

**THE COMPUTER MISUSE AMENDMENT ACT 2022: IMPACT ON DIGITAL JOURNALISM
PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I, OCWEO RONALD, hereby affirm that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to this or any other institution for any academic award.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted to the School of Journalism, Media, and Communication at Uganda Christian University with the approval of the supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the students and professional practitioners of Digital Journalism, my supervisor, Mr. Ssenoga Abraham Bakiraasa Ssenoga, my lecturers Mr. Tumwine Edward, Mr. Frank Obonyo, Dr. Samuel Kazibwe, and my friends from the School of Journalism, Media and Communication. These people have assisted me on various grounds to strengthen and help me discover, rediscover, and uncover different multimedia potentials in my quest to become a Multimedia journalist. I also would like to dedicate this research to Mr. Etura Ambrose, Lira City Physical Planner, who advised me to join the School of Journalism, media, and Communication. I would like to express my gratitude to my parents Mr. and Mrs James Patrick and Doreen Okwir for their exceptional support in my journey since childhood. They have provided invaluable support, particularly in terms of financial assistance. Their unwavering commitment to my success has been commendable, and I am immensely grateful for their guidance and encouragement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background	1
1.1 Problem Statement.....	2
1.2 General Purpose	2
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	3
1.4 Research Questions.....	3
1.5 The Scope of the Study	3
1.5.1 Geographical Scope	3
1.5.2 Content Scope	4
1.5.3 Time Scope	4
1.6 Justification of the Study	4
1.7 Significance of the Study	5
1.8 Theoretical Framework.....	5
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7

2.0 Introduction.....	7
2.1 Understanding Digital Journalism	7
2.2 Understanding the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act	9
2.3 Digital Journalism Vs Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act.....	10
CHAPTER THREE	13
METHODOLOGY	13
3.0 Introduction.....	13
3.1 The Research Design	13
3.2 The Case Study Design.....	14
3.2.0 Justification.....	14
3.3 Sampling	15
3.4 Research Techniques	15
3.4.1 Interviews.....	15
3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion	16
3.5 Data Collection	16
3.6 Data Analysis	17
3.7 Quality Control	18
3.7.1 Reliability.....	18
3.7.2 Validity	18
3.8 Ethical Considerations	18
3.9 Limitations to the Study.....	19
CHAPTER FOUR.....	20
DATA INTERPRETATION & PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	20
4.0 Introduction.....	20
4.1 Data Description	26
CHAPTER FIVE	33
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	33

5.0 Interpretation of Results.....	33
5.1 Research Questions Vs Findings	33
5.2 Findings Vs Literature Review	37
5.3 Theoretical Framework Vs Findings	39
5.4 Unexpected results	41
CHAPTER SIX.....	43
CONCLUSION.....	43
6.0 Summary of the main findings.....	43
6.1 Implications of the research	43
6.2 Contributions of the Study	44
6.3 Avenues for Future Research.....	44
REFERENCES	45

LIST OF ACRONYMS

UBC	–	Uganda Broadcasting Cooperation
CMA	–	Computer Misuse (Amendment Act)
DJ	–	Digital Journalism
BBC	–	British Broadcasting Cooperation
NEEDP	–	National Economic Empowerment Dialogue Party
X	–	Twitter
I.K Musaazi	–	Ignatius Kangave Musaazi

ABSTRACT

This study Assesses the Impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 on the practice of digital journalism a case study of Uganda Christian University. This study seeks to establish the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 which are liable for exploitation by narrow interest groups, it further addresses how these loopholes have hindered the advancement of digital journalism and how the loopholes found can be bridged. The study employs qualitative methods, including questionnaires, and content analysis, to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 on digital journalism practices. This study contributes to the existing literature on digital journalism by establishing their channels or mode of operation in the digital world, it further elaborates in-depth on the origins and provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022. Using a theoretical framework based on Authoritative theory, the study assesses how the Act is a tool for the suppression of digital press freedom in their quest to collect, gather, produce, and share content online. It also highlights the significance of media freedom in a bid for nation-building, accountability, and having an informed society.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

Digital journalism practices in Uganda have been facing immense pressure from government regulations, policies, and laws. The existence of widespread misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and propaganda has led to limitations on digital journalism through internet restrictions and policies (Florence, 2021). However, these policies were first introduced by the colonial masters (Britain) in 1954, when the media industry was introduced in Uganda. The Uganda Broadcasting Cooperation (UBC), which was a state-owned BBC, undertook an authoritarian theory of mass media that censored freedom of journalism practices, limiting it to the promotion of British propaganda at the expense of ordinary Ugandans who demanded a libertarian theory that anticipates equality and freedom in journalism practices. In addition, the British used it to suppress the activities of Pan-Africanists such as I.K Musaazi, who were outspoken about the British state of governance by demanding policy reviews and political inclusion (Bob, 2012). With the evolution of the internet or the digital era, accessibility, and dissemination of information have increased, giving birth to digital journalism practices among student journalists, professionals, and citizen journalists within Uganda Christian University, Mukono. This involves sharing media content through the internet as opposed to print or broadcast. However, online sharing of content has been associated with falsification, distortion, disinformation, misinformation, and propaganda, attracting numerous policies in a bid to curb, discourage, and limit their distribution. These policies include the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), which has in turn crippled digital journalism practices in regard to unlawful exposure and sharing of information or data from fraud, embezzlement of funds, corruption, misuse of public offices, human rights violations, and other activities that render any journalism practice a public watchdog and accountable to the society (Carl-Magnus Höglund & Johan Karlsson Schaffer, 2021).

In this study, I intend to examine the limitations that the amended Computer Misuse Act of 2022 presents to digital journalism practices, the loopholes that may exist within the provisions of the policy, and the framework within which media practitioners or journalists can still operate despite the sabotaging implications of the policy.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) has imposed restrictions on digital journalism practices in Uganda, making it difficult for journalists to create, upload, disseminate, and distribute content online. Journalists in Kampala and other neighboring districts have faced various penalties as a result of this law, including house and office searches, seizure of computer-related properties, threats, and arrests. For instance, Pidson Kakaire, the managing editor of Drone Media, was charged with criminal libel and offensive communication under this law. Dr. Stella Nyanzi, a human rights activist, was also arrested and charged with cyber harassment and offensive communication (Michael, Anke F. and Kerem, 2016). The Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) prohibits the unauthorized sharing of information or data electronically, the sending and sharing of malicious or unsolicited information, and the misuse of social media activities. These provisions pose a significant threat to digital journalism, including public watchdog function, accountability function, and dissemination of information. It makes it illegal to access information or data without authorization, which can lead to penalties. The study also navigates how these loopholes influence journalism practices.

According to Mr. Asuman Odaka, the Secretary-General of the National Economic Empowerment Dialogue Party (NEEDP), the Computer Misuse Act of 2022 puts the practice of journalism on the brink of collapse in Uganda. Therefore, this study aims to identify the loopholes within the framework of this law that can end up crippling the progress of Digital journalism and that can be exploited by different parties with narrow interest. The study will help establish the limitations brought about by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and its impact on digital journalism practices in Uganda.

1.2 General Purpose

The main objective of this study is to analyze the limitations imposed by the amended Computer Misuse Act of 2022 on Digital journalism in Uganda Christian University. The study aims to identify any potential loopholes within the law that could allow digital journalism practices to continue legally and to evaluate the existence of a framework for journalists to operate within the law. The research also seeks to explore the legal implications of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on the practice of journalism in Uganda Christian University.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To assess the extent to which digital journalism practices have been limited by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) within Uganda Christian University, Mukono.
- To find out how digital journalists can practice within the parameters of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) at Uganda Christian University, Mukono.
- To examine loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) regarding digital journalism practices at Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

RQ2: How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of Digital journalism practices?

RQ3: How can these loopholes be bridged?

1.5 The Scope of the Study

This study intends to examine the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on the Journalism practice at Uganda Christian University, Mukono. In addition, it seeks to identify the existing framework within which Digital journalism practices can operate despite efforts to sabotage its activities and to assess loopholes or unconstitutionality existing within the law. The study targets Digital journalists who have been directly limited by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act); it also seeks to understand how Digital journalists can operate within the framework of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

1.5.1 Geographical Scope

This study intends to cover the Uganda Christian University, Mukono district. This is in order to investigate the extent to which the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) has limited Digital journalism practices within the institution especially among student journalists, and professional journalists operating within the University. In addition, analyze possible similarities and differences in those limitations. It is also intended to examine and establish a framework within which Digital journalists in these districts can work within the framework of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and to conclusively identify loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act)

1.5.2 Content Scope

This study intends to assess Digital journalists including professional journalists, student journalists, and Citizen journalists who have practically participated in pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution of online content through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter(X), YouTube, Instagram, and Websites. This is aimed at examining their experiences while distributing online content within the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and the limitations faced in the process. The study also aims to examine legal experts on allegations that the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) possesses Acts that are unconstitutional (loopholes) with the sole purpose of discouraging online activism and scrutinization of government apparatus. In conclusion, the content scope of the study is desired to establish a framework within which Digital journalists can disseminate news content online without contradicting the law in mention.

1.5.3 Time Scope

The study intends to cover a time period of four (4) months, this is based on the analogy that news-worthy events and happenings transpire on a daily basis, and with Digital journalism practices at hand, the speed at which content production and distribution is relatively high due to the accessibility ease that online platforms such as Twitter(X), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Websites provide to the respective audiences. Therefore, a period of four months offers ample time to examine the limitations faced in the process of content production and dissemination by Digital journalists. In addition, it should also be able to establish a framework within which Digital journalists can still produce content and distribute without contradicting the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and finally to assess legal experts on the unconstitutionality through loopholes that are within the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study is imperative on the following counts;

- It will identify, assess, and define various limitations initiated on Digital journalism practices by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). In addition, it focuses on examining the existence of unconstitutional provisions within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) also termed as loopholes, especially in regard to Digital journalism roles and purposes of serving public interests through scrutinization and demanding

accountability of government apparatus by exposing corruption scandals, bribery, fraud, embezzlement of public funds and abuse of public offices among others.

- It will establish an existing framework within which Digital journalism practices can still operate consistently within the constraints of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), this is purposely to avoid contradictions that may unfold while producing and distributing online content and also to minimize the criminalization of the production of online content that serves public interest.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is relatively significant on the following fronts;

- This study will establish the extent to which the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) has limited Digital journalism practices within online spaces in Mukono. In addition, it will clearly show how these limitations on Digital journalism practices have led to widespread unaccountability and reduced follow-up on issues of public interest for example corruption scandals, abuse of public offices, and embezzlement of public funds because of hindrances brought by provisions such as accessing unauthorized, malicious and unsolicited information.
- This study will establish a framework within which Digital journalists including professionals, students, and citizen journalists within Mukono can still practice within the constraints of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). This is aimed at maintaining the coherence of the practice due to the accessibility and favorable conditions offered by digital platforms such as Websites, Search engines, Facebook, Twitter(X), Instagram, and YouTube.
- The research findings of this study will not only benefit Digital or online journalists by outlining the limitations, and existing framework and establishing unconstitutionality that requires reforms but also civic organizations and societies who share influential content and ideologies online will get to continue with their practices through the aid of the research findings of this study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the approaches of the critical, libertarian, normative, and authoritarian theories of media because they are largely associated with authorities and press freedoms as seen below;

Andrew Feeberg (2008) stated that the dynamics of the critical theory in the communication technological era have changed, this is because it provides a primary preposition to societal issues of public interest. In addition, it further indicates that the internet provides innovational structures that collectively unify respective audiences.

The study conveys the approaches of the Libertarian theory of media with an interest in the evolution of media through digitalization, which states that people are rational beings who are capable of distinguishing right and wrong, Kimumwe (2020) further states that man should be accorded equal rights and opportunities to express oneself. In regards to digital journalism practices, professionals, students, and citizen journalists should conceptualize, produce, and distribute online content that is of public interest and impactful to society without limitations brought by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

This study further navigates that for new policies such as the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) to prevail, the normative theory of media is put into consideration since it states an ideal framework through which media systems are operated by the state, authority, and governments. In addition, it stresses media relations with political administrations rather than media and public interests such as scrutiny and accountability.

This study also hints at the authoritarian theory of media which states that man is weak insinuating that he is overshadowed by the powers and authority of the state and governments. In addition, it highlights that the media is meant to serve the functionalities and interests of the state which includes propaganda manifestations and brutalization of democratic processes and participation such as elections in a bid to favor them (Anne, 2019)

In the next chapter, Literature Review, the study aims to define Digital journalism, Digital journalists, and Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), and how they have affected each other in the same sphere.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims at defining the concept of Digital journalism, the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), and establishing how the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) has affected Digital journalism since its enactment (Mackenzie, 2023). It also strives to further investigate how researchers and scholars have assessed the limitations brought about by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on the practice of Digital journalism, its impact on the practice after limitations, and existing unconstitutionalities or loopholes within the law.

2.1 Understanding Digital Journalism

This section explores the definition of Digital journalism using different approaches as seen below;

Digital journalism is the production and distribution of news resources on digital spaces such as Websites and Social Media platforms such as Twitter(X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube among others (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). In addition, Digital journalism is a networking that incorporates the production and dissemination of news and informational resources (Silvio, 2019) Many scholars have hardly desegregated both digital and traditional journalism in the aspect of consistency and news sourcing, but the tools employed in the process of collecting information distinguishes them (Ferucci, 2017)

Hermida (2010) defines journalism in the digital era as moving journalism or journalism in motion. The process of filtering relevant issues is the new phenomenon governing journalism practices in the online or digital space (Franklin, 2013, p. 1). Under digitization, journalists are availed with more chances which presents new bounds in the line of Analytics, audience, and algorithms. Under digitization, the most notable changes are between content consumers and producers, the agenda setting in media has changed since it has incorporated the public or audiences as well. In the online or digital era, the consumers of news resources have turned into news producers due to easy accessibility to online platforms such as Websites and social media platforms. Therefore, this gives rise to digital journalists who may not necessarily be professionals in the field. (Loosen, 2014)

It should be noted that Digital journalism practices have become instrumental in the field of policymaking, this is due to new challenges and concerns brought by the new technologies pertaining to privacy and information security especially the unsolicited, unauthorized, and malicious messages that are aimed at blackmailing, spreading propaganda and issues of public interest. Apparently, these concerns about digitization have paved the way for policies like the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) with provisions such as abuse of social media, and unsolicited and unauthorized information among others with heavy fines and prison sentences accorded in violation.

The following explanations establish the 5Ws and H of Digital journalism as seen below;

- Who

Digital journalism does not limit its definition to certified professionals in the field, but with the technological advancements, whoever has access to the internet and can supply news resources and commentaries into the online or digital domain qualifies to be a digital journalist. (Lewis & Westlund, 2015)

Journalistic identity has undergone recession, this digitization has given birth to new journalism dynamics including citizen journalism hence infiltrating the environment once dominated by professional journalists (Knight, Geuze, and Gerlis 2008; Singer 2003)

- What

The content arrays of digital journalism include articles, blogs on a website, YouTube videos, audio, news headlines, editorials, and art reviews. In addition, has also led to the evolution of new content such as podcasts, reviews, fake news, rumors, and misinformation among others.

- Where they operate,

Digital journalism is not affected or limited geographically. This is because content can be uploaded and disseminated through websites, social media platforms, and search engines with high speed and accessibility courtesy of connections through Wi-Fi or internet data.

- When

Digital journalism knows no time, this is attributed to its speed where content is distributed, redistributed, posted, and re-posted within a short time via wireless channels and networks. These wireless channels and networks are due to the

advancement in technology or digitization which is achieved through the electromagnetic spectrum which comprises wavelength and frequencies.

- Why

Digital journalism is in place for various reasons ranging from content creation for advertisement, income generation through sponsorships and endorsements, the scrutinization of government apparatus, informing, educating, and entertaining through content, it further acts as an influential tool on the public, to create awareness.

- How

Digital journalism encompasses a free accessibility environment with no defined rules especially in terms of procedure and ethical grounds while creating and publishing content online. In addition, it lacks specific ways in which content should be availed to the public.

2.2 Understanding the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act

This section defines the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) regarding Digital journalism practices;

The Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) was signed into law by the President of Uganda H.E Yoweri Museveni in 2022. This policy was moved on the floor of parliament by Kampala Central Member of Parliament Hon. Muhammad Nsereko to reform the Computer Misuse Act 2011 which was considered outdated. This move was backed by the idea that technological advancements had introduced new issues, threats, and concerns that needed urgent addressing.

Goitom (2023) further asserts that the government of Uganda signed the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) into law on the basis that transformations had taken place in the technological sphere without clear reforms or changes in the policies and laws governing them. In addition, the digitization era introduced new types of content for example fake news, misinformation which posed a threat to privacy and information security thus prompting the government to sign into law the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) which introduces new provisions criminalizing some practices within Digital journalism including Abuse of social media, Unauthorized Access, Unsolicited Information and Malicious Information among others.

The following are some of the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) that limit Digital journalism practices according to Goitom (2023);

- Unauthorized Access to Information,

This provision states that anybody who gains access to another person's information or program, records video or audio of another: or disseminates information about or that seems related to another, commits an offence. In addition, it places heavy penalties of fines of up to 15 million shillings or a prison sentence below ten (10) years or both.

- Unsolicited Information,

This provision states that Digital journalists should only disseminate information concerning somebody else for example government officials only when they are in the public interest, this is cited on the basis that unsolicited information may be without a person's consent and hence can lead to reputational damage.

This provision not only distorts the agenda-setting theory of media but also minimizes media relevance in the internet era where anybody with digital accessibility can easily set the topic of discussion.

Upon violation of this policy and conviction, one can serve up to seven (7) years of incarceration and a fine of fifteen (15) million shillings or both.

- Social Media Abuse,

This provision criminalizes the distribution of informational content in contradictions with the domestic laws of Uganda under concealed identity or disguising with informational resources belonging to others. This provision limits Digital journalism practices, especially in cases where content has to be held undercover to avoid unnecessary leakages that can cause public outcry or image distortion.

It carries a fine of about 15 million shillings, a jail term of less than 5 years, or both upon conviction.

2.3 Digital Journalism Vs Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act

This sub-section explores how the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and Digital journalism practices have affected each other;

Many scholars agree that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) was proposed, enacted, and signed into law with the sole aim of restricting Digital journalism practices. This is because they scrutinize government bodies, demand accountability, and perform the public

watchdog role using platforms like Twitter(X), YouTube, and Instagram among others. In addition, they also use sophisticated computer programs to monitor media activities online. Upon examining online restrictions through laws like the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022), different scholars, authors, and schools of thought agree that these policies undermine international human rights standards; they further state that these policies lack a framework of validity, legitimacy, rightness, and necessity. Through observation, researchers have conclusively assessed that domestic cyber laws in Uganda are often unverified and executed with minimal monitoring (Florence, 2021)

The initial target of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) was to primarily litigate and intimidate free online sharing of information by Digital Journalists from accessing and disseminating unauthorized information of public interest for example corruption scandals, fraud, bribery, embezzlement of public funds and incompetence among government officials. It has in turn been used to truncate the activities of these online journalists who offer forums that scrutinize, reduce inadequacies, and hold the government accountable for all business done in public offices from health structures, education systems, and public service delivery among others (Matsiko and Kersting, 2023). It should be noted that the media industry underwent numerous transitional changes under the Museveni regime, especially regarding regulations and policies, this is evident through the Computer Misuse Act of 2011 (amended 2022) among others. Dr. Emily Maractho alludes that for the administration and evolution of media in Uganda to be probed, the legal structures and policies have to be thoroughly conveyed (Maractho, 2015)

It should be noted that in countries like Uganda, exercising political rights is limited to elections which are often characterized by violence, abductions, rigging, and tribal affiliations. Therefore, online platforms or Computer-mediated communication tools avail new measures in political participation which includes awareness from Digital journalists and activists through tools such as Twitter(X), Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to rally for infrastructural, administrational, and policy improvements in the line of health, education and service delivery (Matsiko and Kersting, 2023). Therefore, this suggests that limiting the activities of Digital journalists with the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) not only undermines freedom of expression but also hinders efforts to fight for the restoration of credibility, consistency, and accountability of the state apparatus.

Different scholars allude that the existence of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) has not only sabotaged Digital journalism practices but also the public or masses who are denied opportunities to participate and advocate for free and fair governance systems through activism (McIntyre and Meghan, 2021). For Digital journalism practices to be free, the public or masses must determine what they expect from that particular media apparatus (public agenda setting) (Michael Meyen et al., 2016)

Digital Journalists in Uganda consider themselves as mediators, or interposition themselves as part of the public hence making them cover stories on issues affecting or happening within their particular spheres of influence. However, some Digital journalists affiliate more with the state functions than their role as the fourth estate or watchdog which asserts the Normative theory of mass media (McIntyre & Meghan, 2021). This also constitutes why Digital journalism practices are faced with less solidarity moves by internet service providers who often comply with government policies to protect their entities instead of customers or users for example MTN which supports all government positions in line with image and brand protection (Florence, 2021)

Mackenzie (2023) asserts that regulating online or Digital journalism practices specifically targets both the Users of online platforms for example Websites, Facebook, Twitter(X), Instagram, YouTube, and the platforms themselves. This also instigates that regulations are intended to discourage interactivity and engagement of users online specifically on political topics, and matters of public interest, and also to persuade the digital platforms mentioned above to synchronize content shared on their spaces, therefore calling for these platforms to be wary of emerging domestic policies to maintain accessibility from wider geographical scopes.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This module explores the methodological approach and research design of this study. It relies entirely on navigating concepts, experiences, and opinions of digital journalists, scholars, and legal experts to guide the ideological approach. It assesses the qualitative approach used in this study. It further addresses the data collection methods including questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. This module also dispenses analytical processes and data interpretation techniques including reliability and validity. In conclusion, this module defines the ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

3.1 The Research Design

Lelissa (2018) describes research design as the process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting research content or data. This intends to link the problem statement concerns with the experiences, opinions, and concepts of digital journalism scholars and practitioners. This states that the research design establishes the process of needed content or data, the methodology applicable to find out the data, and how analysis will be done in a manner that responds to the research questions which include: the limitations facing digital journalism under the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), the existing framework within which digital journalism can be practiced and the unconstitutionalities or loopholes existing within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) in regards to digital journalism practices.

This study uses descriptive and explanatory approaches that offer ground reality to the limitations faced by digital journalism while practicing their craft under this law, what and why there could be unconstitutionalities within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) in regards to digital journalism practices and how digital journalism practices can prevail without contradicting with the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). These approaches seek to establish factors that lead to happenings for example reason and cause. In addition, they offer backup evidence of their existence since they compare constraints and relationships between various aspects relating to the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and digital journalism practices (Lelissa, 2018).

The main goal of this study is to examine the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on digital journalism practices in Mukono. Therefore, different scholarly concepts, opinions, and experiences of digital journalism practitioners have to be assessed using methods such as interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions to establish the qualitative study design.

3.2 The Case Study Design

The case study design focuses on the qualitative research approach which offers various means of internalizing happenings or events for example through reviewing concepts and interacting with digital journalism practitioners to get opinions and experiences. Therefore, the qualitative approach generalizes in unraveling how the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and digital journalism practices have influenced one another within the Mukono setting. This further states that the qualitative approach of research puts much emphasis on establishing how phenomena transpire in case they co-exist in the same sphere or whenever one is meant to regulate the other for example the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) as a policy was set to regulate the activities of computer-mediated forms of communication which includes digital journalism practices.

3.2.0 Justification

Qualitative research approaches will investigate and produce in-depth accounts of the concepts, perspectives, and experiences of the participants involved for example in this case the digital journalism practitioners, media scholars, and legal experts within Uganda Christian University. (Creswell, & Plano Clark, 2011; Munhall, 2012; Wuest, 2012; Holloway & Galvin, 2016). Qualitative research will navigate how digital journalism practices can continue within the existing framework of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), it also establishes the loopholes within the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) and some of the limitations brought by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on the practice of digital journalism, these are all through subjecting participants such as digital journalism practitioners, media scholars and legal experts to the descriptive natures of the research questions that can lead to responses that inform the existing situation(Curry et al., 2009; Yin, 2015). The qualitative approach enables the researcher to possess and have consistency in straightforwardness and responsibility throughout the research process hence enabling the readers to identify critical analytical decisions made by the researcher.

However, the qualitative approach of research does not convert symbols used verbally while expressing oneself into mathematical numbers or digits (Hogan et al., 2009; Sarantakos, 2013; Holloway & Galvin, 2016).

3.3 Sampling

This study seeks to identify and locate digital journalism practitioners within Uganda Christian University, Mukono. This is because the institution is home to the School of Journalism, media, and Communication which comprises Media scholars, digital journalism practitioners, and student journalists who have practiced before or still practicing the art. Therefore, sampling will enable the collection of rich information and data regarding the impact of Digital Journalism on Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) from Uganda Christian University as a sampling base (Paton, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

3.4 Research Techniques

This study will explore several techniques in a bid to gather data and information on the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on digital journalism practices in Mukono. These techniques include interviews and focus group discussions.

3.4.1 Interviews

Under this study, different participants including Digital journalism practitioners, media scholars, and legal experts from Uganda Christian University, Mukono will be subjected to interview-based evaluations which will include question-asking and answer-responses. This is intended to produce comprehensive information or data about the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on Digital journalism practices in Mukono. This information will be extracted from the experiences, concepts, and perspectives of these contributors. To gather rigorous information about the limitations brought by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on digital journalism practices, the framework within which digital journalism practices can be practiced without contradicting the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), and finally the loopholes or unconstitutionalities existing within the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). In conclusion, the results obtained from the interview sessions are supposed to inform and justify the qualitative approach (Grey, 2014).

These interview sessions will incorporate shaped questions to source the needed information calculatedly, they will further aid in availing explanations and ensuring connectivity with the

topic; Impacts of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on Digital Journalism Practices in Mukono (Gill et al., 2010).

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

This study intends to use focus group discussions to obtain or gather comprehensive information from the group discussions. These group discussions will involve designated groups of Digital journalism practitioners including student journalists at Uganda Christian University with previous experiences in practicing Digital journalism before and after the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). This is intended to investigate their concepts, experiences, and perspectives about the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on Digital journalism practices (Morgan, 1996). In addition, the study further explores incorporating respondent moderator focus group form of discussion. This will involve a few selected Digital journalism practitioners participating in the discussion to take up roles such as provisional group coordinators (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). This is intended to reverberate the rest of the participants to give or exhibit independent responses, this idea was put into consideration to enable the participants freedom to discuss their concepts, experiences, and perspectives. In addition, the autonomy of answers shared in the discussion increases the depth and variety of concepts, experiences, and perspectives without mere repetitions. In conclusion, the focus group discussions of data collection give room for straightforward and frank answers which are needed to cultivate the gaps identified by this study.

3.5 Data Collection

This study will explore the use of interviews and focus group discussions in collecting data or information on the impacts of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) for example the research question: What are some of the limitations brought by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on digital journalism practices will be addressed using both interviews and focus group discussion to widen the resulting scope, the research question on how digital journalism practices can work within the framework of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) will be subjected to focus group discussions to verify what the majority think or regard as appropriate. The research question regarding the unconstitutionality will be subjected to both interviews and focus group discussion to create a critical analysis of the concept. Most of the research questions will incorporate all the data collection techniques because the

presence of the researcher is vital regarding the degree of transparency. In addition, it adds validity to the result or outcome of the research process (Holloway, 2005; Creswell, 2007)

3.6 Data Analysis

Under this stage, different analytical approaches will be explored to review and preview the experiences, perspectives, and concepts of the participants. This is intended to determine the outcomes of the research study on the impact of Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on Digital journalism practices in Mukono. These approaches include thematic analysis, content review analysis, and Narrative analysis.

- Thematic Approach

This approach incorporates identifying repeated views or perspectives in a collection of data or information. In this study, this approach will be used to address responses to research questions such as; What are some of the limitations brought by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on Digital journalism practices in all the data collection methods including interviews and focus group discussions. This is intended to enable the identification of any repeated views or ideas from the participants (Leonard & David, 2016).

- Content Review

Under this approach, reviews will be done on previous texts and declarations that have been produced in line with the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) on the practice of Digital journalism through examining texts, key highlights, and various concepts of media scholars or Digital journalism practitioners to analyze the existence, interpretations, and similarities of those texts, highlights and conceptual analogies from the focus group discussions and interviews(A.J, Kheinhekse, et.al,).

- Narrative Approaches

This explores Digital journalism practitioners as examples and concentrates on establishing their narration of data and seeks to build knowledge based on the experiences of Digital journalism practitioners while creating content before and after the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). This is through identifying coordinating sequences within the narrations of Digital journalism practitioners as they discuss their experiences before and after the signing of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act). This approach also seeks to examine what digital journalism practitioners think about the possible unconstitutionalities within the provisions of the law (Josselson, R.,

& Hammack P.L., 2021). This approach can contextualize and energize the perspectives of digital journalism practitioners affected by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

3.7 Quality Control

This study intends to undertake the reliability and validity procedure in maintaining the levels of information or data and the data collection methods such as interviews and focus group discussions. These quality control approaches will provide the readers with reliable and validated research outcomes which aims at furthering more research information in the field of Digital journalism and the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

3.7.1 Reliability

This study will determine reliability by creating provisions for an in-depth description of the procedures and mechanisms which will offer other researchers a basis to gather their data or information with the same criteria (Firmin, 2008). It will also allow new researchers to carry on work, especially those with matching research questions (Saumure & Given, 2008)

3.7.2 Validity

This segment of quality control will cultivate internal validity to determine the extent to which data collected from interviews or focus group discussions represents ground reality or ground examples. It will further navigate the methods of research and the contributors in this case who include Digital journalism practitioners about the expression and presumptions of the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). To attain validity, this study will carefully define the data in-depth, clearly indicating unfavorable and contentious issues using other researchers to assess the outcomes articulately, fact-checking and analysis,

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study intends to minimize threats aimed at reducing the integral aspect of Digital journalism practitioners (Polit & Beck, 2010; Neuman, 2011, Munhall, 2012). This further insinuates that the participants will include entirely Digital journalism practitioners who comprise professional journalists, citizen journalists, and student journalists. They will further be subjected to the optimum ethical procedures regarding their independence, forceful participation, secrecy, and privacy (Neuman, 2011; Scott, 2013). In addition, clarity and responsibility will be presented regarding the procedure and conduct of the research by clearly establishing how the participants' consent was assessed, illustrating how

confidentiality was protected. The readers shall be made aware of the inclusion process of the participants, who in this case are Digital journalism practitioners.

3.9 Limitations to the Study

This study is limited to data collection methods that require the presence of the researcher including interviews and focus group discussions. Methods like questionnaires and surveys which are more cost-friendly may not be applicable due to honesty concerns and the desire for the researchers to get involved face-to-face with the research participants who are Digital journalism practitioners to understand their reactions as they explain or narrate their ordeals while practicing Digital journalism under the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

This study also faces limitations on researched studies specifically on Digital journalism and Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) with questions such as; What are the limitations facing Digital journalism practices under the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), How can Digital journalism practitioners practice within the parameters of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA INTERPRETATION & PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

The data collected for this research is based on the guidance of research questions including:

1. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?
2. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of Digital journalism practices?
3. How can these loopholes be bridged?

The following objectives guide these research questions;

- To assess the extent to which digital journalism practices have been limited by the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) within Uganda Christian University, Mukono.
- To find out how digital journalists can practice within the parameters of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) at Uganda Christian University, Mukono.
- To examine loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) regarding digital journalism practices at Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

Data interpretation is a crucial stage in the research process, as it enables researchers to make sense of their findings, identify patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions (Bryman, 2016).

The purpose of data interpretation is to:

1. Identify patterns and relationships:
 - (i) Patterns

The goal of data interpretation is to uncover patterns and relationships in the data that can help answer the research question (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). Meanwhile, a trend is a consistent change in the data over time or across categories (Creswell, 2014, p. 240). A correlation indicates a relationship between two or more variables (Bryman, 2016, p. 338). Clusters can be described as groups of cases that share similar characteristics (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Outliers are data points that deviate significantly from the pattern (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 542).

(ii) Relationships

A causal relationship suggests that one variable affects another or they are inversely proportional to each other (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 544). An associative relationship indicates a connection between variables without implying causality (Creswell, 2014, p. 241). Contextual relationships consider the broader context in which the data was collected, this is because it calls for depth in its approach rather than just basics (Bryman, 2016, p. 340). Temporal relationships examine how variables change over time and it also considers that change is a constant factor that minimizes its permanence (Merriam, 2009, p. 214).

(i) Final Conclusions:

This is a conclusion that is definitive and based on comprehensive analysis or analysis that deals in intricate details or thorough investigation (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 545)

Data interpretation involves drawing conclusions from the data, based on the research question and objectives (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 543).

2. Support Arguments:

This provides evidence to support arguments and claims made in the dissertation. In other words, it is a basement for narratives or theories that have been established (Merriam, 2009, p. 212). Supporting arguments can enhance data interpretation in the following ways;

(i) Contextualization:

This provides context to the data, making it more meaningful and relevant. This can also suggest that it gives a broader picture of the data collected hence making it more value-oriented (Creswell, 2014, p. 245)

(ii) Validation:

This provides a basis that strengthens the credibility of findings through logical reasoning and evidence. It is important to note that evidence is crucial in examining the credibility of a given narrative; therefore, validation assists in providing a background basis that enables the data interpretation process to flow successfully" (Bryman, 2016, p. 342). Inform decision-making:

(iii) Clarification:

This involves explaining complex data insights, making them more accessible and understandable (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). Clarification also involves breaking down details that may be hard to digest by the audiences. This move helps to make data more understandable and also eases the interpretation process. It is important to note that when data is broken down, it simplifies the identification of gaps and missing links which helps to inform the theory further.

(iv) Generalizability:

This considers how findings can be applied to wider contexts or populations (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 545). It is based on the scope of the data collected, anticipating that the data should encompass a broader range to ensure that it is not limited to only a specific phenomenon.

(v) Theoretical connections:

The process of connecting data insights with established theories or frameworks serves to enrich our understanding (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 548). It's noteworthy that data trends frequently mirror existing theories or narratives. For instance, the mass society theory, which suggests that individuals have a preference for belonging to larger societal groups, is often utilized to analyze various behavioral patterns, particularly in times of change.

3. Inform-decision making

The process of informing decision-making through data interpretation is essential as it allows stakeholders to make well-informed decisions based on valuable insights derived from data analysis. This approach not only guides decision-making but also plays a significant role in shaping theories and practices, as highlighted by Eisenhardt (1989, p. 548). Here's how informing decision-making helps in data interpretation:

(i) Identifying key findings:

Data interpretation is an essential process in research as it involves analyzing and making sense of data to uncover valuable insights. These insights are crucial for informing decision-making processes. According to Creswell (2014, p. 245), data interpretation aids in the identification of critical insights that play a pivotal role in projecting key issues. These insights contribute to a detailed narrative that informs the research study findings.

Key findings extracted from data interpretation form a critical component of the overall conclusions drawn from the research study.

(ii) Evaluating options:

Interpreted data enables stakeholders to evaluate different options and choose the best course of action (Bryman, 2016, p. 342). These help the research findings to possess the most relevant arguments which helps in providing a comprehensively concluded report that informs the research study accordingly. Evaluating options helps to provide basis to select the most vital tips within the data so as to inform the research study.

4. Identify limitations:

Data interpretation should also consider the limitations of the study, including potential biases and errors (Creswell, 2014, p. 248). This argues that potential biases and errors may appear in the provisional findings therefore identifying those limitations assists in filtering or verifying unwanted data traits within the findings. The following are the different ways through which limitations are identified within the data;

(i) Exposing assumptions:

Data interpretation reveals underlying assumptions made during data collection or analysis (Bryman, 2016, p. 343). Bryman argues that while collecting data, it is possible for a researcher to make certain assumptions or assertions in a bid to gather data according to their narrative. These assumptions may sometimes have elements of propaganda or bias whose identification is vital during the data interpretation process. It is important to analyze data that is free from assumptions but genuine facts gathered from the field.

(ii) Highlighting gaps:

Interpreting data identifies gaps in data coverage, sampling, or instrumentation (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). When data is interpreted, gaps within the content gathered, and methods used can be identified, these gaps help to expose unwanted loopholes within the data structure which helps to minimize irregularities within the findings. It is important to note that existing gaps within the research study provide ground for conducting further research studies.

(iii) Detecting errors:

Data interpretation helps detect errors in data entry, coding, or analysis (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 547). Deleting errors helps to reduce or do away with unwanted traits within the data. This also helps to provide clean data for coding or analysis, having clean data without errors is important in analysis and conclusion as it provides ground for informative and relevant conclusions.

(iv) Uncovering inconsistencies:

Interpreting data involves a detailed examination of patterns, trends, and relationships within the dataset (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 549). This meticulous process enables the identification of inconsistencies or irregularities before the commencement of data analysis. Uncovering these discrepancies within the data structure allows for corrective action to be taken, ensuring that the subsequent analysis is based on reliable and precise data, thereby minimizing the risk of drawing incorrect conclusions.

(v) Assessing reliability and validity:

When interpreting data, it's important to consider the broader context in which the study was conducted, as mentioned by Bryman in 2016 (p. 342). Using theoretical frameworks to guide the analysis, as suggested by Eisenhardt in 1989 (p. 545), can enhance data interpretation. Additionally, researchers should explore alternative explanations for their findings during data interpretation, as emphasized by Merriam in 2009 (p. 215). It's also crucial to document the process of data interpretation to ensure transparency and replication of the results.

5. Contextualize findings:

Contextual findings play a crucial role in data interpretation by providing a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon. Contextualization involves considering the social, cultural, historical, and environmental factors that influence the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). Interpreting data requires considering the broader context in which the study was conducted (Bryman, 2016, p. 342). Contextual findings help in data interpretation through the following ways;

Identify patterns and relationships that may not be immediately apparent (Bryman, 2016, p. 342). It develops a more nuanced understanding of the data, reducing the risk

of misinterpretation (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). It also enhances the validity and reliability of findings by considering alternative explanations (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 545). It also increases the generalizability of findings by understanding how contextual factors influence the phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 548). Additionally, identify biases and assumptions that may have influenced data collection or analysis (Creswell, 2014, p. 246). It develops more effective interventions or solutions by understanding the contextual factors that influence the phenomenon (Bryman, 2016, p. 343)

6. Use theoretical frameworks:

A theoretical framework plays a crucial role in data interpretation by providing a conceptual lens through which to examine and understand the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 245). It enables researchers to:

Identify patterns and relationships in the data that align with or challenge existing theories (Bryman, 2016, p. 342). It develops a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon by situating it within a broader theoretical context (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). It enhances the validity and reliability of findings by ensuring that they are grounded in established theoretical concepts (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 545). Increase the generalizability of findings by demonstrating how they contribute to or challenge existing theoretical knowledge (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 548). Data interpretation can be enhanced by using theoretical frameworks to guide the analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 545). It can develop a clear research question and objectives that are aligned with the theoretical framework (Creswell, 2014, p. 246). It is used to select appropriate data collection and analysis methods that are consistent with the theoretical framework (Bryman, 2016, p. 343). They are also used to identify potential biases and assumptions that may have influenced data collection or analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 217).

Conclusively, a theoretical framework is essential for data interpretation as it provides a conceptual structure for understanding the data and situating it within a broader theoretical context. By using a theoretical framework, researchers can develop more accurate, valid, and reliable findings that contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field

Data Description

The data description part of a dissertation provides an overview of the data used in the study, including its source, collection methods, and characteristics.

(i) Data source:

Description of where the data came from, including any relevant details about the population or sample.

The data for this research dissertation originated from digital journalism practitioners including students and staff from Uganda Christian University which is the case study area. As the research aims to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) on the practice of digital journalism, many scholars from the school of journalism, media, and communication have already felt the impacts exerted by the provisions of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) including social media abuse, access to unauthorized information, access to unsolicited information and malicious information among other key provisions that limit Digital Journalism practices

(ii) Data collection methods:

This provides explanation of how the data was collected, including any instruments, tools, or procedures used. For this research, data was collected using a questionnaire method and sent to about 10 participants with a 60% response rate. This questionnaire method was comprised of three key research questions:

1. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act), 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?
2. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of Digital journalism practices?
3. How can these loopholes be bridged? These questions were packaged in the form of an online survey which was then sent to the participants through email and WhatsApp.

(iii) Data characteristics:

This is the description of the data's key features, such as level of measurement, data type, sample size, and population size.

The data type is Qualitative since it comprises of in-depth discussions or responses from the participants. The data was collected from a sample space of 10 participants with a 60% response rate. It is also important to note that Qualitative data seeks to understand the meaning and context of the data, rather than just its numerical value. Qualitative data is often subjective and open to interpretation, requiring the researcher to analyze and make sense of the data. The data was cleaned and checked for outliers. Conclusively, the data description section of a research study provides essential information about the data used to investigate the research question or hypothesis. By including details about the data source, collection methods, characteristics, quality, and limitations, researchers can ensure transparency, replicability, and validity of their findings.

Results

The following were the results from the research conducted to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) on the practice of Digital Journalism a case study of Uganda Christian University. The responses from the research participants have been set as pseudonyms A, B, C, D, E, and F, this is because they requested privacy with their names

1. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

Respondent A - If enforcement of the law is subject to discretion or influenced by political or other considerations, narrow-interest parties may attempt to use their connections or influence to avoid prosecution or receive preferential treatment.

Respondent B - Some of the provisions for the act, for example, provision 2, talk about regulating the sharing and access to malicious information in favor of these parties in such a way that they hope to use this to get away with their dirty acts because this limits the gatekeepers, that is, journalists, from playing their watchdog roles.

Respondent C - Hate speech

Respondent D - It threatens freedom of expression online with all rights of receive and impart and it

targets critics of the government and this will end up preventing people from speaking their minds thus curtailing people's rights. Additionally, this law claims to prohibit hate speech yet their other laws that control hate speech and defamation in this country

Respondent E – It is simply a weak law

Respondent F - It targets the youth in Uganda who depend on social media. Infact social media is a tool for people to express themselves in third world countries because Leaders from those countries put strict laws that are in there favour. To add on, you can't tell me that you want to prohibit hate speech, when am I to ask what hate speech is, and how is it measured? This can be influenced by the Government to prohibit freedom of expression because may fail to say anything because they might be fear of the Act

2. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices?

Respondent A - selective enforcement of provisions may create an effect on freedom of expression among journalists. Fear of violating the law or facing consequences could lead to self-censorship, causing journalists to refrain from covering certain topics or expressing controversial opinions. Narrow interest parties may exploit loopholes to hinder investigative journalism efforts by limiting access to information or intimidating journalists who seek to uncover wrongdoing.

Respondent B - These loopholes have removed the digital freedom journalism had, which affects the practice. Journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out as journalists to be the voices of the people.

Respondent C - Digital journalism plays a crucial role in the modern media landscape allowing for more timely, interactive, and multimedia reporting. Legal frameworks must be involved to support and enable these practices while also addressing legitimate concerns around cyber security, privacy, and the spread of misinformation.

Respondent D - The above loopholes will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more also people are prevented from speaking their minds because you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism

Respondent E - In the case of copyright, the victim has no protection from the act

Respondent F - Content creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and talk freely about an issue because they fear capturing the theme of hate speech. Freedom for Journalists will be reduced in the country because some journalists resorted to digital journalism and put their feelings that they serve the common man, now when they talk about issues like corruption in Parliament, someone can take them to court for not respecting the Act

3. How can these loopholes be bridged?

Respondent A - Allocate sufficient resources to enforcement agencies responsible for implementing the Act, including training for law enforcement personnel on identifying and prosecuting violations related to digital journalism practices. Ensure judicial independence and impartiality in interpreting and applying the law.

Respondent B - As much as the government wants to regulate computer misuse, the loopholes should be looked into and regulated. The leaders should be closely monitored so that they are not the ones misusing this act for personal gain.

Respondent C - Ongoing review and amendment process; laws and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit- for purpose and as technology and societal needs evolve. This requires an open collaborative process involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders.

Respondent D - The Government should work together with all stakeholders like Journalists, lawyers, etc to make a better version of the law that doesn't limit anyone's freedoms

Respondent E - Implement laws

Respondent F - The Government should revise this law again and should consult stakeholders in the industry like lawyers, journalists, the Church etc

The following are the key findings from the results of the research study on the impact of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) on Digital Journalism practices. The first research question presented the following key findings.

1. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

Respondent B - Some of the provisions for the act, for example, provision 2, talk about regulating the sharing and access to malicious information in favor of these parties in such a way that they hope to use this to get away with their dirty acts because this limits the gatekeepers, that is, journalists, from playing their watchdog roles.

Respondent D - It threatens freedom of expression online with all rights of receive and impart and it targets critics of the government and this will end up preventing people from speaking their minds thus curtailing people's rights. Additionally, this law claims to prohibit hate speech yet their other laws that control hate speech and defamation in this country

Respondent F - It targets the youth in Uganda who depend on social media. Infact social media is a tool for people to express themselves in third world countries because Leaders from those countries put strict laws that are in there favour. To add on, you can't tell me that you want to prohibit hate speech, when am I to ask what hate speech is, and how is it measured? This can be influenced by the Government to prohibit freedom of expression because may fail to say anything because they might be fear of the Act

2. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices?

Respondent A - selective enforcement of provisions may create an effect on freedom of expression among journalists. Fear of violating the law or facing consequences could lead to

self-censorship, causing journalists to refrain from covering certain topics or expressing controversial opinions. Narrow interest parties may exploit loopholes to hinder investigative journalism efforts by limiting access to information or intimidating journalists who seek to uncover wrongdoing.

Respondent B - These loopholes have removed the digital freedom journalism had, which affects the practice. Journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out as journalists to be the voices of the people.

Respondent D - The above loopholes will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more also people are prevented from speaking their minds because you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism

Respondent F - Content creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and talk freely about an issue because they fear capturing the theme of hate speech. Freedom for Journalists will be reduced in the country because some journalists resorted to digital journalism and put their feelings that they serve the common man, now when they talk about issues like corruption in Parliament, someone can take them to court for not respecting the Act

3. How can these loopholes be bridged?

Respondent B - As much as the government wants to regulate computer misuse, the loopholes should be looked into and regulated. The leaders should be closely monitored so that they are not the ones misusing this act for personal gain.

Respondent C - Ongoing review and amendment process; laws and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit- for purpose and as technology and societal needs evolve. This requires an open collaborative process involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders.

Respondent D - The Government should work together with all stakeholders like Journalists, lawyers, etc to make a better version of the law that doesn't limit anyone's freedoms

Respondent F - The Government should revise this law again and should consult stakeholders in the industry like lawyers, journalists, the Church etc.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 Interpretation of Results

This section is where results are discussed in relationship with the research questions, literature review and theoretical framework to provide a clear context of the findings of the research study;

5.1 Research Questions Vs Findings

The following were the research questions used in the research study above in relation to their key findings;

1. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

Respondent B – Argues that the provision of the law that talks about regulating the sharing and access to malicious information which is in favour of these parties in such a way that they hope to use this to get away with their dirty acts because this limits the gatekeepers that is, journalists from playing their watchdog roles.

This respondent argued that some of the provisions of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act 2022 including the prohibition of access and sharing of malicious information can act as a vantage point for narrow interest parties, who may get away with the law simply because it shields Digital journalists from accessing those malicious activities or it renders it unlawful for Digital journalists to access such information. This therefore implies that the provision of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) is a loophole that is liable for exploitation by narrow interest parties.

Respondent D: It threatens freedom of expression online with all rights to receive and impart, and it targets critics of the government hence this will end up preventing people from speaking their minds thus curtailing people's rights. Additionally, this law claims to prohibit hate speech yet there are other laws that control hate speech and defamation in this country.

This respondent argued that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) limits freedom of expression online by Digital Journalists especially when targeted to government which will limit expression. This also implies that independent digital media houses such as Daily Monitor, who play an important role in exposing fraud, corruption and abuse of office by government officials might be limited because the law in one way or the other render them as haters. Therefore, the respondent argues that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) itself is a loophole that is liable for exploitation by these narrow interest parties.

Respondent F – It targets the youth in Uganda, who depend on social media. Infact social media is a tool for people to express themselves in third world countries because leaders from those countries put strict laws that are in their favour. To add on, you can't tell me that you want to prohibit hate speech, when am I to ask what hate speech is and how is it measured? This can be influenced by the Government to prohibit freedom of expression because people might fail to say anything because they might be in fear of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022)

This respondent argues that laws such as the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) are used by leaders in third world countries in their favour for example limiting the youth from expressing themselves using social media. They also argued that there is no specific measurement for hate speech which may render narrow interest parties to use this law in their favour. He demonstrates that the provision of the law to prohibit hate speech is a loophole which liable for exploitation by narrow interest parties.

2. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of digital Journalism practices?

Respondent A – The Selective enforcement of the provisions may create an effect on freedom of expression among journalists. Fear of violating the law or facing consequences could lead to self-censorship, causing Digital journalists to refrain from covering certain topics or expressing controversial opinions. Narrow interest parties may exploit loopholes to hinder investigative journalism efforts by limiting access to information or intimidating journalists, who seek to uncover wrongdoings.

The respondent argues that selective enforcement of the provisions which affects freedom of expression among journalists can hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices because they will fear violating the law or facing consequences surrounding the law, this is because of self-censorship through refraining from covering certain topics or expressing

controversial opinions. The respondent further argued that investigative journalism practices in the digital era might be hindered due to the provisions that limit access to information when trying to uncover wrongdoings

Respondent B – These loopholes have removed the digital freedom journalism had which affects the practice. Journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out with as a journalist to be the voice of the people.

This respondent argues that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) have removed the digital freedom journalism had and he adds that this will hinder the advancement of Digital Journalism since these Journalists will start sugarcoating facts instead of presenting them the way they are as their obligation to expose the truth.

Respondent D – The above loopholes will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more. Also, people are prevented from speaking their minds because you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism practices.

This respondent argues that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) will hinder the advancement of Digital Journalism practices through its attempt to curtail freedom of expression. In addition, Digital Journalists will be prevented from speaking their minds through writing opinion articles because they aren't sure of what will be taken as hate speech.

Respondent F – Content creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and talk freely about an issue because they fear capturing them for hate speech. Freedom for journalists will be reduced in the country because some journalists resorted to digital journalism and put their feelings that they serve the common man, now when they talk about issues like corruption in parliament, someone can take them to court for not respecting the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022).

This respondent argued that the loopholes will hinder the advancement of Digital Journalism practices by reducing content creation in the political environment for example people will fear to be hosted and talk freely about issues of national concern like corruption, fraud and abuse of public offices due to fear that hate speech will catch up with them. He also added

that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) will hinder advancement of Digital Journalism since freedom for journalists will be reduced

3. How can these loopholes be bridged?

Respondent B – As much as the government wants to implement the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022), the loopholes should be looked into and regulated. The leaders should be closely monitored so that they are not the ones misusing this Act for personal gains

The respondent suggests that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) can be bridged through looking into the law and regulating it to minimize leaders from misusing the Act for their personal gains.

Respondent C – Ongoing review and Amendment process; laws and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose and as technology and societal needs evolve. This requires an open collaborative process involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders.

This respondent explains that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) can be bridged through undertaking review and amendment processes indicating that laws and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose as technology and societal needs evolve. They further suggested that engaging collaborative processes involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders is key in a bid to bridge the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022)

Respondent D – The government should work together with all stakeholders like journalists, lawyers etc to make a better version of the law that does not limit anyone's freedoms.

This respondent suggested that in a bid to bridge loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022), the government should work together with all stakeholders like journalists, lawyers to make a better version of the law that does not limit anyone's freedoms.

Respondent F – The government should revise this law again and should consult stakeholders in the industry like lawyers, journalists and the church

This respondent also suggested that in an attempt to bridge the loopholes, government should revise this law again and should consult stake holders in the industry like lawyers, journalists and the church

5.2 Findings Vs Literature Review

The following sub-section will discuss the relationship between the Findings of this research and the Literature review

As previously discussed in the Literature review many scholars agree that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) was proposed, enacted, and signed into law with the sole aim of restricting Digital journalism practices since they scrutinize government bodies, demand accountability, and perform the public watchdog role using platforms like Twitter(X), YouTube, and Instagram among others according to my research findings based on the question. In addition, the initial target of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) was to primarily litigate and intimidate free online sharing of information by Digital Journalists from accessing and disseminating unauthorized information of public interest for example corruption scandals, fraud, bribery, embezzlement of public funds and incompetence among government officials “How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of Digital Journalism practices?” the respondents presented similar results as follows;

Respondent A

This respondent argued that selective enforcement of the provisions of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) might create an effect on freedom of expression among Journalists. The respondent further explained that fear of violating the law or facing consequences could lead to self-censorship, causing journalists to refrain from covering certain topics or expressing controversial opinions. Since the law restricts Digital Journalism practices, the respondent asserted that narrow interest parties may exploit loopholes to hinder investigative journalism efforts since it limits access to information or intimidates journalists who seek to uncover wrongdoings.

Respondent B

This particular respondent asserts that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) have removed the digital freedom journalism had which affects the practice, since they have been restricted, journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out as the voice to the voiceless.

Respondent D

This respondent discussed that the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment ACT (2022) will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more since people are prevented from speaking their minds because you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism.

Respondent F

Respondent F explained that content creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and they talk freely about issues because they fear being captured because of hate speech. They further revealed that freedom for journalists will be reduced in the country because some journalists will not discuss issues like corruption due to fear of being taken to court for not respecting the Act.

As earlier discussed in the Literature review upon examining online restrictions through laws like the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022), different scholars, authors, and schools of thought agree that these policies undermine international human rights standards; They further state that these policies lack a framework of validity, legitimacy, rightness, and necessity. Through research question “What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties? The following findings relate to the Literature review;

Respondent F

This respondent argued that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) targets the youth in Uganda who depend on social media. They further added that social media is a tool for people to express themselves in third world countries where leaders from those countries put strict laws that are in their favor. In addition, respondent F “narrates that you can’t tell me that you want to prohibit hate speech when they are to ask what hate speech is and how it is measured?”. They further added that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) can be influenced by the government to prohibit freedom of expression because people may fail to say anything because they might be in fear of the Act.

Respondent B

This respondent asserted that the provision of the law that talks about regulating the sharing and access to malicious information is in favor of these interest parties who may use this to get away with their dirty acts because the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) limits the gatekeepers who are digital journalists from playing their watchdog roles.

Respondent D

This respondent asserts that the Computer Misuse Amendment Act threatens freedom of expression online with all rights to receive and impart. It targets critics of the government and this will end up preventing people from speaking their minds thus curtailing people's rights. Additionally, this law claims to prohibit hate speech yet there are other laws that control hate speech and defamation in this country.

5.3 Theoretical Framework Vs Findings

This sub-section addresses the relationship between the theoretical framework and the findings of the research study

As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, Andrew Feeberg (2008) stated that the dynamics of the critical theory in the communication technological era have changed, this is because it provides a primary preposition to societal issues of public interest. In addition, it further indicates that the internet provides innovational structures that collectively unify respective audiences. Therefore, the research findings of this study through the research question "How can the loopholes in the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) be bridged?" draws relationship with some of the responses from the participants as seen below;

Respondent C

The ongoing review and Amendment process; rules and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit and as technology and societal needs evolve. This requires an open collaborative process involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups and other affected stakeholders.

Respondent D

The government should work together with all the stakeholders like Journalists, Lawyers etc to make a better version of the law that doesn't limit anyone's freedoms.

Respondent F

The government should revise this law again and should consult stakeholders in the industry like lawyers, journalists, and the church.

As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, this study also hints at the authoritarian theory of media which states that man is weak insinuating that he is overshadowed by the powers and authority of the state and governments. In addition, it highlights that the media is meant to serve the functionalities and interests of the state which includes propaganda manifestations and brutalization of democratic processes and participation such as elections in a bid to favor them (Anne, 2019). However, if this narrative is related to the findings through the research question “How can the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) hinder the advancement of Digital Journalism practices?” the following responses by participants render the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) authoritative and meant to serve the functionalities and interests of the state as seen below;

Respondent B

These loopholes have removed the digital freedom journalism had which affects the practice. Journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out as journalists to be the voices of the people.

Respondent D

The loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more also people are prevented from speaking their minds because you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism

Respondent F

Content Creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and talk freely about an issue because they will fear being captured for hate speech. Freedom for journalists will be reduced in the country because some digital journalism practitioners who put their feelings that they serve the common man will abscond from talking about issues like corruption in parliament since someone can take them to court for not respecting the provisions of the Act.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

The findings of the research study above are represented by the pseudonyms A, B, C, D, E, and F to protect their identity as all the subjects requested to be anonymous based on the subject matter of the study which is assessing the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 on digital journalism practices. Additionally, the research findings of the study are truthfully presented as retrieved from the survey tool used to carry out the study. It is important to note that this research survey was not ambushed onto the participants but rather their consent was sought first before any questions were shared with them. Therefore, the participants responded at their will, freedom, and laxity.

5.4 Limitations of Findings

The findings of this study were limited by a lack of responses from some of the sampled participants. It is important to note the responses were 60% which narrowed the scope of the findings. In addition, the questionnaire method of research was envisioned to allow the participants to express themselves freely while responding to the questions at their own pace but it turned out that some participants forgot or lost interest in the cause hence this limited our scope of findings. It should also be noted that some participants did not provide detailed explanations to the questions despite it being open-ended as qualitative research demands. This therefore limited our analysis of their responses since we could not understand which school of thought inspired their responses and hence could not make assumptions on their behalf.

5.5 Unexpected results

The following are some of the unexpected results registered from the research study conducted to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act (2022) on Digital Journalism practices: A Case study of Uganda Christian University. Three research questions were formulated and sent in form of a questionnaire survey. The questions included;

- 1) What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?
- 2) How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices?
- 3) How can these loopholes be bridged?

The following were some unexpected results from the research questions as seen below;

- 1) What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

Respondent C - Hate speech

Respondent E – It is simply a weak law

Being qualitative research, the responses from the participants were expected to have context or explanations as to why one stands with his or her point since the questions were open-ended but not close-ended questions.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 Summary of the main findings

This sub section summarizes the main findings of the research study to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 according to each of the research question as seen below;

Basing on the research question “What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

In summary, the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act 2022 include provisions of the law such as unauthorized access and sharing of malicious information and hate speech. The law further threatens freedom of expression online and targets the youth who use social media or expression.

Based on the research question “How can these loopholes hinder advancement of digital journalism practices?”

In summary, the loopholes within the Computer Misuse Amendment Act 2022 removes digital freedom of journalism practices. Additionally, it limits content creation in the political environment

While based on the research question “How can these loopholes be bridged?”

The government should revise this law and consult stakeholders in the industry for instance lawyers, journalists, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders. The government should also review the law to ensure it remains fit.

6.1 Implications of the research

The research study to assess the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 on the practices of digital journalism is capable of rendering a review and adjustments on the provisions of the Act. This can be achieved by an in-depth analysis of the loopholes existing in its framework that are liable for exploitation, assessing how these provisions hinder the

advancement of digital journalism, and establishing how these loopholes can be bridged based on the findings explained above

6.2 Contributions of the Study

The research study assessing the impact of the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 on the practice of digital journalism has helped to expose the loopholes existing within the law which are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties. It has further established how the existing loopholes hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices and above all elaborated on how the loopholes mentioned above should be addressed

6.3 Avenues for Future Research

With the ever-evolving technological advancements, more opportunities are created for digital journalists to practice despite numerous constraints that arise through regulations by authorities and governments. The following are potential future research avenues;

1. Comparing the impact of the Act on digital journalism practices in different countries or regions to establish the existing gaps
2. Assessing how digital journalists use different technological innovations to adapt to the computer (Misuse Amendment Act) 2022
3. Investigating how the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 impacts international coordination and sharing of data in digital journalism.

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APPENDICES

This sub-section will provide additional information that backs up the main research text

Appendix A

The questionnaire technique was conducted by formulating three research questions which were then uploaded to the free online survey website. Links were generated and shared with the participants who agreed or consented to participate in the survey. The survey was shared with participants through emails and WhatsApp. The participants were given at least two weeks to finalize the research at their own pace.

Appendix B

The following were the questionnaires and their responses as retrieved from the survey site and how it was responded to by the participants who were labeled in the form of pseudonyms A, B, C, D, E, and F

2. What are the loopholes within the Computer Misuse (Amendment Act) 2022 that are liable to exploitation by narrow interest parties?

Respondent A - If enforcement of the law is subject to discretion or influenced by political or other considerations, narrow-interest parties may attempt to use their connections or influence to avoid prosecution or receive preferential treatment.

Respondent B - Some of the provisions for the act, for example, provision 2, talk about regulating the sharing and access to malicious information in favor of these parties in such a way that they hope to use this to get away with their dirty acts because this limits the gatekeepers, that is, journalists, from playing their watchdog roles.

Respondent C - Hate speech

Respondent D - It threatens freedom of expression online with all rights of receive and impart and it targets critics of the government and this will end up preventing people from speaking their minds thus curtailing people's rights. Additionally, this law claims to prohibit hate speech yet their other laws that control

hate speech and defamation in this country

Respondent E – It is simply a weak law

Respondent F - It targets the youth in Uganda who depend on social media. Infact social media is a tool for people to express themselves in third world countries because Leaders from those countries put strict laws that are in there favour. To add on, you can't tell me that you want to prohibit hate speech, when am I to ask what hate speech is, and how is it measured? This can be influenced by the Government to prohibit freedom of expression because may fail to say anything because they might be fear of the Act

3. How can these loopholes hinder the advancement of digital journalism practices?

Respondent A - selective enforcement of provisions may create an effect on freedom of expression among journalists. Fear of violating the law or facing consequences could lead to self-censorship, causing journalists to refrain from covering certain topics or expressing controversial opinions. Narrow interest parties may exploit loopholes to hinder investigative journalism efforts by limiting access to information or intimidating journalists who seek to uncover wrongdoing.

Respondent B - These loopholes have removed the digital freedom journalism had, which affects the practice. Journalists will start sugarcoating things instead of coming out as journalists to be the voices of the people.

Respondent C - Digital journalism plays a crucial role in the modern media landscape allowing for more timely, interactive, and multimedia reporting. Legal frameworks must be involved to support and enable these practices while also addressing legitimate concerns around cyber security, privacy, and the spread of misinformation.

Respondent D - The above loopholes will lead to curtailing of freedom of expression and once this is done, digital journalism practices will be no more also people are prevented from speaking their minds because

you never know what will be taken as hate speech or not thus hindering digital journalism

Respondent E - In the case of copyright, the victim has no protection from the act

Respondent F - Content creation especially in the political environment will be reduced because no one will be hosted and talk freely about an issue because they fear capturing the theme of hate speech. Freedom for Journalists will be reduced in the country because some journalists resorted to digital journalism and put their feelings that they serve the common man, now when they talk about issues like corruption in Parliament, someone can take them to court for not respecting the Act

3. How can these loopholes be bridged?

Respondent A - Allocate sufficient resources to enforcement agencies responsible for implementing the Act, including training for law enforcement personnel on identifying and prosecuting violations related to digital journalism practices. Ensure judicial independence and impartiality in interpreting and applying the law.

Respondent B - As much as the government wants to regulate computer misuse, the loopholes should be looked into and regulated. The leaders should be closely monitored so that they are not the ones misusing this act for personal gain.

Respondent C - Ongoing review and amendment process; laws and regulations need to be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit- for purpose and as technology and societal needs evolve. This requires an open collaborative process involving lawmakers, legal experts, industry, representatives, civil society groups, and other affected stakeholders.

Respondent D - The Government should work together with all stakeholders like Journalists, lawyers, etc to make a better version of the law that doesn't limit anyone's freedoms

Respondent E - Implement laws

Respondent F - The Government should revise this law again and should consult stakeholders in the industry like lawyers, journalists, the Church etc