

KENYAN JOURNALISTS: A STUDY OF DEMOGRAPHICS, JOB SATISFACTION, NEWS  
VALUES AND PERCEIVED AUTONOMY

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Abstract

This study strived to examine the situation of Kenyan journalism in the 21st century. A total of 96 Kenyan journalists were surveyed so as to understand their demographic backgrounds, job satisfaction, working conditions, and the use of technology. Their perceptions on journalistic ethics, journalistic freedoms, and forces which influence their work were also explored. Results show that 69.7% of those surveyed were satisfied with their jobs, with income being the main predictor of job satisfaction. More male journalists were satisfied with their jobs than their female counterparts. While newsroom gatekeepers were found instrumental in deciding news content, media owners followed by advertisers were perceived as the main threats to journalistic freedoms. Almost half of the surveyed journalists work in print media, and slightly over three quarters work in privately-owned media organizations. A majority of respondents said corruption was deeply entrenched in the Kenyan journalism. Moreover, 96% of respondents had formal training in journalism.

**Introduction**

Journalists' cardinal role in any country, whether democratic or authoritarian, is unquestionable. Through dissemination of information to the public, news people expose social evils, both at micro and macro strata of our intricate communities. They also bear witness to events of great magnitude, in the process documenting and preserving such occurrences for present and future references. Moreover, their contribution to good governance, an essential ingredient of democracy and nation-building, is recognized in many nations. In democracy, McNair (2009) says that journalists are charged with monitoring the exercise of power. Similarly, Otieno (2007) argues that the place of the media in development and indeed in the democratization process cannot be underestimated. Journalists' unofficial, but vital role in any nation comes only after those exercised by the executive, legislature, and judiciary, the three powerful arms in governance. This is the reason why the institution of the media is referred to as the "fourth estate."

Because news people occupy a vantage position in society, explains why understanding their demographic backgrounds and other salient characteristics are germane in journalism scholarship. Thus, the present study strived to understand the situation of Kenyan journalism in the 21st century at a period when the media industry in the country has witnessed unprecedented growth in the last decade. Specifically, the study examined such demographic backgrounds as age,

gender, education, income, ethnicity, and region. In addition, the study investigated journalists' satisfaction with their jobs, working conditions, and the use of technology (e.g. social media). Their attitudes toward journalistic ethical issues (e.g. bribery and corruption), journalistic freedoms, and forces which influence their work (e.g. media owners, government, politicians, media laws, advertisers, etc.) were also explored.

While many studies on journalists have been undertaken in other regions of the world – from North America, Asia, Europe, Latin America, to Middle East – such research is seldom done in Africa. In fact, Mwesige (2004) notes that studies comparing African journalists to their counterparts in developed countries are scarce. The only available evidence is research on journalists in Algeria (Kirat, 1998), Tanzania (Ramaprasad, 2001; Lederbogen, 1992), Uganda (Mwesige, 2004), and Roser and Brown's (1986) work on African newspaper editors. This dire situation in Africa is further evidenced in forthcoming book, *The Global Journalist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by David Weaver and Lars Willnat, which carries no data about journalists in any of the 54 African countries. This leaves a huge research gap about African journalism. The present study contributes toward narrowing this gap. Findings from this study provide useful ideas and insights about Kenyan journalists.

### **Kenya Social, Economic and Political Context**

Kenya, twice the size of State of Nevada in the United States is almost bisected by the equator. Its size encompasses 224, 961 sq mi and the land is located approximately between latitudes 4° 28' South and North, and between 34 and 40 degrees east meridians. Of the 224, 961 sq mi, 5, 172 sq mi are water surface and about two thirds of the remaining land surface is semi-arid or desert.

The Indian Ocean coastline, stretching from the Somalia border in the North to Tanzania in the South is 378 miles long. Described as "the cradle of humanity," Kenya, with a population of 38 million people, borders Somalia to the East, Ethiopia to the North, Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, and Sudan to the Northwest. Nairobi is the capital city. Internally, the country is divided into eight administrative provinces: Rift Valley, Eastern, North Eastern, Coast, Nyanza,

Central, Western, and Nairobi. However, Kenya has a new constitution since 2010, which creates new administrative units in the form of county governments headed by elected governors.

Though Swahili (national) and English (official) are the main languages, there are over forty local dialects based on ethnic groups. The five largest ethnic groups are: Kikuyu (6.6 million), Luhya (5.3 million), Kalenjin (4.9 million), Luo (4.0 million), and Kamba (3.8 million) (Ndegwa, 2010). Kenya is one of the most literate societies in Africa, with a literacy level of 87% (World Bank, 2012). The largest export earner is the tourism industry which forms a vital foundation for the country's economy. It is highlighted by two most unique features, wildlife and beaches. The country is also a leading producer of coffee, tea, and pyrethrum in the world.

Kenya became a British Protectorate in 1895. This was the first step towards the creation of a state colony, which was achieved later in 1920. Kenya attained independence in 1963, and that year the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party won with a landslide the first democratic elections, with Jomo Kenyatta becoming the Prime Minister. Upon assuming the country's leadership, Kenyatta engineered some constitutional changes which among a raft of other amendments abolished the position of Prime Minister, replacing it with an executive presidency, which he assumed on December 12, 1964 when Kenya became a Republic.

Kenyatta ruled until his death on August 22, 1978 at State House, Mombasa. Daniel arap Moi, then Vice President took over in a constitutional succession arrangement and ruled for a record twenty four years until 2002. The country remained a *de facto* one-party state from 1969 to 1982 when KANU made itself the sole legal party. However, on December 2, 1991, in an unprecedented move, President Moi bowed to internal and external pressure for political pluralism when he dramatically announced the repealing of Section 2(a) of the constitution to usher in multipartism, ahead of the 1992 watershed elections. Until the repeal of Section 2(a) of the constitution, the country had only two brief spells of multiparty politics: 1963-1964 when the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) dissolved voluntarily and joined KANU, and between 1966 and 1969 when the KANU government permitted Kenya People's Union (KPU) to operate, before banning it later.

President Moi stepped down in December 2002 after his constitutional two-term office mandate came to an end because of the constitutional changes effected in 1991. The divided opposition had failed to dislodge KANU from power in multiparty elections of 1992 and 1997, but did so in the 2002 when Mwai Kibaki won the election with a landslide. Kibaki's victory ended nearly forty years of KANU's leadership.

Kibaki's reelection in 2007 was controversial as it was bitterly contested by his rival Raila Odinga who claimed he was rigged out in favor of the incumbent. The disputed election resulted in unprecedented violence in some parts of the country, which left 1,500 people dead, and more than half a million internally displaced. To end the post-election violence, Kibaki and Odinga entered into a power-sharing accord, which was effected through a constitutional amendment. The new power-structure in the government saw the re-introduction of the Prime Minister position, which went to Odinga, while Kibaki retained the presidency. However, under the new constitution overwhelmingly adopted in 2010 through a national referendum, Kenya retains the presidential system, with the president as the head of state and government. Unlike in the old constitution where the legislature consisted of the National Assembly (parliament) only, under the new constitutional dispensation, the legislature will comprise of the Senate (upper house), National Assembly (lower house), and County Assemblies. Members of the three branches of the legislature will be elected by voters.

### **Media System in Kenya**

The development of the press in Kenya can be classified into three phases: the press in the colonial era, the press in post-independence era (1963-1990), and the press in multiparty era (1991 – present). In post-independence Kenya, the media remained dormant throughout the single-party era until the restoration of multipartisim in early 1990s. Before 1992, the media in Kenya worked within an environment of extremely harsh political and legal environment (Aling'o, 2007). During the 24-year reign of President Daniel Moi, Kenya's second president, media freedom to criticize the government remained elusive. The regime restricted political expression through the media and criminalized some critical journalists and their media outlets through sedition trials (Kalyongo, 2011).

However, since the ushering in of pluralistic politics in 1991, the media industry became more diverse and vibrant. Moggi and Tessier (2001) observe that there has been positive growth of the media sector since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1992. Re-introduction of political pluralism in 1991 (Ogola, 2011) and liberalization of the media sector in 1990s (Ibelema, 2009) have contributed to the freedom of the press in Kenya. While Paasch (2009) notes that the ability to practice as a journalist in Kenya is unrestricted, Mbeke (2010) asserts that the Kenyan media have a reputation as fierce defenders of good governance and democracy. Today's mass media landscape in Kenya is a four-tier system – private, community, quasi-community and public – according to Ali (2010).

In the newspaper sector, the missionaries and British settlers started the modern Kenyan press in 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ochillo, 1993). *Taveta Chronicle* published in 1885 by Rev. Robert Stegal of the Church Missionary Society was one of the early newspapers. By 1952, there were 50 newspapers in the country (Ainslie, 1966), but most of them folded up when Kenya attained independence in 1963. The pre-independence press was grouped into a three tier system: European press, Indian press, and African press (Faringer, 1991). The European press was at the top, the Indian press was in the middle, and the African at the bottom. The objective of the European press was to provide information for the missionaries and settlers of the news coming from England, legitimize the rights of the colonial masters, and provide a channel for social communication among the settlers in Kenya (Ochillo, 1993). On the other hand, the African newspapers purely focused on the independence agenda.

Today, there are six daily newspapers in Kenya, plus several magazines and weekly publications. Though 66% of the Kenyan population is able to read text in English, only 55% of the urban dwellers read newspaper compared to 36% in rural areas (Media Council of Kenya, 2005). Obonyo (2003) categorizes the Kenyan print media into four sectors: the regular daily newspapers, the magazines, the regional newspapers, and the printed sheets that also seek to pass for newspapers in urban centers. Though Kenyan newspapers have no any ideological leanings to differentiate them (Obonyo, 2003), the media political leanings are influenced by ownership, ethnic considerations and business interests (Esipisu & Khaguli, 2009). *The Standard* is the oldest

newspaper in the country, established in 1902. *Daily Nation* is the most prestigious and influential newspaper in the region. Established in 1960, *Daily Nation*, an independent publication is “arguably *The New York Times* of Kenya’s newspaper industry” (Onyebadi, 2008, p. 20). It commands over 55% of the newspaper circulation in Kenya, with about a daily print run of 185,000 copies and 230,000 for its sister publication, *Sunday Nation* (Onyebadi, 2008).

In the broadcast sector, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) is the largest broadcasting organization in Kenya enjoying a nationwide coverage. It was formed in 1961 but became Voice of Kenya (VOK) in 1964 when it was nationalized under an Act of Parliament. Another Act of parliament saw it revert to KBC in 1989. It aims at informing, educating and entertaining but more so it strives to communicate the government’s agenda on development to members of the public. Though a semi-autonomous entity, it is still state-owned, operating radio and television stations which generally remain uncritical of the government of the day. It is funded from the exchequer and operates under the Minister for Information and Broadcasting. KBC Radio provides three services: the National Service which is in Swahili, the English Service, and Vernacular Services. The KBC National Service controls the airwaves with 52% of the listening population tuning to the station (Media Council of Kenya, 2005).

Radio is found and heard everywhere in Kenya, thus, the most influential form of media in the country. It is estimated that 86% of the population listen to radio. According to the Media Council of Kenya (MCK, 2005) the “proportion of the population that listens to radio in the urban and the rural areas are close to each other comprising 88.1% and 84.6% respectively” (p. 93). State owned KBC is still the only radio with a nationwide coverage. Capital FM 98.4 was the first private radio station to be licensed in Nairobi, in 1996. About 60 radio frequencies are in use in Kenya (Helander, 2010). MCK (2005) says that television is a source of information for only 39% of the population. There are a number of reasons explaining why a small proportion of the Kenyan population use television as a source of information. One of the major reasons is that the supply of electricity in the country is not universal to all households (MCK, 2005). The other factor is the cost of television sets where those with meager resources cannot afford to buy a television set. There are over 20 television stations in Kenya (MCK, 2006), but Helander (2010) puts the number of television

channels at 14. KTN became the first private television station in the country since 1990, thus, breaking KBC's monopoly. Citizen TV went on air in July of 1999 and NTV followed later that year in December.

### **Literature Review**

Mass communication scholars in different regions of the world have devoted a great deal of time to study journalists in countries of their interest. Primarily, the bulk of these studies focus on journalists' demographic backgrounds, work experience, job satisfaction, autonomy in work, ethical dilemmas, working environments, journalistic freedoms, use of technology, and forces influencing their work.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is one the leading variables examined in relation to the practice of journalism in different countries. Pollard (1995) says job satisfaction "is essentially an accounting of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards sought and received" (p. 682). Income, autonomy in work, and job security are indicators of job satisfaction. A 2001 national survey of journalists found very low levels of job satisfaction in Uganda, with about 40% of respondents saying they were either "somewhat" or "very dissatisfied" (Mwesige, 2004). Only 6% were "very satisfied." Income and perception of organizational performance were the strongest predictors of how satisfied news people in Uganda were with their jobs. It is the same story in the neighboring Tanzania where 76% were totally dissatisfied (Lederbogen, 1992). As in Uganda, the main reason for job dissatisfaction in Tanzania was low pay.

In their 2002 study, Weaver et al. (2007) reported that American journalists were "slightly more satisfied with their work than a decade ago, bringing to a halt a downward trend in job-satisfaction ratings" (p. 124). Lah and Zilic-Fiser (2012) surveyed 406 journalists in Slovenia. They reported that about 80% of journalists in the country were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their jobs. Nearly 95% listed "job autonomy" as the reason they became a journalist. There is a relative high level of job satisfaction among Indonesian journalists (Hanitzsch & Hidayat, 2012). This is despite low pay and difficult working conditions. The 2001 study found that 22.6% of those surveyed

were very satisfied, 54.4% were satisfied, 21.8% unsatisfied and only 1.2% were very unsatisfied. Their work satisfaction was supported by commitment to the profession – with 81.7% not planning to quit journalism in foreseeable future. Pay and job safety are the two factors which accounted for job satisfaction in Indonesia.

### **Education**

Lederbogen (1992) reported that 20% of Tanzanian journalists had completed university studies, while Ramaprasad (2001) found that 57% of those who had completed college in the country had studied journalism. In 2002, Weaver et al. (2007) said “it was more the case than ever before in American journalism that a bachelor’s degree in journalism-mass communication was the necessary qualification for being hired as a journalist by the mainstream news media” (p. 50). Still in the U.S., of the journalists with college degrees, 36% had majored in journalism as of 2002 (Brownlee & Beam, 2012).

Hao and George (2012) note that journalism education at university level in Singapore started in early 1990s. They say this explains why an overwhelming majority of journalists in the country have degrees in other disciplines. Their 2009 survey found that those with undergraduate degree account for 63%, while those with a master’s degree were 18.8%. It should be noted that a university degree has increasingly become an important qualification for journalists in Singapore. This is so because, of the 156 respondents who joined journalism in the last five years, only five do not have a Bachelor’s degree (Hao & George, 2012). In Finland, journalism continues to be an open profession without formal education or other requirements, a 2007 survey indicates. As a consequence, Jyrkiainen and Heinonen (2012) explain that much of the workforce enters newsrooms with studies in other disciplines. But they note that the share of journalists with journalism education has risen steadily because by 2008, 18% of journalists had at least a Bachelor’s degree in journalism.

### **News Decisions and Journalistic Freedoms**

News decisions and journalistic freedoms are intertwined concepts in journalism. This is so because decisions taken by journalists in writing their stories depend on the amount of freedom

they enjoy in newsrooms. In fact, autonomy is a core characteristic of professional work (Beam, Weaver & Brownlee, 2009). In doing their duties, journalists face many constraints which come from different quarters such as government, media laws, editorial policies, media owners, politicians, and advertisers.

Two studies of the U.S. journalists in 2002 and 2007 which explored constraints on autonomy found that about 30% of respondents mentioned commercial constraints, 25% cited policies, procedure or customs of their news organizations, 20% blamed outside agents such as government agency, and about 10% believed that professional practices limited their journalistic freedoms (Brownlee & Beam, 2012). Organization policy and the government were found to be above average in their influence on the work of journalists in Tanzania (Ramaprasad, 2001). Ugandan journalists face pressures from media laws in the country, government, and politicians (Mwesige, 2004).

A study of 12, 412 journalists in Spain found that 42.5% had never received any pressure, while 57% stated they had been subjected to some form of pressure (Farias et al., 2012). Those who experienced pressure, 85.4% blamed managers, 31.1% politicians, 16.3% advertisers, 15.6% other companies, and 8.1% blamed public institutions and other pressure groups. In Germany, about a third of journalists surveyed considered editors-in-chief (31%) or senior editors (39%) as having a strong influence on their work (Weischenberg et al., 2012). Raeymaeckers et al. (2012) reported that journalists in Belgium feel the pressure of media convergence, while in Indonesia they are influenced by professional, procedural and organizational factors as opposed to political and economic forces (Hanitzsch & Hidayat, 2012).

### **Journalistic Ethics**

Professionalism goes hand in hand with ethical standards. Nwabueze (2010) points out that ethics “ensures that people practicing a particular profession are let to decipher what is morally right from what is morally wrong without being policed to do so” (p. 498). In this view, journalists like other professionals face ethical dilemmas in their line of duty. Ward (2009) defines journalism ethics as “a species of applied ethics that examines what journalists and news organizations should do, given their role in society” (p. 295).

Nothing compromises journalistic independence more than bribe taking. Studies show that the culture of “brown envelope syndrome” is widespread across nations. The term “brown envelope” is applied to denote journalistic activity which involves transfer of various types of rewards from sources to the reporter (Skjerdal, 2010). Corruption prevalence among Kenyan journalists is investigated in this study. The vice is believed to negatively impact editorial independence of news people in Kenya. In different cultures around the world, cash for publicity attracts different metaphors. In Russia, it is known as “*zakazukha*” or “*jinsa*,” while in China it is “*hongbao*” (Skjerdal, 2010). In Cameroon, the practice is known as “*gombo*” (Ndangam, 2006), while it is called “*mshiko*” in Tanzania (Mpagze & White, 2010). Kenyan journalists call it “*dawa*”, a Swahili word for “medicine.”

Corruption among journalists is rampant in Africa. Ronning (2005) says that journalists in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon accept bribes in exchange for giving favorable coverage to politicians and companies. The *gombo* phenomenon in Cameroon has evolved into a common way of practicing journalism in the country (Ndangam, 2006). In Tanzania, 78% of journalists interviewed indicated that they have never taken a bribe and they have a negative perception of their occupation which is characterized by low ethical standards (Mpagze & White, 2010). Mpagze and White (2010: 547) argue:

No other occupation in Africa faces the contradictory pressures of being obliged to report with total honesty the bribery and corruption in public services and, at the same time, being subjected to pressure to accept bribery and corruption in suppressing this truthfulness.

A 2010 survey of 150 Nigerian journalists found that a majority of respondents, 78%, said acceptance of brown envelopes does not affect objectivity in news reporting (Nwabueza, 2010). Only 7% agreed that taking freebies makes them less objective. In Uganda, 90% said they would not approve of being paid by a source to publish, kill or change a story to reflect the wishes of the news source (Mwesige, 2004). Dirbaba (2010) says in Ethiopia, “journalists will only work on those stories where a source is willing to pay, and, of course, the journalist goes only for the highest bidder” (p. 480). Dirbaba names five major diffusion mechanisms of corrupt behaviors among Ethiopian journalists, namely: a legacy inherited from older generations, source induction, organizational resource constraints, collegial coaching, and collegial social interaction.

This review of literature about journalists' job satisfaction, education, news decisions, journalistic freedoms and journalistic ethics paves the way for this study's six research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What are the demographic backgrounds of Kenyan journalists (age, gender, ethnicity, region, income, education, marital status)?

**Research Question 2:** How are Kenyan journalists satisfied with their jobs?

**Research Question 3:** Which among income, job security, work experience, freedom in work, and education are the strongest predictors of job satisfaction?

**Research Question 4:** Which forces influence Kenyan journalists' selection of what is newsworthy?

**Research Question 5:** Which forces are considered the major threat to journalistic freedoms?

**Research Question 6:** How widespread is corruption among Kenyan journalists?

## **Methods**

This study carried out a survey of Kenyan journalists working in various media organizations – including daily and weekly newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and freelancers. Using Qualtrics survey online software, the survey questionnaire was sent to 187 journalists via emails. There were 96 responses - a response rate of 51.3%. The questionnaire sought answers for various variables about Kenyan journalists – including their demographic backgrounds, job satisfaction, journalistic ethics (specifically corruption and bribery), journalistic autonomy, journalistic freedoms, and forces that constrain their day-to-day operations.

Because this study was conducted away from Kenya, online survey was the best suited method of collecting the data. This is because the method is cheap and is not hampered by geographic boundaries. As such, it was impossible to obtain a complete master list of Kenyan journalists so as to draw a random sample for this study. Moreover, it is important to note that such a list does not exist because of leadership wrangles in the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ). Even if it exists, the list is unreliable because many journalists opt out of the KUJ membership because of various reasons – including the union's troubled leadership, lack of faith in the union, and the likelihood of members being deregistered from KUJ for engaging in unethical practices such as bribe-taking.

Because of these reasons, the only way to obtain the survey sample was through the use of snowball sampling. To begin with, the researcher randomly contacted 10 journalists working in different media houses and asked them for names and e-mails of their colleagues, either working in the same or different organizations. The ten media organizations whose journalists were contacted for referrals are *Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *The People Daily*, *The Star*, Citizen TV, Baraka FM 95.5, Capital FM 98.4, KBC Radio, Radio Umoja, and Kenya News Agency (KNA).

The referrals were then contacted through e-mails and telephone calls and were subsequently furnished with the study questionnaire. Despite the fact that the sample selection was not random, this study is an important springboard for future research about Kenyan journalists. Findings from the study provide useful insights about the practice of journalism in the country. The survey was administered from March 11, 2011 through April 21, 2011. It was approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities.

The framing of the questionnaire for the study was modeled along the one developed and used by Weaver et al. (2007) during the national survey of American journalists in 2002. Though the Weaver and colleagues' research used both closed-ended and open-ended questions, this study strictly employed closed-ended questions. This is so because the researcher was apprehensive that asking detailed responses in a survey which he had no control of, would turn away many participants, citing their busy schedules. In addition, the researcher was unsure whether the respondents were familiar with answering questions online, taking into account that technology-based research is very new in Kenya. It is, however advantageous to use closed-ended questions because they provide greater uniformity in responses and the answers are easy to quantify (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

Though most questions are similar to those in the Weaver and colleagues' questionnaire, several other questions were introduced to cater for the different socio-economic and political context in which journalism is practiced in Kenya. The main reason for borrowing heavily from the Weaver et al. questionnaire, designed for Western journalists, is because of the fact that journalism practice in Kenya mirrors American and British conceptions of the press – in terms of news values,

objectivity, and ethics. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the main predictors of job satisfaction. Difference of means was used to find out the forces that influence journalists' selection of what is newsworthy and the major threats to their journalistic freedoms.

## **Findings**

### **Demographics**

A typical journalists in the present sample, which is not generalizable to all Kenyan news people is male (67%) in his mid-thirties (33 years), and has a Bachelor's degree (38%). He is also married (54%) and has worked in the journalism field for eight years. The respondents were as follows: editors (n = 28), correspondents (n = 27), reporters (n = 14), others holding various titles such as news anchors, bureau chiefs, and freelancers (n = 22), and those who didn't reveal their titles (n = 5). Journalists working in print and broadcast media were 49.5% and 36.3% respectively. Slightly over three quarters work in private-owned media organizations, while 15.4% work in state-owned outlets.

Table 1 indicates that out of the 88 respondents who majored in journalism or mass communication, 42.7% were trained at an Associate degree level, popularly known as Diploma in Kenyan education system. Those trained at the Bachelor's degree level were 34.4%. Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) remains the sultan of journalism training in the country. Of the 102 times that schools were identified as the institution of training, KIMC led the pack with 37.3%, followed by University of Nairobi with 21.6% as shown on Table 2. On average, a journalist in the surveyed sample uses the Internet for leisure-related activities five days a week and seven days for news work-related activities. They also use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter seven days in a week. Based on 89 participants who responded to the question about the region they hail from, Western and Nyanza provinces each produced 20.2%, Central (19%), Rift Valley (16.9%), Eastern (12.4%), and Coast (4.5%). Nairobi and North Eastern each had 3.4%.

**Table 1: Training Levels of Kenyan Journalists**

Training Level	Number	Percentage
Associate Degree	41	42.7%
Bachelor's Degree	33	34.4%
Master's Degree	8	8.3%
Certificate	6	6.3%
Didn't Respond	8	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Institutions of Training**

Institution of Training	Number of Trainings	Percentage
KIMC	38	37.3%
University of Nairobi	22	21.6%
Other Kenyan Institutions	22	21.6%
Foreign Institutions	11	10.8%
Moi University	8	7.8%
In-House Training	1	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Job satisfaction

Research question 2 investigated how the surveyed journalists were satisfied with their jobs. Table 3 indicates that 69.7% of the respondents were "satisfied", while 10.1% were "very satisfied." Only 18% were "dissatisfied" and 2.2% "very dissatisfied." Examining how satisfied they were with income, a predictor of job satisfaction, 44.9% said they were "satisfied," 41.6% "dissatisfied", and 12.4% "very dissatisfied." Job security is another predictor of job satisfaction where 48.9% said they were "satisfied" that their jobs were safe. Another 38.9% were dissatisfied. In terms of gender, out of the 63 males who responded to the question about job satisfaction, 69.8% said they were satisfied, 15.9% dissatisfied, 9.5% very satisfied, 3.2% very dissatisfied, and 1.6%

answered “don’t know.” For the 27 females who answered this question, 59.3% were satisfied with their jobs, 29.6% dissatisfied, and 11.1% very satisfied.

Asked whether journalism was their first career choice, 78% answered in affirmative and 22% said it was not. Out of the 89 who responded to the question about their future in journalism, 55% said their future lies in the journalism profession, 20% in other professions, and 25% were unsure. Half of those hoping to quit journalism in near future prefer to work in public relations. The question about work experience was shunned by half of the respondents. However, it is those with six to ten years of work experience who expressed most satisfaction with their work. Question 3 examined which among income, security, work experience, freedom in work, and education was the strongest predictor of job satisfaction. Table 4 shows results of a multiple regression analysis with income (*beta* = .503) as the only significant and strongest predictor.

**Table 3: Satisfaction Levels in Job, Income, and Security among Kenyan Journalists**

Satisfaction Level	Job	Salary	Security
Very Satisfied	10.1%	0.0%	3.3%
Satisfied	69.7%	44.9%	48.9%
Dissatisfied	18.0%	41.6%	38.9%
Very Dissatisfied	2.2%	12.4%	8.9%
Don't Know	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Strongest Predictors of Job Satisfaction**

Variable	Beta	Statistical Significance
Income	.503	<.001
Job Security	.182	p=.318
Work Experience	.009	p=.947
Freedom in Work	.0264	p=.061
Education	-.065	p=.630

**Newsworthiness and journalistic freedoms**

Research questions 4 and 5 asked about the forces which influence selection of what is newsworthy, and factors that hamper journalistic freedoms. Table 5 indicates supervisors are perceived as the leading forces influencing selection of news content. The other strong influence is from local competing news sources. As for factors hampering journalistic freedoms, media ownership, advertising forces, and editorial policies were singled out as the main constraints, as Table 6 illustrates.

**Table 5: Forces Influencing News Decisions among Kenyan Journalists**

<b>Newsworthiness Forces</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Supervisors	1.64
Local Competing News Sources	1.90
Public Opinion Polls	2.08
News Sources	2.15
Peers and Staff	2.43
Wire Services Budgets	2.76

Scale: 1 = Very Influential; 2 = Somewhat Influential; 3 = Not Very Influential; 4 = Not Influential At All

**Table 6: Forces Limiting Freedom of Journalists in Kenya**

<b>Freedom Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Media Ownership	1.72
Advertising	1.81
Editorial Policies	1.92
Government Interferences	2.02
Politicians	2.23
Kenyan Media Laws	2.39

Scale: 1 = Very Significant; 2 = Somewhat Significant; 3 = Not Very Significant; 4 = Not Significant At All

**Corruption**

Table 7 shows that corruption is thought to be very widespread among Kenyan journalists. To gauge the perception of the vice, participants were asked: How widespread do you think corruption is among Kenyan journalists? Out of the 88 who responded to this question, 44.3% indicated that corruption was “very widespread” and 34.1% said the vice was “somewhat widespread.” This gives an overwhelming 78.4% who perceive corruption to be rife within the Kenyan media. However, when asked their reaction to being paid by a source to kill a story, 67.8% of the 90 participants who answered the question said they “strongly disapprove.” Another 24.4% said they “disapprove”, 4.4% “approve” and 3.3% “strongly approve.”

**Table 7: Levels of Corruption Prevalence among Kenyan Journalists**

<b>Corruption Perception</b>	<b>Corruption Level</b>
Very Widespread	44.3%
Somewhat widespread	34.1%
Not Very Widespread	18.2%
Not Widespread At All	2.3%
Don't Know	1.1%

## **Discussion**

Scholarship on journalism research indicates that income is a predictor of job satisfaction for news people across nations. Though there is no evidence that research has been undertaken in Kenya examining the job satisfaction-income relationship, findings from this study confirm the hypothesis that income predicts job satisfaction. When multiple regression analysis was conducted to test whether income and four other independent variables were strong predictors of job satisfaction among Kenyan journalists, income emerged as the only strong predictor. Employing stepwise method in multiple regression analysis results in the most parsimonious model in which education, work experience, freedom in work, and job security were all eliminated.

Despite the fact that only 44.9% of the respondents were satisfied with their earnings, findings here underscore the importance of income in understanding Kenyan journalists' job

satisfaction. Table 2 presents evidence that a solid majority of those surveyed, 69.7%, were satisfied with what they do. Adding this to 10.1% who indicated being “very satisfied” it means over three quarters were satisfied with their jobs. These results can be interpreted to mean that a majority of them liked the journalism profession, despite the not-so good rewards. Their work satisfaction appears to be supported by career choice and commitment to the profession. 78% said journalism was their first career choice. Over a half have no plans of quitting the profession in foreseeable future.

So, how do Kenyan journalists compare with news people in other countries in job satisfaction? Those surveyed appear more satisfied when compared to journalists in Uganda, Tanzania, Russia, Indonesia, and the U.S. However, journalists in Slovenia and Britain are better off than Kenyans. Mwesige (2004) found that 55% of Ugandan journalists were “fairly satisfied” compared to Kenya’s 69.7%, a significant difference. In Tanzania, 76% were totally dissatisfied (Lederbogen, 1992).

Weaver et al. (2007) reported that in 2002, 51% of American journalists were “fairly satisfied”. But 33% of Americans were “very satisfied” compared to Kenya’s 10.1%. It is only 39% of Russian journalists who were satisfied with their job (Pasti et al., 2012). Though 54.4% of Indonesian journalists were “satisfied”, another 22.6% indicated they were “very satisfied” (Hanitzsch & Hidayat, 2012). Lah and Zilic-Fiser, (2012) found that 80% in Slovenia were “satisfied.”

Kenyan journalists identified their supervisors in newsrooms bearing the most responsibility in deciding stories to include in the news. In Germany, Weischenberg et al. (2012) also found supervisors (e.g. editors) having a strong influence on the work of journalists. Local competing news sources were also found to be influential in Kenya. On a 4-point scale, with 1 being “very influential” and 4 “not influential at all,” supervisors and local competing news accumulated means of 1.64 and 1.90. These means indicate that the two were “somewhat influential” as they lie closer to point 2 on the scale. Influence from peers, news sources, and public opinion polls was also “somewhat influential” – falling between points 2.0 and 2.5 on the scale. Except for the wire services budgets, the remaining five influences congregate around point 2. Therefore, it can be

observed that newsroom gatekeepers such as editors don't really enjoy absolute influence in deciding news content. For example, the mean difference between supervisors (1.64) and peers (2.43) is .79, which seems insignificant.

Suppression of the press freedom is one of the serious problems facing journalism in Africa (Ronning, 2005). Journalistic freedoms can be curtailed by government, media laws, editorial policies, media ownership, politicians and advertisers, to name a few. In this study, media owners were thought to be the main constraints on journalistic freedoms. This view is shared by a respondent in Helander's (2010) study which explored how political reporting is perceived by the Kenyan media practitioners. Noting that the media owner's influence is unavoidable, the respondent said: "This newspaper is partly owned by politicians; so of course there will be that interference and political influence" (Helander, 2010, p. 531). Equally blamed were advertisers and editorial policies.

On a 4-point scale, where 1 is "very significant" and 4 "not significant at all," the mean for media ownership was 1.72. The means for advertisers and editorial policies were 1.81 and 1.92 respectively. The three means are very close to each other - clustering around point 2 on the scale - "somewhat significant." Naming media ownership, advertising, and editorial policies as the main threats to journalistic freedoms, brings into question the generally held perception that the Kenyan government and the local media laws are the major impediments to freedom of journalists in the country. The two were not strongly identified as the leading forces in curbing journalistic freedoms. These results contrast with findings by Mwesige (2004) in Uganda, and Brownlee and Beam (2012) in the U.S. Official laws such as sedition and criminal libel were cited as the most significant limits to journalistic freedoms in Uganda. Commercial constraints were identified as the leading limits in Brownlee and Beam (2012).

Corruption is a blot in African journalism and Kenyan journalists seem to be wallowing in a miasma of unethical journalistic behaviors. The cash-for-story phenomenon in Africa is a well-documented fact. In fact, the 2010 third issue of *African Communication Research* journal entirely focuses on the topic of bribery and corruption in African journalism. Ronning (2005) points out that

low competence, low wages for journalists and the lack of economic resources have an impact on the ethical standards of reporting in many parts of Africa.

Helander (2010) says in Kenya, “corruption ranges from petty sums in order to influence journalists to the more serious cases of large bribes for specific stories” (p. 534). A significant number of this study’s participants – 78.4% perceived corruption to be rampant. In contrast, however, 67.8% of respondents said they “strongly disapprove” of being bribed to publish or suppress a story. Another 24.4% said they “disapprove” of the practice. What do the two striking scenarios mean? Do Kenyan journalists preach water and take wine? Well, it can be argued that though many of them engage in corruption, they are aware that the behavior is unethical.

This pattern where bribery is perceived to be widespread among Kenyan news people, but also highly condemned by the same journalists also plays out in Nigeria, Uganda, and Tanzania. Noting that accepting bribes has created a perennial credibility problem for the profession in Nigeria, Nwabueze (2010) found that 84% of respondents accept brown envelopes. In contrast, 78% denied that accepting freebies affects their objectivity in reporting. Though 75% of Ugandan respondents said being paid by a source to facilitate the information-gathering process might be justified, 90% said they would not approve being paid by a source to publish or suppress a story (Mwesige, 2004). In Tanzania, 83% of respondents said bribery is common among Tanzanian journalists, 80.5% said they know a journalist who has accepted bribe, but 77.8% said they have never taken a bribe (Mpagze & White, 2010).

### **Conclusion and future research**

The aim of the present research was to understand Kenyan journalists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study explored their demographic backgrounds such as age, gender, education, and work experience. Other variables investigated include job satisfaction, working conditions, use of technology, ethical issues, freedom in work, forces that shape what is newsworthy, and journalistic freedoms.

Confining the findings to this non-random sample, the typical Kenyan journalist is male in his mid-thirties, and has a Bachelor’s degree. Almost half of the surveyed journalists work in print media and over three quarters work in privately-owned organizations. 96% had formal training in

journalism and 69.7% said they were satisfied with their jobs. Income was the main predictor of job satisfaction, with 44.9% expressing satisfaction with their salaries. Male journalists were found to be more satisfied with their work than females. While newsroom gatekeepers were found instrumental in deciding what is included in news, media owners were singled out as the main threat to journalistic freedoms. A majority of respondents said corruption was deeply entrenched in the Kenyan journalism.

The use of snowball sampling was a major limitation of this research – because the sample surveyed can't be generalized to the journalist population in Kenya. Though the study's findings provide some useful insights about the practice of journalism in Kenya, future research should aim at using a random sample, which can be generalized. Even if it is difficult to obtain a master list of Kenyan journalists, future researchers can overcome this hurdle by, first, obtaining a list of all print and broadcast media houses in the country from the Kenyan Union of Journalists (KUJ) and the Media Council of Kenya (MCK). From there a list of editorial staff in each media organization can be drawn, which will give a reliable figure of the total number of journalists in Kenya. The names can be organized alphabetically and a random sample can then be drawn.

Another limitation of the study is the use of closed-ended questions only, leaving no room for respondents to explain some of their responses. In future, researchers should consider using both closed-ended and open-ended questions. This can be supplemented by use of such qualitative approaches as in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Still, follow-up studies stemming from this study's findings can be pursued – for instance – investigating why media owners were named as the main threat to journalistic freedoms, and why the practice of journalism in Kenya is perceived as riddled with corruption.

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