

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM IN UGANDA. THE CASE STUDY OF NEXT MEDIA

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the level of independence of journalism in Uganda. It explored the challenges the media professionals practically go through and face in the process of carrying out media work and practicing their profession in Uganda. And secondary, it identified how both the existing and newly proposed laws impact on journalism freedom in Uganda while drawing from the domestic, national, regional and international laws. Qualitative methods were used in this research with interviews and current analysis being central. From the findings, it was evidenced that 56.7% of the respondents agreed that there was lack of trust in news, 53.5 % of the respondents agreed of unstable job market, 44.5% of the respondents agreed that there was navigating remote work during the pandemic, 57.7% of the respondents revealed that balancing the digital landscape is also the challenge in work environment in journalism 76.9 of the respondents disagreed with the statement of balancing the digital landscape, 88.4 %of the respondents agreed that next media face negative attitude. The government should improve the roads in the country. This can be done through rehabilitation of the existing roads and constructing other new roads in the rural areas of the country. This will improve the activities of journalists by making movement of the journalists easier in different parts of the country

Key words: work environment and practice of journalism

Background of the study

The Ugandan media originates from the colonial days when Uganda was still a British protectorate; the British colonial masters introduced the media industry in Uganda in 1954, aimed at supporting the imperial agenda of the movement (Kazaara, Charles, et al., 2023). The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, UBC state owned rebroadcasted BBC and other local programs meant to counter anti British pro independent voices by the local Pan Africanists (Davids et al., 2023). Even in colonial days the working environment on journalism was not easy as media was restricted because the Black pan Africanists used the media to attack the colonial masters. Compared to previous government, the current one under president Museveni has expanded various freedoms both in practice and by the

enactment of a Bill of Rights (Damasus et al., 2023). The liberalization of the communication sector in the early 1990s led to an explosion of media. This upsurge in media has necessarily led to increase in the number of critical voices that can be heard against the government (Flavia et al., 2023). Over time, the government has sought to mute those voices. In a way, the government is scared of its own success. It is as if having let the genie out of the bottle, it is now resorting, partly, to the force of legislation to achieve its aims of having appellant population (Mercy et al., 2023). The government is doing this well aware it can get its way because the ruling party dominates parliament. On April 18, 2007, president Museveni said in the news on NBS he persuaded his ministers as to the benefits of

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licensing private broadcast media (Flavia et al., 2023). Journalism is the production and distribution of reports on current events based on facts and supported with proof or evidence. The word journalism applies to the occupation, as well as collaborative media who gather and publish information based on facts and supported with proof or evidence. Journalistic media include print, television, radio, Internet, and, in the past, newsreels (Shakilah & Kazaara, 2023).

Statement of the problem

Both national and international legislation states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression including 'freedom of the press and other media' Limitations to the above human rights can only be acceptable and demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society in certain circumstances, such as risks to public security or health (Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023). The absence of media censorship in a country is seen as an indication of a free society where people may criticize those holding power as well as stimulate debates on issues of national, regional and international importance (Shakilah & Kazaara, 2023). Media freedom is therefore '*an important right*' recognized in a democratic society as a mechanism

and tool that enables the citizens to participate in their own governance through analyzing what the government is doing and holding their leaders accountable for their actions (Victoria et al., 2023). Despite constitutional guarantee of the freedom of expression, and enactment of domestic legislation that expand this right, restrictions and censorship of media still exist (Joventa et al., 2023). The Penal Code Act for example links materials published by journalists to sedition, the Anti-terrorism Act prohibits promoting acts of terrorism through publication, and other laws which will be discussed in chapter four of this thesis. Based on the above domestic laws, over 30 journalists have pending cases in the court of law and yet their trials are regularly postponed (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023). Notably, the good laws are non-operational, and depending on the circumstances, the existing domestic media laws have stifled freedom of media (Lugalambi 2010:29, 30). Similarly, media houses continue to be attacked, intimidated and their equipment vandalized by state security (Filstar, 2023). Raiding of media premises by security forces continues under the guise of looking for subversive materials, consequently leading to the temporary closure of media outlets.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the challenges that journalism professionals (journalists) practically face in the process of performing their work and practicing their professions in Uganda.
2. To assess the effect of media regulations/ laws on the development of journalism/ media in Uganda.
3. To analyze the effect of working environment on the development of journalism in Uganda

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges that journalism professionals (journalists) practically face in the process of performing their work and practicing their professions in Uganda?
2. What is the effect of media regulations / laws on the development of journalism/ media in Uganda?
3. What is the effect of working environment on development of journalism in Uganda?

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Methodology**Research Design**

This study adopted a correlation research design (Saris and Revilla, 2015). A correlation research design refers to a quantitative research design involves two or more quantitative variables from a similar group of subjects and it tries to establish the relationship between the two variables as to whether they have anything in common. A correlation research design was used in this study to enable the researcher to find out the relationship between the studies variables (Sekaran, 2003). In addition, the study used a triangulation approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Study Population

The study population consisted of 50 respondents (next media human resource manual, 2020). These were consisted of administrative staff, journalists, and media regulators. The administrators were chosen because they were having the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the media regulations in the media house. The lower media house officials were chosen because they were aware of what was taking place in the media house and the impact of the media regulation on the performance.

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Data collection Methods

Data were collected from primary sources. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the collection of data. Primary data were collected using self-administered questionnaires and interviews.

Survey

According to Amin (2005) a questionnaire survey in research is a method that considers a series of questions that aim at acquisition of information from respondents. The questionnaire survey method was employed to gather primary data from lower media house officials through a semi-structured questionnaire. The respondents were having an obligation of selecting responses in the tool basing on their choices as per their experience with the statements (Amin, 2005).

Interview

Interview refers to the method of collecting data by asking people questions and following up or probing and prompting their answers (Kathuri, 2004). This was used to collect primary data from managerial and operational staff of Radio Simba. It also involved the use of a semi-structured interview guides as presents in my proposal. The method of interview also involved a free interaction between the researcher and the respondents. Open ended questions were used to gather information where by the researcher was being guided by the tool to ask the questions and the respondents' responses were being recorded.

Data Collection Instruments

These are the tools for data collection (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In this study, these were included; Questionnaire and Interview guide. These were used because it is important to implement the data collection methods highlighted above. The tools generated were basing on conceptual framework.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is an instrument used in research that contains closed ended questions with choices that triggers that aim at collecting data from participants in the study (Amin, 2005). The questionnaire in this research undertaking were used to gather data among the lower media house officials in Radio Simba Uganda. The researcher distributed the questionnaires among the sampled respondents and they were given time to fill them at their own convenience and later the researcher had to go back to collect the filled too.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved arranging, sorting and organizing data and later attach meaning to create a sensible meaning that reflects the findings Patton (2017). This study involved both quantitative and qualitative data and each analyzed in its form as shown below:

Quantitative data analysis

In analyzing quantitative data, the data was sorted as per its allocated codes and entered into a statistical package known as Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics that

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created the mean, mode and median; the variance, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages (Nelson et al., 2022). These were arranged in tables and later explained by the researcher on what they meant as per the set objectives and their implications in the study.

Qualitative data analysis

Through use of content and thematic analysis, qualitative data were analyzed and the findings were related to the study objectives and findings. The verbatim captions were tabulated in shorter sentences and pulling out key words that explained a certain phenomenon (Sekaran, 2003). These key words were used by the researcher to explain the occurrences that the study was found out to answer the concerns that were raised in form of study objectives and answering the research questions.

RESULTS

The challenges that journalism professionals (journalists) practically face in the process of performing their work

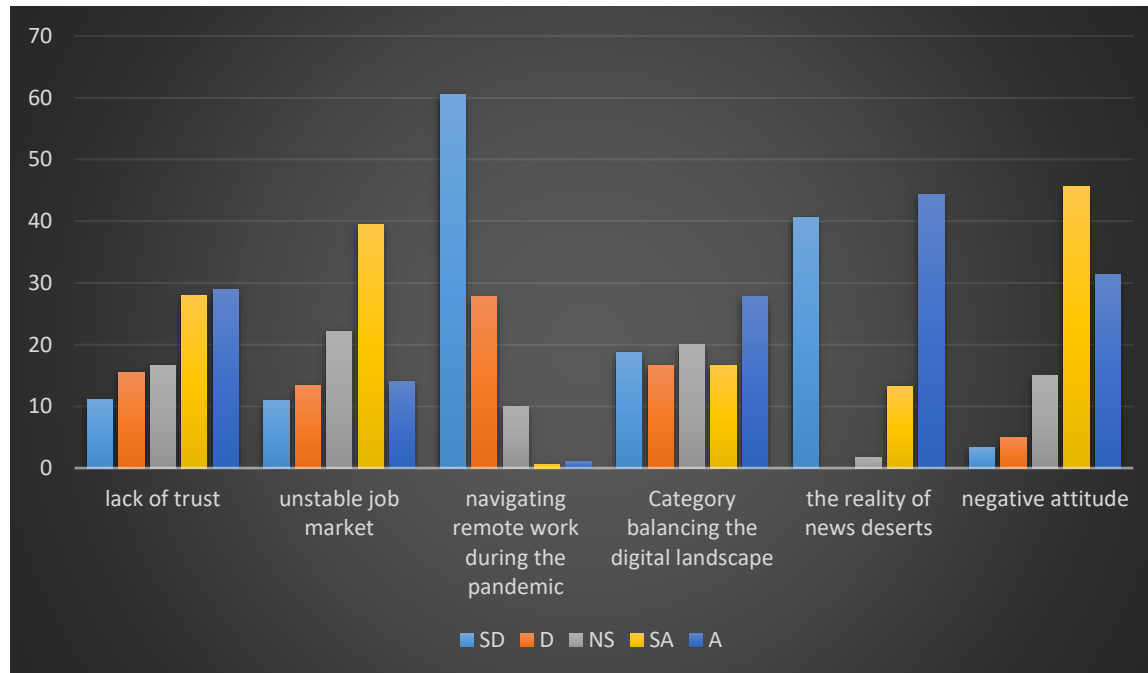
Table 1: Distribution of the respondents on the challenges practically faced by journalism professionals

No.	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	SA %	A %	TOTAL %
1	Lack of Trust in News	11.1	15.5	16.7	27.8	28.9	100
2	Unstable Job Market	10.9	13.4	22.2	39.4	14.1	100
3	Navigating Remote Work During the Pandemic	60.6	27.8	10.0	0.6	1.0	100
4	Balancing the Digital Landscape	18.8	16.7	20.0	16.7	27.8	100
5	The Reality of News Deserts	40.6		1.7	13.3	44.4	100
6	Negative attitude	3.3	5.0	15.0	45.6	31.3	100

Source; primary data, 2020

The table shows the challenges practically faced by journalism professionals

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Source Primary data, 2019

Table 1 the challenges that journalism professionals practically face. This is evidenced by 56.7% of the respondents agreed that there is lack of trust in news, 53.5 % of the respondents agreed of unstable job market, 44.5% of the respondents agreed that there was navigating remote work during the pandemic, 57.7% of the respondents revealed that balancing the digital landscape is also the challenge in work environment in journalism 76.9 of the respondents disagreed with the statement of balancing the digital landscape, 88.4 %of the respondents agreed that next media face negative attitude.

Media regulations/ laws on development of journalism in Uganda

Table 2 Distribution of the respondents on the effects of media regulations/ laws on development of journalism in Uganda

No.	Statement	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	Increase on media usage	8.9	9.4	15	29	37.2	100
2	Deny access to freedom of expression			15.6	45	39.4	100

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3	Reduction on criminal rate most specially among those who uses social media		10	47	33	10	100
4	Closure of different social media handles and media centers	3.3	5.0	5.0	31.7	45.0	100
5	Reduction on advertisement	10.1	13.4		14.1	61.6	100
6	Reduction of spreading of false information	5	5	40	30	25	100

Source primary data 2020

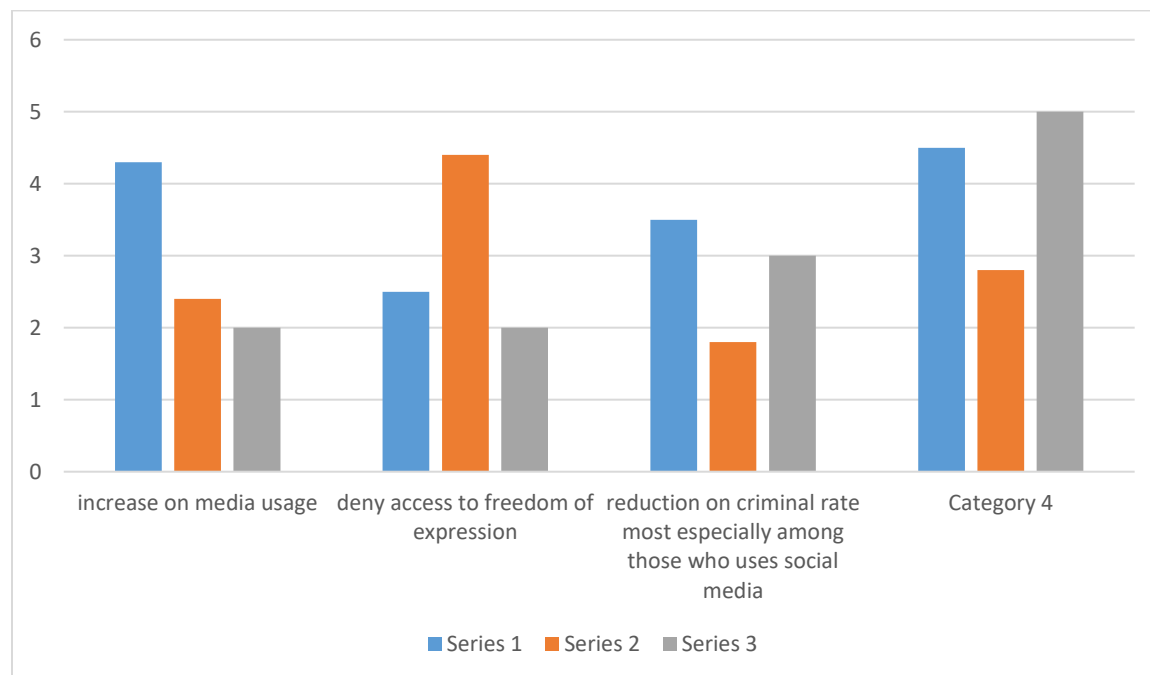


Table 2 above show the effects of media regulations/ laws on development of journalism in Uganda. This is from the fact that 66.6% of the respondents agreed that the increase on media usage 84.4% of the respondents agreed that there was deny access to freedom of expression, 43% of the respondents agreed that there was reduction on criminal rate most specially among those who uses social media, 76.7% of the respondents agreed that the Closure of different social media handles and media centers and lastly 55% of the respondents agreed that all the reduction on advertisement. This implied that next media experienced brought in by media regulations/ laws on development.

Effect of working environment on development of journalism in Uganda.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents on the effect of working environment on development of journalism next media.

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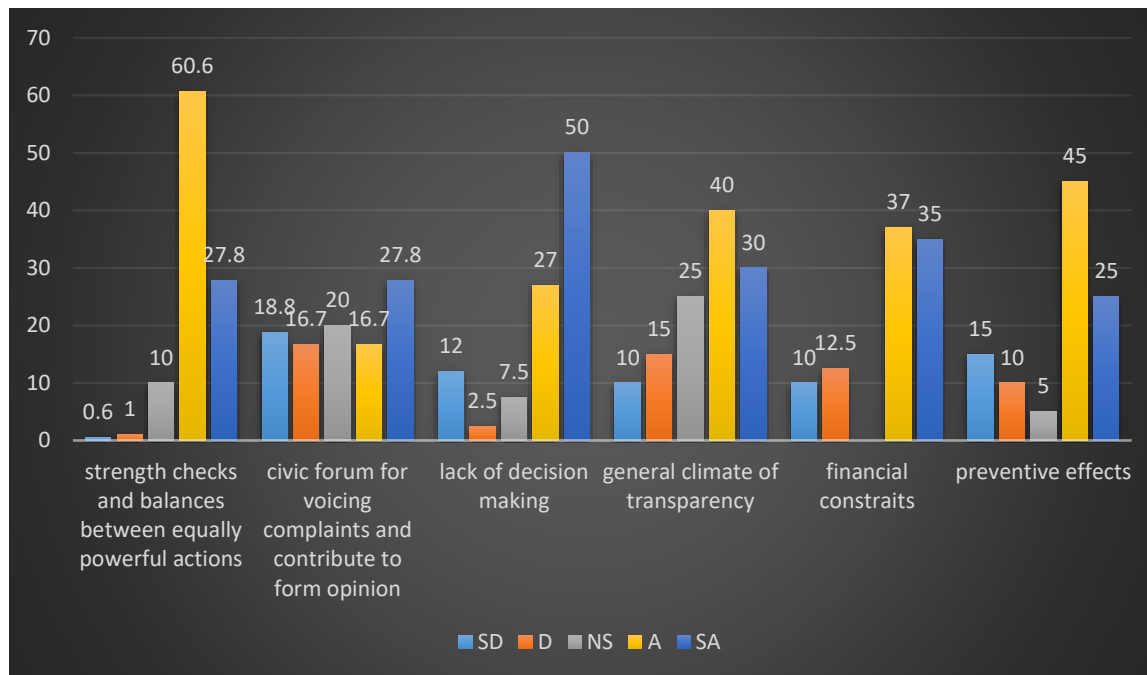
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NO	STATEMENT	SD %	D %	NS %	A %	SA %	TOTAL %
1	Strength checks and balances between equally powerful actions	0.6	1.0	10.0	60.6	27.8	100
2	Civic forum for voicing complaints and contribute to form public opinion	18.8	16.7	20.0	16.7	27.8	100
3	Lack of decision making	12	2.5	7.5	27	50	100
4	General climate of transparency	10	15	25	40	30	100
5	Financial constraints	10	12.5		37	35	100
6	Preventive effects	15	10	5	45	25	100

Source primary data 2020

Bar graph 3 shows Distribution of the respondents on the effect of working environment on development of journalism next media.



Bar graph 3 above show the procedures involved in on the effect of working environment on development of journalism next.

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This is from the fact that: 88.4% of the respondents agreed that Strength checks and balances between equally powerful actions, 44.5% of the respondents agreed in Civic forum for voicing complaints and contribute to form public opinion. 77% of the respondents agreed that there was lack of decision making among the journalists, 70% of the respondents revealed that there was general climate of transparency, 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement of financial constraints, obtained 70% of the respondents agreed with the statement that Preventive effects. This implies that the procedures involved in the effect of working environment on development of journalism next are effective and efficient.

Findings from the interviewing guide

From the study it is evident that on age bracket of the respondents 3(22) of the respondents were below 24 years, 3(22%) were between 25-29 years of age, 12(86%) were between 30-39 years of age, 20(144%) were between 40-49 years and 12(86%) were above 50 years of age. On gender of the respondents 52% (187%) of the respondents were males and 48% (173%) were females. On Level of education majority of the respondents represented by 48% were graduates (Mark et al., 2023), 12% were post graduates, 28% obtained Diplomas, 8% obtained A 'level and the least were Others with just 4%. On owning challenges faced by journalists; 90% of the respondents agreed that they are experiencing such challenges while 10% of the respondents don't have. Media laws, all respondents agreed with the statement and lastly 80% of the respondents agreed that working environment affects journalism profession as 20% were in disagreement with the statement.

Conclusion

This is from the fact that: 88.4% of the respondents agreed that Strength checks and balances between equally powerful actions, 44.5% of the respondents agreed in Civic forum for voicing complaints and contribute to form public opinion. 77% of the respondents agreed that there was lack of decision making among the journalists, 70% of the respondents revealed that there was general climate of transparency, 72% of the respondents agreed with the statement of financial statement items are obtained 70% of the respondents agreed with the statement that Preventive effects. This implies that the procedures involved in the effect of working environment on development of journalism next are effective and efficient.

Recommendations

The government should support some media houses through giving them subsidies and other financial benefits. The government should also remove unnecessary restrictions that are always put on some media regulations. This platform would help investor to start other media centers in the country.

There is need for the media houses to ease laws enacted on journalist and the media as whole and this can be done through cooperation with the government. This will curb down the high rate of cases concerning media people and public

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The government should improve the roads in the country. This can be done through rehabilitation of the existing roads and constructing other new roads in the rural areas of the country. This will improve the activities of journalists by making movement of the journalists easier in different parts of the country

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