

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA
PROFESSIONALISM IN KENYA**

By

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Communication Studies, School of Journalism and Mass Communication,
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DECLARATION AND CERTIFICATION

I declare that this research project, *A Critical Analysis of Media Professionalism in Kenya*, is my original work and that it has not been submitted either wholly or in part to the University of Nairobi or any other university for the award of any degree or diploma.

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This is to certify that this research project, *A Critical Analysis of Media Professionalism in Kenya*, is a bonafide research work carried independently by OtumaOngalo under my supervision and guidance.

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DEDICATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMWIK	Association of Media Women in Kenya
CAK	Communication Authority of Kenya
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
KCA	Kenya Correspondents Association
KEG	Kenya Editors Guild
KJA	Kenya Journalists Association
KSWA	Kenya Sports Writers Association
KUJ	Kenya Union of Journalists
NIS	National Intelligence Service
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to identify and critically interrogate the factors that impede professionalism in Kenyan media. Based on the previous literature on related studies, the study critically reviews several thematic areas, such as political interference, obsession with economic returns, media ownership, journalism training, audience perspective, personnel factor and poor pay. The study is guided by the libertarian theory of the press and social responsibility theory. It perceives professionalism in two broad perspectives, namely the independence of the media practitioners to exercise their skills without interference from internal and external factors as well as responsibility to societal needs. Its findings are based on information obtained from media practitioners and stakeholders purposively identified to provide first hand information on challenges encountered in journalism practice. While the study confirmed factors identified in earlier studies as impediments to professionalism, it also focuses on the magnitude. Poor pay and poor training are the most prominent factors. The study also found out that tribalism is one of the emerging issues in media practice.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the importance of the media in the society as expounded by various scholars and one of the recent research findings. It briefly discusses the tenets of professionalism as opined by some studies and relates them with the Code of Conduct for Journalism Practice in Kenya. The chapter also discusses the overall research aim and justification as well as the study objectives, problem statements, research questions, and operational definitions.

1.2 Background

The media is the watchdog of the society (Weaver and Wu, 1998: 57) because of the important role that it plays in protecting the public against the excesses of the ruling elite (Norris, 2012:2). One of the recent Afrobarometer studies (Mitulla and Kamau, 2013) indicates that the media plays the greatest role in holding governments accountable in the war against graft in Africa. In a study conducted across 34 African countries, 71% of respondents reported that the media is effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption.

The ability of the media to promote accountability and democracy relies on how effectively the practitioners and institutions adhere to professional tenets. White (2012:68) observes that professionalism in media practice involves responsibility, which includes reporting with accuracy, fairness, without distortion from the information sources and selection of truly important news for the people. Earlier, Tawney (1921: 91) viewed professionalism as a force capable of subjecting rampant individualism to the needs of the community while Parsons (1951:49) opined that the professionals training should cultivate the proper balance between self and collective interests which, sustained by the interaction with the community, is important for social order.

Scholars such as Janowitz (1975), Esser (1999) and Hanitzsch (2005) have identified autonomy, common practices, rules and values enforced by ethical codes and dedication to public service as some of the tenets of professionalisation in journalism.

Professionalism, therefore, goes beyond the mere observance of ethical issues in media practitioners' day-to-day lives. According to Nyabuga (2012), media and journalism play a fundamentally important role by providing information critical to the society. The media are key factor in shaping how society operates by articulating ideas and influencing perceptions and attitudes (2012: 101).

Generally, professionalism in the media manifests itself when investigative journalism is entrenched in newsrooms, journalists are academically trained and adhere to professional standards, and media organisations uphold neutrality or only take a stance in public interest, not parochial interests.

The Media Council of Kenya's Code of Conduct (see **Appendix I**) outlines some of the professionalism parameters in media practice, including accuracy and fairness, independence, integrity, accountability, the principle of opportunity to reply, the obligation to protect confidentiality, avoidance of misrepresentation and obscenity, the commitment to incorporate acceptable taste and tone in reporting, reasonable respect of privacy and the avoidance of conflicts of interest. Mare and Brand (2010) studied various journalism codes of conduct and observed similarity in professional requirements. They observed that the codes regard accuracy, honesty and fairness fundamental journalistic issues, and underscore the need to ensure fair and balanced report of events:

Distortion of information by giving only one side of the story, by placing improper emphasis of one aspect of a story, by reporting the facts out of the context in which they occurred or by suppressing relevant available facts are marked as ethical violations (Mare and Brand, 2010:414).

Various studies, for example (Kasoma, 1991, 1994, 1996; Mbeke, Orlale and Ugungu, 2010; Okigbo, 1994; Mwaura, 1994; Nyabuga, 2012) reveal lack of professionalism in media practice in Africa, including Kenya. According to Kasoma (1994, 1996),

there is lack of ethical basis since many journalists are dubbed liars and puppets of the state. Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010) argue that advertisements and materials that support commercial interests are prioritised while Mwaura (1996) observes that journalists and media houses lack independence since they are controlled by political and business leaders. Nyabuga (2012) posits that the media owners are profit driven at the expense of journalistic expense and integrity.

These, and many other studies that reveal professional gaps, put the media under spotlight, in view of the responsibilities bestowed upon it or expected of it as the most trusted institution in safeguarding public interests and watching against the excesses of the authorities.

1.3 Research Justification

The study was necessary considering that the media often faces numerous accusations over professionalism (Kasoma, 1991, 1994, 1996; Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu, 2010; Okigbo, 1994; Mwaura, 1994; Nyabuga, 2012). Professional roles and ethical values are crucial in the way journalists shape content (Esser 1999: 205), hence the need to examine them critically in journalism practice.

Although similar research studies have been conducted, the media operation is susceptible to the changes in the socio-political environment, such as the promulgation of Kenya's Constitution in 2010 and the successive change of regimes since the end of the Kanu era. The socio-political environment in which the media operates is critical in ascertaining the degree of independence. For instance during the Moi-Kanu regime, media independence and practice were stifled. The regime ruled under the Lancaster Constitution, which was intolerant to media and journalism practice. Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010) observe that the old constitution stifled media development and all the negative attributes of the media in Kenya are by products of a bad constitution and legal regime (2010:38).

The Constitution of Kenya (2012), under the Bill of Rights in Chapter 4, now provides for media freedom in sections 32, 33 and 35. Section 32 (1) states that every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

Section 33 (1) (a) provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes freedom to seek, receive or impart information or ideas. Section 35 (1) (a) and (b) states:

Every citizen has the right of access to information held by the state and information held by any other person and required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom.

These constitutional guarantees are quite fundamental in enhancing professionalism in the Kenyan media. However, one of the emerging questions is whether these guarantees are practical or merely theoretical. This study set out to explore this phenomenon in the new context in which the media operates. The research findings will be helpful in a number of ways: First, they will contribute to the body of knowledge to enlighten media scholars on salient issues on professionalism. Secondly, the findings will enable media industry regulators and other stakeholders to address issues that affect professionalism. Thirdly, the study findings will enable media institutions that endeavour to promote professional excellence to identify key issues that either impede or enhance professionalism.

The study also seeks to critically examine the gap between theoretical and practical issues in media professionalism and provoke debate on salient issues as well as point way forward for related studies.

1.4 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how professionalism affects the quality of media productions.

The study's specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify and critically examine specific factors that affect professionalism.
- ii. Explore and explain factors that contribute to unprofessionalism.
- iii. Identify the factors that affect professionalism in media practice.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What are the factors that hinder professional journalism in Kenya?

- ii. Among the several factors that impede professionalism, which ones affect most?
- iii. How can professionalism be enhanced in media practice?

1.6 Problem Statement

The watchdog role is one of the key tenets of media professionalism. In a media survey to rate the effectiveness of the media's watchdog role across 34 African countries, 71% of the respondents reported that the media is effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption (Mitulla and Kamau, 2013). In Kenya, a study conducted by the University of Nairobi's Institute for Development Studies (IDS) established that the media is the most trusted non-state actor, at 77%, in the war against corruption.

In recent times, they have been various complaints against the media over professional standards. In the first two months of 2014, the Media Council of Kenya's Complaints Commission received six complaints on professional conduct of media institutions and journalists (Media Council of Kenya, 2014). In 2013, the Council received 17 complaints while in 2012 there were 18 complaints.

Professional negligence among trained journalists has been identified (Mbeke, Orlale and Ugungu 2010: 29). Although media houses have adopted the Code of Conduct, they have not been able to enforce its use among journalists.

There is, therefore, need to investigate factors that impede professionalism, leading to some of the complainants lodged against the media industry.

1.7 Operational Definitions

- Journalists: Individuals employed in media houses as writers and editors
- Media: Firms that produce daily newspapers
- Media experts: Former senior journalists now engaged in media related issues as scholars, consultants or employed in media related firms
- Professionalism: Adherence to regulations specified in Code of Conduct for Journalism Practice in Kenya, standardisation of skills, autonomous control over media output and responsibility to social expectations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter puts the issue of professionalism in media practice into context. The chapter discusses some of the earlier studies on professionalism from different perspectives, namely the societal values as opposed to individual values, political interference, the regulatory framework, obsession with the economic returns, media ownership, poor pay and corruption, journalism training and individual limiting factors and media personnel, among several others. The section also discusses the theories that guide the research, namely the libertarian theory of the press and the social responsibility theory. This is based on the argument that professionalism in the media broadly depends on media independence and responsibility to the society.

2.2 Professionalism Parameters in Media

Professional work is seen as comprising certain conventions and norms that enable people to do their job, and media professionals are not different (Williams, 2003: 105-106). The scholar posits that the position of journalists has been subject to speculations regarding whether there is a set of values, attitudes, and behaviours associated with being a professional journalist and doing the job that shapes what is produced. Williams (2003) further observes:

While there have been scholarly debates on whether journalism meets certain objective requirements to be a profession, individual journalists share a conception on what the role of the professional journalist should be and how far this determines how they select, write and edit the news story (Williams, 2003: 107).

Professionalism is concerned with freedom and responsibility. White (2012) observes that there has been extensive research on media freedom and editorial responsibility in Africa (Eribo and Jong-Ebot, 1999; Faringer, 1991; MøBayo, Onwumechuli and Nwanko, 2000; Wiserman, 2012) and some of the analysed aspects include repression from authoritarian regimes, the oppressive legal systems, self-censorship, bribery and the insidious doctrine of 'development journalism'.

2.3 Critical Analysis of Literature on Media Professionalism

2.3.1 African Ethics

Several studies and scholarly discourses on media professionalism and ethics in African countries in general and also in Kenya reveal various shortcomings. According to Kasoma (1993), the journalism profession throughout Africa "needs to develop an ethical basis" to put to an end to journalists being dubbed liars and puppets of the state, and accord them some personal respectability and pride (1993: 11).

In his subsequent work, Kasoma(1996) advocated what he referred to as *afriethics*(African ethics) in order to address the ills bedevilling the media profession on the continent. His emphasis was on societal values as opposed to individual morals of journalists in addressing ethical and professional issues. The scholar argues against preoccupation with western standards of journalism and instead suggests that African journalists should go back to the primordial ethical checks and balances that have always existed in the African society to ensure professionalism in media practice.

However, Kasoma's view is not in tandem with modern trends in journalism. The view contrasts with that of scholars who view professionalism in journalism as a universal issue because of globalization and shared practices regardless of the social cultural context. Spichal and Sparks (1994), for instance, studied media practice in 22 countries and established similar professional values despite differences in national culture, educational qualifications and training, social background and political affiliation.

Another assumption in Kasoma's *afriethics* proposition is the homogeneity of African communities. Even at country level, homogeneity does not exist. Kenya, for instance, has got 42 communities and each community has contrasting social ethos. Okigbo (1994) argues against the assumption of homogeneity. He points out that it is tempting to assume omniscient position when examining the problem of indecency in African reporting, as if all African reporters think alike on all issues. "The fact is, Africa is not a homogenous community," Okigbo(1994:71) argues.

Mfumbusa (2008) also observes that the world conjured up by Kasoma may no longer be consistent with the African newsroom realities. He argues that it is difficult to see how a mere return to the African ethical roots would improve media performance.

While media professionalism is a much wider context issue, Kasoma's views mainly emphasize ethical issues and in the narrow context of amorphous African culture.

2.3.2 Political Interference and Regulations

One of the most recurring themes in media and professionalism discourses is political interference. Mwaura (1994:92) points out that governments in Africa do not leave news reporting to journalists but have devised a labyrinth of measures and dirty tricks to control the media. He argues that the media are at the behest of political and business leaders and are under pressure to either publicise or suppress a story. Government and politicians resort to the use of state machinery to harass, intimidate and discriminate against those whose activities are loathed. Mwaura (1994) observes:

They contribute to mediocrity, opportunism, professional laxity and high mortality of journalists. The high turnover of editors in government owned and private media in many countries is a manifestation of the ruthlessness and determination of the politicians to ensure that only those who support them can survive (Mwaura, 1994: 102).

Political interference results to self-censorship, where journalists avoid some stories because of the fear of backlash. According to Skjerdal (2008), the constraints of economic and political powers prevent journalists from speaking out truthfully and forcefully. "The discourses of fear are more important than fear in itself", argues Skjerdal (2008: 202) in his attempt to show the impact of politics on media performance. Political interference is especially bad in investigative journalism. Mwaura (1994) observes that while investigative journalism is highly regarded in the profession, authorities consider it a hostile activity since it seeks to uncover misconduct and mismanagement.

Helander's study (2010:521) focused on how political reporting is perceived by Kenyan media practitioners themselves. The scholar observes that the structure of Kenyan media system appears to result in media outlets being transformed into direct political instruments during election campaigns and that despite the positive changes

on the freedom of speech, the emerging climate of fear leads to self-censorship. She argues that the threat of being sued for libel is taken seriously and this makes many media houses to hire teams of in-house lawyers, who go through all political articles for possible libellous statements.

However, it has been argued that in-house lawyers impede professionalism more than they enhance it in their endeavour to sanitise newspapers before publication. According to Robertson (1978), they degut public interest stories that may provoke court reprisals:

Press lawyers are inevitably more repressive than the press laws, because they will always err on the safe side where they cannot be proved wrong. The lawyer's advice creates a broad penumbra of constraint, confining the investigative journalists not merely to the letter of the law but to an outer rim bounded by the mere possibility of legal action (Robertson, 1978:205).

White (2012: 59) notes that in spite of the fact that all media define their role in terms of monitoring the actions and policies of public institutions in terms of service to the citizens, virtually all evaluations of media's public service role indicate that the constraints of political and economic powers prevent journalists from speaking out truthfully and forcefully.

Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010:29) also note political interference in the media. They aver that the independence of Kenyan journalists is seriously in doubt since some of them were politically co-opted during the 2005 referendum on the Proposed Constitution. They further argue that the media houses' independence was equally in question in 2007 elections and the violence that followed due to editorial biases, largely by senior editors.

Robertson (1978) identifies political interference but in a less direct way through laws and regulations that hamper professionalism in media practice:

The principle obstacles to press freedom lie not in prejudiced proprietors, circulation, crazed editors or incompetent journalists, but in web of vague legal doctrines which catch facts and opinions essential for informed scrutiny of social power (Robertson, 1978:225).

White (2012) observes that although some countries have tried to address restrictions of press freedom through constitutional reforms or introduction of the new constitutions, claw back phrases remain. His study, which is largely based on the Ghanaian example, explores the major restrictions of editorial freedom in Africa. He argues, *inter alia*, that:

What makes editorial responsibility so difficult is that the invoking of laws against editors is so often linked to the unpredictable emotional reaction of some public officials. The laws themselves are so vague and all encompassing that virtually any personal pique can warrant a charge against the editor (White, 2012:54).

White (2012) further points out that what makes these legal restraints so difficult to deal with in professional journalistic commitments is that often the laws are demands for personal respect for the honour and good reputation of public officials.

In Kenya, Helander (2010) observes that although there has been a more pluralist media since the early 1990s and a less oppressive political environment, the influence of the government has been prevalent through regulations. She argues that the freedom of expression is regulated through criminal libel legislation, the Official Secrets Act and a statutory media council (Helander, 2010:522).

Following the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010, there have been drastic changes in media regulations but studies indicate the media is not yet free. Kadhi and Rutten (2001) argue that although liberalization of the media has taken place, the media are not classified as free nor have they been serving their role of truthfully informing the public, especially during political campaigns.

From the aforementioned studies, the studies by Helander (2010); Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010) and Mwaura (1994) focus on the Kenyan context on issues concerning professionalism, just like this study. However, Helander (2010) narrowed her focus to coverage of political issues while Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010) and Mwaura (1994) studies were largely informed by secondary sources of information.

2.3.3 Economic Returns

Various scholars (Williams, 2003; Nyabuga, 2012; McBride, 1986; Mwaura, 1994; and Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu, 2010) point out that preoccupation with the economic

returns in the media industry is one of the greatest impediments to professionalism. Williams (2003) points out that many of the decisions media owners and managers make about the commercial viability of their operations are influenced by the growing dependency of the media on advertising (Williams,2003:73). Nyabuga (2012) argues that the commodification of journalism and the attendant obsession for the bottom line is one of the greatest challenges to media freedom and responsibility:

Given the pressure to increase profitability, editors and other media personnel work in continual rejection of stories that the public should know about. If not suffering the wrath of funding entrepreneurs and top management, journalists are constantly under the spotlight of sources and supporters (often political mandarins, commercial and advertising executives) who seek to control or manipulate media contents (Nyabuga,2012: 100).

Mcbride (1986:48) observes that media managers in Africa measure success in terms of whether the institution is meeting objectives, such as maintaining close ties with authorities and making money. Mwaura (1994:108) highlights the issue of newspapers and other publications relying on advertising for survival. Aware of the influence they wield, the scholar, who is also a former senior media manager, argues that governments or private enterprises often threaten to withdraw advertisements to dictate how news should be covered.

According to Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale (2010: 30), the media tend to give more priority to advertisements and materials that support commercial interests rather than news and content oriented towards development. They further point out that newspaper design appears organized to shore up corporate interests rather than public interest. Masterman (1985: 111) observes that advertising influence goes much deeper than shaping the structure of individual newspaper. It determines which (and what kind of) newspapers will and will not be available to the public, hence shaping the structure of the whole media industry.

2.3.4 Media Ownership

Several studies and scholarly discourses have also identified media ownership as a key factor affecting journalism and especially media concentration, where a few firms or individuals own or control mass media. Williams (2003:73) observes that the ownership and control of the media is not only an important factor in determining the

structure, working and output of mass media but also in the production of meaning in the society. Benn (1981:105) argues that in general, the media proprietors and top level directorate find it easy to impose their will on the outlets in print, radio or TV which they own or control.

According to Nyabuga (2012), the few firms or individuals controlling the mass media are becoming progressively powerful and profit driven at the expense of journalistic integrity and performance:

This has led to major concerns that the most powerful media players are strangling diversity and plurality of opinion, skewing public opinion and ultimately political and democratic process(Nyabuga, 2012: 107).

Kasoma(1996:3) argues that because most of Africa's journalists have been working for media either owned and /or lightly controlled by the state, their professional performance has been overshadowed by the need to obey orders and survive. In her study, Helander (2010) found out that media owners have direct editorial influence while its economic entity makes the media to curry favour with the few corporate powersö (2010:532).

However, the power that media owners wield in media practice is challenged by other scholars. Masterman (1985:82), for instance, points out that it is often difficult to pin down the precise influence which individual owners and controlling companies have upon the media, since great deal of that influence is likely to be covert, indirect, structural and long-term. He argues that generalisations are difficult to make since proprietorial styles vary a good deal between different individuals and companies.

The scholar further posits that control of large corporations has effectively passed from owners into the hands of professional managers who alone have the kind of expertise necessary to run complex corporative business enterprises. He argues that ownership might not constitute a problem if there were any regulatory body to ensure reasonable standards of accuracy and fairness in newspaper reporting.

Berger and Bratt(2008:113) also argue that there is evidence that the skilled editor and editorial team will be able to convince the owner that the freedom to exercise responsibility is in the best interest of the proprietor.

2.3.5 Journalism Training

Studies also identify journalism training as a factor that affects professionalism. There are several middle level colleges that attract thousands of students each year, despite some of them having low credibility (Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale, 2010: 32). They observe that even major training institutions are bedevilled by financial constraints and rely on obsolete equipment during training:

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nairobi, as well as other universities and public colleges, do not have the facilities and equipment- such as broadcast studios, editing suites and digital processing machines. Most institutions have obsolete technology, which compels journalism students to seek further training elsewhere immediately after leaving college or while on the job (Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale, 2010:34).

Kasoma (1996:14) argues that African journalism educators hold the key to developing ethics and professionalism but many of them do not consider journalism ethics as important to teach. He decries lack of published works in journalism ethics and calls for more interest and research in the subject in order to enhance professionalism. However, this view may not hold in present times since several scholarly works have been published on journalism ethics. Since 1990s, codes of conduct have been established by several media councils formed across the continent. The Media Council of Kenya, for instance, has developed Code of Conduct for Journalism Practice in Kenya (see **Appendix I**).

A study by Ongonga and White (2008: 170) found out that senior journalists at both the *Nation* and *Standard* (Kenya's leading daily newspapers) were critical of the journalism training recruits had received. In their view, new recruits lack the urge or instinct to go out and look for exclusive stories or establish and maintain news sources.

2.3.6 Audience Perspective

Some scholars, especially those who subscribe to consumer sovereignty theory, view the audience as a powerful factor in shaping the media, through their active choice of some media texts rather than others. Whale (1977:85) argues that the press is

predominantly conservative in tone because its readers are. The scholar asserts that owners of newspapers have little power in influencing media content and that it is the readers who are the figures of power.

Masterman (1985), however, differs with consumer sovereignty theorists. He argues that while audiences have an important influence, they do not exert direct power in relation to media texts:

Any text must address its intended audience in a language and tone with which it will feel comfortable, and must, to some degree, speak to its audience's interests. But the audiences addressed by the media are themselves selected on the basis of their importance either to the advertisers or media institutions. Audience influence is thus differential and mediated. And some very large audiences appear to have very little influence at all(1985:115).

2.3.7 Personnel Factor

Masterman further argues that media personnel are a critical factor in understanding the salient issues affecting professionalism in the media industry. The scholar posits that consideration of the legal, institutional and socio-economic constraints upon media products leads, inevitably, to a recognition of the limitations within which most media professionals are compelled to work (1985:115).

Kasoma (1994:102) observes that individual journalists fall prey to personal greed and disregard professionalism. He says such journalists do a lot of harm to themselves as professionals and to the honour and reputation of the profession, thereby contributing to the atmosphere that makes it possible for others to persecute and suppress them.

He accuses post multi-party era African newspapers of muckraking journalism, exploits, libelling, invading privacy and practising vendetta journalism. The hallmarks of this journalism include using abusive language against sources, not offering right of reply, selective choice of facts and using sarcasm in reporting sources the journalists hate or dislike.

The personnel factor is also cited by Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale (2010), who argue that corruption among Kenyan media practitioners is rampant and that some media products disseminate content that borders on obscenity, pornography and vulgarity.

They observe that there is poor reporting and editing skills while the independence of Kenyan journalists is seriously in doubt.

Andoh(1994:122) points out at attempts to dramatize certain news events to make them more interesting to the readers. In this kind of writing, quotes are attributed to the individuals who did not utter them.

2.3.8 Poor Pay

Studies by Ongonga and White (2008:175-176) and Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale (2010:31) link poor remuneration to the fall in media professionalism. Between 70% and 80% of Kenyan journalists earn between Sh10,000 and Sh20,000.

The desperate plight of journalists is well known, and news sources and other friends of young journalists are quite willing to help if they can, expecting in a general way, of course, that the friendship will be met by equal friendship from the journalist. At times news sources that want to make news releases will invite journalists to their offices or to lunch and expenses are taken care of as a matter of fact (Ongonga and White, 2008: 176).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study approaches professionalism based on the premise that it is largely determined by independence to operate and report on salient issues without undue internal or external interference as well as the ability to be responsive or sensitive to societal expectations and needs. The study, therefore, is based on the libertarian theory of the press and the social responsibility theory.

By adopting the two theories, the study argues that an independent or free media but that which is also responsible to the society is more likely to adhere to the basic tenets of professional requirements, as outlined in Kenya's Code of Conduct for Journalism Practice (see **Appendix I**).

The social responsibility theory is in the realms of normative theories of the media. McQuail (1994) notes that these theories are concerned with examining and prescribing how the media ought to work if certain set of values are to be observed or attained. According to Williams (2003), such theories lay down a desired set of conditions or goals for the practice and performance of the media and shape the

expectations placed on the media by other social agencies as well as their own audiences. He observes:

Often, normative theories are encoded in the laws, regulations and policies of the society. They provide a basis for research into the mass media that seeks to assess how they live up to those expectations of the social culture and cultural performances (2003:17).

The social responsibility theory argues that the media should accept and fulfil certain obligations to society. These obligations are mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of informativeness, objectivity, accuracy, balance and good taste. McQuail (2005: 172) outlines basic tenets of the social responsibility theory and one of it is that the media should follow the agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct.

According to Tankard (2001: 314), the social responsibility theory holds that anyone who has something of significance to say should be allowed a forum and that if the media do not assume their obligation, somebody must see into it that they do. Under this theory, the media is controlled by community opinion, consumer action and professional ethics.

The study was also based on the libertarian theory of the press, which traces its roots to John Milton in 1644. Milton opposed state restrictions on the media, arguing that individuals were blessed with the faculty of reason, which enabled them to make choices between good and bad, based on their conscience (Kean, 1991). Rather than seeing the media as mouthpieces for the ruling classes, free press theory highlights the independent role of the media in society (Williams 2003: 38).

According to Siebert, Fred, Peterson and Shramm (1972), the media, under the liberal systems of government, have their critical roles and functions embodied in these countries' constitutions or fundamental laws. The media is free from government control and has the key function of keeping the government from overstepping its bounds (watchdog role).

Ochilo(1993) recognises the role of the media under the libertarian theory. He observes that the media has basic functions of informing, entertaining and providing a

basis of economic support through advertising as one of the ways of being to ensure financial independence, which in turn allows the media in question a measure of freedom from governmental and state controls.

In other words the media under liberal systems have the dominant role in the social interaction, political and economic discussions and the formation of "public opinion" without undue hindrance from government (1993:22).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored several thematic issues that affect professionalism as found out by various studies. One of the issues outlined is afriethics, which is a call to African journalists to go back to the primordial ethical checks and balances in the African society to ensure professionalism in media practice.

Political interference puts the media under pressure to either publicise or suppress a story. The media also tend to give more priority to advertisements and materials that support commercial interests rather than news and content. Media proprietors and top level directorate often impose their will on the outlets they own or control.

Several colleges attract thousands of students each year, despite some of them having low credibility. While some scholars view the audience as a powerful factor in shaping the media, through their active choice of some media texts rather than others. Others argue that they do not exert direct power in relation to media texts. The media personnel are a critical factor in determining professionalism. Individual journalists often fall prey to personal greed and disregard professionalism due to corruption. There are attempts to dramatize certain news events to make them more interesting to the readers. Poor remuneration also affects professionalism. News sources and other friends of journalists capitalise on this to get fair coverage.

Generally, some of the studies do not capture the challenges of the new environment in which the media operates. For instance, Mfumbusa (2008) observes that the world conjured up by Kasoma in his afriethics supposition is no longer consistent with newsroom realities. The study was guided by the libertarian and social responsibility theories

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists five sub-sections namely, research design, research target population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection instruments and techniques, and data analysis. Basic terms are defined and justifications made for choices made.

3.2 Research Design

Research design means the procedures employed to achieve the objectives of research (Mutai, 2001:40). According to Selltiz (1962), research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine the relevance to the research purpose with economy of procedure.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:202) observe that emerging issues relating to social, political and economic development in poor countries have enhanced the use of qualitative approaches in search of sustainable solutions to the myriad problems facing these countries (1999:202).

The research design adopted in this study is exploratory, specifically the experience survey. According to Kothari (2014:36), experience survey means the survey of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied. For such survey, people who are competent and can contribute new ideas may be carefully selected as respondents to ensure a representation of different types of experiences.

3.3 Research Target Population

Singleton, Straits B.C, Straits M.M and McAllister (1998:134) define target population as the population to which the researcher would like to generalise his or her results. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:9-10), target population is the total set of subjects in a study where the research will be generalised. Within the target population the scholars identify accessible population.

For this study, the target population was print media journalists in Kenya as well as media experts. The study targeted respondents drawn from four media houses that produce daily newspapers (*Nation, Standard, Star and People*) as well as selected experts on media issues.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

Initially, 30 respondents were targeted but 21 of them (70%) participated in the study. The respondents were 8 editors, 9 senior reporters and 4 experts on media issues. The experts were a former media manager, a media consultant, and two others working in institutions dealing with media affairs.

The respondents were identified through purposive sampling method. According to Singleton, Straits B.C, Straits M.M and McAllister (1998:153), in this form of sampling the investigator relies on his or her expert judgment to select units that are representative or typical of the population:

The general strategy is to identify important sources of variation in the population and to select a single unit or sub-population that is thought to be typical of population in important aspects or select a few units that correspond key population differences (Singleton, Straits B.C, Straits M.M and McAllister, 1998: 153).

Purposive sampling was preferred because the study assumed that not everyone in the media industry is knowledgeable enough to provide insight on the operations of the industry. One of the factors likely to determine the envisaged response is experience gained by working in different media houses and wide knowledge gained through research and education. Wilson, Esiri and Onwubere (2008) observe:

The basic assumption under which purposive sampling is conducted is that with good judgment and an appropriate strategy, the researcher can select cases to be included in the sample and thus arrive at samples that meet one's needs (2008:154).

Many of the targeted respondents have worked for several media houses and, therefore, their responses were informed not just by experience in their current work stations but also the media industry in Kenya in general and over a considerable period of time, spanning across different socio-political environments. The non-practising experts provided independent observation, based on the assumption that

they would have no inhibitions in their responses as a result of affiliations to the targeted media houses.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The study utilised both in-depth interviews and self-administered questionnaires depending on researcher's convenience and respondents' preference. Both structured (closed-ended) and semi-structured (open-ended) questions were used. Self-administered questionnaires were sent via email while follow-up interviews were made via phone, where situations allowed. The study also relied on document reviews to complement responses gathered through primary research. The selected method enabled as many responses as possible in a short period, given that journalists are mostly on the move (reporters) or work over long period of time (editors). The interviews were conducted in Nairobi in October, 2014.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:95), reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. The scholars define validity as the degree to which the results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study (1999:99). This study ensured reliability and validity by sampling individuals who not only have wide experience in media practice but have also worked in several media houses. The responses captured, therefore, cut across a wide spectrum in terms of time and variety. The questions were carefully structured to avoid ambiguity. Opinion was also sought from individuals who were not employed in media houses to avoid bias associated with affiliation. Since no research assistants were used, there was uniformity in data collection and analysis.

3.7 Ethical issues

The study observed ethical issues. Information sourced from other works was duly acknowledged while only data collected from respondents were used and their originality maintained except for routine editing. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their confidentiality ensured. For instance, the respondents' names were not revealed in the research findings and discussions

section. All the respondents willingly participated in the research without any inducement or coercion.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999:203).

The responses received were analysed and classified thematically. They were compared and contrasted to establish patterns, trends and relationships. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999:117), researchers who use qualitative analysis are interested in analysing information in a systematic way in order to come to some useful conclusions and recommendations.

The completed questionnaires were edited and findings reported, indicating both firsthand experiences of the respondents on professional malpractice as well as general overview of challenges faced in the media. A table (see **Table 4.1**) was also used to relay findings when respondents were asked to rank the factors that affect professionalism.

The methodology employed in reporting the study findings is unique. By using direct quotations, the study allows the media practitioners to rely firsthand information.

3.9 Conclusion

This study adopted experience survey to get feedback from carefully selected respondents on professionalism in Kenyan media. The study's target population was print media journalists drawn from *Nation*, *Standard*, *The Star* and *Peoplenewspapers*, as well as experts on media issues. The respondents were identified through purposive sampling method and were selected based on their experience in various media houses.

In-depth interviews and self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data. Both structured (closed-ended) and semi-structured (open-ended) questions were used. The responses received were edited, analysed and classified thematically. The

findings were reported using both first person narratives to relay personal experiences and third person to give a general critical overview on professionalism.

Reliability and validity were ensured by selecting respondents whose view is representative of media practitioners based on their experiences and also using experts who have wide experience on media issues but are not currently employed by media houses.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the study subjects' responses based on the study objectives and research questions. The first section provides personal testimonies of the media practitioners and experts on the challenges faced in exercising professionalism. Most of the testimonies are provided through the first person experience to enable the respondents relay firsthand experiences on some of the circumstances that forced them to go against professional ethics. Besides the personal testimonies, the chapter also provides discussions on factors that impede professionalism in the media, as identified by the media practitioners and experts on media affairs. It critically analyses the responses provided by subjects who answered that there is adherence to media professionalism and also outlines, in order of significance, the factors that impede professionalism.

4.2 Personal Testimonies on Lapses in Professionalism

One of the questions posed to respondents in this study was: In your media practice, have you ever been compelled by circumstances to act in a manner you consider unprofessional?

A majority of the respondents (71%) admitted that they had been compelled by circumstances to act unprofessionally in the course of their duties while 29% said they had faced no such challenges. One of the major reasons given for unprofessional conduct is poor pay or inadequate facilitation by the employers while on duty. The study finding confirms the earlier studies by Ongonga and White (2008: 175-176) and Mbeke, Ugungu and Orlale (2010:31), who also established that poor remuneration affects professionalism in the media industry in Kenya.

An editor observed that he often accepted lunches from politicians and other sources since his employer did not provide for such or the provisions were grossly inadequate. In other instances, he had to go an extra mile to write a positive story on news sources who were kind or generous enough to give financial incentives.

A senior reporter argued that it is a norm in my media house to act in an unprofessional way. The most common malpractice is the disclosure of confidential sources, mostly in stories where senior media managers have interest in or are under pressure from authorities to reveal the sources of information on sensitive issues. Some stories that would only have appeared as fillers, or even discarded altogether, are given undue prominence when the subjects are linked to a top editor, manager or even the newspaper owners.

The editors are often under pressure to either downplay or discard public interest stories. An editor who used to be in charge of a column that handled complaints on service delivery in public and private firms reported that top management often ordered him to either discard or go slow on issues concerning key advertisers. This was after one of the major advertisers withdrew advertisements following a negative story. A court reporter also narrated a similar situation:

Some of the public interest stories are never published at all. We were forced to kill certain stories because they do not favour some people in public office or our own bosses have an interest in them. In some extreme cases, we are compelled to take certain angles or distort facts. One gets very embarrassed when a story published the following day is quite different from the other dailies. A magistrate once admonished me publicly for misreporting the facts in her ruling but I could not give an excuse on what had happened. (Interview with a court reporter, Nairobi, 2 October 2014).

Many editors use their positions to promote the political interests of their benefactors. They initiate story ideas that either promote their benefactors or portray their godfathers or opponents negatively. A senior writer narrated how he was prevailed upon to write a story to portray negatively a political leader:

After the botched ODM party elections, I was approached by an editor, whose loyalty was obviously with the government in power to write a story to prove that former Prime Minister Raila Odinga was no longer powerful. The premise of his argument was the ODM leader was a spent force and needed to give room to younger politicians in Nyanza. For a week, the editor selectively gave me quotes from Raila's rivals in Nyanza. I did the story, but based on comments and remarks I had obtained from my other sources, the story was rejected. Instead, a junior writer was assigned to seek comments to uphold the theory. (Interview with a senior writer, Nairobi, 6 October 2014).

It is the responsibility of senior editors to use their judgment to determine whether a story meets professional and legal threshold before it is published. However, the editors quite often surrender this responsibility to other competing interests, especially media owners. A senior editor said he and his colleagues were forced by the media owner to carry a story that they had advised him against. He recalled: "We were taken to court, lost the case and he did not care or regret."

In media practice, lack of professionalism is not just about what journalists do but also what they fail to do in accordance with their roles as the watchdogs of the society. This manifests itself through the "killing" of stories that touch on sensitive issues but which the public has the right to know. A news editor at one of the dailies recalled how a prominent businessman contacted one of his seniors and this led to the withdrawal of a major story that was being pursued concerning a controversial land deal.

The practice of bending professional ethics and obligations is entrenched. Almost everyone in the media, from the correspondents to the media owners, has links with individuals in high circles and caters for their interests whenever a negative story is being prepared. This also involves protecting one of their own. For instance, one of the editors interviewed said he decided not to use a story about his colleague who had been charged with sexually assaulting his house help. He argued: "I think this was more out of my loyalty to him as a colleague and friend."

Some reporters and even editors are on the payroll of certain individuals and organisations to either distort facts in stories that portray them negatively or alert them when such stories are lined up for publication. An investigative reporter said whenever he works on a very sensitive story he gets numerous threatening calls from the subjects involved and their cronies long before the story is published, despite the fact that only one or two top editors are privy to his assignments. In one of the newsrooms, a story that an editor had spent several weeks compiling from various sources and correspondents "disappeared mysteriously" from the system, including a copy saved elsewhere. She said: "Several senior editors had expressed a lot of interest in the story and I thought they were merely excited about its public interest angle."

Many favours extended to journalists by the government, corporate bodies and NGOs also compromise reporting standards. Senior editors and reporters, for instance, often accept local and foreign trips from various organisations that aim to push certain agendas and once back in the newsroom they write favourable stories on their benefactors. The payback gesture is often irresistible considering the fact that the media personalities are pampered during these trips. Besides being booked in high end hotels, they get generous out of pocket allowances and many of them end up being given consultancies or job opportunities once they move out of the media.

A reporter with one of the dailies said she is often a beneficiary of local and foreign trips organised by an embassy. When she received information on a scandal related with the embassy, she chose not to pursue the story because one of the individuals involved was the facilitator of her trips.

An editor who once worked for the then vibrant Kanu- owned *Kenya Times* said the paper often protected the political interests of certain individuals, a practice that is still prevalent today. Quite often, the paper could not publish a story about scandals involving Kanu officials but featured prominently the denial of a story carried by another paper. "The practice would be if we didn't break the story then we should leave it aside," he said. The editor had even been assigned extra duty to be on the lookout for negative stories against certain individuals and ensure that they were never published. Various respondents said some top government or corporate officials cannot feature in stories that portray them negatively because they provide advertisements to the newspapers or are close to the newspaper owners. And managers

One of the study limitations in this section is worth noting. Since many of the respondents are personally known to the interviewer, having been sampled purposively, some of them did not respond freely to the question probing their engagement in unprofessional conducts while others may have focused on "lesser evils." While some incidents were noticed, they were however not significant enough to alter the study outcome.

4.3 Other Factors Impeding Professionalism

Besides personal confessions of unprofessional conduct, the study respondents explained various factors that impede professionalism in the media industry. The study posed the question: In what ways are media houses and individual journalists compelled to act unprofessionally?

4.3.1 Advertisers' Pressure

One of the most cited reasons was pressure from the advertisers. The study confirmed earlier studies (e.g. Nyabuga 2012; Mbeke, Ugangu and Orlale 2010; and McBride 1986) that established that for media houses, the overriding issue is commercial interests. Senior media managers abhor journalists who write 'negative stories' about their core advertising clients. In some cases, journalists have lost their jobs, been demoted or reprimanded for writing stories deemed to be unfavourable to certain companies that advertise regularly and sustain media houses. Sometimes the pressure is not overt. Editors and reporters simply keep off negative stories involving major advertisers because, as one editor said, 'they know where their bread is buttered.'

4.3.2 Corruption and Call from Above

The editors' and reporters' independence is compromised due to reliance on politicians and corporate leaders' magnanimity. An editor observed that most Kenyan journalists, particularly correspondents, operate in very inhospitable environments and rely on politicians for meals and transport means. Some senior editors and senior writers are 'in the pockets' of senior politician and do their bidding at a fee. He observed:

The culture is so rampant that some journalists lead a lifestyle well beyond what their official pay can afford. Some media houses are so much allied to certain political parties (particularly the ruling party) that they cannot dare carry stories that are deemed to have negative implications on their "godfathers." (Interview with an editor, Nairobi, 7 October 2014).

In some cases the politicians or business magnates interfere directly via 'call from above' when they obtain information that negative stories about them have been lined up for publication. They call either the top executives or newspaper owners who in turn call top editors to tell them to drop the stories or edit them substantially.

4.3.3 Red Tape

While journalism ethics demands that journalists should identify themselves fully when gathering news and avoid any underhand tactics (see **Appendix I**), this is often not the case due to bureaucracy and secrecy involved in obtaining official news. One reporter observed:

Journalists are forced to steal official documents to support their stories. Some of these documents are supposed to be public documents but are hidden by government officials in order to shield some information from the public. Some of the common cases include missing files at Attorney General's office or Registrar of Companies. Sometimes journalists have to bribe to get such documents yet they are supposed to be readily available for public perusal. (Interview with a reporter, Nairobi, 2 October 2014).

This indicates that despite the right to seek information being guaranteed by The Constitution of Kenya (2012), under the Bill of Rights in Chapter 4, sections 33 and 35, journalists do not enjoy these rights yet. For instance Section 35 (1) (a) and (b) states that every citizen has the right of access to information held by the state and information held by any other person and required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom.

4.3.4 Poor Pay

Majority of the respondents (65%) pointed out that poor payment adversely affects professionalism. Because of poor pay, journalists are prone to manipulation. Some cadre of journalists rely on news sources for their rent, school fees or even meal and fare. Objectivity is compromised since the writers are more interested in pleasing their benefactors than adhering to professional ethics or pursuing stories of public interest.

The most affected cadre of journalists are correspondents, who are the majority of newspaper contributors. According to Mbeke, Orlale and Ugungu (2010:31), correspondents and stringers make 70% of media contributors and some of them earn less than Sh10,000 a month. Their salaries are irregular since they earn on the basis of the size of stories they publish per month. Several interviewees pointed out that despite the correspondents' meagre pay, many of them drive top range cars, own palatial homes and even own several plots, an indication that they benefit immensely from other sources other than their official pay.

4.3.5 Poor Training

Professionalism in the Kenyan media is impeded since some of the mushrooming colleges do not offer quality training. The study confirmed the earlier one by Mbeke, Orlale and Ugangu (2010:32), which found out that media training institutions do not have common standards while some of the training institutions do not have syllabi outlines or description of the courses on offer. During the study, a media scholar observed:

Poor training impacts on the final product that is published. A poorly trained journalist will have no ethics and will not honour the tenets of professionalism. For example such journalists can be used by politicians to fight their wars through the media. Lack of proper training in journalism means media cannot hold the power to account effectively. For it to play this role, its editors and reporters must be well versed with the beats they cover. This way, they stand to ask tough questions.(Interview with a media scholar, Nairobi, 14 October 2014).

4.3.6 Untrained Managers

Unlike in other professions, top managers of several media houses are not professionally trained journalists. Several respondents in the study argued that professionalism can be greatly enhanced in media practice if the people appointed to run the industry are professional journalists. Citing examples, a senior writer argued that the appointment of Chaacha Mwita as the Editorial Director at Standard Group played a critical role in redeeming the media house's reporting, since he worked independent of a CEO who was not a professional journalist. He observed:

However, it badly dwindled later on in April 2014 when he was dismissed. Being a complex business to manage, therefore, media should adopt the 'set a thief to catch a thief strategy. This has been perfected at Nation Media Group where Tom Mshindi, a veteran journalist, is not only the firm's Chief Operating Officer but also an Acting Editorial Director. This way, he can diligently balance between editorial independence and the fact that the company must generate revenues.(Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 15 October 2014).

4.3.7 Professional Body

Lack of a strong professional body to guide journalists impacts on professionalism. While there are several media associations such as AMWIK, KJA, KCA, KSWA and KEG a media expert argued these associations mostly address welfare issues instead

of emphasising professionalism and fall short of meeting professional body threshold. This view contrasted with Mbeke, Orlaleand Ugangu (2010:34), who identified these institutions as media associations that promote professional behaviour by promoting networking opportunities.

4.3.8 Regulations

In an earlier study, Helander (2010:522) observed that although there has been a more pluralist media since the early 1990s and a less oppressive political environment, the influence of the government has been prevalent through regulations. This view was corroborated by a media expert, who pointed out that while the Constitution guarantees media freedom, there are a number of laws that restrict the realisation of the same, citing NIS Act and the CAK Act.

Respondents said although freedom of the press in Kenya is high compared to some African countries. It is still wanting following the signing into law the contentious Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill by President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2013. Media outlets and individual journalists risk hefty fines if they fail to adhere to government-established standards and code of conduct.

4.3.9 Tribalism

One of the emerging trends in journalism practice in Kenya is ethnicity. Several respondents observed that some writers, editors, top managers and media owners side with politicians from their respective tribes even when such politicians are wrong on certain issues. A senior editor observed that many journalists have let their political/ethnic leanings to inform their reporting and editing and slant stories in favour of the parties/groups they are affiliated to:

There is too much 'access journalism' where the line between the journalist as watchdog and their individual support for news-makers, on either grounds of ethnicity or other basis, gets blurred, blunting the journalists' capacity to vet those in power. (Interview with a senior editor, Nairobi, 18 October 2014).

Tribalism does not just manifest itself in reporting. Some top editors and other cadres of media managers are appointed and swiftly promoted on the account of their tribe. Many of them are charged with catering the political interests of the individuals close

to the media owners or even the owners themselves. As a result, individuals with low education standards and professional competence supervise and even overrule the more competent ones on critical editorial issues. As one respondent observed, "not only is their sense of news judgement impaired but even the capacity to write or edit a story."

4.3.10 New Technology

The new information technology that makes access to news instant has put a lot of pressure on media houses and individual journalists. There is often rivalry to bask in the glory of being the first to break the story. The resultant hurry has greatly affected professionalism. The urge to beat deadline compromises quality. As a result, many facts are never verified, the right of reply is never observed, balance is sacrificed, background information is scant and editing is compromised. In some extreme cases, writers "invent" quotes to beat deadlines while photo journalists "steal" images from the internet or manipulate them for greater impact.

4.4 Yes Perspective Overview

Out of the respondents interviewed, only 29% said Kenyan journalists enjoy freedom to practise their profession and meet public expectations. Significantly, almost all the explanations given to support their assertions still pointed at the fact that professionalism is not entrenched in media practice. For instance, a chief sub-editor who said that the media enjoys independence and credibility explained thus:

Journalists in Kenya enjoy a great deal of — but not limitless — freedom in reporting. They have other considerations to bear in mind, which may limit their freedom. For example, if a story will reflect negatively on their media house they may choose to be economical with the truth or kill the story. This is not in the best interests of the public. Likewise for a story about a political personality or party. Libel laws also keep journalists' hands tied, by compelling them not to reveal information that the public deserves to know, but is slanderous. (Interview with a chief sub editor, Nairobi, 7 October 2014).

A respondent answered "yes" when asked if there was media freedom and responsibility but also argued that the signing into law the contentious Kenya

Information and Communications (Amendment) Bill by President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2013 is a drawback to freedom.

An editor argued that journalists are free to interview anyone at any time and interrogate facts but pointed that sometimes they do not meet public expectations ònot because of lack of freedom, but laziness or because of being embedded to political parties or individual politicians.ö

While the aforementioned arguments were meant to support professionalism in the media, they pointed out various shortcomings that do not assert professionalism. This indicates that even those who gave a straight òYesö when asked whether they believe Kenyan journalists enjoy freedom to practise their profession and meet public expectations have reservations on professional practice in the media.

4.5 Professional Threats Magnitude

The study also sought to find out from respondents the top five factors, in order of significance, that impede professionalism. Their responses are summarised in **Table 4.1**. These factors were analysed based on the ranking in terms of the topmost factors cited and also the factors that were most frequently cited.

Table 4.1: Top Five Greatest Threats to Professionalism in Order of Significance

Respondent	No.1 cause	No.2	No.3	No.4	No. 5
A	Political/ethnic partiality	Spin doctors	Threats	Corruption	Poor pay
B	Commercial interests	Corruption	Poor training	Poor working conditions	Poor professional organisations
C	Ownership system	Stiff Competition	Advertisers influence	Untrained managers	Poor pay
D	Intimidation	Job insecurity.	Poor pay	news sources uncooperative	Public ignorance
E	Poor training	Poor registration	Poor pay	Owner influence	Job insecurity
F	Journalists bias	State interference	Commercial interests	Owner influence	Poor training
G	Poor training	Poor pay	Journalists bias	No public editor	Newsroom bullying
H	Poor training	Poor pay	No professional body	Hostile political climate	Commercial interests

I	Corruption	Regulations	Ethnicity/politics in hiring staff	Poor training	Insecurity while working
J	Tribalism	Poor pay	Political leanings	Religious leanings	Journalists bias
K	Poor training	Regulations	Advertisers influence	Poor pay	Owner influence
L	Corruption	Intimidation	Poor training	Low funding	Owner influence
M	Poor pay	Political patronage	Advertisers influence	intimidation of journalists	Poor training
N	Corruption	Poor pay	Insecurity while working	Low ethics enforcement	Work pressure
O	Corruption	Tribalism	Laziness	Poor training	poor pay
P	Poor pay	Poor training	-----	-----	-----
Q	Tribalism	Poor pay	Journalists bias	Owner influence	Commercial interest
R	Advertisers influence	Poor pay	Corrupt editors	Owner influence	Poor work conditions
S	Political influence	Tribalism	Corruption	Advertisersø influence	Media ownership
T	Commercial interests	Poor pay	Corruption	Working conditions	Owner interference
U	Poor training	Insecurity	Stiff regulations	Poor pay	Advertisers

In terms of ranking, the most cited factors were poor training and poor pay, as noted by 65% of the respondents in each case. In terms of frequency, the trend was the same. Poor training and poor pay were most cited among respondents (65%).

While the issue of poor pay was straightforward, it was not clear what poor training specifically meant since most of the observation was general and there was no evidence that those who went to more reputable training institutions were more professional than those who studied in low rated ones. This was beyond the scope of this study. However, as noted in the subsequent concluding chapter, this is one of the study areas that require further interrogation. Notably, state interference, media ownersø interference and advertisersø influence were not highlighted as the topmost factors, despite having been cited frequently by many respondents.

One noticeable departure from the previous related study findings is the issue of tribalism as an impediment to professionalism in media practice. This could be attributed to the aftermath of the hotly disputed 2013 General Election, which divided

the nation along tribal lines. In this study, 25% of the respondents observed that tribalism is a hindrance to professional journalism in Kenya.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter captured the personal testimonies of respondents on how they have wittingly or unwittingly contributed to malpractice in journalism practice. It then delved into general issues that impede professionalism.

Generally, the study confirmed several related studies but also provided more insight. Issues such as poor pay, interference by advertisers, media owners and politicians, poor training, and corruption featured prominently.

However, unlike many previous studies, this study sought to find out the magnitude of the impeding factors and identified poor pay and poor training as the most prominent factors. The study also found out that tribalism is one of the emerging issues in media practice, a factor that has not featured prominently in other studies. Another emerging issue is that CEOs heading media houses but who are not professionally trained journalists are impediments to professionalism.

The study utilized practitioners and experts as the respondents in order to gain from practical insider information. It also focused on the print media, which is largely ignored as many researches focus on electronic media whenever ethical and professional issues are explored.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter recaps the whole study, highlighting the objectives, sampling, methodology and the findings. It gives an overview of the major findings in the study. Based on the findings, the chapter offers some of the recommendations that can be applied by authorities, media houses and individual journalists to improve professionalism in media practice.

5.2 Conclusions

The overall objective of this research project was to establish whether or not Kenyan journalists practise professionalism, mainly the freedom to operate without internal and external interference and responsibility to the societal needs and expectations. This study was undertaken to contribute to existing knowledge as well as critically examine the current media operations.

The study respondents, who are practising writers and editors as well as experts on media issues, were selected purposively and interviewed in-depth on whether the media industry exercises professionalism and, if not, explain the factors that impede professionalism.

A majority of respondents (71%) said the media does not adhere to professionalism. Several factors were cited. One of the major factors is poor remuneration. An underpaid journalist is highly prone to manipulation and this impairs objectivity in reporting and editing, a cardinal principal in media professionalism.

Corruption manifests itself in form of brown envelope journalism, a practice that Skjerdal (2010:369) describes as a journalistic activity which involves transfer of various rewards from sources to the reporter.

The study established that there is no standardisation in media training while some of the mushrooming media training institutions are ill equipped to train journalists who

uphold professional ethics. In some extreme cases, trainees are taught by individuals who lack skills in journalism theory and practice.

The advertisers' influence was noted. The advertisers keep the newspaper business afloat and have capitalised on this influence to dictate terms in the day-to-day media operations and decisions. Quite often, media stories are highlighted, downplayed or even shunted in accordance with the advertisers' wishes.

Newspaper owners are a hindrance to professionalism. Their overriding factor is the business side of the media industry as opposed to responsibility to the society. A number of institutions are also owned by politicians and view their business as a medium to perpetuate their political aspirations.

Despite the significant changes in the socio-political atmosphere, the influence of the government on media operation is still prevalent through stiff regulations and advertising.

Unlike in other professions, most of the chief executives appointed to run the media industry are not professional journalists. They focus more on the business aspect than integrity and social responsibility.

There is also lack of a strong professional body to regulate journalism practice. Most of the existing associations merely play the welfare role. The Media Council of Kenya, whose mandate is to regulate journalism practice, is state-controlled and does not enjoy full support of media practitioners and stakeholders.

Direct political interference was noted. Many leading politicians control media content by manipulating reporters, editors and even media owners or threatening investigative journalists who are interested in their shady activities. Several media houses are owned by politicians (e.g. the Standard Group and Mediamax) or by those who are politically connected or openly take stand in political duels (Royal Media Services).

5.3 Recommendations

If the media operates in an environment that enables freedom to discharge its responsibilities and also be conscious of social responsibilities, its watchdog role will be enhanced. This will contribute to positive reforms in the society and contribute

towards the creation of a culture of civil discourse, transparency and government accountability. Some of the ways through which the media can be empowered to enhance professionalism are:

- Media owners should review the existing salary structures and improve remuneration so that journalists are not easily manipulated by financial rewards to sacrifice professional standards.
- Media houses should fully cater for journalists trips or carefully scrutinise sponsored ones to ensure that the purpose is not to interfere with professional integrity of reporters and editors.
- There is need for standardisation in media training to ensure uniformity in practice standards across media houses and individual journalists.
- The Government should impose tough regulations to ensure that only the media training institutions that meet the requisite standards are allowed to operate.
- Media owners should employ professional journalists as CEOs since they are better placed to understand the dynamics and demands of the profession. They should also delink themselves from the day-to-day running of newspapers
- Advertising should be regulated, especially in the public sector, so that no expenditure of more than 40% of total advertisement budget on one media house. This will deter some public offices from using their financial muscle to muzzle the press.
- Enactment of firm constitutional guarantees of a free press and freedom of information to curtail the influence of the government on media operation.
- Formation of a strong and independent professional body to regulate journalism practice.
- Strengthening the courts, the police, and the justice system, and generally, the rule of law, to provide adequate protection for journalists.
- Continuous in-house and refresher courses locally and abroad to broaden the experiences and improve the level of skills in various areas of journalism, especially investigative reporting.
- Instituting awards and other forms of recognition for excellence in watchdog reporting.
- Introducing a mandatory requirement that for one to be a journalist they must have gone through specified training just as lawyers and doctors. At the moment, anyone

passes of as a journalist, including DJs and comedians employed in some media houses.

- The public should be sensitised on the role of the media in the society in order to end hostility posed to some journalists.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Study

A majority of respondents in the study identified poor training as a key impediment in media professionalism. This study did not explore deeper the gaps in the training of journalists in Kenya. There is, therefore, need for a detailed study focusing on media training institutions in the country and the role they can play to improve media practice.

The issue of advertisements as impediments to the independence and integrity of media practice also featured prominently but there were no clear-cut suggestions on how this issue could be overcome. This issue needs to be explored broadly in future studies.

A future study of this nature should also infuse focus group discussions methodology so that several factors can be interrogated deeply instead of one-on-one interview with respondents and questionnaires.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Code of Conduct for Journalism Practice in Kenya

RECOGNISING that freedom of speech is a basic element of a democratic society and that free and independent mass media are among the most important institutions in a democratic society;

EMPHASISING the individual's and the community's fundamental freedoms of expression and information;

ACCEPTING that as a social institution, the mass media discharge crucial duties by carrying information, debates and critical comments on society, and that the mass media are therefore particularly responsible for allowing different views to be expressed;

NOTING the duty of the mass media to protect the freedom of expression and of the media and not to yield to any pressure from any person or authority who might want to prevent the free flow of information, free access to sources of information and open debate on any matters of importance to society;

REALISING that it is the duty of the mass media to publish information on what goes on in society and to uncover and disclose matters which ought to be subjected to debate or criticism;

NOTING that all journalists and the mass media have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards;

EMPHASISING the importance of maintaining accuracy in reporting and protection of privacy of individuals;

ACCEPTING the duty of the mass media to protect individuals against injustices or neglect committed by public authorities and institutions or private bodies or institutions and individuals;

REALISING the need to regulate the conduct of every person working for the mass media;

THEREFORE THIS CODE shall guide the conduct of journalists and the mass media.

Accuracy and Fairness

A journalist shall write, and the mass media shall publish, broadcast or report fair, accurate and unbiased stories. All sides of a story shall be reported, and comments from any person mentioned in an unfavourable context shall be obtained as appropriate.

Whenever it is recognised that an inaccurate, misleading or distorted report has been published or broadcast, it shall be corrected promptly. In effecting corrections, the medium shall publish or broadcast the correct information and not restate the error except where clarity demands such restatement.

An apology shall be published (in the case of the print media) or broadcast (in the case of the electronic media) as appropriate.

Opportunity to Reply

- 1) A fair opportunity to reply to inaccuracies shall be given to individuals or organisations when that is reasonably called for.
- 2) If a request to correct inaccuracies in a story is made in the form of a letter, the editor shall have the discretion to publish or broadcast it in full; or the editor may publish or broadcast an abridged or edited version, particularly where the letter is inordinately long, provided that the edited or abridged version shall be an effective reply to the allegations.
- 3) The editor shall not omit or refuse to publish or broadcast important portions of the reply or rejoinder which effectively deal with the accuracy of the reply or rejoinder.
- 4) Even if the editor doubts the truth or factual accuracy of the reply or rejoinder, he or she shall publish or broadcast it with liberty to append an editorial comment doubting its veracity. This shall be done only when this doubt is reasonably founded on unimpeachable evidence in the editor's possession.

- 5) The editor shall not, in a cavalier fashion, or without due application of his or her mind, append such a note as: "We stand by our story."

Letters to the Editor

- 1) In the case of the print media, an editor who decides to open his or her columns on a controversial subject is not obliged to publish all the letters received on that subject.
- 2) The editor may select and publish only some of the letters either in their entirety or the gist thereof.
- 3) In exercising this freedom, the editor shall make an honest attempt to ensure that what is published is not one-sided but presents a fair balance between the pros and cons of the principal issue.
- 4) In the event of rejoinder upon rejoinder being sent by two or more parties on a controversial subject, the editor shall have discretion to decide at what point to end the debate.
- 5) In the case of the electronic media, a broadcasting licensee who airs a program in which controversial issues of public interest are discussed, shall make reasonable efforts to present significant points of view in a fair manner. Such points of view may be presented either in the same program or in a subsequent one, forming part of the same series of programs, presented within a reasonable period of time in substantially the same time slot.
- 6) Any person whose views are criticised in a broadcasting program on a controversial issue of public interest shall be given a reasonable opportunity to reply should such person so request.

Unnamed Sources

- 1) Unnamed sources shall not be used unless the public interest or the pursuit of truth is best served by not naming the source.
- 2) When material is used in a report from sources other than the reporter's, these sources shall be indicated in the story or the broadcast.

Confidentiality

- 1) Journalists shall have the obligation to protect confidential sources of information.
- 2) In circumstances where complete confidentiality is requested as a condition of obtaining a story, the requirement shall be respected and considered in a manner consistent with the law.

Misrepresentation

- 1) A journalist shall identify himself or herself and not obtain or seek to obtain information or picture through misrepresentation or subterfuge.
- 2) Subterfuge shall, subject to paragraph (1), be justified only in the public interest and only where material cannot be obtained by any other means.
- 3) Unless the public interest demands it, documents or photographs shall be removed or taken only with the express consent of the owner.
- 4) The public interest shall include:
 - a) detecting or exposing crime or serious misdemeanour or anti-social conduct;
 - b) protecting public health, morality or security; or
 - c) preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action.

Obscenity, Taste and Tone in Reporting

- 1) The mass media shall not publish or broadcast anything which is obscene, vulgar or offensive to public good taste. A story, photograph or drawing of questionable taste shall be published or broadcast only if it has significant news value and when overriding public interest demands.
- 2) Good taste shall be determined by the prevailing social norms, and the test shall be based on the standard whether the material is so vulgar that it is likely to deprave; or it is likely to be regarded as "filthy", "dirty" or "lewd."
- 3) With regard to pictures, the following guidelines shall apply:
 - a) Is it vulgar and revolting?
 - b) Is it pornographic?
 - c) Is its publication meant merely to make money by titillating the sexual feelings of the adolescents or adults among whom it is intended to circulate? In other words, does it constitute "unwholesome exploitation of sex for the sake of money?"

- 4) Publication of photographs showing mutilated bodies or other horrible scenes shall be prohibited unless the non publication of such photographs will compromise overriding public interest.
- 5) Television stations especially shall exercise great care and responsibility when presenting programs where a large number of children is likely to be part of the audience or viewership.

Plagiarism

- 1) Using someone else's work without attribution or acknowledgement, whether deliberately or thoughtlessly, is prohibited.
- 2) Statements or words directly quoted from sources other than the reporting journalist shall be attributed.

Discrimination

- 1) The mass media shall avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's race, ethnicity, clan, religion, political affiliation, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or handicap. Such references shall be eschewed unless they are germane to a story.
- 2) Every person shall be accorded equal treatment as a news subject or source and no journalist shall deliberately deny the right of any group to exposure in the mass media.

Recording Interviews and Telephone Conversations

- 1) Except in rare and justifiable cases, no journalist shall make a recording of any person without that person's knowledge and consent.
- 2) Exception may be made only if the recording is necessary to protect the journalist in a legal action, or for some other compelling reason, and if no other approach is appropriate.

Privacy

- 1) Intrusion and inquiries into an individual's private life without the person's consent is prohibited unless overriding public interest exists.

- 2) Matters concerning a person's home, family, religion, ethnicity, race, clan, sexuality, political affiliation, personal life and private affairs are covered by the concept of privacy, except where this impinges upon the public interest.

Intrusion into Grief or Shock

In cases involving personal grief or shock, inquiries shall be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion.

Provision against Insider Dealing

- 1) No journalist shall use information, received in the course of his or her duties in advance of its general publication, for monetary or other profit; nor shall he or she pass such information to third parties.
- 2) No journalist shall write about shares or securities in whose performance that journalist or his or her associates or members of his or her family have a financial interest without disclosing the interest to the editor.
- 3) No journalist shall buy or sell, either directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities about which he or she intends to write in the near future.

Conflict of Interest and Unfair Advantage

- 1) Journalists and their employers shall conduct themselves in a manner that protects them from real or apparent conflicts of interest.
- 2) Such conflicts of interest may arise through accepting gifts, bribes, favours, free travel, special treatment or any other form of inducement or privilege.

Comment, Conjecture and Fact

Journalists shall distinguish clearly in their reports between comment, conjecture and fact. They shall write in such a manner that the reader is able to distinguish among comment, conjecture and fact.

Protection of Children

- 1) Children shall not be identified in cases concerning sexual offences, whether as victims, witnesses or defendants.

- 2) Except in matters of public interest, like in cases of child abuse, neglect or abandonment, no journalist shall interview or photograph a child on subjects involving the child's personal welfare in the absence of or without the consent of a parent or other adult responsible for the child.
- 3) A child shall not be approached or photographed while at school without the permission of the school authorities.
- 4) For the purposes of this code, a child is any person below the age of eighteen years.

Victims of Sex Crimes

The mass media shall not identify victims of sexual assault or publish material likely to contribute to such identification unless this is expressly provided under law.

Use of Pictures and Names

The mass media shall apply caution and discretion in the publication or other use of pictures and names to avoid the possibility of harming the person concerned.

Verification of Reports before Publication

- 1) Where an editor receives a report, photograph, radio, television program or video, containing defamatory or derogatory imputations or comments touching on the public conduct or character of an individual or organisation, he or she shall, before publishing the information, check with due care and attention, its factual accuracy, apart from other authentic sources, with the person or organisation concerned to elicit comments or reactions.
- 2) Where the person or organisation so contacted refuses, despite sincere efforts by the editor, to comment, a footnote to the effect shall be published along with the report, article or broadcast.

Innocent Relatives and Friends

The mass media shall avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime unless the reference to them is necessary for the full, fair and accurate reporting of the crime or legal proceedings.

Acts of Violence

- 1) The mass media shall avoid presenting acts of violence, armed robbery, and banditry and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct.
- 2) The mass media shall not allow their columns or air time to be used for writings or broadcasts which have a tendency to encourage or glorify social evils, war-like activities, or ethnic, racial, political or religious hostilities.

Covering Ethnic Disputes or Clashes

- 1) News, views or comments relating to ethnic or religious disputes or clashes shall be published after proper verification of facts, and shall be presented with due caution and restraint and in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to national harmony, amity and peace.
- 2) Sensational, provocative and alarming headlines shall be avoided.
- 3) News reports of commentaries shall not be written in a manner likely to inflame the passion, aggravate the tension or accentuate strained relations between the communities concerned.
- 4) Articles with the potential to exacerbate communal trouble shall not be published.

Headlines not to be Sensational or Provocative

Provocative or sensational headlines shall not be published; headings shall reflect and justify the matter printed under them and headings containing allegations made in statements shall either identify the body or the source making it or at least carry quotation marks.

Judicial Acts

The mass media or journalists shall avoid unfair and unwarranted criticism which by innuendo attributes an oblique or extraneous motive to a judge for performing an act in the course of his or her official duties, whether or not such criticism amounts to contempt of court.

Editor's Responsibility

- 1) The editor shall assume responsibility under the terms of this Code for all matters, including advertisements, published in the print media or broadcast on radio or television.
- 2) Where responsibility is disclaimed, this shall be explicitly stated beforehand.

Advertisement

Broadcasters shall not broadcast advertisements intended for or related to the purposes of a political party unless other political parties are provided with opportunities to advertise which are no less favourable.

Appendix II: Questionnaire Covering Letter

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is OtumaOngalo, a Master of Arts in Communication Studies student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking a research study entitled:*A Critical Analysis of Media Professionalism in Kenya*.The objective of the study is to examine factors that affect professionalism. I have identified you as one of my key informants in this study and request you to kindly respond to the attached questionnaire as soon as possible. Information provided will be treated with utmost confidence and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. If you have any question about this, please get in touch with the University of Nairobi via:

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Nairobi

P. O. Box 30197-00100

Tel: +254-020 -318262

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Yours faithfully

OtumaOngalo

0714831252

Appendix III: Questionnaire

1. Do you believe Kenyan journalists enjoy freedom to practise their profession and meet public expectations? (delete inappropriate option)

Yes

No.

2. If the response to the above question is YES, please explain briefly?

3. If the response to the above question is NO, please explain briefly, outlining factors that hinder freedom and responsibility

4. In your media practice, have you ever been compelled by circumstances to act in a manner you consider unprofessional?

Yes

No

5. If your response to the above question is YES, Please provide a brief anecdote of the situation.

6. In what ways are media houses and individual journalists compelled to act unprofessionally?

7. In your view, and in order of significance, list five factors that impede professional journalism in Kenya.

i.

ii.

iii.

iv.

v.

8. How does the **first factor** that you have outlined above affect professionalism?

9. In what ways can professionalism be enhanced in media practice?