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# Working conditions in the Ghanaian media



**Abena Animwaa Yeboah-Banin and Sulemana Braimah**

## Abstract

Ghana's media remain one of the most celebrated across the continent, for its expansive and liberal ecosystem. With an exponential growth rate and a generally liberal atmosphere for discourse, it is easy to assume that all is well in the media. However, anecdotal evidence about the economics and management practices in the media suggests that all may not be well, particularly, with professionals who work in the space. This chapter examines working conditions in the media by exploring issues of entry and exit, remuneration, welfare, resources for work and policies to govern individual conduct. It reports evidence of high levels of opacity in recruitment practices. Media personnel are also poorly paid with many working without the benefit of healthcare support nor pensions. The study also reveals that media organisations, generally, have no codified protocols to guide employee behaviour. The chapter concludes with a number of recommendations for regulators and media owners/managers and associations.

**Keywords:** Working conditions, media professionals, employee welfare, salaries in media

## Introduction

Ghana's media industry has seen significant growth in the Fourth Republic. What begun in 1993 as a sector with a handful of newspapers, one national TV station and about a dozen radio stations run by the state broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), is now a huge industry. By the third quarter of 2022, some 513 radio stations were

in operation (NCA, 2022). There were also 113 TV stations, and over a hundred newspapers. Several digital news, and blogging platforms are also thriving although the big social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are more popular.

Prior to the Fourth Republic, trained media professionals had only a few outlets. The GBC, the then Graphic Corporation, New Times Corporation and the Ghana News Agency, and a few private newspaper outlets were the only available options. The presence and pervasiveness of private media in Ghana today means that professionals have more employment openings. However, once they enter the industry, media professionals must have the wherewithal to produce optimal results. Thus, where resources for work are unavailable, the opportunity for media personnel to produce interesting and impactful stories may be challenged. Similarly, poorly remunerated employees become vulnerable to unprofessional practices (Alhassan & Abdulai, 2019) that ultimately reduce the credibility of the media sector. Clearly, the capacity of media professionals to work to expectation depends on their working conditions (Chukwudumebi & Kifordu, 2018).

While anecdotal claims often reference poor working conditions in the media, empirical evidence remains a challenge, denying policy makers and actors of requisite empirics for remedial responses. This chapter addresses the challenge by presenting evidence on working conditions in the media. It seeks to support policy and advocacy efforts with empirical evidence that enables improvements in working conditions. The specific objectives are to:

- explore recruitment practices in the Ghanaian media.

- explore job security issues in the Ghanaian media.
- examine employee remuneration in the Ghanaian media.
- explore provisions for employee pension, healthcare and support for family in the event of death.
- examine perceptions about the availability of resources for work.
- examine the state of institutional arrangements towards creating conducive work environments.

### Design of the study

The evidence presented in this chapter is drawn from a mixed methods study combining a survey, key-informant interviews and digital ethnography.

A survey of employees in 200 media organisations across the country was conducted using Google Forms. A probability sampling technique was used to select the organisations using the NCA's quarterly bulletin on the electronic media, Geopoll's print media rankings and FeedSpot's ranking of top news websites. However, the absence of a database of media employees forced us to use convenience sampling techniques to identify individual participants. We relied on data supplied by the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and the Media Foundation for West Africa to identify employees in the selected organisations. The former was a list of contact details of personnel from different media houses that the GJA had compiled for Electoral Commission accreditation to cover the 2020 general elections. The MFWA list comprised contact details of persons who had been included in its capacity building workshops.

Persons identified (in the two lists) from each selected organisation were invited by trained research assistants to participate in the study<sup>1</sup>. The first respondents to agree to participate were given the link to the survey through email or text. After two rounds of bi-weekly reminder prompts, 154 survey completions were achieved representing a 77 percent response rate. The survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Three key informant interviews were used to explore the quantitative evidence. The interviewees were a radio presenter (INT 1), a general manager of a broadcasting group (INT 2) and a radio station

manager (INT 3). Interviews were held based on their convenience, on telephone or in-person. They explored working conditions in the media as regards issues of remuneration, welfare, recruitment, among others.

The third method employed in evidence gathering was digital ethnography (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). Conversations on a WhatsApp platform to which the lead researcher has access were mined for comments about working conditions in media. The conversations ensued after a member had posted information encouraging members, predominantly journalists, to take up 'side hustles' [side jobs] to supplement their meagre earnings from media. The discussions that followed centred around working conditions and followed a natural course without any prompts from the researcher. Contributors whose comments are used in this analysis were all notified privately and given the opportunity to consent to the use of their information. Their identities are anonymized as Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Speaker 3 and Speaker 4.

### Survey data profile

Survey respondents were drawn from a cross section of media (Table 1), working in the radio sector (60%) or converged media with presence across different platforms (e.g., newspapers, websites, TV and radio) (Fig. 1). The profile of their employer organisations indicates a good spread with 57 percent being small or medium-sized entities with employees ranging between 8 and 30. Sampled media with more than 30 employees constitute 43 percent (Fig. 2).

**Table 1:** Regional distribution of media from which data was gathered

Region	Frequency	%
Accra	44	28.6
Ashanti	39	25.3
Eastern	2	1.3
Western	7	4.5
Central	2	1.3
Volta	11	7.1
Bono east	7	4.5
Bono	6	3.9

<sup>1</sup> In a few instances, the databases did not include information on some selected media houses. In such cases, a trained research assistant (a graduate student of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana) physically visited the media to administer the instrument to one editorial or production staff member, on a convenience basis.

Northern	14	9.1
Western north	2	1.3
Upper east	3	1.9
Upper west	11	7.1
Savannah	5	3.2
Oti	1	.6
Total	154	100.0

Fig. 1: Frequency distribution of media

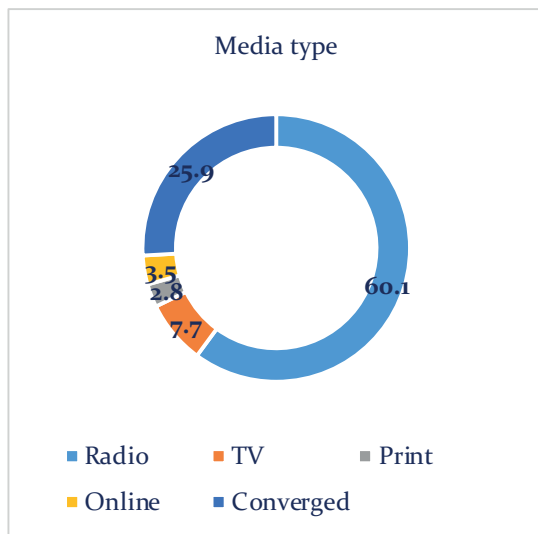
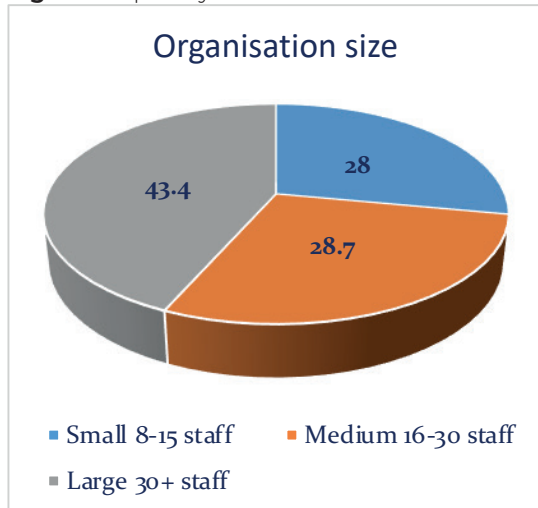


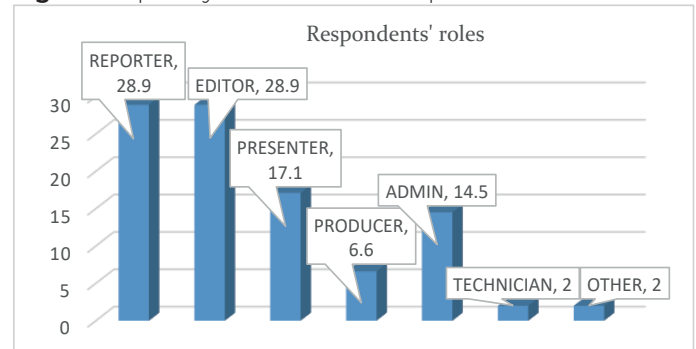
Fig. 2: Frequency distribution of size of media



The survey respondents had a gender distribution of three males to one female. Respondents had industry experience spanning one to 25 years with the average being 10 years. Their roles in the media

organisations were varied and included editorial staff, administrative staff and technical staff (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Frequency distribution of respondents' roles



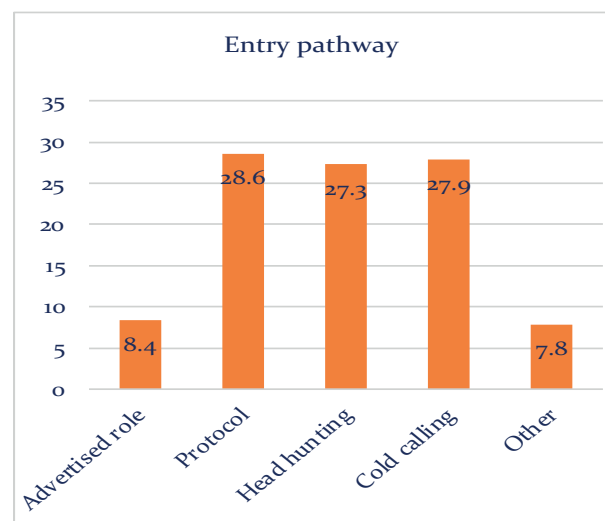
### Findings

#### Entry, progression and exit in the Ghanaian media

Organisational practices around recruitment and employee turnover are critical for the attraction and retention of talent and skill (Yusliza et.al., 2021). This is because employee status and working conditions are often linked to how people were employed (Adeniran et. al., 2020). The study sought to find out how people are recruited into the Ghanaian media i.e., whether through open competition or not. Four recruitment options were given to respondents to choose from – protocol/introduction<sup>2</sup>, head-hunting, cold calling<sup>3</sup> and openly advertised roles.

Findings show that most respondents (85%) entered their organisations through channels not open to competition. These included 'protocol/introduction' = 29%; head hunting = 27% and cold calling = 28%. Together, these suggest that recruitment practices are not very transparent.

Fig. 4: Modes of respondents' entry into media



<sup>2</sup> Protocol is slang for 'whom you know'-based advantages.

<sup>3</sup> Where prospective employees introduce themselves to media owners/recruiters in search of job opportunities.

**Table 2:** Cross-tabulation of entry mode and gender

Mode of entry into organisation	MALE	FEMALE	Total
Advertised role	12 10.7%	1 2.4%	13 8.5%
Protocol/influence	29 25.9%	14 34.1%	43 28.1%
Headhunting	35 31.2%	7 17.1%	42 27.5%
Cold calling	29 25.9%	14 34.1%	43 28.1%
Other	7 6.2%	5 12.2%	12 7.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b> <b>100.0%</b>	<b>41</b> <b>100.0%</b>	<b>153</b> <b>100.0%</b>

It appears that these pathways of entry into the media are gendered (Table 2). Males (31%) are almost twice as likely to have been headhunted than females (17%) who, on the other hand, tended to come through protocol pathways or cold-calls. It appears that women may have less specialised skills that attract media owners and recruiters. Also, women may not have the visibility or stature to come to attention and be headhunted.

As shown in Table 3, some differences also emerge in the recruitment practices of media depending on whether they are city-based or not. The latter uses four times more openly competitive channels than city-based media.

**Table 3:** Cross-tabulation of recruitment channel and media location

Mode of employee entry	Location of media		Total
	City media	Non city media	
Applied for advertised role	3 (3.3%)	10 (15.6%)	13 (8.4%)
Protocol	32 (35.6%)	12 (18.8%)	44 (28.6%)
Headhunting	25 (27.8%)	17 (26.6%)	42 (27.3%)
Cold calling	24 (26.7%)	1 (29.7%)	43 (27.9%)
Other	6 (6.7%)	6 (9.4%)	12 (7.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>	<b>64 (100%)</b>	<b>154 (100%)</b>

Respondents were also asked whether they had a contract governing the terms of their employment. At least 40 percent of respondents indicated that there was no contractual agreement between them and their employer. While this means the majority do have contracts, the fact that two out of every five respondents are working without a contract and, therefore, subject to arbitrary treatment (e.g., dismissal) is a cause for concern.

*Ideally there should be contracts, written properly, signed and witnessed. Some have contracts that I know of. I have a contract. Others, its word of mouth. It is also because, the economic situations in which we operate sometimes people end up selling themselves for less. They need to survive and so they end up feeling like you're doing them a favor by even giving them a job to start with (INT 1: Radio presenter).*

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*"employment without appointment letters so you cannot take them to labour [Commission] when they sack you off without a reason (Speaker 2: broadcast journalist and presenter).*

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*Oh, they can even change your contract terms without your knowledge. And when you ask, you'll be told they changed it. Happened to me (Speaker 1: Journalist).*

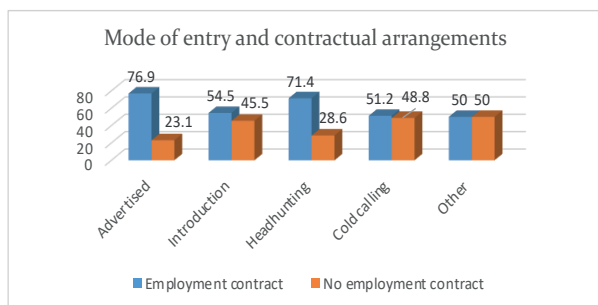
As interviewees explain, the general thinking of media owners seems to be that employees are dispensable:

if you leave today, I will get someone else over there" (INT 3: radio station administrator).

This leads that to the feeling that "there is job but no job security", as expressed by Speaker 1. Also, of

interest to note are the seeming linkages between pathways of entry and the contractual arrangements that govern work in the media. Those who entered organisations through openly advertised roles were the most likely to have employment contracts (77%) (Fig. 5). Of those who came in through channels less amenable to open competition, those who were head-hunted are the ones most likely to have defined contracts.

**Fig. 5:** Cross-tabulation of mode of entry and contract



Further, it is interesting to note the pattern that emerges around location of media and the formalization of contractual arrangements with employees sampled. Nearly 70 percent of city-based respondents had contracts binding their connections to their employer. In sharp contrast, less than half of non-city-based respondents had defined contracts. In other words, for every four city-based media respondents, nearly three had contracts. In contrast, less than two out of every four non-city-based respondents had contracts (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Cross-tabulation of media and contract

Do you have a formal contract?	Location of media		Total
	City media	Non-city media	
Yes	61 (67.8%)	31 (48.4%)	92 (59.7%)
No	29 (32.2%)	33 (51.6%)	62 (40.3%)
Total	90	64 (100%)	154 (100%)

Given the high levels of opacity in entry practices, it is not surprising that career progression in media appears to be nontransparent. Promotion practices are shrouded in patronage and nepotism, in the absence of codified structures. A 2020 report on the status of women in the Ghanaian media

(Yeboah-Banin et al., 2020) gave indications about the opacity of promotional practices in the media. Nearly 45 percent of respondents in that study indicated that they did not know whether their organisations had a promotion policy. It appears that the general practice when it comes to promoting employees is individual owner/manager-led rather than structured. While personal professional development can be recognised, for the most part, promotions remain at the discretion of the top leadership.

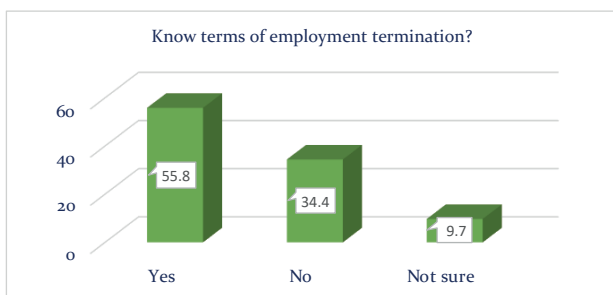
*There is an avenue where you kind of you top up your knowledge yes. As in you have probably a news editor who entered with an HND or a BSC and now has a master's in communication or something, that person is recognized. And probably the COO will talk to you and restructure your salary for you because you are adding knowledge and you are bringing that knowledge back to us to help us grow so with that it will happen that it increases but not to say you are this so we are promoting you to this level (INT 3: Radio station administrator).*

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*Media houses must have a salary structure. And promotion structure just like the banks. You can't be a reporter for 100 years with the same salary whereas someone just comes in and earns three times the amount (Speaker 1).*

With regard to exit from the media, the study sought to establish whether the employees have clarity as to the circumstances under which they may lose their jobs. Fig. 6 shows that a small majority (56%) of the survey respondents know about what could lead to the termination of their appointment. It is important to take note, however, of the over 40 percent of respondents who either do not know (34%) or are unsure (10%) of the circumstances under which they might lose their jobs.

**Fig. 6:** Frequency distribution of knowledge of terms of employment termination

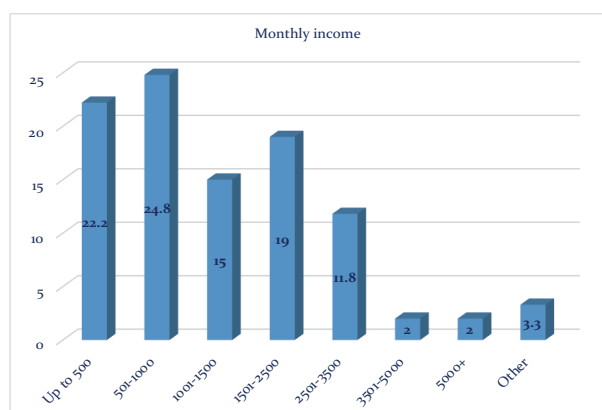


**Remuneration**

The study also sought to examine remuneration patterns in the Ghanaian media. How well or not employees are paid has varied implications for their work, conduct and output (Kayode et. al., 2019), loyalty to the organisation (Nguyen et.al., 2020), commitment (Sardjana et. al., 2019), exit intentions and general wellbeing (Asuquo et.al.,2021). Respondents were asked questions about salaries, timeliness of salary payments and whether unforeseen events that befall their organisations easily affect their remuneration.

Findings (Fig. 5) indicate that salaries are generally quite low with nearly half of the respondents (47%) earning monthly incomes of at most GHC1,000 (nearly half of that number actually earn no more than GHC 500 monthly). Salaries of respondents working in media organisations in the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions were much higher than those working outside these two regions. Up to 70 percent of respondents (two of every three) working in the other regions earn no more than 1000. This is irrespective of their roles (e.g. editor, reporter, presenter etc.), which did not seem to make much difference in earnings, surprisingly. This is in sharp contrast to the 26 percent (one in every five) Accra and Ashanti-based respondents earning a similar amount.

**Fig. 5:** Frequency distribution of incomes



Salary range	Accra and Ashanti	Other regions	Total
Up to 1000	22 26.5%	49 70%	71 46.4%
1001-1500	16 19.3%	7 10.0%	23 15.0%
1501-2500	24 28.9%	5 7.1%	29 19.0%
2501-3500	13 15.7%	5 7.1%	18 11.8%
3500+	6 7.2%	0 .0%	6 2.0%
Other	2 2.4%	3 4.3%	5 3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>153</b>
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Interview data validates the finding that salaries in the media are woefully inadequate.

*Sometimes you hear the salaries of journalists from both state or public and private media and you're like "really?". Thousand two hundred (1200) cedis for assistant editor, thousand eight hundred cedis (1800), seven hundred and fifty (750) cedis and you pause and ask yourself. "eeii, asɔm no ɔyɔ critical" [this is critical]. Some of them are mothers, some of them are fathers, some of them are married and so, what will they do with that kind of money? Now, the thing also is, generally what are the salary levels in Ghana like? Not much to write home about. But in the media, especially private media, from what I know or from what I hear, it's not the best (INT 1: Radio presenter).*

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*So many journalists calling me daily for loans here and there and yet they are employed. I have complaints from some politicians about how they heckle [beg for money from] them (Speaker 3: Journalist).*

Clearly, incomes in media organisations are low and can render media personnel vulnerable to influence and corruption. As this speaker argues, the only way to make ends meet as a media practitioner in Ghana is to seek alternative incomes:

*Best solution to our poverty! Stay a media practitioner. That's okay. You can still present, direct, write, whatever. But here is the big secret! One leg in media, one leg in business or another job. That's the only way you may survive in this industry! Strive towards entrepreneurship while working full time; when your strides look good, keep only one leg in by working part time in media, and go advance your business (Speaker 4: Journalist).*

Indications from recent empirical data shows that the remuneration also has gendered undertones. As shown by Yeboah-Banin et al (2020), there are strong perceptions of unequal pay practices along gender lines. As one participant in this study concludes, there is “favouritism in salary payments; same role, similar experiences but huge disparities [in salaries]” (Speaker 2: Journalist).

Perhaps even more worrying, besides this trend of low remuneration, is the concerning evidence of unpaid work. As discovered in this study, there are several instances where personnel in the media are working for no pay at all.

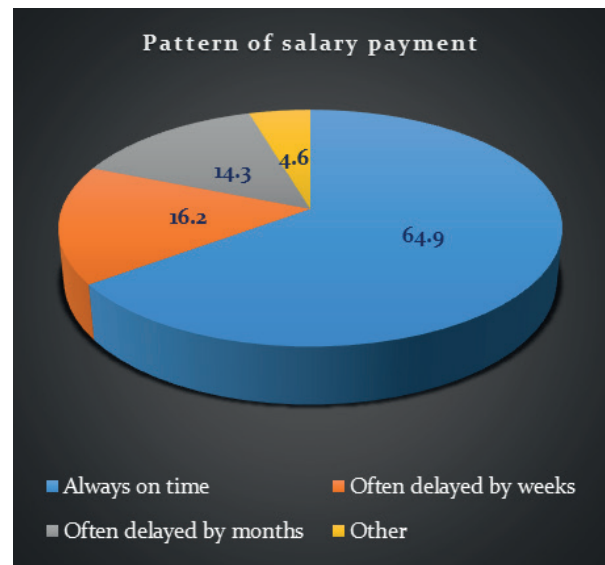
*I have worked nearly a year with an organisation right here in Ghana and I had to put fuel in my vehicle, drive to work every single day for nearly a year without a salary. Even up to now, I am trying to track that salary and it never comes at all. When you practice international journalism with organisations outside Ghana, that is when you really know how we are being cheated. There are organisations that you work with and probably, you could buy a vehicle every single month. Because they are caring for every aspect of your life, taking care of your health and so many other things. Comparatively to how we are being treated in this country, it is woefully inadequate (Speaker 4: Journalist).*

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*We have permanent workers who are on our monthly wages or salaries others are paid meagre wages. I must be very frank here. And there are others who are not even paid. Not because we don't appreciate what they do but because they are not into the mainstream activities of the station (INT 2: General manager of a broadcasting group).*

The silver lining, perhaps, is the finding that for a moderate majority of those who receive salaries, payments are relatively regular. Every two out of three respondents (65%), typically, receive their salaries on time every month (Fig. 6). That said, it is of concern that as much as 30 percent of them experience frequent delays in salary payments. This is even more so when one considers the generally low salaries reported. In other words, for a good number of respondents, they must contend with delays in payments besides their relatively low remuneration.

**Fig. 6:** Frequency distribution of salary patterns



**Welfare in the Ghanaian media**

Besides remuneration, the welfare of individual employees helps to boost commitment and productivity. Welfare packages can cover employee healthcare and that of their close dependents, arrangements to support their family in the event of death, as well as contributions towards employees' pension.

**Fig. 8**

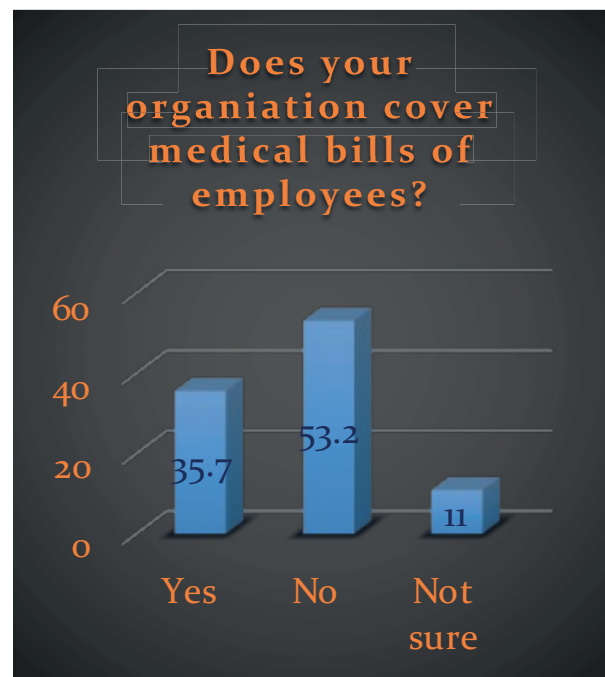
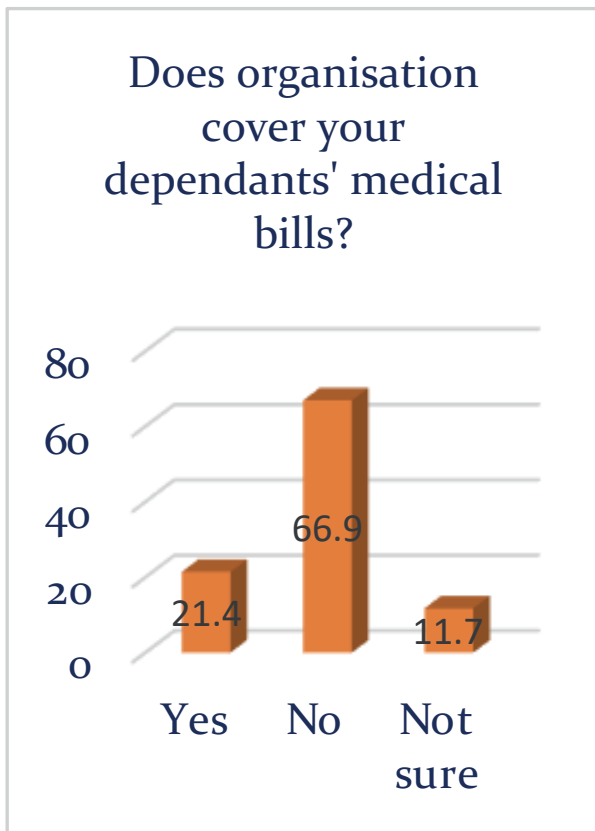


Fig. 9



Findings from the study show that health care support for employees in the Ghanaian media is not very widespread. A small majority (53%) indicated that their organisations extend no such provisions to their employees. For those who have such provisions, terms for medical care appear to be generally fluid and unstated.

*Ok, so there is not a clearly defined policy on that but from the little I have worked over 6 years, I think if it is a norm, then that norm becomes a policy. Then it cuts across all. Because whoever is in that situation probably a month or two is taken care of and irrespective, fully (INT 3: radio station administrator).*

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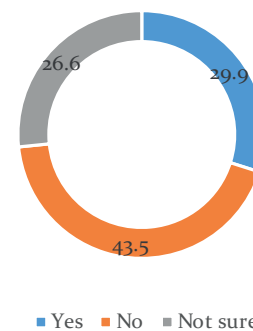
*No, that's another grey area. For the medicals, that is where the favoritism comes in. You know, "oh, mo mpɛ ten thousand bi mma no na ɛnfa nhwɛ ne how far" [get him some ten thousand cedis and let him see how far it will help him]. 'Oh accounts kakra wɛ hɛ? ɛneɛ mo ma yɛnfa thousand bi ɛmma no' [Accounts, do we have some money? Let's get him some thousand cedis]. 'Nti ɛhɛ deɛ favoritism ba mu' [so as for medical care, there is a lot of favouritism in it] because for medicals, it doesn't go well. And you know, no matter what, in every organization there are favorites.*

*So, there's always a disparity between who gets the thigh of the grasshopper and who doesn't (INT 1: Radio presenter).*

The story is much worse when it comes to health coverage for dependants of employees (Fig. 9). Nearly 70 percent of respondents indicated that their organisations have no such provisions. Where ill-health results in the death of the employee, it appears few of the organisations sampled have any provisions to support their family. Only about a quarter (27%) of the respondents indicated the existence of any such support to families of deceased employees in their organisations. Nearly twice this number (44%) indicated that no such provisions exist in their organisations. There is also some substantial level of ambivalence on the existence of such provisions as 30 percent indicated a lack of clarity on the matter (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10: Welfare provision for bereavement

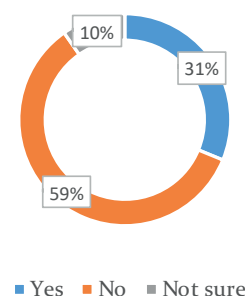
Does your organisation have any provisions for families of deceased employees?



Interestingly, despite the generally poor welfare support from media organisations, employees do not seem to be exploring alternatives. The majority (59%) of respondents indicated that employees in their organisation had no staff welfare fund.

Fig. 11

Do employees in your organisation have a welfare fund?



The study also examined the payment of pensions within media. Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated that they have pension cover at their workplaces, leaving nearly 40 percent who either do not have a pension (31%) or are unsure of any such cover (9%). The fact that nearly a third of respondents have no pension cover means that statutory obligations towards them may be being flouted. Interestingly, even among the sixty-one percent who have pension cover, an even smaller number indicated knowledge that their pension deductions were actually being paid to the relevant pension funds.

Fig. 12

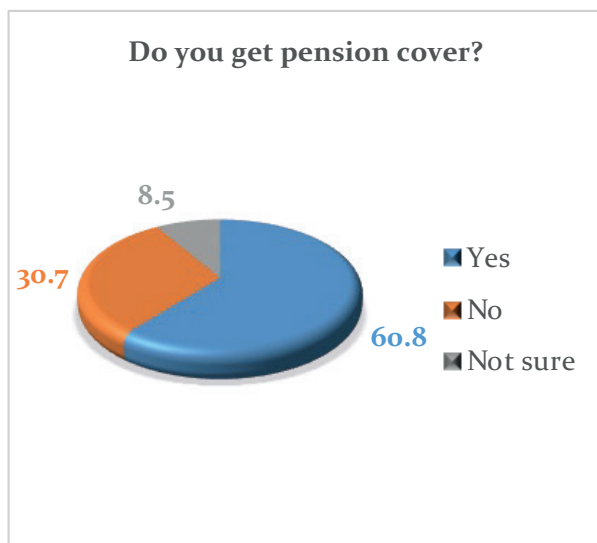
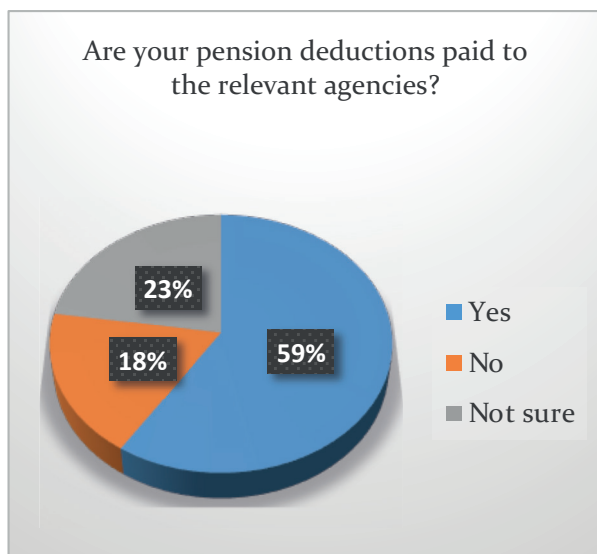


Fig. 13

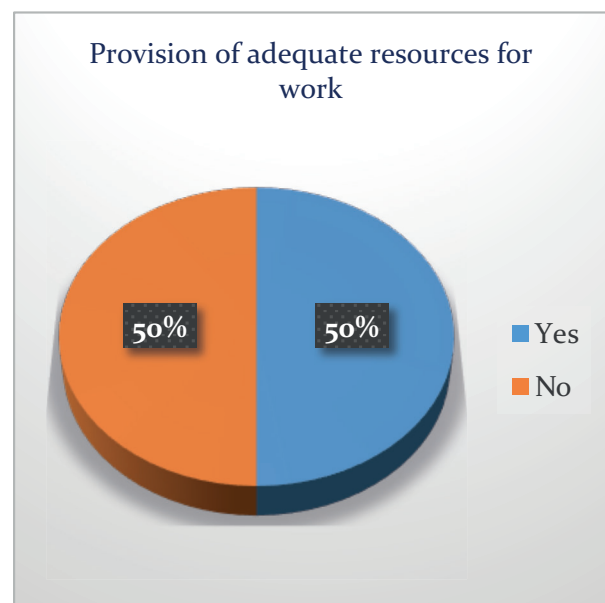


**Work support and resourcing**

Employee productivity is partly contingent on the availability of work-related resources that facilitate the delivery of their responsibilities. Within media, such resources can be equipment and transportation for newsgathering activities. The study explored how well media organisations in Ghana fare in the provision of resources for work. It also examined the availability of counselling services to support employees who experience trauma and stress as a result of their work.

Opinions on resource availability were divided. While half of the respondents indicated that their organisations ensure resources needed for work are readily available, the other half had opposing views. The equivocality of the evidence is very informative as one would expect that supplying employees with the resources they need to work should be a matter of course. Yet, as the evidence shows, not only is it the subject of divided opinion, indeed, the possibility is that resource inadequacy is a challenge experienced by half the respondents.

Fig. 14



How does the picture apply to non-routine work circumstances such as the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic? From the onset of the pandemic, media professionals joined health and other professionals on the frontline. Their duty of public education and information meant that they could not go on lock-down etc. Rather, and perhaps more so in a pandemic, they were out gathering the news to both inform audiences about the pandemic and also to provide much-needed education on how

to stay protected. In doing this, media professionals were under considerable danger of contracting the disease besides other dangers they routinely face in their work.

The study found that generally, organisations fared well in ensuring the safety of their employees who stayed to work during the pandemic. Eighty-six percent of respondents rated their organisations as having done well (ranging from excellently to just okay) in supplying such protective materials as face masks, hand wash basins etc. that enabled employees to stay safe during the pandemic. The remainder rated their organisations as having done poorly.

Fig. 15

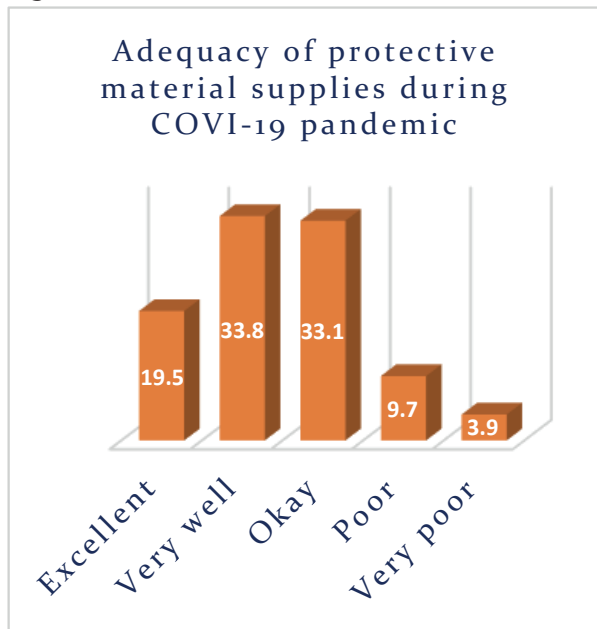
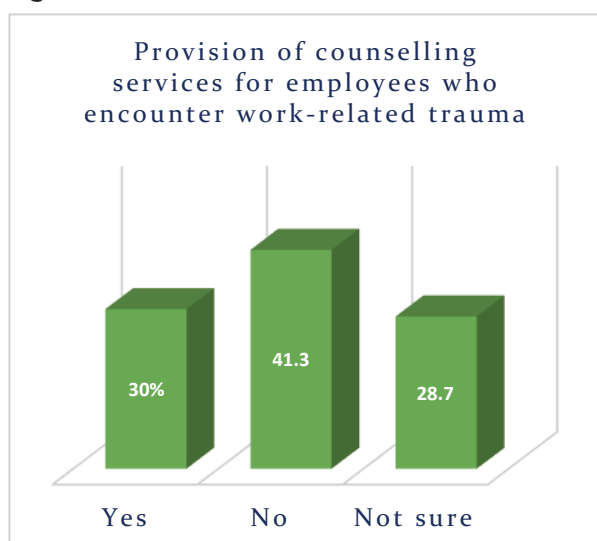


Fig. 16



Media professionals often face attacks for doing

their work, the nature of which can be traumatic. The study sought to find out whether under such circumstances, media organisations have provision for support such as counselling.

The findings show that media organisations have little provision for employees to receive such support. Seventy percent of respondents indicated either the absence of such help (41%) or uncertainty that it was available to them (29%). Only 30 percent indicated that their organisations have provisions for such support.

**Structures to guide acceptable behaviour**

To ensure fairness and respect among employees, organisations require behaviour guides that specify acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Such guides include documents that specify employee codes of conduct, and organisational posture towards unacceptable behaviour. In addition, organisations also need clearly defined procedures for remediating unacceptable behaviour while ensuring that victims are protected.

The study explored the existence of two such behaviour guides – anti-harassment and anti-discrimination - within the media organisations. Respondents were also asked to indicate whether their organisations had clearly defined disciplinary procedures as well as clearly defined procedures for employees who felt wrongly treated to seek redress.

Media organisations of respondents do not appear to be proactive about confronting issues of harassment and discrimination. Less than 40 percent of respondents indicated the existence of anti-harassment policies in their organisations. Even less (34%) said their organisations have policies against discrimination.

A majority of the respondents (58%) indicated that their organisations have clearly defined procedures for seeking redress for errant behaviour. This means, however, that two out of every five respondents work in organisations where such redress is either not possible nor clearly available.

## Summary of findings

The key findings emanating from the study are as follows:

- Recruitment into the media generally relies on channels less open to competition.
- Job security is a challenge for many (40%) media personnel owing to the absence of contractual agreements between employees and their employers.
- Career progression opportunities are largely non-existent. There are no established structures for promotion and practices are shrouded in patronage and nepotism. Salaries in the media are woefully low and, sometimes, delayed or not paid at all.
- Provision of health care support for employees (and their dependants) is neither widespread nor institutionalised.
- Perceptions are divided as to whether media organisations adequately provide resources for work.
- There is little room for provision of counselling support for employees who experience trauma in the line of work.
- About 60% of respondents' organisations do not appear to have institutionalised systems for preventing harassment and discrimination.

## Discussion

The media industry in Ghana is a career destination for many, making it imperative to ensure that it offers a viable space to pursue fulfilling careers. To this end, this chapter explored working conditions in the media to understand how well the industry offers a welcoming place for work.

Generally, the findings from this study show that working conditions in the media are not good. Job insecurity, poor remuneration, and poor employee welfare are issues that call for urgent attention. They appear to be foregrounded by a system (whether deliberately or inadvertently formed) that ensures that remedial actions are almost impossible to pursue.

In the first instance, high levels of opacity in recruitment practices makes it almost impossible for change to happen. When employees are recruited through nonmerit-based channels, a foundation for rent-seeking is laid in which they become indebted to owners, managers and their influencers. This takes from employees the power to bargain for better conditions. At the same time,

there is a high potential for low quality output (given that persons recruited may not come with requisite skills), which reduces employees' upward mobility and subsequent bargaining power.

Evidence published by Alhassan and Abdulai (2018) suggest that poor remuneration in the Ghanaian media also fuels the practice of *solli* (where journalists accept money or other forms of gifts as sitting allowance after covering an event) to the extent that journalists have come to expect *solli* as a legitimate obligation of event organisers and a way to supplement their low incomes. The study shows that this affects editorial decisions and content. This suggests that the low remuneration and resultant growing reliance of media personnel on *solli* can result in poor journalism. Importantly, poor remuneration also means that media personnel risk becoming less motivated to do their work as needed to deliver the benefits of democracy to the citizens of Ghana. There is also the implication for high turn-over in media as people seek 'greener pastures' in other industries and fail to stay in media long enough to build capacity and clout which can be leveraged for better conditions.

The implications of the low remuneration are potentially exacerbated by the weak provision of medical care for media personnel and their dependents, and the general absence of counselling support where needed. Not only does this mean that media personnel cannot access such help without recourse to their personal finances, it also signals the possibility of high levels of unattended mental and other health issues. There is also the possibility of self-censorship as media personnel avoid dangerous stories that expose them to attacks for which they must expend their personal resources to seek help. This can result in a conducive atmosphere for corruption and impunity. Equally of concern is the realisation that such support, where available, are not institutionalised but rather subject to the whims of owners and managers. Such state of affairs can increase employee indebtedness to owners and managers, and foment a culture of rent-seeking.

Another cause for concern is the weak structures for ensuring acceptable behaviour, and redress for wrongdoing. Nearly two thirds of respondents work in media organisations that may not have formalised structures in place for guiding employee behaviour away from discrimination and harassment. This is worsened by the fact that in more than a third of respondents' organisations, no clear procedures exist for seeking redress for such wrongful behaviours. Potentially, this means that redress for cases of harassment and discrimination are at the

discretion of owners/managers, or seldom receive attention. This is problematic.

## Recommendations

The chapter makes the following recommendations for consideration and action by the underlisted entities.

### **Media organisations**

As a matter of urgency, take steps to improve the working conditions of media personnel. Media organisations must:

- » review and revise recruitment practices to make recruitment more open and competitive
- » review and improve salaries of employees
- » develop and publish standard salary scales and promotion criteria
- » institute structures for fair and reliable promotion of employees
- » develop and publish standards for acceptable employee behaviour including on anti-discrimination and anti-harassment
- » institute health care provision systems for their employees

### **Media personnel**

- Organise and engage owners and managers on conditions of service
- Advocate for improved conditions

### **Regulatory agencies**

- As part of requirements for licensing, regulators must introduce and insist on sustainability plans by media organisations seeking licensing. The sustainability plan must include sections on staff compensation and working conditions.

### **General labour unions and industry associations**

- Labour unions in the country working on general labour issues must take an interest in examining working conditions in media and advocating for improvements.
- Industry associations such as the GJA, Ghana Independent Broadcasting Association, Ghana Employers Association and the Alliance for Women in Media Africa must take an interest in working conditions in media and advocate for improvements.

- The GJA and the MFWA should consider instituting an award category dedicated to best practice in employee working conditions as part of their annual awards ceremonies. This will not only draw attention to the issue but also incentivise action on it.

### **Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)**

- The GJA must serve as a voice for media personnel across the country. While not a labour union, the GJA presents a formidable entity that must promote reforms in the media by actively speaking out on, and calling for change in the mistreatment of media personnel. There is strength in numbers which, at the moment, seems to be best realized under the umbrella of the GJA.

### **Media/development agencies**

- Media development agencies and civil society must assist media organisations to develop standards and protocols to guide employee behavior. These should include standards for
  - » fair and open recruitment
  - » promotion
- Media development agencies should also develop training programs to help
  - » Managers develop sensitivity for fair treatment
  - » Managers develop work place behavior codes
  - » Media personnel to develop safe work cultures
- Media development agencies should also develop training programmes to help women create niches and visibility and to leverage them for better terms of work.
- Media development organisations and industry associations such as the GJA may consider instituting awards for best media employer to encourage reforms.

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