



Country Report

Journalists in Botswana

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Backgrounds of Journalists

In the sample of 186 journalists interviewed in Botswana, most were male (62.4%), held a bachelor's degree or equivalent (84.2%), and had specialized in journalism and/or mass communication (84.7%). The mean age of these journalists was 34.07 years. Journalists' modal language/ethnicity was Setswana (83.7%), but 10 other languages/ethnicity were represented in small frequencies. In terms of religious affiliation, of the 184 respondents who reported their religious affiliation, 123 (66.8%) were Christian; these respondents did not specify a particular denomination of Christianity. Percentages for those who did provide a denomination were 4.9 percent for Protestant/Lutheran and 5.4 percent for Roman Catholic. Religion was quite important for the journalists (3.93 on a five-point scale, where 5 indicated more).

Journalists in the Newsroom

While the spread of position titles was considerable, the modal title of Botswana journalists in this study was reporter (40.5%). The majority of these journalists were full time (88.6%), permanent (90.5%), worked for only one newsroom (93.8%) and one news outlet (80.6%), did not hold other paid jobs (83.7%), and were not generally members of professional associations (61.3%). The journalists tended to be generalists working on several topics (74.2%), and among those who worked on beats, the modal beat was sports (28.3%), followed by economy (17.4%). On average, Botswana journalists had 8.84 years of experience ($s=7.40$); roughly half of them had more than seven years of professional experience.

The modal (51.4%) salary of these journalists was up to Pula 10,000 (USD 1,069). The modal job site was weekly newspapers (39.8%), followed by daily newspapers (18.3%), and television (15.1%). None of the journalists worked for independent online news media. The news outlets that respondent journalists worked for were mostly privately owned (61.8%) and national (91.4%) in their reach.

Journalistic Roles

The top six roles, all with means above 4.5 and standard deviations below 1, for Botswana journalists, were a mix of those aligned with a liberal press (e.g., report things as they are) and those relevant to development journalism (e.g., support national development). "Report things as they are" (mean=4.80) and "Educate the audience" (mean=4.70) were the top two roles for these journalists (see Table 1) with 96.2 percent and 94.1 percent of the journalists respectively saying that they considered these roles "extremely" or "very" important. The least important roles, both with means below the midpoint of three, were "Be an adversary of government" (mean=2.62) and "Convey a positive image of political leadership" (mean=2.40); these journalists did not want to take a seriously adversarial stance with government but neither did they want to convey a positive image of political leaders.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	186	96.2	4.80	.51
Educate the audience	186	94.1	4.70	.64
Provide analysis of current affairs	186	92.5	4.55	.73
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	185	89.2	4.54	.77
Let people express their views	184	89.1	4.51	.86
Support national development	182	86.8	4.54	.86
Tell stories about the world	185	83.2	4.30	.93
Provide information people need to make political decisions	183	80.3	4.24	1.10
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	185	75.7	4.13	1.06
Monitor and scrutinize business	180	75.0	4.17	1.04
Advocate for social change	184	73.4	4.08	1.16
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	184	71.7	4.04	1.20
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	185	71.4	3.95	1.19
Be a detached observer	168	68.5	3.86	1.34
Motivate people to participate in political activity	185	64.3	3.81	1.29
Provide entertainment and relaxation	184	62.5	3.73	1.25
Influence public opinion	184	48.4	3.36	1.38
Set the political agenda	178	41.6	3.07	1.37
Support government policy	183	39.3	3.21	1.34
Be an adversary of the government	170	28.2	2.62	1.45
Convey a positive image of political leadership	183	21.9	2.40	1.40

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

Botswana’s journalists had the highest agreement with the statement “Journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context” (mean=4.80) (it was the only role with a mean above 4.00); altogether, 96.8 percent of the journalists said they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement. The standard deviation was small for this statement further indicating considerable agreement about this ethical orientation. Botswana’s journalists had the lowest agreement (mean=2.23) with “What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment“ (see Table 2); this orientation and “It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it“ (mean=2.77) had means below the midpoint of three. However, standard deviations were large for all but the first statement, indicating considerable difference in opinion.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "strongly" and "somewhat agree"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	186	96.8	4.80	.50
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	185	54.1	3.23	1.60
Its is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	185	36.2	2.77	1.53
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	186	26.9	2.23	1.45

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

“Using confidential business or government documents without authorization” was the practice that had the largest percent of respondents saying it was “always justified” (13%). “Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information” and “Using hidden microphones or cameras” followed with both having 10.3% of the respondents saying these were “always justified” (see Table 3). For the answer that a practice was “justified on occasion,” the highest percent (53.8%) was for “Using hidden microphones or cameras.” Thus these three practices appeared to be more acceptable to journalists from Botswana than other practices. “Accepting money from sources” tied with “Altering and fabricating quotes from sources” for the smallest percent of respondents indicating that these practices were “always justified” (1.6% each) or “justified on occasion” (3.8% each).

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	185	13.0%	44.9%
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	184	10.3%	39.1%
Using hidden microphones or cameras	184	10.3%	53.8%
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	185	9.7%	34.1%
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	184	5.4%	33.7%
Paying people for confidential information	184	4.9%	27.7%
Altering photographs	185	3.8%	5.4%
Claiming to be somebody else	186	2.7%	28.5%
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	184	2.7%	34.2%
Publishing stories with unverified content	184	2.2%	8.2%
Accepting money from sources	185	1.6%	3.8%
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	185	1.6%	3.8%

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Journalists indicated considerably high professional autonomy particularly for participating in editorial coordination (mean=4.20), followed by selecting aspects of the story to emphasize (mean=3.76), and selecting stories (3.66). Standard deviations were just above 1 for all three statements. The top influence for these journalists was journalism ethics (mean=4.61) followed by information access (mean=4.46), editorial policy (mean=4.42), and media laws and regulation (mean=4.40) (see Table 4). More than 80 percent of the journalists indicated these four as being “extremely” or “very” influential. Friends, acquaintances and family were rated last (mean=2.14) in influence, with only 16.6 percent of the journalists considering this influence as “extremely” or “very” important. The mean influence of religious considerations was 2.91. Several influences fell below the midpoint of three including politicians, peers on the staff, business people, colleagues in other media, and the economic influences of profit expectations and advertising considerations.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	181	92.3	4.61	.74
Information access	182	88.5	4.46	.85
Editorial policy	180	85.0	4.42	.91
Media laws and regulation	184	84.8	4.40	.91
Availability of news-gathering resources	180	82.2	4.27	.94
Time limits	172	76.7	4.13	.96
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	179	70.9	3.92	1.10
Feedback from the audience	184	68.5	3.88	1.11
Managers of your news organization	178	65.7	3.75	1.28
Audience research and data	171	58.5	3.71	1.23
Censorship	182	57.7	3.59	1.34
Relationship with news sources	183	57.4	3.61	1.36
Owners of your news organization	176	55.1	3.47	1.50
Competing news organizations	183	51.4	3.42	1.32
Personal values and beliefs	168	46.4	3.37	1.26
Government officials	184	42.9	3.20	1.44
Public relations	184	40.2	3.06	1.34
Politicians	184	35.9	2.91	1.44
Business people	182	30.8	2.72	1.36
Religious considerations	168	29.2	2.91	1.26
Profit expectations	154	28.6	2.62	1.38
Colleagues in other media	183	28.4	2.66	1.25
Advertising considerations	160	26.9	2.59	1.37
Peers on the staff	166	24.1	2.78	1.16
The military, police and state security	183	22.4	2.46	1.34
Pressure groups	182	22.0	2.43	1.25
Friends, acquaintances and family	185	16.8	2.14	1.29

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

Journalists who had worked for five or more years in the profession were asked to indicate whether certain aspects of their work had increased or decreased. More than 80 percent of journalists indicated an increase in having a university degree (top most) and having a degree in journalism or related field (third from top) (see Table 5). Respective percentages of those saying “increased a lot” and “increased somewhat” were 89.2 percent and 83.8 percent. A larger percent of journalists agreed that all aspects of their work had increased than the percent who agreed that these had decreased. Altogether, 71.6 percent indicated an increase in the requirement of technical skills and 80.2 percent indicated an the increase in the requirement for the skill to use of search engines.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
Having a university degree	111	89.2	2.7
Relevance of journalism for society	109	85.3	2.8
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	111	83.8	5.4
Use of search engines	111	80.2	9.9
Average working hours of journalists	111	73.9	2.7
Technical skills	109	71.6	10.1
Credibility of journalism	110	70.0	11.8
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	112	56.3	22.3
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	109	55.0	19.3
Time available for researching stories	111	42.3	27.9

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Botswana. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Journalists with five and more years of experience were also asked to indicate changes in the level of influence of certain aspects of journalistic work. More than 80% of the journalists indicated that the influence of competition and of journalism education had strengthened, followed by the influence of social media (79.6%) (see Table 6). A considerable percent of these Botswana journalists believed that some economic variables, i.e., profit making pressures, public relations, and advertising considerations had also strengthened. Botswana journalists did not consider any of the listed variables to have weakened in the strength of their influence.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Competition	108	86.1	4.6
Journalism education	111	84.7	8.1
Social media	108	79.6	8.3
Ethical standards	110	72.7	11.8
Profit making pressures	109	67.9	14.7
Audience feedback	108	65.7	11.1
Public relations	109	65.1	11.0
Advertising considerations	109	63.3	9.2
Western ways of practicing journalism	109	61.5	16.5
User-generated contents, such as blogs	107	59.8	18.7
Pressure toward sensational news	107	53.3	22.4
Audience involvement in news production	108	48.1	18.5
Audience research	109	47.7	19.3

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Botswana. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

Interestingly, Botswana journalists’ trust in various societal institutions capped at a mean of 3.66 indicating that their trust in institutions was not very high (see Table 7). Their highest trust was reserved for their own institution, the news media, with 57.6 percent saying that they had “complete’ or a “great deal” of trust in this institution; this variable also had the smallest standard deviation (s=0.88) indicating some consensus among the journalists. Public institutions such as Parliament and the judiciary came next in level of trust with respective means of 3.33 and 3.27. Politicians and political parties earned the least trust (means of 2.14 and 2.43 respectively); only 8.2 percent said they had “complete’ or a “great deal” of trust in politicians in general.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying “complete” and “a great deal of trust”	Mean	Standard Deviation
News media	184	57.6	3.66	.88
Judiciary/the courts	181	43.6	3.27	1.06
Police	183	41.0	3.27	1.02
Parliament	184	39.7	3.33	1.16
Religious leaders	184	35.3	3.14	1.05
Military	184	35.3	3.10	1.13
Trade unions	184	34.2	3.13	1.02
Government	184	29.3	2.92	1.15
Political parties	181	11.0	2.43	1.00
Politicians in general	184	8.2	2.14	1.00

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

- Size of the population:* 361 working journalists (estimated)
- Sampling method:* No selection for newsrooms (contacted all) and simple random sampling, simple systematic sampling and purposively chosen sampling based on quota for journalists within newsrooms
- Sample size:* 186 working journalists
- Interview methods:* face-to-face and mail/e-mail
- Response rate:* 88%
- Period of field research:* 01/2013-04/2015