



MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN BHUTAN

Findings of Rapid Assessment Survey

Journalists' Association of Bhutan
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At a Glance

- The study was comprehensive with an 80% response rate from Bhutan's registered journalists.
- The study highlights a complex media environment where constitutional press freedom guarantees are challenged by practical limitations.
- Financial instability is a major concern across media organizations, affecting both private and state-owned media.
- Private media houses face financial constraints due to declining advertising revenues and increased reliance on government subsidies.
- Government austerity measures, such as the shift to electronic procurement systems, have further reduced revenue streams for media outlets.
- Economic pressures have led to the closure of regional bureaus, reduced staffing, and diminished local coverage.
- Journalists encounter significant obstacles in accessing public information, with nearly 80% reporting bureaucratic barriers.
- Regulations like the ACC's Model Public Service Code of Conduct and RADA have created a reluctance among civil servants to engage with the media.
- There is a lack of a Right to Information Act, which is supported by 90% of survey participants.
- Self-censorship is prevalent, with 80% of journalists admitting to avoiding sensitive topics due to fear of reprisal, legal consequences, or management disapproval.
- Almost half of Bhutan's media houses combine the roles of CEO and editor-in-chief, raising concerns about conflicts of interest.
- The dissolution of the Media Council in 2023 has weakened media self-regulation and public trust.
- Despite these challenges, over 83% of journalists are committed to continuing their profession.
- Key recommendations include establishing a Media Endowment Fund, enacting a Right to Information Act, reintroducing an independent press council, and enhancing legal protections for journalists.

Executive Summary

The Journalists' Association of Bhutan's comprehensive 2025 Rapid Assessment Survey on the Media Landscape provides a detailed examination of the current state of Bhutan's media, drawing on responses from 80% of the country's registered journalists. This extensive participation rate underscores both the significance of this evaluation and the deep engagement of the journalistic community in addressing the challenges facing their profession. The findings present a nuanced picture of the media landscape at a critical juncture, where constitutional guarantees of press freedom coexist with substantial practical constraints that threaten the sector's sustainability and independence.

Financial instability emerges as one of the most pressing concerns across all media organisations. Private media houses operate under particularly severe constraints, with narrow profit margins resulting from dwindling traditional advertising revenues and an increasing reliance on government subsidies. This precarious financial situation has been exacerbated by recent government austerity measures, including the shift of public notices to electronic procurement systems, which has significantly reduced a crucial revenue stream for many outlets. Even state-owned media entities, Kuensel Corporation Limited (KCL) and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), are not immune to these challenges, having reported substantial financial losses in recent years. These economic pressures have led to tangible consequences for media operations, including the closure of regional bureaus, reduced staffing levels, and diminished local coverage – developments that directly impact the media's ability to serve its democratic function as a watchdog and information provider.

The challenges extend far beyond financial considerations. Journalists report significant systemic barriers in accessing public information, with almost 80% of respondents citing bureaucratic obstacles as a major impediment to their work. Journalists have reported that the situation has been exacerbated by regulations such as the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) *Model Public Service Code of Conduct* (2022) and RCSC's *Rules for Administrative Disciplinary Actions* (RADA) 2022, which have fostered a culture of excessive caution among civil servants, leading to a reluctance to engage with the media. Notably, RADA appears to have been integrated into the *Bhutan Civil Service Regulations* (BCSR) 2023 – an update that remains largely unknown to members of the press. The respondents however, perceive the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) to be transparent and approachable, suggesting that journalists generally find it easier to obtain information from the PMO.

The absence of a Right to Information (RTI) Act, a reform overwhelmingly supported by 90% of survey participants, represents a glaring gap in Bhutan's legal framework, leaving the constitutional promise of transparency largely unfulfilled in practice. These access barriers disproportionately affect younger and less experienced journalists, creating an uneven media landscape where information availability depends heavily on personal networks and professional seniority.

Most alarmingly, the survey reveals widespread self-censorship within the profession, with 80% of journalists admitting to avoiding certain sensitive topics due to fears of reprisal, legal consequences, or management disapproval. This climate of caution is further compounded by worrying structural issues in media governance. Nearly half of Bhutan's media houses combine the roles of CEO and editor-in-chief, creating inherent conflicts between business interests and journalistic integrity. The 2023 dissolution of the independent Media Council has removed an important accountability mechanism, with 69% of respondents viewing this development negatively as it weakens the media's ability to self-regulate and maintain professional standards.

Despite these significant challenges, the survey reveals remarkable resilience within Bhutan's journalistic community. More than 83% of respondents expressed their commitment to continue working in the profession, highlighting the strong sense of purpose and social value that journalists attach to their work. This dedication provides a solid foundation for implementing the comprehensive reforms needed to strengthen the sector. Key recommendations include the establishment of a Media Endowment Fund to provide financial stability while preserving editorial independence and the urgent enactment of a Right to Information Act to institutionalise transparency. The reintroduction of an independent press council would help restore professional standards and public trust, while enhanced legal protections are needed to safeguard journalists against censorship and undue interference.

The survey also emphasises the importance of investing in professional development, particularly in digital journalism skills, to prepare the sector for evolving technological landscapes. Equally crucial are public awareness campaigns to reinforce understanding of media's vital role in democracy. Bhutan's media sector stands at a pivotal moment. While current challenges are substantial, they also present an opportunity to build a more robust, independent, and sustainable media ecosystem.

By addressing these issues through coordinated policy reforms and sector-wide collaboration, Bhutan can ensure its media continues to serve as a cornerstone of the nation's democratic development and a guardian of the public interest. The findings of this assessment provide both a sobering reality check and a roadmap for positive transformation, calling for immediate action to secure the future of quality journalism in Bhutan.

Abbreviations

ACC	–	Anti-Corruption Commission
BBS	–	Bhutan Broadcasting Service
BCSR	–	Bhutan Civil Service Regulations
BMF	–	Bhutan Media Foundation
BICMA	–	Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority
CEO	–	Chief Executive Officer
CLG	–	Center for Local Governance and Research
CSO	–	Civil Society Organisation
DoIM	–	Department of Information and Media
DoMCIIIP	–	Department of Media, Creative Industry and Intellectual Property
FGD	–	Focus Group Discussion
ICMAB	–	Information, Communication and Media Act of Bhutan 2018
ICT	–	Information, Communication and Technology
IFJ	–	International Federation of Journalists
IMS	–	International Media Support
JAB	–	Journalists' Association of Bhutan
KCL	–	Kuensel Corporation Limited
MEDB	–	Media Enterprise Development Budget
MoU	–	Memorandum of Understanding
MPSCC	–	Model Public Service Code of Conduct
MoICE	–	Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
MoIC	–	Ministry of Information and Communications
NA	–	National Assembly of Bhutan
NC	–	National Council of Bhutan
NGO	–	Non-Government Organisation
NSB	–	National Statistics Bureau
NYAB	–	National Youth Association of Bhutan
OAG	–	Office of the Attorney General
OTT	–	Over-the-Top
PMO	–	Prime Minister's Office
Q&A	–	Question and Answer
RAA	–	Royal Audit Authority
RADA	–	Rules for Administrative Disciplinary Actions
RBA	–	Royal Bhutan Army
RBP	–	Royal Bhutan Police
RCSC	–	Royal Civil Service Commission
RGoB	–	Royal Government of Bhutan
RTI	–	Right to Information
SLAPP	–	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
SOE	–	State-owned Enterprise
SOP	–	Standard Operating Procedures
UNESCO	–	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDP	–	United Nations Development Programme

Background

Bhutan's media journey in modern times began with the *Kuensel* newspaper, transitioning from a government bulletin in 1965 to a weekly publication in 1986, catering to Dzongkha, Lhotsham, and English speakers. This pivotal moment coincided with the expansion of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) radio, which evolved from the youth-led *Radio NYAB* in 1973. More than three decades later, in anticipation of the nation's democratic transition in 2006, the Information, Communications and Media Act was enacted, leading to the establishment of the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA). Further bolstering the media ecosystem, the Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF) was founded in 2010 through a Royal Charter, followed by the formation of the Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB) in 2012, which registered as a Mutual Benefit Organisation in 2014.

By 2013, Bhutan had 12 newspapers, six radio stations, two magazines, and a national television network. However, today, there are seven newspapers, a national television channel, and three radio stations, two of which primarily focus on entertainment rather than news. This shift indicates a consolidation and potential change in media focus.

In a nation guided by Gross National Happiness, the media's role as the fourth estate is critical. It is essential for 'promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency within the executive, judiciary, and legislature, and holding them accountable for their actions.' Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, media, and information, more than 80% of respondents rated Bhutan's press freedom as 'low to middle'. This perception is reinforced by concerns over 'limited access to information' and 'restrictive administrative protocols' that hinder journalists from acquiring necessary data. This challenge is echoed in existing journalistic research, which highlights the reluctance of bureaucrats to engage with the media, citing various regulations that obstruct accurate reporting (C Rinzin, *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, Vol. 48, 2023).

As one journalist noted, 'the inability to ask questions spontaneously due to administrative protocols that require submitting questions in advance' undermines the media's watchdog role. The Meet the Press sessions, intended as platforms for open dialogue, are often criticised for their lack of opportunities to pose follow-up questions. While experienced journalists do not face similar challenges in obtaining information due to their established networks, credibility, and trust, there are only a few senior journalists, most of whom lead teams from the office while newly recruited and lesser-known journalists, who go into the field, struggle to gather critical information.

Furthermore, respondents cited 'indirect government influence in the appointment of CEOs and government advertising spending' as factors impacting media independence and sustainability. Additionally, 'self-censorship among journalists, particularly among less experienced journalists without access to proper training and mentoring', was highlighted as a significant concern affecting journalistic integrity. These factors contribute to Bhutan's declining press freedom ranking.

According to the 2024 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, Bhutan ranked 90th out of 180 countries, a drastic drop from 65th in 2022. In 2023-2024, the ranking further dropped from 90th to 147th position. These declines are reflective of the sentiments expressed by journalists during the rapid assessment survey, where more than 80% of respondents rated press freedom at '5 out of 10'.

Bhutanese journalists work under tremendous pressure and tight deadlines, facing challenging working conditions characterised by poor management, inadequate incentives, low remuneration, and the absence of structured professional development programmes. 'Burnout' has been frequently cited as a reason for the high rate of journalist attrition, with many experienced professionals leaving the industry. These challenges collectively paint a picture of a media landscape in transition, with significant hurdles that need to be addressed to ensure a vibrant and independent press in Bhutan.

Literature Review

Bhutan Media Impact Study

The erstwhile Department of Information and Media (DoIM), under the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC), conducted media impact studies every five years to evaluate the growth and development of the media sector. These studies aimed to analyse media trends and consumption patterns, assess the professionalism of Bhutanese media, and identify challenges to its advancement, including working conditions, external pressures, and opportunities available to media organisations and professionals. These studies also examined the role played by media in disseminating government policies, laws, rules, and regulations. The Bhutan Media Impact Study was conducted in 2003, 2008, and 2013, 2017 covering print (newspapers) and broadcast media (television, radio, film, and music).

The findings from the 2013 study highlighted challenges affecting media development, which included a lack of media professionalism, the sustainability of many media outlets dependent on public sector advertising, difficult access to public information, and legal, policy, and regulatory challenges.

In the face of the mushrooming digital and social media, the DoIM conducted media impact study in 2017 but discontinued it after controversial findings were reported in the draft.

Media Development Assessment 2010

The DoIM, in collaboration with UNESCO, UNDP, and International Media Support (IMS) of Denmark, conducted a media development assessment in 2010, which provided an analysis of the media and communications environment in Bhutan. The indicators delineated critical areas of media development, ranging from freedom of expression and diversity of media to the professional and infrastructural capacities of the media industry. The study found that the media industry was grappling with a dearth of trained journalists, as most entry-level journalists lacked training in basic journalism.

The study recommended developing and implementing the Right to Information (RTI) Act with clear objectives and realistic, workable provisions in consultation with media stakeholders, civil society organisations, policymakers, and ordinary citizens. It required government at all levels to operate transparently and facilitate easy, low-cost access to public information (records and data) available in standard formats. It also recommended enhancing the capacity of media or public relations officials in government agencies to facilitate and accelerate the information flow to both media and citizens at large.

Media Baseline Study

BMF conducted a media baseline study in June 2012 and found that professionalism was the most significant issue. There was a serious shortage of media professionals in the industry, and the turnover rate for media personnel switching jobs and organisations was high. A lack of adequate training and skills – not only for journalists but also for other media professionals – created challenges regarding professionalism. The study also revealed that the media was relatively young and faced challenges in functioning sustainably. Moreover, media regulation was inadequate, and the regulatory authority was struggling with the evolving media landscape of media convergence.

It was recommended to strengthen and promote journalism as a preferred career choice in the job market and to support media organisations in the professional management of human resources to retain experienced and trained media professionals.

It was further suggested to provide training to media personnel in journalism and other media-related professions such as circulation, marketing, graphics and design, vernacular journalism, media management, and new media, and to assist media organisations in exploring alternative means of earning to improve their sustainability and pursue true journalism.

Media Survival Strategy 2022

According to the media survival strategy developed in 2022 by the DoIM and BMF, the traditional role of newspapers in social participation, change, and inclusivity is now threatened by the rise of digital media and its impact on the revenue and readership of newspapers.

It stated that the state of print media in Bhutan is challenged by a vulnerable financial situation characterised by a narrow audience reach, reduced readership, a lack of advertising revenue, and a shortage of qualified professional journalists. Massive departures of top talent and trained professionals have left newspapers with junior and inexperienced staff in charge, further negatively affecting the quality of the newspapers and the content they produce.

Based on the report ‘Private Newspapers in Bhutan: Proposed Strategy to Overcome the Crisis, 2014’, the first structural problem is the size of the potential readership that private newspapers are competing for. In a country with just over 700,000 inhabitants, 70% of whom live in rural areas, and with a literacy rate of 70.6% as per NSB 2022, the total number of potential newspaper readers is extremely low by any standard. This reality alone makes the economics of the newspaper business extremely challenging, even in the best of economic times, aside from all the other structural challenges that this market must contend with.

Consequently, with the government acting as the dominant source in the advertising market, private newspapers live or die based solely on their success in competing

for government advertising. Complicating this criterion is the introduction of digital platforms such as e-GP (Electronic Government Procurement System), which has affected the revenue stream for private media houses.

The report also stated that Bhutan's approach to the liberalisation of the information and media market, especially newspapers, has led to the ups and downs experienced by this sector over the years. Before 2010, four newspapers were in operation. By 2012, the number had increased to 12 newspapers. Currently, there are seven in operation. Despite numerous assistance initiatives and strategies implemented by the government to sustain the business entity and improve news content, most print media houses continue to struggle.

The State of Journalism in Bhutan 2024

The study carried out by the BMF in 2024 stated that journalism in Bhutan is characterised by a relatively young workforce with mixed experience and greater gender parity. The average age of journalists is 34 years; 25% of journalists have less than one year of experience, and 44% are female.

Print media remains the dominant medium of work, accounting for 41% of journalists, followed by television at 28%. The findings indicate that print media is the primary medium for 41% of journalists, with television following at 28%. Ninety-three percent of journalists in Bhutan believe they are safe. However, verbal intimidation, insults, abuse, hate speech, online intimidation, and trolling on social media negatively impact journalists' perceptions of safety.

The BMF found that 84% of journalists practise self-censorship, with male journalists 1.5 times more likely to engage in self-censorship than their female counterparts. Mid-level journalists tend to practise self-censorship less frequently than entry-level and senior journalists. The 'small society syndrome' and fear of backlash are the two major reasons cited for self-censorship. According to 60% of journalists, most media organisations in Bhutan do not have a safety policy. The findings also highlight that 84% of journalists reported various degrees of difficulty in accessing information. Sports (70%) and culture (42%) are the two easiest sources of information, while politics (30%) and economy (22%) are the two most challenging areas to obtain information on. Two-thirds of the journalists reported that their requests for information are often refused by authorities, and the limited trust of young journalists also compels public officials to deny information.

A Review Report on the State of Media 2024

Concerned by a significant drop in Bhutan's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index – from 65th out of 180 countries in 2022 and 90th in 2023 to 147th in 2024 – the National Council's Social and Cultural Affairs Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the media landscape in 2024. The committee reviewed public perceptions regarding freedom and transparency, evaluated the effectiveness of current policies, and examined the role of digital media in shaping public discourse.

In passing the resolution along with recommendations on the state of media, the 34th Session of the NC acknowledged the challenges journalists face, including high turnover, limited professional development opportunities, low salaries, and difficulty accessing information. The NC also noted the policy and legal framework for media freedom but highlighted challenges in its implementation, as well as in media independence and financial sustainability for the media sector.

The NC recommended that the government urgently review and amend legislation, particularly the Information, Communication and Media Act 2018, to address the challenges and advancements posed by digital transformation. Other recommendations include drafting and adopting a National Information and Digital Policy to ensure equitable access to accurate and reliable information, protect citizens' privacy and security online, and foster responsible digital engagement.

The resolution recommended that the government establish and implement clear and fair advertising policies for the allocation of public advertising, based on objective (market-based) principles that prioritise reaching the intended audience rather than merely supporting the media houses. Recognising the importance of both state-owned and private media, the NC recommended that these guidelines incorporate circulation audits and input from media impact assessments to ensure transparency and accountability.

To ensure the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of media operations, the House also recommended conducting regular media development assessments, media impact assessments, and circulation audits. The resolution also highlighted the strict implementation of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Sharing of Public Information with the Media. As guaranteed by the Constitution, the government must ensure the removal of all barriers and promote transparency and accountability.

Newspaper Publication House Inspection Report, September 2024

The Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA), the regulatory body for media, conducted an inspection of all newspaper publication houses to validate adherence to regulatory standards and other compliance aspects, such as the validation of the editorial team, inspection of office space, and other operational aspects as outlined in the newspaper licence terms and conditions.

The findings from the inspection revealed that two private newspapers (owned by sole proprietors) had not registered with the Company Registry Authority as required by the Rules and Regulations for Publication 2021 and the newspaper licence terms and conditions. BICMA also found that these two newspapers had not specified amounts for editors and reporters, making it impossible to validate salary disbursements. One private newspaper was fined Nu. 36,000 for failing to submit weekly publications despite repeated reminders, and its licence has been temporarily suspended due to multiple lapses.

The inspection report also highlighted the high turnover of journalists and the challenges media houses face in retaining employees, with many reporters resigning shortly after recruitment.

Currently, Bhutan has seven print media houses, including one weekly Dzongkha newspaper, *Gyalchi Sarshog*. *Kuensel* publishes a daily edition of its English newspaper, while its Dzongkha edition, which was published daily until 2023, is now published every Saturday due to high printing costs. The other private newspapers, including *Business Bhutan*, *The Bhutanese*, *Bhutan Times*, *Bhutan Today*, and *The Journalist*, are weekly publications.

The authority also carries out content regulation and oversight. The licensed ICT and media service providers include BBS's broadcasting (television) and 11 broadcast radios, including BBS Radio. Other entertainment broadcast radios include Centennial Radio, Kuzoo FM, Radio Valley, Edi Community Radio, Lhop Community Radio, CST Campus Radio, JNEC Campus Radio, Rigzhung Lungta, Sherig FM, and Sherubtse Campus Radio.

Bhutan's three licensed over-the-top (OTT) platforms, Samuh Mediatech Pvt Ltd, Shangreela, and Songyala, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to initiate merger process under the brand name Samuh+Shangreela to strengthen local content and boost global reach.

IFJ Bhutan Country Report 2023-2024

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) report 'Hollowed-Out Media' states that low salaries, poor working conditions, and difficulty in accessing information are seen as factors contributing to the exodus of journalists from the profession. Bhutan's top daily, the state-owned *Kuensel*, lost two senior editors between October 2023 and February 2024. According to *Kuensel*, the number of working journalists fell by 37% from 2021 to 2023, with only four out of 15 vacancies filled over the past two years. About 90 journalists, including 30 from the print media, have quit journalism in the last two years. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) alone lost 60 employees. News reporters, producers, camerapersons, and editors left en masse.

The enactment of the RTI Act is considered vital for vibrant journalism in Bhutan. However, this legislation could not be enacted. Furthermore, the closure of the autonomous Media Council – previously responsible for overseeing media content – and its transfer back to BICMA does not bode well for access to information.

Challenges related to access to information, high turnover of journalists, the sustainability of media houses, and a lack of trained professionals have been highlighted since 2008 in every study and assessment of the media situation, along with recommendations and suggested solutions. However, many stakeholders say these recommendations were not implemented and remain shelved.

Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework for Media

Article 7(5) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan underlines the ‘freedom of the press, radio and television, and other forms of dissemination of information, including electronic’, as a fundamental right of all Bhutanese citizens.

The ICMAB 2018 emphasises the creation and promotion of ‘a Bhutanese information society and the right environment for the vibrant growth of ICT and media sectors in line with the principles of Gross National Happiness.’

However, due to the lack of a systematic or institutional mechanism in place to facilitate access to information, agencies such as the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC), Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Thimphu Municipality, and even the National Assembly (NA) have devised their own model codes and rules, restricting the sharing of public information (IFJ report).

According to the IFJ report, a series of rules and notifications from various agencies have effectively silenced civil servants, with agencies competing to withhold access to information. All of these factors – media hollowing, sustainability challenges, and self-censorship – have been attributed to the decline in press freedom ranking.

Rules for Administrative Disciplinary Actions (RADA)

The endorsement of RADA by the RCSC during its 145th Commission meeting on 12 July 2022, introduced new regulations concerning access to information within Bhutan’s bureaucracy. It has since been incorporated into the BCSR 2023. Under RADA, administrative offences are categorised into major and minor offences based on their severity and impact on government service. Unauthorised disclosure of classified information is categorised as a major offence, with offenders facing prosecution in court. Other major offences include:

- Disclosure of critical information to unauthorised individuals or platforms.
- Utilisation of official information for personal gain.
- Posting defamatory content targeting individuals or government agencies in public or online forums.

In cases of major offences, civil servants can expect severe consequences, including demotion, compulsory retirement, or prosecution (Notification issued on 15 July 2022). While the RCSC asserts that RADA aims to enhance good governance and combat corruption by promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency within the civil service, the practical implications of these rules could pose challenges to public access to information.

ACC’s Model Public Service Code of Conduct

Reinforcing RADA, the ACC released a Model Public Service Code of Conduct (MPSCC) on 30 December 2022, which further restricts public servants’ ability to disclose information. According to this code, any unauthorised sharing of official

information regardless of confidentiality status can lead to disciplinary and criminal sanctions.

The model code applies to all public servants and forms part of their employment terms, emphasising the necessity of maintaining confidentiality regarding any information encountered during official duties.

Key sections include:

- Section 29 emphasises the importance of maintaining confidentiality and secrecy surrounding official documents and information.
- Section 30 outlines public servants' responsibilities in securing information.
- Section 31 prohibits unauthorised disclosure of official information unless explicitly authorised.

Violations of these regulations can result in severe disciplinary actions, including termination and compulsory retirement for major offences, and suspensions or demotions for minor offences.

Concerns have been voiced that restrictive measures on information disclosure jeopardise transparency and accountability in governance. As expressed by various media commentators, these regulations might inadvertently foster an environment conducive to corruption and favouritism, effectively sidelining the media's role as a public watchdog (Kuensel & The Bhutanese, January 2023).

The National Council Report 2024

The RCSC, ACC, and ministry focal points all acknowledged the important role of the media in disseminating information to the public, but also pointed out the lack of experience and professionalism among young journalists (NC report, 2024).

The report also stated that, in an effort to improve access to information, the Department of Media, Creative Industry, and Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP) issued an SOP on 28 April 2023. The SOP is designed to guide government agencies' media spokespersons, media focal points, and officials involved in sharing public information with the media. While certain types of information are exempt from disclosure, the SOP also outlines efforts to streamline the process, specifying turnaround times for information sharing. However, during the consultation process, the NC found that many government media focal points were unaware of the SOP.

Methodology

This rapid assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to comprehensively evaluate Bhutan's media landscape. The study integrated an online survey, FGDs, in-depth interviews, and desk research to capture diverse perspectives from media stakeholders.

1. Online survey

A structured questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to all 90 registered members of the Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB), achieving an 80% response rate (72 respondents). The survey covered:

- Demographic profiles of journalists
- Workplace conditions and economic challenges
- Perceptions of press freedom and access to information
- Institutional integrity and corruption risks
- Professional development needs

2. Focus Group Discussions

Three targeted FGDs were conducted with key stakeholder groups:

- Private media owners (5 participants) – explored sustainability challenges, advertising dynamics, and policy impacts
- Former journalists (6 participants) – examined attrition reasons and historical changes in media freedom
- Serving journalists (8 participants) – discussed operational challenges, censorship, and professional pressures

3. One-on-one interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 purposively selected participants:

- 10 serving journalists (from print, broadcast, and digital media)
- 5 former journalists/media managers

Interviews followed an open-ended guide while allowing for organic discussion about:

- Day-to-day reporting constraints
- Institutional pressures and self-censorship
- Career progression challenges
- Comparisons between state and private media environments

4. Desk research & literature review

The team analysed:

- Previous media assessments (Bhutan Media Impact Studies 2003-2013)
- Policy documents (Information Communication Media Act 2018)

- International reports (Reporters Without Borders indices)

5. Analysis approach

Quantitative survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from FGDs and interviews underwent thematic analysis through:

- Transcription and anonymisation
- Open coding to identify emerging patterns
- Axial coding to establish relationships between themes
- Selective coding to develop final analytical frameworks

Key thematic clusters included: financial sustainability, access to information, professional integrity, and regulatory environments. Findings were triangulated across all data sources to ensure robustness, with particular attention to discrepancies between journalist perceptions and institutional realities.

This methodology enabled a 360-degree assessment of Bhutan's media ecosystem, capturing both statistical trends and nuanced experiential perspectives from frontline practitioners to organisational leaders. The mixed-methods design provided depth in understanding complex issues like self-censorship while maintaining empirical rigor through survey data.

1. Profile of Respondents

1.1 Gender and Age

The survey revealed that 62.5% of the respondents are men, while 37.5% are women. The representation ratio suggests that while there are women working as journalists, they are outnumbered by their male counterparts. This raises important questions about gender equity in media representation and the potential barriers that may exist for women in pursuing careers in journalism.

The survey shows that the average profile of journalists in Bhutan is predominantly young with close to 46% of the journalists under the age of 30 while the age group from 51 to over 60 years is negligible.

The absence of a significant number of journalists aged 51 and above in the survey highlights the need for strategies that support diversity not just in gender and youth but also across different age groups. Encouraging the involvement of seasoned professionals can enrich the media landscape in Bhutan by blending experience with fresh perspectives from younger journalists. Overall, it points an area for potential growth and development in the profession.

1.2 Qualification of Respondents

A significant majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree with 76.4% followed by post-graduate and above of 20.8%. The respondents with higher secondary school (up to 12th grade) qualification stands at 2.8%. The data indicates that the workforce primarily composed of individuals with Bachelor's degrees. Overall, the qualifications reflected in the survey indicate a strong educational foundation among journalists while

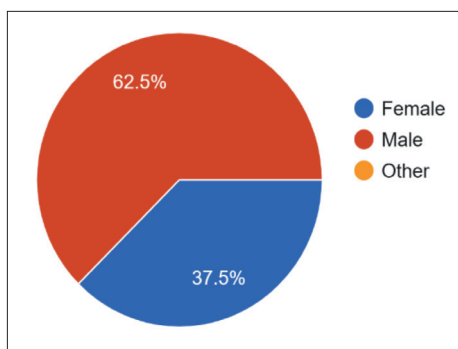


Figure 1: Gender

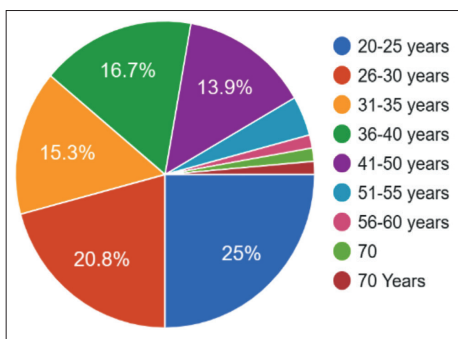


Figure 2: Age

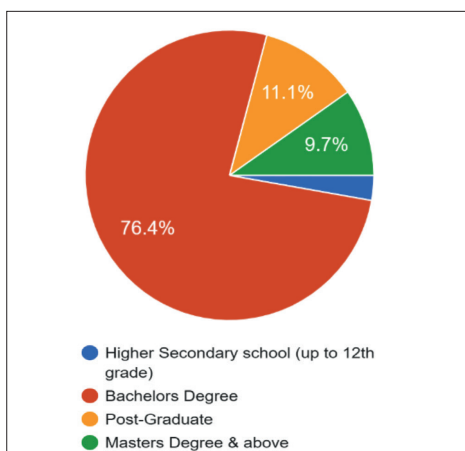


Figure 3: Qualification

also pointing towards opportunities for enhancing professional growth through further education and training.

In summary, the survey indicates a diverse range of experience levels among journalists, emphasising a need for structured support for both emerging and seasoned journalists in the rapidly evolving media landscape. This mixture can foster collaboration, mentorship, and a learning environment, which is essential for journalistic growth and development.

1.3 Educational Background of Respondents

53.7% of the respondents have pursued postgraduate studies in journalism or mass communication. While 22% of the respondents studied literature, 12.2% availed courses in social sciences and the remaining pursued a mix of sciences and management.

The presence of individuals with journalism and mass communication in postgraduate education reflects a desire within the industry to professionalism and skill enhancement. The individuals with advanced training in literature and social sciences can contribute to a well-rounded journalistic approach that is informed by a rich understanding of human experiences and societal issues.

A significant portion 42.3% of respondents majored in literature, specifically in english or dzongkha. A notable 21.1% of respondents studied journalism or mass communication and 7% of the respondents pursued physical/biological/environmental sciences. A smaller group of 11.3% pursued social sciences and 5.6% of the respondents studied business and management.

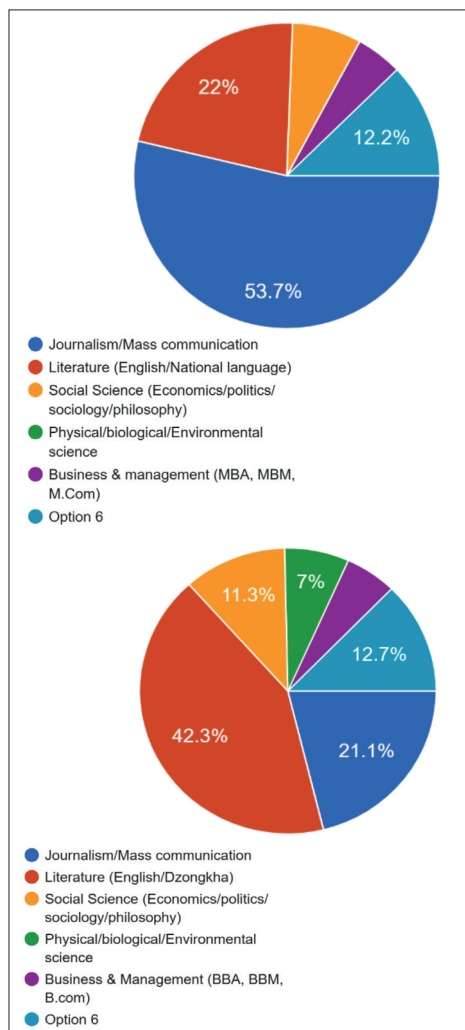


Figure 4: Educational Background

The findings suggest that the journalism sector is diverse, with professionals coming from various academic backgrounds, particularly strong in literature and communications. This diversity can enrich journalistic content, as individuals with different perspectives and expertise can contribute unique insights.

1.4 Work Experience

A significant proportion of respondents (38%) are relatively new to the field, with 0-2 years of experience. A smaller but notable 26.6% of journalists have experience ranging from 3-10 years. This group possesses moderate experience and knowledge of the field, contributing to the institutional memory of journalism in Bhutan. The presence of journalists with over 11 years of experience (21.2% combined for 11-15 years, 16-20 years, and more than 21 years) indicates a veteran workforce that can provide mentorship and guidance to less experienced journalists.

In summary, the composition of Bhutan's journalism workforce reflects a dynamic but imbalanced professional landscape. A substantial portion comprises early-career journalists, suggesting high turnover or a steady influx of new entrants, possibly due to the profession's accessibility or a lack of long-term retention strategies. While there is a moderate cohort with several years of experience contributing to the sector's institutional memory, the relatively smaller proportion of veteran journalists may indicate challenges in career sustainability or limited incentives for long-term engagement. This imbalance raises concerns about the continuity of professional standards and mentorship, which are crucial for nurturing journalistic quality and integrity over time.

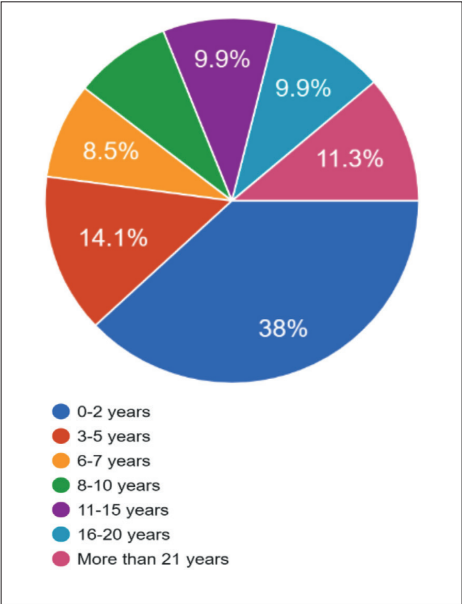


Figure 5: Work Experience

1.5 Choice of Career

The majority of respondents (59.7%) indicated that ambition was the driving force behind their decision to pursue journalism. This suggests a desire to succeed and make an impact in the field, which may enhance the quality of reporting and commitment to journalistic integrity.

A significant portion of 31.3% reported that their decision was influenced by job openings. This indicates that for some individuals, employment opportunities played an important role in entering the field, suggesting a response to market demand. Additionally, some personal motivations for entering journalism, included interest in media and storytelling, passion for writing and background in related fields.

The survey found that while 80.6% of respondents became journalists through on-the-job experience, only 19.4% of respondents reported being journalists by training. This suggests that journalists enter the field without traditional academic backgrounds in journalism. It also indicates potential gaps in foundational training, which could affect the quality of reporting, understanding of ethical standards, and adherence to journalistic practices.

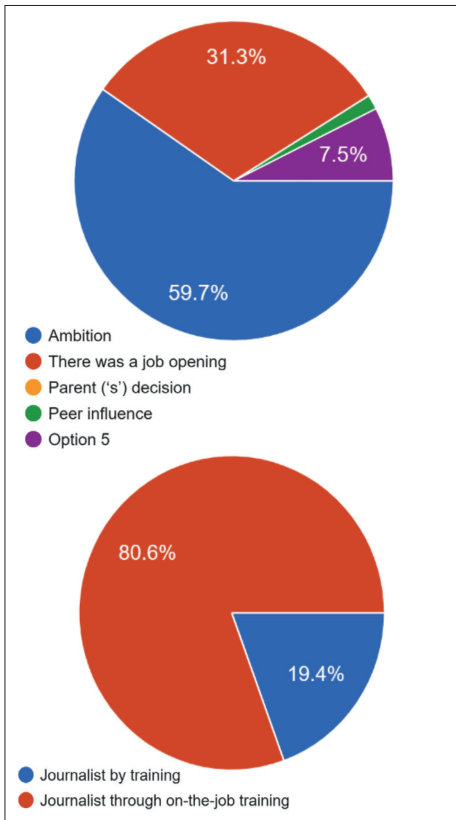


Figure 6: Career in journalism/choice of career

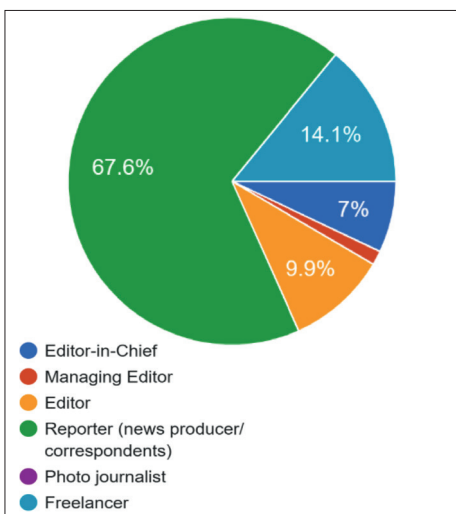


Figure 7: Position/ Titles

1.6 Position/Titles

A majority of respondents of 67.6% were reporters/news producers/ correspondents representing actively engaged in reporting and producing news content followed by freelancers representing 14.1%. Another 9.9% were editors and 7% editors-in-chiefs. The remaining comprised of managing editors and photo journalists.

The dominance of reporters, news producers, and correspondents suggests a healthy base of professionals actively engaged in journalism, which is vital for news coverage and community engagement. The relatively smaller figures for editor's positions imply potential opportunities for growth and development in editorial leadership within the industry.

The presence of a significant number of freelancers indicates a diverse array of content creation and an adaptable media landscape. However, it may also highlight the challenges of financial stability and support for independent journalists.

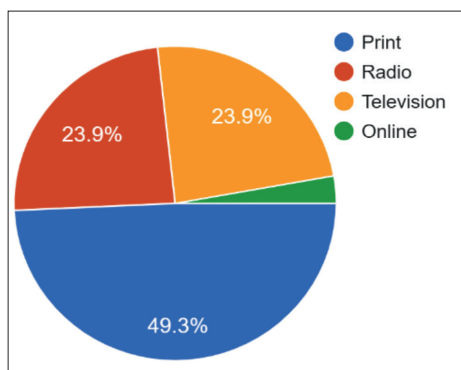


Figure 8: Media House Representations

1.7 Representation of Respondents

Print media emerged as the dominant platform, with 49.3% of respondents indicating it as their primary or previous area of work—reflecting the larger employment base within the print sector. Radio and television each accounted for 23.9% of responses, while online media was represented by only 2.9%. The equal distribution between radio and television is likely due to their being solely operated by the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS).

The presence of online media is increasingly vital, especially in a world where digital consumption of news is surging. It also poses challenge in balancing the role of traditional media (print, radio, television) and easily accessible online platforms as the media landscape evolves.

2. Current State of Media Landscape

46.5% of respondents rated the media situation as average, and 42.3% (11.3% + 31%) rated it as poor (either 'extremely poor' or 'bad'). This indicates that a majority of participants perceive significant challenges within the current media landscape. Only 9.9% rated the media situation as good, and none rated it as excellent.

This suggests that positive perceptions of the media are scarce, reflecting underlying issues that might be affecting both the quality of journalism and public trust. With the majority of responses leaning towards the lower end of the evaluative scale, it is clear that many see the need for significant improvements in the media situation.

This feedback highlights the urgent need for media houses to address the issues contributing to these perceptions. By focusing on quality, accountability, and audience engagement, the media can work towards rebuilding trust and improving its standing in the eyes of the public.

The rise of digital and social media has significantly transformed Bhutan's media landscape. Traditional media is facing challenges due to declining readership and audience engagement, while digital content is rapidly expanding, offering more options and instant accessibility via mobile devices.

The transition to digital presents a major challenge in an already strained media environment. Reporters are often required to submit up to 15 stories a month, and venturing into real-time digital content creation would significantly increase their workload

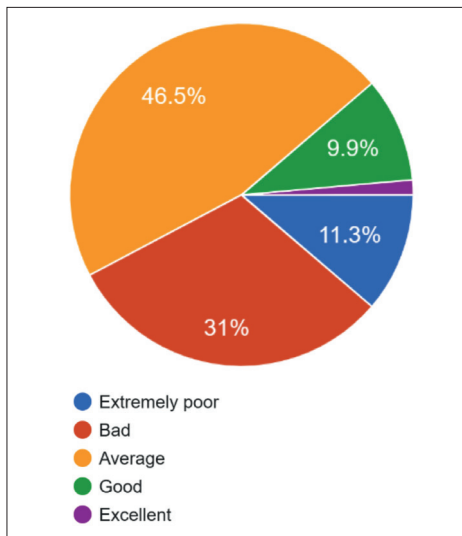


Figure 9: Current Media Landscape

without additional resources or staffing support.

Traditional media's use of social platforms has largely been limited to reposting existing content from television, websites, or print publications on platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. While media houses recognise the need to transition to digital platforms to stay relevant and sustainable, concrete steps remain limited. Media houses such as BBS and Kuensel have initiated discussions on adopting digital strategies, though no definitive actions have been taken.

Furthermore, the lack of robust content regulation on social platforms has blurred the lines between professional journalists who adhere to structured, credible reporting and social media influencers, complicating the public's ability to discern trustworthy information.

To report on news and events from remote districts and local communities, Kuensel and BBS have established bureau offices staffed with dedicated field reporters. However, due to sustained financial losses in recent years, both have been forced to implement cost-cutting measures, resulting in the closure of several bureaus across the country.

Currently, BBS operates nine bureau offices, down from 14 three years ago, each typically staffed by a single reporter with limited equipment and resources. Kuensel now maintains only three bureaus, a significant reduction from eight over the same period. These cutbacks have made it increasingly difficult to gather and produce timely, high-quality news from the field.

Bureau reporters also face challenges in professional development, as most capacity-building programmes are conducted in the capital and primarily benefit head office staff. Those in the field often receive little support or training and must work in difficult conditions with minimal protection and managerial backing.

With the ongoing decentralisation process, local governments and rural communities are playing a more significant role in Bhutan's development, supported by substantial annual grants. In this context, the presence of bureau offices is essential to ensure transparent reporting on the use of public funds, keep citizens informed, and hold local officials accountable for service delivery and development outcomes.

3. Internal Challenges

3.1 Integrity of Media Houses and their Vulnerability to Corruption

More than half of the respondents (51.5%) rated the integrity of their media organisations as 'moderate.' This suggests that while there are areas of integrity recognised, there might also be significant room for improvement. A combined total of 45.5% (31 respondents) rated the integrity as either 'very high' (17.6%) or 'high' (27.9%), indicating that a notable portion of journalists perceive their organisations positively. The absence of responses in the 'low' and 'very low' categories may indicate that respondents' concerns were not extreme enough to warrant such low ratings.

Responding to questions on vulnerability to corruption risks, about one-third of respondents (32.8%) believe that their organisation is susceptible to corruption risks. This indicates a notable level of concern within the organisation regarding potential ethical breaches and integrity issues. Nearly half of the respondents (49.3%) expressed uncertainty regarding corruption risks. This high percentage suggests a lack of clarity or awareness about the organisational practices related to corruption, which may reflect a need for more transparency and communication. Only 17.9% of respondents feel confident that their organisation is not vulnerable to corruption, indicating that trust in the system may be limited and points to potential underlying issues that need to be addressed.

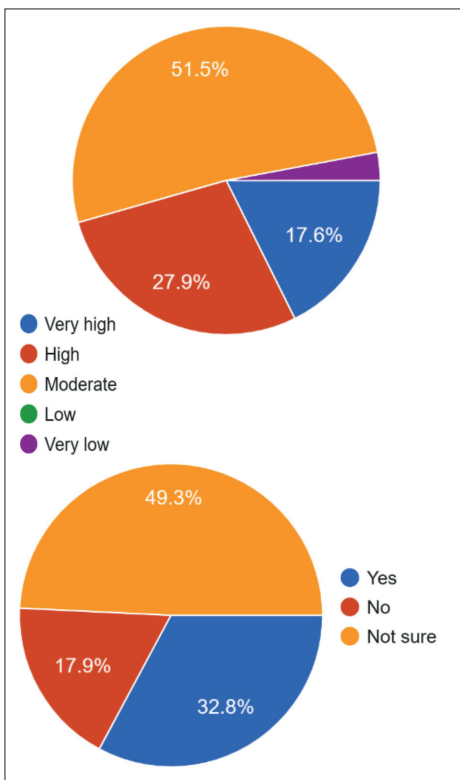


Figure 10: Integrity and Vulnerability of Media Houses

Respondents identified that personal relationships with politicians or influential figures can lead to biased editorial decisions, where positive stories are

avored due to personal connections rather than journalistic merit. There are risks associated with advertisers trying to sway editorial content.

Concerns about the potential for corruption and self-censorship due to the government's financial support for media houses need to be viewed more closely. While the support is an important and positive gesture from the government, alternative and healthier support set-up strengthening media autonomy will go a long way in achieving a vibrant and healthy media landscape.

Respondents indicated that there is often an undue influence from management regarding the narratives presented in news coverage, which may compromise the editorial independence essential for fair journalism. Negative workplace dynamics, including imbalances in responsibilities and a lack of accountability, can exacerbate issues of corruption by creating an environment where unethical practices go unchallenged.

There were mentions of bribery as a risk to editorial independence, suggesting that financial incentives could lead to biased reporting and a departure from journalistic ethics. And there is apprehension surrounding the ability to publish sensitive stories, indicating that pressures or threats may inhibit open reporting on critical issues. Some respondents mentioned the lack of clear and transparent payment systems indicating a weak or corrupt management.

Instances of nepotism and favoritism within hiring and promotion decisions were highlighted. The concerns raised by respondents underscore a substantial perception of vulnerability to corruption risks within their media organisations.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to conduct regular assessments to promote a culture of independence and integrity to reward ethical practices for journalists to uphold high standards.
2. Media houses need to engage with the audience and community to help media organisations gauge public perceptions of their integrity and rebuild trust where needed.
3. Relevant agencies need to assess the organisation's vulnerability to corruption through audits and surveys that can identify weaknesses in processes and guide improvements.

3.2 Editorial Independence and Business Interest

The Bhutanese media landscape faces significant internal challenges that impact its sustainability, credibility, and professional growth. One of the key concerns is the structural composition of media houses. The survey found that 45.1% of media houses have their MD/CEO/Head also serving as the editor-in-chief. This dual role raises concerns about editorial independence, as business interests could overshadow journalistic integrity. While a slight majority (54.9%) reported

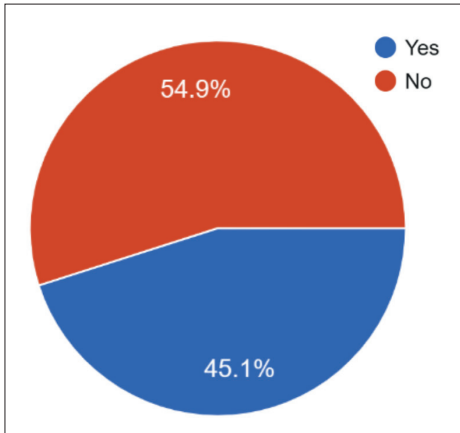


Figure 11: Separation of Management and Newsroom

a separation of these roles, ensuring governance structures that prevent conflicts of interest remains critical.

Media houses where the MD/CEO/Head also serves as the editor-in-chief may face challenges related to influence over editorial content. This setup could lead to the prioritisation of business interests over journalistic standards, particularly in matters that may involve reporting on sensitive topics related to the organisation or its management.

The division of roles between management and editorial functions can play a critical role in shaping the integrity and independence of a news organisation. The presented data reflects a prevailing trend towards distinct governance, which can be beneficial for journalistic credibility.

Recommendations:

1. Relevant authorities need to strictly enforce provision of government's Rules and Regulations for Publication.

3.3 Management's Interference and Influence

A significant combined total of 66.2% of respondents indicated that they receive news ideas either 'very frequently' (32.4%) or 'occasionally' (33.8%). This suggests a relatively high level of engagement from management in terms of contributing news ideas and direction for reporting. A smaller proportion of respondents (23.9% combined) reported that they receive news ideas 'rarely' (16.9%), 'very rarely' (7%), or 'never' (7%). This indicates that a minority of employees may either not receive direction from management or feel less involved in the generation of news ideas. Notably, none of the respondents selected 'Always', which indicates

that while management is involved in generating ideas, there is not an overwhelming reliance on management for news topics.

A combined total of 50% of the respondents indicated that the MD/CEO/ Head of the organisation interferes in editorial matters either ‘very frequently’ (19.7%) or ‘occasionally’ (31%), pointing to a notable level of managerial influence over news affairs. In contrast, only 9.9% reported that there has ‘never’ been any interference, suggesting that most employees perceive some degree of leadership involvement in editorial decisions.

A combined majority of respondents (59.2%) believe that news content is influenced, particularly by the Board, management, or owners of media houses, while combined 40.8% disagree.

This reflects a significant divide in opinion and highlights concerns about internal editorial interference rather than just external pressures. When media houses face financial constraints, ownership and management can exert subtle but powerful influence over editorial choices. This highlights the need for stronger safeguards, such as clear editorial policies, transparency in ownership, and independence between management and newsroom operations, to protect journalistic integrity and public trust.

Such interference can affect journalists’ willingness to pursue certain stories, potentially compromising the integrity and objectivity of news coverage. Frequent interference from management may create a culture where editorial independence is limited, stifling creativity and undermining journalistic autonomy. While the extent of perceived interference varies, the findings highlight

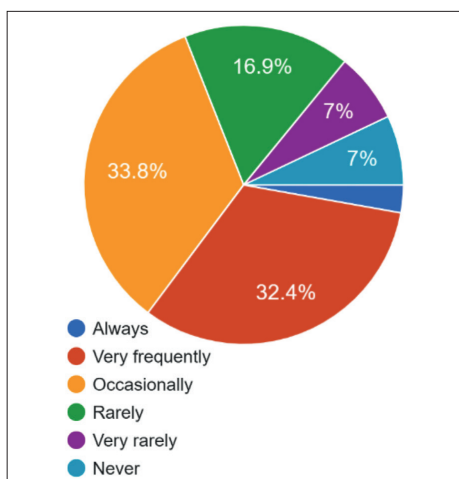


Figure 12: Management's Influence on Newsroom

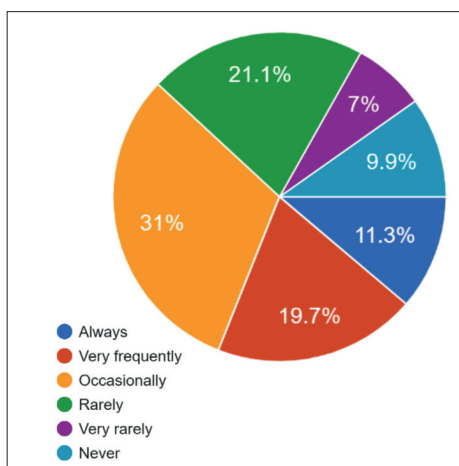


Figure 13: Management's Interference in News Affairs

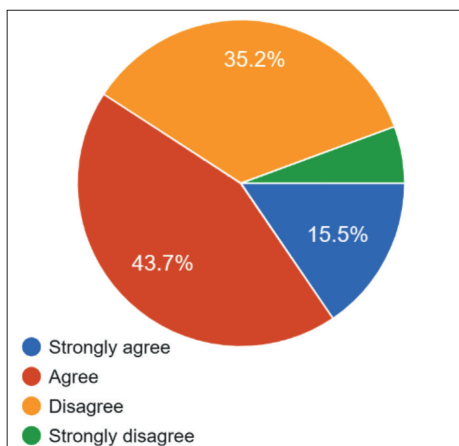


Figure 14: Owner/Board/Management Influence on News Content

the need to balance effective leadership with the preservation of editorial integrity and independence.

Recommendations:

1. Relevant authorities need to strictly enforce provision of government's Rules and Regulations for Publication.
2. Media organisations need to conduct periodic assessments of interference levels to help management understand the impact of their involvement on journalistic practices and tailor their approach accordingly.

3.4 Ownership and Management Transparency

A combined total of 64.3% of respondents feel that the organisation has a good level of transparency regarding ownership and management. This indicates a generally positive perception, suggesting that a majority of employees believe they have access to information about the organisation's governance. 15.7% of respondents feel that the organisation is not transparent, while another 20% are unsure about the transparency of ownership and management.

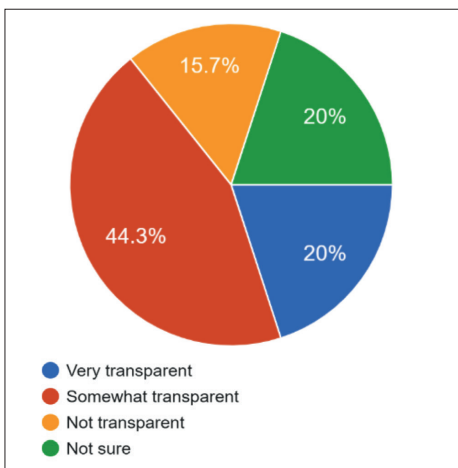


Figure 15: Ownership and Management Transparency

The presence of a notable number of responses in the 'not transparent' and 'not sure' categories indicates areas of concern that may need further exploration. The 20% of respondents who are uncertain about the level of transparency could point to a lack of communication or clarity within the organisation. Uncertainty often stems from insufficient information or engagement from leadership.

The perception of transparency significantly influences trust within the organisation. Employees who believe they are kept in the dark may feel disengaged and skeptical about management decisions. Employees who are unsure about transparency could benefit from improved communication strategies. Ensuring clarity on ownership and management can help alleviate uncertainties and improve overall morale.

While a majority of respondents perceive the media organisation as transparent, there remains a significant portion that feels uncertain or believes transparency is lacking. Addressing concerns about transparency could ultimately contribute to a more positive and collaborative workplace culture.

Recommendations:

- 1. Media houses need to foster dialogue to improve trust and engagement within the organisation.

3.5 Salary, Allowances and Other Benefits

The study found that 12.9% of respondents earn less than Nu 15,000 per month, while 8.6% earn between Nu 16,000 and Nu 20,000. Combined, these two categories represent approximately 21.5% of the sample, indicating that a notable group of employees receive monthly salaries below Nu 20,000. This highlights the presence of a smaller yet significant segment of the media workforce whose compensation may be considered low, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of rising living costs. A negligible 7.1% of respondents reported earnings above Nu. 61,000, which indicates that the media houses could not retain senior professionals through attractive financial incentives.

New recruits at private media houses earn as little as Nu 10,000 to Nu 15,000 per month, which is a stark contrast to their counterparts at BBS and Kuensel. Among the two, BBS employees receive comparatively higher salaries than those at Kuensel. The largest group of respondents (35.7%) reported monthly earnings in the range of Nu 31,000 to Nu 40,000. This suggests that a significant proportion of media personnel fall within this middle-income bracket.

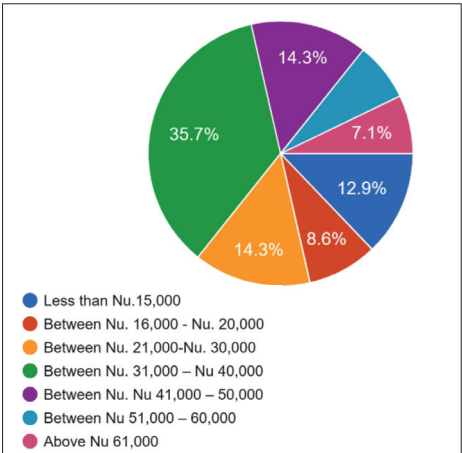


Figure 16: Monthly Salary

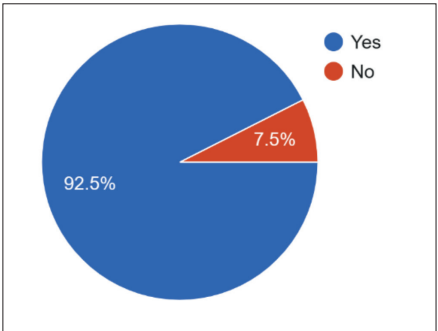


Figure 17: Timely Payment

An overwhelming 92.5% of respondents report that they are paid on time. This indicates a strong level of satisfaction regarding payroll processes within the organisation, suggesting that most employees have confidence in the reliability of salary disbursement.

However, 7.5% of respondents reported not receiving their salaries on time. Although this represents a relatively small portion of the workforce, it raises a significant concern for the affected individuals. Delayed payments can undermine employee morale and financial stability, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and decreased productivity.

It is found that a significant majority of 84.7% of respondents reported that they are being paid travel and daily subsistence, and 24.2% respondents reported of getting communication allowances while on duty.

An average of 34.3% respondents reported that they are provided other benefits of provident fund, staff welfare scheme and office loan facilities, which seems to be serving as retention strategy for most working journalists.

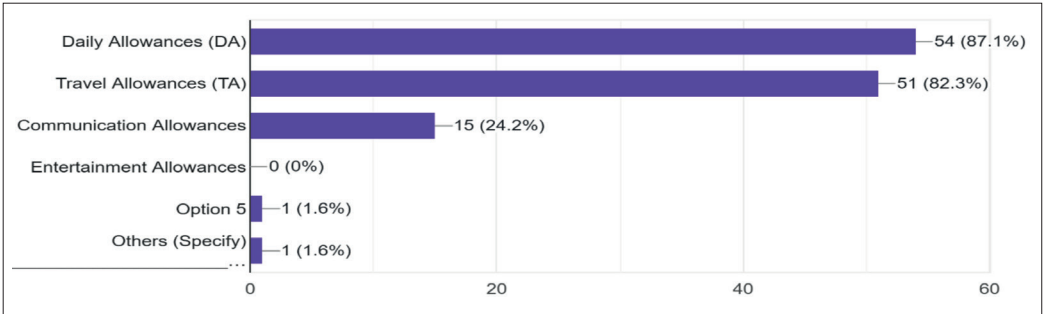


Figure 18: Allowances

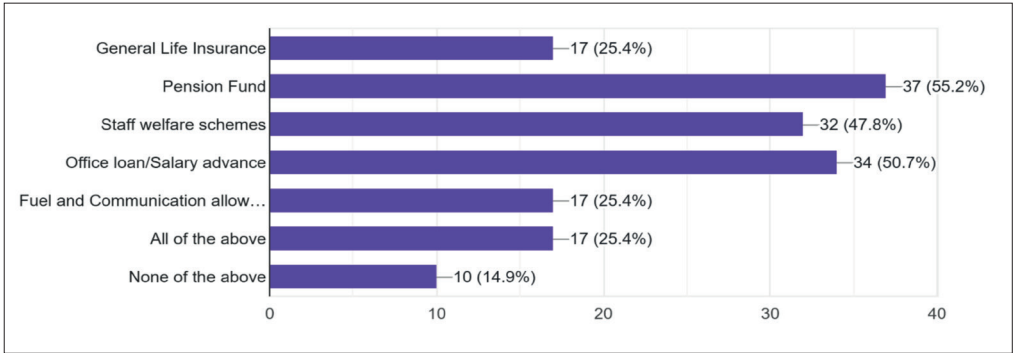


Figure 19: Other Benefits

Recommendations:

1. Revisit the salary structure discrepancies of two state-owned media houses considering their ownership modalities.
2. Media organisations need to work towards financial sustainability of the media houses and develop pay structures that are competitive and aligned with employees' expectations and rising living cost.
3. Relevant authorities and media organisations need to create awareness on the provisions of the Labour and Employment Act 2007.

3.6 Respondents' Perception towards their Profession

Of the 72 respondents, 58.3% view journalism as an attractive profession, while 41.7% do not. This highlights a clear divide in perceptions of the field. The positive sentiment suggests that many still value journalism for its societal impact, the dynamic nature of news reporting, and the sense of purpose it can offer.

Conversely, the significant portion of respondents who do not find journalism appealing likely reflect concerns about job stability, low salaries, long working hours, burnout, and the professional hazards such as censorship, threats, and pressure as key deterrents ongoing shifts within the industry.

This divide indicates that while some are drawn to the profession's potential and purpose, others are disillusioned by its practical challenges. These differing views have implications for recruitment and retention, pointing to the need for journalism organisations to address underlying issues to maintain and grow their talent pool.

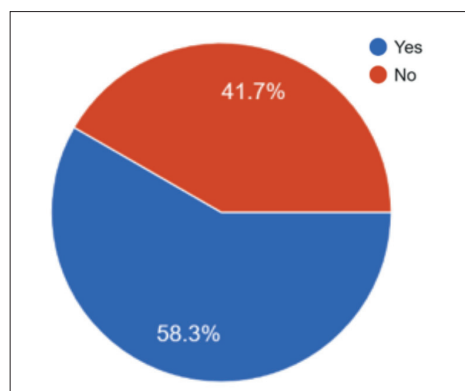


Figure 20: Attitude Towards Journalism Profession

Understanding the reasons behind the negative perceptions is essential. Such feedback offers valuable insight into the structural and cultural changes needed to enhance the profession’s appeal to both current and aspiring journalists.

Recommendations:

- 1. Media organisations need to conduct more in-depth surveys to explore the reasons behind the mixed perceptions of journalism’s attractiveness and make objective interventions.
- 2. Media organisations need to carry out advocacy campaigns that showcase the importance of journalism and recognise its role in democracy and society to increase public appreciation and improve the profession’s image.

3.7 Career Commitment and Attrition

A significant 83.1% of respondents expressed a desire to continue their careers as journalists, indicating a strong level of commitment to the profession among the majority of participants. In contrast, 16.9% reported that they do not wish to remain in the field. This minority response may point to underlying challenges within the workplace, dissatisfaction with the profession, or the influence of external factors such as financial instability, limited growth opportunities, or changing personal aspirations.

The most common reason for not continuing as a journalist was ‘Looking for Better Opportunities,’ cited by 58.3% of respondents. This suggests many are seeking career growth or a shift to other fields, possibly due to dissatisfaction with current prospects or industry challenges. Additionally, 33.3% expressed a desire to change professions entirely, reflecting broader concerns such as job stability, industry pressures, or personal career goals.

A smaller portion of respondents (8.3%) cited ‘No Salary on Time’ as a reason. Although relatively low, this highlights how payment delays can seriously affect employee retention and job satisfaction.

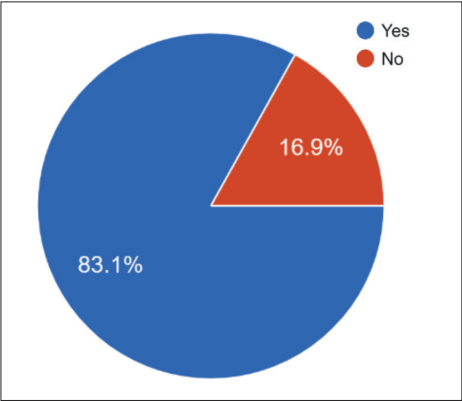


Figure 21: Views on Continuing or Leaving the Job.

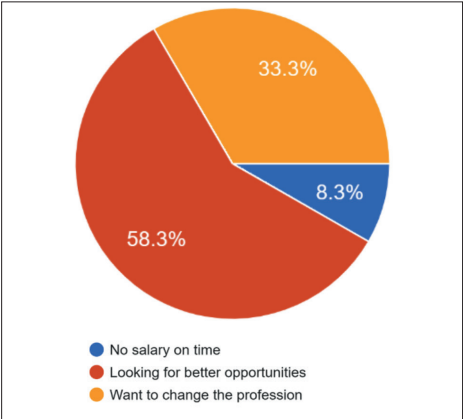


Figure 22: Reasons for Leaving the Job

Retaining experienced journalists has been a major challenge for all media houses, especially in the private sector, which faces higher attrition rates. Even state-owned entities like Kuensel and BBS have struggled, with BBS losing over a hundred employees in the past three years. Former journalists cite poor management and unfavorable working conditions as key internal factors behind this exodus.

Financial instability, resulting in delayed salary payments, declining advertising revenue, and overall financial insecurity, contributed to making media jobs less attractive. There is also the issue of limited professional growth due to the lack of structured career progression and training opportunities to gain technical skills and knowledge.

Journalists are under immense pressure to meet the minimum requirements for story coverage with each publication. This heavy workload, coupled with limited access to information, particularly from government agencies and constitutional bodies, has resulted in significant mental stress.

Additionally, it was reported that journalists face political pressure, personal threats, and workplace harassment, with no adequate protection from the editorial and management teams. While efforts to extend legal support to journalists in the past, including the publication of a Legal Guidebook for Bhutanese Journalists, have been reported, journalists expressed higher expectations.

Despite these challenges, some professionals choose to stay in the industry due to their passion for journalism or their academic background in the field. At BBS, employees often find motivation in the tangible impact of their work, as they can 'see their content directly reaching the public at the end of the day'. However, the industry is at a critical juncture, struggling with the attrition of experienced journalists while relying on fresh graduates who often enter the field without adequate training.

Excessive multi-tasking is also reported by participants as a reason for leaving the profession. As journalism increasingly requires reporters to juggle multiple roles (e.g., writing, editing, social media management, marketing, etc.), this can lead to stress and job dissatisfaction.

Recommendations:

1. Media houses need to develop career progression structures and initiatives to provide journalists with pathways to advance within the field.
2. Media organisations need to strengthen their roles in building professional and management capacity of media houses.
3. Media organisations should consider conducting follow-up discussions or in-depth interviews with respondents who indicated their intention to leave the profession.

3.8 Professional Development

The basic journalism course saw the highest participation (86.2%), indicating that many journalists prioritise fundamental skills, which are vital for their professional development. Courses focused on specific areas, such as Climate Change and Environment Reporting (38.5%) and Women and Children Reporting (26.2%), show a significant interest in reporting on important social issues and emerging topics.

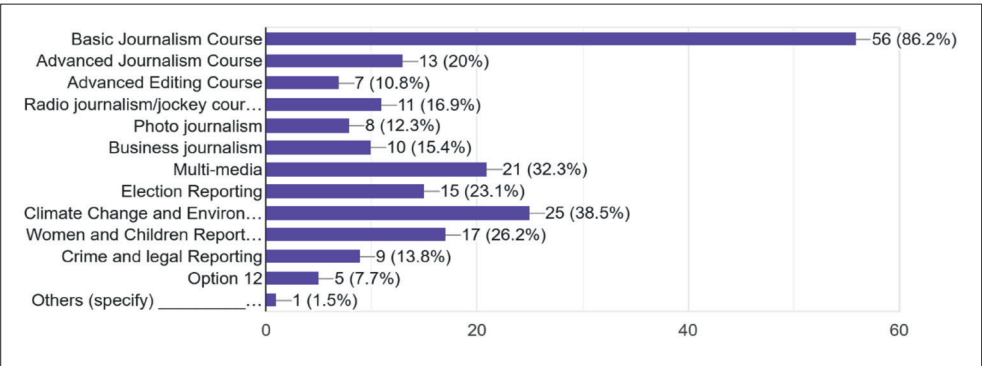


Figure 23: In-country Training

Respondents have engaged in various specialised training programmes, highlighting their interest in expanding their expertise across different facets of journalism, such as multimedia (32.3%), election reporting (23.1%), and business journalism (15.4%). While fewer participants attended courses like the Advanced Editing Course (10.8%) or Radio Journalism (16.9%), those who did sought to enhance their technical and editing skills, which are critical for producing high-quality journalism.

While basic journalism courses are offered by organisations such as the BMF and the JAB, most respondents reported acquiring skills through in-house initiatives. Besides, the proprietors of the private media houses, in contrast, argue that such trainings are ineffective in skills development. Furthermore, limited staffing prevents many journalists from attending available training.

The credibility of media houses rests largely on the quality of their reporting and writing. Despite this, most media houses lack formal training frameworks, relying instead on ad hoc or externally organised events. Respondents expressed concern over the absence of dedicated, state-supported capacity-building plans and funding for the media industry.

Private media owners highlighted a lack of coordination between private media firms, government agencies, JAB, and BMF, particularly in planning and implementing effective training programmes. Without a basic needs assessment, capacity-building initiatives often result in duplication and have limited impact on actual skill development.

Another major concern is access to long-term educational opportunities. While the scholarships and grants for advanced journalism studies are generally available

to state-run media houses, private media journalists do not get such facilities. As a result, private media journalists often resign to pursue higher education, which is financially unsustainable.

The effectiveness and professionalism of media rely heavily on the educational background, qualifications, and skills of its journalists. While some possess relevant degrees in journalism or media studies, many come from unrelated academic backgrounds and lack formal training. The absence of specialised education in fields such as investigative journalism and digital media further limits the scope of in-depth reporting. Many young journalists also struggle with limited field experience and lack established networks for sourcing credible information. Addressing these gaps will not only enhance media quality but also improve public access to reliable information and credible reporting.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations must improve professional standards, enhance training opportunities, and respond to public concerns to strengthen the role of journalism.
2. Relevant authorities and media organisations need to develop a structured professional development plan backed by dedicated funding to uphold public trust and confidence.

4. External Challenges

4.1 Financial Health of Media Houses

A particularly notable finding is that nearly half (46.3%) of respondents perceive the financial health of their media houses as 'unstable and uncertain,' reflecting widespread concern among journalists about the sustainability and long-term viability of their organizations. A significant portion, 34.3%, acknowledge some improvement, describing the financial situation as 'improving but with challenges.' This suggests positive developments, though ongoing struggles that could affect operations, staffing, and editorial independence remain.

Only 13.4% of respondents characterize their media house as 'stable and secure,' underscoring a lack of confidence in the financial stability of news organizations, possibly due to declining advertising revenues, audience shifts, or rising operational costs. Furthermore, 6% of respondents report their media organization as being in a 'declining and concerning' state, indicating that a portion of the workforce harbors significant concerns about job security and the organization's ability to operate effectively.

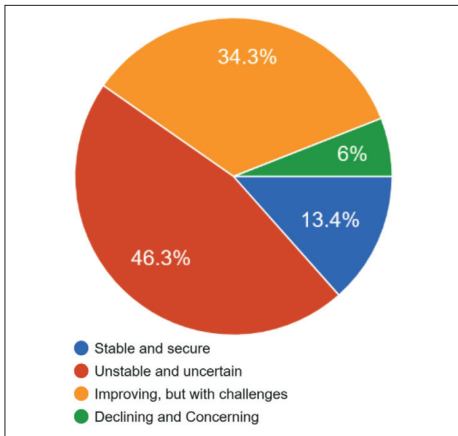


Figure 24: Financial Situation of Media Houses

The financial health of media houses varies significantly, with both private and state-owned entities relying heavily on government subsidies. Financial sustainability remains a challenge, largely due to the limited market size and advertising revenue following the liberalization of media licensing in 2006. This has resulted in intense competition, leading a respondent to describe the situation as ‘journalism cannibalism,’ where media houses vie for scarce financial resources, ultimately contributing to the decline of journalistic quality.

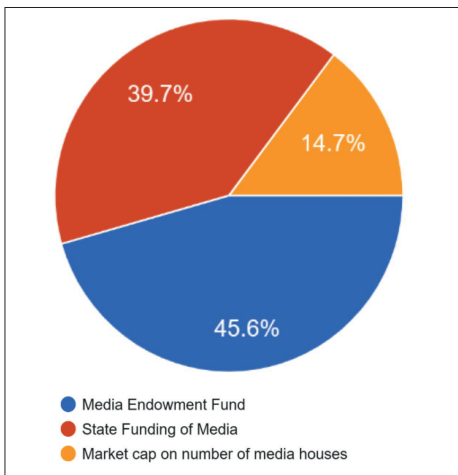


Figure 25: Scope of Funding and Sustainability

The most popular suggestion, with 45.6% in favor, indicates strong support for establishing a Media Endowment Fund. This fund could provide financial support for media organisations, helping to ensure their independence while easing financial pressures. It could be used for training, capacity-building, or innovation within the industry, promoting sustainability. 39.7% of respondents believe that state funding could be an effective measure to support the media industry. This suggests a recognition that government support may be necessary to help media organisations thrive, especially in times of economic hardship. However, this option raises questions about editorial independence and the implications of government involvement in media. Only 14.7% support implementing a market cap on the number of media houses, suggesting that this is not viewed as a primary solution to sustainability issues.

It is reported that the Media Enterprise Development Budget (MEDB) has benefited the media houses. However, some respondents have questioned the efficacy of the fund, as resources are shared equally amongst the media houses with no objectively defined

parameters. Instead, suggestions were made about establishing endowment fund that could provide a more objectively aligned window of sustainable support to the media houses.

The State-Owned Enterprises (SoE) Report 2020 published by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) revealed that both Kuensel and BBS incurred significant losses. Kuensel reported a loss of Nu. 11 million, while BBS reported a loss of Nu. 16 million. The SoE 2021 Report further mentioned BBS sustaining a loss of Nu. 31 million. While BBS receives substantial financial support from the government in the form of grants and subsidies, Kuensel continues to face financial difficulties, prompting it to diversify its business into printing, stationery supply, pick and drop services, etc., to explore other revenue sources.

The heavy reliance on government subsidies, which account for '80-85% of revenue,' has a significant impact on critical reporting on government actions and development. Several respondents have proposed exploring an alternative state support system, such as the 'Scandinavian model, which involves dedicated state resources and maintains an arm's-length relationship with the media.' This approach could serve as a viable model for Bhutan to consider. Additionally, a comparison has been drawn between the divergent paths of media licensing and banking licensing policies. While the moratorium on new banking licenses has supported the sustainability of the banking sector, the liberalisation of media licensing has had a detrimental effect on the media industry.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to conduct a thorough market analysis to help media houses better understand audience preferences and tailor their offerings to meet the needs of the population. This analysis could assess whether consolidation or collaboration between newspapers might improve sustainability.
2. Print media could consider investing in digital platforms and social media engagement to reach wider audiences.
3. Establish a Media Endowment Fund.
4. Study best practices including Scandinavian models for balanced, sustainable state-supported media ecosystems.
5. Review media licensing and regulatory policy.

4.2 Government's Austerity Measures

Advertisement is an important source of financial sustainability for all media houses, including state-owned Kuensel and BBS. However, the advertising market remains relatively small, with limited private sector participation and a heavy reliance on government advertisements. Moreover, recent austerity measures have significantly affected media revenue streams.

Owners of private media houses have expressed concern that ‘the government’s policy of publishing all construction advertisements through its Electronic Procurement System (EPS) has significantly impacted their advertising revenue’. As a result, many media houses have become increasingly reliant on non-government entities, including foreign organisations, corporate entities and private businesses. This dependency raises concerns about potential influence within the media industry, which could undermine the core principles of journalism and the media’s role as the fourth arm of governance.

Furthermore, as businesses explore alternative advertising platforms such as social media and digital marketing, traditional media houses are struggling to attract advertisers. The shrinking advertising market poses a serious threat to the sustainability of media houses. Kuensel, with its daily publication, has a greater audience reach and captures nearly 30% of the advertisement market, as most procuring agencies tend to choose it as their preferred medium for advertisements.

Owners of private media houses have questioned both the intent and effectiveness of the government’s austerity measures on advertisements, as these measures have severely affected their financial sustainability. However, views remain divided, as some believe that earnest implementation of the policy could lead to a healthier media landscape.

Another revenue stream has been reporting grants accessible either in the name of media houses or in the name of individual journalists. It is noted that the two state media houses have different modalities for accessing reporting grants where Kuensel has a more flexible SOP, suggesting a mutual benefit-sharing model of 60:40 with individual reporters as the main proponents of the project. In contrast, BBS has a more restrictive in-house rules for the same.

Although the intent and scope of Government’s e-procurement is to reduce corruption and enhance efficiency in its procurement systems, some media houses have questioned its outcome. While it may have achieved its objective of cost-cutting and service efficiency, it remains questionable if it has addressed issues such as collusion between government officials and businesses, which could potentially result in losses to the state.

Recommendation:

1. Relevant authorities need to review government’s procurement advertisement policy.

4.3 Merger

A significant majority of respondents (69%) believe that the presence of seven newspapers may be excessive for a country with a small population and the increasing influence of social media. This insight highlights the need for media organisations to reassess their strategies, placing greater emphasis on quality, collaboration, and adaptability to succeed in a competitive landscape.

The growing influence of social media and digital platforms intensifies these concerns, as audiences increasingly turn to online sources for news and information. While 31% of respondents believe that seven newspapers are not excessive, this reflects an acknowledgment of the diversity and choice that multiple publications can offer. Some argue that different newspapers cater to various audiences and address a broad range of interests within the population.

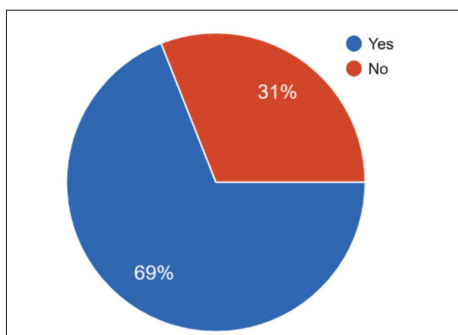


Figure 26: Views on Number of Media Houses

A significant portion of respondents (44.9%) advocates for the merging of two or more newspapers into one. This reflects a belief that consolidation could enhance operational efficiency and resource allocation, ultimately leading to better quality journalism. Suggestions to reduce the number of newspapers to three (26.5%) and four (12.2%) indicate a preference for a more streamlined media landscape that might be better equipped to thrive economically and meet audience needs.

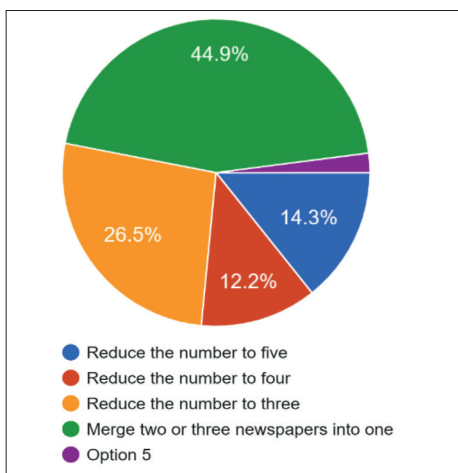


Figure 27: Merger

Two successive governments have expressed concerns about the sustainability of media houses and have suggested reorganisation through mergers. Such a strategy could enable content-sharing alliances, consolidating resources, expanding reach, and reducing operational costs. However,

these discussions have not garnered significant attention and have yet to lead to any actionable conclusions.

Recommendation:

1. Government may consider incentivizing mergers to create an environment where media organisations are encouraged to consolidate.

4.4 Access to Information

A significant majority, 59.2%, of respondents found accessing public information to be difficult, while an additional 19.7% rated it as very difficult. This suggests that nearly 79% of respondents face considerable challenges when seeking public information. Only 21.1% of respondents rated access as easy, and none indicated that it was very easy. This stark contrast highlights a widespread perception that public information is not readily accessible.

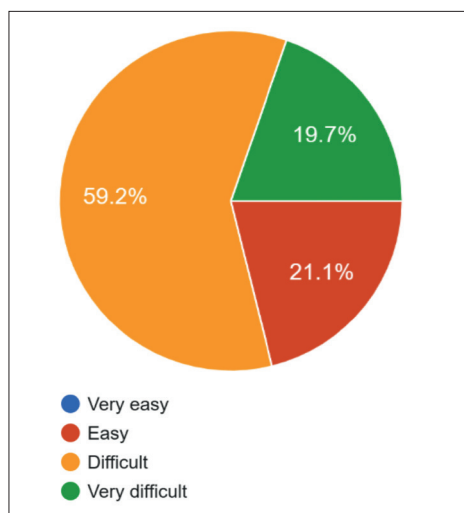


Figure 28: Ease of Access to Information

Access to information remains a significant challenge for journalists, affecting the quality and depth of news reporting. Various structural and professional barriers hinder media professionals, particularly young journalists, from obtaining timely and accurate information from government and other sources. Access to information from bureaucrats in relevant government agencies is a major challenge facing journalists today.

A notification issued by the RCSC on *Rules for Administrative Disciplinary Actions (RADA) 2022/BCSR 2023* bars civil servants from speaking to the media, which has further hindered reporters from obtaining timely information from government officials. Further, it was reported that the Anti-Corruption

Commission's (ACC) *Model Public Service Code of Conduct* (2022) fostered a culture of excessive caution among public servants, leading to a reluctance to engage with the media. There seems to be 'a systemic fear within the bureaucracy' regarding communication and information sharing with the media. In contrast, it was noted that 'foreign media houses found easy access to official information and documents from bureaucrats compared to local media houses.'

Journalists believe that establishing strong professional connections is essential for accessing information. However, 'young reporters often struggle due to their limited networks. Journalists who gain trust within the system find it easier to obtain information, whereas newcomers face skepticism from sources'. While there is an SOP for Sharing of Public Information with the Media, it was found that majority of the journalists seems to be unaware of it.

Journalists and media houses also reported structural barriers and bureaucratic hurdles. 'The government's effort to appoint media focal points in every agency has done little to improve access to timely and accurate information.' Young media focal officials with limited exposure to the plans, policies, and governance of their own agencies cause delays in obtaining information and complicate the reporting process as well. Media houses and journalists noted that while 'politicians are generally more accessible and responsive, bureaucrats tend to be more restrictive in sharing information.' Government media focal persons, intended as facilitators, 'often hinder access to information rather than expediting requests'.

It was also revealed that there is a lack of consistency in the appointment of media focal points, leading to delays in news without specific Turnaround Time (TAT). It was also found that most government agencies did not appoint their media focal persons and media spokespersons as per the provisions of the SOP for Sharing of Public Information with the Media.

Easy access to information is often facilitated by the personal relationships and connections that a journalist maintains with the relevant officers in charge of the agency. It was also found that state-owned BBS and Kuensel enjoy easier access to information from government agencies and officials compared to private media houses.

Moreover, due to severe bureaucratic layers in getting access to accurate information, there have been instances where information shared by mainstream media houses was inaccurate or outdated, misleading the public and causing fear and anxiety among the audience. Some journalists have even faced threats with accusations from affected parties and individuals in response to such incidents.

The high percentage of respondents indicating difficulty in accessing information could signal significant transparency issues within public institutions. This raises questions about the effectiveness of public information systems and the degree to which citizens can engage with governmental processes. Challenges in accessing public information could stem from various factors, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of clear communication channels, inadequate online resources, or even possible intentional obfuscation by authorities.

4.5 Ease of Access Rating

The survey was conducted using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 being very easy to 10 being very difficult. It provides a comprehensive overview of respondents' perceptions of accessibility to information from various agencies.

The survey shows that most respondents rated the PMO as relatively easy to access for information, giving it a score of 2. This is the highest rating compared to other scores for this agency, suggesting that journalists generally find it easier to obtain information from the PMO than from many other institutions.

For ministries, most respondents gave a rating of 5, meaning they feel that accessing information is neither very easy nor very difficult – it falls somewhere in the middle. This suggests that while information is available, it may not always be straightforward to obtain.

For departments, most respondents rated access to information at 6, which is higher than the rating for ministries. This indicates that journalists find it more difficult to get information from departments compared to ministries. While access is not the hardest, it is still somewhat challenging.

For the ACC, RAA and the Judiciary, most respondents rated access to information at 5.

The responses for corporations and CSOs indicate that it is generally easy to access information, and journalists do not encounter major challenges in doing so. The monastic institutions have the highest frequency, with a score of 7. This indicates that it is relatively easy to access information from these institutions.

For the RBP, it is quite difficult to access information and journalists generally find it challenging. This implies that accessing information from them is not as straightforward as with other organisations.

The responses suggest that opinions regarding accessing information from the RBA are divided. Some respondents find it very challenging to obtain information while others may view it quite differently. For the OAG, accessing information can be fairly easy at times, and difficult occasionally.

Recommendations

1. Relevant authorities could implement training programmes for personnel across all agencies to improve their ability to provide timely and accurate information to the public.
2. Media organisations need to educate citizens about their rights to access public information and its significance in encouraging greater engagement in civic matters.

3. Government and public institutions could prioritise the creation and improvement of clear, user-friendly online platforms where public information can be accessed easily.
4. Designate media focal person and media spokesperson as per the provisions of government's SOP for Sharing of Public Information with the Media.
5. Institute an Annual Government–Media Dialogue Forum.
6. Revisit and harmonise the SOP (DoMCIIP), RADA/BCSR and ACC's Model Public Service Code of Conduct in terms of their ethical expectations, accountability mechanisms, and governance principles.

5. Press Freedom

An overwhelming majority, 94.3% of respondents are aware of the freedom of the press being guaranteed in the Constitution. This indicates a strong level of awareness among the population regarding this fundamental right. Only 5.7% of respondents indicated they were unaware of this constitutional guarantee. This suggests that the majority of individuals in the survey are informed about the legal protections afforded to press freedom.

Despite the high awareness of constitutional protections, the earlier responses regarding the actual state of press freedom reveal a disparity between legal guarantees and lived experience. This suggests that legal provisions may not fully translate into practice, highlighting the need for continued efforts to ensure that constitutional rights are actively protected and respected.

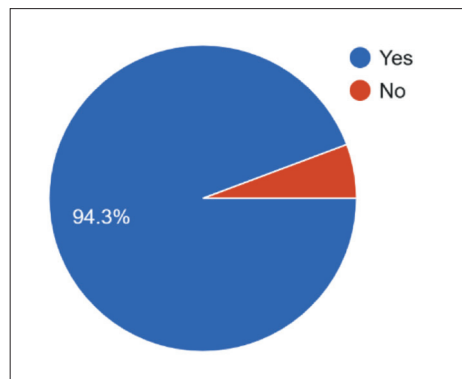


Figure 29: Perception and Experience

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to continue their efforts to educate citizens about their right to information as enshrined in the Constitution, emphasising the importance of a free press and the role it plays in democracy.
2. Media organisations need to strengthen networks to support journalists, particularly in instances where they face challenges or threats, ensuring they are aware of their rights under the Constitution.

5.1 Perception on Press Freedom

The responses are notably split, with 42.9% agreeing that there is freedom of the press, and another 42.9% disagreeing. With 11.4% strongly disagreeing and 4.2% strongly agreeing, a total of 54.3% of respondents expressed skepticism or outright opposition to the idea that there is freedom of the press in the country. This reflects concerns about the limitations or challenges faced by journalists and media houses.

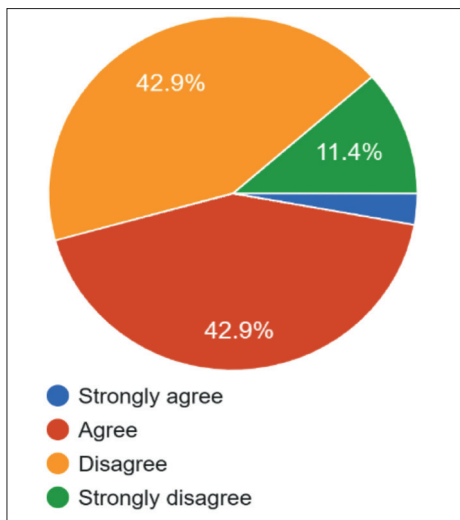


Figure 30: Perceptions on Freedom of Press

Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, media, and information, more than 80% of respondents rated press freedom as 'low or middle'. This assessment is supported by concerns regarding 'limited access to information' and 'restrictive administrative protocols' in obtaining information. This sentiment is echoed in other published works by journalists. 'Bureaucrats frequently decline to engage or share information with journalists, citing various regulations, posing significant obstacles to the media's ability to provide accurate information through their reporting'. (C Rinzin, Journal of Bhutan Studies, Vol. 48, 2023).

The government's *Meet the Press* sessions, although intended as a platform for open dialogue, are often criticised for requiring journalists to submit questions in advance, undergo a screening process by the PMO media unit, and for limiting opportunities to pose follow-up questions. As journalists noted, 'the inability to ask questions spontaneously undermines the media's ability to perform its watchdog role'.

With changes in the political government at the centre, there has also been a shift in political priorities, which has, in turn, affected the media landscape. There is 'an increasing trend of media regulation and greater censorship in reporting by various media houses', this sudden shift in media acceptance, political censorship, and information restrictions imposed by government agencies has created unfavourable working conditions in many media houses, ultimately leading many senior and experienced journalists to leave the profession.

Many media professionals have admitted that the 'decline in the country's press freedom ranking is largely due to growing censorship of media content, stringent media regulations, a lack of support for private media firms, inadequate professional development plans, limited access to information, and abrupt closure of an independent Media Council'.

Any positive change and success in the media landscape will depend on a strong political will of the government. This can influence and foster a shift in the attitudes and behaviour of the bureaucracy towards the media, as well as uphold the media's right to information and reporting for the welfare of the public.

Recommendations:

1. Relevant authorities need to support media organisations and independent neutral bodies to conduct periodic assessment of press freedom conditions.
2. Relevant authorities may consider enacting and/or amending laws and policies to enhance press freedom.
3. Relevant authorities may consider establishing a mechanism to promote sustainability of independent media houses and provide a platform for diverse perspectives.
4. Media organisations need to increase public understanding of the role and importance of a free press to help cultivate a culture that supports journalistic independence and accountability.

6. Protection of Journalists

Bhutan lacks clear legal protections for journalists, leaving them vulnerable to pressures such as fear of reprisal, weak legal support, and self-censorship. Journalists are often cautious about reporting on sensitive issues, leading to restrained investigative journalism and a tendency to avoid controversial content.

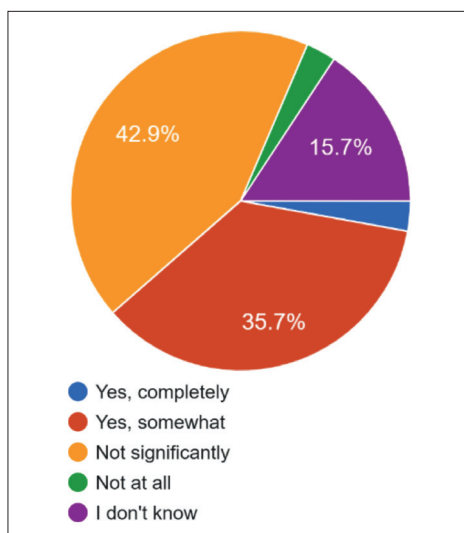


Figure 31: Protection of Journalists

Additionally, Bhutan's press freedom ranking reflects these constraints. The absence of clear policies that protect journalists contributes to an atmosphere where self-censorship is prevalent, and editorial independence is often compromised. Weak regulatory frameworks and enforcement also allow financial and political pressures to influence editorial decisions, restricting the media's ability to function as a watchdog.

35.7% of respondents believe that the law provides some level of protection for journalists and media against abusive lawsuits or prosecution. This indicates recognition of the existence of some legal safeguards, though many respondents feel these protections are inadequate. A significant 42.9% of respondents feel that the laws do not significantly protect journalists or media from abusive legal actions, which suggests a substantial concern over the vulnerability of media professionals. This skepticism may stem from experiences with lawsuits that are perceived as harassing or silencing, alongside possible limitations in legal recourses available to journalists.

The 15.7% of respondents who indicated 'I don't know' highlights a portion of the population that may not be aware of the specific legal protections in place. This uncertainty points to a need for improving public awareness and understanding of journalists' rights and the available legal frameworks. This considerable portion of respondents that does not believe protections are effective indicates a gap in legal safeguards for journalists. Strengthening these legal frameworks is essential for ensuring that journalists can operate without fear of harassment or undue legal pressure. For instance, anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) laws to deter frivolous legal

actions aimed at silencing journalists has been used effectively in some countries.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to conduct an analysis of current laws related to media protection and propose amendments to strengthen the legal safeguards against abusive lawsuits.
2. Media organisations need to establish or enhance legal aid programmes specifically designed to support journalists facing legal challenges.
3. Media organisations need to develop initiatives aimed at increasing awareness about the legal rights of journalists, including protections against abusive lawsuits.
4. Media organisations need to develop partnerships with legal experts, and civil society to monitor and report on abuses against journalists.

6.1 Threats in the Line of Duty

Nearly 40% of respondents reported experiencing threats while carrying out their journalistic duties while 60% indicated they have not faced threats.

The fact that almost 40% of journalists have experienced threats such as phone calls, visiting offices and while going for reporting is alarming and warrants attention. It suggests that threats to journalist safety are a tangible issue that can have serious implications for press freedom and the ability to report without fear.

The reported threats can create a chilling effect, where journalists may self-censor or refrain from pursuing certain stories

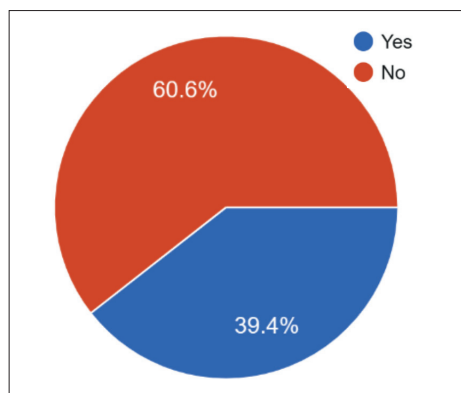


Figure 32: Threat in the Line of Duty

due to fear of retaliation. This hinders the overall quality and depth of reporting.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to develop and implement clear safety protocols to protect journalists, especially those covering sensitive issues.
2. Media organisations and media houses need to initiate training programmes on dealing with threats, recognising risks, and safety measures.

6.2 Type of Threats

76.9% indicated that threats were aimed at preventing journalists from sharing information. This suggests some level of intimidation designed to stifle journalistic freedom and impede the flow of vital information.

15.4% reported threats related to advertising, implying that media houses may face economic pressure if journalists do not comply with demands. This points to the vulnerabilities of media houses that rely on advertising revenue, making them susceptible to outside influence.

It was reported that threat to use management against the journalist, pointing to a more indirect method of intimidation that could create fear regarding job security. The 'Other' responses highlighted various forms of intimidation beyond direct threats, such as intimidation through calls and a general sense of disillusionment regarding the effectiveness of constitutional guarantees for press freedom.

While there were no responses indicating threats of physical abuse or harassment,

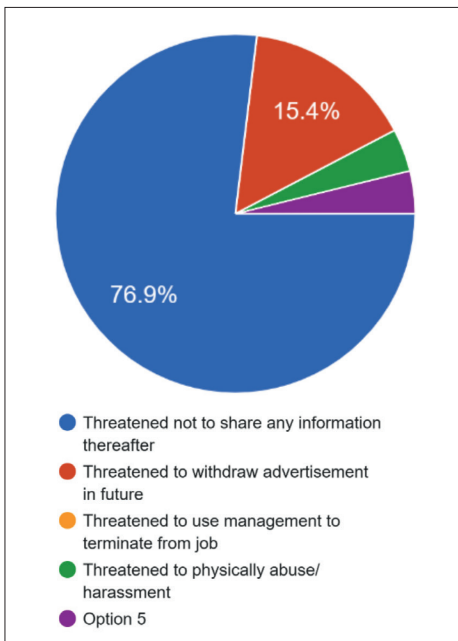


Figure 33: Type of Threats

it does not discount the possibility that such threats might be felt but not verbally expressed.

Recommendations:

- 1. Media organisations need to establish a system to record threats and intimidation to discuss and work towards possible solutions to resolve such issues in future.
- 2. Media houses need to foster a culture of ethical journalism that resists undue pressure from advertisers or management to support journalistic integrity.
- 3. Journalists and media organisations need to engage in dialogue with policymakers to secure a commitment to upholding constitutional protections.

6.3 Origin of Threats

The majority of respondents (52.5%) indicated that bureaucrats posed the most significant threat. This potentially underscores the influence and power dynamics at play within government structures, where bureaucratic authority can intimidate journalists and affect their ability to report freely. Politicians were identified as the source of threats by 15% of respondents. This points to the direct pressure that public officials may exert on journalists, especially concerning sensitive topics or critical reporting.

However, there were no responses indicating threats from armed forces or business persons, suggesting that these groups may not be perceived as significant threats compared to bureaucratic entities and politicians.

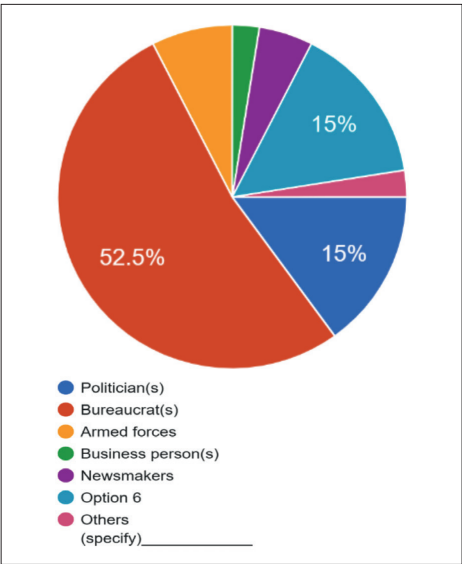


Figure 34: Origin of Threat

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to act as a conduit to build constructive relationships between bureaucrats, politicians and the media houses that can eventually benefit both journalism and governance.

6.4 Perception on Safety in Covering Critical Stories

A combined total of 58.5% respondents indicated that they feel unsafe when covering critical stories. This is indicative of a significant level of concern among journalists regarding their safety, highlighting the risks they perceive in reporting on sensitive or controversial issues.

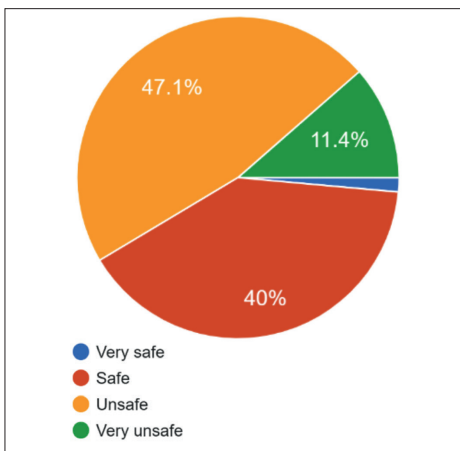


Figure 35: Safety in Covering Critical Stories

While 40% of respondents indicated they feel safe when covering critical stories, this indicates that nearly half of the journalists still do not feel secure in their roles. The presence of a substantial number of journalists feeling unsafe raises questions about the environment in which they operate, and the potential implications for press freedom.

Notably, there were no responses indicating a feeling of 'very safe'. This absence suggests a pervasive atmosphere of concern that may affect the willingness of journalists to pursue important stories that may potentially pose danger to the journalists.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to provide trainings focused on safety protocols for journalists.

6.5 Challenges in Reporting Critical Stories

The most significant factor preventing reporting on critical issues is the ‘small and close-knit society’, which received 43.3%. This suggests that the social environment plays a critical role in shaping journalistic practices. In such close-knit communities, the fear of social backlash or damaging personal relationships may inhibit journalists from taking on controversial topics.

Fear of reprisal was cited by 22.4% of respondents. This indicates a concern regarding potential retaliation, which can come from various sources, including government officials, businesses, or even local community members.

Multiple responses pointed to management as a barrier, both in terms of a lack of support for critical reporting and direct restrictions on reporting. This was noted by 17.9% of respondents and echoed in several ‘other’ comments regarding management’s role in shaping the narrative and limiting journalistic freedom. The mention of self-censorship points to an internalised pressure that journalists experience. A relatively smaller number of respondents (10.4%) indicated that a lack of adequate skills prevents them from reporting on critical issues. This reflects a potential area for improvement through training and professional development.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to develop tailored training programmes focusing on investigative skills, ethics, and handling sensitive stories to address the skills gap expressed by some journalists and empower them to tackle critical issues confidently.

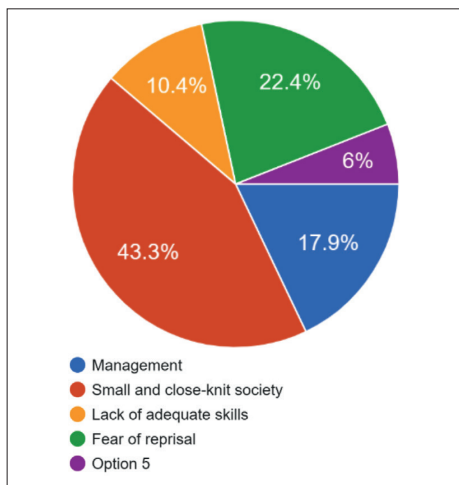


Figure 36: Challenges in Reporting

- Media houses need to take initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the damaging effects of self-censorship can encourage journalists to feel empowered to report on critical issues.

6.6 Self-censorship

A combined significant 80.4% of 70 respondents indicate that they practise self-censorship at least to some degree. This reflects a concerning environment where fear of reprisals significantly impacts journalistic practices.

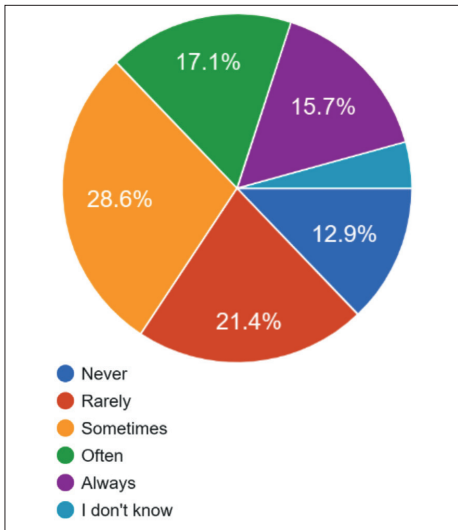


Figure 37: Practice of Self-censorship

The breakdown shows that Never (12.9%) and Rarely (21.4%) account for a total of 34.3% of respondents who feel less pressured by concerns of reprisal. Conversely, 15.7% always engage in self-censorship, and 17.1% often do, highlighting a considerable portion of respondents who feel compelled to restrain their reporting due to perceived risks. Approximately 5.7% of respondents selected 'I don't know', suggesting some ambiguity or uncertainty in their stance on self-censorship. This might indicate a lack of awareness or a variable assessment of their own practices regarding self-censorship.

The findings emphasise the necessity for stronger support mechanisms for journalists, whether through legal protections, media organisations, or community backing to create a safer environment that could help reduce self-censorship.

Recommendations:

- Media organisations need to advocate on policies that protect press freedom and promote secure environment for journalists.

2. Media organisations need to create support networks for offering counseling and legal aid for those facing intimidation or threats.

6.7 Role of Public Officials in Press Freedom

A combined total of 60% of respondents feel that government officials and politicians do not adequately guarantee press freedom. This represents a strong sentiment of distrust towards the commitment of political leaders to support an independent media landscape. Only 32.9% of respondents feel that officials support press freedom to a degree (somewhat), indicating that even those who acknowledge some level of support do not believe it is complete or robust. Particularly, there are no respondents who indicated that government officials act in a way that guarantees press freedom ‘completely’.

Approximately 7.1% of respondents chose ‘I don’t know’, reflecting a lack of clarity or mixed feelings on the issue. This uncertainty may stem from varying experiences with press freedom or a lack of understanding regarding the policies impacting the media.

The perceptions of government officials’ and politicians’ roles in safeguarding press freedom appear to be largely negative, suggesting that journalists may feel vulnerable and unsupported in their pursuits. This lack of trust in governmental support can lead to self-censorship and a reluctance to cover critical stories.

Recommendations:

1. Media organisations need to engage with government officials to create a dialogue about the importance of press freedom and outline ways in

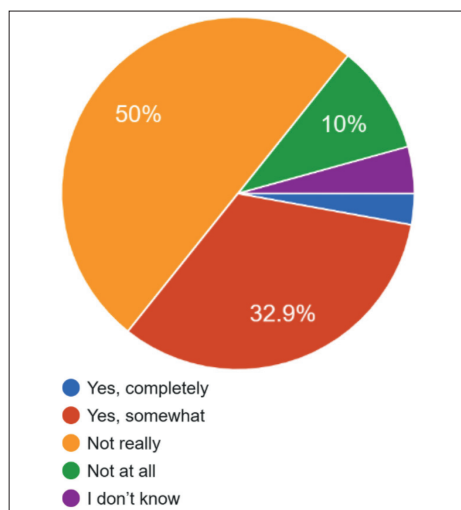


Figure 38: Public Officials Guarantee

which leaders can actively support it.

- 2. Relevant authorities and media organisations need to establish mechanisms to monitor and report on press freedom violations and provide grounds for action against government infringement on media rights.

7. Legal Context

7.1 Pluralism and independence

60% of respondents affirm that the law provides mechanisms to guarantee pluralism and editorial independence, albeit somewhat. This indicates that there is a degree of confidence that legal frameworks exist to support these essential aspects of a healthy media environment, though many feel that these mechanisms may not be fully effective.

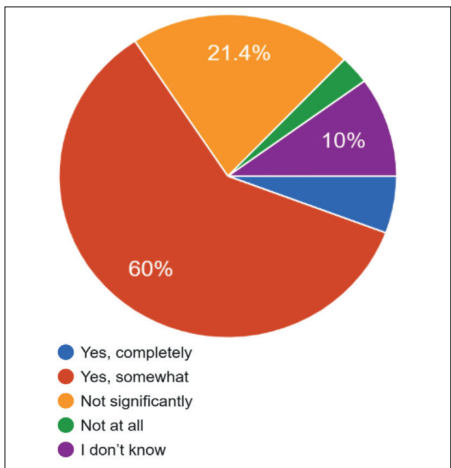


Figure 39: Pluralism and Independence

21.4% of respondents believe that the laws do not significantly support pluralism and editorial independence. This skepticism suggests that there are perceived gaps or weaknesses in the legal framework that may hinder the full realisation of these ideals. Concerns may center around enforcement, the implementation of the laws, or potential political influences that affect media operations.

The 10% of respondents who expressed uncertainty ('I don't know') indicates that there is a segment of the population that may not be fully informed about the laws governing media pluralism and independence. This lack of awareness could point to a need for better education and communication regarding media laws and their implications.

Although legal provisions exist to promote media pluralism and independence, their practical effectiveness remains limited, highlighting the need for stronger regulatory frameworks and better implementation. The uncertainty surrounding media laws presents an opportunity to enhance public engagement by educating citizens about their rights and media protections, thereby fostering informed discussions on media independence. Additionally, the skepticism expressed by a significant minority highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue among media organizations, civil society, and policymakers to identify gaps and collaboratively strengthen legal protections.

Recommendations:

- 1. Relevant authorities could consider undertaking a comprehensive review of existing media laws to identify strengths and weaknesses related to pluralism and editorial independence.
- 2. Relevant authorities and media organisations need to develop outreach programmes aimed at educating the public about media rights and the importance of pluralism and independence in the media landscape.

7.2 Support for Right to Information Act

A huge majority of 90.1% of respondents supported the enactment of an RTI law. This high level of support indicates a strong public interest in promoting transparency, accountability, and access to government-held information, which are essential components of a functioning democracy. Only 9.9% of respondents expressed opposition to the need for an RTI law citing concerns regarding potential misuse of information or the implications for national security and privacy.

The overwhelming support for an RTI law indicates a public demand for greater transparency in government operations, which is crucial for fostering trust between citizens and governmental institutions.

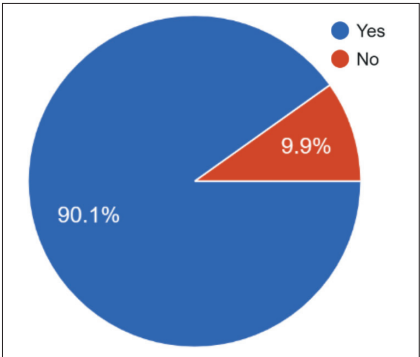


Figure 40: Support for Right to Information Act

Implementing an RTI law could enhance governance practices by allowing citizens to hold public officials accountable, reducing corruption, and enabling informed public participation in decision-making processes. The strong affirmative response suggests potential for civil society organisations to collaborate with the government in advocating for and formulating the RTI law to address needs.

Recommendations:

1. Relevant authorities could consider initiating and prioritising an enactment of an RTI law.
2. Media organisations need to launch public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about their rights to information and the need for an RTI law.

7.3 Perspectives on the closing of the Media Council

A majority of 69.1% believes that closing down the Media Council was a questionable decision. This suggests a prevailing sentiment among respondents that the Media Council served an important role in supporting independent media and promoting freedom of expression. Only 30.9% of respondents support the decision to close the Media Council based on views that prioritise government oversight or concerns about the Media Council's effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate.

The opposition to the closure of the Media Council highlights the perceived importance of having an independent media regulatory body in promoting press freedom, an essential aspect of democracy. The Media Council served as a guardian of journalistic integrity and media responsibilities.

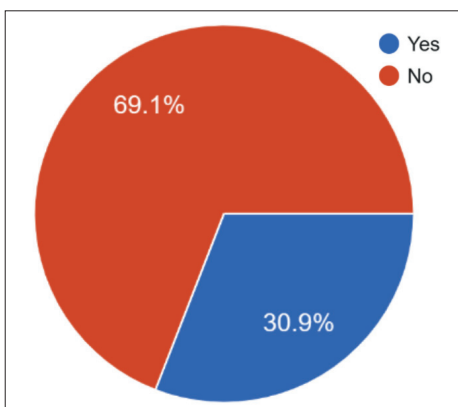


Figure 41: Media Council Closure

7.4 Perceived Impact of Media Council Closure

The largest percentage of respondents, 28.3%, cited increased censorship or potential government control over the media as a significant reason for opposing the closure. This fear reflects a concern that the absence of an independent regulatory body could allow for more government interference in media operations, threatening journalistic freedom. 26.1% of respondents highlighted that the closure diminished protection for journalists. This suggests that the Media Council may have played a critical role in advocating for journalists' rights and safety, emphasising the need for protective measures in a potentially challenging environment.

23.9% noted that the closure undermined the independence of the media. This perception indicates that respondents believe the Media Council was essential for maintaining a separate and autonomous media landscape. 13% of respondents expressed concern over the reduced ability of the media to self-regulate. This indicates that the Media Council might have been a crucial framework for establishing standards and fostering accountability within media organisations. A smaller segment, 8.7%, highlighted the removal of a body that could investigate complaints against media houses. This underscores a concern that without oversight, media organisations may operate without accountability regarding their practices and content.

Recommendations:

1. Relevant authorities need to consider re-constituting of the Media Council.
2. Media organisations need to educate and advocate on the need for an independent Media Council.

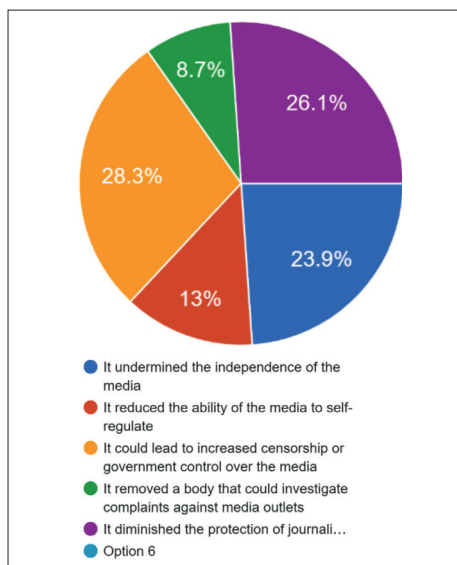


Figure 42: Concerns about Independence

Conclusion

The 2025 Rapid Assessment Survey by the Journalists' Association of Bhutan paints a clear and urgent picture of a media sector at a crossroads. Financial instability, restricted access to information, widespread self-censorship, and weakened governance structures pose serious threats to the future of independent journalism in Bhutan. Yet, amidst these challenges, the steadfast dedication of Bhutanese journalists offers a powerful source of hope.

To protect and revitalise the media's essential democratic role, immediate and coordinated reforms are necessary including the establishment of a Media Endowment Fund, the enactment of a Right to Information Act, the restoration of an independent Media Council, and stronger legal protections for journalists. Besides, strict enforcement of the provisions of relevant laws and its regulations is crucial to nurturing a healthy media landscape.

Investment in digital skills and public education on the importance of free media must also accompany these efforts. The road ahead will not be easy, but with collective commitment and bold action, Bhutan has the opportunity to build a stronger, freer, and more resilient media landscape that truly serves its people.

Annexures

Annexure 1: Survey questionnaire

Rapid Assessment Survey Questionnaire

**Indicates required question*

INTRODUCTION

A dramatic decline in Bhutan's press freedom ranking, dropping from 90 to 147 in 2024, has led many journalists, editors, media managers, and even the management of the media houses to call for a comprehensive study of the Bhutanese media landscape. With financial support from the Department of Media, Creative Industry, and Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP), the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (MOICE), the Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB) has initiated this opinion survey. This is a good start. The information you provide will help analyze the ground realities and challenges facing journalists as well as media sustainability in the country. The information will help to recommend appropriate interventions by the authorities and stakeholders concerned to improve Bhutan's press freedom ranking as well as the ailing the media situation in Bhutan.

ANONYMITY

The use of your responses will be restricted to the internal use of the JAB. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential and will not be included in any public document.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION (Please Tick)

1.1 Gender:

(Mark only one square)

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other

1.2 Age

(Mark only one square)

☐ 20-25years

☐ 26-30years

☐ 31-35years

☐ 36-40years

- ☐ 41-50years
- ☐ 51-55years
- ☐ 56-60years
- ☐ Other: _____

1.3 Which media do/did you work at?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Print
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Online

1.4 Current position
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Editor-in-Chief
- ☐ Managing Editor
- ☐ Editor
- ☐ Reporter (news producer/correspondents)
- ☐ Photo journalist
- ☐ Freelancer

1.5 What is your highest qualification?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Higher Secondary school(upto12thgrade)
- ☐ Bachelors Degree
- ☐ Post-Graduate
- ☐ Masters Degree & above

1.6 What is your main undergrad major?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Journalism/Mass communication
- ☐ Literature (English/Dzongkha)
- ☐ Social Science (Economics/politics/sociology/philosophy)
- ☐ Physical/biological/Environmental science
- ☐ Business & Management (BBA, BBM, B.com) Option 6
- ☐ Others(Specify) _____

1.7 If you have post graduate degree/diploma, in which field?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Journalism/Mass communication
- ☐ Literature(English/National language)
- ☐ Social Science (Economics/politics/sociology/philosophy)
- ☐ Physical/biological/Environmental science
- ☐ Business & management (MBA, MBM, M.Com) Option 6
- ☐ Others(specify) _____

1.8 Have you attended any of the following short term in-country trainings?
(Tick more than one and list all short-term training attended)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Basic Journalism Course
- ☐ Advanced Journalism Course Advanced Editing Course
- ☐ Radio journalism/ jockey course Photo journalism
- ☐ Business journalism Multi-media
- ☐ Election Reporting
- ☐ Climate Change and Environment Reporting Women and Children Reporting
- ☐ Crime and legal Reporting Option 12
- ☐ Others (specify) _____

1.9 How long have you been working as a journalist?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ 0-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-7 years
- ☐ 8-10years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ More than 21 years

1.10 Are you a journalist by training or became one on-the-job?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Journalist by training
- ☐ Journalist through on-the-job training

1.11 Is journalism your first job/ profession?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

1.12 Why did you decide to become a journalist?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Ambition
- ☐ There was a job opening
- ☐ Parent ('s') decision
- ☐ Peer influence
- ☐ Option 5
- Others(specify)_____

2. Organizational Integrity and Corruption Risks

2.1 How would you rate the overall integrity of your media organization?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Very high
- ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Very low

2.2 Do you believe that your organization is vulnerable to corruption risks?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

2.3 If you have chosen yes, please provide brief descriptions of the potential corruption risks that your organization may face.

3. INTERNAL CHALLENGES

3.1 At the news organization you work/worked, is/was MD/CEO also the Editor-in-Chief?

(Mark only one square)

☐ Yes

☐ No

3.2 How often do/did you receive/received news ideas from your head of management or owners?

(Mark only one square)

☐ Always

☐ Very frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Very rarely

☐ Never

3.3 How often does/did the head of your organization interfere/d in news affairs?

(Mark only one square)

☐ Always

☐ Very frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ Very rarely

☐ Never

3.4 Do you agree that 'owners/management/ board members of your organization influence/d news content'?

(Mark only one square)

☐ Strongly agree

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly disagree

3.5 How would you describe the level of transparency in the ownership and management of your media organization?

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Very transparent
- ☐ Some what transparent
- ☐ Not transparent
- ☐ Not sure

4. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

4.1 What is your monthly salary?

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Less than Nu.15,000
- ☐ Between Nu. 16,000 - Nu. 20,000
- ☐ Between Nu. 21,000-Nu. 30,000
- ☐ Between Nu. 31,000 – Nu 40,000
- ☐ Between Nu. Nu 41,000 – 50,000
- ☐ Between Nu 51,000 – 60,000
- ☐ Above Nu 61,000

4.2 Are you paid on time?(Only for working journalist)

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4.3 If No, how many months in a row?(Only for working journalist).

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ One month
- ☐ Two months
- ☐ Three months
- ☐ More than four months

4.4 Do you want to continue to be a journalist?(Only for working journalist)

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4.5 If No,why?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ No salary on time
- ☐ Looking for better opportunities
- ☐ Want to change the profession
- ☐ Other (Specify) _____

4.6 Are you provided with the following facilities while you are away on duty?
(Only for working journalist) (Tick appropriate)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Daily Allowances (DA)
- ☐ Travel Allowances(TA)
- ☐ Communication Allowances
- ☐ Entertainment Allowances
- ☐ Option 5
- ☐ Others (Specify) _____

4.7 Apart from salary, are you entitled to other benefits? (Tick appropriate
on the following if yes)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ General Life Insurance
- ☐ Pension Fund
- ☐ Staff welfare schemes
- ☐ Office loan/Salary advance
- ☐ Fuel and Communication allowances
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ None of the above

5. EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

5.1 Do you think journalism as a profession is attractive?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5.2 If no,why?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Salary package is not attractive
- ☐ Long working hours
- ☐ Constant management interference
- ☐ Professional hazard(censorship/threats/pressure)
- ☐ Lack of public recognition
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Others(specify) _____

5.3 The current media situation is:
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Extremely poor
- ☐ Bad
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent

5.4 What, according to you, are the causes of current situation? (Tick appropriate)

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Unsustainable news media industry
- ☐ Lack of quality journalism
- ☐ High level of censorship
- ☐ Lack of government support (policy/incentives)
- ☐ All of the above
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Others (specify) _____

6. ACCESS TO INFORMATION & PRESS FREEDOM

6.1 How easy is it to access public information?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

6.2 'There is freedom of the press' in Bhutan,do you agree?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

6.3 Are you aware of freedom of press guaranteed in the Constitution?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6.4 Have you been threatened (in any form) while discharging your journalistic responsibilities?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6.5 If yes,how?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Threatened not to share any information thereafter
- ☐ Threatened to withdraw advertisement in future
- ☐ Threatened to use management to terminate from job
- ☐ Threatened to physically abuse/harassment
- ☐ Option 5
- ☐ Others(specify) _____

6.6 Who threatened you the most?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Politician(s)
- ☐ Bureaucrat(s)
- ☐ Armed forces
- ☐ Businessperson(s)
- ☐ News makers
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Others(specify) _____

6.7 How safe do you feel to cover critical stories?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Very safe
- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Unsafe
- ☐ Very unsafe

6.8 What prevents you from reporting critical issues?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Management
- ☐ Small and close-knit society
- ☐ Lack of adequate skills
- ☐ Fear of reprisal
- ☐ Option 5
- ☐ Others (specify) _____

6.9. Do government officials and other politicians, including Constitutional
post holders, act in a way that guarantees press freedom?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes, completely
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ Not really
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I don't know

6.10. Rate the following agencies in terms of ease of access to information
(1-10 : 1 being very easy to 10 being very difficult) –
Mark only one square per row.

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8	Column 9	Column 10
Prime Minister Office	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ministries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Departments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Judiciary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Office of the Attorney General	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Royal Bhutan Police (RBP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Royal Bhutan Army (RBA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Corporations/ CSOs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Monastic Institutions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. SELF-CENSORSHIP

7.1 Do you practice self-censorship for fear of reprisals?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Sometimes
☐ Often
☐ Always
☐ I don't know

7.2 Have you received calls for censorship from government agencies,
religious groups, civil society organisations, private firms, or individuals?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

7.3 If Yes, why?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Threatened not to share any information thereafter
- ☐ Threatened to use management to terminate from job
- ☐ Threatened to file a defamation suit in the court of law
- ☐ Option 4
- ☐ Others(specify) _____

7.4 In your opinion, how common is self-censorship (i.e., avoiding certain topics) due to fear of political or financial repercussions in your organization?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Very common
- ☐ Common
- ☐ Uncommon
- ☐ Very rare

8. MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY

8.1 What do you think of the financial health of the media house you are working for? (Only for working journalists)
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Stable and secure
- ☐ Unstable and uncertain
- ☐ Improving, but with challenges
- ☐ Declining and Concerning

8.2 In your opinion, what are the factors that cause practicing journalists and editors to leave their profession?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Low salary
- ☐ Long working hours
- ☐ Family pressure
- ☐ Lack of opportunities
- ☐ Excessive multi-tasking

8.3 Given the small size of population in Bhutan and influence of social media, do you think seven newspapers in the country is too many?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8.4 If yes, what measures need to be taken to sustain media houses?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Reduce the number to five
- ☐ Reduce the number to four
- ☐ Reduce the number to three
- ☐ Merge two or three newspapers into one
- ☐ Option 5
- ☐ Others (Specify) _____

8.5 What other measures need to be taken to build a sustainable media industry?
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Media Endowment Fund
- ☐ State Funding of Media
- ☐ Market cap on number of media houses

9. LEGAL CONTEXT

9.1 Does the law provide mechanisms to guarantee pluralism and editorial independence? (Note: Media pluralism refers to the diversity of media outlets and voices within a society, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives is represented in the public discourse)
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes, completely
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ Not significantly
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I don't know

9.2 Does the law provide mechanisms protecting journalists or media against abusive lawsuits/prosecution?

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes, completely
- ☐ Yes, somewhat
- ☐ Not significantly
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ I don't know

9.3 Do you think that Bhutan needs to implement the Right to Information (RTI) law to facilitate access to public information?

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9.4 If Yes, specify the reasons:

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Lack of transparency in government decision-making processes
- ☐ Inadequate information sharing in public institutions
- ☐ Difficulty in holding public officials accountable
- ☐ Limited access to information for marginalized groups
- ☐ Need to promote good governance and public participation
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Others (Specify)

9.5 In your opinion, was it a good idea of closing down the Media Council, an independent body?

(Mark only one square)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9.6 If No, why so?(Choose one or more,and elaborate if you wish)
(Mark only one square)

- ☐ It undermined the independence of the media
- ☐ It reduced the ability of the media to self-regulate
- ☐ It could lead to increased censorship or government control over the media
- ☐ It removed a body that could investigate complaints against media outlets
- ☐ It diminished the protection of journalists and their freedom of expression
- ☐ Option 6
- ☐ Others (Specify) _____

Thank you for taking part in the survey!

Annexure 2: List of Interviewees

1. Former and current employees of Kuensel
2. Former and current employees of BBS
3. Former and current employees of BMF
4. Former and current employees of the Private Media Houses
5. Proprietors of the Private Media Houses

Acknowledgment

The Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB) extends its heartfelt gratitude to the Department of Media, Creative Industry and Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP) under the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) for their generous financial support in conducting this 'Rapid Assessment of Media Landscape in Bhutan.'

We would also like to thank the following media organisations for their cooperation and willingness to share insights during the survey: Bhutan Broadcasting Service, Bhutan Times, Business Bhutan, Bhutan Today, Gyalchi Sarshog, Kuensel, The Bhutanese, and The Journalist. Your participation was invaluable to our research.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all working journalists, editors, media managers, and freelancers, both past and present, who actively engaged in the opinion survey regarding journalists, journalism, and the media landscape in Bhutan. Your contributions played a crucial role in the successful completion of this assessment within the scheduled timeframe.

We are equally grateful to the Centre for Local Governance and Research (CLG) for their collaboration and support, which enabled JAB to conduct interviews with the top leaders of media houses and facilitate focus group consultations with our members.

Kadrinchey to all our stakeholders for your meaningful involvement in this important initiative. Together, we are shaping a more informed and vibrant media landscape in Bhutan.

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Towards building a vibrant journalism community in Bhutan

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