

Kerala Journalists: Satisfied and Passion-led Professionals

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Abstract

In Europe, North America and in some Asian countries like Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, China and Indonesia, surveying news people has generated an impressive amount of data. In India and so in Kerala, the state of research is quite different. Journalists as professionals have rarely been investigated systematically for their basic characteristics, work patterns and their views on the profession. This paper throws light into various aspects of journalistic career, focusing media persons' job satisfaction, using the data from a survey conducted among 122 journalists in Kerala.

Keywords

Journalists, Job Satisfaction, Professional Freedom, Malayalam Media, Indian Journalism

Introduction

At present the duty of a journalist to inform and educate is replaced by infotainment (a combination of information and entertainment) and the field of journalism is reformed as an industry, i.e., media industry just like any other industry. Even the law restricts the newspaper production and Television under the Industries Act of India. So journalist turns to be a worker in the media industry. These industries, owned by profit aiming monopolies outsmart service oriented journalism.

Profit oriented media industry depends mainly on advertisements and its sponsors. In order to increase the advertisements, the media takes a soft approach on their sponsors. Gradually, media is being limited as advertisement suppliers for corporate firms with a mask of news providers. And the fourth estate represents merely the wealthy hands of vested interest groups overruling the other three estates.

Kurt Luedtke, former editor of Detroit Free Press, reminded the news people, “On your discretionary judgments hang reputations and careers, jail sentences and stock prices, Broadway shows and water rates. You are the mechanism or reward and punishment, the arbiter of right and wrong, the roving eye of daily judgement. You no longer shape public opinion, you have supplanted it” (Swearingen, 1989).

This paper is a study about professional and contract journalists who are journalists by passion and by chance employed in the media industry. The paper examines a professional journalist's freedom in his/her work in this media context. It also aims at an analysis of how these journalists are motivated to the field with what expectation and whether they are satisfied in the profession.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the result of employees' perception of how well their job important. Job satisfaction is generally defined as the amount of overall positive affection that individuals have towards their job. In simple terms job satisfaction is the extent to which people like their job. Here, job satisfaction means the amount of overall positive affection that journalists have towards their profession of journalism. Job satisfaction may depend upon the demographic and professional variables of the journalist.

Research Questions

R1: What are the basic characteristics of Kerala Journalists?

R2: Is there any role for demographic variables in deciding a journalist's job satisfaction?

R3: Is there any role for professional variables in deciding a journalist's job satisfaction?

Methodology and Sampling Technique

The present study involves survey research method which investigated basic characteristics and job satisfaction of media persons in Kerala done by asking those questions using a structured questionnaire. Survey method is an efficient way of collecting information from Kerala journalists and statistical techniques were used to determine validity, reliability, and statistical significance.

Given the field manageability, stratified random sampling was used to identify the respondents from three parts of the State: North, Central and South. The purpose of this division was to ensure maximum representation of each geographic segment having variant historical and cultural features and each stratum has given equal importance. It is to be noted that cultural and historical factors have influence on defining media practice in a particular region. From each stratum 100 each journalists are randomly selected. Surveying 122 media persons in Kerala using a three parted questionnaire unearthed the Basic Characteristics and Job Satisfaction of Media Persons in Kerala.

Sample Profile

The typical journalist in Kerala, as per the sample taken, is 33 years old, male, married, and has worked in the field of journalism for nine years (Table 1). The male-female ratio in Kerala journalism field is 4:1. Most journalists (79.51%) are working with print medium which is dominated by men (79.38%). But in broadcast journalists (20.49% of the total), 44 percent of the total population are women journalists and the male domination is reduced to 56 percent. Approximately, fourteen out of fifteen journalists hold a college or University Post Graduation, 4.1 percent of them an M Phil or PhD, with none who have not completed any professional education. Since journalists are quite well educated in proportion to the overall population, it seems legitimate to describe them as educated elite.

Younger journalists tend to be better educated that indicates a steady professionalization in the field.

In terms of professional education, seven out of ten journalists have majored in journalism, holding either Post Graduation or PG Diploma in Journalism and Communication and they constitute 72.95 percent of the total. Another 0.07 percent has completed their studies in communications or in a related field; there are also 4 per cent of all journalists who have not completed any professional education related to journalism..

Most of the journalists in the sample (90.80) are permanent in status and majority (70.49) of them are members of a journalistic association.

Table 1: Basic characteristics of Kerala journalists (N=122)

Characteristics	Men 91 (74.59%)	Women 31 (25.41%)	Total 122 (100)
Average age (years)	34.12	27.90	32.54
Married	81.32%	58.06%	75.41%
Single	18.68%	41.94%	24.59%
Holding Post Graduation and above	91.21%	100%	93.44%
Majored in journalism	70.33%	80.65%	72.95%
Desk	37.36%	48.39%	40.16%
Reporting	62.64%	51.61%	59.84%
Broadcast	15.38%	35.48%	20.49%
Print	84.62%	64.52%	79.51%
Permanent Status	99.02%	99%	99.02%
Member of journalists' association	79.22%	77.72%	74.59%
Has worked in journalism (years)	10.37	4.35	8.85

This study has found that men journalists tend to be less in percentage in editorial field in comparison with their counter parts in reporting field in Kerala. Altogether, 59.84 percent of the journalists work at the editing field and the rest at reporting field. The modest numbers of women journalists probably reflect the professional self-selection as women among whom 41.94 percent like to receive another job if offered. Furthermore, women journalists tend to be younger (27.90 years old) and have less professional experience (4.35years) than their male colleagues who are more aged (34.12 years old) and experienced (10.37years).

Men are more likely to be married (81.32%) and less are women (58.06%). Obviously, combining career and family appears to be difficult for women journalists, news work basically requires a commitment to immediate demands, and so 54.84 percent of them experience lack of time to spend with family.

As far as professional education is concerned, women journalists tend to be better prepared than male journalists. By contrast, they are less likely to be members of journalists' associations than men are. The share of female journalists is largest among those with low editorial responsibilities such as reporters, sub editors, news writers, correspondents and news presenters but women are notably fewer among journalists with higher editorial responsibilities such as editors-in-chief, programme directors, senior managers, reporters-in-chief etc. Since journalism remains a man's job in Kerala, it is unsurprising that women are less likely to be found in higher positions in the editorial hierarchy.

Job Satisfaction

Journalists in Kerala are well educated especially in the professional education level. Passion to the field hinders them to choose a further option in career for better prospects or for higher salary. Degree of acceptance of another profession other than journalism for secure and economic stability or any other reason is very low among the professionals, especially among male journalists. The higher level of professional education of the journalists especially of the younger generation is a hint to the progressing professionalization in the field. They are trained to be journalists and so satisfied in their selection of career. The survey says that the journalists are satisfied irrespective of their various characteristics.

Majority of the respondents (86.07%) are satisfied with the present job (table 2). Most dissatisfied respondents belonged to middle aged group (31-50 years). It may be due to the particularities that belonged to this group as they become moderately experienced and lesser enthusiastic as the pioneers or those who are preparing to retire.

Table 2: Job satisfaction by age

Age (in years)	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
30 and below	47 (90.38)	5 (9.62)	52 (100.00)
31-40	42 (80.77)	10 (19.23)	52 (100.00)
41-50	11 (84.62)	2 (15.38)	13 (100.00)
50 and above	5 (100)	0	5 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 2.8574, df = 3, p = 0.4141

But, the probability value ($p = 0.414144$) indicates that there is no significant association between gender and nature of satisfaction. In other words, age is not an influencing factor in journalists' satisfaction with their present job.

Women journalists are more satisfied than men (87.10) are (table 3). It may be due to their very nature and capacity to be adjusted with something than men. Though small in number, they tend to be younger and well prepared which may contribute a little to their satisfactory nature.

Table 3: Job satisfaction by gender

Gender	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
Male	78 (85.71)	13 (14.29)	91 (100.00)
Female	27 (87.10)	4 (12.90)	31 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 0.036851, df = 1, p = 0.8477

Yet, the probability value (0.84) says that there is no significant relation between gender and job satisfaction. Gender has no role in deciding the satisfaction of journalists. In short, gender is not a decisive factor in job satisfaction in journalistic career.

The most and the least educated groups (Graduates and M Phil and above) among journalists are the most satisfied groups in journalistic career (table 4). In contrast to this, professionally well-educated is the least satisfied group.

Being, a professionally trained group they might be led by passion even at earlier age, they may expect more and get less. Beyond it, they may look at the best examples of journalism and seeking for it that is rare at this age of commercialization.

Table 4: Job satisfaction by education

Education	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
MCJ/PG+PGDC	62 (81.58)	14 (18.42)	76 (100.00)
PG (nonprofessional)	30 (90.91)	3 (9.09)	33 (100.00)
M Phil and above	5 (100.00)	0	5 (100.00)
Graduation	8 (100.00)	0	8 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 4.02595, df = 3, p = 0.258696

Anyhow, the probability scale (0.25) disagrees with the observation we made from the table and reminds us that there is no relation between job satisfaction and education. Education is not a factor in deciding a journalist's satisfaction in his or her career.

Reporting is the most satisfied field in journalism (5). This may be because they are the real reporters of the news and also they are credited for their work whereas in editorial field editors continue to be mere editors and gone unaccredited. In other words, journalists in reporting field are edited and so they see as less satisfied with the job. Beyond that they are not office workers but field workers.

Table 5: Job satisfaction by field of work

Field of work	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
Desk	60 (82.19)	13 (17.81)	73 (100.00)
Reporting	45 (91.84)	4 (8.16)	49 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 2.27426, df = 1, p = 0.131547

However, the probability scale (0.13) rejects such a possibility that the field of work is a determining factor in job satisfaction in the journalistic career. Field of work does not affect one's satisfaction in the job.

Job satisfaction in broadcast media is lesser to print media (table 6). The reason can be that the Journalists in broadcast media are more popular through their medium but are paid less in comparison with their counterparts in print media.

Table 6: Job satisfaction by medium

Medium	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
Broadcast	18 (85.71)	3 (14.29)	21 (100.00)
Print	87 (86.14)	14 (13.86)	101 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 0.002610, df = 1, p = 0.959254

But, according to the probability value there is no relation with the job satisfaction and the type of medium they work. Type of medium has no role in deciding the satisfaction element in the journalistic career.

Journalists in permanent status are the most dissatisfied group (table 7). Whether is it because of fond for a change or something else? The reason is unknown. Sometimes the permanency limits their freedom.

Table 7: Job satisfaction by status of job

Job status	Perceived satisfaction		Total
	Satisfied	Not satisfied	
Permanent	96 (85.71)	16 (14.29)	112 (100.00)
Contract	9 (90)	1 (10)	10 (100.00)
Total	105 (86.07)	17 (13.93)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 0.140600, df = 1, p = 0.707687

Whatever the reason, the probability value rejects the relation between the job satisfaction and job status.

Journalistic Career

Different journalists watch career as profession, passion or both. Though the attitude has nothing to do with their work, it cannot be simply left aside. Interestingly, fifty percent of them think that they are socially responsible. 18.37 percent of the reporters say that journalism is, for them, passion and not profession whereas 72.60, the vast majority of editors consider it as both profession and passion (table 8). And they almost reject the idea that journalism as passion alone. It may be due to the nature of their work.

Table 8: Attitude towards career by field of work

Field of work	Attitude towards career			Total
	Profession	Passion	Both	
Desk	12 (16.44)	8 (10.96)	53 (72.60)	73 (100.00)
Reporting	16 (32.65)	9 (18.37)	24 (48.98)	49 (100.00)
Total	28 (22.95)	17 (13.93)	77 (63.12)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 7.10602, df = 2, p = 0.028650

Present study points at the relation between the careers attitudes of journalists is related with their field of work ($p = 0.028650$).

At present, running a media organization is not so easy from the point of raising initial capital. And for revenue, a medium depends mainly upon advertisers and other such resources. As a result, there seen a tendency that the policy of media is influenced by their sponsors. Likewise, depending on the owner, orientation of the medium varies considerably. Thus a medium is service oriented in theory, business oriented in evaluation of the common and in fact, it is both service and business oriented.

For a journalist, journalism means both passion and profession. And so selection of medium is influenced by their attitude towards career (table 9).

Table 9: Attitude towards career by medium

Medium	Attitude towards career			Total
	Profession	Passion	Both	
Broadcast	21 (18.75)	16 (14.29)	75 (66.96)	112 (100.00)
Print	7 (70)	1 (10)	2 (20)	10 (100.00)
Total	28 (22.95)	17 (13.93)	77 (63.11)	122 (100.00)

Pearson Chi-square: 13.8355, df = 2, p = 0.0009992

Selection of journalistic career is also related with one's career conception. Passion leads one to select a career that is professionalized. It is true in the case of journalism too. Journalists work in different types of media whether in print or broadcast selected it as it seemed to be the most objective one.

Major Findings

Major findings of the study are:

- Majority of Kerala journalists are satisfied in their profession as a whole.
- Demographic variables like age, gender or education are not predictors of job satisfaction in journalistic field.
- Professional variables like job status, type of medium and field of work are not predictors of job satisfaction in journalistic field.
- Journalists in Kerala are Passion-led Professionals.

Discussion and Conclusion

Kerala journalists look quite similar to their colleagues around the globe. They are mostly young and well-educated men, and they earn average salaries. Although younger journalists tend to be more reluctant to join journalists' associations, journalists in Kerala seem to be well educated, suggesting an increased level of professionalism. Content analysis is needed to evaluate whether this high level of education manifests in a more professional product. Though they do not think that they are paid at par with their workload, altogether they are satisfied in the job. Still, job satisfaction cannot be predicted just by analysing demographic and professional variables of a journalist in Kerala.

Kerala journalists, moreover, share many basic views with their counterparts in other countries, as they primarily see themselves as passionate and professional disseminators of news.

Kerala Journalist is similar to an Indonesian journalist in terms of demographic variables as they both are young, male etc. But journalist in Kerala is more educated, especially in terms of professional education.

Unlike Chinese journalists who are mere transmitters of the political line of the government and of the cultural prejudices of their masters, Kerala Journalists are not regulated by the government.

And journalists in Kerala do not need to negotiate their autonomy from the political regimes by (re)defining their role in society unlike Arab journalists.

Kerala journalists cannot be compared with their Brazilian counterparts who have developed a caricature of American journalism and lack a clear perspective on how to deal with foreign journalistic influences. But both are engaged in forming public opinion.

Journalists in Kerala along with New Zealand journalist though professionalism provided journalists with a model on which to organize themselves along professional lines, their efforts were undermined by the ambiguity surrounding the status of journalism as a profession, with implications for the contemporary configuration of the occupation.

Women journalists in Kerala experience problems associated with working in an industry still dominated by men, the male-ordered culture which can be hostile to women with family responsibilities like their counterparts in Britain. But they become assimilated

into the journalistic workforce to a certain extent and they need no longer be regarded as a separate group.

Technology influenced Kerala journalism field and it is reflected in how journalists do their work, the content of news, the structure or organization of the newsroom and the relationships between news organizations, journalists and their many publics. And so Kerala journalists becomes increasingly computer-bound mouse monkeys required to trade accuracy for immediacy in the speeded-up world of digital and 24-hour news like British and Spanish journalists.

To conclude, Kerala Journalists are satisfied in their job and in general, they can be regarded as 'Passion-led Professionals'.

Limitations of the Study

The small and rather limited sample of journalists from Trivandrum, Ernakulam, and Kozhikode utilized in the study leads one to question the generalizability of these results to larger, more diverse media persons.

Being a very rarely studied area, journalists in India, it has got all the probabilities to begin to study about each and every part of the subject. Furthermore, research on the roles that a journalist play in the Kerala society needs to be conducted with a larger, more heterogeneous journalistic population.

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