

# Drowning Journalism: A Qualitative Examination of Problems Faced by Journalists and Aspiring Journalist in Jamshedpur

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## **Abstract**

This research paper explores the challenges faced by working journalists and students who want to pursue their career in journalism in Jamshedpur, a city known for its industrial landscape and diverse community. Using unstructured interviews with 10 senior journalists from local newspapers and insights from the students enrolled in professional degree, this study delves into the professional, ethical, and socio-economic difficulties they encounter. The findings highlight the interplay of resource constraints, editorial pressures, safety concerns, and evolving public expectations in shaping the journalism profession in the region.

**Keywords:** Journalism, Crisis, Local Journalism, Digital Media, Internships, Superannuation

## **Introduction**

The media industry is booming in Jamshedpur, which is often called the "Steel City of India" and is an industrial city with some of the biggest corporate houses such as Tata Steel. This has attracted people here from all corners of the globe because of the rapid industrialization. Thus, the journalistic work in Jamshedpur is a complex engagement in multiplicity of issues and cultures.

However, there are very many challenges that confront journalists in Jamshedpur: this includes the very act of negotiating the complexities of local politics and corporate influences in a rapid digitalizing environment, unwanted political oppression, the rise of citizen journalism and associated fake news encounters, launch of various independent portals and biased news.

These challenges are formulated by the political structure of Jharkhand for journalists who have very few opportunities. The many instances of violence against the journalist and the intimidation of fact-speakers, especially about alignments with anti-Adivasi projects or Naxalite activities, create the image of a threatening situation for them. Therefore, sources said rather than being Naxalites or police, journalists have now an extra worry of the newly powered up state intelligence agencies and are unable to report impartially([see link](#)).

Digital revolution has done much to transform the media sphere within Indian territories and has elicited new lessons in technology and platforms for all those who matter and who can get business with them. Digital media offers greater accessibility yet more business, such as an instance where changes demand from experts also introduces the extension of misinformation and requires the development of entirely new skills. It is quite challenging, as is the transition from traditional print into digital in ever unique

regional perspective as that of Jamshedpur, creating challenges for journalists who want to match the use of technology with the integrity of journalism([see link](#)).

The purpose the current study applies qualitative study in which journalism landscape in Jamshedpur had to confront the strengths of its own with the strength and quality of such journalism. Herein, senior journalists are interviewed in depth for their views and opinion from the public, and the happenings characterized as far as regional journalism is undergone even in the most contemporary setting. This study will thus detail the dynamic between political waves and industry-driven foci at a time when the country passes through and into its digital transformation.

### **Review of literature**

The issue of working reporter and new houses in developing cities like Jamshedpur and in the country is well documented, but this also pertains to socio-cultural and economic factors that have however gotten very little attention. Thus, resource constraints, editorial pressures, safety, and the impact of digital media are considered in connection with the pressing problems confronting journalism in the mobility in India.

### **Resource Constraints in Regional Media**

The deficiency of resources is the most universally observed limitation on journalism effectiveness in small cities. Ranganathan and Rodrigues (2010) observed that regional journalists usually carry out their work under incomplete infrastructure, which severely limits content quality. Similarly, Kalathil and Boas (2003) indicated that in low-funded newsrooms, the staff often struggle to maintain minimum quality levels, and many practical assignments rely on syndicated or pre-packaged information.

### **Editorial and Political Interference**

The interference of political and corporate influence in journalism is a major aspect in Indian journalism. Thakurta (2012) argued that the commercialization of the media has led editorial independence backward by bringing in gain of advertising revenues and creation of political relations. McChesney (2004) observed the absence of own influence and reporting independence in many economically depressed regions. This impression shows the realities in Jamshedpur where reporters have very little independence in the editorial choices.

### **Safety Concerns for Journalists**

The body of journalists worldwide has grown increasingly alarmed at the curbing of journalists' safety, specifically where it concerns coverage in politically unstable areas. In India, the abuses and violence perpetrated on journalists increased in recent years A study by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2021) reported that journalists in small cities face greater physical and digital threats compared to their counterparts in metros. Banaji and Bhat (2020) puts stress on the lack of institutional, moral, executive and financial support for journalists facing such threats, leaving them vulnerable to coercion and harm.

### **Impact of Digital Media**

Journalism is dramatically altered by digital media across the globe. However, integrating digital media practices with those across the regions of journalism does not happen without significant hurdles. Mitra and Gajjala (2008) posit that journalists' time and effort are usually increased by the shift to digital platforms with no corresponding financial or infrastructural increase. In the Indian instance,

Punathambekar and Mohan (2019) have delved into how regional journalists are in a flux, trying to cater to traditional print readers and adjust to a technological immediacy and interactivity.

**Public Perception and Trust and work life balance**

Generally, across the globe as well as across the Indian scene, public trust seems to be declining. Thomas and Lee (2019) raised the point that media in rural areas do a poor job in creating public communication and in the process are easily transformed into extensions of political or corporate configuration, which causes scepticism within them. Journalism constitutes one of the highest-stress professions, and the strife is even worse in smaller towns, thanks to their resource pattern. A study by Sharma (2021) emphasized how too much work for too little money and too long posting periods around the country lead to journalist burnout. Moreover, Pandey and Sahu (2022) mentioned the lack of mental health support services in newsrooms as one of the earlier influences on the overall well-being of journalists.

**Methodology**

This research employed qualitative methods, relying on unstructured interviews with 10 journalists irrespective of their beats from leading local newspapers from Prabhat Khabar, Dainik Bhaskar, and Hindustan and journalists from web portals who have their Youtube channels. Additionally, vox populi, or "voice of the people," was collected through random interactions with students who are pursuing professional degree such as BA-Journalism and Mass Communication, MA and PhD to understand perceptions of local journalism and opportunities in the field for freshers.

The names of the journalists who were approached using purposive convenient sampling are not mentioned because of some critical questions about the work culture, HR policies, retirement age and wages of them.

The unstructured interview approach allowed journalists to share their experiences without the limitations of predetermined questions, ensuring a richer and more nuanced dataset. Student opinion was also collected through purposive convenient sampling to understand the current challenges faced by them in order to know the opportunities related to the field.

For gathering the total publications in Jharkhand, information was retrieved from the portal of Registrar of Newspaper of India (RNI) with title Press in India 2021-2022, 68<sup>th</sup> Annual report, volume 2.

**Demography of newspapers in Jharkhand**

**Table 1**

<b>National Newspapers with Regional Editions in Jharkhand (Based on circulation number)</b>	<b>Regional Newspapers in Jharkhand (Based on circulation number)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Times of India (TOI)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prabhat Khabar</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hindu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranchi Express</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Telegraph</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dainik Jagran, Bhaskar</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hindustan Times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hindustan</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indian Express</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jharkhand Jagran</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utkal Mail</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kamal Sandesh</li> </ul>

**Language wise distribution of newspaper in Jharkhand**

**Table 2**

S.No	Language	Daily	Bi/Tri-Weekly	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annuals	Others	Total
1	Assamese	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
2	Bengali	1	0	0	1	3	3	0	0	8
3	Hindi	90	0	116	56	120	25	0	4	411
4	Maithili	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
5	Odia	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
6	Punjabi	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
7	Sanskrit	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
8	Santhali	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	7
9	Urdu	34	0	5	4	4	1	1	0	49
10	English	18	1	19	2	14	6	0	9	69
11	Bilingual	4	0	7	4	13	7	2	4	41
12	Multilingual	1	0	2	4	1	1	1	2	12
13	Others	2	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>152</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>615</b>

Indian State Jharkhand is a vastly rich place in terms of printed journalism, with 613 newspapers and periodicals to its credit, now being organized under the following categories; there are dailies, a bi- or a tri-weekly issue, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, quarterlies, annual publications. and 20 are listed as others since they have various periodicities.

As per the Annual Statements submitted by publishers, 175 languages, papers, and broadcasts were published in 2021-22. The overall claimed circulation by these publishers was 55,28,494 copies per publishing day. More dailies, with 48,35,117 copies, were the ones that circulated dominantly. Language-wise distribution showed that Hindi papers were tops at 35,71,632, Urdu followed with 14,26,650, and English had just 3,51,936 copies a publishing day.

In 2021-22 Qaumi Tanzeem, Urdu daily from Ranchi, has the highest number of reported circulations during that period at 1,46,742 copies per issue day.

**The Working Journalist Act, 1955**([see link](#))

The Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act was enacted in 1955, also known as the Working Journalist Act. This Act, is a historical legislation in India, has aimed at safeguarding the rights and working conditions of journalists and other newspaper employees. For optimum working conditions, protection of employment, and fair wages of journalists and press employees, the legislation was put into place. It not only makes the press financially disadvantaged but also dignifies the profession itself. Provided here are the most important sections of the

Act and their interpretations thereof.

### **Aims and Scope**

Primarily, the Act is directed toward regulating the services of working journalists and other employees of the newspaper industry. It watches service areas like rates of remuneration, leave, holidays, working hours, and mechanisms of dispute resolution. The Act applies to newspaper establishments based on journalists, editors, reporters, photographers, proofreaders, and extends to non-journalistic employees in the same establishments. This places all working journalists, reporters, editors, photographers, and proofreaders on a footing with the non-journalistic industrial workers and brings them to the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, for resolving disputes.

### **Key Aspects of the Act**

- **Setting up of wage boards for journalists:** The law aims to establish wage boards to decide what should be deemed a fair wage for the journalists and other staff working in the print industry. These wage boards are comprised of members from employers, employees, and other independent persons who are employed or selected by the government. The wage board recommendations would be legally binding so that everyone's remuneration must be on the same line in the print industry under the law.
- **Hours of Work and Overtime:** The act has restricted the stipulated hours for journalists so that they will not be overburdened. It says that no journalists shall be required to labor more than the prescribed amount of labor. Overtime will be paid to journalists who perform work beyond these limitations. No working journalist is supposed to work more than one hundred forty-four hours for a period of four consecutive weeks, excluding the meal timings. Along with this any working journalist shall be allowed a rest period of not less than twenty-four hours within seven consecutive days.
- **Leave and Holidays:** Journalists enjoy the benefits of multiple types of leave-earned or casual leave, and besides, medical leave. They will be granted paid holidays authorized for other industrial workers to guarantee work-life balance and to safeguard their mental health. Journalist's as per the act will have earned leaves on full wages for not less than one eleventh of the period spend on duty and leaves based on medical issues on half wages not less than one eighteenth of period of service.
- **Job Security:** They are protected from arbitrary dismissal terms. They will not be discharged from service without any notice, meaning job security and fair treatment in the working environment.
- **Gratuity and Retirement Benefits:** Gratuity has also been made an essential component of the act, as it is meant to financially secure the newspaper employees after retirement. It is in accordance with other legislation in the country's field of labour and employment concerning the same rectification of fairness to workers. As per in Assam, the age of superannuation for a journalist is not less than 60 to avail the Assam Pension Scheme for journalist introduced in January 2016, which will provide a financial assistance of rupees 8000 after a service of not less than 20 years in the state([see link](#)).

### **Result and Findings**

The interview findings from journalist (will be denoted as J) upholds certain level of serious concerns pertaining in the field, certain prominent themes were charted out to understand the major issue-

#### **Lack of resources available for accountable reporting**

” Often, reporters don't have enough resource to dig into some information, so they rely on whatever the first-hand information that comes to them. Fundings are mostly dependent on advertisements from local

enterprises, schools, universities which is not enough to provide them travel allowances to go in the field and collect primary data” said a senior editor while asking on what are the constraints reporters deal with for accountable reporting?

Moreover, a reporter from Prabhat Khabar, Jamshedpur told- limited staff, low salary and some of my colleagues in broadcast journalism in the city often report that lack of adequate equipment and proper editing system creates hinderance for creating a good package. In print media, reporters are also entitled to bring advertisement on a commission basis.

### **Undue Editorial and Political Pressures**

“The city has seen a rise in political crime, including sand and scrap mafia, along with the drug trafficking. We know the places, we know how to report, but sometimes its better to save our job and stick to what is told from top, there were physical assault incidents, recently what we have seen in the murder of Mukesh Chandra in Chhattisgarh, we don’t have much executive and organization support, but if we can do it on our own risk we are praised, everyone in this field is furious about digging these issues but we are handcuffed and thus we oversee things, we also know who is benefiting from what but a lower level in position there is always a fear to be fired”, told one of crime beat reporter. Several good stories are also not accepted because of political or advertisement support from the firm or the person, a reporter from Dainik Bhaskar added.

### **Impact of digital media, lack of professionalism and unawareness of journalistic rights**

“Just imagine the journalism scenario ten years back and now, the digital media and the urge of immediacy of news consumption has affected the print and broadcast journalism in Jamshedpur drastically. The advertisements are now shifting to web portals from print, to which are running lack of funds, our reporters are underpaid, there is no future in print as per I see”, a member of Press Club of Jamshedpur told on randomly asking him about why he shifted his print career to digital. Moreover, all the major print media has their own digital portal as well which makes the work for reporter even more tough as now, they are required to generate digital edition as well, he added.

Unlike other profession where they organise development program, training session, journalism is lacking those, reporters are self-learned practitioners. In most of the media houses the ratio of degree holders in Mass Communication or a diploma in Journalism journalist are less and people who joined the field and learned the art of journalism through practice is more. Upon asking about the awareness about Working journalist Act, surprisingly because of less discussions and debates among the journalist, most of the field reporters were not aware of the act and their rights.

### **Maintaining Work-Life balance**

“It’s exhausting, specially where reporters go in the field all day collecting news and then meet the deadline and submit their copies by late evening”, says a senior editor. City like Jamshedpur offers many industrials incidents, developments that are happening, but due to lack of staff support the load is on one reporter which makes it difficult for them to maintain work life balance and further career development activities for personal growth.

### Word cloud on themes developed



Figure 1

### Data findings on the basis of aspiring journalists and related themes

There are several good accredited universities in the city which are providing professional courses on Mass Communication and journalism, but several issues are still pertaining for aspiring students who want to pursue journalism as their career.

#### Lack of industry support

“As compared to universities outside, the studio facility in the university within the city is not adequate”, says an aspiring student interested in broadcast journalism. We are given bookish knowledge but there is not place where we can practice those, the studio is limited and is not sufficient for us to understand what the market needs, he added. More industry collaboration and visiting faculties from the field are required for us to understand the real-life intricacies of the field.

#### Budget constraints and internships

Finding internships within the local press houses is very difficult, as they are running out of funds, and even if we get, we are not paid and hardly we get bylines by our name, says a student pursuing BA in Journalism. The journalism scenario is very unorganised what I feel, he added.

#### Emigration for better opportunities

For most us, we planned to emigrate to metropolitan cities for better opportunities in terms of a job or internship from a recognised news firms, which is resulting in lack of incoming fresh minds into the field within the city, a final year Masters student told.

#### Demand for experienced candidates

As approaching for a job, I was rejected because of lack of experience, if not given a chance how can somebody get experience, people beyond their age of superannuation are still working and resulting in no seats left for newcomers to come in, says an intern.

### Word cloud on themes developed



Figure 2

### Recommendations and discussions

#### Stress in Resource Allocation and Funding

- **Government and Organizational Support:** Specific funds need to be allocated by government bodies and nongovernmental sectors to improve the quality of local journalism, for instance, the travel allowance necessary for the reporters to gather data directly from the field and getting a just remuneration.
- **Independent Funding and Fellowship:** It should be that through such fees to independent organizations or NGOs, journalists without any budgetary constraints can be financed for investigative reporting in unearthing deep stories.
- **Diversity of Income Streams:** Media operators should look beyond local ads to diversify income from adverts, digital ads, and collaborations with global journalism platforms by thinking of subscription models as new ideas.

#### Protection from the Editorial and Political Pressure

- **Strengthen journalist unions:** It is appropriate for the union to fight for journalistic freedom in the country and to provide in the legal and organizational sense all the possible support essential to journalists to evade political or corporate intervention.
- **Secure Channels for Requesting Information Anonymously:** The provision of platforms where journalists could safely relay key information on political crimes or issues of national interest for fear-free retaliation would cut direct retaliation risks.
- **Policy Intervention:** Through blanket advocacy, work to persuade legislators into more firmly invoking sound protective prescriptions in the Working Journalists Act to protect and nurture the independence and general safety of journalists.

#### Journalism training and educational industry collaboration

University collaboration subjects are expected to link up with industry professionals to gain practical training, internships, and workshops that make the bridge between theoretical information and demands developing in the marketplace.

- **Enhancing Studio Infrastructure:** Top-level state-of-the-art studios are needed for students taking western broadcast journalism. Such studios train them for better hands-on experience.



- **Visiting Faculty Programs:** It is recommended to host experienced journalists as guest speakers or mentors so that the students get to know what the market needs.

### **Redefining Policy frameworks**

Equal distribution between working journalists and supporting staff should be done. That way, they should have enough time to work, meet the deadline, and thus later maintain good health.

- **Flexible Working Policies:** Like digital edition production, employers should offer flexible working hours allowing workers to work from any remote station under these working conditions.
- **Career Development Opportunities:** Deployment of these directives towards employee orientation and workshop sessions to equip journalists with new skills for the advancement of their careers.

### **Foster Awareness about the Rights of Journalists**

- **Building Awareness on The Working Journalist act:** Conduct seminars and workshops intended for reporters in highlighting their rights under the Act, such as Unfair Practices which these deals with.
- **Journalism forums and debates:** hold community forums for journalists' gatherings to join their heads in discussion about common difficulties and sharing of experiences between them and the peer's developing 'peerage'.

### **Enhance Internship and Job Opportunities**

- **Promoting paid Internships:** Media companies should make provisions for paid internships, aimed at recruiting and retaining potential journalists, while getting them introduced to tangible experiences in the business.
- **Mentoring Programs:** Develop programs that are structure-guiding and advisory in the affair of the youth journalist for them to acquire skills and develop high self-esteem in the profession.
- **Intern bylines:** The bylines assign full acknowledgment to internship work consolidating professional records, which should be promoted.
- **Make young talent come in:** Encourage local journalism by creating incentives for students and young professionals-reward scholarships, fellowships, or awards meant to encourage them to pave way to careers in journalism at their respective localities.
- **Recruiting New Graduates:** The media houses should create first jobs for new fresh grads, so they can build their professional experience and then proceed with their advancement.
- **Retirement Policies:** Have a superannuation age for journalist and let the new fresh minds have a place within the sector.

### **Development of a Digital Media-Adapted Atmosphere**

It is crucial from the outset to ensure that the fabric of democracy is maintained by creating media adapted to the new digital possibilities. Journalists, not just online media, need this kind of adaptation their existence relies on access to content. In short, the aim of the module would be to prepare journalism students in every way they could think of, to provide them with better software to work upon, facilities of typewriters, and everything else which they would require to use as part of their learning faculty.

Higher education in all cases is just about academicians and students learning from one another, with some learned men keeping in touch with colleagues. Everyone participating in the course remotely on the newest

tech trends, whether on the campuses involved with this, or maybe the academics involved in some research projects.

Correspondingly, then, would also be the ethos in the same course being tailored to fight duplication. All this encourages a considerable improvement in the interest levels of the students and teachers and employers.

## Conclusion

The crisis faced by journalists and journalism students in cities like Jamshedpur is largely similar to the broader problem met by local journalism, characterized by severe shortage of resources, political as well as editorial pressures, and institutional support, which are indeed absent. And despite a crucial role that the press is supposed to play in driving transparency and accountability, these issues could very much limit the effectiveness of journalism and keep the talented young people away from it. To tackle these problems, an attempt must be made to give a multifaceted level of attention through increased financial investments, strong legal protection, updated training programs, and better balance between work and life.

Reforming journalism means better infrastructure and improved career prospects: And at the same time, ways will be created to revitalize the groundwork for local journalism. Furthermore, digital transformation and industrial and government engagement can be attempts to expand journalism in this transformation in the media itself. Different entertainment industries, governmental policies, and education facilities have to work together for the revival of local journalism and its selection as the keystone of the democratic purpose in giving voice to the voiceless and also in uncovering truthfulness shaping a society.

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