

Dynamics of Job Security of Journalists in the Political Economy of Nigeria and the Future of Journalism Practice

Kingsley Inalegwu Onah¹, Tsegysu Santas², Kelvin Inobemhe^{3*}

^{1,2}Nasarawa State University, ³Glorious Vision University

Email Address: kingsleyinalegwuonah@gmail.com, tsegysu@nsuk.edu.ng
inobemhekelvin@gmail.com

*Corresponding author : inobemhekelvin@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study was conducted to examine the existential issues in Nigeria's political economy and the interconnectedness with the job security of practising and aspiring journalists and the future of journalism practice in Nigeria. The objective of the study therefore was to identify the nature and forms of the underlying issues of Nigeria's political economy with a view to contextually providing prognosis for possible interventional solutions. It is based on a systematic literature review, considering the need to map empirical and theoretical insights across the domains under investigation. The theoretical framework of the study is anchored on systems theory as propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. It showed that the political economy of the country has been a mixed bag of undulating experience characterised by uncertainties of political policies, decisions and actions that have adversely impacted the economy thereby creating distressing working and living conditions for media organisations, journalists and by extension, the Nigerian workers. In addition, the study demonstrated that beyond journalism practice, the reality of the political economy was critical to determining the availability of an enabling environment for continuity with consequent concerns of job security for journalists both as employees and employers in the line of duty and what the future holds for them in the practice. While it concluded that the political economy has posed serious threat for journalism to thrive as expected, it has, among other things been recommended that political actors should as a matter of necessity, create the enabling environment for guaranteed job security for practitioners of journalism in Nigeria.

Keywords: Job Security, Journalism, Journalists, Political Economy, Welfare

INTRODUCTION

Political economy of any given country across the world remains fundamentally instrumental in providing policy direction and growth indices that impact on the general well-being of the populace. The use and control of political power helps shape the direction and character of public policy (Sha, 2023). In other words, the political economy of any country is intricately interwoven in the fabrics of the day-to-day administration of governance that is manifested in the immediate, short or long term in its trickle-down effects on the populace. Re-echoing the synergy of purpose that exists, Pettinger (2020) averred that many economic issues are inherently political because they lend themselves to different opinions. Buttressing the subtlety of intricacies that underscore the relationship between politics and economics, Jolicoeur (2023) observed that these two domains could best be contextualized as a dynamic, two-way street, where each influence and shapes the other in a complex web of interactions. This goes to point out that there is systemic marriage between the political firmament and the economy. As a matter of fact, they are inseparable to the extent that it has today defined what is known as macroeconomics in the context of aggregated position in the national outlook.

The effectiveness of this is predicated on the fact that, politics is presumably expected to establish the requisite pedestal for the constitution of capable and popular leadership at various strata through democratic process, monarchical order of selection or *coup d'état* as the case may be. The implication is that, the viability or buoyancy of the economy of a sovereign nation is anchored on the performance of the machinery of governance, political institutions set in motion (through the capitalist, socialist, communist or the mixed structure) in steering the affairs of the nation which eventually defines the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or experiential living conditions of citizens. In essence, the performance of the economy is one of the key political battlegrounds (Pettinger, 2020). The effect of this is reflected in the capacity of government in providing the enabling environment for the stimulation of economic activities that can guarantee job creation and in the long run, job security for the working population and the general well-being of her citizens.

This therefore brings us to the focus of our study which is job security of Nigeria's working population from a general perspective and that of journalists in particular. In actuality, the discussion of job security of journalists in the context of our topic cannot be justified without the ideation of the political economy of Nigeria. While acknowledging the import of the necessity of job security and stability, it is expedient to stress that the Nigerian media has had a historical trajectory that has evolved with the Nigerian state (pre-independence and post-independence). Going down memory lane, it is obvious that through the power of the media, the hitherto stateless corporate entity at the time transmuted into an independent state called Nigeria for self-government that would chart a new course of self-determination and common identity (Inobemhe et al., 2022a, p. 275). With the enormity of responsibility journalists shoulder considering the risky terrain of operations, one may wonder if there are inherently commensurate reward system in the conditions of service of journalists. Again, the question to ask is: has the journalist failed in holding government to account and demanding for the rights of citizens in its surveillance

function in Nigeria? The answer may be either “yes” or “no” depending on the time or phase of operations of journalists as observed by Frantz Fanon cited in Otongaran (2023).

Taking a look at the job of the journalist in retrospect from the colonial era, it may be appropriate to state that the media proactively lived up to the mantra of its calling. In fact, the mission of Nigerian journalists in the colonial regime was fulfilled (Otongaran, 2023) but then, with this feat at the time, was there job security for journalists? Well, it could be said that journalism practice within that era was unarguably at its infancy stage, however, it steadily graduated from pre-professionalism to proto-professionalism (Enemugwem, 2009, p. 111) and provided the needed shape and form for modern journalism in Nigeria. The issue of job security may not have been a prevalent discourse during the colonial regime but there were series of repressive and suffocating legislations that were aimed at taming the popular public acclaim of the Nigerian press to suggest that job security for the journalist was questionable.

To this end, the following antimedia laws were promulgated to keep journalists in check: Official Secrets Ordinances of 1891 restricted the press from delving into the official secrets of the government; The Newspaper Ordinances of 1917 regulated the establishment of media houses; Seditious Offences Act of 1909 forbade pressures from publishing anything against the colonial government (Enemugwem, 2009, pp. 111-112). The consequence of this was that journalists were gagged, arrested, incarcerated/jailed on trumped-up charges and even starved of government patronage. Particular instances include the trial of J.B. Davies (of *Times of Nigeria*), jailing of Thomas Horatio Jackson (of *Weekly Record*) and repeated detention of Anthony Eromosele Enahoro of *Southern Nigeria Defender* (Enemugwem, 2009; Lakemfa, 2010).

Post-independence, government aversion for journalists has exacerbated in a fashion that is draconian and condescending albeit with intermittent Gestapo military interruption of the democratic process (Adelakun et al., 2021). Despite the state of dystopia where the sacredness of the rule of law and freedom of speech are abhorred, the media has trudged along though painfully. Again, it would be credited to journalists that they were instrumental to the return of the country to democracy in 1999 amidst other feats which meant that the role the journalist was pivotal in nation building (Ngara & Esebonu, 2012). In the next phase of the struggle for total emancipation, the media faced virulent attacks and molestation that saw media houses closed down, some journalists killed and some others arrested and incarcerated for days and even months (Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism, 2019). Nevertheless, as the manhunt for journalists perceived as enemy of the state (Nigeria) continued, those who could escape, left the shores of the country on asylum. With this horrendous experience in a high-risk terrain, journalists cannot bargain for less when it comes to job security and commensurate welfare packages.

Given the above, it is crystal clear that from the colonial political economy to the present setting that several changes have taken place in labour market demands and these changes present unfolding new challenges for job security of journalists. To this end, we shall be exploring further the dynamics of job security of journalists and the presumed future that lie ahead for practitioners.

Statement of the Problem

Job security of Nigerian journalists is disconcertingly pathetic given the dilemma of the political economy they have found themselves. From the colonial era to date, a careful analysis of the job description of the journalist and the political class is a thin line across the divide; while the political class scramble for power to manage the commonwealth of the Nigerian state, the journalist as the watchdog of society seeks to ensure that there is surveillance beamed on the political class in order to make them accountable to the populace in their managerial role. This critical role usually puts them on a collision path because of discordant perception on the necessity of accountability thereby positioning the political class in a covert or overt mission of suspecting and antagonising journalists in the line of duty (Omula & Ogbale, 2024; Yahaya, 2025). This has led to the enactment of repressive laws/decrees that tamper with their inalienable right of fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy as contained in Section 22 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) states that “the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people.”

Considering the riskiness of the job given that some journalists have suffered unduly as a result of the harsh working environment, it would have been heartening if the reward system was commensurate to the toil and hazard of the job. Unfortunately, it is not and some contending issues continue to militate against the attainment of this lofty anticipation. According to Avani (2022), the repercussions for independent journalism in our country range from physical attacks to criminal action under laws of sedition. This is even with the existence of a union, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) that should have risen to the occasion by evoking advocacy and insisting on improved welfare and conditions of service for Journalists. As it stands, there is yet to be seen the initiative of NUJ on job security and improved conditions of service. Be that as it may, the issue of collective bargaining which should cover the security of tenor of employment of journalists or job security (as the case may be) remains a nagging challenge. As a matter of fact, there is also the concern of exit or retirement benefits which may or may not be achievable. The complexities of this malaise are further accentuated by ownership structure of the media and the “japa” syndrome occasioned by the array of poor economic indices such as broken down real sector, fiscal instability as ricochet effects of inflation, infrastructure deficit, rampant insecurity, high unemployment (Otongaran, 2023; Harlem, 2024; Okunade & Awosusi, 2023; Fasina, 2024). In Nigerian parlance, the japa syndrome refers to the mass emigration drive by Nigerians, particularly youth and skilled professionals, in search of economic stability, career opportunities, and better living conditions abroad.

Research Questions

1. Is job security a right?
2. What are the dynamics of job security of journalists in the political economy of Nigeria
3. What is the future of journalism in Nigeria?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Defining Job Security

The concept of job security continues to be an intriguing and debatable topic that has caught public attention and generated scholarly fireworks. It is a discussion that has conceptualised the desirability or otherwise of the notion of job security given that it bothers on the workforce of society and the future of their engagement in the workplace. In the views of Zekić (2016), prior to recent emerging labour market issues, the notion of job security as a traditional form of security for workers dominated employment relation. Hur & Perry (2016) argue that both distant and recent policy choices about job security have been based largely on normative and ideological considerations rather than behavioural science evidence. These submissions give the inkling of the developments and complexities of the matter at hand but before we proceed, it will be appropriate to give an understanding of this concept. What then is job security?

According to Olulu and Udeorah (2018, p. 70), “job security is the presumption or confidence index of employees with respect to the protection of their employment within the workplace.” In the same manner, the United States’ Employment Act of 1946 sees job security as the assurance that an employee’s job is secure and they will not be fired or laid off without valid reasons. Elaborating further, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines job security as the possession of a niche in work, allowing some control over the contract of a job. A careful examination of the various definitions shows that there is an underlying understanding that is visibly the same among them and that is the fact that there is the probability of reasonable certainty of guaranteed future for workers on the job. While the definitions may be communicating the same meaning in different variants, the ILO sees job security from the point of view of the individual worker demonstrating cognate capacity on the job that can guarantee his/her continued stay on the job.

Therefore, as against the generalisation of the advocacy or proposition of job security, the principle of individuality of responsibility should be critically considered (Faster Capital, 2024). This again brings us to the divergent views on the concept of job security; while one school of thought observes that job security provides the leverage of planning and financial stability for workers, the other school of thought which has been critical of this concept submits that job security gives room for complacency and the culture of entitlement which may be at variance with workplace ethics. These critics go further to state that some indolent and unproductive workers may want refuge under the guise of job security in pursuing their career to the top without acquiring needed requisite skills, experience and capacity to match the reward system (and this is usually prevalent in the public service).

Political Economy Perspectives

For proper perspective within the context of this study, the discussion bordering on the concept of political economy of the country shall be retrospectively situated between the colonial era when journalism took its roots in Nigeria and the present-day practice. There is therefore no gainsaying that, the political economy is the livewire to the survival of any nation. As a matter of fact, the efficiency and vibrancy of the political

economy are always reflective in established institutions, rural and urban infrastructure development, poverty and security indices and the capacity to stimulate and attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs); and create enabling environment for employment opportunities through productive activities (Alli, 2026; Victor et al., 2026). In short, the fiscal and monetary policies are pivotal in explaining the policy direction of a nation as far as the political economy is concerned. In the views of Goshit and Landi (2014, p. 56), an appropriate monetary and fiscal policy mix is crucial for macroeconomic management.

While monetary policy objectives are targeted towards price stability, domestic output growth, sustainable balance of payments equilibrium, high employment level, equitable income distribution and poverty reduction, fiscal policy ensures that market development allows public debt managers to focus more on cost minimisation (Goshit & Landi, 2014). What then is the political economy? Kenton (2024) offers a way to understand the concept and describes it as a branch of social sciences that takes on the interdisciplinary approach and the focus is on the interrelationships of public policy, governments, and individual members of the society. It is also conceptualised as an aspect of social science with focus on the relationships that exist between society and individuals, on one hand, and the markets and state, on the other hand, and the methods and tools are drawn from sociology, political science, and economics (Veseth & Balaam, 2025). Furthermore, Lee and Jordan (2023) see political economy as a social science that focuses on the relationships between the state, society, individuals and its markets.

From the foregoing, it is imperative to note that as far as political economy is concerned, there is a handshake between politics and the economy. In essence, political economy studies both how the economy affects politics and how politics affects the economy (Kenton, 2024). Politics as an aspect of the political economy is the pedestal upon which political parties subject themselves to democratic processes of electing representative leaders who can manage the resources of a nation in trust. In Nigeria however, before the emergence of the fourth republic, the democratic process was fraught with military incursions into the space of governance at various times. This is not to forget the colonial experience that came with its own baggage.

Conceptualising Journalists and Journalism

Journalism by reason of its long-standing role in society after Gutenberg's revolution has remained stoutly relevant even as it continues to evolve in style and processes. It is a profession that has earned public confidence and asserted itself in the public space as the voice of truth and vehicle for change. Buttressing this view, Olayinka and Ridwan (2024) posits that journalism, the cornerstone of a democratic society, plays a vital role in providing the public with accurate and timely information. It serves as a bridge between events and the people, shedding light on crucial issues, holding power accountable, and fostering public discourse (Rojas-Calderón, 2024). It is therefore obviously clear that journalism practice is a prized profession but this cannot be achieved without ingrainedly inculcating and expressing the defining value systems of the practice which are truth, accuracy and objectivity.

Expatriating on the foregoing, Hsu (2024) identifies the following five essential ingredients for an impactful and unadulterated journalism: 1) treat change and diversity as opportunities to learn; 2) stay true to what and who journalism is for; 3) practice firm journalistic values at all times; 4) choose credible news over captivating noise always and 5) remember to ground yourself and to always celebrate your views.

Unfortunately, despite this lofty height society has offered the profession, the practice has been in the mire of ethical infractions and unscrupulous conduct that have tampered with this assertion of public goodwill. According to Semiu et al. (2012), in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, the question of unethical practices among journalists has continued to attract and generate arguments of varying degrees. This situation has given rise to fake news or false presentation of issues while reporting. However, in a glimmer of hope, Jenny Taylor, a seasoned journalist observed that, though trust in media may be waning, the rediscovery of journalism can still be done to make it the beacon of truth and justice (Lausanne Movement, 2024).

This takes us further into the argument of whether journalism is a profession or not. While some argue that journalism is not a profession because it accommodates everybody regardless of the field of study, some others opine that journalism is a profession with clear-cut roles defined for it. Still, some schools of thought believe that journalism is a grooming ground for practitioners as many veer into better opportunities in their later years. This position was corroborated in *TVNewsCheck*, June 19, 2024 that some local TV's brightest and most ambitious talents were leaving journalism for jobs with acceptably higher salary.

The transition phases of journalism in the profession are also important. While the Generation X and perhaps Generation Y journalists can endure the whims and caprices of the job and be loyal to a particular media house for as long as the tenure of appointment may define (if at all there is), that may not be the anticipation of the majority of the millennials and Generation Z journalists whose appetite for faster career growth and better salary is high. According to Chan and Bui (2020), the millennial (and Generation Z) journalists were born into the digital era as such they would not appreciate what growth was about in journalism. They would jump from newsroom to newsroom until they land in a major market or at a national outlet (Chan & Bui, 2020).

Who then is a journalist? In a rapidly changing world with new inventions and applications, there can be no one-stop definition of the personality of the journalist. As a matter of fact, what held sway as to who a journalist is three to four decades ago may not be exactly the same today given the fluidity of the profession. This is even so with the presence of the new media which is gaining more acceptance side-by-side the mainstream (or traditional) media of radio, television and the print. The emerging developments notwithstanding, some scholarly definitions have been advanced. According to Indeed Editorial Team (2026), a journalist refers to the professional, whose main tasks include, collecting, editing, and presenting news through written or spoken words.

In the views of American Press Institute, a journalist is the individual that guides citizens to reach decisions that concerns their societies, communities, lives, and

government through the accurate information provided. Furthermore, Hill (2023) conceptualises a journalist as the person that gathers, organises materials in the process of ensuring that the finished and verified pieces get distributed through various mediums and forms – which hitherto were considered as limited radio, television, and the print – however, now expanded to cover other aspects such as the online mediums/outlets. Traditionally, the role of the journalist would be as: reporters, editors, photojournalists, correspondents, news anchors, (and freelancers) (Hill, 2023) but with the evolution, bloggers and content creators have joined the fray (rightly or wrongly).

Literature Review

Literature abounds on the impact of the economy on the working conditions of journalists around the world. For example, Hussain, Saeed, Aslam and Gull (2022) investigated the relationship between economic conditions and journalist's adherence to journalism principles and code of ethics in Faisalabad city. Employing the qualitative study method with the use of in-depth interview, 13 journalists participated in the study. Findings from the study showed that due to the overwhelming economic pressure of the economy some journalists were unable to uphold the ethical principles of journalism profession. Hussain et al. (2022) further demonstrated that a lot of journalists were forced to compromise their convictions due to the bad nature of the economy. This finding is a testament to the fact that no matter how principled a journalist may be, there is the tendency for journalists to breach the professional code of ethics if they are not well catered for by their employers.

Cipuri and Marku (2022) study delve into the factors and reasons that motivate journalists in Albania to migrate into other jobs and professions to seek for higher job satisfaction. Using the survey research method, 321 journalists and 302 students of journalism participated in the study. Findings from Cipuri and Marku's (2022) study indicated that job security, low salary remuneration and lack of recognition accorded to journalists were the main reasons why journalists resign from journalism profession to take up positions from other professions. This finding has huge implications for the future of journalism practice in the sense that future prospective journalists may decide to lose interest in the profession thereby leaving the job for some armature people who may not have interest or passion for the job. The implication of this is that, in the near future we may have shortage of journalists in the society if this negative trend is not arrested.

In a related development, the findings of Rauf et al. (2021) corroborates Cipuri and Marku (2022) study when they found in their study that job security plays a significant role in journalists work performance. Their study discovered that journalists who have permanent employment status perform creditably well in the workplace compared to journalists whose employment status are not permanent. This underscore the fact that job placement has a significant role to play in motivating journalists' performance in the workplace. It was equally found that job security is a significant factor in driving high job performance among journalists in Peshawar. The study concluded that journalists face varying challenges such as financial issues and job insecurity as major threat to their profession. It is imperative to know that most of these issues are directly related to the level of a society's economic income which obviously has a corresponding impact on the journalist's work condition.

Considering the importance of job security and protection of employees, there are some countries with legislative provisions for the protection of workers. Cuadra (2024) in a report for *Employee Benefit News* identified Germany as one of the countries of the world with protective labour laws that guarantee the security of workers from unjust job dismissal. As global phenomenon requiring attention, policy of political actors on the stage of governance, the volatility of the economy and the whimsically unrestrained actions of employers have been deciding the fate of journalists as far as job the security of job for a journalist. This has been buttressed with studies that demonstrated the impact of uncertain media environment on job security of journalists in different climes (Faheem et al., 2021; Goyanes & Rodríguez-Gómez, 2018).

In furtherance of this study, empirical review has been done on some studies that bear semblance with the current study. To this effect, Tijani-Adenle (2021) in a study titled: “Information Disorder and the Future of journalism in Nigeria” asserts that Nigerian journalism was being confronted with many threats, majority of which were exogenous and manifested in the form of repression by colonial and post-colonial administrations, clampdown by military regimes, draconian and repressive decrees and codes, attacks on facilities, prevention of circulation and closures, intimidation, imprisonment and worse of all- murder. The study however admits that journalism was also plagued with many insidious endogenous challenges, one of which is information disorder. According to Tijani-Adenle (2021), information disorder though classified into disinformation, misinformation and malinformation encompasses all the various channels through which the integrity of published information is compromised. The study which was based on mixed method approach using content analysis, interview and survey posits that information disorder if not checked, may pose a greater threat to the future of journalism in Nigeria. Like the subsisting study, Tijani-Adenle (2021) in his study considers the future of journalism as a contending issue requiring urgent attention. Both studies however differ from each other in their theoretical framework and underlying issues of discourse.

Furthermore, Obateru (2017) in a study underscores the dire need for the domestication of more empirical works in the understanding and appreciation of journalism practice in Nigeria. The researcher argues that journalists in the Nigerian media landscape are seemingly caught in the global journalism phenomena as typified in the new media technologies and their impact, environmental impact – based on the evidence of current literature that suggests negative impact on the profession. Findings from the convergent parallel mixed methods applied show that journalists respond differently to the many similar challenged they encounter in the course of their duties. Unlike the ongoing study, this study is empirical with differing theoretical framework. They are however similar in the sense that, they seek to prognosticate and forecast the future of journalism in Nigeria.

Matthew and Onyemaobi (2020) in their study identify the disconnect and generalisation of viewpoint between the western world and the Global South regarding underlying assumption of full and permanent employment as being the norm. The researchers sought to explore journalism in the Global South and the precarious work conditions of journalists. Accordingly, the researchers relied on 15 semi-structured interviews with carefully selected editors and journalists in commercial newspapers that represented the northern and

southern regions of Nigeria (that is, the *Daily Trust* and *Punch*, and the *Guardian*, and *This Day* newspapers). There was role representation in the inclusion criteria as respondents include reports, senior reporters, and editors across the various media organisations. This was considered to ensure role-based perspectives are offered by the media personalities. Like the current study, Matthew and Onyemaobi (2020) contextualized the uncertainties of the operating environment of journalists and the future of the practice. However, they differ in concept, theoretical framework and methodology.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical study of this study is anchored on systems theory as propounded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. According to Santas et al. (2024), systems theory provides a framework for understanding how various components within a system interact with each other and how the system as a whole function and adapts to its environment. In other words, systems theory sees diversely distinct components working in synergy and congruent alignment of purpose. To this end, job security is considered to be labour market dilemma that has to do with journalists in particular and by extension, the Nigerian worker. The labour here is seen as the organisation under which we have the tripartite components consisting of the government, employer(s) and the conglomeration of journalists represented by concerned Union(s) which in this case is Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ). These tripartite components are expected to work together in agreement to come up with decent work arrangements that should include job security of the journalist.

METHODS

Research Design

This study is based on a systematic literature review (SLR) research methodology. This involves a reproducible, rigorous, and transparent method of identifying, evaluating, and synthesising existing research evidence on a specified research topic or question (Liberati et al., 2009). Unlike the narrative review, SLR adopts a structured protocol in which selection bias is minimised and reliability enhanced through the application of explicit criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies. Accordingly, the choice of this approach is justified by the interdisciplinary and broad scope of this current research, which is on job security of journalists in Nigeria – as it spans fields of political economy, communication studies, media sustainability, and labour law. SLR provides a space for comprehensive mapping of empirical and theoretical insights across these domains, thereby laying a foundation for new thematic framework development

Search Strategy and Database Selection

The literature search for this study was conducted systematically across multiple academic repositories and databases, including Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, African Journals Online (IAJOL), JSTOR, and Nigerian universities' institutional repositories. The selection of these databases was informed by their focus and breadth of coverage of literature in journalism, communication studies, media studies, political economy, and labour law. Consequently, the search strategy for this study was designed to ensure comprehensive coverage of Nigeria-specific and international scholarship. This led to the

use of the following Boolean search strings across the different databases, “media sustainability and Nigeria or African continent,” “press freedom, political economy, or media ownership,” “job insecurity, and media, and the Nigerian situation,” “job security, and journalism, or journalists,” and “journalism in Nigeria and employment.”

The researchers adopted a time frame for the literature, setting it between 2017 and 2025. This also includes a particular reference and emphasis on publications from 2020 onward strictly because of the need to capture recent developments in the issues starting from the post-COVID-19 era. However, attention was given to foundational and seminal works that predate 2017 because they provided irreplaceable theoretical value to the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to the search process in order to ensure rigour, quality, and relevance of the selected literature (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). These criteria were applied in three stages namely screening, abstract review, and full-text appraisal. The inclusion criteria include studies published in English, peer-reviewed book chapters, journal articles, and credible reports (particularly the Reuters Institute report), studies that directly address media sustainability, job security, political economy of media, journalism practice, and related constructs, studies with focus on Nigeria or providing global perspectives relevant to Nigeria’s context, or comparative African perspectives, theoretical, empirical, and review studies, and publications between 2017–2025, with exceptions for foundational texts.

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria for this study include studies that do not engage with media, journalism, or employment/labour as primary focus, editorial, opinion pieces, and non-scholarly commentary without theoretical or empirical grounding, theses or dissertations unless the ones from accredited and known institutions with demonstrable peer supervisory scrutiny, studies with significant methodological limitations, duplicate publications or studies subsumed in later, more comprehensive works, and non-English publications.

Screening and Selection Process

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework was followed in the study’s screening and article selection process. This framework, according to Page et al. (2021), provides a standardised approach that can be leveraged to report systematic literature reviews. The screening followed a four-stage process: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the identification stage, database searches were conducted and generated an initial pool of records, supplemented by manual searches of reference lists of key papers. The screening stage involves removing duplicate records, leaving titles and abstracts that were assessed against the set inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the eligibility stage, full-text articles were retrieved and evaluated in detail for quality and relevance. The inclusion stage involves the retention of studies that meet all criteria for thematic synthesis.

After the duly executed screening and selection process, a total of 18 studies were identified to have met the full inclusion criteria and retained for thematic analysis. The sources included book chapters ($n = 1$), institutional reports ($n = 2$), peer-reviewed journal articles ($n = 14$), and dissertations from accredited and known universities ($n = 1$).

Quality Appraisal

Considering the mixed nature of the literature included in the final selection process (theoretical, empirical, and grey literature), the researchers conducted a quality appraisal guided by the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018). The following dimensions were considered in the assessment of each included study: clarity of research objectives, aims, and design; methodology appropriateness in comparison with the research questions; data collection and analysis-specific rigour; transferability and credibility of findings; and ethical considerations. Studies were not excluded solely on account of lower quality scores but weighted accordingly in the synthesis to avoid over-reliance on weaker evidence.

Data Extraction and Management

As part of the consideration to capture key information from each study included, a structure data extraction form was developed. Certain relevant field were captured in the form, including, author(s) and publication year; aim and research questions; methodology; key results; implications for job security and journalism; and context (specific country or region). A spreadsheet and thematic coding matrix was adopted to manage the data in order to facilitate systematic comparison and pattern recognition across studies.

Thematic Synthesis

The adopted method thematic synthesis for this study was based on the outline developed by Thomas and Harden (2008) with three iterative steps being considered. These include line-by-line coding of primary studies' findings; development of descriptive themes in line with clusters of similar codes; and the generation of analytical themes that transverse the content of individual studies for the purpose of offering conceptual contributions. Four themes were drawn from the thematic synthesis process. There was also a process of synthesising and reviewing the emergent themes through a process of inductive and deductive analysis to ensure contextual validity and theoretical coherence. The researchers maintained reflexivity throughout the process and acknowledge the potential for interpretative bias in the thematic synthesis adopted for this study.

Ethical Considerations

On account that the study relied on existing, publicly available academic literature and includes no form of primary data collection from human subjects, formal ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required and, therefore, was not sought. However, the researchers strictly observed the principles of academic integrity throughout the review process. Findings of individual studies have been duly represented to distortion or misrepresentation of scholarly contributions.

Additionally, the SLR process adopted for this study was conducted considering the political and social context of journalism in Nigeria. The researchers recognised that discussions of censorship, labour rights, and press freedom carry significant implications for vulnerable groups in society, including media workers, journalists, and citizens who constantly depend on independent and free press for access to reliable and unbiased information.

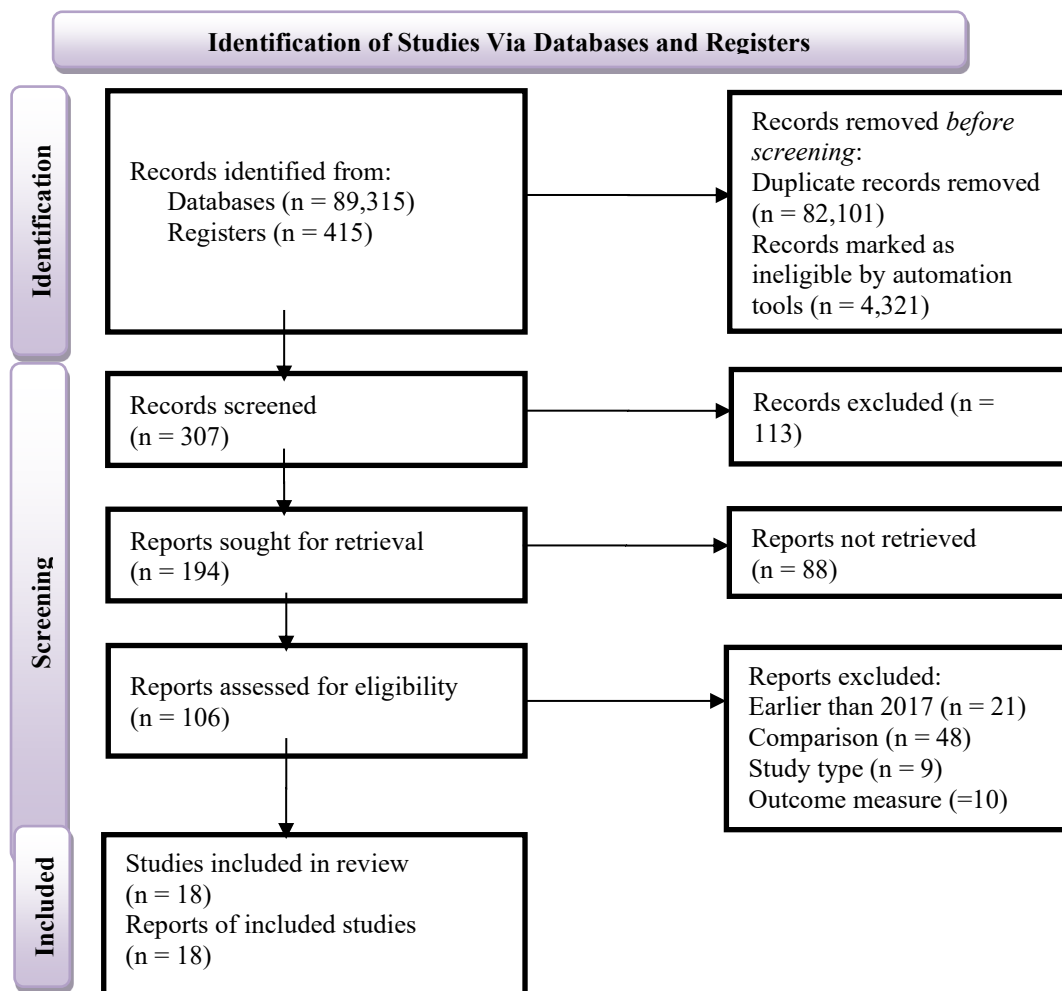


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Critical and systematic review of the literature reveals four emergent themes that extend and deepen this study's analytical scope. These themes capture dimensions of the phenomenon.

Table 1: Literature Review Table

SN	Author(s)	Pub. Year	Main Objectives	Methods	Key Findings
1	Deckker, D., & Sumanasekara, S.	2025	To examine how AI is restructuring global labour markets, including the media industry, and the implications for job security	Narrative review	AI automates tasks previously performed by humans (content aggregation, data analysis, editorial functions, routine reporting), creating conditions of precarity for journalists, especially in routine or lower-skill roles.
2	Kim, B.-J., & Kim, M.-J.	2024	To examine how AI-induced job insecurity affects knowledge-sharing dynamics within organisations, and the mitigating role of AI self-efficacy.	Empirical	AI-induced job insecurity disrupts knowledge-sharing dynamics within media organisations; journalists threatened by AI replacement tend to withdraw from collaborative knowledge practices, weakening institutional capacity.
3	Yakubu, B. N., & Ritter, K.	2022	To examine the effects of modern technology on job security in Nigeria.	Mixed-Methods (Survey/Interview)	Technology adoption in Nigeria has been uneven and marked by a digital skill gap, exposing local journalists to displacement without adequate retraining or preparation.
4	Nwokeocha, I. M., Brown, G. N., & Ntegwung, E. G.	2025	To examine the practice, problems, and prospects of development journalism in Nigeria.	Qualitative Interviews	Nigerian media houses struggle with poor remuneration, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate training infrastructure for journalists and media personnel.

5	Gana, S. V., & Inobemhe, K.	2025	To examine the balance between regulation of traditional and digital media and press freedom in Nigeria.	Mixed Method (Quantitative and Qualitative)	The regulatory landscape in Nigeria is characterised by a complex interplay between constitutionally guaranteed press freedom and persistent attempts by political actors to control and constrain media operations.
6	Uchendu, C. E., Akin-Odukoya, O. O., Falobi, F., Aondover, P. O., & Benard, L.	2025	To examine social media regulations and government censorship in Nigeria.	Policy Analysis/Review	Government attempts to regulate social media in Nigeria pose threats to digital journalism, which is a growing sector offering alternative employment pathways for journalists.
7	Santas, T., & Inobemhe, K.	2021	To examine the challenges and implications of social media regulation in a democratic Nigeria.	Policy Analysis/Review	Repeated attempts by the Nigerian government to regulate social media could impose restrictions on digital journalism practice, compounding existing job insecurity among journalists.
8	Inobemhe, K., Santas, T., Asemah, E. S., & Igyuve, A.	2022	To assess the intricacies of policing virtual spaces in Nigeria and the quest to regulate social media.	Conceptual/Policy Analysis	Regulatory threats to social media and digital journalism in Nigeria represent a form of institutional insecurity distinct from market-driven job insecurity.
9	Folarin, P. A.	2017	To examine job security law in Nigeria and advocate for a transition from contract to status-based protections.	Legal/Doctrinal/Comparative Analysis	Nigeria's labour law framework is inadequate and falls short of providing meaningful protection to media workers, particularly regarding arbitrary dismissals and lack of enforceable rights to fair hearing in employment disputes.

10	Olulu, R. M., & Udeorah, S. A. F.	2018	To examine job security policies and laws in Nigeria vis-à-vis ILO standards.	Comparative /Policy Analysis	Nigerian job security policies and laws fall short of ILO standards, leaving media workers, including journalists, inadequately protected against arbitrary dismissals.
11	Rick, J., & Hanitzsch, T.	2024	To develop a theoretical model of journalists' perceptions of precarity.	Theoretical/ Conceptual Review	Proposed a model showing how structural inequalities intersect with labour precarity to produce distinct patterns of vulnerability, particularly among younger journalists, women journalists, and those from marginalised communities.
12	Springer, N., & Rick, J.	2025	To examine the coping strategies journalists use to find ease in professionally vulnerable situations.	Empirical Qualitative (Interviews)	Journalists employ various coping strategies when experiencing precarity; structural inequalities compound vulnerability among certain groups, pointing to the need for inclusive policy responses.
13	Tijani-Adenle, G.	2021	To examine information disorder and its implications for the future of journalism in Nigeria, including the gendered dimensions of newsroom culture.	Policy Analysis	Women journalists in Nigeria face compounded insecurity through gender-based discrimination and institutional/market pressures; information disorder devalues professional journalism and diminishes justification for maintaining a well-paid workforce.

14	Onigbinde, C. O., & Oloyede, I. B.	2024	To examine misinformation and disinformation in the Nigerian media landscape.	Descriptive/ Analytical Study	The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation in Nigeria erodes public trust in journalism, leading to audience fragmentation, reduced advertising revenue, and worsening job insecurity for journalists.
15	Ozohu-Suleiman, Y., & Dahiru, J. M.	2017	To survey public trust in mass media as democratic building institutions in Nigeria.	Quantitative (Survey)	There is a decline in public trust in Nigerian mass media, which undermines journalism's sustainability and contributes to deteriorating occupational and economic conditions for journalists.
16	Umeaku, P. C., & Babatunde, K. A.	2021	To investigate the relationship between news media trust and participatory governance among Nigerian youths.	Cross-sectional Design (Survey)	Low media trust among Nigerian youths contributes to audience fragmentation, reducing media organisations' revenue base and, in turn, negatively affecting journalists' employment conditions.
17	Farid, A. S.	2023	To examine the paradigm shift from traditional to digital journalism and its impact on professionalism and credibility.	Comparative Analysis	The shift to digital journalism changes the revenue base of traditional media outlets; audience redirection to alternative platforms erodes advertising revenue, which leads to cost-cutting measures affecting journalistic employment.

18	Nielsen, R. K., & Selva, M.	2019	To outline five key facts about the future of journalism relevant to researchers and practitioners.	Policy Report/Analytical Review	Audience fragmentation and the decline of traditional advertising models undermine the financial sustainability of news organisations, directly impacting the employment conditions of journalists.
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Source: Authors’ Screening

Theme 1: Technological Disruption, Artificial Intelligence, and the Redefinition of Journalistic Labour

An increasingly prominent and recurring concern across the reviewed literature is the profound impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies on the scope, nature, and security of journalists’ employment. Deckker and Sumanasekara (2025) provide a comprehensive narrative review of how AI is restructuring the global labour markets, including the media industry, by automating tasks that were previously performed by humans; such as content aggregation, data analysing, editorial functions,, and routine reporting. This automation imperative, while promising efficiency gains for media organisations, simultaneously creates conditions of precarity for journalists, particularly those in routine reporting or lower skill-requiring roles.

Kim and Kim (2024) provide a nuance concern by demonstrating that AI-induced job insecurity does not merely threaten employment levels but greatly disrupts the dynamics of knowledge-sharing dynamics within media organisations. Accordingly, journalists faced with the threats of AI replacement tend to withdraw from collaborative knowledge practices, leading to a weakening of institutional capacity of media outlets. This is particularly significant in the Nigerian context, where media houses already struggle with poor remuneration, limited institutional capacity, and inadequate training infrastructure for journalists and media personnel (Nwokeocha et al., 2025).

This analysis was further extended to the African context by Yakubu and Ritter (2022) as they show that there has been uneven adoption of technology in Nigeria, and that it is marked by a digital skill gap, exposing local journalists to displacement without adequate retraining or preparation. The intersection of digital transition, AI adoption, and labour insecurity constitutes a distinct thematic cluster that is not adequately covered in literature. This theme calls for a closer examination of how media outlets in Nigeria respond or fail to respond to the changing technological landscape in ways that job security of their journalist is either protected or eroded.

Theme 2: Regulatory Environment, Press Freedom, and Institutional Vulnerability of Journalists

In the reviewed literature, there was a consistent mentioning of legal and regulatory environment as a structural determinant of job security for journalists, creating a sense of a system that operates independently of market forces. In Nigeria, the regulatory landscape for media is characterised by a complex interplay between press freedom as guaranteed by the constitution and persistent attempts by the political class and actors to control, regulate, and constrain media operations (Gana & Inobemhe, 2025; Uchendu et al., 2025). Though freedom of expression and the obligation of the mass media to uphold accountability is clearly enshrined in Section 22 and 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), there is a challenge with practical exercise of these rights as they remain contested and precarious.

Santas and Inobemhe (2021) and Inobemhe et al. (2022b) succinctly document the repeated attempts by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to regulate social media, which, if enacted, would impose restrictions on digital journalism practice. It is noteworthy because this field is considered as a rapidly growing sector that offers alternative employment pathways for journalist in the country. The regulatory threat is further compounded by safety concerns for journalists covering sensitive beats, particularly those reporting on militant activities (security), electoral violence, and corruption. Weaponisation of defamation and cybersecurity laws, overt censorship, and arbitrary detentions of journalists are the institutional sources of vulnerability that qualitatively distinct from market-driven job insecurity in Nigeria.

This theme draws attention to the need to distinguish between two strands of job insecurity that confront Nigerian journalists: market insecurity and institutional insecurity. While market insecurity is driven by digitalisation, completion and declining revenues, institutional insecurity is rooted in political interference, legal vulnerability, and the absence of robust protective frameworks for journalists. Folarin (2017) and Olulu and Udeorah (2018) reveal that the labour law framework in Nigeria is inadequate as it falls short of providing meaningful protection to media workers, particularly the issues of arbitrary dismissals, with no enforceable rights to fair hearing in employment disputes. This justifies the need for a thematic engagement with the regulatory environment, which appears significant to have a complete understanding of job security issues that pertain to journalists in Nigeria.

Theme 3: Gender, Identity, and Differential Experiences of Job (In)security in Nigerian Journalism

Though the reviewed literature is rich in its engagement with structural and systemic dimensions of journalist job security, it is largely silent on the differential experiences of job security across age, identity lines, and gender. On the international scene, scholarship is, however, increasingly attention to how structural inequalities intersect with the precarity of labour to produce distinct patterns of vulnerability among younger journalists, women journalists, and those from marginalised communities (Rick & Hanitzsch, 2023; Springer & Rick, 2025). This gap is significant especially in the Nigerian context, where glass ceiling, institutional sexism, and patriarchal norms remain entrenched and documented features of newsroom culture (Tijani-Adenle, 2021).

In Nigeria, women journalists are faced with a compounded form of insecurity: they are forced to navigate gender-based discrimination in hiring, assignment to prestigious beats, and promotion, they are also subject to the same institutional and market pressures affecting their male counterparts in the industry (Tijani-Adenle, 2021). Social and digital media have, in some respect, created new opportunities for women to practice journalism outside formal gatekeeping structures/walls, yet these platforms also expose women journalists to heightened risks of cyberbullying, harassment, further compromising their sense of occupational security and safety.

The intersectionality of identity and job security demands empirical and theoretical attention. The theoretical demand is particularly so in any comprehensive review of journalism and labour issues in Nigeria. Therefore, future research efforts should explicitly examine how ethnicity, gender, regional location, and age modulate the experience of job insecurity for journalists in Nigeria, with a view to provide more equitable and inclusive policy responses. This theme represents a critical blind spot in the current literature brought to the foreground through the systematic review process.

Theme 4: Public Trust, Audience Fragmentation, and the Crisis of Journalism's Social Contract

The fourth emergent theme has to do with the crisis of public trust in Nigerian journalism and the structural consequences that portend for the journalistic profession's sustainability. The literature reviewed consistently draws a relationship between the decline in public trust in the media and the deterioration in occupational and economic conditions of journalists (Onigbinde & Oloyede, 2024; Ozohu-Suleiman & Dahiru, 2017; Umeaku & Babatunde, 2021). The connection operates through a chain of causation: a continuous increase in scepticism of mainstream media among audience, mainly due to misinformation, perceived partisanship, sensationalism, and political capture, they redirect their engagement and attention to alternative information sources, principally citizen journalists and social media platforms.

The result of the foregoing is audience segmentation which erodes the advertising revenue base on which traditional media outlets depend for financial sustainability (Farid, 2023; Nielsen & Selva, 2019). This culminates in revenue decline for media organisations. As such, casualisation of labour, downsizing, and the replacement of experienced journalists with less-qualified and cheap personnel are of the cost-cutting measures media organisations implement which directly affect journalistic employment. This comes with a price, with consequence being a self-reinforcing cycle of eroding trust, reduced revenue, declining quality, and worsening job insecurity, creating what can be described as a trust-sustainability trap for journalism in Nigeria.

Tijani-Adenle (2021) provides a particularly incisive analysis of how information disorder, characterised by the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation in Nigeria's media landscape not only reflects but also exacerbates the crisis of trust. In situations when audiences fail to distinguish credible journalism from outright falsehoods or partisan content, the reputational capital of professional journalists gets devalued, and the perceived necessity of maintaining a well-paid, well-resourced workforce is diminished in

the eyes of not just media proprietors but also advertisers. This theme underscores the democratic and social dimensions of journalist job insecurity, framing the issue not as a mere labour market problem but as a symptom of a deeper crisis in the relationship between democracy, journalism, and the Nigeria's public sphere.

Synthesis and Thematic Integration

The four themes identified through this systematic literature review collectively illuminate the multidimensional nature of job security in Nigeria's journalism landscape. They reveal a phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood through any single theoretical or empirical lens, but rather demands an integrative framework that accounts for institutional social, structural, cultural, and technological dimensions simultaneously.

The four themes extend and deepen the terrain of understanding the issues: technological disruption and AI redefine the nature of journalistic labour; regulatory and legal frameworks constitute an institutional form of vulnerability distinct from market-driven insecurity; gender and identity mediate the differential experiences of precarity; and the crisis of public trust creates a destructive feedback loop between audience fragmentation, financial sustainability, and occupational security.

Together, these themes point toward the need for a holistic institutional and policy response that addresses journalist job security not merely as a problem that borders on employment matters, but as a public interest and democratic concern. The implications are significant for media practitioners, journalism training institutions, government agencies responsible for media policy formulation, media proprietors, trade unions, and regulatory bodies in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

No doubt, the labour market is evolving very rapidly and new challenges are emerging. While the concept of job security is gradually becoming fluid and elusive, socio-economic consideration and other derivable benefits to both employers and employees, the concept of job security continues to generate heated debate on the necessity of job security in our workplace. As a matter of fact, the necessity of guaranteed job security cannot be overemphasised. This is because, it is one thing to secure employment for livelihood but it is another for the source of livelihood which is the gainful employment to be secured within measurable variables (or contending factors).

The primary thrust of job security is to provide stability of inflow of income as a needed fulcrum for employees to be able to plan for the foreseeable future. However, where the security of Job cannot be guaranteed and the employment index is abysmally poor, then there is the tendency of a high incidence of the working age population involuntarily put out of job with little or no fall back mechanism. As a matter of fact, employment index or labour issues vary from country to country. While some countries have proactively demonstrated commitment to friendly and amenable labour relations, some others have prognostically maintained stereotypically antiquated approach to labour relations. The International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC (2024) in its 11th Global Rights Index report shows that there has been a steady decline in access to workers' rights around the world.

Recommendations

Drawing from the above conclusion, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. That the NUJ should rise up to the occasion of her responsibility by kick-starting and enduring that job security, welfare and conditions of service of journalists are entrenched to the extent that the arbitrariness of employers are curtailed through robust labour action.
2. That government should provide enabling environment for businesses especially gig economy (or informal sector) where lots of youths are engaged to thrive and be self-sustainable.
3. Baseline regulatory framework should be put in place for the enforcement of minimum standard requirement for the practice of journalism (whether mainstream or new media) in order to encourage professionalism and the protective backing of the law.
4. That for job security to be guaranteed, practicing journalists should constantly remain up-to-date on current trends in order not to be stagnated in the web of antiquity and outdatedness.
5. In an era where the entrant of new media challenges the gatekeeping regulatory controls of news dissemination, a legal framework should be developed to guard against fake news and unethical practices that undermine the value systems of the practice.

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