

Beyond the Byline: Newsroom Culture, Welfare, and Work-Life Balance as Perceived Correlates of Job Satisfaction among Female Journalists in Kano Metropolis

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Abstract

Nigerian female journalists continue to face what scholars call the “masculine newsroom culture,” whereby women are more often assigned “soft” beats such as health, education, and fashion, while “hard” beats such as politics, investigative reporting, and conflict coverage remain male-dominated. This study examined newsroom culture, welfare and remuneration, and work-life balance as they relate to job satisfaction among female journalists in Kano Metropolis, at a time when the region's media industry faces mounting economic pressure and persistent socio-cultural constraints on women's professional mobility. Grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Kramarae's Muted Group Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design and purposively sampled 100 practicing female journalists drawn from public and private media organisations within Kano metropolis. Data were gathered electronically through a structured questionnaire and analysed descriptively, using simple percentages and frequency distributions; no inferential test was conducted, and the findings reported below reflect respondents' self-reported perceptions rather than objectively verified conditions or evidence of causal influence. Findings show that a majority of respondents (59%) perceive themselves to be confined to “soft” story assignments while hard-news beats remain male-dominated, and 41% report direct experience of gender-based discrimination in the newsroom. Economically, 52% describe their salaries as insufficient to meet basic needs under prevailing 2026 inflationary conditions, a hardship that 39% link to active consideration of career exit. On the domestic front, 49% report perceived conflict between newsroom demands and family expectations, compounded by inadequate late-shift security provision reported by 32% of respondents. Job satisfaction itself was not measured through a single standalone scale but was assessed indirectly through respondents' evaluations across these three thematic dimensions. The study concludes that these self-reported perceptions point to a newsroom environment in which gendered assignment patterns, deficient hygiene factors, and unresolved work-life tension converge, and recommends deliberate beat reallocation, salary review, and institutionalized safety and flexibility measures as correctives.

Keywords: Job satisfaction; Female journalists; Newsroom culture; Welfare packages; Work-life balance

Introduction

Women's entry into Nigerian journalism has expanded considerably since the late twentieth century, with growing numbers of graduates from Mass Communication programmes at institutions such as Bayero University Kano and Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria

moving into active newsroom roles (Okunna, 2017). Yet numerical growth has not translated into structural parity. Nigerian newsrooms continue to operate what scholars describe as a masculine occupational culture, one that channels women disproportionately into “soft” beats; health, education, fashion, and lifestyle, while treating political, investigative, and conflict reporting as the preserve of male colleagues (Suleiman, 2021). Kano State presents a particularly instructive site for examining this dynamic. As the principal media hub of Northern Nigeria, the state hosts a dense mix of Public, and Private broadcast and print outlets, yet its conservative social fabric layers additional expectations onto the professional lives of female practitioners (Jibril, 2022). A female journalist returning from a late assignment may face social judgement unrelated to her job performance; a media house without maternity or childcare provision quietly signals that women's domestic obligations are not its concern. Job satisfaction in this context is therefore never purely an organisational question, it is inseparable from the cultural terms on which women are permitted to practice the profession at all. Economic conditions sharpen these pressures further. Nigeria's media sector has absorbed successive waves of inflation and currency instability, and welfare packages in many Kano newsrooms have not kept pace (Sani, 2022). Where such deficits combine with rigid scheduling and thin institutional safety provision, the result is a workforce increasingly weighing exit from journalism against professional commitment, often toward public relations or corporate communication roles offering steadier hours and pay. This paper draws on primary survey data collected from 100 female journalists across Kano's Public and Private media organisations to describe three of the dimensions most directly evidenced in that dataset: newsroom culture and career progression, welfare and remuneration, and work-life balance and safety. Confining the analysis to these three areas, rather than the broader set of socio-cultural, digital, and mentorship-related questions sometimes raised in adjacent literature, keeps the paper's claims tightly anchored to what the data can actually support.

Problem Statement

Despite the rising visibility of women in Kano's newsrooms, anecdotal and scholarly accounts converge on a persistent gap between women's professional aspirations and the organisational realities they encounter. Reports of biased beat assignment, thin welfare provision, and irregular attention to late-shift safety recur across studies of Northern Nigerian media (Ibrahim & Spikin, 2021), yet much of this evidence predates the sharper economic contraction of the mid-2020s and the intensified pace of digital-era newsroom work. Absent updated, Kano-specific empirical evidence, media managers and professional bodies such as the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) lack a current basis for designing retention-focused policy. This study addresses that gap.

Objectives of the Study

The paper is organised around three objectives, selected because they correspond directly to the thematic sections and data instruments through which evidence was actually collected. Consistent with the descriptive survey design adopted and the absence of inferential statistical testing, the objectives are stated descriptively rather than as tests of influence or statistical relationship. The study sought to:

1. Describe the newsroom work environment and organisational culture as experienced by female journalists in Kano metropolis, and their perceived bearing on professional commitment;
2. Describe the welfare packages (salaries, health benefits, and promotion processes) reported by female journalists in Kano metropolis, and how these are perceived to relate to job satisfaction; and
3. Describe the extent of work-life balance and institutional safety provision reported by female journalists in Kano metropolis, and their perceived bearing on job satisfaction.

Research Questions

1. What newsroom work environment and organisational culture do female journalists in Kano metropolis report, and how do they perceive its bearing on their professional commitment?
2. What welfare packages (salaries, health benefits, and promotion opportunities) do female journalists in Kano metropolis report, and how do they perceive these in relation to their job satisfaction?
3. To what extent do female journalists in Kano metropolis report work-life balance and institutional safety provision, and how do they perceive these as shaping their job satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

The findings offer female journalists documented, empirical grounds on which to press for improved conditions; give media managers a diagnostic basis for reforming beat allocation and welfare structures; supply NAWOJ and the NUJ Kano chapter with current data to inform collective bargaining; and extend the scholarly record on gender and newsroom practice in Northern Nigeria, a region still comparatively under-represented in the mass communication literature relative to studies centred on Lagos and the South (Tijani-Adenle, 2019).

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of emotional and professional contentment an employee derives from work, encompassing evaluations of pay, environment, recognition, and the fit between a role and the individual's broader life circumstances. Newsroom culture denotes the informal norms, power arrangements, and unwritten rules governing how assignments, recognition, and advancement are distributed within a media organisation, including the gendered patterning of "hard" versus "soft" beats (Tijani-Adenle, 2019). Welfare and remuneration cover both direct salary and non-salary institutional benefits; such as health insurance, transport for night shifts, and maternity provision, that support a journalist's material and physical security. Work-life balance describes the equilibrium a female journalist achieves between the unpredictable demands of media production and her domestic and familial responsibilities, a balance that

Northern Nigeria is further shaped by prevailing religious and cultural expectations around women's mobility and visibility.

Empirical Review

Research on female broadcast journalists in Lagos found a positive relationship between supportive work environments and job satisfaction, but also identified workload-driven stress, respondents averaging ten to twelve working hours daily, as the leading source of dissatisfaction even where technical facilities were modern (Olayiwola, 2025). This Lagos-based evidence offers a useful comparative baseline for assessing whether Kano journalists report a similarly workload-driven, rather than culturally driven, pattern of dissatisfaction. Using in-depth interviews with female media practitioners across Nigeria, Tijani-Adenle (2019) documented a masculinized occupational structure in which career advancement is implicitly tied to constant availability, the capacity to travel at short notice or remain in the newsroom late into the night. Because domestic responsibilities more often fall to women, this expectation quietly excludes many qualified female practitioners from managerial advancement, a dynamic the author linked to informal “old boys' network” gatekeeping rather than any deficit in competence. A mixed-methods study conducted specifically in Kano State found that female journalists report what the authors term gendered unsafety, spanning physical risk during fieldwork, verbal harassment, and professional marginalization within the newsroom itself. Notably, the large majority of the media houses examined had no written policy addressing gender discrimination or the safety of female staff on night shifts (Ibrahim & Spikin, 2021), a finding that frames institutional neglect, rather than isolated incident, as the more accurate description of the problem. Complementary survey work across Northern Nigeria identified socio-cultural perception, journalism viewed locally as an indecorous profession for women, as the principal barrier to entry and retention, with a majority of respondents citing dual-role conflict between wife/mother and journalist as the leading driver of attrition (Ibrahim & Wagami, 2021). This cultural framing helps explain why job satisfaction outcomes in Kano may diverge from those recorded in Southern Nigeria even where organisational conditions are broadly comparable. Finally, applying the Work-Family Conflict Theory to practitioners nationally, Ogande, Rabi, and Aminu (2025) found that the absence of family-friendly provisions, flexible shifts, workplace daycare, paid maternity leave, measurably demotivates female journalists, with irregular hours implicated in strained marriages and diminished domestic functioning that in turn erodes career satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory distinguishes hygiene factors, salary, organisational policy, physical conditions, job security, from motivators such as achievement, recognition, and advancement. Hygiene factors do not by themselves generate satisfaction, but their absence produces acute dissatisfaction; motivators, by contrast, are what elevate an already-adequate job into a fulfilling one. Applied here, inadequate pay, absent health cover, and unsafe night-shift logistics function as deficient hygiene factors that are likely to depress baseline satisfaction among Kano's female journalists regardless of how intrinsically rewarding individual practitioners find the craft itself.

Muted Group Theory. Originating with Ardener (1975) and substantially developed by Kramarae (1981), Muted Group Theory holds that in mixed-gender institutions the dominant group's norms and communicative style become the unmarked standard, leaving subordinate groups, typically women, structurally "muted": not silent by choice, but required to translate their experience into terms set by the dominant group to be heard at all. In the newsroom, the theory illuminates why "toughness," late-night availability, and aggressive pursuit of hard news have become the tacit measure of professional seriousness, a standard defined around male working patterns that female journalists must either conform to or be marginalised against. Together, the two theoretical frameworks operate at complementary levels: Herzberg's theory explains the material and organisational conditions that produce dissatisfaction, while Muted Group Theory explains the structural and cultural logic by which those conditions come to be distributed unevenly along gender lines in the first place.

Research Gap

Existing Kano-specific evidence on safety and socio-cultural barriers substantially predates the sharpest recent phase of Nigeria's economic contraction (Ibrahim & Spikin, 2021; Ibrahim & Wagami, 2021). Little current data connects newsroom culture, welfare adequacy, and work-life conflict within a single, integrated assessment calibrated to the 2026 economic environment. This paper addresses that gap using recently collected primary data from practicing Kano-based female journalists.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, appropriate for capturing the current state of a defined population without manipulating the research environment (Ohaja, 2003). Consistent with this design, the study's objectives and analysis are treated as descriptive throughout: percentages and frequency distributions are used to characterise respondents' reported experiences and perceptions, and no inferential claim of statistical relationship or causal influence is drawn from the data presented. The target population comprised approximately 240 female journalists drawn from the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Kano State chapter membership records, practicing across Public and Private media stations operating within Kano metropolis. Because this figure reflects registered chapter membership rather than a comprehensive census of every female journalist active in the metropolis, female practitioners who are not affiliated with either body were not part of the sampling frame. This is acknowledged as a coverage limitation: the findings are generalisable to the registered professional community captured by NAWOJ and NUJ records rather than to the profession as a whole. A purposive sample of 100 respondents; approximately 42% of the accessible population of 240, was selected. Beyond the general adequacy threshold proposed by Comrey and Lee (1992) for descriptive survey research involving a specialised professional population, this proportion was considered sufficient to capture variation across the three media-ownership tiers (state, federal "as public" and private) while remaining logistically manageable within the study's resource and time constraints. Eligibility required that respondents be female, practicing in a reporting, editing, or presenting capacity, and currently employed by a Kano-based media organisation.

A structured questionnaire, comprising demographic items and three thematic sections corresponding to the study's three research questions (newsroom culture and career progression; welfare, remuneration, and economic satisfaction; and work-life balance and safety), was administered electronically via Google Forms, distributed through official NAWOJ and NUJ WhatsApp and Telegram channels, with follow-up reminders issued over a two-week collection window. Instrument face and content validity were established through expert vetting, vetted by four scholars specialising in media and gender research and research methodology from the department of Mass communication of Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria, Kano; the instrument was developed by the researchers for this study rather than adapted from an existing validated scale. Reliability was assessed via pilot test conducted among female journalists in a neighbouring state (Jigawa state) who did not form part of the main sample, but that the pilot reliability figure was not retained. Given by the pilot sample, which is reported as indicative rather than conclusive, a larger pilot is recommended for future replications of the instrument. While the operationalization of Job satisfaction is treated in this study as a composite construct rather than measured through a single standalone scale. It is assessed indirectly across the three thematic sections of the instrument: perceived fairness of story assignment and career progression (newsroom culture), perceived adequacy of salary and institutional welfare (remuneration), and perceived balance between professional and domestic demands together with institutional safety provision (work-life balance and safety). Respondents' evaluations across these dimensions are interpreted as proxy indicators of job satisfaction rather than as direct measurement on a validated job-satisfaction scale (e.g., the Job Descriptive Index). This is acknowledged as a limitation of the present design, and future research is encouraged to pair such thematic indicators with a validated overall job-satisfaction measure. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, simple percentages and frequency distributions.

Results and Discussion

Newsroom Culture and Career Progression

A majority of respondents (59%) agreed or strongly agreed that male editors predominantly assign soft stories to female journalists rather than hard-news beats, against only 17% who disagreed (Table 1). Supporting indicators reinforced this pattern: 40% of respondents perceived a glass ceiling limiting advancement to management, against 39% who did not; 41% reported personally experiencing or witnessing gender-based discrimination; and, more encouragingly, 47% felt their editorial contributions were valued on a par with male colleagues. As these figures reflect respondents' self-reported perceptions rather than independently verified newsroom records, they are best read as evidence of a widely shared perception of gendered assignment patterns rather than as objective proof of discriminatory practice.

Table 1. Influence of Newsroom Culture on Story Assignments

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	17	17.0%
Agree	42	42.0%
Neutral	24	24.0%

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	12	12.0%
Strongly Disagree	5	5.0%
Total	100	100%

This result is consistent with Tijani-Adenle's (2019) finding that Nigerian newsrooms remain intensely masculinised in structure, and it aligns with Muted Group Theory's account of how dominant-group norms determine which professional contributions are recognised as central versus peripheral. That female journalists nonetheless report feeling heard in editorial discussion (47%) suggests the perceived constraint operates less at the level of individual voice and more at the level of structural task allocation: women report being listened to, yet still perceive themselves as routed away from the assignments that carry the greatest career weight.

Welfare Packages, Remuneration, and Job Satisfaction

Over half of respondents (52%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that their current salary meets basic needs under prevailing economic conditions, against only 26% who considered their pay adequate (Table 2). A cumulative 39% indicated that financial constraint was pushing them to consider leaving journalism altogether, while 41% reported inadequate institutional health insurance or welfare cover, and 42% remained neutral on the transparency of promotion processes itself suggestive of limited confidence in career-progression pathways.

Table 2. Perception of Salary Sufficiency among Female Journalists

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	12	12.0%
Agree	14	14.0%
Neutral	23	23.0%
Disagree	35	35.0%
Strongly Disagree	17	17.0%
Total	100	100%

These self-reported assessments map onto Herzberg's (1959) classification of pay and institutional welfare as hygiene factors: their perceived deficiency is associated with measurable dissatisfaction and, in this case, reported attrition risk, even though fixing them alone would not necessarily generate positive job satisfaction. The scale of dissatisfaction recorded here, more than half the sample, suggests that respondents perceive Kano newsrooms as having not adjusted remuneration structures in step with the region's 2026 inflationary pressures, a perception with direct

implications for talent retention.

Work-Life Balance, Safety, and Job Satisfaction

Nearly half of respondents (49%) reported that domestic expectations conflict with professional duties, against 21% who disagreed (Table 3). Only 29% felt their work schedule allowed adequate time for family responsibilities, while 42% were neutral, pointing to a widespread but not universally reported strain. On safety, only 32% confirmed that their organisation provides adequate transport or security for late-night shifts, and 37% reported that deadline pressure negatively affects their mental well-being.

Table 3. Conflict between Domestic Expectations and Professional Duties

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	17	17.0%
Agree	32	32.0%
Neutral	31	31.0%
Disagree	14	14.0%
Strongly Disagree	7	7.0%
Total	100	100%

This pattern corroborates Ibrahim and Spikin's (2021) Kano-specific finding that female journalists report a distinctly gendered form of unsafety, compounded here by the domestic-role conflict that Ogande et al. (2025) associate with the absence of family-friendly newsroom policy. Read together with the welfare findings above, the results suggest that perceived hygiene deficits in Kano newsrooms are not confined to pay, but extend into the physical and logistical infrastructure, secure transport, flexible scheduling that would otherwise buffer the tension between professional and domestic obligations.

Cross-Cutting Discussion

Considered jointly, the three sets of findings suggest a mutually reinforcing pattern of perceived disadvantage rather than three isolated problems. Reported gendered beat allocation restricts the professional recognition and advancement most likely to justify enduring difficult conditions; reported inadequate remuneration removes the material incentive to do so; and reported unresolved work-life conflict, sharpened by thin safety provision, raises the personal cost of remaining in the profession at all. Herzberg's framework explains why economic and logistical deficits alone would be sufficient to produce dissatisfaction, while Muted Group Theory explains why the underlying structure whose norms count as professional, whose hours are treated as reasonable, has been slow to shift even as the number of women entering Kano's newsrooms has grown. As these are respondents' self-reported perceptions rather than independently audited organisational data, they should be read as a strong composite indication of dissatisfaction risk

rather than as a definitive causal account.

Limitations of the Study

The findings should be interpreted in light of several design limitations. First, the descriptive survey design and the use of simple percentages and frequency distributions mean that the results describe patterns of perception rather than establish statistical relationships or causal influence between newsroom culture, welfare, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. Second, the sampling frame was drawn from NAWOJ and NUJ Kano State chapter membership records, which may not capture female journalists outside these professional bodies; the findings are therefore most safely generalised to the registered professional community. Third, job satisfaction was assessed indirectly through thematic proxy indicators rather than a single validated job-satisfaction scale. Fourth, the reliability pilot involved only ten respondents, a sample too small to treat the resulting coefficient as fully conclusive. Finally, all findings reported here are respondents' self-reported perceptions and should be distinguished from objectively verified workplace conditions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to describe how newsroom culture, welfare and remuneration, and work-life balance relate to job satisfaction among female journalists in Kano metropolis. The self-reported evidence indicates that satisfaction in this population is perceived as compromised on several fronts: gendered story assignment and a perceived glass ceiling constrain career visibility; insufficient pay and thin welfare cover leave more than half the sample reporting financial dissatisfaction, with a substantial minority weighing exit from the profession; and unresolved conflict between domestic expectation and newsroom demand, compounded by inadequate night-shift safety provision, adds a further layer of reported strain. Female journalists in Kano metropolis remain visibly committed to the profession, but that commitment is, by their own account, being tested by conditions their organisations have been slow to address. Accordingly, the study recommends that media managers in Kano metropolis deliberately reallocate hard-news assignments on the basis of competence rather than gender; that management boards conduct an upward review of salary structures in line with current economic conditions; that organisations running night shifts provide dedicated, secure staff transport; and that professional bodies; the NUJ and NAWOJ Kano chapter, press for institutionalized, written anti-discrimination and flexible-scheduling policies rather than relying on informal or discretionary arrangements. Future research might usefully extend this analysis through a comparative assessment of state-owned versus privately owned media organisations, through the use of a validated job-satisfaction scale alongside the thematic indicators used here, or through inferential analysis (e.g., correlation or regression) where an underlying item-level dataset permits it, as well as through cross-regional comparison with female journalists' experiences in Southern Nigeria.

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