



DISCUSSIONS
ДИСКУСІЇ ТА ОБГОВОРЕННЯ

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Are investigative centres independent?

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Investigative journalism has brought both advantages and challenges for journalism in Malawi. As a developing country, Malawi has benefited immensely from this type of journalism. Research, however, has shown that centres for journalism have revealed that corruption exists within the media itself. The study has also demonstrated that the centres lack financial independence, although they maintain editorial independence. As a result, these centres can only carry out work that does not require significant funding. The study focused on two investigative journalism centres in Malawi: the Centre for Investigative Journalism and the Platform for Investigative Journalism. Purposive sampling was used to choose the respondent centres. The study used a qualitative approach that included semi-structured interviews. The study was guided by the research question: To what extent are investigative journalism centres independent? The findings revealed that journalists at these investigative centres applied Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory in their work. The study also found that some institutions receive support, while others do not hamper the process of investigative journalism. The study also revealed that governments and security agencies have minimal influence over how information is gathered. It is hoped that this study will be used by media institutions around the world to develop their journalistic practices.

Keywords: investigative journalism, Malawi, Africa, Platform for Investigative Journalism, Centre for Investigative Journalism

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Чи є розслідувальні центри незалежними?

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Розслідувальна журналістика принесла журналістиці в Малаві як переваги, так і виклики. Як країна, що розвивається, Малаві отримала величезну користь від цього виду журналістики. Однак дослідження показали, що центри журналістики виявили наявність корупції в самих ЗМІ. Дослідження також продемонструвало, що центрам бракує фінансової незалежності, хоча вони зберігають редакційну незалежність. Як результат, ці центри можуть виконувати лише ту роботу, яка не потребує значного фінансування. Дослідження зосереджувалося на двох центрах розслідувальної журналістики в Малаві: Центрі розслідувальної журналістики та Платформі розслідувальної журналістики. Для вибору центрів-респондентів використовувалася цілеспрямована вибірка. У дослідженні використовувався якісний підхід, що включав напівструктуровані інтерв'ю. Дослідження керувалося дослідницьким питанням: якою мірою центри розслідувальної журналістики є незалежними? Результати показали, що журналісти цих розслідувальних центрів застосовували у своїй роботі Теорію медіа-багатства та Теорію фреймінгу. Дослідження також показало, що деякі установи отримують підтримку, тоді як інші не перешкоджають процесу розслідувальної журналістики. Дослідження також показало, що уряди та агенти безпеки мають мінімальний вплив на те, як збирається інформація. Сподіваємося, що це дослідження буде використано медіа-установами по всьому світу для розвитку своєї журналістської практики.

Ключові слова: журналістські розслідування, Малаві, Африка, Платформа журналістських розслідувань, Центр журналістських розслідувань

There are three metaphors that describe the media's role. The first metaphor is that of the mirror, where the community sees itself and corrects itself; second, of the watchdog, which starts to bark to make noise when leaders in power become corrupt, and the last one is of the marketplace of ideas, where even the oppressed and the less privileged get heard (Ziba:27; Craft and Davis, 2013). In this context, journalism is regarded as the fourth estate (Powe, 1992) because it serves as an institution that monitors governmental power (Alexander, 2015). This role is entrusted to the media by the people of a nation to ensure balances and checks on power. In that way, it introduces an accountability paradigm.

Democracy came to Malawi in 1994 with the establishment of multiparty democracy. Since then, the country has seen the birth of many radio stations and newspapers, although most of the newspapers have come and gone. While democracy was born in Malawi in 1994 and subsequently nurtured, the nation has had no centre for investigative journalism until the establishment of The Centre for Investigative Journalism of Malawi (CIJ) in 2013, aimed at encouraging ethical, impactful, and unique reporting (CIJM, 2018) and the Platform for Investigative Journalism in 2019 (PIJ, 2019) which has contributed immensely to exposing issues politicians had buried. Even in Southern Africa, the first centre that was dedicated to investigative journalism opened in South Africa in 2010, sixteen years after democracy was established there (Bizcommunity, 2010). This does not mean that there was no journalistic practice during this time, as some newspapers were indeed seeking out information, risking their lives.

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The author invites discussion of the topic and awaits comments from readers. Taking into account the comments, the author can prepare the manuscript of the article for review and publication as a scientific article.

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In a democratic setting where people are free from oppressive governance, policymakers are so relaxed that they steal from the public purse. It is at this juncture that investigative journalism can act as a credible and effective watchdog, thereby boosting the credibility of the press (Colonel, 2022). For this reason, the Malawian population has welcomed the establishment of these two media institutions.

This paper investigates the extent to which these investigative institutions are independent. It also explores the extent to which these institutions, known as investigative centres, have in fact been able to uncover corruption and contribute to saving money for development. These questions are crucial; if not answered, these institutions risk being perceived as "white elephants" within the field of journalism in Malawi today.

Furthermore, this paper aims to advance more literature on investigative journalism that can be used by scholars around the world to promote the growth of investigative practices and cultivate a culture of investigations among journalists.

Literature review

It has been reported that the Global Journalism Conference has 235 member organizations, and ten percent of those are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Among the 22, twelve are in Southern Africa, which is a significant development. However, it is important to note that not all these organizations serve the same functions. Some are geared toward training journalists, while a few do the donkey work of investigative journalism, leading to a decline in the number of foot soldiers in journalism. According to Majoni (2022:1), "a few of these member hubs in Southern Africa—four of them—are, strictly, not investigative centres because they do not in themselves produce content. Rather, they offer support efforts related to investigative journalism. This support includes the provision of small grants, training, and mentorship as well as research. Because of this, the distinction between purely investigative centres and support centres tends to be blurred, considering that the latter, in some cases, contribute directly and indirectly to the production of investigative news content through interventions like mentorship." This blurredness creates a gap on its own as the number of investigative reporters decreases when organizations focus only on training others. However, to overcome this drawback, journalists can collaborate online with other reporters to maintain information continuity. This can lead to the adoption of a global perspective, enriching local, regional, and national stories with information that could have been difficult to get due to a lack of investigative reporters (Berglez, 2013).

Investigative journalism has several dependent variables that must be explored. This study examines these independent variables to gain insight into the problems investigative journalism faces. The first variable is financial issues.

Financial issues

One of the drawbacks of investigative journalism is its high cost, although the future of journalism is largely dependent on it. This is corroborated by the saying of Njoki Chege, who coined the words that "Good journalism does not come cheap" (Kenya, 2022). The most powerful journalism breakthrough is always expensive. A good example is the story in the globe's Pulitzer winning investigation of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in which there was a 40-year cover, published in January 2002. It took eight months of reporting and major litigation before a single word appeared in print... the overall cost of this effort was probably more than \$1 million in staff salaries and tens of thousands of dollars in legal costs (Houston, 2010:52). This point is further supported by Clement et al. (2018:4) and Ettema & Glaser (1998). Those who argue that investigative journalism is costly highlight that it requires more resources than daily journalism. This includes acquiring information, such as documents and databases; analyzing and verifying that information; and discussing findings before producing the initial draft. Often, legal examination and assistance are necessary.



It should also be noted that even in collaboration on investigations to reduce costs (Berglez, 2013), not all issues can be shared with other journalists due to classified information. Also, some journalists may pass information to people who are being investigated. This creates a gap in research.

Although journalism is expensive, it yields results that are beneficial to society, particularly in combating corruption. Hamilton (2016), as cited by Hume and Abbot (2017:4), concluded that for every dollar invested in an investigative story in the USA, society can reap over \$100 in benefits. This potential of investigative journalism has attracted attention from governments around the world. For instance, the United States Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor allocated between \$3 and \$5 million in 2016 to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project and Transparency International for a three-year project aimed at advancing investigative anti-corruption journalism, which included training and support. Another example of increased US donor interest is USAID's recent five-year \$6 million media development project in Moldova, which had a major focus on investigative journalism and anti-corruption activities (Hume and Abbot, 2017:4).

However, one should say that if funds are mismanaged by journalists, it can lead to a lack of confidence, eroding donor trust in media institutions. Thus, in this context, the next vital variable is accountability.

Accountability

According to McQuail (2005: 207), "media accountability is a voluntary or involuntary process by which the media answers directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication". On the other hand, Claude-Jean Bertrand defines media accountability "as any non-State means of making media responsible towards the public" (2000: 108). Both definitions are relevant to this study.

There have been growing calls by media scholars to hold mass media accountable (Plaisance, 2000) due to the important role the media plays in the prevention of corruption. One of the significant concerns within investigative journalism is the lack of accountability. Because of the fundamental role of news media in a democratic society, it is of paramount importance for the media to maintain accountability at all times. In this spirit the 2021 Media and Democracy Monitor (MDM) was conducted. The results were alarming as very few media organisations demonstrated a comprehensive commitment to the fundamental ethical elements of accountability and transparency. Teams of researchers in 18 countries investigated the performance of leading news media regarding media accountability for the 2021 MDM project (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021b, 2021c). The overall picture left a lot to be desired (Barbara et al. 2022; 232). In this context, a report by Global Investigative Journalism Network Executive Director David E. Kaplan highlighted in his 2013 survey for the Center for International Media Assistance, "Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support" (CIMA, 2013), concluded that only 2% of the nearly \$500 million spent annually on international media assistance went to investigative journalism. Kaplan expressed concern that donors might be more interested in exciting new digital and data tools, potentially failing to support systematic investigative reporting, which also requires a human element to uncover secrets using forensic techniques and provide meaning and context (Hume and Abbot, 2017:4).

This evidence underscores the need to implement accountability not only within organisations outside the media but also within the media itself, as it acts as a watchdog for society. As such, it acts as salt and light for the common person. Such gaps, therefore, need to be filled to ensure public trust.

Even so, there have been instances in the media where journalists have been harassed or intimidated by perpetrators who do not want journalists to write about them. The next variable, therefore, to discuss will be the harassment and intimidation of journalists.



Violence and intimidation of journalists

Organisations that monitor journalists, such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), have established that violence against practicing journalists has been on the rise and continues to escalate around the world. These institutions say journalists are being killed, while others are kidnapped, injured, or threatened for the investigative work they do, their investigations (Le Cam et al. 2021)

The United Nations states that every four days a journalist is killed in connection with their work. So far, in 2025, 72 media workers have died, following 125 journalists in 2024. The aim of this violence, according to Ferragamo (2025), is to stifle independent reporting.

Moreover, Amnesty International reports that in East and Southern Africa, governments are using national security laws that include counter-terrorism and cybersecurity legislation to undermine the right to freedom of expression, thereby punishing as well as suppressing media freedom. This context contributed to the arrest of Macmillan Mhone, who was charged with publishing news likely to cause fear and alarm (VOA, 2024). Additionally, Gregory Gondwe went into hiding following threats of arrest due to his coverage of corruption in the Malawi army (CPJ, 2024).

When politicians pursue the violence discourse against journalists by using anti-media rhetoric, the more likely it is to increase journalists' vulnerability to attacks and the more likely it is for non-state actors to attack journalists. The intimidation and violent discourse signal to both non-state and state actors that they can do anything to journalists without being arrested (Mazzaro, 2023)

Not surprisingly, a study by Dorff et al. (2023) found that as violence against journalists increases, the specificity of news stories decreases.

There is antagonism and a thin line between the violence perpetrated against journalists and the efforts to safeguard the freedom of the press.

A significant gap exists in trying to protect investigative journalists to do their jobs properly, and the violence from state and non-state actors. Filling this gap is essential to ensure that investigative journalism can thrive in a nation.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses two theories: Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory.

Media Richness Theory

Media Richness Theory (MRT) is a framework used to evaluate messages based on the way they are conveyed with richness through various channels, which include cues, facial expressions, body language, and vocal tone, among others.

The architects of this theory are Daft and Lengel (1986), who posited that ambiguous messages can be better explained through richer media. Authors benefit from fewer misrepresentations and a more comprehensive understanding of messages.

In the context of this study, investigative journalism adds colour to the language of journalism. Issues are better explained and articulated using investigative techniques. The actions of individuals, as well as deeds, are thoroughly investigated, and evidence is brought forward to clarify the meanings behind those actions. Investigative journalism loudly conveys to the public the meaning of accountability as well as freedom of speech and expression. For instance, investigative journalism can expose and explain how public money has been used, who used it, and in what manner. That way, it gives cues to whether money was appropriately utilized or misappropriated.



Framing Theory

Framing Theory examines how messages are presented, portrayed, or framed (Chong and Druckman, 2007). It aims to influence an individual's behavior, enticing them to take action. This is achieved by, among others, selecting and making prominent certain words or sentences while omitting others, driving people to an intended action. It should be noted that frames are used by journalists to emphasize specific aspects of a story, thus impacting the users of the message. They also do this by providing a specific context. For example, a story on community relations might focus on the duty of an individual rather than the community as a whole. In other contexts, Framing Theory may use slogans or jargon to send the message across.

Framing Theory is being employed in rhetorical political campaigns to sway public opinion in favor of particular parties. For behavioral change, campaigners choose certain language to their advantage by emphasizing it. It is also done by civil liberties organizations worldwide, even by major media organizations, such as the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera, who also emphasize some words, for example, "terrorism", "genocide", "harassment", and "intimidation" when reporting on journalists imprisoned by repressive governments around the world. They do this to send a strong message to such powerful nations as the USA, Great Britain, or France to take action. There is, in fact, a thin line between "journalism of attachment" and Framing Theory, where the former aligns with the community's interests, while the latter just frames a message for impact without any attachment. Nevertheless, both share the common goal of creating an impact for a specific purpose.

In the investigative context, the media use specific words to send a message across to citizens to take action if the media has exposed corruption. In terms of danger, the media use a certain frame to enrage citizens to demand governmental action. For instance, in Malawi, the media used words such as "rigging", "tribalism", and "theft" to incite public protest. It proved effective as people poured into the streets while others, unfortunately, burned government buildings and private property belonging to government officials.

Methodology

Research design

This is a qualitative study, as data were collected through interviews to understand informants' perspectives, unlike the quantitative research, whereby data are collected through statistics (Minichiello, 1990). Additionally, an interpretive study by interviewing individuals attempting to make sense of or interpret the phenomena related to investigative journalism centres was conducted (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

Methodological framework

This research adopts an interpretive approach, focusing on studying individuals' lived experiences and the meanings these individuals attach to such experiences. An interpretivist believes that "to understand this world of meaning, one must interpret, and the inquirer must elucidate and clarify how meanings are embodied" (Schwandt, 1994:118). Interpretivism, therefore, is suitable for this research as I interview the journalists of investigative centres to share their lived experiences and subsequently interpret the results.

Interpretivists study the meanings and motives behind people's actions and perceptions, such as behaviour and interactions with others in society, among others (Whitley, 1984). In this context, the investigative centres can be understood by studying their ideas, thinking, and the meanings that are important to them using thematic analysis (Boas, 1995). Thematic analysis is discussed later.

Interpretivism aligns well with the theoretical framework and the methodology of this study. Media Richness Theory and Framing Theory use interpretations to make decisions, and thematic analysis utilizes interpretations in the analysis process.



In addition to that, Lin (1998) explains that "interpretivist researchers do not only look for the presence or absence of a causal relationship but also the specific ways in which it is manifested and the context in which it occurs. Thus, these researchers can go beyond what has occurred to see how it has occurred" (Keliher, 2005; Lin, 1998). In this study, I propose to explore how investigative journalism is viewed by the public and understand the context of investigative journalism from the perspective of these centres.

Positivists, on the other hand, believe in knowledge gained through measurement (Antwi and Hamza, 2015). This study does not lend itself to empirical analysis based on mathematical methods (Abrutyn, 2023).

Constructivism posits that people construct their own understanding based on their experiences and prior knowledge (Western Governors University, 2020). Constructivists argue that concepts and hypotheses are human constructions rather than innate ideas or products of revelation, perception, or intuition. Since the study does not focus on human constructions but on examining and interpreting issues, constructivism is not applicable here (Collin, 2021)

Sampling

Data were collected from journalism centres and 20 journalists to gather their views regarding investigative centres. Purposive sampling was therefore employed to choose the investigative centres. For the journalists, a simple random sampling method was used to choose the respondents based on specific qualities that could help answer the research questions (Bernard, 2002).

Methodological tools

To obtain information on the lived experiences of respondents in their environments, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews were utilized, as outlined in the methodological framework. In-depth interviews were used to research the topic and gather the required data.

Analysis

After data were collected from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted on their transcripts and recordings. Thematic analysis goes beyond merely counting phrases or words, as is the case with content analysis. This method of data analysis explores explicit and implicit meanings within the data and reveals codes and themes (Brauk and Clarke, 2006).

Presentation of Data and Their Analysis

This chapter presents results that were obtained from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, among other methods. It includes the questions that were posed and the responses the researcher received.

1. Please provide profiles of your organization (from the PIJ website).

Established in 2019, the Platform for Investigative Journalism (PIJ-Malawi) stands at the forefront of investigative journalism in Malawi. Born out of a need to bridge significant gaps in the investigative journalism genre within the local media landscape, PIJ-Malawi has quickly become a pivotal force in shaping transparent and accountable reporting.

As a registered non-governmental media Organisation under the Companies Act, PIJ-Malawi is more than just a media institution. It is a beacon of truth, consistently unearthing stories that demand attention and action. By holding power to account, PIJ-Malawi not only promotes the principles of investigative journalism but also plays a crucial role in lighting the path for democracy in Malawi.

2. To what extent does the investigative centre have both financial independence and editorial independence?



The twenty journalists interviewed agreed that editorial independence may sometimes rely on financial independence, as several investigative tasks cannot be performed without the organisation's financial muscle.

PIJ-Malawi acknowledges that gaining financial independence is a big challenge. However, it is achieved by financial injections from donors who value their work, as well as personal savings. Nonetheless, there is a need to make finances sustainable to ensure the longevity of investigative journalism.

3. How does financial independence affect editorial independence or vice versa?

All journalists agreed that financial independence stabilizes a media organisation, stating that a media outlet without finances cannot operate effectively. They noted that it is not surprising that many newspapers have closed due to a lack of finances.

Gregory Gondwe remarked that a financially stable organisation, one that does not rely on external funding, is more capable of publishing independently and maintaining ethical standards. He pointed out that financial influences can compromise editorial independence, particularly in cases like the journalists who received money from British businessman Zuneth Sattar to sway their editorial decisions.

4. To what extent has the media exposed corruption? Please provide examples.

Journalists said that all multi-party presidents have faced corruption allegations. The media exposed much corruption during the tenure of the first multi-party President, Bakili Muluzi. It is alleged that he embezzled money from Taiwan that was intended for development. The case was later withdrawn by the state during the MCP Government after languishing in the courts for over ten years. On the other hand, the United Democratic Front (UDF) responded to the anti-corruption efforts with an impeachment charge against Dr. Mutharika, accusing him of using US \$300,000 in public money for launching his Democratic Progressive Party, which alienated him from the UDF, the party that elevated him to the presidency. Joyce Banda was implicated in *the Cashgate scandal*, where many civil servants stole money using the Accountant General system. In case of Dr. Mutharika, many believe that individuals around him were responsible for significant thefts, while for Dr. Chakwera, it was again the associates who connived with Indian nationals to steal millions of dollars.

5. To what extent are some institutions helping in the fight against corruption?

Gregory Gondwe mentioned several organisations outside of Malawi that are forthcoming with information, particularly from the Western world, such as the United Kingdom. He noted that he was able to obtain information regarding allegations against prominent figures, including Dr. Chilima, the Vice President of Malawi, and Kapondamgaga, an aide to former President Dr. Lazarus Chakwera. They were both alleged to have accepted money in exchange for awarding government contracts. Dr. Chilima denied the charges, and the allegations against him were ultimately dropped. Similarly, the allegations against Kapondamgaga were also dismissed. Additionally, Gregory Gondwe highlighted a few organisations within Malawi that provide him with information confidentially. Other journalists mentioned private institutions owned by individuals who are willing to share information easily.

6. To what extent are some institutions hampering the fight against corruption? Please give examples.

Most journalists mentioned a lack of information that might shed light on corruption. Three-quarters of the journalists interviewed said some government institutions are slow to provide information, while others said they were even threatened and told such information was classified under national security. This issue is particularly evident regarding expenses of the police and the military, where it is difficult to obtain such information. In other instances, red tape is prevalent, despite existing laws designed to facilitate journalists' access to information. Additionally, some institutions accept journalists' inquiries but fail to respond, even after multiple follow-ups, which



further hampers information collection. Some organisations have become no-go areas for journalists, viewing them as enemies of their institutions.

7. To what extent have you risked your life(ves) to obtain information for the nation and the world?

PIJ-Malawi has reported that its journalists have been arrested several times for publishing information deemed a threat to national security by the police. Continued publishing is enough evidence that journalists are willing to risk their lives. Out of twenty journalists, eight said they had been harassed and intimidated by the police at some point. Almost all journalists agreed that one cannot obtain information if they do not put their life at risk, as journalism is inherently a dangerous profession.

Ten journalists discussed political stories. During investigations, some alleged they were followed by young supporters of those parties, particularly the ruling party. They claimed that even the police did not protect them when they heard that the ruling party fanatics were harassing them. A revealing example was seen during the reign of DPP and MCP, where fanatics attacked demonstrators while the police looked on.

8. What is your advice for the investigative centres in Malawi? Please give reasons.

Fifteen journalists expressed the need for a single centre for investigations, arguing that the existing Centre for Investigative Journalism is basically used for training. In contrast, five journalists advocated for more investigative centres. Those fifteen said there was a need to help the centre have well-equipped, trained journalists who can work across the country or region. The five said that having more centres would enable the country to have more expertise, as diverse journalism centres might bring in better quality.

Some journalists suggested that PIJ-Malawi should enlist volunteers to assist in digging into stories, especially related to corruption. They also said international organisations should make a deliberate effort to establish funds to support investigations, as some stories require extensive investigation, especially stories that affect multiple countries. Additionally, journalists mentioned the depth of stories, saying some stories need a bigger depth for them to have a bigger impact.

9. How do you account for the funds?

Gregory Gondwe stated that the institution accounts for every penny received in funding. All expenditures are reported to donors, which ensures financial support as donors know that their money will be used responsibly. Even the private money, which constitutes a significant portion of the budget, is accounted for. Accountability is both our practice and tradition.

10. Is there other relevant information that needs to be mentioned?

Four journalists expressed the necessity for collaboration with other media outlets from other countries, especially regarding corruption that involves multiple nations. One journalist mentioned a syndicate involved in child trafficking and human trafficking operating between Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. One journalist said he saw how one bus company was colluding with border patrols across these countries. Such syndicates facilitate the entry of children, men, and women into South Africa with no passports. Another journalist mentioned multinational companies with branches in various countries, saying that when they are under investigation, it is essential for reporters from their respective countries to be involved. In that way, he said it would be cheaper to gather information than rely on journalists operating from a different country.

Discussion of the results

The results have shown that all journalists agree that investigative journalism has successfully exposed corruption in high places, including the media itself. Also, all agree that PIJ-Malawi has done significant work in investigating corruption. However, what many journalists do not agree on is how to address gaps within investigative centres.



One perspective suggests that PIJ-Malawi should employ trainee journalists to serve as a pipeline to the center, enabling a more thorough investigation of various cases, as it is the only relevant journalism centre in Malawi. However, others disagree, arguing even now the centre is struggling to operate effectively because of a lack of funding.

Another area worth discussing is the independence of the centres, particularly PIJ-Malawi, which is more proactive compared to CIJ, primarily focused on training. While it has been observed that these centres are professionally independent, their economic independence is a concern. PIJ-Malawi mostly relies on personal savings to fund its investigative stories. According to Gregory Gondwe, some organisations provide only intermittent funding, which hampers investigations.

These sentiments align with observations from the literature review, which indicates that investigative journalism is very expensive. While several media institutions can produce investigative stories, they are not sustainable because of a lack of funding.

PIJ-Malawi operates independently. It is not surprising that it investigates not only media professionals but also government agencies. Reporters from PIJ have faced harassment and intimidation. During the MCP Government era, PIJ uncovered instances of corruption involving certain editors who assured a corrupt individual that his stories would not be published by media outlets.

Another issue under discussion is the harassment of investigative journalists. The literature review revealed a worldwide crackdown on investigative journalists and investigative journalism, especially by powerful organisations and individuals. In Malawi, Gregory Gondwe and his colleague Golden Matonga have been repeatedly imprisoned. In some instances, they were harassed and intimidated by the police. After being arrested, they were transferred between different police stations, all to silence them. However, it is worth noting that each arrest ultimately led to further exposure of corruption. Exposing corrupt officials puts the lives of journalists at risk: corrupt officials who lost their jobs may want to retaliate by killing or poisoning journalists.

Another issue worth mentioning is the bribing of investigative journalists by conglomerate organisations, especially those that bribe senior government officials. Gregory Gondwe mentioned a bribery syndicate involving senior journalists at media outlets who, allegedly, received bribes from British businessman Zuneth Sattar. These journalists have not been held accountable and continue working in their media.

It should also be mentioned that journalism schools need to focus more on investigative journalism. A stronger focus could increase the number of investigative journalists in the country. Presently, very few media employ investigative journalists, partly because this subject is taught for one semester throughout the four-year journalism training programme.

It is important to acknowledge that investigative journalism is a highly risky field that demands both courage and a strong commitment to the profession, without which it is very difficult to uncover stories that are beneficial for both the country and the world. Just as soldiers who are ready to die for a country, those who want to venture into this area of journalism need to sacrifice a lot for the love of their country. Even full-time journalists, who were interviewed, have revealed that some journalists who excel in investigative journalism have put their lives at risk.

Additionally, the results of recent studies have illustrated concepts from Framing Theory and Media Richness Theory. The framing of stories shows that journalists want them to have an impact, particularly through the lens of the corruption paradigm. Evidence of corruption and the collusion involved in financial wrongdoings are all illustrations of the wealth of the powerful. This framing allows the audience to better follow and understand the unfolding events.



Lastly, the results have shown that PIJ-Malawi maintains editorial independence. However, it struggles with financial independence, relying on donor money and occasionally its own savings to fund investigations. Achieving financial independence is critical, as it is the only thriving investigative centre in Malawi.

Recommendations

I recommend that a fund be established for investigative journalism. This fund should be set up by international organisations that protect the journalism profession. That is the best way for investigative centres to be independent and sustainable. The loss of vibrant investigative centres would be a significant setback.

I also recommend that journalism programmes focus more on investigative journalism to train skilled reporters who can join investigative centres. At present, these programmes only include investigative journalism courses for one or two semesters out of eight throughout the entire college studies.

I recommend that there should be collaboration among journalists around the world. An investigative story that spans multiple countries or regions would be more feasible if institutions shared financial resources and coordinated the transfer of information.

I also recommend that watchdog organisations that protect journalists have regional or national offices, funded appropriately. In that way, investigative journalists can be better protected from state and non-state actors.

I recommend that the Media Council of Malawi implement punishments against those media that fail to adhere to professional ethics. Gregory Gondwe highlighted corruption in the media, which has not been thoroughly investigated. In contrast, the legal profession investigates allegations and punishes culprits. As the fourth pillar of democracy, which ensures accountability of the executive, the judiciary, and parliament, the media also needs to have systems of checks and balances in place. How can media be checking on others when they are doing the same?

Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process. The author confirms that no artificial intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript except for translation. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI.

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