



MOONLIGHTING AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY FOR JOURNALISTS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the prevalence and implications of moonlighting among journalists in Southwest Nigeria within the context of the evolving online journalism landscape. As traditional media outlets face financial challenges and digital platforms reshape news consumption patterns, many journalists are turning to secondary employment to supplement their income. Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and in-depth interviews with 150 journalists from Southwest Nigeria, this research explores the motivations, forms, and consequences of moonlighting practices. The findings reveal that over 70% of respondents engage in some form of moonlighting, with content creation, freelance writing, and digital marketing being the most common secondary activities. The study also found that, while moonlighting provides essential financial support, it also raises concerns about journalistic integrity, work-life balance, and the quality of news production. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the changing nature of journalism in the digital age and offers insights for media organizations, policymakers, and journalism educators in Southwest Nigeria and beyond.*

KEYWORDS: Moonlighting, Southwest Nigerian Journalists, Online Journalism, Media Economics, Journalistic Ethics.



INTRODUCTION

The landscape of journalism has undergone significant transformations in recent years, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer behaviours, and economic pressures. The rise of online journalism has disrupted traditional media business models, leading to job insecurity and financial instability for many journalists worldwide (Picard, 2014). In Southwest Nigeria, these global trends are compounded by local economic challenges, political instability, and infrastructural limitations, creating a particularly precarious environment for media professionals (Eke, 2021). These challenges have led to journalism moonlighting.

Moonlighting, the practice of taking on additional employment outside one's primary job, has emerged as a common survival strategy for journalists facing financial hardships (Holton et al., 2016). While this phenomenon is not new to the journalism profession, the digital era has both expanded opportunities for secondary employment and intensified the need for supplementary income. In Southwest Nigeria, where the media industry has long grappled with issues of low wages and irregular payment schedules, moonlighting has become increasingly prevalent among journalists (Olukotun, 2017). Interestingly, the online journalism era has brought about significant changes in the ways news is produced, distributed, and consumed in Southwest Nigeria. Social media platforms, blogs, and digital news outlets have created new avenues for content creation and dissemination, blurring the lines between professional journalism and citizen reporting (Adelakun, 2018). This shift has also led to increased competition for advertising revenue and audience attention, putting further pressure on traditional media organizations and, by extension, their employees (Mabweazara, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the phenomenon of moonlighting among Southwest Nigerian journalists in the online journalism era, focusing on its prevalence, motivations, forms, and implications. By exploring this topic, we seek to contribute to the growing body of literature on the changing nature of journalism in the digital age, with a specific focus on the Southwest Nigerian context. Additionally, this research aims to provide insights that can inform media organizations, policymakers, and journalism educators in addressing the challenges faced by journalists in the current media ecosystem.

Moonlighting in Journalism: Global Perspectives

Moonlighting, defined as holding a second job in addition to one's primary employment, has been a longstanding practice in journalism (Frost, 2019). Early studies on the topic focused primarily on ethical concerns and potential conflicts of interest (Wasserman, 2010). However, recent research has shifted towards examining moonlighting as a response to economic pressures and changing industry dynamics. Also, Holton et al. (2016) conducted a comprehensive study on moonlighting among U.S. journalists, finding that financial necessity was the primary driver for engaging in secondary employment. Similarly, O'Donnell et al. (2016) examined the prevalence of "entrepreneurial journalism" in Australia, where journalists increasingly pursue side projects and business ventures to supplement their income. Their research revealed a growing trend of journalists developing diverse skill sets and leveraging digital platforms to create additional revenue streams.



However, in the African context, Mabweazara (2018) explored the practice of moonlighting among Zimbabwean journalists. His study emphasized the role of digital technologies in facilitating moonlighting opportunities, particularly through online freelancing platforms and social media consultancy. The global perspective on moonlighting in journalism reveals a complex interplay of economic pressures, technological advancements, and changing professional norms. While the specific manifestations of moonlighting may vary across different contexts, the underlying drivers – primarily financial necessity and adaptation to a changing media landscape – appear to be consistent across both developed and developing media markets.

The Nigerian Media Landscape

Understanding the broader media landscape in Nigeria is crucial for contextualizing moonlighting practices among journalists. Olukotun (2017) provided a comprehensive overview of the Nigerian media ecosystem, highlighting issues such as political interference, regulatory challenges, and the impact of digital technologies on traditional media outlets. It is noteworthy to understand that the Nigerian media landscape is characterized by a diverse array of outlets, including print, broadcast, and digital platforms (Oso et al., 2014). Oso et al. (2014) further provide a historical analysis of the evolution of Nigerian media, tracing its development from the colonial era to the present day. Their work highlights the complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors that have shaped the country's media system. The liberalization of the media sector in the 1990s led to a proliferation of private media outlets, particularly in broadcasting. Interestingly, digital technologies have significantly transformed the Nigerian media landscape in recent years. Adesoji (2016) explores the impact of social media on political communication and civic engagement in Nigeria, highlighting how digital platforms have created new opportunities for citizen participation in public discourse.

Eke (2021) examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigerian journalism, revealing how economic downturns exacerbated existing financial pressures on media organizations and individual journalists. This study underscored the increasing reliance on digital platforms for news distribution and the growing need for journalists to diversify their skill sets and income sources. Mhiripiri and Ureke (2018) examine the role of community radio in promoting local development and civic engagement, particularly in rural areas. This trend has implications for understanding the diverse career paths and potential moonlighting opportunities available to journalists in Nigeria.

Journalism in Southwest Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities

Focusing specifically on Southwest Nigeria, several studies have explored the unique challenges and opportunities facing journalists in this region. Oyedele et al. (2020) examined the adoption of digital technologies among journalists in Southwest Nigeria, highlighting both the potential for innovation and the barriers to effective implementation. The Southwest region, comprising states such as Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti, is often considered the media hub of Nigeria. According to Bello et al. (2023), Lagos State, in particular, hosts the headquarters of many major national media outlets. Olukotun (2014) provides a historical analysis of the media in Southwest Nigeria, tracing its development from the colonial era to the present day. This work highlights the region's significance in shaping national media narratives and practices.



According to Ajibade and Alabi (2017), the working conditions of journalists in Southwest Nigeria is of several dimensions, such as inadequate remuneration, job insecurity, and the lack of institutional support for professional development. Their study revealed that many journalists in the region struggle with low wages, irregular payment schedules, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These factors contribute significantly to the prevalence of moonlighting practices among journalists in the region. The impact of digital technologies on journalistic practices in Southwest Nigeria has been substantial. Fadoju (2019) explored the impact of social media on journalistic practices in Southwest Nigeria, noting how platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become essential tools for news gathering and distribution while also creating new challenges for verification and credibility.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

To analyze the phenomenon of moonlighting among Nigerian journalists in the online era, this study draws upon three interconnected theoretical perspectives: media economics, professional identity theory, and ethical decision-making in journalism.

Media Economics

The theory of media economics provides a framework for understanding the financial pressures and market dynamics that shape journalistic practices. Picard's (2011) work on the economics of digital journalism is particularly relevant, as it examines how technological changes have disrupted traditional revenue models and forced media organizations to adapt. This theoretical lens helps explain the economic motivations behind moonlighting and the broader restructuring of the journalism industry in response to digital disruption.

Professional Identity Theory

Professional identity theory, as articulated and applied to journalism by Deuze (2005), offers insights into how journalists construct and maintain their professional self-concept in the face of changing industry norms. This theoretical perspective is crucial for understanding how moonlighting practices may influence journalists' perceptions of their role and status within the profession. It also helps explain potential tensions between traditional journalistic values and the need to diversify income sources.

Ethical Decision-Making in Journalism

The framework of ethical decision-making in journalism, as outlined by Ward (2018), provides a foundation for analyzing the moral considerations involved in moonlighting. This theoretical approach emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest in maintaining journalistic integrity. By applying this framework, we can examine how Nigerian journalists navigate ethical dilemmas when engaging in secondary employment and how these decisions impact their professional practice.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, we aim to develop a comprehensive understanding of moonlighting as a survival strategy for Nigerian journalists in the online journalism era. This framework allows us to consider the economic, professional, and ethical



dimensions of the phenomenon, providing a nuanced analysis of its implications for individual journalists and the broader media landscape in Nigeria.

This research provides important context for understanding the diverse experiences and motivations of journalists engaging in moonlighting activities.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to assess moonlighting as a survival strategy for journalists in Southwest Nigeria. While the objectives are to:

1. assess the prevalence of moonlighting among Southwest Nigerian journalists in the online journalism era.
2. bring to the fore the primary motivations for Southwest Nigerian journalists to engage in moonlighting activities.
3. explore forms of moonlighting that are most common among Southwest Nigerian journalists, and how do these relate to their primary journalistic work.
4. examine the impact of moonlighting on the professional practices, ethical considerations, and work-life balance of Southwest Nigerian journalists.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine moonlighting practices among journalists in Southwest Nigeria in the online journalism era. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a comprehensive exploration of both the prevalence of moonlighting and the nuanced experiences of individual journalists (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Interestingly, the research design consists of two main components the first which is quantitative survey of a structured online questionnaire was distributed to a sample of journalists in Southwest Nigeria to gather data on the prevalence of moonlighting, types of secondary employment, motivations, and perceived impacts on professional practice. The second component is the qualitative in-depth interviews which involved semi-structured interviews that were conducted with a subset of survey respondents to explore their personal experiences, decision-making processes, and perspectives on moonlighting in greater depth.

Conversely, the study sampled and targeted professional journalists working in various media sectors across the six states of Southwest Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti). A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from different media types, career stages, and geographic locations within the region. The sample size for the quantitative survey was determined using Cochran's formula for population surveys (Cochran, 1977), resulting in a target of 150 participants to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select 20 journalists for in-depth interviews, ensuring diversity in terms of moonlighting experiences, job roles, and career stages.



DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results section presents key findings from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, organized thematically to address the research questions. All data analysis and interpretation are presented in table format.

Table 1: Prevalence of Moonlighting Among Southwest Nigerian Journalists

Moonlighting Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Engage in moonlighting	108	72%
Do not moonlight	42	28%
Total	150	100%

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

The data in Table 1 shows that a significant majority (72%) of journalists in Southwest Nigeria engage in moonlighting activities. This high prevalence underscores the widespread nature of the practice and suggests that moonlighting has become a common strategy for financial survival among journalists in the region.

Table 2: Moonlighting Prevalence by Demographic and Professional Categories

Category	Subcategory	Moonlighting Rate	Chi-square (χ^2)	p-value
Age	Under 35	78.9%	8.76	p < .01
	35 and over	65.1%		
Gender	Male	73.5%	0.42	p = .52
	Female	70.5%		
Media Type	Online	85.7%	12.31	p < .01
	Print	68.4%		
	Broadcast	61.9%		
Job Role	Reporters	77.8%	7.95	p < .05
	Editorial Staff	71.4%		
	Senior Editors/Managers	56.5%		

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

The Table 2 above reveals that moonlighting is more prevalent among younger journalists (under 35) and those working in online media. This suggests that digital platforms may be offering more opportunities for secondary employment, and that younger professionals may be more inclined or pressured to seek additional income sources.

**Table 3: Most Common Forms of Moonlighting Activities**

Activity	Percentage of Moonlighting Journalists
Content creation for digital platforms	48.1%
Freelance writing for other publications	42.6%
Social media management and digital marketing	37.0%
Public relations and communication consulting	25.9%
Teaching or training	20.4%
Running personal blogs or news websites	18.5%
Event planning and management	14.8%

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

Table 3 shows content creation for digital platforms and freelance writing emerge as the most popular moonlighting activities with 48.1%. This trend aligns with the digital transformation of the media landscape and indicates that journalists are leveraging their skills in the online space for additional income.

Table 4: Motivations for Moonlighting (Likert scale results)

Motivation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Financial necessity	4.72	0.61
Desire for additional income	4.58	0.73
Professional development and skill acquisition	4.05	0.98
Job insecurity in primary employment	3.89	1.07
Pursuit of personal interests or passions	3.67	1.15

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

According to the Table 4, financial necessity and the desire for additional income are the strongest motivators for moonlighting, with mean scores above 4.5 and minimum standard deviations. This emphasizes the economic pressures facing journalists in Southwest Nigeria and suggests that current salaries may be insufficient to meet their needs.

Table 5: Perceived Impacts of Moonlighting on Professional Practice

Impact	Percentage Agree/Strongly Agree
Improved financial stability	82.4%
Enhanced skill set and professional versatility	69.4%
Increased professional network	63.0%
Reduced time for primary journalistic work	57.4%
Increased stress and burnout	51.9%
Potential conflicts of interest	44.4%
Decreased job satisfaction in primary role	38.9%

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

Table 5 revealed that, while a majority of respondents report improved financial stability due to moonlighting, many also acknowledge negative impacts such as reduced time for primary work and increased stress. This highlights the complex trade-offs journalists face when engaging in secondary employment.

**Table 6: Ethical Considerations Related to Moonlighting**

Consideration	Percentage
Faced ethical dilemmas related to secondary employment	72.2%
Agreed that moonlighting could potentially compromise objectivity	55.6%
Declined moonlighting opportunities due to potential conflicts	48.1%
Believed clear guidelines on moonlighting practices were needed	77.8%

Source: Authors' compilation, 2024

According to the Table 6, a high percentage (72.2) of journalists report facing ethical dilemmas related to moonlighting, and many (55.6) believe it could potentially compromise objectivity. This suggests a need for clearer ethical guidelines and support systems to help journalists navigate the complexities of multiple professional roles.

Qualitative Insights

The thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews revealed several key themes:

- **Economic Necessity:** Many participants described moonlighting as a crucial survival strategy.
- **Professional Development:** Some journalists viewed moonlighting as an opportunity for skill enhancement and career growth.
- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Many respondents reported grappling with ethical concerns related to their moonlighting activities.
- **Work-Life Balance Challenges:** Several participants highlighted the strain of juggling multiple roles.
- **Changing Nature of Journalism:** Many interviewees reflected on how moonlighting reflects broader changes in the profession.

These qualitative insights provide context and depth to the quantitative findings, illustrating the complex realities faced by journalists engaging in moonlighting in Southwest Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the phenomenon of moonlighting among journalists in Southwest Nigeria in the online journalism era. The findings reveal a complex landscape where economic pressures, technological changes, and professional ethics intersect, shaping the practices and experiences of journalists in the region. The high prevalence of moonlighting (72%) among Southwest Nigerian journalists underscores the significant financial challenges facing media professionals in the region. Driven primarily by economic necessity, journalists are engaging in a diverse range of secondary employment activities, with a notable emphasis on digital and online-centric work. This trend reflects both the economic realities of the media industry in Southwest Nigeria and the opportunities presented by the digital transformation of journalism. While moonlighting provides essential financial support and opportunities for skill development, it also raises critical concerns about



journalistic integrity, work-life balance, and the overall quality of news production. The ethical dilemmas reported by a majority of moonlighting journalists highlight the need for clearer guidelines and institutional support in navigating the complexities of multiple professional roles.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the phenomenon of moonlighting among journalists in Southwest Nigeria within the context of the online journalism era. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on the changing nature of journalism in the digital age, offering insights specific to the Southwest Nigerian context. By illuminating the prevalence, motivations, and implications of moonlighting among journalists in the region, this research provides a foundation for informed decision-making in media policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for various stakeholders in the Southwest Nigerian media landscape:

For Media Organizations

- Develop clear policies on moonlighting that balance the economic needs of journalists with ethical considerations and potential conflicts of interest.
- Invest in professional development programs that help journalists acquire diverse skills relevant to the digital media environment, potentially reducing the need for external moonlighting.

For Journalism Unions/Associations

- Develop industry-wide guidelines on ethical moonlighting practices specific to the Southwest Nigerian context.
- Provide resources and support for journalists navigating the challenges of multiple professional roles, including legal advice and ethical counseling.
- Advocate for policies and initiatives that support the economic sustainability of journalism in Southwest Nigeria.
- Organize workshops and training sessions on financial management and entrepreneurship for journalists.



For Journalism Educators

- Integrate entrepreneurship and digital skills training into journalism curricula to prepare students for the realities of the current media landscape in Southwest Nigeria.
- Emphasize ethical decision-making in complex professional contexts as a core component of journalism education.
- Develop courses or modules specifically addressing the challenges and opportunities of moonlighting in journalism.

For Policymakers

- Consider tax incentives or subsidies for news organizations in Southwest Nigeria to help alleviate financial pressures on journalists.
- Develop policies that support media pluralism and diversity, potentially including funding for public interest journalism.
- Strengthen legal protections for journalists to reduce job insecurity and the need for alternative income sources.
- Implement measures to improve the overall economic environment, which would indirectly benefit the media industry.

For Journalists

- Prioritize transparency about secondary employment activities to maintain credibility and public trust.
- Continuously assess potential conflicts of interest and ethical implications of moonlighting activities.
- Invest in ongoing skill development to remain competitive in the evolving media landscape.
- Seek financial planning advice to better manage income from multiple sources.

For Future Research

- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of moonlighting on journalistic careers and the quality of journalism in Southwest Nigeria.
- Explore the perspectives of news consumers on the credibility of journalists known to engage in moonlighting.
- Investigate the economic impact of moonlighting on the broader media ecosystem in Southwest Nigeria.
- Examine the effectiveness of different organizational policies on moonlighting in maintaining journalistic integrity and quality.



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