

Professionalization of the Ivorian Press in the Face of the Socio-Educational and Demographic Profile of the Journalist: The Case of the Daily Newspapers Notre Voie, Soir Info, Le Patriote and Fraternité Matin



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ABSTRACT: Generally perceived as the main culprit for the flaws of a declining media system, the Ivorian journalist has rarely been the subject of a socio-educational and demographic study that allows a better understanding of his behavior in the global media ecosystem, faced with the requirements of professionalization. This article attempts, on the basis of a systemic approach, to fill this gap by showing how the socio-educational and demographic profile of the journalist has an impact on the professionalization of the sector, through the case study of four Ivorian dailies: Fraternité Matin, Le Patriote, Notre Voie and Soir Info.

KEYWORDS: Ivorian journalists, socio-educational and demographic profile, media system, professionalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Journalism operates as a system within which act and interact several actors and factors whose role is more or less important. From the source to the customers-consumers (readers, listeners, television viewers, Internet users, etc.) of the information, passing through other actors (journalist, printer, advertiser, etc.), the involvement of everyone seems decisive in the functioning and viability of the global media ecosystem.

Journalism can be defined as a system of relations in the sense that a set of rules preside over the relationship that the journalist maintains with his environment and make probable, therefore foreseeable, a limited number of behaviors on the part of journalists and other actors engaged in relations with him (...). The system of relations characterizes not only the relations between the actors (journalists, sources, readers), but also the relations between the texts and the discourses. (Charon & De Bonville : 2002).

Thus, the difficulties of some or the shortcomings of others can be sources of dysfunction and negatively affect the productivity of the entire media system. The fact remains, however, that of all these links, the journalist seems to be the one whose role remains preponderant. Considered one of the key players in the media chain, he is at the heart of the system. Therefore, the quality of the information produced will largely depend on his abilities and his state of mind, in accordance with the rules of journalistic writing, in respect of the principles of ethics and professional conduct which govern the profession of journalism. In other words, if the journalist does not have the basic training and skills required, does not exercise his profession in adequate and satisfactory working conditions, is not fulfilled and has no career prospects, it will be less inclined to unleash its full potential to provide excellent performance and the information it produces would be of poor quality.

It is this postulate that guides this article in which we study the socio-educational and demographic profile of Ivorian journalists wrongly or rightly taxed for lack of professionalism¹, in a media system considered moribund where the press is in constant

¹ Several reports from the Observatory for Press Freedom, Ethics and Deontology (OLPED), the National Press Authority (ANP) and the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA) highlight the recurrent violations of the rules of ethics and deontology by journalists. By way of example, in August 2021 and July 2022, the new digital terrestrial television channels NCI and Life TV were arrested by the HACA for broadcasting indecent content, respectively for apology for rape and "attack on the fundamental values of the Republic and the family, on good morals". Consequently, the HACA invited these media to be more professional and responsible in the programming of their broadcasts. At the level of the press, the National Press Authority issued

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decline with a strong decrease regular sales figures for at least ten years. The press will have lost, between 2011 and 2017, 52% of its value and only 22% between 2016 and 2017. The turnover of the press of more than 6 billion FCFA in 2011 rose to 3 billion FCFA in 2017 (Dolumbia, 2018).

Similarly, many studies show the lack of independence of Ivorian journalists accused of fueling conflicts or bias.

3/4 of the journalists, both vassalized and "mercenary", appropriate the speeches of the "politicians-employers" that they reconstruct in a precise caliber to reach the indicated target. The public space is thus transformed into an immense territory of skilfully distilled information which functions like a veritable advertising agency, with its rituals and its stereotyped slogans, its grounds for maneuvers and confrontations, its artificial theatricality (...). It is a paradox to suggest that the plurality of the press fuels the current Ivorian crises. It adds to individual anxiety (in the face of changes in society) a profound collective uncertainty (Blé, 2006).

To portray the lack of professionalism and independence of some Ivorian journalists, Thérout-Bénoni and Bahi (2008) find that more than a reflection of the social, actors and media institutions follow a logic that is part of specific processes, dynamics and issues. Thus the actors of the political field and the journalistic field consider journalistic communication as a strategy of domination. They therefore build the action within a logic of confrontation in which the media are considered as weapons and information as ammunition distributed by their networks. Why then should we expect that the media which, since at least the return to multiparty politics, have played the game of power by enrolling in logics of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1997), (...) will suddenly change these practices to become "peace media"?, in other words to exercise their profession with professionalism.

We start from the hypothesis that the numerous shortcomings noted against certain Ivorian journalists, accused of not practicing their profession according to the rules of the art, are partly due to the fact that they are not well trained, do not receive a substantial salary and are not provided with good working conditions by their employers. To verify this hypothesis, we study the case of journalists from the dailies *Notre Voie*, *Soir Info*, *Le Patriote* and *Fraternité Matin*, respectively news outlets close to the Ivorian opposition, independent and close to the ruling party. On the basis of this postulate, we seek to know the socio-educational and demographic profile of the journalists of these different news organizations by asking ourselves the following specific questions :

- What types of training have the journalists of these daily newspapers benefited from ?
- What are their living and working conditions ?
- What is the age, gender and place of residence of each of these media women and men ?
- Do they all benefit from a substantial and regular salary accompanied by an incentive career profile ?

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The two main theories that support our argumentative approach are based on the theory of systems and that of the sociology of the journalist defended by Gilles Bastin (2011) and Roger Dickinson (2007). Bastin and Dickinson place the journalist at the center of the information production ecosystem and find that "the work of sociologists attached to grasping particular contexts of journalistic work more than professional or organizational rules applicable everywhere shows all the interest there is in considering the dimension of interaction of the activity of journalists and asking the question of the role of individuals, through their daily activity, in redefining the profession (rather than that of the profession or the employing organizations in defining the activity of individuals" (Bastin, conference, 2011).

For Dickinson (2007: 190) "errors and shortcomings are a reminder that journalists are social actors whose behavior does not always conform to professional codes, normative frameworks, organizational constraints and pressures on sources that sociologists media have identified as powerfully determining. They also draw our attention to one of the fundamental problems of sociology: how social control is defined and maintained in specific social contexts. In short, the status and the socio-educational and demographic characteristics of the journalist (individual) can have an impact on his behavior (production) in the media ecosystem (group).

About system, it should be noted that several authors give more or less complementary definitions. Bertalanffy (1991) defines it "as a complex of interacting elements". For Rosnay (1975), "a system is a set of elements in dynamic interaction, organized

29 warnings and six arrests in respect of editorial staff, for the month of October 2021 alone. Three journalists were also the subject of warnings and 11 others of interpellation. All these facts highlight the lack of professionalism of some Ivorian journalists.

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according to a goal". Morin (1977) considers the system as "an organized global unit of interrelations between elements, actions or individuals". Walliser (1977) defines the system as "a relatively individualizable entity, which detaches itself from its context or its environment while carrying out exchanges with its environment". Le Gallou (1993) considers the system as "a set, forming a coherent and autonomous unit, of real or conceptual objects (material elements, individuals, actions, etc.) organized according to a goal (or a set of goals, objectives, purposes, projects, etc.) by means of a set of relationships (mutual interrelationships, dynamic interactions, etc.), all immersed in an environment".

A constant emerges from these different definitions of the system : the recurrence of the notion of relationship/interdependence between the unit and the whole ; the interdependence of the parts in relation to the whole (Grawitz, 2001).

The journalist, a link in the media system, has very often been perceived as a producer of information and less apprehended as an economic agent, an employee who, beyond satisfying the expectations of the public-consumer of information, remains a social being who must satisfy their needs, from the most basic (health care, food, housing, clothing) to the most elaborate (leisure, travel, marriage, etc.). Thus, the journalist, a key player in the media system and the information production chain, cannot be taken as a negligible portion if we want to understand in depth the issues and problems related to the development of the media. Their living and working conditions as well as their training, in short their origin and socio-educational and demographic profile are factors to be taken into account to understand the content of their production and the dynamics of their profession.

From a methodological point of view, we favored the qualitative approach over the quantitative; the aim being to describe the subject rather than to measure it: it was a question of collecting the impressions, opinions and points of view of thirty (30) journalists from the editorial staff of Notre Voie, Soir Info, Fraternité Matin and Le Patriote on their socio-educational and demographic situations. To achieve this, we mobilized the techniques of documentary research and semi-structured interview. Among the various possible forms of collecting oral information, the sociologist attaches particular importance to the semi-structured interview, also called centered interview (Combessie, 2007) or "qualitative, in-depth interview". It is based on fairly generally formulated and open questions. It offers the possibility of asking new questions if the interviewee raises an aspect that is still unknown. Unlike the questionnaire, the research interview establishes a special relationship between the researcher and the interviewee. It is used to verify hypotheses and to bring out new ones.

3. RESULTS

3.1. A lack of continuous training

If research reveals that all individuals have a level of higher education (BAC + 2 minimum), a prerequisite for better socio-professional integration, they do not all benefit from the continuing education necessary to update their knowledge and to their familiarization with the contemporary challenges of their profession.

Table 1 : The number of journalists receiving continuous training (Soir Info, Fraternité Matin, Le Patriote, Notre Voie)

Media	Continuous training		Total
	Yes	No	
Soir Info	1	4	5
Fraternité Matin	3	7	10
Le Patriote	4	2	6
Notre Voie	3	6	9
Effective	11	19	30
Rate %	37	63	100

Source : Our study

As the table below shows, out of 30 journalists surveyed, 63% did not benefit from continuous training. A fairly high rate likely to have a negative impact on the qualifications and ability of the journalists interviewed to practice their profession in a professional manner as well as on the overall performance of their various companies. Incidentally, this is what Ouattara (2009) seems to assert in a study devoted to continuing education in Côte d'Ivoire.

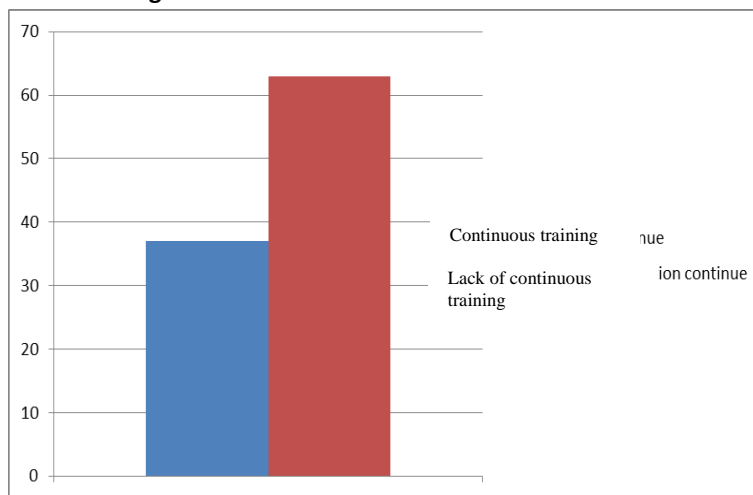
Companies in the chemical industry, agri-food, trade and the transport and communications sector allocate larger budgets to skills development. This translates into a preponderance of the profitability of continuing education in these

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sectors. The estimation of panel data by the fixed effects and by the dynamic panel method of Arellano and Bond, highlights the positive effect of continuous training on the added value with a greater effect of the investments of the previous year. . We therefore support the need to take into account the effects on the medium term in the evaluation of the return on training and to promote any policy which aims to encourage companies to invest in the reinforcement of human capacities.

With the histogram below, we become more aware of the extent of the lack of continuous training in the newsrooms concerned and its potential impact on the skills of journalists.

Figure 1: Histogram on continuous training within the editorial staff

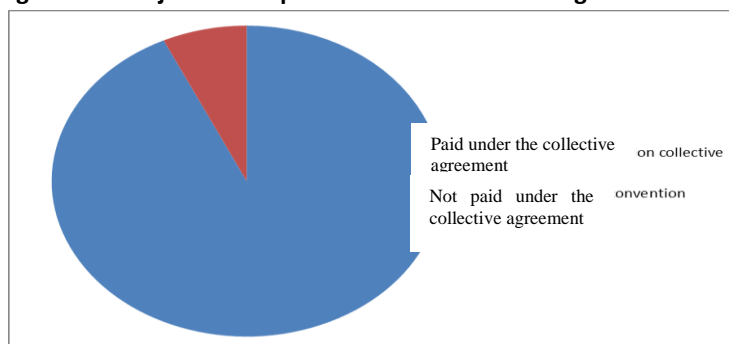


Source : Our study

3.2. Insufficient wages and unsatisfactory working conditions

Moreover, while the majority (93%) of journalists say they are paid under the inter-professional collective agreement, and find their salaries regular (87%), more than half (57%) nevertheless consider them insufficient to live on decently.

Figure 2 : Pie chart representing the rate of journalists paid under the collective agreement



Source : Our study

Table 2 : Decent life with current salary

Media	Decent life with current salary		Total
	Yes	No	
Soir Info	3	2	5
Fraternité Matin	5	5	10
Le Patriote	4	2	6
Notre Voie	1	8	9
Effective	13	17	30
Rate %	43	57	100

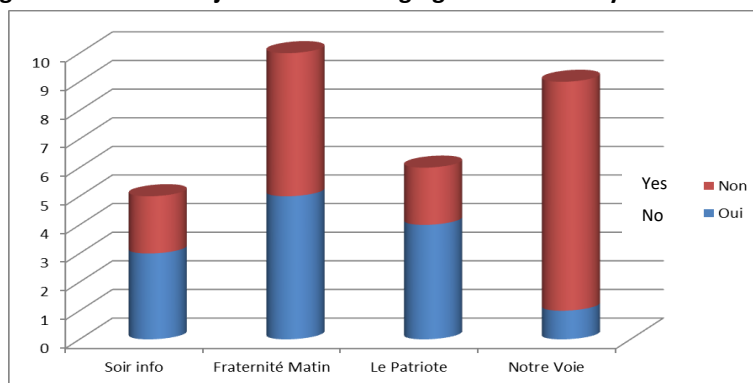
Source : Our study

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At this level, it is clear that there are disparities from one drafting to another. At *Soir Info*, 2 out of 3 journalists say they do not live decently on their salary, while they are 5 against 5 at *Fraternité Matin*. *Le Patriote* has a rate of 50 out of 50 of journalists who claim to live decently on their paychecks. The most alarming picture is that presented by *Notre Voie* with 8 out of 9 journalists (88.88%) who claimed not to live decently on their salaries. This malaise has often shifted to the field of claims marked by work stoppages observed by workers in this sector or suspensions of the publication of titles, as illustrated by the following article from *Alerte Info*.

Agents of "Notre Voie", a daily close to Gbagbo's party, on strike to demand "five months of salary arrears" The staff of the Ivorian daily "Notre Voie", a newspaper close to the party of ex-president Laurent Gbagbo, began a three-day strike on Wednesday to demand "five months of salary arrears", according to employees. "We are claiming five months of salary arrears" and even "more" for certain agents whose "holidays have not been paid", an employee told *Alerte Info*. The monthly payroll being of the order of 15 million FCFA, the management should free up more than 75 million FCFA to satisfy the staff estimated at around sixty people, including around forty journalists, according to an internal source. "If the payments are not made, the newspaper will not appear until Friday", launched an employee reached by telephone. When questioned, the director of publication, Mr. Bamba said that he "knows nothing about it". Several Ivorian newspapers have experienced financial difficulties since the advent of the online press (*Alerte Info*, 2016).

Figure 3 : Comparative histogram of the rate of journalists managing to live decently or not with their salary level



Source : Our study

The relatively modest standard of living of journalists is corroborated, among other things, by the means of transport they use to get to work. Nineteen (63%) out of 30 travel to their various newsrooms using public transport compared to 11 (27%) who have a personal vehicle. If we start from the hypothesis that a high level of salary contributes to the improvement of the living conditions of the worker by providing him with amenities (vehicle, decent housing, leisure, etc.), we can affirm that most of the journalists interviewed do not have a comfortable standard of living.

Table 3: Means of transport used by journalists

Media	Means of transport		Total
	Public transportation	Personal vehicle	
Soir Info	2	3	5
Fraternité Matin	5	5	10
Le Patriote	4	2	6
Notre Voie	8	1	9
Effective	19	11	30
Rate %	63	37	100

Source : Our study

While 100% of journalists (see Table 4) claim to have been declared to the Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale (CNPS), the employers of almost half (43%) of them do not regularly pay their contributions to the service provider. social ; which jeopardizes their support in case of need.

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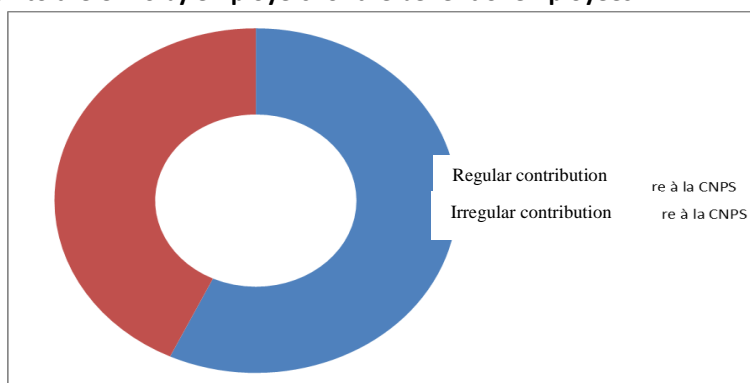
Table 4 : Journalists declared or not to the CNPS and those whose employer regularly or does not contribute to the CNPS

Media	Declared to the CNPS		Total	Employer contribution		Total
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Soir Info	5	0	5	5	0	5
Fraternité Matin	10	0	10	6	4	10
Le Patriote	6	0	6	4	2	6
Notre Voie	9	0	9	2	7	9
Effective	30	0	30	17	13	30
Rate %	100	0	100	57	43	100

Source : Our study

The graph below shows the extent of default by the employers of many journalists at the CNPS.

Figure 4 : Rate of contribution to the CNPS by employers for the benefit of employees



Source : Our study

Nevertheless, the majority (93%) of the media professionals interviewed claim to benefit from health insurance or a social program within their companies.

Table 5 : Journalists with or without health insurance or a social programme within the four media

Media	Health insurance or social program within the company		Total
	Yes	No	
Soir Info	5	0	5
Fraternité Matin	10	0	10
Le Patriote	5	1	6
Notre Voie	8	1	9
Effective	28	2	30
Rate %	93	7	100

Source : Our study

3.3. Uncertain and unreassuring career prospects

The opinion of journalists on career prospects is tinged with pessimism. If the opinions are divided in the medium term, 14 (47%) against 16 (53%) expecting to remain in the profession within 5 years, the trend is completely reversed when they are asked if they wish to end their career in the journalism. No answer 23 (77%) against 7 (23%). These figures show that this job does not seem attractive and rewarding enough to keep workers there until the end of their career. The reality even varies from one press company to another. Apart from *Fraternité Matin*, where 80% of journalists (see table 6 below) intend to remain in the profession within 5 years, opinions are totally divided in the other newspapers : *Soir Info* has 1 employee (20%) for and 4 (80%) against, *Le Patriote* 2 (33.33%) for and 6 (66.67%) against, same with *Notre Voie* with 3 journalists (33.33%) for and 6 (66.67%) versus.

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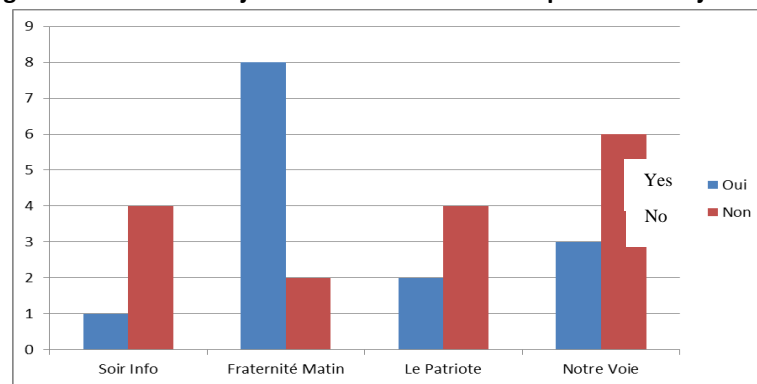
Table 6 : Prospects for working as a journalist in 5 years

Media	Do you plan to work as a journalist in 5 years?		Total
	Yes	No	
Soir Info	1	4	5
Fraternité Matin	8	2	10
Le Patriote	2	4	6
Notre Voie	3	6	9
Effective	14	16	30
Rate %	47	53	100

Source : Our study

The histogram below shows the disparities on the issue, from one news organization to another.

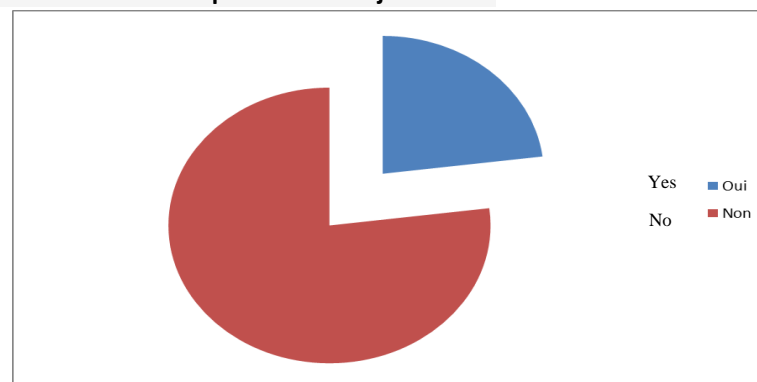
Figure 5 : Comparative histogram of the desire of journalists to remain in the profession of journalism in 5 years



Source : Our study

Graph 6 below, which presents the circular diagram on the end of careers of journalists, shows the high rate of disaffection with this profession.

Figure 6 : Pie chart of journalists' desire to complete career in journalism



Source : Our study

These various figures and illustrations reflect the image of a profession that does not reassure and does not offer sufficient guarantees and security to its workers.

3.4. Discussion

A general phenomenon revealing a sector of activity in danger and the inseparable link between the training, socio-educational and demographic conditions of journalists and their professionalism

If the level of education (BAC + 2 minimum) of most Ivorian journalists entering the profession today seems sufficient, their lack of continuous training as well as the precariousness of their salary and working conditions nevertheless constitute factors of underperformance and limiting their professionalism. But on observation, this phenomenon is more and more general

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(throughout the world) and reveals a profession in danger. To this end, several authors have attempted to show in their writings the link between the socio-educational and demographic profile of journalists and the quality of their production.

Govain (2015) therefore estimates that for the case of Haiti :

The question of the training (initial and continuous) of the journalist must be the first concern of the owners of the press for a better journalistic practice and of the press in Haiti. It is in particular from this moment that the media will be able to deal in a professional manner with the correct collection, sorting, processing, encoding or formatting and dissemination of information from institutions in a crisis situation. It is thanks to the quality of the training of journalists that they will manage to behave well in the face of the crisis and the dictatorial impulses which are often the sources of crises in certain developing countries. We often complain about the quality of the work provided by Haitian journalists and this is the result of several factors, first and foremost the quality of the training offered to them. Other elements also come into play: lack of technical or even technological infrastructure in the media, low remuneration of journalists, lack of search for excellence as a horizon of achievement, etc.

In a similar study conducted by Merah (2016) on online journalists in Algeria, "respondents often express their dissatisfaction with web-journalists in terms of resources and professional practices. They recognize that their knowledge and know-how remain insufficient to take advantage of all the possibilities offered by digital technology". Bahi (2008) notes in a publication on the integration of young people graduates in the Ivorian journalistic field the rise of proletarianization and precariousness due to the growing number of freelancers and fixed-term contracts, which we can think will have "impacts on their professional practices and ultimately on the production of information" (Balbastre 2007: 489 quoted by Aghi, 2008 : 206).

In France, freelancers can be grouped into two categories according to significantly different working conditions: freelancers attached to an editorial office by fixed-term contracts, who are mainly employed by the daily news media (national or regional daily written press , mid-day or evening news from national or regional television, national or local radio news); and freelancers, who most of the time collaborate independently with the magazine press, whether written or audiovisual. Depending on the category of freelancers considered, the impact on the very production of information is different (Balbastre, 2007). Other studies such as the one conducted on the training of French journalists show the impact of working conditions and career profile on the propensity of journalists to exercise their profession professionally.

All of the assets accumulated during the training period (general studies, professional studies, field experience) should constitute a framework conducive to relatively easy entry into the job market before even considering the development of the career itself. -same. However, the precariousness of the status offered at entry, the reality of a hiring job market far removed from a largely imaginary mythical journalism, unattractive salaries create the conditions for a very strong gap between the expectations of these young journalists who are already highly trained and the reality not of the field, but of employment and therefore of the career hopes that they can support (Leteinturier, 2010).

Furthermore, Wittmann (2006: 185) asserts that the third weakness of the Senegalese print media, insufficient professionalism, is partially linked to this financial instability: economic fragility makes it impossible to set up a solid logistical infrastructure (equipment recording, computers, vehicles, etc.) and is also responsible for the very low level of journalists.

Yacine Diouf (2005) is more explicit about the situation of the Senegalese journalist: "Taking on a social standing with others that he does not have, badly paid, the journalist finds himself in a delicate situation which makes him a zigzagging, faced with an economic and social situation full of lack and which exposes him to all temptations".

In fact, the precarious condition of the journalist, mainly that of the press, is only the tree that hides the forest of difficulties that crosses a disaster area. Around the worldwide, the press is in decline, faced with the emergence and rise of the Internet, which has led to a profound upheaval in the mode of production and consumption of information. After the music sector, the press is one of those which have been most directly confronted with the transformations linked to information technologies. The destruction of value, the proliferation of economic players, the appearance of new forms of competition linked to information sites and the emergence of new forms of reading are all major developments that have led to a rebalancing of the sector (Benghozi , P., Gié, B., Michaux, V. & Schneidermann, D., 2015).

If, at the beginning of the 1950s, eight French people out of ten regularly read a daily newspaper, there were only four at the beginning of the 1990s, after a phenomenon of slow erosion and a period of renewal of the means of information (...). In fact, the circulation of daily newspapers, which had peaked at 15 million copies in 1946, is steadily decreasing (...) and crumbles to 9.7 million in 1990 (Delporte, Blandin, Robinet, 2016).

In the United States, according to a study by the Annenberg School of the University of South California, in five years, most American newspapers in paper version will have disappeared. The vision is undoubtedly a little alarmist, but it indicates a trend

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that seems irreversible. Newspapers (paper) are "the industry that is shrinking the most in the United States" in terms of lost jobs (Bussard, 2012).

In Côte d'Ivoire, the picture is no better with the fall of half of the turnover of the press between 2011 and 2017, falling from more than 6 billion FCFA to 3 billion FCFA during this period. "In ten years, from 2011 to 2021, the turnover of the press has fallen by 82%, from 5.4 billion CFA francs in 2011 to less than one billion in 2022" revealed the president of the National Press Authority (ANP), Samba Koné, on Thursday July 21, 2022 on the occasion of the award ceremony for the best press companies in Côte d'Ivoire held in Abidjan (Cyprien, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study on the socio-educational and demographic profile of Ivorian journalists in connection with the professionalization of the sector, through the case of the daily newspapers Fraternité Matin, Le Patriote, Notre Voie and Soir Info, gives us the following main lessons :

- aspirants to the profession of journalism enter the profession with adequate intellectual potential, but unsuitable and unfavorable working conditions are limiting factors to the emergence of this potential
- the lack of continuous training, insufficient salaries and the poor quality of social benefits prevent most journalists from considering the end of their career in the profession
- all these elements together make the Ivorian journalist one of the weak links in the media system and constitute major obstacles to the professionalization of the sector.

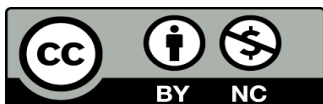
An appropriate response to this problem must however be thought out through an in-depth diagnostic study taking into account all the other actors and factors (printers, publishers, distributors, consumers of the information product, competition from the Internet, etc.) of the Ivorian media ecosystem, with a view to providing a viable and effective global solution, within the framework of a systemic analysis. It is undoubtedly at this price that we could find lasting and satisfactory solutions for all.

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