

# Mongolian Journalism Education: Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

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## Abstract

This study investigates the decline in enrollment in journalism education programs in Mongolia and explores the factors shaping students' professional perceptions and career expectations. Drawing on statistical data and survey responses collected from journalism students in 2020 and 2023, the study identifies key reasons for declining interest in the field, including the profession's diminishing public image, low salaries, unfavorable working conditions, and growing societal pressure and harassment. The findings further reveal that although many students initially chose journalism based on personal interest, their perceptions often shifted during their studies, leading nearly half to consider alternative career paths. A regression analysis indicates that academic level, evaluation of the profession, and societal perception significantly influence students' likelihood of working as journalists. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for structural reforms in journalism education and the media sector, including improved ethical standards, stronger industry academia collaboration, and labor protections to sustain journalism as a viable and respected profession in Mongolia.

**Keywords:** journalist, higher education, students, challenges, professional perception

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, Mongolian universities and colleges have experienced a decline in student enrollment in journalism programs, alongside a noticeable decrease in students' interest in pursuing journalism as a long-term career. This trend is reflected in patterns such as students switching to other majors during their studies, opting not to work in journalism after graduation, or pursuing further education in unrelated fields. At the same time, technological advancements have reshaped the job market, creating opportunities for journalism graduates beyond traditional news media. As a result, there is growing demand for professionals with journalism skills in areas such as public relations, content marketing, and social media management. With the rising demand for journalism professionals, employers have begun lowering their hiring requirements, emphasizing internal skills of fresh graduates and adopting a strategy of providing in-house training. This situation has sparked a need to reevaluate the social perception of journalism as a profession and the state of journalism education.

Journalism flourished in the 1970s, when Walter Cronkite, the evening news anchor for CBS, was voted the most trusted person in America, and publications like The New York Times revealed the Pentagon Papers, and The Washington Post uncovered the Watergate scandal. During that era, journalism schools experienced a surge in enrollment (Avirmed, 2016).

Globally, the trend in higher education prior to the 1990s was one of elitism, characterized by few enrollments and limited high-quality programs. Since the 1990s, higher education has shifted towards a universal model, leading to an increase in the number of universities. In Mongolia, there were 14 public universities in 1991, but by 2006, the number of universities and colleges had reached 180, including private institutions. In 1990, only one university in Mongolia offered journalism education, but by 2006, this number had increased to 22.

Currently, there are 65 universities and colleges operating in Mongolia, 15 of which provide journalism education (Ministry, 2024). While the number of schools has decreased, so has the number of students enrolled. Today, 850 students are studying journalism at the undergraduate level across 14 universities (see Table 1). Only one university offers graduate-level programs in journalism, with 228 students pursuing advanced degrees across nine universities, 94 at the doctoral level and 134 at the master's level.

Table 1. Number of students in Mongolian journalism schools over the past five years

Academic Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Undergraduate Students	981	878	751	754	850
Master's Students	141	157	136	133	124
Doctoral Students	66	72	84	86	94
Total Students	1,188	1,107	971	973	1,068

Source: Higher Education Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports

In 2016, a total of 1,749 students were enrolled in undergraduate journalism programs across 18 universities. By 2019, this number had decreased by 41.4%, and by 2024, it had dropped by 57%. However, in the 2024-2025 academic year, the number of undergraduate journalism students increased to 850. While the total number of students grew in the 2024-2025 academic year, this increase was solely due to a rise of 96 students at the undergraduate level. Compared to the 2020-2021 academic year, the total number of journalism students in 2024-2025 decreased by 10%. Specifically, undergraduate enrollment fell by 13%, master's level enrollment decreased by 12%, while doctoral-level enrollment showed a positive increase of 42%. In recent years, the number of students coming from China to study in journalism programs has also increased, contributing to the growth of advanced-level journalism enrollment.

Table 2. Number of undergraduate journalism students by university, 2025

University	Year Started	Journalism Program	2016-2017	2019-2020	2024-2025
National University of Mongolia		1960	215	180	314
University of the Humanities		1994	116	172	75
Mongolian National University of Education		1991	230	226	147
Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture		1995	323	218	100
Otgontenger University		1998	105	29	13
Ider Institute		2000	55	29	20
Zokhiomj College		1999	188	8	93
Film Arts College		1999	82	20	11
Ulaanbaatar Erdem College		1997	48	8	3
Ikh Zasag University		2002	61	50	9
Journalism College/City College		2004	82	5	15
Literature and Social Work College		1997	30	5	-
Mongolian International University (MIU)		2018	-	30	12
Mongolian National University		2016	-	35	31
Ulaanbaatar University		2006	44	-	-
Darkhan Branch of UH		2012	30	-	-
Orkhon Institute		2009	17	-	-
Soyol Erdem College		2003	40	-	-
International Studies College		1996	24	-	7
Ikh Mongol/Global Leadership College		1999	59	-	-
Total			1749	1015	850

Source: Registration System of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports

From the table above, it can be observed that there are three universities offering journalism programs with fewer than ten students. While 15 universities and colleges in Mongolia train journalists, five of them lack dedicated full-time faculty in this field.

Over the past decade, the number of students enrolled in Mongolian universities has decreased by up to 20%, and the number of students in journalism programs has also declined. This trend has been attributed to increased university admission thresholds and the outflow of students seeking education abroad. (Maulet, 2014) has noted that while having many universities fosters competition and promotes diverse perspectives on issues, the existence of 18 institutions training journalists is excessive for a country like Mongolia. He emphasizes in his study that 5-6 high-quality universities would be sufficient for training journalists.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Global and Regional Trends in Journalism Education

The global trend of declining university enrollments has not excluded journalism education (Nietzel, 2019). Specifically, undergraduate enrollment in journalism and mass communication programs in the United States decreased by 3% between 2010 and 2013 (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014). Interest in journalism and mass communication programs has continued to decrease, although enrollment in public relations undergraduate programs has shown a slight increase since

2013 (GotLieb, 2017). In fact, seven out of every ten students in journalism and communication programs are studying advertising or public relations, a trend that has persisted for over two decades. Between 2015 and 2018, enrollment in journalism and mass communication programs in the United States remained relatively stable. However, the decline in journalism program enrollments is not limited to the U.S.; similar trends have been observed in other countries. For example, the number of journalism students in New Zealand has been decreasing since 2013, while the industry's expectation for graduates to possess multimedia skills has posed significant challenges (Hannis, 2017).

Undergraduate enrollment in the USA declined by more than 662,000 students, or 4.7%, from spring 2021, according to a new report by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. To date, the undergraduate student body has dropped by nearly 1.4 million students, or 9.4% during the pandemic (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022). The 2021 Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments further supports this trend.

Journalism researchers attribute the decline in journalism student numbers primarily to the collapse of traditional journalism sectors. "There is growing concern over falling enrolment numbers in journalism programs, linked to declining job prospects and rapid changes in the media industry." (Newman et al., 2023) Journalism schools, once considered "cash cows" of many university campuses, now face new challenges in attracting and educating specialized students. While this global decline in journalism student numbers is mirrored in Mongolia, the 60% decrease in total enrollments over the past eight years cannot be ignored. With 434 media outlets in Mongolia and a 112-year history of journalism, the ongoing challenges in the sector's human resources threaten to further weaken the field and lower professional standards.

## 2.2 Empirical Insights from Transitional Contexts

Drawing insights from similar contexts enriches the analysis. A recent study of journalism, media, and communication students in Bangladesh (public universities) surveyed 220 respondents via an online questionnaire. Key motivators included societal contribution, social recognition, financial security, and stable job prospects. However, many students pointed to outdated curricula, poor compensation, and precarious working conditions as deterrents to journalism careers. The study underscores the urgency for curriculum reform, career development focus, and policy support.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

To explain how such trends coalesce at the intersection of individual choices and institutional constraints, this study is grounded in three interlocking theoretical lenses:

### 1. Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986)

Bourdieu's framework shows that educational systems reproduce social inequality through skills, language, professional norms, objectified by access to technology and facilities, and institutionalized forms of cultural capital. In Mongolia, mostly students face disadvantages due to limited access to multimedia labs, professional networks, and the high cost of living in Ulaanbaatar, ultimately suppressing enrollment and career mobility.

### 2. Career Development Theory (Super, 1990)

Super's model frames career growth across five life stages. Most journalism students in Mongolia are in the exploration stage, evaluating their fit within the profession, aligning skills with industry expectations, and considering future prospects. Rapid industry changes, and mismatches between student skills and multimedia demands, may prompt detours from journalism careers.

### 3. Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, 1994)

SCCT highlights three determinants of career behavior: self-efficacy, in other words belief in one's capability, outcome expectations which are anticipated results, and goal-setting. In Mongolia, self-efficacy may be high among still-committed students, but uncertainties in the media labor market which low pay, political pressures, negatively influence outcome expectations, weakening long-term career commitment.

## 3. Methods and Analysis

A survey was conducted to investigate the factors influencing Mongolian journalism students' decision to pursue a career in journalism, their perceptions of the current state of the profession, their confidence in its future, and their awareness of changes within the media industry. The primary aim was to obtain insights from within the field by directly engaging students enrolled in journalism programs. The study also examined how students' professional perceptions shape their attitudes toward journalism and influence their career intentions, potentially playing a decisive role in whether they remain in or depart from the profession.

**Sampling and participants:** The target population consisted of undergraduate journalism students enrolled in accredited journalism and mass communication programmes in Mongolia. In both survey waves, purposive sampling was used to ensure representation from all major institutions offering journalism degrees. Eight universities participated in both 2020 and 2023.

In May 2020, an online questionnaire was distributed to approximately 300 enrolled journalism students via official university mailing lists and student social media groups. A total of 235 valid responses were received, yielding a response rate of 78.3%. In November 2023, the same instrument (with minor updates to reflect changes in the media landscape) was sent to approximately 240 students, producing 191 valid responses (79.6% response rate).

Survey instrument and validation.

Research question is:

RQ1: How do Mongolian journalism students perceive their field of study?

RQ2: What factors influence their expectations of working as journalists?

The 2020 instrument was adapted from prior studies on journalism career choice and professional identity. A pilot test was conducted in April 2020 with 15 students from one university; feedback led to minor adjustments in question wording. Internal consistency for scaled items was measured using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients above 0.75 in both 2020 and 2023, indicating acceptable reliability.

In the 2023 survey, 24 students (12.6%) were first-year students, 45 (23.6%) were second-year students, 51 (26.7%) were third-year students, and 71 (37.2%) were fourth-year students. Among them, 154 (81.5%) were female students, and 38 (18.5%) were male students. This gender distribution is consistent with national enrolment trends in journalism programmes.

Data collection procedure.

Both waves of the survey were administered online via Google Forms to facilitate wide geographic reach, particularly given COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained electronically. No identifying information was collected, ensuring respondent anonymity.

Limitations.

The study's purposive sampling and focus on eight universities limit the generalisability of findings, particularly to students in smaller or non-accredited programmes. Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias, especially regarding career motivations and professional perceptions. While the same instrument was used in both years, external factors, such as political developments, media policy changes, and global trends like AI adoption, may have influenced perceptions, making direct comparisons suggestive rather than strictly causal. Additionally, reliance on an online format may have excluded students with limited internet access, potentially biasing the sample toward more digitally connected respondents.

When cross-tabulating the reasons for choosing a school and a profession, students across all universities cited their personal desires and goals as the primary motivation. In other words, the decision to pursue a career in journalism was largely driven by their personal ambitions rather than university-related factors.

In the 2020 survey, 83.8% of students enrolled in journalism programs based on personal interest, although 68% reported that their understanding of the profession changed during their studies. By 2023, 66.8% of respondents still cited personal interest as the main reason for enrollment, while 47.1% said their understanding of the profession had changed over the course of their studies. The study explored how journalism students view their profession and the impact of higher education on their worldviews. When asked about the motivating factors behind their decision to become journalists, in 2020, students described journalism as an interesting, creative field that constantly seeks new ideas and involves interacting with diverse people. Specifically, 117 students (50%) were motivated by the creativity and interaction aspects of journalism, 73 (31.2%) aimed to make a tangible social impact, 65 (27.6%) aspired to become renowned artists, and 53 (22.6%) were inspired by the opportunity to report directly from event locations.

In 2023, however, the primary motivating factors shifted, with students citing the opportunity to meet and interact with many people, creativity, helping others, and combating injustice as the leading reasons for choosing journalism as a career.

Table 3. Ranking of Motivating Factors for Becoming a journalist

Rank	2020	2023
Top Motivating Factors for Becoming a Journalist		
1	Being interesting and creative	Meeting and connecting with many people
2	Constantly seeking innovation	Being creative
3	Meeting and connecting with many people	Helping improve people's lives
4	Making a tangible social impact through journalism	Fighting against injustice
5	Becoming a renowned artist	Becoming an influencer
6	Reporting directly from event locations	Advocating for freedom and democracy

Source: "Evaluation of the Journalism Profession" Survey. University of the Humanities. 2020 and 2023.

When evaluating the current state of Mongolia's journalism sector, 86.8% of students in 2020 rated the field as average or poor, while in 2023, 85.9% rated it as average or poor, 9.4% as good, and 4.7% were unsure. The top reasons for these average or poor ratings in 2020 included "neglecting their duty to serve the public and prioritizing profit" (51.7%) and "disseminating biased, imbalanced, and distorted information, lacking ethical standards" (43.2%). By 2023, the main reasons shifted to "disseminating biased, imbalanced, and distorted information, lacking ethical standards" (116 students, 67.8%), "neglecting their duty to serve the public and prioritizing profit" (100 students, 58.5%), and "journalists failing to deliver truthful, complete, and fair information" (98.6 students, 57.4%).

The name value of the journalism sector did not improve among students from 2020 to 2023, as the percentage of students rating it as average or poor remained around 86%. However, the rankings of the top two reasons for the negative evaluations shifted. In 2020, the primary reason was "neglecting their duty to serve the public and prioritizing profit," followed by "ethical issues." By 2023, the top reason became "ethical issues," followed by "neglecting their duty to serve the public and prioritizing profit" (University of the Humanities, 2020, 2023)

In response to the question, "Will you work in your field of study after graduation?" 58.7% of survey participants in 2020 answered "yes," while in 2023, this figure dropped to 53%, indicating a decline in students' aspirations and expectations to work in their profession. In 2020, the majority of students intending to work as journalists, 48%, planned to work in television, 17.9% in public relations departments, 13.1% in online media, 11.8% in print media, 1.7% in radio, and 7.4% in other sectors. By 2023, the interest in working in television increased to 50%, while interest in working for newspapers and magazines declined. Meanwhile, interest in jobs in online media, public relations departments, and social media and marketing divisions rose. Interest in working in radio also increased.

These findings suggest that students' interest in television as a career remains strong. Among Mongolia's 434 media outlets, 4,448 people are employed, with 2,257 working in the television sector, accounting for 51% of all employees in the industry (Press Institute of Mongolia, 2024).

Table 4. Evaluation of the journalism sector and reasons for low ratings

Field	2020	2023
Fields Students Plan to Work in After Graduation		
Television	48.00%	50.00%
Online Media	13.70%	9.60%
Newspapers and Magazines	11.80%	4.50%
Public Relations	17.90%	9.60%
Radio	1.70%	5.10%
Social Media Departments	-	10.90%
Marketing Departments	-	10.30%
Other	7.40%	0.00%
Percentage of Students Planning to Work in their field after graduation	58.7%	52.9%

Source: "Professional Perceptions of Journalism" Survey. University of the Humanities, 2020 and 2023

Interest in working in fields outside traditional journalism jobs, such as marketing departments, public relations departments, and social media departments, increased in 2023 compared to 2020. One possible reason for this is the perception of the profession's value. To explore this further, a cross-tab analysis was conducted between the question "How would you rate today's Mongolian journalists?" and the sectors where students plan to work.

Students who expressed an interest in working outside the journalism sector gave lower ratings to today's journalists. Specifically, 22-24% of all students expressed interest in working in other fields, while only 5% of students who rated journalists highly ("good") intended to work outside the field. However, 20-37% of students who gave average or poor ratings expressed interest in working in other fields.

Table 5. Evaluate today's Mongolian journalists cross-tabulation with work sectors

	Evaluation	Marketing Department	Public Department	Relations	Social Media Department
Evaluation of Today's Mongolian Journalists by Work Sectors	Poor	29.20%		20.80%	37.50%
	Average	23.50%		25.20%	24.30%
	Good	5.60%		5.60%	5.60%
	Total	22.30%		22.30%	24.20%

Source: "Professional Perceptions of Journalism" Survey. University of the Humanities, 2023

According to the 2020 survey, approximately 40% of students with an optimistic outlook on their profession but critical

of the field rated journalism as having poor working conditions and expressed interest in studying another field. In 2023, major reasons for considering leaving the profession shifted to poor professional perception, societal pressure, and low salaries. These findings align closely with a 2019 labor conditions survey conducted by the Mongolian Media Institute, which included 1,100 journalists and media workers from 260 media outlets across Ulaanbaatar and 19 provinces. The students' perceptions did not significantly deviate from these findings.

The majority of workers in the journalism sector are aged 26-35, and their household income is below the national average. Around 77% of journalists' families report insufficient household income. The National Statistical Office reported that the average monthly salary for employees in the first quarter of 2019 was 990,000 MNT (approximately USD 367) after tax, while the average in the media sector was 664,000 MNT (around USD 246). Although 92% of employees in the field have higher education, their salaries are more than 30% below the national average. Satisfaction levels are highest regarding workplace atmosphere and lowest regarding salaries. Approximately 60% of employees have changed jobs 1-4 times due to low pay, late payments, poor career prospects, or conflicts with colleagues or management, indicating high job instability. Additionally, 76% of employees express interest in personal development and training but face financial challenges (49%).

Regarding working hours, media workers average 9.1 hours per day and 6.5 days per week, leaving them only half a day weekly to spend with family. This makes the journalism sector particularly unfriendly to family life. Over half of media workers work on public holidays but often do not receive compensatory time off (62%) or additional pay (60%). Many workers also report being unable to take or having never taken annual leave (Press Institute of Mongolia, 2019).

In 2020, reasons cited for not pursuing a journalism career included low pay (26.3%), long working hours (15.8%), lack of societal respect for the profession (13.2%), lack of interest in the field (10.5%), and perceptions of journalism as a career without a future (0.9%). By 2023, the top reason remained low pay, followed by low societal recognition of the profession. Societal pressure and harassment were ranked as the third most significant reason, while long working hours and poor labor conditions were ranked fourth.

### 3.1 Regression analysis

To determine the main factors affecting students' expectations of working in journalism after graduation, we used multiple regression analysis. The results showed that the university a student attends does not significantly influence whether they expect to work in the field. However, other factors such as academic level (year of study), evaluations of current journalists, societal pressure, and societal perception were important. To better capture external influences, two factors—students' reported experiences of societal pressure and their perceptions of public attitudes toward journalism—were combined into a single composite variable, referred to as *bully*. This variable was constructed by coding responses on a Likert scale (1 = very low influence to 5 = very high influence), with higher scores indicating stronger negative societal pressure. The combined measure demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70) and was therefore included in the regression model as an aggregated indicator of external social constraints.

In the regression equation, *profession* indicates whether the student expects to work as a journalist in the future (1 = yes, 0 = no). *Level* represents the student's academic year, *evaluation* refers to their rating of current journalists in Mongolia (higher scores mean better ratings), and *bully* captures external influences like societal pressure and public perception.

$$\text{profession} = 0.56 - 0.09\text{level} + 0.13\text{evaluation} - 0.18\text{bully}$$

$$n = 147, R^2 = 0.59$$

Our developed model, which examines whether students expect to work in their profession, considers academic level, evaluation of the journalism profession, and external societal pressures. The regression model is shown to be significant overall based on the F statistic and its corresponding significance level. Moreover, these three factors explain 59% of the variance in students' expectations of working in their profession, as indicated by the R-squared value.

Table 6. Estimated coefficients from regression analysis

Model Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.563	.179		3.154	.002
Bully	-.187	.085	-.177	-2.197	.030
Year of study	-.093	.040	-.187	-2.338	.021
Evaluation of Mongolian Journalism	.131	.057	.186	2.316	.022

Dependent Variable: Will you work as a journalist after graduation?

Source: Author's Calculation

As for Level, the higher the academic level of the student, the lower their expectation to work in their profession. The

coefficient of -0.09 suggests that advancing one academic level reduces the expectation to work in the profession by 0.09. This result is significant with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ , indicating 95% confidence. For evaluation, the higher the students' rating of current journalists, the higher their expectation to work in their profession. The coefficient of 0.13 reflects this positive influence, and the result is also significant with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ , indicating 95% confidence. Finally, bully reduces students' expectations to work in their profession by 0.18. This result is significant with a  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ , indicating 95% confidence.

To summarize, considering the expectation to work in their profession as the likelihood of working in journalism: Students studying journalism see their likelihood of working in the field decrease by 9% with each advancing academic level. An increase in the rating of current journalists raises the likelihood by 13%, while external pressures and societal perceptions reduce the likelihood by 18%.

Table 7. Results of the regression analysis: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.429	3	1.143	4.903	.003 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	33.565	144	.233		
Total	36.993	147			

a. Dependent Variable: Will you work as a journalist after graduation?  
b. Predictors: (Constant), How do you rate today's Mongolian journalists? Which year are you currently studying in? Bully

Source: Author's calculations

This study, based on the current state of journalism education in Mongolia, aims to identify the decline in the number of students, the transition of graduates to the labor market, and the factors affecting the quality of education. The results of the study provide the following key issues and opportunities for discussion.

In recent years, the number of students studying journalism has significantly decreased. This trend aligns with global tendencies where the reputation of media has declined, and financial instability has developed in this field, reducing enrollment in journalism programs. In Mongolia, the declining interest in pursuing journalism as a career is linked to several factors. Compared to other professions, journalism is perceived as a low-status job, which is the primary reason for decreased enrollment. Moreover, low salaries and poor working conditions of journalists further diminish the demand for this profession. Additionally, the rise of social media platforms has introduced new challenges, such as public criticism and online harassment, which influence students' long-term aspirations to pursue a career in journalism. Students have expressed concerns about societal violence impacting their motivation to choose long-term careers in this field. Another reason for this perception is the substantial shift in the role of traditional media due to digital platforms. This change leads young individuals to view the journalism field as having limited prospects. Although enrollment numbers are declining, the demand for skilled media professionals remains. Employers are actively seeking graduates with diverse multimedia skills and an understanding of convergent journalism. Faced with a shortage of human resources, media outlets often emphasize internal skill development and frequently train inexperienced graduates. This trend impacts the valuation of professional skills among new graduates, highlighting the need to revisit the alignment between educational institutions and employers.

Student expectations about their careers often change during their academic journey. While many choose journalism based on personal interests, their understanding shifts due to the realities of the profession, including its challenges and opportunities. Journalism schools and media organizations need to enhance collaboration by updating curricula, bridging the gap between academia and practice, and providing opportunities for students to gain practical experience. There is a pressing need to improve graduate employment monitoring systems and to conduct research to accurately identify job market demands. The challenges facing journalism education in Mongolia align with global trends, but it is essential to consider internal factors. Enhancing the quality of education, increasing the professional value of the field, and modernizing curricula are critical steps.

The second part of the study, based on survey responses from 2020 and 2023, reveals how students' attitudes and professional evaluations of the journalism sector have evolved over time.

First and foremost, the study confirms that students' career choices are primarily influenced by their personal goals and aspirations. In 2020, 83.8% of students reported choosing journalism as a profession based on their personal interests, but this figure dropped to 66.8% in 2023. This decline reflects how students' confidence in the future of journalism as a profession has changed. According to the 2023 survey, 47.1% of students with high expectations for the profession have expressed intentions not to pursue a career in journalism. This shift highlights students' negative perceptions of the economic state of the journalism industry, ethical challenges, and working conditions. The current state of the journalism sector directly impacts students' assessments of the profession. In 2020, 86.8% of respondents rated the journalism sector as average or poor, and while this figure dropped slightly to 85.9% in 2023, it remains unsatisfactory.

In 2023, students placed greater emphasis on the ethical aspects of journalism, particularly the need to deliver accurate and fair information. Students' perspectives on the future expectations of the journalism profession reflect how changes and reforms in the sector influence their outlook. According to the 2023 survey, students view journalism as an opportunity to meet new people and serve society. While this reflects an optimistic and engaging perspective of the profession, the realities of the industry—including ethical issues and working conditions—somewhat diminish this enthusiasm.

Professional valuation, expectations, and changes within the media sector significantly influence students' decisions to pursue journalism as a career. In 2020, students considered journalism as a profession capable of driving societal change and innovation. However, this perspective slightly diminished in 2023, likely due to the negative developments and challenges within the journalism industry.

In conclusion, the decision-making processes of journalism students in Mongolia, the conditions of the sector, and expectations of the job market have shown slight changes over two years. However, the study revealed that students' confidence and perceptions about the future of the journalism sector remain negative. This indicates the need to address numerous issues within Mongolia's journalism sector, including ethical and professional challenges, to improve the situation.

### *3.2 Implications for Stakeholders*

This study identifies key factors influencing journalism students' career plans in Mongolia. Statistical analysis indicates that academic level, evaluation of the journalism sector, and societal pressures are significant predictors ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, the motivations underlying these patterns are nuanced and multifaceted.

#### *Journalism Schools*

Enrollment in journalism programs has declined by 13% over the past five years, with nearly half of students in 2023 expressing unwillingness to pursue journalism professionally. Persistent skill gaps, particularly in multimedia and digital competencies (Hannis, 2017), underscore the need for comprehensive curricular reform. Integrating multimedia tools, data journalism, and ethics training is essential. Moreover, rural students require targeted support through mentorship and internship programs, given their limited access to resources.

#### *Policymakers*

Low wages (72%) and long working hours (68%) discourage students from entering the profession, despite the availability of jobs. Many perceive journalism as a passion rather than a viable career path. Measures such as labor protections, fair wage policies, and targeted subsidies could address these challenges. Concerns over political interference (54%) highlight the urgency of enacting stronger press freedom legislation and establishing independent oversight mechanisms. Furthermore, investment in digital infrastructure beyond Ulaanbaatar is critical to improving access and equity.

#### *Media Organizations*

A substantial proportion of students (39%) prefer careers in public relations, marketing, or digital content production over journalism. Negative perceptions of the profession are associated with a lower likelihood of entering the field ( $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). To address this, media organizations should offer competitive compensation, clear career progression opportunities, and collaborative programs with universities. Strengthening editorial independence is also vital for rebuilding public trust.

#### *International Donors and NGOs*

Rural students report significantly lower access to professional networks and training facilities (mean difference = 1.2,  $p < 0.05$ ). International donors can play a pivotal role by funding mobile training laboratories, scholarships, and fellowships. Partnerships with global journalism schools could bridge skill gaps and expose students to international standards. Additionally, sustained support for independent media can enhance public trust and encourage talented graduates to enter the profession.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study has examined the current state of journalism education in Mongolia, with particular focus on student enrollment trends, professional perceptions, and the structural factors influencing students' career intentions. Despite the continued availability of positions in the media sector, journalism is increasingly perceived by students as a precarious and undervalued profession, characterized by low wages, challenging working conditions, and diminishing public trust.

The decline in undergraduate enrollment by 13% over the past five years, alongside a 12% drop in master's level enrollment, underscores a growing disinterest in pursuing journalism as a viable career path. Although the number of doctoral students has increased, this may reflect a pivot toward academic or research-oriented trajectories rather than engagement in professional journalism.



A key finding of this study is the shift in student motivation and professional perception throughout the course of their academic programs. While initial enrollment decisions were primarily driven by personal interest, nearly half of respondents (47.1%) reported intentions not to enter the profession upon graduation. This suggests a substantial mismatch between students' expectations and the realities of the field.

Ethical concerns, such as biased reporting and the prioritization of commercial interests over public service, were repeatedly cited by students as central issues undermining the credibility of journalism. Furthermore, poor labor conditions, including low remuneration, long working hours, and limited job security, were significant factors contributing to students diminished professional aspirations.

Notably, while interest in traditional media sectors, especially television remains relatively high, there is a clear trend toward non-traditional communication roles such as public relations, marketing, and digital media. Regression analysis confirms that students' academic level, evaluation of the journalism sector, and societal pressures are statistically significant predictors of their likelihood to pursue a journalism career.

Mongolia's digital infrastructure development has become an important factor influencing journalism education and career prospects. The expansion of high-speed internet and mobile connectivity, particularly in rural regions, has improved students' opportunities to engage with digital tools, online learning resources, and multimedia platforms. Nevertheless, persistent disparities between urban and rural areas highlight the need for targeted policy measures and external support to ensure more equitable access to training. Continued investment in digital infrastructure not only strengthens the quality of classroom instruction but also expands employment prospects for graduates in emerging fields such as online media, social networking, and digital content production.

## **5. Recommendations**

To better prepare future journalists, schools should update their programs to include practical skills like multimedia work, data reporting, and digital storytelling, along with a strong focus on ethics. Building closer ties with news organizations can help through mentorships, internships, and real-world projects that give students hands-on experience. Schools should establish dedicated career services to connect graduates with credible and sustainable opportunities in the media industry. Policymakers need to protect journalists by setting fair wages, limiting unpaid internships, and guarding against political pressure. Providing scholarships or tuition waivers for rural students can help close to the location based education gaps. At the same time, media companies can build trust and retain talented journalists by investing in continuous training, offering fair compensation, and maintaining transparent editorial policies. Combining traditional and digital media approaches can give young reporters clear paths to grow their careers. Across all groups, creating a national council to connect education and the industry would increase the quality of tracking job trends and help solving the challenges we face today in this matter. Organizing public campaigns and marketing events highlighting importance of journalism matters will be beneficial to changing the negative attitudes and understanding of the profession. Without meaningful reforms and strategic planning, journalism faces the risk of further diminishing its societal relevance and losing the engagement of the next generation of media professionals.

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