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EXAMINING THE PROMINENCE OF THE POLITICAL CORRUPTION NEWS IN SOUTH SUDAN

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study to examine the prominence of political corruption news by newspapers in South Sudan

Method: The study used descriptive research design to address the research objectives. The target population in this study was Sudan Tribune, Juba Monitor, The Dawn, Peace Day, Sudanese Online newspapers, international and local NGOs, journalists who work for the media station and lecturers and students from Juba University. The researcher can identify every single element and the sampling frame was the five newspapers, also local and international NGOs, students and lecturers from Juba University

Findings: The findings indicated that media houses shied away from giving priority to political corruption news for the fear of their lives, intimidation and torture. This further saw the coverage of political corruption news on a quarter of a page, hence confirming the fact that the public in South Sudan was denied the opportunity by the print media to question the government on corruption in the country

Unique contribution to theory, policy and practice: The study had the following recommendations: The various media regulatory policies and the constitutional rights should be implemented by the instruments of power including the police, the government and the judiciary. This would assure journalists and media houses of their freedom to access information and freedom of expression, while shielding them from intimidation, torture and killing. The legislature, in collaboration with the media regulatory bodies in South Sudan should enact laws that protected media houses and journalists, especially in the cases where they covered sensitive but important information. Those who infringed on the rights of journalists and media houses should be pursued and arraigned in the court of law, where punitive action would be taken against them. This would further reaffirm journalists of their safety.

Key words: Newspaper, political corruption, South Sudan, democracy, press freedom, media regulation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The media, which is often regarded as the fourth pillar in democracy, has an important role in fighting corruption. Have shown a strong correlation between freedom of the press and political corruption and emphasize the importance of media plurality and media freedom). There is a broad consensus that a free press helps curb corruption by improving 'citizens' accessibility to information which in turn makes it more difficult for politicians and public servants to get away with corrupt behavior. In particular, the media plays a key role in exposing corruption and raising general awareness of its detrimental effect upon society, as well as in promoting integrity and accountability norms, values and practices in society.

Corruption is a global phenomenon that is attracting global reactions. Africa and the World group, (2012) asserted that corruption is perhaps the most prominent factor that is impeding accelerated socioeconomic transformation of developing or less developing countries (LDCs) of the world. Furthermore, it has been noted by development scholars that the level of reduction in corruption has a very direct link to the level of economic development of nations in the world. To curb the negative effects of corruption on economic and sustainable development requires conscious efforts and attention. The word corruption means the deviation from what is right, ideal or correct. Corruption is the act of changing or of being changed for the worse. Moreover, Lipset and Lenz (2000) in their definition portrayed corruption as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means, private gain at public expense or a misuse of public power for private benefit. According to Sen (1999), corruption or corrupt behavior is that which involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit.

Africa is widely considered among the world's most corrupt places; a factor seen as contributing to the stunted development and impoverishment of many African states. According to Transparency International, a leading global watchdog on corruption, of the ten countries considered most corrupt in the world, six are in Sub-Saharan Africa. A 2002 African Union study estimated that corruption cost the continent roughly \$150 billion a year. To compare, developed countries gave \$22.5 billion in aid to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2008 (OECD, 2008). Some economists argue that African governments need to fight corruption instead of relying on foreign aid. But anti-corruption efforts on the continent have shown mixed results in recent years, and analysts fear that major international partners are unwilling to exert leverage over African governments. An initiative for transparency in the extractive industries shows promise, but is mostly untested. Some experts suggest African interest in attracting foreign investment will serve to spur more substantive efforts to fight corruption.

Journalism is a report of things as they appear at the moment of writing not a definitive study of a situation. Journalism is the process of gathering writing, editing or disseminating news through newspaper, magazines or by radio or television or through other media. It also means the event of the day detailed into pictures, a few words or sound, processed by the mechanic of communication to satisfy the human curiosity of a world that is eager to know what is new.

The media can be hindered to fulfill its rightful role as a watchdog by difficulties such as restrictions on press freedom, market failures, and lack of professional standards, weak civil society, and limitations in media literacy and public access to the media (Norris & Odugbemi, 2010). In developing countries, where the media often faces major challenges in the form of lack of training and technical skills, low professional standards, limited financial resources, inadequate legal frameworks and an undemocratic political system, corruption in the media is likely to further undermine the role that the media can play in fighting corruption and

promoting public accountability. This is reflected by Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer findings, which indicate that corruption in the media is an area of concern in many developing countries such as Lebanon, Yemen, Pakistan, Bolivia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Malawi, Senegal, Peru, Afghanistan, Thailand, Palestine, Zambia, South Sudan, and Malaysia (Transparency International, 2010/2011). Various factors such as media regulations, media ownership, as well as resources and capacity can put the media's integrity and autonomy at risk and make them vulnerable to corruption. A study by Martini (2012) in Sudan concluded that corruption permeates all sectors and manifests itself through various forms, including petty and grand corruption, embezzlement of public funds and a system of political patronage well entrenched within the fabrics of society in Sudan. Further, despite the great role the media is expected to play in the fight against corruption in the society, it is observed that there is still a marginal disproportion of coverage and reportage of corruption in developing countries like South Sudan.

The South Sudan media has not been reporting sufficiently the political corruption cases because of the governments' repressive laws which do not guarantee media freedom. For the development partners well-versed in the role of communications and technology in dealing with corruption, there is a feeling that the laws of the press are restrictive thus denying the electronic media the freedoms for elaborate coverage of the vice. Although globally the media is slowly evolving in terms of coverage of important issues such as political corruption, in the African setting, this is yet to be achieved. This is no exception to Southern Sudan. This research was set to analyze how often the newspapers cover political corruption issues in South Sudan and their level of coverage in terms of frequency, prominence, depth of treatment and the type of news (Nogara, 2009). Therefore, this study was relevant and timely.

The objective of the study was to examine the prominence of political corruption news in South Sudan framing of anti-corruption war of President Muhammadu Buhari was carried out by Igwebuikwe (2016). The study investigated newspaper coverage of President's Buhari's anti-corruption war. Two newspapers-The Punch and Daily Trust - were selected for the study. The study duration was June 1st 2019 January 30th 2020 leading to seven months and 28 weeks. The Holsti's Inter coder reliability was applied to determine the reliability for the study and this yielded 0.84 which was considered high. Content analysis was adopted for the study while result that most (33.8%) of the anti-corruption stories occupied quarter pages. Consequent open the result of this study, the study recommended that newspapers should improve in the area of investigative reports so as to expose corrupt dealings in Nigeria.

A study by Fadairo *et al.*, (2014) on coverage of corruption news by major newspapers in Nigeria adopted content analysis to determine the Newspaper coverage of corruption news in the major sectors of the Nigeria economy over a period of 5 years (2006 to 2010). A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three newspapers namely Tribune, The Nation and Guardian; and a total of nine hundred and thirteen (913) corruption articles generated from the 540 issues were analyzed. Data were collected on depth of treatment of articles on corruption. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means were used to summarize the data collected. Findings revealed that more than half (56.8%) of space allotted to corruption articles was found to be one-quarter page while the Nigeria Tribune recorded highest (61.4%) space allotment of full page.

Mass media and information-communication penetration was associated with lower levels of corruption and poverty. Dutta *et al.*, (2011) found that a free and independent media acts as a means of enhancing socio-political stability which in turn leads to higher economic growth via increased domestic investment. A study by Freille *et al.*, (2007) found evidence that both

political and economic influences on the media are robustly related to corruption, while detrimental laws and regulations influencing the media are not. According to University of South Africa Press, corruption is defined as the abuse of power for personal gain (Uys, 2006). It is an inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means (bribery). Corruption, similar to stress, is a dynamic that has been present in all institutions since an institution is established, but it is undesirable and has a negative effect on the provision of services.

readers or a bureaucracy for personal gain or specific group interest. The UN points out that corruption can take many forms that vary in degree, from the minor use of influence to institutionalized bribery, and that “this can mean not only financial gain but also non-financial advantages” (UN, 2010). Definitions of corruption abound, but the most commonly used one refers to the abuse of a public position for private gain. Corruption is facilitated by bribery, embezzlement and theft but also by nepotism and cronyism. Corruption affects both the private and public sectors and is often subdivided into grand and petty corruption which ranges from the provision of small ‘gifts’ in the former to the misappropriation of public assets at the highest levels in the latter. Further classifications distinguish between incidental, institutional and systemic corruption and between political and bureaucratic corruption.

The size and incidence of corruption might be attributed to four key factors: the level of public benefits available, the discretionary power of officials, the level of risk associated with corrupt deals and the relative bargaining power of the corruptor and corrupted (Rose-Ackerman, 1997). In terms of the causes of corruption, experts representing higher and lower income countries are unanimous on the three most important causes of corruption and in general agreement on the importance of a number of other factors. These are norms and values of politicians and public servants lack of control, supervision, auditing and interrelationships. It is argued that corruption is in fact largely self-sustaining as a result of the action and reaction of certain elements within a given society. Key elements include payments to political parties and control over appointments which can increase the number of civil servants on lower salaries.

Prominence of Political Corruption news

Prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public (McCombs & Carroll, 2003). Hence, broadsheets discreetly communicate a host of cues about the prominence of certain issues on their daily agenda - the lead story on page one, front page versus inside page, the size of the headline and even the length of a story all communicate information about the salience of the various objects on the news agenda (McCombs & Carroll, 2003). Once the prominence cues from broadsheets are already established, the readers use these cues in order to decide which issues are of most value to them. News prominence is often misguided by this role played by the media. A study by Cohen and Shoemaker (2006) indicated a disconnect between what people think is newsworthy and how prominently newspapers display news stories. They found a huge difference between what people think are newsworthy and what the media portray as news. Furthermore, Shoemaker (2006) also stated that prominence of a story can be operationalized as its quantity (in increments of space and time) weighted by its placement within the medium.

The positioning of news articles also plays a vital role in measuring news prominence. Outing (2009) found a common pattern in his study with regards to readers’ eye movement. He said that the eyes most often fixated first in the upper left of the page, then hovered in that area before going left to right. That is why newspaper organizations employ the inverted S or Z-

pattern (Gildersleeve, 2014) in positioning their news, where they put the most important stories at the top left and the least important ones at the bottom right in order to project the level of importance given to a story. A study by Olusheye (2013) stated that the widespread corruption in Nigeria is traceable to the increasing wave of covetousness, greed, inordinate ambition, materialism, the get-rich-quick-syndrome of the post-independence era, nationwide poverty, inadequate social security, corrupt/extravagant political system being operated and the inefficient socio-economic structures and systems put in place by our governments to alleviate the rampant abject poverty and combat the increasing wave of corrupt practices.

A study was conducted by Wantchami and Ngange (2017) on comparative analysis of the Post and Cameroon Tribune Newspapers' coverage of corruption practices in Cameroon. Issues of the newspapers as from July 2014 to December 2014 were content analyzed with the unit of analysis being a news story. Findings revealed that The Post newspaper covered more stories on corruption (70.6%) than Cameroon Tribune (29.4%). The Post newspaper gave prominence on corruption stories (88.9%), front page placement to Cameroon Tribune (11.1%). The study concluded that the private press is more proactive in the fight against corruption in Cameroon. Their recommendation is that the media need to be objective, balanced and fair in the coverage of corruption issues in order to win public concern and support for this course.

A study by Fadairo *et al.*, (2014) on coverage of corruption news by major newspapers in Nigeria adopted content analysis to determine the Newspaper coverage of corruption news in the major sectors of the Nigeria economy over a period of 5 years (2006 - 2010). A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select three newspapers namely Tribune, The Nation and Guardian; and a total of nine hundred and thirteen (913) corruption articles generated from the 540 issues were analyzed. Data were collected on prominence of coverage on corruption. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means were used to summarize the data collected. Findings revealed that prominence was given to inside page articles (87.4%) in all the three newspapers, however, the Guardian newspaper was found to have reported the highest in the front page having 41.7%.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework refers to the theories the researcher chooses to explain something which happens or exists or a set of principles on which an activity is based. There were certain mass communication theories which are relevant to this study. These were theory, Spiral of Silence Theory.

Spiral of Silence Theory

This theory was formulated by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974 as an attempt to explain in part how public opinion is formed. She wondered why the Germans supported wrong political positions that led to national defeat, humiliation and ruin in the 1930s to 1940s. It stipulates that individuals have a fear of isolation, which results from the idea that a social group or the society in general might isolate, neglect, or exclude members due to the members' opinions. This fear of seclusion consequently leads to remaining silent instead of voicing opinions. Media is an important factor that relates to both the dominant idea and people's perception of the dominant idea. The assessment of one's social environment may not always correlate with reality (West *et al.*, 2010).

The theory is created on three places that people have a quasi-statistical organ, a sixth-sense, which allows them to know the normal public opinion, even without access to surveys, that

people have a fear of loneliness and know what behaviors will increase their likelihood of being socially isolated, and that people are quiet to express their minority views, primarily out of fear of being isolated. The closer a person believes the opinion held is similar to the prevailing public opinion, the more they are willing to openly disclose that opinion in public. Then, if public sentiment changes, the person will recognize that the opinion is less in favor and will be less willing to express that opinion publicly. As the perceived distance between public opinion and a person's personal opinion grows, the more unlikely the person is to express their opinion.

It is related to the mass media, in such a way that mass media influences public opinion. Shifts in public opinion occur commonly and therefore this theory is used to search an explanation for behavior (speak up or stay silent). The theory has also been criticized for ambiguity and methodological weakness, but the idea has persisted. Evidence of the spiral effect is usually small but significant. According to Noelle-Neuman (1993), media is regarded as central formulation of the Spiral of Silence Theory, whereas some scholars argue whether the leading idea in one's social environment overwhelms the dominant idea that media proposes as the perceived social norm (Kenamer, 1990). Some empirical research aligns with this perspective suggesting that the micro-climate of an individual overwhelms the effects of the media. Other articles further suggest that talking with others is the primary way of understanding the opinion climate. Media influence affects the order of presentation in news reports about news events, issues in the public mind. Media Significances It says what people should think about and how people should think about. Agenda setting theory has two levels; one which is mostly studied by researchers, media uses objects or issues to influence the people what people should think about and the second where media focuses on the characters of issues how people should think about. This theory has been criticized since it indicates that media users are not ideal, people may not pay attention to details, effect is weakened for people who have made up their mind and media can't create problems. They can only alter the awareness and priority (Ho *et al.*, 2013).

In the current study, the theory highlighted the essence of making people informed of the prevailing conditions in the country through coverage of political corruption news. The closer a person believes the opinion held is similar to the prevailing public opinion, the more they are willing to openly disclose that opinion in public. The theory further insists on the significance of the freedom of adherence to media regulations and honouring the freedom of the press..

While some media communication theories assume a passive audience, such as the Hypodermic Needle model, the spiral model assumes an active audience who consumes media products in the context of their personal and social goals (Ball-Rokeach & Cantor, 1986). Knowledge gained from the mass media may offer ammunition for people to express their opinions and offer a rationale for their own stance (Ho *et al.*, 2013). They pointed out that among individuals who paid high amount of media attention, they have a low fear of isolation were significantly more likely to offer a rationale for their own opinion than were those who have a high fear of isolation

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design to address the research objectives. The target population in this study was Sudan Tribune, Juba Monitor, The Dawn, Peace Day, Sudanese Online newspapers, international and local NGOs, journalists who work for the media station

and lecturers and students from Juba University. The newspapers (Sudan Tribune, Juba Monitor, The Dawn, Peace Day, Sudanese Online) used in this study commanded national circulation and readership. The NGOs on the other hand had been so keen on corruption matters and had been the whistle blowers. the population used in the study was critical in providing the information needed as per the objectives since newspapers were the key sources of information to many Sudanese citizens. And the sampling frame has the property that the researcher can identify every single element and the sampling frame was the five newspapers, local and international NGOs, students and lecturers from Juba University

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic profiles

TABLE (1) DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Age Bracket	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Below – 25 years	18	24
26– 35 years	30	40
36 – 45 years	20	27
46-55 years	4	5
Above 56 Years	3	4
Total	75	100

Source: Field Data (2019)

The respondents' background information was categorized based on gender, age, highest level of education, favorite newspaper, and the length of operation of respective newspapers.

Based on the findings in table above, the highest number of survey respondents constituted young people who were between 26-35 years, which was 40% of the total respondents. Those aged 36-45 years were 20 (27%), those below 25 were (24%), 46-55 years were 4 (5%) and the least number represented respondents who were aged above 56 years, which were 3 (4%). The age group has an impact on readership of print media since most young people prefer social media as compared to print media (Malik *et al*, 2011). This has a negative effect on access to crisis information through the print media as an avenue. Moreover, majority of the young people are struggling with unemployment in South Sudan; which made affordability of a newspaper or print media difficult. It is ironical that most of the information about corruption is communicated through the international media and yet very few people have the ability to access or even read a newspaper.

From the statistics most of the respondents indicated that their newspapers had existed for 5-10 years, accounting for 33 (44%) of the total of those interviewed for the study. In addition, there were newspapers which had been in operation for 11-15 years, with 18 (24%) of the respondents saying so. A sizeable number of the newspapers had also operated for below 5 years, with 16 (21%) of the respondents saying so. The least number of respondents (8; 11%) said that their newspapers had operated for more than 5 years. Overall, 59 (79%) of the newspapers had been operational for more than 5 years. This further meant that a greater

percentage of the newspapers had operated long enough to understand all the dynamics related to the coverage of political corruption as the subject of study for this research.

4.2 Prominence of Coverage of Political Corruption by Newspapers in South Sudan

The respondents were asked about the prominence of coverage of political corruption by newspapers in South Sudan. The responses are summarized in table below

Table 2: Prominence of Coverage of Political Corruption by Newspapers

<i>Prominence by Page</i>	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Front page</i>	20	27
<i>Inside page</i>	28	37
<i>Back page</i>	17	23
<i>Front & Inside pg</i>	6	8
<i>inside & back pg</i>	4	5
Total	75	100

Source: Field Data (2020)

Based on the analysis on the above table 2 most political corruption appeared in the inside page, with 28 (33%) of the respondents saying so. On the other hand, 20 (27%) of the respondents said that the news appeared on the front page. Furthermore, 17 (23%) of those interviewed indicated that news on political corruption appeared on the back page. Only 6 (8%) and 4 (5%) of the respondents indicated that political corruption was published on both the front and inside page, and inside and back pages respectively. These statistics where majority of the news was published on the inside pages rather than on the front or back pages may further reinforce the repressive nature of the media in South Sudan. This means that most of the newspapers were likely afraid to put sensitive news on their cover pages in order to avoid easy attention of the government security agencies which could use the excuse to shut their business or arrest their journalists.

The findings are in agreement with findings from Wantchami and Ngange (2017) study on comparative analysis of the Post and Cameroon Tribune Newspapers' coverage of corruption practices in Cameroon. Issues of the newspapers as from July 2014 to December 2014 were content analyzed with the unit of analysis being a news story. Findings revealed that The Post newspaper covered more stories on corruption (70.6%) than Cameroon Tribune (29.4%). The Post newspaper gave prominence on corruption stories (88.9%), front page placement to Cameroon Tribune (11.1%). The study concluded that the private press is more proactive in the fight against corruption in Cameroon. They recommendation is that the media need to be objective, balanced and fair in the coverage of corruption issues in order to win public concern and support for this course.

4.3 Multivariate Analysis

In order to understand the strength of the influence of the independent (predictor) variables on the dependent variable, a multivariate analysis was performed. Based on regression analysis, the following model was established:

$Y = 4.121 + 0.532X_1 + 0.321X_2 + 0.351X_3 + 0.291X_4 + (-0.423X_5)$, where Y stands for level of political corruption, which is the dependent variable or outcome of the study, and X_1 represents extent of coverage of political corruption news, X_2 prominence of political corruption news, X_3 effect of coverage, X_4 types of news, and X_5 moderating relationship between media polices and regulation.

The statistics further indicated that, taking all factors to be at zero, the constant was 4.121, signifying the level of political corruption. However, a unit positive variation in the extent of coverage of political corruption new In addition, at the level of significance of 5%, this implied that $P=001 < 0.05$, the extent of coverage of political corruption news had a strong influence on level of political corruption.

The findings further indicated that with all other factors remaining at zero, a positive unit variation in prominence of political corruption news would lead to a 0.321 positive performance of level of political corruption. Furthermore, at 5% level of significance where $P=000 < 0.05$, this implied that prominence of political corruption news positively influenced level of political corruption in South Sudan. Statistics further showed that a unit increase in the effect of coverage when all other factors remained at zero would result into a 0.531 performance of level of political corruption. At 5% level of significance where $P=004 < 0.05$, it meant that effect of coverage also had a positive influence on level of political corruption.

Moreover, at 5% level of significance where $P=003 < 0.05$, this meant that types of news by newspapers positively influenced level of political corruption in South Sudan. At the same time, the coefficient for the moderating relationship between media polices and regulation on coverage of political corruption by newspapers in South Sudan was -0.423. The moderating effect of regulation on the relationship between media policies and political corruption is positive and significant. This implies that the relationship between x and Y is stronger at higher levels of regulation (moderator) and weaker at lower levels of regulation (moderator). At 5% level of significance and a P-value of $p=0.062 > 0.05$, moderating relationship between media polices and regulation on coverage of political corruption by newspapers would significantly reduce level of political corruption in South Sudan.

Summary

In summary, most media houses did not cover political corruption news, with most of the newspapers shying away from publishing such information. This was attributed to the intimidation that the journalists who attempted to cover such news had been subjected to, with some even losing their lives. Those who did, covered on monthly basis and such news was not given much prominence. The respondents indicated that such were covered in approximately a quarter a page and that they would present such in cartoons and editorials rather than straight news. This therefore indicated that political corruption news were treated with utmost care, for a slight sway could even claim a life or more. Corruption news ranged from bribery, embezzlement of funds, misuse of office, nepotism, illegal appointments to

even transfer of civil property to selfish individuals. Policies existed, but were not effectively implemented. Journalists continued to be deprived of the freedom of expression and access to information, despite the rule of law having clearly stipulated such

Those who infringed on the rights of journalists and media houses should be pursued and arraigned in the court of law, where punitive action would be taken against them. This would further reaffirm journalists of their safety.

Recommendations

Informed by the findings, the study had the following recommendations:

The various media regulatory policies and the constitutional rights should be implemented by the instruments of power including the police, the government and the judiciary. This would assure journalists and media houses of their freedom to access information and freedom of expression, while shielding them from intimidation, torture and killing

The government and the private sector, including international agencies should work collaboratively in ensuring that the freedom of press, freedoms of expression and access to information were protected and adhered to. Journalists should be given literacy by learning institutions and refresher courses on their rights and the actions they would take in case of abuse and intimidation; emerging trends in news broadcasting; and cover up during risky recording operations.

The media houses were to be independent of the government, and that they should be allowed to cover corruption news freely. The government sometimes altered the content aired to the public, thereby allowing corrupt deals to remain concealed.

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