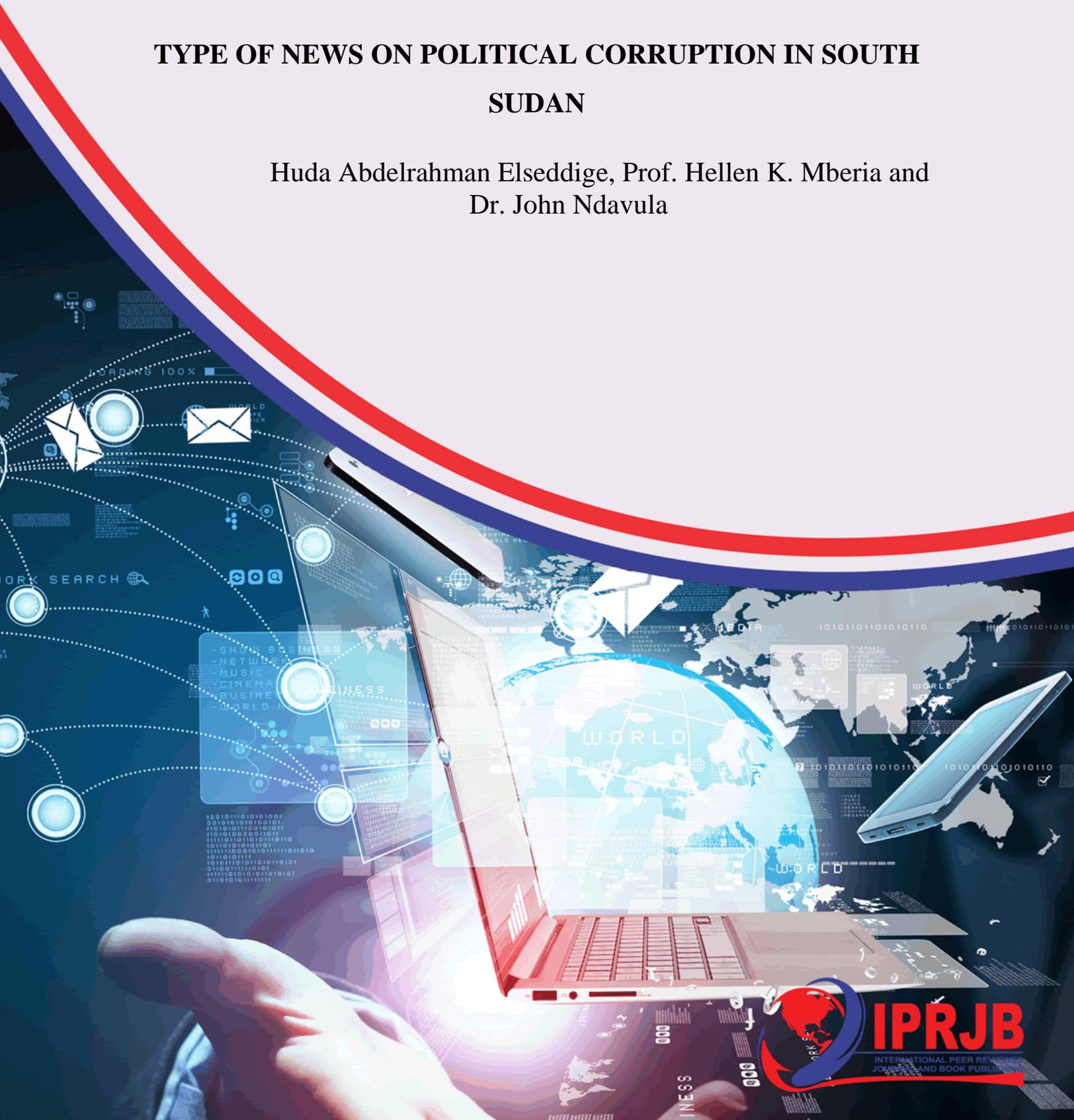


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## TYPE OF NEWS ON POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN SOUTH SUDAN

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## TYPE OF NEWS ON POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN SOUTH SUDAN

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study sought to determine the type of news on political corruption 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 identified every single element and the sampling frame was the five newspapers, also local and international NGOs, students and lecturers from Juba University

**Findings of the study** Media houses shied away from giving priority to political corruption news for the fear of their lives, intimidation and torture. 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

**Contributions Informed** by the findings, the study had the following recommendation 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 cover sensitive but important information.

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

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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. . There are many ways in which media can help combat and prevent corruption. A news story can have a direct and “tangible” effect, such as resulting in the launch of an investigation, impeachment and forced resignation of corrupt political leaders (Nogara, 2009). Media coverage of corruption can also have longer term more indirect effects. The media is used to help mobilize the public against corruption and build pressure for reforms. Indeed, they can raise standards of public accountability through monitoring and investigating the actions of those who were granted public trust, exposing corruption cases, and increasing the costs and risks associated with corrupt behaviors. The media can inform the public and present different points of views also can encourage public participation as well as support political competition by putting politicians under pressure to take a stand against corruption practices (Nogara, 2009).

However 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 (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. .

There are many ways in which the media can help combat and prevent corruption. A news story can have a direct and tangible effect, such as resulting in the launch of an investigation, impeachment and forced resignation of corrupt political leaders. Media coverage of corruption can also have longer term, more indirect effects. The media can help mobilize the public against corruption and build pressure for reforms. They can raise standards of public accountability by monitoring and investigating the actions of those who were granted public trust, exposing corruption cases, and increasing the costs and risks associated with corrupt behaviours. Informing the public and presenting different points of views can also encourage public participation as 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.

Framing of anti- corruption war of President Muhammadu Buhari was carried out by Igwebuiké (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 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 January 30<sup>th</sup> 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 *fadrio 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 summaries 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( Duta 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.

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. 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. 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

**Purpose** of the study sought determine the type of news on political corruption by newspapers in South Sudan

## 2.0 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.

## 3.0 RESULTS

### 3.1 Demographic Results

#### 3.1.1 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

As it is observed in the table 1 below, the education levels of the participants were varied. The respondents with university education made the highest number of those who were interviewed for the study, which constituted 65 or 87% of the total. Those with college education were 9, which made 12% of the total. Only one respondent (1%) had secondary level of education; this being the least educated respondent among all those who were interviewed. Based on this analysis, majority of the respondents were highly educated and therefore understood the relationship between newspaper coverage and political corruption in South Sudan. This further indicated that the respondents gave credible information regarding the subject of study. Hence, the researcher was able to effectively address the research question. Additionally, the statistics on the respondents' level of education meant that there was likely to be high readership ability of the survey respondents which made the ability to access crisis communication messages/information through newspapers possible (2010).

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education**

Education Status	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Secondary	1	1
College	9	12
University	65	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Data (2020)

#### 3.1.2 Operational Period for Newspaper

The respondents were asked to state the period for the operation of their respective newspapers, and the information is presented in table 2 below.

**Table 2 Operational Period for Newspaper**

No. of Years	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Below 5 years</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5-10 years</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>11-15 years</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Above 15 years</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Data (2020)*

From the statistics in table 2, 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.

**Table 3 Type of News on Political Corruption by Newspapers in South Sudan**

Type of news on political corruption	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Straight news	3	4
straight news, features, editorials, cartoons	2	3
straight news, editorials, cartoons	6	8
straight news, editorials	3	4
straight news, cartoons	9	12
straight news, letter to the editor, cartoons	3	4
Features, editorials, cartoons	1	1
Features & cartoons	2	3
Editorials & cartoons	13	17
Letters to the editor & cartoons	4	5
Cartoons	29	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Data (2019)*

Based on table above, most news on political corruption were presented in form of cartoons, where 29 (39%) of the respondents shared this opinion. Furthermore, 13 (17%) of the respondents indicated that the news were presented in form of editorials and cartoons while 9

(12%) said that the news was in mostly in form of straight news and cartoons. Other types were presented in different combinations, with least as 1 (1%), representing a combination of features, editorials and cartoons. From this data where most newspapers presented political news in form of cartoons, it may imply that the news did not reach very many people especially given the high illiteracy levels in South Sudan. This is because very few people ordinarily are able to interpret the meaning of cartoons in terms of the message they convey, especially where they are presented as standalone items without words to help in explaining further what the cartoons imply.

This limitation is further reinforced by the fact that 13 (17%) other respondents, who were the second in terms of their numbers, also indicated that the newspapers presented political corruption news in form of a combination of editorials and cartoons. This further meant that such news were limited to readers who may have high level of education to read condensed messages and be able to interpret and understand them well. It is true that most people with little or moderate education levels may be more inclined to reading elaborate news where they are able to decipher the message easily than going for things such as cartoons or editorials which may need some high level of intellect to analyze and understand.

The study further examined the sources of corruption news from the respondents. The findings indicated that corruption news had varied sources. These included leaked information from government official, social media, civil societies and NGOs, newspapers, national TVs, social media, opposition groups inside the country, university and academic information, law enforcement agencies, political figures, parliament, eye witnesses and anti-corruption commission reports. Various unpublished reports from individuals, researchers or even institutions as well contained important information on corruption. Some corruption cases were reported and pursued in courts of law, and therefore information about corruption could be acquired from the court proceedings. Officers who once worked in the government and were fired at times exposed the corruption incidences in their offices, especially if the firing was not well received by the officers. Human rights activists acted as whistle blowers, exposing scandals that would otherwise never have been unveiled. Some information was sought from online newspapers and websites for instance the Juba monitor graph, Sudan tribune and Alrakoba online newspapers among others. Some essential documents containing classified corruption deals leaked in the hands of media houses, hence helping unveil corruption incidences. Friends of corrupt individuals would at times secretly leak information about their dirty business in office, especially if their friends had taken the lions share and denied them their own. Other sources included banks, audit reports, money laundering scandals and mismanagement of public offices. This was according to the following responses:

*“Leaked information from government official, social media, civil societies and NGOs, newspapers, national TVs, social media, opposition groups inside the country, university and academic information, law enforcement agencies , political figures , parliament, eye witnesses and anti-corruption commission reports... Anti - corruption commission, national revenue authority, unpublished reports, auditor general. Reported cases in the court, Banks, fired officers, auditor reports...human right activists, radio and website like Juba monitor graph , Sudan tribune, Alrakoba online newspaper and Nymal peddra....Sudan*

*tribune , website...leaked documents...friends working at the government, money laundering scandals , mismanagement of public offices.”*

Respondent 39

*Source: Field Data (2020)*

The study further probed on the type of corruption news covered in newspapers. From the findings, it emerged that corruption was of varied kinds, and it ranged from simple to sophisticated corruption deals. The respondents indicated to cover embezzlement of funds meant to benefit the general public; hiring of relatives and clansmen into office by government officials, some of whom were incompetent to the tasks they were assigned; violation of democracy and illegally appointing people into office, not elected by the people they represent; and unequitable distribution of state resources and wealth, whereby some individuals channeled state resources for their own selfish and personal gains. Tribalism emerged to be a nuisance whereby some tribes were seen to be superior to others; some ranks especially in the army, police and public service were awarded on merit of *who do you know*. The misuse of power was evident whereby the elected leaders did not obey the rule of law. Nepotism was perpetuated in allocation of government contracts including road constructions, supply of government assets and foodstuffs to the vulnerable; whereby the contractors were close relatives of senior government officials. Media houses also covered cases of unpaid salaries, money laundering, land grabbing and illegal transfer of civil resources to government officials. Other corruption cases covered in newspapers included economic corruption, whereby taxes were not duly paid, corruption in the procurement of healthcare supplies and administration of healthcare to the citizens of South Sudan and traffic officers demanding for bribery even when the offenders had violated the traffic rules. Media houses therefore represented these cases through editorial cartoons, poems and freelance articles.

*“Embezzlement of funds, nepotism, abuse of power for instance appointments instead of elections, inequitable distribution of wealth and state resources...Tribalism, influence, rank in army or police or public service whether a person was in Service (SRS) concentrated more on the peaceful coexistence of South Sudanese, and the SRS organized it’s programs...misuse of power/ authority private persons not respecting the rule of law constitution and local rules...bribery...cartoons, poems and freelancer articles....government contracts are awarded to close relation / family members of government officials...Money stolen in the government offices....unpaid salaries , exporter laundering of money , land grabbing, ownership of government assets by its staff...economic related corruption , corruption in the area health...contacts for roads construction , army contracts and food supply...traffic officers asking for bribe.”*

Respondent KI011

*Source: Field Data (2020)*

Similar findings were observed from Burgess (2001) in India, who observed that in regions where newspaper circulation was high and the government accountable, calamity relief expenditure and public food distribution was more likely to reach their intended targets. A study

by Jensen and Oster (2009) used data from rural households in four Indian states and explored the effect of the introduction of cable television on women's status in rural India. They found that introduction of cable television was associated with greater women's empowerment (in terms of domestic abuse) and with a decrease in fertility. Their study showed that mass media affects informal institutions and paved the way for economic development. Economies with intense government ownership of the media have been shown to suffer from poverty, high infant mortality rates, less access to sanitation, higher corruption and less developed capital markets (Djankov *et al.*, 2003). Moreover, Coyne and Leeson (2004) emphasized that with a state-controlled media, politicians get an additional edge in manipulating information, reaching the public, and serving their private interests at the expense of society. Further, Leeson (2008) found that in countries where government had direct or indirect control (by controlling vital infrastructural and distributional facilities) of the media sector and restricted the free flow of information in society, citizens were more politically ignorant and relationship with the coverage of news by newspapers. From the study findings, it emerged that there was no relationship, since some of the policies were never implemented. This thereby translated to the inability of media houses to covering corruption cases despite the massive corruption cases in the country. The truth about corruption would not be openly and freely aired since content was monitored by government security agencies before being released for the masses. The respondents further pointed out that corruption news were affected by the ministry of information and communication in South Sudan. Despite the freedom of media being clearly stipulated in article 24 (2) of the Laws in South Sudan, journalists would be victimized and even executed for airing content that implicated government officials. They were seen as criminals and would be hunted even at a gun-point. Furthermore, media policies allowed for free press and freedom of expression, but journalist feared publishing as they were harassed and restricted in terms of the content to be shared.

*“Policies in the country are good on paper but implementers don't allow media to cover corruption cases yet the country is politically corrupt. The relation is restrictive in nature...some talk the truth back in the corner while the corrupt side needs them to stop telling the truth about corruption...no clear relationship between media coverage and regulation...The government ministry of information affects government related corruption news ...article 24 (2) of the Laws in South Sudan states that, “all the levels of the government shall guarantee the freedom of the press and the other media shall be regulated by the law in democratic society.” This only exiting paper as journalists are hunted and are seen as people who committed crime. In fact, journalists are seen as criminals in south Sudan...There is poor relation since newspapers are restricted from getting information form the agencies...the relation between the two is in such a way that it limits the media in exposing corruption practices...media policies allow for free press and freedom of expression, but journalist fear publishing due to harassment and restriction of press freedom.”*

Respondent KI021

*Source: Field Data (2020)*

The opinion of the respondents was sought on what could be done to enhance the coverage of political news by newspapers in South Sudan. The respondents highlighted the need to guarantee journalists the freedom to access information, freedom expression, and an end to information censorship; an end to intimidation, torture and killing of journalists who covered corruption news and appointing qualified personnel to lead media regulatory bodies. There was need to enact laws that protected media houses and journalists, especially in the cases where they covered sensitive but important information. The respondents further pointed out on the need to remove restrictions on the ownership and what news were to be covered by media houses; and that political leaders were to respect fundamental human rights of journalists. Some journalists feared covering corruption news even when they threatened the state and the civil community. Assuring them of their safety would enable them to publish corruption deals by politicians. Moreover, those who arrested journalists on grounds that they covered corruption cases were to be prosecuted and punitive actions taken against them. The respondents highlighted on the need for collaborative efforts between the government and NGO sector in ensuring that the freedom of press, freedoms of expression and access to information were protected and adhered to. The respondents further pointed out that media houses were to be independent of the government, and that they were to be allowed to cover corruption news freely.

### **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 of 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 , 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.

### **Recommendations**

The study has following recommend

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.

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.

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.

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 operation

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