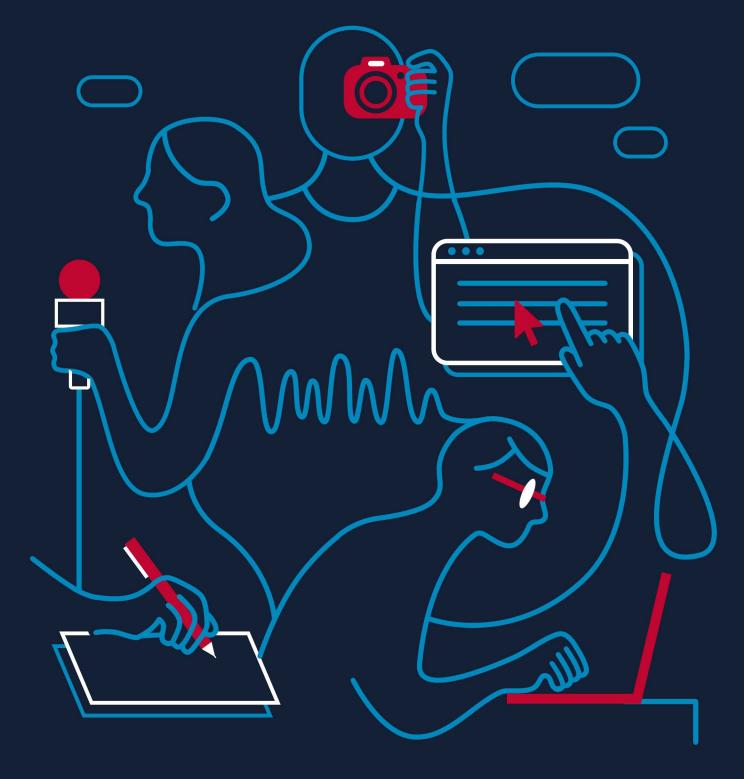
# ETHICAL GUIDE

FOR FILIPINO JOURNALISTS



National Union of Journalists of the Philippines



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For all the Filipino journalists who continue to thrive despite the dangers of reporting and speaking truth to power. For all our courageous colleagues who defy poor and challenging working conditions to help the people make informed decisions. For all the other journalists whose lives were cut short by COVID-19. And for our former chairperson, Nonoy Espina — the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines dedicates this guide to all of you.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines would like to thank all the people who made this guide possible, particularly those who participated in our survey and focus group discussions nationwide, as well as the organizations who provided their insights that help form this novel guide: the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, the Philippine Press Institute, and the Photojournalists' Center of the Philippines.

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#### **Foreword**

That the Philippine Press Institute, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines and the National Press Club adopted a Journalist's Code of Ethics in 1988, so soon after the restoration of democracy, shows the value that the profession puts on ethics.

But work in the media more than three decades later has become more complex than 11 guidelines could ever hope to cover.

In the course of the research for this manual, we found that many newsrooms simply assume that a rookie reporter already knows all about ethics because they learned it in journalism school or because they are inherently good people. Both may be true, but the practice demands so much of its practitioners that even veterans of the newsroom could find a refresher useful and updates on best practices necessary.

The journalism community has always held up self-regulation when the government proposes licensure and accreditation and this manual is, it is hoped, one concrete step towards that.

We recognize, however, that personal ethics are just one part of working towards a more ethical media. The late Nonoy Espina, under whose chairmanship initial work on this manual started, often stressed that wages and working conditions in media are as much a factor — if not more — in the challenge to remain an ethical journalist as personal convictions are.

"In such a situation," he said in an interview with the International Federation of Journalists in 2019 on the media landscape in the Philippines, "upholding ethics has become an increasingly uphill battle, although many journalists have also succeeded in keeping their principles and professionalism."

We hope that this manual helps many more journalists on that uphill battle to keep their principles and professionalism while we also push for a better working environment where doing the job ethically is not as difficult a choice.

Jonathan de Santos NUJP Chairperson

#### INTRODUCTION

### "Journalism without a moral position is impossible. Every journalist is a moralist. It's absolutely unavoidable."

#### - Marguerite Duras

Media circles in the Philippines tiptoe around discussions on ethics because many journalists consider the subject to be too personal. Although press watchdogs routinely call out journalistic malpractice, and the ubiquity of social media has made it easy for citizens to do the same, it is uncommon for a reporter to criticize a colleague for their ethical shortcomings, and, more so, for a news organization to reprimand a competitor over a lapse in professional judgment.

It is deemed impolite.

In Western settings, a confrontational approach is par for the course; not so in Philippine newsrooms and press offices where there's a premium on fellowship. Thus, conversations about moral and professional standards, and the extent to which media practitioners apply them in the performance of their craft, will in many cases turn awkward, stirring shame in some, for having stepped into ethical pitfalls themselves, or defensiveness in others, for failing to recognize the privilege of saying no – to coffee, or to a Christmas present or to cash in an envelope – in an industry where living wages are a rarity.

Rookie reporters straight out of college and brimming with fervor will discover quickly the ambiguities that complicate the rules taught by their ethics professors. They will find, for instance, that it might be perfectly okay to decline an invitation to a buffet after a press conference, but it is poor etiquette, and even poorer ethics, to rub it in the face of a fellow reporter who can hardly afford a decent meal.

This Guide aims to help journalists, especially the young, resolve the ethical dilemmas they have faced or will face on the job, including those confounding questions that cannot be answered in black or white.

One explanation for the reticence among Filipino journalists to discuss ethics openly and honestly is the industry's weak self-regulation and its failure to enforce its own rules even after egregious displays of unethical reporting or professional misconduct, as happened in the broadcast media's abysmal handling of the Manila bus hostage crisis of 2010.

Newsrooms, too, are typically secretive in their ways of dealing with errant reporters or editors, operating on a "don't ask, don't tell" policy with respect to one's adherence to the Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics or, if these exist, their own internal rules.

Ethics, however, is both, and in equal measure, individualistic and social. It refers not only to one's internal set of beliefs but to its external application, meaning it transcends both the personal integrity and professional behavior of reporters on the beat or during coverage, and the self-policing mechanisms of their organizations.

Media scholar Stephen Ward defines journalism ethics as the set of principles, norms and standards that can guide the practice not only of an individual journalist or newsroom but "an entire era of journalism."

This suggests, first, that journalism ethics is the media institutions' collective response to the problems, situations and changes confronting them, and second, that it is not static and evolves with the challenges of the times and the changing values of a society.

Crafted in 1988 by the post-EDSA Revolution press, the Journalist's Code remains as the only document approved by three of the biggest media institutions as the guide for the practice of ethical journalism in the country.

It carries the weight and endorsement of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), and the National Press Club (NPC), which collectively ratified 11 tenets of ethical journalism after the tumultuous years of Martial Law.

Journalists, they agreed, must be truthful, independent, fair and honorable both in their reporting and in their professional conduct during the pursuit of a story.

#### Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics

- I shall scrupulously report and interpret the news, taking care not to suppress essential facts nor to distort the truth by omission or improper emphasis. I recognize the duty to air the other side and the duty to correct substantive errors promptly.
- I shall not violate confidential information on material given me in the exercise of my calling.
- I shall resort only to fair and honest methods in my effort to obtain news, photographs and/or documents, and shall properly identify myself as a representative of the press when obtaining any personal interview intended for publication.
- I shall refrain from writing reports which will adversely affect a private reputation unless the public interest justifies it. At the same time, I shall write vigorously for public access to information, as provided for in the Constitution.
- I shall not let personal motives or interests influence me in the performance of my duties; nor shall I accept or offer any present, gift or other consideration of a nature which may cast doubt on my professional integrity.
- 6 I shall not commit any act of plagiarism.
- 7 I shall not in any manner ridicule, cast aspersions on or degrade any person by reason of sex, creed, religious belief, political conviction, cultural and ethnic origin.
- I shall presume persons accused of crime of being innocent until proven otherwise. I shall exercise caution in publishing names of minors, and women involved in criminal cases so that they may not unjustly lose their standing in society.
- g I shall not take unfair advantage of a fellow journalist.
- 10 I shall accept only such tasks as are compatible with the integrity and dignity of my profession, invoking the "conscience clause" when duties imposed on me conflict with the voice of my conscience.
- I shall comport myself in public or while performing my duties as journalist in such manner as to maintain the dignity of my profession. When in doubt, decency should be my watchword.

While it is generally accepted that the 33-year-old Code is out of date, some of its facets may be considered ahead of its time, as it emphasizes the value of truth-telling above the conventional journalistic virtues of neutrality and objectivity. The phrasing of the bylaws, though simplistic, is well in line with modern thinking on the functions of journalism in a society as well as the impossibility of absolute objectivity in reporting. In the same respect, however, the Code appears to relegate journalists to a passive role in preventing the distortion of truth. It falls short of their obligation to combat disinformation in the public sphere.

Esteemed writer and academic Luis Teodoro, in a December 2012 speech, makes a case for journalists as deserving of belonging to the august company of people who have potential to become "public intellectuals." He cites linguist and media critic Noam Chomsky's description of the responsibilities of the intellectual "as speaking the truth and exposing lies responsibilities that in the Philippine setting, where lies are often mistaken for the truth, and the truth, because too disturbing, is made to seem like a lie, are particularly relevant. But the intellectual speaks the truth and exposes lies - to the end, we should add, of interpreting the world towards changing it."

The Code, unfortunately, is silent on this. It is equally silent on the interplay and tension between journalism, power and justice, and the purpose of the journalist, as an oft-quoted phrase goes, to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

An ethics manual published in 2007 by the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), the most reputable press watchdog in the country, recognizes these unspoken mandates of journalism to speak truth to power and to amplify the voice of the marginalized. The group cites the seminal 2001 work of Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in "The Elements of Journalism," which posits nine essential characteristics of journalism, including how "it must serve as an independent monitor of power."

Echoing this, Rosenstiel and Kelly McBride write that besides telling the truth and reporting the facts, journalists must take on the mission of "giving voice to the voiceless and documenting the unseen."

To redirect Filipino journalists onto these untrodden paths, and, as well, to assist them in navigating the uncharted terrains of the modern media landscape, there is a need to revisit and update the Journalist's Code.

Fake news, disinformation, troll farming, cyber-libel and red-baiting/red-tagging, or the practice of labeling government critics as Communists, are only some of the issues and challenges facing the press in the digital age, on top of such enduring threats as media corruption, press censorship, and the culture of violence and impunity.

Filipino journalists have never been so close to their audience as today, as social media and the internet have obliterated the barriers that used to separate gatekeepers of the news from their consumers. yet this unprecedented familiarity between the media and the public brings discomfort on both sides, breeding not only contempt but distrust.

The emergence of populist and authoritarian world leaders has only fanned the flames of suspicion toward the news media. One of them is the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, who has launched relentless attacks on media organizations since winning the presidency in 2016. While he denies responsibility for the legal and extralegal harms inflicted on the press under his administration, the President's anti-media rhetoric has no doubt spurred state agents to go after critical news organizations, both in the mainstream and alternative press, among them, ABS-CBN, Rappler, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Bulatlat, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), **VERA** Files and AlterMidya.

As the most striking example, ABS-CBN, the largest media group in the Philippines boasting an 11,000-strong workforce at its peak, of whom 1,000 worked in the newsroom, was shut down after the House of Representatives, complying with the President's wishes, denied the network a new franchise. Celebrated Rappler founder Maria Ressa was convicted of cyber-libel and sentenced to prison in a case that remains on appeal while facing other charges, including tax fraud. The non-media business interests of Inquirer owners faced punitive actions that at one point pushed them to seek a buyout from a billionaire friend of Duterte, though the sale ultimately did not materialize.

In the alternative press, Manila Today editor Lady Ann Salem was freed in March 2021 after nearly three months in detention. A Mandaluyong court voided the search warrant used by the authorities to raid her apartment and ruled that the firearms and explosives they supposedly found were inadmissible evidence. But Frenchie Mae Cumpio, the editor of Eastern Vista website, who was held on an identical charge, is still behind bars after more than a year since the raid on her Tacloban City home-office in February 2020.

Philippine history is replete with Presidents like Duterte who have attempted or succeeded in suppressing the press, varying only in the severity of their methods, from the torture and abuses of the Ferdinand Marcos regime and Corazon Aquino's infamous libel suit against Luis Beltran to Joseph Estrada's advertising boycott on critical newspapers and the sedition charges pressed by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo against prominent journalists, to name only some.

## **A Timeline of Press Freedom**

1972-1988 (Santos & Pinlac, 2007)



#### **SEPT 21** 1972

Ferdinand Marcos signs Proclamation No. 1081 placing the country under Martial Law.

#### **SEPT 22** 1972

Through Letter of Instruction No. 1, Marcos orders the closure of media establishments like Manila Times; Daily Mirror; Manila Chronicle; Manila Daily Bulletin; Philippine Daily Express; Philippines Herald; Philippine Free Press, Graphic; and the Nation as well as wire agencies.



#### **SEPT 23** 1972

Media and opposition

military camps for

intelligence begins.

personalities known to be

critical of Marcos are taken to

investigation and detention.

the media by the military

The series of interrogations of

The Department of Public Information (DPI) issues Order No. 1 requiring all media publications to get a clearance from the DPI, and Order No.2 which prohibits printers "from producing any form of publication for mass dissemination without permission from DPI." On this day, the Philippine Daily Express restarts publication.

**SEPT 25** 1972



#### OCT 28 1972

Marcos issues Presidential Decree (PD) 33 which "penalizes the printing, possession, and distribution of leaflets and other materials, and even graffiti which undermine the integrity of the government."



#### **NOV 2** 1972

**JUNE 11** 1978

Marcos issues PD No. 1498 or

the National Security Code.

Marcos issues PD No. 36 canceling the franchises and permits of all mass media facilities allegedly trying to topple his government. The decree creates the Mass Media Council which has the power to grant certificates of authority to newspapers, radio, and TV.



Marcos issues PD 90 penalizing rumor-mongering. Rumor, according to the decree, is "false news and information and gossip which undermines the stability of government."



#### **NOV 9** 1974

PD 576 abolishes the Media Advisory Council and the Bureau of Standards for Mass Media. But, two days later, on November 11, Marcos authorizes the organization of regulatory councils for print and broadcast media through PD 576-A. The Philippine Council for Print Media and the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) are formed.



#### FEB 3 1976

Marcos issues PD 885 forbidding the creation of "subversive" organizations. It included "preparing documents, leaflets and any other types of publication, and advising and counseling members of 'subversive' organizations" as among the punishable acts. The penalty for crimes against public order is increased through PD 942.



#### **JAN 28** 1977

Marcos issues PD 1079, a decree "Revising and consolidating all laws and decrees regulating the publication of judicial notices, advertisements for public biddings, notices of auction sales, and other similar notices."



#### **SEPT 12** 1980

Marcos issues PD No 1737 or the Public Order Act. This " empowered him to issue orders as he may deem necessary" in order to clamp down on "subversive publications or other media of mass communication" and "ban or regulate the holding of entertainment (or exhibitions) deemed 'detrimental to the national interest." Under this, he was also "empowered to order the preventive detention of persons and to prohibit the wearing of certain uniforms or emblems."

#### MAY 11 1973

Marcos issues PD 191 abolishing the Mass Media Council and creating the Media Advisory Council.

1974

The Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines is formed to protect the rights of journalists working for foreign-based news agencies. Like local journalists, foreign correspondents undergo censorship. In an interview with PJR Reports, former New York Times correspondent Alice Colet Villadolid says they go to Malacañang every day to have their articles checked and approved by the Office of the Press Secretary.



#### **OCT 9** 1980

Marcos issues PD No. 727 making "unlawful the malicious dissemination of false information."

#### **JAN 17** 1981

Marcos issues Proclamation No. 2045 "lifting" Martial Law.

#### **JAN 23** 1981

The government abolishes the print and broadcast media councils. The right to publish without having to obtain prior license is restored.



#### **MARCH 9** 1982

Marcos issues Letter of Instruction No. 1211. Called the Presidential Commitment Order, the Presidential issuance allows the "preventive detention" of persons for crimes mentioned in PD No. 2045.



#### **DEC 2** 1982

Marcos orders the seizure of We Forum after it came out with a series exposing his fake medals.

#### **JULY 21** 1983

The Presidential Commitment Order is replaced by Preventive Detention Action. Marcos issues PD 1875 repealing the Public Order Act, and PD 1876 repealing the National Security Code.

#### **JULY 25** 1983

Marcos issues PD 1835 or the Anti-Subversion Law of 1981, "increasing the penalties for membership in subversive organizations from life imprisonment to death."



#### AUG 20 1983

Women Writers in Media Now hold a consultation on press freedom.

#### **AUG 21** 1983

Former senator Benigno Aquino Jr. is assassinated upon his return to Manila.

#### **SEPT 29** 1983

Properties of the Philippine Times are seized after it published a story implicating high government and military officials in the assassination of Ninoy Aquino.



#### Mid-1985

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists announces that a total of 12 journalists have been killed since 1984. The National Press Club, on the other hand, says that 19 were killed and one has been missing since 1976.



#### FEB 7 1986

Snap elections are held.



#### FEB 22 1986

People Power begins and ends peacefully after four days.



#### FEB 25 1986

Marcos flees to Hawaii. Corazon Aquino takes power.





#### FEB 28 1986

The Aquino government issues Executive Order (EO) No. 1 creating the Presidential Commission on Good Government which is tasked to go after the alleged ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family.

#### **MARCH 2** 1986

President Aquino lifts the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus.

#### **JULY 16** 1986

EO No. 29 repeals PD No. 33, the decree "Penalizing the Printing, Possession, Distribution and Circulation of Certain Leaflets, Handbills and Propaganda Materials and the Inscribing or Designing of Graffiti."

#### **DEC 17** 1986

Malacañang issues EO No. 92 expanding the responsibility and authority of the Office of the Press Secretary. Through this order, the Bureau of National and Foreign Information and all its subsidiary offices, the Radio and Television Malacañang, the Presidential Press Staff and its sub-offices, the People's Television 4, and the Radyo ng Bayan are placed under the control of the OPS.

#### **DEC 24** 1986

The Aquino government forms the Philippine Information Agency after the abolition of the Office of Media Affairs.

#### 1987

The PPI is reestablished after its operation was halted during martial law.



#### **JUNE 5** 1987

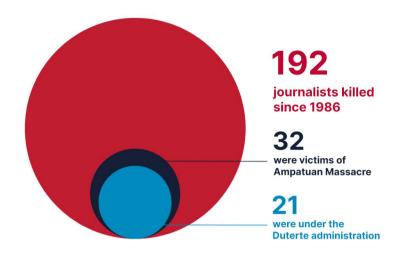
President Aquino issues EO No. 187 repealing the Marcos-issued PD 38 ("Amending Articles 135, 136, 137, 138, 140, 142, 177, 178 and 179 of The Revised Penal Code"), 942 ("Amending the Provisions of the Revised Penal Code on Crimes Against Public Order), 1735 ("Imposing Additional Penalties for Rebellion, Insurrection, Sedition, and Subversion Committed Within or Outside Philippine Territory"), 1834 ("Increasing The Penalties For The Crime of Rebellion, Sedition, and Related Crimes, and Amending For This Purpose Articles 135, 136, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146 and 147 Of The Revised Penal Code and Adding Section 142-B Thereto"), 1974 ("Amending Presidential Decree No. 1834"), and 1996 ("Further Amending PD No. 1834 as Amended") and Articles 142-a and 142-b of the Revised Penal Code.

#### **OCT** 1987

President Aquino files a libel suit against journalist Luis Beltran for writing in his column that she "hid under the bed" while government troops were battling mutineers in August 1987. Post-script: On October 22, 1992, Beltran and Soliven were convicted of libel, but the decision was reversed by the Court of Appeals on July 12, 1993.

#### 1988

The NUJP, PPI and the National Press Club adopt the Journalist's Code of Ethics.





230 cases of attacks on journalists

(including arrests and detention, libel cases, intimidation, red-tagging, cyberattacks)

Over time, the state-sponsored campaign to vilify the press has made deep inroads, eroding the public's trust in the Fourth Estate even as consumption of news continues to grow during the gradually accelerating shift from traditional to online media.

A survey of 2,209 adult respondents in the Philippines in the 2021 Digital News Report, an annual project of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University, registered low overall trust in the news, at 32 percent, well below the global average of 44 percent, although it was already an improvement from the previous year's 27 percent. The Philippines ranked sixth to last place among 46 media markets covered.

In the profile on the Philippines in the earlier 2020 report, respected journalist and professor Yvonne Chua notes that the reason for the country's low ranking may be that journalists and publications critical of the President "have faced increased attacks over the last year, ranging from insults to state-initiated court cases."

"Journalists have been labelled 'prostitutes,' 'fake news,' 'spies,' 'lowlifes' and 'enemy' by

the president and his supporters who have sown confusion between foreign funding of mass media, which is lawful, and foreign ownership, which is prohibited. Alternative media outlets have been plagued by distributed denial of servitce attacks and 'red-tagging' – being labelled as communists or terrorists," she writes.

Besides lawsuits and verbal attacks, journalists have also been assaulted and, at times, murdered.

At least 192 journalists and media workers have been killed since the restoration of democracy in 1986, according to figures compiled by press freedom groups Reporters Without **Borders** (RSF), Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and NUJP. Of the fatalities, 32 were victims of the 2009 **Ampatuan** massacre Maguindanao, the single deadliest attack against journalists in history.

The Duterte administration has only continued this terrible legacy. As of October 2021, the NUJP Media Safety Office has recorded 21 journalists killed since 2016, most of them working in the community press. In the same period, the NUJP documented 230 cases of attacks on

journalists, including arrests and detention, filing of libel cases, intimidation, surveillance, red-tagging and cyberattacks. Not surprisingly, the Philippines has emerged year after year as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist, based on the CPJ's Global Impunity Index.

The country "has become notorious for impunity," says Chua.

To understand the persistence of the culture of impunity, it is crucial to determine how it connects to ethical and professional malpractice in the Philippine Corruption in journalism jeopardizes the lives of all media practitioners not because those of them who are unethical are automatically exposed to harm, but because members of the public and by extension. the authorities, bombarded by accounts of bribery in the press, begin to believe that that harm is self-inflicted and deserved.

Teodoro, in a speech delivered during World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2011, explains: "I am not saying that those killed were unethical or unprofessional, as some in both academia and practice insist, although a few may indeed fall into that category. I am saying that unprofessional and unethical performance has over the years predisposed readers, viewers and listeners to look at the media, except in relatively rare instances, as of no consequence to their lives and those matters that concern them."

There is a rich taxonomy of media corruption and bribery in the Philippines, tracing its roots to the paid-for journalism of the 1970s marked by the wholesale and

institutional repurposing of journalism as a vehicle for state propaganda, writes CMFR executive director Melinda Quintos de Jesus in "Untold Stories: How Corruption Conflicts of Interest Stalk the Newsroom" in 2015 for the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN).

"This also encouraged and institutionalized the practice of cash incentives or gifts given to journalists to secure favorable coverage. The conflict of interest is obvious: a journalist who takes bribes is reporting for his personal gain. A reporter then can slant the story to favor a subject who has paid or promised payment and shares the reward with other editors," she says.

De Jesus identifies some of the unethical practices that persist up to now: AC-DC (attack-collect, defend-collect), where a reporter is paid first to criticize and then paid to praise; ATM journalism, meaning regular payoffs through a journalist's ATM account; "blood money," or a bribe to "kill" a story; "envelopmental journalism," which refers to the under-the-table practice of giving reporters cash in envelopes; and intelligentsia, a play on "intelligence" and the journalist's "share" of protection money given to police.

While the pervasiveness of such journalistic misbehavior upsets and embarrasses press groups, they are by no means shocked by it. Indeed, what may well be more upsetting and embarrassing for the media industry is the sorry state of its practitioners.

An untold number of reporters, photographers, videographers, production staffers and correspondents are paid a pittance for their work, forced to take side jobs to sustain themselves and their

families, or worse, interminably drawn into the culture of corruption.

In March 2021, the NUJP's Survey on Journalists' Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes toward Ethical Journalism drew responses from a broad cross section of journalists and media workers from all over the country. Although the sample is not representative of the entire industry, the salary ranges reported by the respondents paint a staggering portrait of media compensation in the Philippines.

The largest group, or 19 percent of the respondents, reported earning PHP5,000-10,000 (USD100-200) a month, while 16 percent said they were paid below PHP5,000 a month. Only 15 percent stated they received a salary of PHP41,000 (USD822) and above, of whom most are based in Metro Manila, according to the survey. Of the respondents, a little more than a third said they had no other source of income, while the rest indicated taking various alternative jobs from commissioned work for NGOs or the private sector to teaching stints, speaking engagements, and even farming.

Writing for the PCIJ in 2010, Tita Valderama

reports that: "Media companies – print, broadcast, or online – have varying salary rates. Many print journalists for community newspapers are paid only for the stories that are run, not for stories that they submit."

"Some journalists thus take home as little as PHP3,000 (USD60) a month. The more senior ones make PHP10,000 (USD200) to PHP15,000 (USD300), depending on the number of newspapers they write for," Valderama writes.

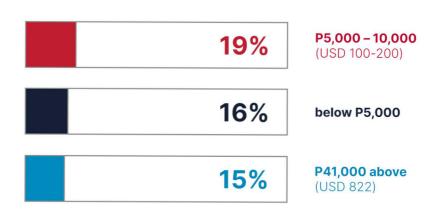
By contrast, top media companies in the Philippines are run by some of its wealthiest families, who are known to build what VERA Files and RSF characterize in a 2017 report as a "cozy relationship" with the political and business elite.

"Since the turn of the 20th century, media were owned and controlled directly by the oligarchy, or by its allies. Marcos displaced the traditional owners with his own 'cronies,' who functioned as an even more concentrated oligarchy. After Martial Law, partly familiar faces and partly new players (re)entered the media market which allows them to promote their vast affiliated business interests," according to the report.

# Media salary in the PH

\*monthly

NUJP Survey on Journalists' Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes toward Ethical Journalism



#### MEDIA OWNERSHIP MONITOR PHILIPPINES

# **Top 8 Media Companies based on Revenue**

Source: Securities and Exchange Commission - General Information Statement(GIS) and Financial Statements(FS) For more information: https://philippine.mom-rsf.org

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	ABS-CBN	GMA	MANILA ABULLETIN TOO NA TOOM & LAASON NAWS-A-FEA	THE PHILIPPINE STAR	INQUIRER	5	SOLAR INTERPRET COMMON	MBC BROADCASTING COMPANY
SEC DATA	Dec. 15	Dec. 15	Dec. 15	Dec. 15	Dec. 15	Dec. 14	Dec. 15	Dec. 15
TV	•	•				•	•	
Radio	•	•	•		•	•		•
Print	•		•	•	•			
Online	•	•			•	•	•	•
Revenue	817.04	293	58.89	44.92	42.88	38.31	29.28	23.08
Advertising	453.88	264.61	31.65	-	( <del>=</del> )	Ψ.	Ξ.	21.69
Ad. in %	56%	90%	53%	-	:=1	=	-	94%
of revenue								
Profit	76.68	63.65	2.46	5.66	1.004	-82.43	2.66	3.3
Market Share	58.47%	20.97%	4.29%	3.21%	3.070%	2.74%	2.10%	1.65%
79.44%						Total Market Share Total Market Revenue Total Market Profit		96.49% 1397.45 62.162

Before the ABS-CBN shutdown in May 2020, the broadcast giant dominated the industry alongside GMA Network Inc., the two together forming a duopoly that has wielded the biggest economic power and audience reach among media companies in the country.

Other key players in the industry are Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Philippine Star, TV5, Solar Entertainment and Manila Broadcasting Co.

Because of the ties that bind them, it should come as no surprise that there are widespread perceptions that the corporate media are beholden to political and business interests.

Results of the NUJP survey among

journalists showed that 3 in 5 journalists agreed to the statements: "All media companies have sacred cows," "Media companies are being used to promote or protect the image of a politician," and "Media companies are being used to promote or protect products/services of the owners' other businesses."

Not all news organizations, of course, are equal, and today even the largest ones are struggling in the face of drastic changes in the media landscape with the migration from print and broadcast to digital, compounded by financial difficulties due to the 2020 pandemic. In an interview with the NUJP in May 2021, PPI executive director and trustee Ariel Sebellino says the community lockdown in many parts of the country has forced at least 12 publications

to limit operations. Many outfits have retrenched employees and cut costs.

This, however, does not absolve media institutions of their obligation to "uplift the lives of employees," says Sebellino. For some publishers, "all they are thinking of is money and survival but survival isn't everything," he says. "We must weigh things between commerce and our mission and vision. We have to stick to the core of what the organization truly is."

Journalism ethics, therefore, must be anchored not only on press freedom issues and the responsibilities of individual journalists, but on the protection of the social welfare and labor rights of its practitioners, especially in the lowest rungs of the industry. It is incumbent on media owners and funders to provide living wages and decent remuneration for their reporters and staff.

The times call on journalists to take stronger and more forceful steps in exposing and fighting such injustice within their ranks, to uplift their living and working conditions, and as an answer to the chilling effects of the prevailing culture of impunity.

Journalism professor Danilo Arao writes in a 2016 paper, "Press Freedom, Governance and Culture of Impunity: The Alarming Case of the Philippines," that ending the culture of impunity in the country might necessitate strengthening the "culture of resistance" within the press.

"Impunity results in the dearth or absence of press freedom which, in turn, has deleterious effects on the practice of journalism as the people are deprived of relevant information that could help shape public opinion," he says.

The problems facing today's media industry are complex and sometimes baffling. They require a rethinking of some of the conventions in the profession and the core principles that influence its practice. Teodoro reminds journalists how they "have to renew our commitment to the defense of press freedom through, among other means... 'continuing self-examination, self-criticism and reform,' both for our own sake as well as that of the Filipino people."

Ethics, according to Teodoro, "has to do not only with journalists' lives, welfare and safety, but also with the lives of the people, and the survival of whatever remains of democracy in this country."

More than ever, journalists are being challenged to examine themselves, to be more honest, honorable and answerable to the public, their readers and viewers, and to be more vigilant and watchful of the powerful forces in government and business that exert heavy restraints on the independent and free press.

This Guide embraces the duty of a journalist as a truth-teller more than a reporter of facts, focusing on what is truthful instead of what is technically correct, being humane and grounded in the community we serve, being open and accountable to the public, fair more than neutral, just and responsible instead of distant and objective, and going beyond "he said, she said" reporting that defines mainstream Philippine journalism today.

66

The times call on journalists to take stronger and more forceful steps in exposing and fighting such injustice within their ranks, to uplift their living and working conditions, and as an answer to the chilling effects of the prevailing culture of impunity.



#### **CASE STUDY**

# The Manila Bus Hostage Crisis of 2010

What may well be the most embarrassing 11 hours in the history of the Philippine press occurred on August 23, 2010, as the world watched media coverage of a hostage crisis that was unfolding at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila's Rizal Park after dismissed police officer Rolando Mendoza, brandishing an assault rifle, commandeered a bus full of tourists from Hong Kong and began making demands.

As delicate negotiations with the police progressed from morning until early evening, reporters gave graphic live reports of the events, took turns interviewing the hostage-taker to the point of cutting off his communication line with negotiators, agitated the suspect by reporting the arrest of his brother on live TV, and visibly panicked and lost composure as shots were fired and a gunfight ensued between the authorities and Mendoza.

By the time the gunpowder had settled, nine people were dead, including Mendoza.

The broadcast media's behavior was shocking and the impact on the industry was huge. It prompted a major reassessment of media ethics in the country. It forced the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), the only self-regulatory body for TV and radio, to overhaul the Broadcast Media Code.

The fallout was so tremendous that members of the House of Representatives and the Senate issued a stern warning to the broadcast media to practice better self-regulation, lest they be compelled to legislate controls on media – statements that lawmakers would not dare to make under normal circumstances.

Then Cebu Representative Gabriel Quisumbing filed House Bill No. 2737 to make it unlawful for the media to report police and troop movements during crises such as a hostage-taking incident. Though it did not prosper, the fact that the bill was filed at all was a message in itself.

Media watchdog Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) took stock of the events and listed down specific examples of unethical behavior shown by the reporters and news presenters who covered the hostage drama.

# Blow-by-blow coverage

The media provided live, detailed and blow-by-blow reports during the police operation. As the hostage-taker was watching television on the bus, Mendoza was made aware of the movements and positions of the police operatives outside. A television reporter ran and joined the raiding team, defying a request to step back. Every detail was revealed on live TV, from the team's location to their actions. Another reporter from a rival station exposed the position of snipers who were at that point training their sight on the bus. Another reporter disclosed the type of firearm the authorities were planning to use against Mendoza.

# Interviewing the hostage-taker

At one point, Mendoza requested to be interviewed by the press, putting out a sign that read "Media now" on the windshield. One by one, reporters from four major broadcasting networks were able to get hold of him on the phone.

The CMFR observed: "The problem with interviewing a hostage-taker is that it gives him or her a platform from which he or she can say anything. The interviews with Mendoza also choked police communication with the lines The **IIRC** (Incident hostage-taker. Investigation and Review Committee)

report noted that Police Superintendent Orlando Yebra was still trying to contact Mendoza, but that the latter was not answering the police phone, and his mobile phone was busy. Assistant negotiator Police Chief Inspector Romeo Salvador told the IIRC that Tulfo was talking on the police phone while describing the bus."

# Covering the arrest of the suspect's brother

One of the media's biggest failings was when it made a spectacle of the arrest of the hostage-taker's brother Gregorio, who was at the time suspected of being an accessory. Reporters swarmed around him and the arresting officers, despite knowing that Mendoza was watching. Gregorio's arrest was shown on live TV, angering his brother.

Moments later, Mendoza began firing.

### **Panicky anchors**

Another ethical lapse observed by the CMFR was the disposition of news presenters annotating the events being shown on screen. At one point, a TV news anchor interrupted a fellow reporter and shouted that shots were being fired. His colleague in the studio turned visibly frantic and panicky, alarming TV viewers.

Weeks later, the CMFR organized a round-table discussion that gathered together news managers and reporters to do a post-mortem assessment on what transpired. Here are some of their findings and conclusions:

- While existing guidelines do not prohibit live coverage, the media must weigh the risks of going live to ensure the safety of both their subjects and media workers.
- Media organizations should draft and adopt internal guidelines to ensure that live coverage does not violate journalism ethics. A news manager may be assigned to ensure ethical compliance during coverage.
- Driven by competition, the race for ratings is the primary reason why there is limited or even no restraint in live coverage. The repercussions being evident with the incident's outcome, competition should take second place during incidents that involve risks to human lives. Media organizations should agree on a set of limits in covering hostage-taking and similar incidents to reduce the pressure of going live and getting exclusives for the sake of the ratings.
- While guidelines are available and/or doable, enforcement by media organizations is another thing. Media, through individual and collective efforts, should be more rigorous in implementing ethical guidelines.

- The networks should resist the temptation to go live just because the technology to do so is available. Restraint in live coverage includes care in using the social media networks of news organizations, whose fast, unedited nature makes them prone to factual glitches.
- The KBP is encouraged to publicize its mechanisms of sanctioning practitioners and stations that commit ethical lapses, to remind them of the importance of adhering to professional and ethical standards and to show them that the KBP is serious about self-regulation.

# **Promotion of Journalism Ethics in the Philippines**

# Press Freedom, Law and Ethics



It is well to remember that freedom through the press is the thing that comes first.

> Most of us probably feel we couldn't be free without newspapers, and that is the real reason we want the newspapers to be free.

**Edward Murrow** 

Until journalist killings and government shakedowns tarnished its image, the country's news media used to boast a reputation for being among the most lively and outspoken in the region, enjoying liberties and protections its neighbors could only dream of. At one point, in the years preceding Martial Law, the Philippine press was touted as the freest in Asia and one of the freest in the world.

Under Philippine law and jurisprudence, journalism is protected from censorship and other prior restraints that may hamper its operation. Freedom of the press enshrined in the Bill of Rights under the 1987 Constitution, which states that: "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances." Congress has legislated a law that protects journalists, whether in print, broadcast or online, from being forced to reveal their sources, except in the interest of national security as determined by the courts or the legislature.

Media institutions have vigorously defended against any transgression of these prized legal and constitutional protections in the name of press freedom. Yet, as recent experience has shown, such freedom is far from absolute.

There are a number of legal instruments the government has used time and again to circumvent the Constitution and control the press – or to retaliate against it, as the case may be.

Television and radio networks are covered by legislative franchises and the rules of the National Telecommunications Commission. Media corporations are subject to tax and securities laws. Publishers, editors and reporters are vulnerable to lawsuits such as libel, cyber-libel and other criminal offenses. (See How to Defend Against Libel or Cyber-Libel).

More recently, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 is being challenged before the Supreme Court by activist, legal and media groups for its loose definition of terrorism that may empower state forces to label any critic as a terrorist or any word of criticism as a terrorist act.

One petition, filed by a group of lawyers and journalists, argues: "By penalizing acts regardless of the stage of execution, the Anti-Terrorism Act criminalizes a whole range of actions beginning with expressions of thought, to associations of persons, and to the very acts resulting in death, injury or damage including 'ordinary crimes' under existing laws."



National Union of Journalists of the Philippines

"We do not dispute that terrorism is a menace that must be slain," reads part of the petition, as cited in an Inquirer report. "Our grand Constitutional traditions however do not countenance legal measures that only transform government into a calculatingly cold and repressive machine, such as the new anti-terrorism law."

Outside the ambit of law lurk serious dangers for the press, from harassment, online bullying, verbal attacks and red-baiting to death threats, assaults, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings that claim new victims every year. In October 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte created the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) with the aim of "ensuring a safe environment for media workers."

Yet, after five years and a body count so far of 20 dead journalists during Duterte's term, the task force has little to show for it, except statements proudly and emptily boasting "that the so-called 'culture of impunity' against journalists in the country has finally come to an end," according to CPJ, in reference to the premature classification of the 2009 Ampatuan massacre case as "solved" by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO).

It may be said that the observance of ethics provides a degree of protection to journalists and media organizations facing legal or extralegal threats, because reports that are truthful and fair are, in theory, less likely to trigger the ire of the state or the vengeance of the powerful – but only up to a point.

In practice, it makes little sense to draw a distinction between victims who are ethical and who are not when the culture of impunity is so pervasive. The imperative, then, is to foster a climate that is conducive and encouraging to the practice of ethical standards, to alter the public's deep-set perception of widespread corruption in the press that has over time predisposed Filipinos, as Luis Teodoro says, to view the media "as of no consequence to their lives and those matters that concern them."

Toward this end, the CMFR has been active in monitoring ethical issues in the Philippines, by turns complimenting good practices and reproaching bad behavior in the press. It regularly holds seminars and training programs to raise ethical awareness among journalists.

The NUJP, for its part, devotes its energies toward upholding press freedom and defending against attempts to suppress the media, though it also pays close attention to matters of ethics and calls out misjudgments.

The two groups, however, do not hold any coercive power on news organizations, which is the purview of membership-based media guilds like the PPI for newspapers and the KBP for TV and radio stations.

In 1988, the PPI collaborated with the NUJP and the NPC to craft and approve the Philippine Journalist's Code. The PPI also issued guidelines on reporting about children in 2003 and on disasters and emergencies in 2008. The group has likewise published a Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct in Covering Elections.

In 1981, the KBP presented the first of its Radio and Television Codes drafted by media owners and practitioners and had since assumed the responsibility of policing their ranks and professionalizing the industry.

# The creation of KBP

### 1972

The Media Advisory Council (MAC) and the Bureau of Standards for Mass Media are created by then President Ferdinand Marcos to put all media entities under government control and supervision.

### **April 27, 1973**

Radio and television network owners decide to form the private organization KBP. This puts forward the setting of policies and standards that will regulate the activities of the broadcast media. The organization aims not just to professionalize the broadcast industry but also to prove to the government that media practitioners are capable of regulating their ranks, deflecting full government control over the industry.

### November, 1974

The MAC and the Bureau of Standards for Mass Media are abolished by virtue of Presidential Decree 576, paving the way for the creation of two regulatory councils: the Broadcast Media Council (BMC) and the Print Media Council.

### January, 1981

The BMC is abolished. The role of the BMC is given to KBP which ultimately forms its own enforcement body known as the KBP Standards Authority (KBP-SA). This formulates program and advertising standards that guide all member radio and television stations in the conduct of their activities.

### November, 1981

The first Radio and Television Codes of KBP, crafted by media owners and practitioners themselves, are presented to its general membership for approval during the 7th KBP Top-Level Management Conference.

# Self-Regulation of the Press

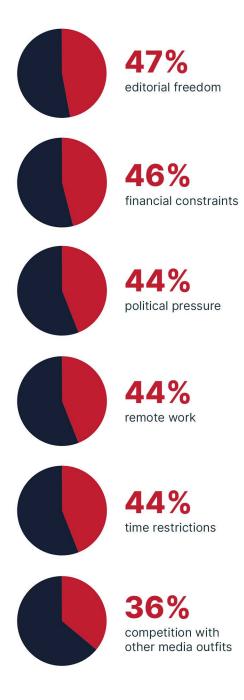
In the absence of effective institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of ethical guidelines, the onus of self-regulation ultimately falls on news organizations themselves, the result of which is uneven and inconsistent compliance with standards of ethics across the industry.

Whether a media worker adheres to ethical quidelines can depend on a number of variables, such as a news organization's business model, corporate pressures, the internal ethical policies guiding staff or the lack thereof, the company's wage structure, and newsroom culture. Perhaps because of this, the journalism produced by Philippine media outfits can vary wildly in quality, from ground-breaking investigative reports on wrongdoing official to puff pieces pandering to the wealthy.

A 2021 NUJP survey of journalists found that about two-thirds of the respondents replied in the affirmative when asked if their media outfit has a standing code of ethics. But nearly one in five reported that "it is loosely implemented."

The surveyed journalists listed down the factors they felt "affect the practice of ethical reporting": editorial freedom (47 percent), financial constraints (46 percent), and political pressure, remote work and time restrictions (44 percent). Competition with other media outfits drew 36 percent of affirmative responses.

### Factors that affect the practice of ethical reporting



NUJP Survey on Journalists' Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes toward Ethical Journalism

"The standards of reporting are very varied," observes the FES report. "Low salaries and the lack of skills and training often lead to poor writing and reporting. Media practitioners complain about the deteriorating quality of graduates coming out of journalism schools," it continues.

"While TV anchors make more money than their education warrants, small community newspapers can't pay living wages for their reporters or correspondents. unionization of the journalistic workforce outside of the top television networks leaves journalists in small cities and rural areas exposed to the whims of the publishers. The result is a subculture of corruption where some journalists take bribes to perform their professional function," according to the report.

The report concludes that: "With the media in general not ready for self-criticism and self-correction, the principle of self-regulation by the media is not really working in practice."

In the United States, major news organizations typically retain a "press ombudsman" whose duties range from representing the public in the newsroom and receiving and answering complaints about its coverage to monitoring editorial content for ethical violations and assisting in professional staff training.

The press ombudsman model, however, has gained little traction in the Philippines. The Philippine Daily Inquirer, until recently, was the only national broadsheet that retained a "Readers' Advocate," a position that the paper had maintained on and off since 1988. Its former publisher, the late Isagani Yambot, is quoted as saying in the CMFR's

Philippine Press Freedom Report in 2008 that the Inquirer prides itself in having an ombudsman to "ensure the paper's excellence, integrity, editorial independence and social responsibility."

The concept of a press ombudsman, however, is considered by some critics as a flawed model because, as an insider in the news organization, they become vulnerable to newsroom pressures and to the owners' private or political interests, according to the CMFR. The FES report similarly observes that while some media companies in the Philippines have ombudsmen to monitor and check the staff's compliance with internal ethical policies, they "don't seem to have the support of the top management or owners."

Explaining why she quit her post after only two years, one of the Inquirer's former Reader's Advocates, Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, says in the 2008 CMFR report that she found the job "too stressful, frustrating, and thankless." At present, the newspaper has no press ombudsman in its employ.

For all its weaknesses, the CMFR maintains that self-regulation based on a high level of ethical awareness still the "only is permissible and desirable means regulation" in the journalism profession. **CMFR** executive director De Jesus suggests a possible solution in EJN's 2015 report on media corruption in Philippines - involving the general public as a crucial stakeholder in the fight against conflicts of interest.

"Media literacy training can be undertaken in schools. More important, there should be training for citizens, including public officials but particularly for the public, so an an audience is empowered to evaluate and criticize media practice when necessary," she writes.

De Jesus tentatively broaches the possibility of a national, independent press ombudsman who can take on the role of policing the press.

Such an idea, however, needs further study, she concedes. One of the more difficult questions that must be resolved is whether to accept government funding, which presents both an opportunity for the press and at the same time an obstacle to its independence.

Sebellino, in the NUJP interview, proposes forming not only separate self-regulatory bodies for print, broadcast or online media but an "industry-wide Press Council."

"It will send a strong message to the government that there are well-meaning

organizations that will strive to make better and more excellent journalism. And to the government, no, we don't owe press freedom to you. You didn't give us press freedom; we fought for it," he says.

A genuine functioning self-policing press is "going to take a lot of work," Sebellino admits. "The most difficult part is how do you get other groups to join? What can we do if we exert efforts but they don't want to?"

"It is going to be a bloodbath but we need to do it one step at a time... Some of the tools and instruments are already there... There's the NUJP and other like-minded organizations. It will help us all if we have each other's backs," Sebellino says. "We may not be able to give money but at least we must provide moral support. We need to support each other. That is how we will be able to survive."

### A Working Model

# The Cebu Citizens-Press Council

Efforts to create a self-regulatory body to police the Philippine press have met with little or no success, nationally and locally. But there is one regional example that has thrived and remains to date the only active press council in the country – the CCPC.

The beginnings of the CCPC may be traced back to 2001 when three Cebu journalists, Eileen Mangubat of the Cebu Daily News, Noel Pangilinan of The Freeman, and Pachico Seares of Sun Star Cebu, discussed the idea of setting up a local press council with Marvin Tort, then executive director of the PPC. On Sept. 16, 2002, another gathering led the fledgling organization to come up with a set of basic rules borrowed from foreign models or local experiences.

The Council, however, was not fully fleshed out until four years later, following a series of briefings and consultations with other potential members and the CMFR, which had developed its own community press council concept that coincided with the Cebu journalists' purposes.

The CMFR model sought to include civil society representatives in the grievance process to bring a community perspective to the practice of journalism – "one that encourages accurate, complete, fair and balanced reporting." Today, Cebu journalists would agree that CCPC owes its success to such public sector engagement, along with institutional buy-in from

publishers and station managers as stakeholders.

The first few years of the CCPC, however, saw a lack of activity due to other pressing concerns that preoccupied Cebu's news organizations at the time. That changed on Sept. 1, 2005, when a group of Cebu journalists, including most of the original founders, met to revive the Council.

This time, they agreed on a basic organizational and membership structure. The CCPC shall be composed of 15 people: editors-in-chief the of the English-Language dailies and two Bisaya dailies in Cebu or their alternates who shall be senior editors, two representatives from the broadcast industry, one for radio and one for television, nominated by KBP, two mass communication or journalism school deans or professors or former media practitioners or academicians, and six public sector representatives who shall be chosen "not only for their sector but also for their interest in, and appreciation of, the workings of the press."

Members of the Council shall elect a president, "preferably a retired judge, lawyer, or any other professional known for probity and integrity," as well as a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

The Council shall have a regular en banc meeting every quarter or depending on the business that needs a full membership meeting. En banc meetings shall be limited to a quarterly regular meeting or any special meeting convened for a media issue or concern by the President or upon request of at least five members.

The group also crafted a set of basic principles to govern the grievance mechanism for complaints against Cebu's news organizations.

- Complaint shall be addressed first to the publication. Only when it is not satisfactorily met by the newspaper-by clarification, correction or apology-will the Council entertain it.
- To determine whether the complaint shall go to the Review Board, the Secretariat shall study the complaint and the publication's response to it, officially and in published comments.
- A member of the Secretariat may be tasked to mediate between the complainant and the publication.
- A hearing by the Review Board shall be a last recourse.
- A waiver of the right to sue shall be a condition for a complaint to be heard by the Review Board.
- No lawyer shall appear before any proceeding of the Review Board. A member who has conflict of interest in the complaint shall be substituted with another member.
- Meetings of the Secretariat and the Review Board shall be in executive sessions closed to the media and the public.

- The filing of the complaint and all proceedings on it shall be confidential until the Review Board renders its decision.
- Decision of the Review Board shall be released for publication to the newspaper that is the subject of the complaint. If the newspaper refuses to publish the decision within two days from receipt of the copy, the Council shall release it to all the other publications.

At present, the CCPC's activities are not limited to resolving complaints about ethical lapses of news organizations in Cebu. The members are active in engaging the public on the challenges facing the Cebu media, highlighting press freedom issues, and calling out attempts to stifle or suppress journalists. Its slogan, emblazoned across the CCPC website, reads: "Being accountable comes with being free."

For all its successes, however, challenges persist, and Cebu journalists, including those under the CCPC umbrella, are not immune from serious ethical lapses.

In February 2021, the CMFR called out a number of Cebu-based journalists for joining the police team in the supposed "rescue" of young Lumad (indigenous) students from the Talamban campus of the University of San Carlos. "The result was uncritical coverage that was practically assured by the reporters' accepting the police invitation for them to join the convoy," according to the CMFR's report "jeering" the Cebu media organizations.

"The reporters involved described the

event exactly as the police called it: 'a rescue' operation. Their failure to ask whether the police had the required warrants and coordinated with university authorities was indication enough that they had compromised their independence, and thus had identified themselves with the police and the consequent violations of human rights and due process," the report says.

The CMFR adds that while later coverage by the same media outfits included statements by other sources from human rights groups and the church countering the police claims, "there was no reference to the misrepresentation in their initial accounts on Facebook, or any indication that they had verified police claims and corrected their failure to provide any context to the incident."

Seares, the CCPC executive director, acknowledges some of the CMFR's criticisms but defends the Cebu media outfits in an online piece for Cebu

Journalism & Journalists.

He says the danger of a reporter "cozying up" with the public official or employee is "always there anyway, whether he's covering an event in the safety of a press-con at City Hall or Capitol or swooping with police on a school retreat house, with the possibility of bullets flying."

"The initial report said it was a rescue operation? The published story can be rectified as quickly as pushing buttons; the chyron or crawler can be changed in the next news bulletin. Print media has its own correction mechanism," Seares says.

"The mistake in the FB Live reports was serious but was it 'egregious' as CMFR called it? Bad but not 'outstandingly bad,' as it was not deliberate and not something beyond correction," he says. "And there were chances of correction, which many news outlets did, in the succeeding news cycles and other phases of the multi-angled story."



#### **CASE STUDY**

## A Landmark Victory for Media Workers

On July 13, 2020, thirty camera operators won a David-versus-Goliath battle when the Supreme Court ordered their employer, GMA Network Inc., to reinstate them and to pay all back wages, allowances and other benefits from the time of their illegal dismissal in 2013 up to their return to the company.

The high court's third division, in a decision penned by Associate Justice Marvic Leonen, declared the petitioners "regular employees" of the network, finding that there existed an employer-employee relationship between them, and that they were not merely "independent contractors" as the network claimed.

The court held that "only casual employees performing work that is neither necessary nor desirable to the usual business and trade of the employer are required to render at least one year of service to attain regular status. However, employees who perform functions which are necessary and

desirable to the usual business and trade of the employer attain regular status from the time of engagement."

Based on court records, the media crew workers were hired between 2005 and 2011 and were dismissed in May 2013.

The Supreme Court says it didn't find evidence that the cameramen, who were paid a salary ranging from PHP750 (USD15) to PHP1,500 (USD30) per taping, entered the company for any other reason than to be ordinary employees. To be considered independent contractors, "it must be shown that the petitioners were hired because of their unique skills and talents and that GMA did not exercise control over the means and methods of their work."

"In this case, GMA provided the equipment used during tapings and assigned supervisors to monitor the petitioners' performance and guarantee their compliance with company protocols and

standards," the Court says.

The Court also "gave weight to petitioners' arguments that they were regular employees having performed functions that were necessary and desirable to GMA's usual business as a television and broadcasting company."

Though many other employees remain locked in a court battle with the network, the landmark case is seen as a huge victory not only because it championed the labor rights of media workers, but it also exposed the ill treatment and poor compensation by one of the country's broadcast giants.

GMA Network, unfortunately, is not alone in this.

In 2010, the alternative media outfit Bulatlat reported that at least 114 employees belonging to ABS-CBN's so-called Internal Job Market (IJM) protested their "illegal termination."

The media corporation had been warned by the Department of Labor and Employment that it was prohibited from keeping an "in-house agency" like IJM and that IJM workers should be on a regular status in accordance with their necessary and desirable contributions to the company.

In August of the same year, then Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz issued a 17-page decision rejecting the claims of the network management in rejecting IJM employees as regular employees.

Bulatlat quotes Baldoz as saying: "The 'talents' in the 1,400 IJM, as the employees are called by ABS-CBN management, cannot be considered as independent contractors because there is no specified timeframe to their contracts. The IJM workers, the decision said, are also regular employees because they perform jobs that are necessary and desirable to the business of ABS-CBN, which is broadcasting and production of programs, and they have been with the company for at least one year."

Such disputes tell us that media ethics is not confined to issues of individual wrongdoing by journalists on the field or in newsrooms but corporate greed and unjust labor practice by the media owners who control them.

## **Core Journalism Principles**



Journalism can never be silent: that is its greatest virtue and its greatest fault.

> It must speak, and speak immediately, while the echoes of wonder, the claims of triumph and the signs of horror are still in the air.

— Henry Grunwald

Journalism students are often taught about Joseph Pulitzer's so-called three rules of journalism: "Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy."

That oft-repeated line, oddly enough, is not entirely accurate, because the full quotation reads:

"What a newspaper needs in its news, in its headlines, and on its editorial page is terseness, humor, descriptive power, satire, originality, good literary style, clever condensation and accuracy, accuracy, accuracy."

What has become increasingly clear, is however, that in the age of disinformation, accuracy not may be enough to serve the ends of journalism. journalist Ellen Tordesillas, speaking to lawmakers in a Senate inquiry on disinformation in 2017, says: "If an official says, you quote as accurately as you can. If it is a lie, do you report a lie accurately?"

A lie that is reported accurately is still a lie, even if the lie comes from high officials like the President. Journalists must remember that their role is different from stenographers who only reproduce what was said faithfully. It is the journalist's job to listen beyond "he said, she said" and actively seek out and report the truth.

This Guide identifies six core ideals that best embody ethical journalism in the Philippines today, namely: truth, fairness, independence, justice, accountability and humanity.

On the one hand, the first three virtues are adopted from long-established ethical standards that remain relevant to the purpose of journalism: Truth is eyed as the

journalist's primary obligation; fairness takes precedence over impartiality, and independence serves as a protective mantle over a journalist's integrity.

On the other hand, the last three mark a tonal shift from the more conservative ethics manuals of other organizations that champion the time-honored but ultimately unrealistic tenets of objectivity neutrality: Justice is highlighted to demonstrate the need for journalism to be grounded and engaged and to have an ear for the voices of the marginalized. Accountability calls attention to the urgency of stronger institutional self-regulation among media groups. Humanity stresses the importance of conscience, empathy and honesty in the practice of journalism.

In this section, we discuss each of the journalism principles and how they apply to the Philippine setting.



Filipino journalists shall strive to report and interpret the news truthfully and accurately without omitting essential information, distorting the truth or misleading the public. It is their responsibility to fact-check and correct any falsehood from news subjects, especially those in power, taking care not to amplify disinformation on any media platform.

It is not enough to stick to the facts to ensure a true report, but also to provide context, background and other such relevant information as needed to make an honest and meaningful account about a news subject or event. Journalists shall verify the information they have gathered during coverage thoroughly and diligently.

They shall double- or triple-check the authenticity of confidential documents or other sensitive information, or if the nature of the news material compels it. They shall refrain from using only one unnamed source of sensitive or potentially damaging information, and shall make the effort to corroborate its veracity with other persons independently.

They shall not publish rumors circulating on social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook. They shall scrupulously check whether quotes are rightly or falsely attributed to news personalities.

It is not the journalist's responsibility to parrot wrong or unfounded claims even when they are made by official sources, including the President.

Journalists must refrain from publishing or broadcasting statements they know or suspect to be false on social media. They must avoid contributing to the spread of wrong information online. If it serves public interest, they may report that an official has made a false statement but with more emphasis on the incorrectness than the claim itself.

Journalists must be especially careful when an allegation of crime or defamatory imputation is made against an individual or group. For instance, they shall not publish or broadcast the names on any "narco-list" of suspected drug personalities who have not been charged, even when it's released by the President.



Filipino journalists shall protect their independence, professional credibility and personal integrity during coverage or outside of it. They shall observe the highest levels of professionalism in their relationships with their sources, news subjects and colleagues.

Journalists shall scrupulously follow ethical guidelines or their own newsroom policies on delicate matters like accepting gifts from sources, paying for meals during interviews, getting invited to media junkets, and other such moral quandaries. (See Best Practices in Handling Ethical Dilemmas).

When in doubt, reporters are encouraged to consult their supervisors or review ethical guidelines before making a decision.

Journalists shall not let personal motives or interests influence their reporting.

Reporters shall disclose any personal relationships or business associations that may affect their professional judgment, or any form of conflict of interest that may arise during coverage. If needed, they may inhibit themselves from certain subjects that they feel will compromise their integrity or affect their professionalism.

Publishers shall disclose their business interests whenever these are referenced in a report. Paid advertisements shall be

clearly labeled.

When journalists find that their allegiances are divided for one reason or the other, they may revisit Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's first two rules in "The Elements of Journalism":

"Journalism's first obligation is to the truth. Its first loyalty is to citizens."



Filipino journalists shall be fair in their reporting. They shall give the subjects of unfavorable reports the full opportunity to respond to criticisms, allegations or other negative statements that are being used against them.

Journalists shall exert all efforts to get the side of news subjects whose reputations may be harmed by their story, especially when the subject is a private citizen.

Publications shall not run a one-sided story that is damaging to any person or group, except when public interest demands it. For example, a publication may run a story involving a public official's misuse of government funds despite the subject's refusal to comment, provided that the attempt to get the other side is adequately explained. Stories shall be promptly updated once comment from the other side has been received.

Reporters shall not sensationalize conflict between opposing parties. Neither shall they deliberately frame the report in a way that favors one over the other, letting the facts, for the most part, speak for themselves.

But journalists may help guide readers or listeners in understanding the story by adding contextual analysis or interpretation. In doing this, they shall be careful to avoid obvious bias and shall exercise restraint.

At all times, journalists shall presume a citizen innocent until proven otherwise by a court of law.

A fair and balanced report only means that the reporter has presented all sides to a story, but journalists must be wary of "false balance" by presenting an opposing view only for the sake of it, especially on topics where a scientific consensus has emerged.

For instance, they shall not give undue publicity to climate change skeptics and flat earthers.



Filipino journalists shall instill a sense of justice in their reporting, speak truth to power and lend an ear to the voiceless and the vulnerable. They shall devote their attention not only to issues concerning the political and economic elite but strive to give proportional coverage to the causes and plights of marginalized groups and how these result from social, political and economic inequality in the country.

News organizations must give space and airtime not only to politicians, business executives and others in the corridors of power, but also to minority groups and those in the fringes of society who are almost never seen or heard in the media.

For too long, the Philippine press, especially the ones in the corporate and mainstream media, has reneged on its duty to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. It is time to level the playing field, and for journalists to be truly equal and just.

Journalists, too, shall pursue the ends of justice within their own institutions.

Reporters shall embrace the responsibility, in the words of Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel, of "holding the powerful accountable, especially those who hold power over free speech and expression."

They shall advocate and work in the interest of press freedom and against censorship and impunity, push for labor rights and decent living wages for their colleagues, and pursue freedom of information, among other important issues facing the media.

Journalistic advocacy shall not be construed as abandoning the principles of impartiality and professionalism of the craft, but rather championing a crucial component toward building a free and independent press in the Philippines.



Filipino journalists shall take full responsibility for their reporting and professional conduct. Factual inaccuracies, wrongful omissions, misattributions and misquotations, while inevitable, must be corrected as soon as they are found and, as much as practicable, given the same space or airtime. Newsrooms shall discipline erring staff for professional and ethical lapses.

Journalists shall use honest and transparent means wherever possible in pursuing a story. If secrecy is merited during a journalistic investigation or in the interest of public safety, a reporter must act with reason and prudence, and within the bounds of law.

Journalists shall welcome criticisms from the public and respond if they are able. They must remember that they are accountable not only to themselves and their organization but to the subjects of their reports and their audience.

Reporters shall not plagiarize. Reporters shall respect confidentiality agreements with subjects, with the understanding that they are protected by law from being forced to disclose the identity of their source of information, except when the matter involves national security.

News organizations are encouraged to apologize in public for any harm done toward any person or group due to errors in their reporting or the misconduct of their staff. They shall effect the necessary restitutions as applicable to the aggrieved party, impose appropriate sanctions on the offender, from reprimand to suspension and dismissal, and review existing internal newsroom policies or establish them if there are none.

Press guilds like the NUJP, the PPI and the NPC, as well as independent watchdogs like the CMFR, are urged to strengthen self-regulation mechanisms within the industry and impose discipline within their ranks.

This Guide takes the view that libel, cyber-libel and other punitive policies in the practice of journalism should be decriminalized, as such laws are often used as tools to intimidate, harass and impede journalists from performing their job.

Self-regulation, for all its limitations, is still the optimal mechanism for a free press to remain unhindered in a democracy.

**Humanity** 

Filipino journalists shall let conscience guide their conduct and strive to do no harm against innocents. They shall act with empathy, honesty, humility and kindness in their practice.

Journalists shall recognize their own humanity and show compassion and understanding when interviewing subjects, writing their reports or dealing with their colleagues. Reporters shall not be constrained by old-fashioned ideas that they must be objective or detached at all times.

As journalist Steve Buttry writes in a January 2010 essay: "Journalism is practiced by flesh-and-blood people with families and pulses. We can and should uphold professional standards such as fairness and accuracy and verification. But when we deny our humanity, we lie to our readers."

That means being genuine and conducting oneself honorably to earn the trust of others. Journalists shall report on sensitive matters in a sensitive way, avoiding hyperbole and sensational language.

Subjects like rape, torture, suicide and hazing shall be discussed without turning the parties into objects of spectacle. Crime victims, especially children and survivors of domestic violence, and minorities stigmatized for their gender, religion, ethnicity or disability, shall not be named, and appropriate care must be taken to ensure that reports do not carry clues to their identities.

Journalists covering conflict zones or breaking stories such as hostage-taking incidents or mass shootings shall act prudently and with caution. They shall not telegraph the movements and actions of innocent parties or the authorities that may compromise police or military response or impede a rescue operation.

Broadcast and online media shall avoid live-streaming events that may cause hysteria or incite panic.



#### **CASE STUDY**

## When A Journalist's Loyalties are Divided

"The Elements of Journalism" states that journalism's first obligation is to the truth. But what if the truth becomes damaging to a journalist's family, business or organization? The ethical rule of thumb is to avoid conflict of interest or any untoward intersection between one's reporting and one's personal and professional ties. But even top news organizations can stray from the correct path.

In 2013, a journalist for a national broadsheet finished her master's degree in a state-run defense college and, as a result of her completion, became a commissioned officer. The reporter, however, got to keep her assignment on the defense beat to cover the institution to which she now, in effect, belonged.

That placed the paper and the reporter in an ethical quandary: How can a journalist credibly and independently report on an establishment to which one has sworn allegiance?

In its report, the CMFR says the right thing

thing to do would have been to assign the journalist elsewhere to preserve her and her organization's independence in her reporting. Conflict of interest, according to the press watchdog, occurs when there is "loss of autonomy and freedom as other values and interests may play into the selection, placement, and the telling of the story."

A second case flagged by the CMFR in that year involved a piece written by a popular newspaper columnist defending his brother, who at the time was the president and chief executive officer of a state-run corporation.

The CMFR describes it as a clear case of conflict of interest "between the citizen's right to a fair evaluation of an event of public concern and his defending his brother's interest."

"Whatever the accuracy or inaccuracy of [the columnist's] claims, his defense of his brother creates an appearance of impropriety that can undermine his and the paper's integrity," the CMFR writes.

It adds that the newspaper could have simply barred the columnist from commenting on a matter that involves a family member.

Another questionable practice in the local media, according to the CMFR, is when broadcasters, particularly radio anchors and commentators, openly endorse products or make pitches for advertisers in their programming. This is a longstanding practice in a number of radio outfits, especially those not governed by the KBP.

In the December 2007 issue of PJR Reports, the CMFR looked into sponsored or ad placements on broadcast programs.

One radio outfit sees nothing wrong with broadcasters and commentators endorsing products, including a top news anchor who has been doing it for years on his top-rating shows.

Endorsements "only mean that he has credibility and this works to their advantage," the CMFR quotes a radio station manager as saying.

Another radio executive from a competing outfit disagrees, saying: "They (ads) can be biased. At the same time, they cannot maintain the integrity of the newscasters.... If you endorse, definitely you favor the (product) you are endorsing."

He says broadcasters and commentators, especially in the news and current affairs department, owe their audience a high degree of professionalism.

The audience, according to the radio executive, would not always understand that such testimonials were scripted to

serve the interest of a client, possibly leading to a conflict of interest when a product being endorsed would later turn out to be defective and become the subject of news coverage.

The CMFR poses a number of questions that illustrate how conflict of interest may arise in such situations:

- Does a broadcaster put his credibility and his station on the line when he endorses a product?
- Can conflicts of interest arise when broadcasters and commentators are allowed to advertise products?
- Are news broadcasters and commentators not bound to the principles of truth-telling, fairness, and balanced reporting when they endorse a product?
- Does the audience separate anchors and newscasters from their personalities when they are not reporting the news?

## Disinformation and Fact-Checking

Overview: Disinformation in the Philippines



## Misinformation is not like a plumbing problem you fix.

It is a social condition, like crime, that you must constantly monitor and adjust to.

Tom Rosenstiel



Anjo Bagaoisan

Filipinos spend an average of four hours and 15 minutes every day on social media – more than any other people in the world, according to the Digital 2021 report of technology research firms Hootsuite and We Are Social.

That makes the Philippines, a country of more than 100 million citizens with a median age of 25, a ripe market and the perfect target for organized disinformation and digital manipulation operations, as in what writer Sean Williams describes as the propaganda machine that propelled President Rodrigo Duterte to power in 2016.

Facebook, he points out, is free on any smartphone in the country, whereas clicking on legitimate news websites would incur data charges, forcing the general public to depend on social media for news and to consume a "daily diet of partisan opinion that masquerades as fact."

This is what has come to be pejoratively labeled as "fake news," a term that dates back to the late 19th century but has taken on contemporary relevance with the rise of so-called internet trolls who use anonymous social media accounts to spread falsehoods online, fueled by ad click revenues or bankrolled by public relations or PR operatives.

Writing for New Republic in January 2017, Williams says Duterte and his backers mobilized a vast and effective keyboard army that originated in November 2015 when the would-be president's team hired former advertising executive Nic Gabunada to lead his social media campaign under a tight 10-million peso budget.

Applying the techniques of advertising and PR campaigns to political marketing, Gabunada used the money to pay keyboard warriors, from ordinary people using anonymous accounts to celebrities and influencers with large followings, to flood social media with pro-Duterte messaging.

Reporting by other publications suggests that Duterte's campaign may have also received help from other PR tacticians, particularly Strategic Communications Laboratories (SCL), the parent company of Cambridge Analytica, the political consultancy at the center of a Facebook data harvesting scandal linked to the 2016 presidential race in the United States.

Investigative journalist Raissa Robles writes in a South China Morning Post report in 2018 that SCL at one point "boasted on its website that it helped get Duterte elected in 2016 by rebranding him as a tough crime fighter."

Duterte, according to the report, was not directly named on the deleted website content, but archived pages hinted of his identity as SCL's Philippine client, with the blurb stating: "In the run up to national elections the incumbent client was widely perceived as both kind and honorable, qualities his campaign team thought were potentially election-winning. But SCL's research showed that many groups within the electorate were more likely to be swayed by qualities such as toughness and decisiveness. SCL used the cross-cutting issue of crime to rebrand the client as a strong, no-nonsense man of action, who would appeal to the true values of the voters."

Thanks in part to the millions of social media volunteers and keyboard warriors who bombarded the electorate with pro-Duterte content, the firebrand Davao City mayor won the May 2016 presidential elections handily, with almost 40 percent of the vote.

"Duterte was the only candidate who took it (power of social networking) seriously," Rappler founder Maria Ressa is quoted as saying in a 2016 BBC story titled "Trolls and triumph: a digital battle in the Philippines."

Legions of internet trolls cultivated by Gabunada continued their work beyond the elections and are now being deployed to "silence dissenters and create the illusion that he (Duterte) enjoys widespread public support," Williams claims.

"The government pays online trolls up to 2,000 dollars a month to create fake social media accounts and flood the digital airwaves with propaganda," he says. "Each day, hundreds of thousands of supporters –

both paid and unpaid – take to social media to proselytize Duterte's deadly gospel. They rotate through topics like corruption, drug abuse, and US interference, and post links to hastily cobbled-together, hyper-partisan websites at all hours of the day and night."

As a postscript to Gabunada's role, in March 2019, Facebook removed 200 pages, groups and accounts engaged "coordinated inauthentic behavior" on Facebook and Instagram in the Philippines. "Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found that this activity was linked to a network organized by Nic Gabunada," says Nathaniel Gleicher, head of Facebook's Cybersecurity Policy.

He says the individuals involved "used a combination of authentic and fake accounts to disseminate content across a variety of Pages and Groups. They frequently posted about local and political news, including topics like the upcoming elections, candidate updates and views, alleged misconduct of political opponents, and controversial events that were purported to occur during previous administrations."

Portions of the Facebook machinery may have been dismantled, but it appears the damage has been done.

The 2019 midterm elections saw the rise of the same disinformation strategies the Duterte campaign had employed three years earlier. Even opposition candidates who once lambasted the president and his army of online trolls and fake news spreaders "have adopted some of the same tactics," writes journalist Craig Silverman for Buzzfeed News. "The result is a political environment even more polluted by trolling,

fake accounts, impostor news brands, and information operations," he says, citing research by Jonathan Corpus Ong, an associate professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Ong and another communication scholar, Jason Vincent Cabañes, studied the aftermath of the campaigns for the May 2016 elections from December 2016 to December 2017 and published their findings in the International Journal of Communication in 2019.

The scholars agree that Duterte owed his electoral victory to a "savvy campaign that mixed the shock value his profanity-laced with speeches the firepower of vociferous social media influencers, bloggers, fan groups, and anonymous paid trolls amplifying his message of anger against the elite establishment," but they challenge the assertion that Duterte was the sole player in organized social media manipulation, as suggested by an academic study that quoted from Williams' reporting.

Ong and Cabañes say the proliferation of organized disinformation channels in the Philippines must be viewed in the context of the "image-based patronage political system in the country that has normalized spin and 'black propaganda' negative campaigns orchestrated by branding strategists from the creative industries."

"Rather than an exceptional invention of angry populist politics or social media, digital disinformation should be seen as but the current iteration of tried-and-tested techniques of promotional marketing transposed into the political sphere. It is the culmination of the most unscrupulous

trends in Philippines media culture and politics, borne out of the country's weak political party ideologies and affiliations that are completely overwhelmed by political personalities building clientelistic relationships with their supporters," they write.

What is more alarming to journalists is how political trolling, as the two researchers acknowledge, "can escalate to physical or even mortal harm."

Organized disinformation networks affect the Philippine media sector in at least two ways: One, it foments public distrust of journalists and the press as they are lumped in with purveyors of hoaxes disguised as legitimate news reports; and two, it fosters a dangerous environment that leaves the press vulnerable to a variety of attacks, from cyber-bullying to red-baiting and death threats.

Such attacks, according to a 2019 paper by Hon Sophia Balod and Michael Hameleers, "can harm the execution of journalists' roles, as they experience threats that impede critical reporting and the execution of the watchdog role."

John Ian Alenciaga, a writer of Panay Today and member of the Altermidya network, learned this the hard way when several men aboard motorcycles harassed and tailed him on June 1, 2021, after a series of red-tagging episodes.

The incident occurred between 4:30 p.m. and 4:50 p.m. when the journalist was visiting a friend's house in Oton, Iloilo. Six persons riding three motorcycles were spotted tailing Alenciaga, according to NUJP's case records. It happened months

after a poster labeling him as the spokesperson of the New People's Army (NPA) made the rounds on Facebook and Instagram in mid-2020, claiming his media affiliations were just a cover for his communist links.

In February 2020, Alenciaga and his colleagues were followed by unidentified persons after taking part in a press freedom protest. In 2015, he received text messages accusing him of being a communist, and three years later, photos circulated in lloilo accusing him and several others of being supporters of the NPA, records showed.

Red-tagging, according to Human Rights Watch deputy director for Asia Phil Robertson, "constricts further the increasingly diminished democratic space in the Philippines, where activists, rights lawyers, journalists, and even ordinary Filipinos on social media are under threat."

The chilling effect experienced by journalists like Alenciaga "may also hinder a healthy, fair, and accurate discussion of societal issues, thus ultimately undermining the role of the media in democracy," Balod and Hameleers write in "Fighting for truth? The role perceptions of Filipino journalists in an era of mis- and disinformation."

It is important to note that the erosion of citizens' trust in the press did not arise as a simple consequence of the public's exposure to fake news but as "part of campaigns to discredit journalists who are being critical," the researchers say.

Balod and Hameleers add that: "An uncertain media environment characterized by hostile extra-media and societal pressures, such as in the case of the Philippines, creates a favorable discursive opportunity structure to attack journalists."

"Open attacks from authorities themselves against critical media, such as in the case of Duterte labeling Rappler as fake news, also heighten cases of threats, especially online harassments," they say.

Journalists, therefore, must respond to the deliberate distortion of truth and the coordinated campaigns to discredit the press in a more critical and engaged way, not only by reporting the facts but actively exposing falsehoods and being more open and accountable to the public in their pursuit of truth.

"[The] current environment of mis- and disinformation puts the media in a unique position where journalists both have the duty to act and react, to report not only the truth but also mistruths and to be critical not only to those in power but also to themselves," Balod and Hameleers conclude.

Indeed, the rise of disinformation represents an opportunity for journalists to step into their changing role in the digital age, which demands that they be more than truth-tellers but fact-checkers, too. It is also a test on their resolve to uphold the truth by combating the spread of lies in the public sphere.



## **How to Spot Fake News:** A Journalist's **Fact-Checklist**

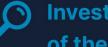
Disinformation agents have grown more organized and more sophisticated with their methods over the past few years, but in most cases, a little digital sleuthing is enough to enable a journalist to determine the authenticity of a claim on Facebook, Twitter or other social media platforms.

Most of the time, it is only a matter of typing up keywords on a search engine and the truth - or falsity - of a claim will surface. Other times, it requires a little more internet savvy, such as doing a reverse image search on a picture or graphic to find its origin. (Google image search, which is free to the public, is one example). Websites get deleted all the time, so looking up a URL on Internet Archives' Wayback Machine can turn up surprisingly useful information.

There are also fact-checking or verification websites like Snopes.com, which has a database on viral hoaxes that have been circulating around the web for years, sometimes decades.

Locally, a number of media and academic groups have started their own fact-checking initiatives, including one set up by Facebook with third-party verifiers VERA Files and Rappler IQ, and NUJP's Google Chrome plug-in called "Fakeblok," in an effort to combat disinformation on its network. (See List of Philippine Fact-Checkers).

To spot a fake, it is useful to do the following checks:



#### Investigate the source of the information

Where did you come across information? Be skeptical of any claim that comes up on your social media feed or is sent by a Facebook friend on a messaging app, especially when it does not link to a legitimate source. Ask the poster or sender if they have evidence.

Is the source legitimate? A claim can come from a government office, a nonprofit, a media organization, a fake news distributor or a satirical site.

Go to the About section of the website and look up the contact details. Does the email address indicate the organization's own domain instead of gmail or other generic handles?

A note of caution: The credibility of the source of information does not always mean the information is true and accurate. News media get things wrong all the time, and not all of them correct or update information on old or archived reports.



#### **Check the date**

Old news reports can suddenly become viral because not everybody checks when it was published. A years-old story about an approaching super typhoon, the declaration of a non-working holiday or the cancellation of classes will sometimes attract thousands of shares or retweets.



#### **Inspect the byline**

Is there an author or a byline?

If a story has no byline, chances are it is fake or a press release. Bylines are an accountability mechanism for newsrooms when errors are made or in case of a libel or defamation charge. Opinion pieces also have bylines but the writers of editorials of mainstream news media are usually not these traditionally named, as are considered to be the collective position of the organization.



#### Verify the link

Is the URL correct?

The link should be active and part of the website. Check if main says abs-cbnnews.com instead of abs-cbnnews.co.



#### Make sure it's not a spoof of a legitimate news source

Are the logo, color and font the correct ones?

Any person can clone real news websites then photoshop a misquotation over the original quote in graphics or images being attributed to a news source.



#### headline

What the headline says is not always the story, even in articles produced by legitimate media entities. Editors trained not only to condense a report into the fewest possible words but to use words that will attract the most views and clicks, hence, the rise of "clickbait."

Is the headline written in all caps or with excessive punctuation marks? Does it carry attention-grabbing words like, "what the media doesn't want you to know" or "the real story behind" or "the secret to," etc.?

When information is presented in such exaggerated fashion, that is typically a sign of manipulation and an attempt to incite emotions in the readers.

Is the information made by only one source? If more than one news organization is reporting about a claim, that adds to the credibility of the information. If it is touted as an exclusive report, check if any other media outfit has verified or confirmed it.

What are the supporting links and documents? Do they match the information on the article or story when you click on them?

Do the results of the reverse image search show that the graphic or photo is an original? If it comes up on other websites with a similar story but different details, then it is likely fake.

Do the dates match? Google image search is useful in finding the origin of a photo, but it's not always reliable. But there are several paid reverse image apps available that can be of more use.

✓ Consult the fact-checkers

If you search the claim on verification websites like Snopes.com or VERA Files, does it show that the information is true, false or unconfirmed? Fact-checkers will most likely have come across a claim once it reaches viral numbers, so it is good practice to look it up.

# List of Philippine Fact-Checkers

## **#StopTheSpread chatbot** and Fakeblok plug-in

In June 2017, NUJP launched Fakeblok, a Google Chrome plug-in that filters out fake news sites on users' Facebook feeds. Journalists review news sites or articles that get tagged as fake, and once it is determined to be a hoax, anyone with the plug-in will be alerted on their feed. To date, the plug-in has flagged 18,000 articles, which have been blocked 1,072,880 times across newsfeeds, according to BBDO Guerrero, adding that over 21,457,600 views of fake news were prevented. "With Fakeblok zero budget, earned PHP1,072,880 (USD21,510) in media value," the agency says.

In March 2020, NUJP and CMFR launched, with the help of BBDO Guerrero, an anti-fake news chatbot on Facebook called #StopTheSpread. The chatbot helps users check if a news item comes from a suspicious source. Anyone can submit links whose authenticity the chatbot can determine according to, among other factors, the presence of a byline, photo credits and publication date.



#### **VERA Files and Rappler IQ**

In April 2018, Facebook announced a partnership with VERA Files and Rappler IQ for a third-party fact-checking program to counter disinformation on the social media platform. The two independent media organizations are members of an international fact-checking network at the Poynter Institute, a US journalism think tank.

#### **AFP Fact Check**

In 2017, Agence France Press launched AFP Fact Check, its digital verification service that "has grown to become the leading global fact-checking organization." Its journalists monitor online content in several countries, including the Philippines, to "investigate and disprove false information, focusing on items which can be harmful, impactful and manipulative."

#### **FactRakers**

FactRakers is a fact-checking initiative of journalism majors at the University of the Philippines-Diliman working under the supervision of journalist and professor Yvonne Chua with Ma. Diosa Labiste serving as editorial consultant.

#### Tsek.ph

Tsek.ph was a collaborative fact-checking project for the Philippines' 2019 midterm elections supported by the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University with media partners ABS-CBN, the Philippine Star, Rappler, Probe and VERA Files, among others. The initiative was launched by the academe and media to "counter disinformation and provide the public with verified information."



#### **CASE STUDY**

# Live-tweeting the President

The explosion of social media over the last decade has transformed the nature of breaking news. These days, reporters habitually try to outdo each other in getting that prized first break on Twitter, all the better to get likes and retweets in the hope of reaching viral numbers. The phenomenon has only grown during the pandemic-induced lockdown that has forced a large section of the press to report from home.

While useful for journalists and social media users, live-tweeting has its limits. The absence of gatekeepers like editors, the limited character count for tweets and the fast-paced environment fostered by the micro-blogging platform itself make for reporting that is alarmingly prone to journalistic lapses, from simple errors of fact to more serious misjudgments – like reporting falsehood as fact. By posting bits of news and information without context, journalists sometimes contribute to the culture of disinformation that is flourishing on Twitter and other social networks.

Add in a nightly televised address from a president who is notorious for spreading mistruth, and you create a perfect storm of "fake news."

On November 17, 2020, a television journalist covering Malacañang was thrust into such a Twitter storm when he drew outrage for live-tweeting, without any fact-checks, the speech of President Rodrigo Duterte, including false claims against Vice President Leni Robredo, opting to directly quote from the speech, unlike other reporters who pointed out the falsity of some of the claims.

The president upbraided his Constitutional successor for supposedly questioning his absence during the onslaught of Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses, although Robredo never made any comment to that effect. Twitter users pilloried the president's diatribe under the hashtag #DuterteMeltDown. Duterte was also mocked for resorting to sexist remarks and insults against Robredo, who at the time was being praised for her efforts to help those affected by the typhoons.

So, was the reporter wrong for simply tweeting Duterte's words without comment?

For so long, the press has always considered any statement coming from the president to be news, and under normal circumstances, there is nothing objectionable or unethical about reporting it directly as news.

The rise of disinformation, however, has made this untenable.

Journalists today must not only report the facts but determine that what is being represented as fact is actually not a lie. When the president issues a statement that is patently wrong, it is the journalist's job to tell it so to the public, and tell it with as much urgency and immediacy as when the lie was first reported.

Arao says journalists are under no obligation to report the lies of public officials, even presidents. "Journalism is all about truth-telling and we cannot juxtapose

the lies with the truth," he tells Rappler in "Why PH media need to change old ways."

Interviewed for the same article, journalist Christian Esguerra weighs in: "Even if you make it into a thread, when you just enumerate what the President says and leave the interpretation to the people without providing context, I think the journalist surrenders his role as a journalist and descends into the simple job of transcription by doing that. Because anybody can do that, the Malacañang Presidential News Desk can do that."

What may be useful for the press to remember as it grapples with the emerging challenges of the digital media landscape, is that when reporters post a tweet, however short or unsubstantive, they are already performing their role as journalists.

That means each tweet, all 280 characters of it, must carry with it the full weight of their identity, along with their ethical responsibilities, as media professionals.

### **Best Practices**

Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right

— Isaac Asimov

Laying down hard-and-fast rules in the practice of ethical journalism in the Philippines can be a tricky exercise because moral doctrines are known to change over time, and what was considered correct behavior decades ago might be wrong and unacceptable today.

A 2019 analysis of moral language in English-language books over a 100-year period by The Conversation Australia and New Zealand suggests that morality is neither rigid nor monolithic, and the world's moral priorities, at least in the English-speaking parts, have shifted in the last century.

The same appears to be true of journalism ethics.

Stephen Ward writes that journalism ethics is an "invention" by journalists to reinterpret fundamental moral principles to fit new situations and challenges facing them, transforming and evolving with the values of a society.

"The invention of a journalism ethic or a new ideal is not just a reworking of existing ideas. Nor is it a creation out of nothing. It is a creative human response, developing new ideas out of the materials at hand," he says in "The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond."

But the changeable nature of journalism ethics presents problems for any attempt at crafting new standards of behavior, especially in a media landscape marked by wide disparities in attitudes and practices, let alone a yawning variance in education, skill and earning capacity.

How, for instance, does one guarantee that

an ethical rule is appropriate and applicable to both the highest-paid TV news executives and the struggling provincial newspaper correspondents?

To use another example, a graduate of a top university who enters the newsroom of a leading media company has a different starting point from that of a high school dropout working in a tabloid, who, as the industry joke goes, was only "sent off to buy vinegar then came back as a reporter."

The two will naturally have different perspectives on ethical questions due to their different backgrounds and value systems. Whereas the former might think a Christmas basket costing PHP1,000 (USD20) is a token gift with no bearing on one's integrity, the latter might look at the present as a huge favor deserving reciprocation.

One-thousand pesos is pocket change to some and a lifeline to others, which means that the ethical implications of receiving such a gift are different for each. So, then, must the rule be relaxed for one group and made rigid for another? Or, is it preferable to ban Christmas presents altogether irrespective of its worth and meaning to the receiver or the purpose of its giver?

These are gray areas and this Guide does not presume to impose any arbitrary black-and-white rule on the value of a gift that Filipino journalists may accept during the holidays. The responsibility of dotting the i's and crossing the t's in ethical quandaries like the previous example falls on newsrooms, because they are in the position to determine what is reasonable or acceptable for their workers. A media outfit that pays its staff less than PHP10,000

(USD200) a month has no ascendancy to order its employees to return a gift that can feed their family.

This is not to stray into the murky depths of ethical relativism or the idea that morality only depends on a particular context, such as culture, historical period or social class. While journalism traditions are many and varied, there are universal principles that are common to them like truth, fairness and independence, according to John Watson's 2008 examination of codes of ethics in the United States.

Even so, any effort to reinvent a modern ethical system for the Philippine media industry cannot ignore and be removed from the social and political milieu in which its journalists operate. It must recognize, first, that the country's media landscape is a microcosm of the larger Philippine society, reflecting the ills, injustices and inequities of the political economy, and, second, that the corruption of the press, at its core, is rooted in the failure of most media organizations to provide decent living wages and working conditions for their reporters, photojournalists, crew members, production assistants and other staff.

In its 2017 ethics code on the coverage of elections, the PPI sought to impress upon the leaders of news organizations the primary role they must play in upholding professional and ethical standards, requiring "the full, unqualified support – in terms of money, resources and corporate leadership – of the newspaper owners."

"Ethics, and how individual journalists conduct themselves, are, first and last, the individual's call. But it takes a community of journalists and newspapers living it out

together to make this Code the genuine, positive, powerful norm and standard it should be for the industry," according to the PPI code.

Such is the overarching theme for the ethical guidelines laid out in this section. Hence, do not be surprised if they sound, at times, to be more lenient on individual journalists and tougher on their news managers and media owners, whose responsibilities in promoting and sustaining journalism ethics is naturally greater than the rank-and-file. (See Responsibilities of Media Owners and Newsroom Leaders).

That said, no excuses shall be made on behalf of unethical journalists, because, just as there are media professionals in positions of privilege who are corrupt, there, too, are disadvantaged practitioners who have maintained their spotless integrity and reputation through the roughest times.

What you will find here are not fixed rules but pragmatic and realistic guidelines on the ethical practice of journalism. The hope is to strengthen the resolve of Filipino journalists in establishing ethical boundaries with their sources and subjects, settling personal or professional conflicts of interest, and helping them through difficult situations, from reporting on suicide and interviewing rape survivors to dealing with unethical colleagues and declining bribes.

This Guide is by no means comprehensive and it does not promise all the answers, but it seeks to provide clarity to many questions that may arise on the beat or during coverage, and guide journalists into forming their own conceptions of what journalism ethics means and how they can apply it meaningfully to their craft.

# Handling Ethical Dilemmas

#### Cash and gifts

Guideline Do not accept cash from a source. Do not accept gifts of any kind in exchange for the publication or airing of a story or as a way to establish goodwill with a source, except on account of culture and when the gift is of token value.

A journalist may not accept cash from publicists or media relations officers however they may euphemistically describe the money as "for coffee" or "for taxi."

It is not acceptable for journalists to be on the payroll of any individual or group to ensure favorable coverage by their news outfit. Cash in envelopes or offers to send money via ATM, digital bank transfer or other channels, as well as gift cards or gift certificates, must be categorically refused.

Newsrooms are encouraged to issue written internal policies on the receiving or giving of gifts.

A written newsroom policy can give journalists a moral anchor in the face of temptations on the job. At the same time, it can be conveniently invoked when declining a gift.

News organizations may guide their

employees on how to return gifts politely, with a form letter explaining the newsroom policy, or if too inconvenient, to donate the item to a charitable institution in the name of the giver.

Journalists may not moonlight with sources on part-time, full-time or contractual basis. They may not accept any role as adviser or consultant for the people they cover. They may not enter into business or financial transactions with sources.

Any attempt by a source to bribe journalists either to kill or push for a story must be promptly reported to one's supervisor. News organizations are encouraged to expose attempts by any public official to bribe staff.

#### **Christmas and birthdays**

It is understood that gift-giving is part of Philippine culture especially during the Christmas season or when celebrating birthdays.

Guideline Journalists, as a general rule, may only accept trifles of insignificant value, never those they cannot afford nor those which they will not purchase with their own money or give them pause.

Refrain from accepting birthday presents from sources, even those you have become friends with. But a birthday cake or a tub of spaghetti delivered in good faith may be shared with colleagues in the staff room or press office.

**Tip** Avoid giving out personal information such as your birthday or address when a source or a publicist asks.

Newsroom policy should clearly address the receiving or giving of gifts during the holidays, including limits on monetary value, as well as participation in Christmas raffle draws, an unfortunate tradition that has tested the resolve of many journalists.

The policy should state whether reporters or photojournalists are prohibited from participating in raffles during parties hosted by news sources for the press and similar activities, or if they may participate as long as they stick to the internal monetary limit on acceptable gifts, or if they may donate the gift.

**Tip** To avoid awkwardness, journalists may approach the host or organizer before a Christmas party to have their names excluded from the raffle. Or leave the party before the lottery starts.

When the situation makes it uncomfortable for one to decline a gift or a raffle prize, a journalist may do so after the party or event, or swap with a colleague for an item of permissible value upon consultation with a supervisor.

Media organizations may make it a policy to allow staff to reciprocate presents by sending company souvenirs like mugs, calendars or umbrellas that are similar to or approximate the value of the gift received.

#### Meals and coffee

**Guideline** The rule of thumb is pay your own way. When meeting sources over lunch, dinner or coffee, it is best that journalists pay for their share of the meal or pick up the tab at the expense of their organization.

In situations when insisting to pay may be seen as disrespectful, a reporter may oblige the host with an offer to reciprocate the gesture for the next meal.

Etiquette usually dictates that the one who made the invitation is the one who pays, but journalists must explain to sources that they are bound by stricter ethical guidelines than most other professionals.

**Tip** Journalists may accept food or drinks provided to the media as a whole during press conferences, briefings and other events for coverage, and when it is impractical to purchase their own meal.

#### **Travel**

Guideline News organizations shall pay for their reporter's expenses for transportation, food, accommodations and other incidentals on official work trips or other coverage on travel.

Journalists may not accept free airfare or hotel accommodations from sources, including government offices, political parties and businesses.

But in cases when it's inconvenient to book a separate flight to a work destination, a journalist may accept travel arrangements by outside parties, provided reimbursements are promptly made afterward.

#### Fellowships and junkets

Journalists may not accept an invitation to a media junket or an all-expense-paid trip

where there is no work involved or the purpose is only to get on their good side with expectation of positive coverage in the future, or to establish a friendship with the host.

Journalists may go on professional fellowships, seminars, training programs, study trips and other work-related activities funded by organizations or foundations that do not have direct business interests with their media outfit.

In such cases, it is permissible to accept a per diem allowance or honorarium to cover incidental costs during travel from the host organization with proper disclosures made with one's supervisor.

#### **Paying for information**

**Guideline** Do not offer to pay a source or news subject for exclusive interviews or confidential documents.

Quid pro quo in the pursuit of news is detrimental to the media profession as a whole. It compromises the integrity of the journalist and puts the credibility of the source in question.

**Tip** The best way of "compensating" a source of information is by giving due respect to the material in the form of truthful, fair and responsible reporting.

#### **Plagiarism**

Guideline Do not plagiarize. Attribute all quoted material to the source, including

paraphrased statements.

Because it is a form of intellectual theft, plagiarism is one of the major offenses a journalist may commit wittingly or unwittingly in the conduct of one's profession.

News organizations must rightly take such ethical violations seriously and may sanction the offender with suspension or dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense.

Newsrooms that do not yet have a plagiarism policy are strongly encouraged to create one and explain the penalties clearly to their staff and impress on them the gravity of a plagiarism violation.

#### Crediting reporting by rivals

As much as possible, journalists shall give credit for any information in their reporting to the original report, even if it was published or aired by a rival media company.

**Tip** Avoid indirect attribution using words like "reportedly" or "according to news reports" or "sources said."

The safest and most ethical recourse is always to identify where the information came from. But do not be excessive in quoting from other works.

**Tip** Online news platforms are strongly encouraged to hyperlink to the quoted report even if it's from a rival outfit.

#### Self plagiarism

Journalists commit self plagiarism when they reuse their own material that has been published before, but this is a gray area on which even experts have not found consensus.

Is it all right to use your own sentences and paragraphs to add as background information or to contextualize a story?

If the original material was published in the same media outfit, there is likely no problem. But if you intend to reuse your material from reports with a previous employer in your reporting for another organization, there may be complications.

Tip Err on the side of keeping your work original.

## Press releases and statements

**Guideline** Journalists may not use a press release or statement word for word and misrepresent it as their own work. They may use quotations and other information from it but clearly state that these came from the press release.

**Tip** Avoid merely rewriting or paraphrasing a press release and submitting it as your report. A press release is only one source of information, and it is good practice to use multiple sources for a story.

#### Relationship with sources

Guideline Journalists must treat news sources and subjects with respect,

transparency and professionalism.

Reporters may not conceal their identity or disguise themselves as somebody else to get close to a person they intend to report on.

There are, however, occasions when a journalist may opt not to reveal his or her identity or to be deliberately vague about it for personal or public safety, or when the situation calls for it. In such cases, journalists must ask themselves: Is deception the only way to get the information? Is the information so important that the story will suffer without it?

Cultivating sources sometimes necessitates interacting with them in informal settings, but journalists must habitually examine themselves and their relationship to make sure that they are still able to perform their job credibly and fairly.

Guideline Journalists must observe ethical boundaries when a relationship with a source turns into a deeper friendship. They may not ask for nor accept special favors like free tickets to a concert, store discounts and the like; neither may they offer positive reporting as a special favor to the source.

If reporters feel that their reporting has been influenced by their closeness to a news subject, or is on the verge of getting there, they may voluntarily step back, disclose the issue to their supervisor or take a new assignment, if necessary.

Newsrooms are encouraged to reassign reporters or photojournalists to a different beat when their relationship with a source becomes too close for comfort.

## Confidential and anonymous sources

**Guideline** Refrain from using sources who ask to speak on condition of anonymity, especially if the information can be obtained from other sources who are willing to be named.

If the use of unnamed sources cannot be avoided, the reporter must establish that they are credible, reliable and have direct or firsthand knowledge. The information provided by a source must be corroborated by at least one other source or, preferably, supported by documents.

Publishers and editors are urged to refrain from running a story with only one unnamed source.

The reporter must let at least one editor know the identity of the unnamed source to help the desk reach a decision on whether to use the story. Multiple sourcing is recommended with each of the sources contacted separately.

**Tip** Avoid quoting the opinions of unnamed sources, particularly statements that may be damaging to another person, except when it is important to establish the relationship of the source with a subject in the report and the subject's side is presented well in the same story.

Avoid vague or misleading attribution such as "reliable sources" or "an unimpeachable source." Use the clearest possible description of sources without giving away their identity to add to the credibility of their information.

## Protecting sources and whistleblowers

Journalists may at times be on the receiving end of pressure from influential persons to reveal the identity of confidential sources.

Guideline Reporters must not divulge the identity of unnamed sources, especially those who have blown the whistle on the misdeeds of public officials or other powerful people, or whose information may incur reprisals, including threats on their lives.

**Tip** Be guided by the protections granted by law to journalists and their sources under the Sotto Law or Republic Act No. 53, as amended by Republic Act No. 11458.

The amended law allows newspaper reporters as well as journalists from television, radio, online and wire service news organizations in broadcast and online media to refuse to reveal the identity of their confidential sources.

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The only exception is when revealing the source's identity is in the interest of national security as determined by a court of law or a committee of the Senate or House of Representatives.

## Interviewing news subjects

**Guideline** Be respectful, transparent and fair to interview subjects, especially if they are private citizens.

Public officials are generally considered "fair game" and are usually trained to field tough or threatening questions from the press.

But private citizens who are suddenly thrust into the limelight for any reason may not have the same preparation, so it is advisable to ask for permission first and let them know the purpose of the interview.

Interviewing suspects and victims

Be sensitive and careful in interviewing

victims of crime and persons accused of a crime.

**Guideline** Do not pose insensitive questions to crime victims, such as asking them to prove they were victimized.

Do not pressure or force crime suspects to admit wrongdoing.

Journalists must never assume a suspect or accused to be guilty of a crime until he or she has been convicted by a court.

Avoid asking questions that push an agenda or propaganda, or appear to do so.

For example, journalists may ask a person who has been red-tagged by the military to respond to the allegation, however unsubstantiated, but they must phrase the question in a way that does not shift the burden of proof from the accuser to the accused.



## Press conferences and briefings

**Guideline** Be professional and maintain proper decorum at all times. Be respectful of your colleagues.

Journalists may be firm and insistent when grilling public officials who dodge or evade their questions but they must avoid getting into a heated debate or badgering the subject.

**Tip** When time is limited, try not to hog all the attention of the person being interviewed. Ask one or two questions with one follow-up.

#### **Advance questions**

**Guideline** Politely decline requests by interview subjects, in particular, public officials or officers, to show them your questions in advance.

Reporters must not let the interviewee dictate the direction and tone of the interview. In special cases – for example, when it is used as a condition for an exclusive interview – you may show a list of general topics you want to discuss but avoid giving the subject the opportunity to prepare for your questions.

**Note** A different guideline may apply to interview subjects who are private citizens and who are not in the news by virtue of their public office, like a child in conflict with the law or a victim of violence. In such cases, be kind and do not confront them with any question they are not comfortable with.

## Recording or filming interviews

**Guideline** Do not record or film a news source without his or her knowledge. Always ask for permission first.

But an exception may be made for investigative reporting on clandestine illegal activity or a crime in progress, such as a restaurant or factory worker dumping waste in a waterway.

**Tip** For sources who are not used to media interviews, make it clear to them that anything they say in the recording may be published or broadcast.

## On the record, off the record or on background

On the record means the source may be quoted fully and identified in the story. Off the record means no part of the statement may be used. On background or not for attribution means sources may be directly quoted and have their rank or position described in the story but they shall not be identified by name.

**Guideline** Respect a news source's request to go off the record or on background during an interview, briefing or coverage. But you may try to convince them to go on the record if you determine that it is not going to cost them their job or get them in legal trouble.

Can a journalist who gets newsworthy information from an off-the-record comment pursue the story with other sources?

Experts differ on this point. There are some who consider all off-the-record statements to be unusable and refuse to listen to them, but others look at them as possible take-off points for further reporting.

**Tip** When in doubt, ask sources if you can pursue the story and confirm their information from other sources.

#### Photographing subjects

**Guideline** Photojournalists and camera operators shall treat news subjects with respect and dignity.

Photojournalists and camera operators must take a respectful distance and avoid swarming around news subjects who are dealing with grief or tragedy, especially victims of crime.

They may not ask the subject to do a staged pose to make the shot more exciting, emotional or newsworthy. They may not digitally alter a picture to distort the image of the subject or to manipulate the message or contextual meaning of the picture.

Photojournalists may not take pictures that commodify children or show them in a negative light that may follow them through adulthood.

They may not take pictures of children who are victims of abuse and other crimes, or juvenile offenders, or are afflicted with AIDS or HIV or other ailments that may incur stigma or humiliation, or other such conditions that necessitate the protection of their identity. (See Covering Special Sectors: Reporting on Children).

Photojournalists may not pay sources or subjects to take their pictures.

Photojournalists must avoid shots that may reinforce negative stereotypes and trigger prejudice against news subjects because of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or disability.

#### **Conflict of interest**

It is understood that media practitioners have private lives outside work commitments but sometimes their personal dealings, affiliations with certain causes or groups, business transactions and family relationships may clash with their professional identity as journalists.

**Guideline** Journalists must always be mindful of connections and associations that may appear to compromise or actually compromise their integrity and credibility to report about a news subject or beat assignment, or harm the reputation of their news organization.

Reporters and photojournalists must immediately disclose to their supervisor any conflict of interest that arises on the job.

For example, they must inhibit themselves from coverage involving any person related to them by blood or marriage. They may not report on a business or enterprise in which they have a personal stake or investment.

As a general rule, journalists may not report on protests or demonstrations staged by a cause-oriented group of which they are a member. But there are justifiable exceptions, such as activities protesting violations of press freedom and other issues that threaten free speech and democracy. As another example, a reporter who is a member of an LGBT+ group may report on a Pride March.

**Outside work** 

**Guideline** Journalists may not pursue outside work that may conflict with their professional responsibilities, such as consultancy for a political party or politician when one is a political reporter, or writing press releases for an office that a journalist regularly covers.

Journalists may, upon consultation with their supervisor, accept teaching positions in college or university, or speaking engagements connected to their work, or seminar and training programs for campus journalists, among others.

#### **Elections**

Journalists are encouraged to vote as part of their civic responsibilities, but they must refrain from taking part in any partisan political activity. They must at all times recognize that they represent their news organization and the media profession.

**Guideline** Journalists may not campaign for any candidate or political party. Journalists may not run for public office.

Journalists who decide to run for public office must resign their positions immediately.

In covering the campaign and elections, journalists must guard their integrity and independence at all times. (See Handling Special Topics: Covering Elections).

#### **Endorsing candidates**

In the United States, news organizations are known to endorse presidential or local candidates during elections but that tradition has not been adopted by Philippine media.

Newsrooms are not precluded from endorsing candidates in an election, but they must make their choice after a judicious, thorough and methodical assessment of the qualifications and qualities of the candidates using all the resources and information at their disposal.

In an editorial, news organizations must explain not only their choice but the process in making their pick to their readers or viewers.

It must be made clear to the audience that this is an editorial choice of the news organization, and it will not influence news coverage about the candidate and his or her opponents.

#### **Resisting political pressure**

**Guideline** Media owners, publishers, newsroom managers and journalists must protect their independence and resist any attempt by the government and political leaders to pressure the news organization or take control of its news agenda.

The most effective way to do this is by going public, enlisting the support of media groups and disclosing any attempt to kill a story, to block reporters from covering certain topics or to pressure them to report on certain subjects.

Journalists must arm themselves with knowledge of the law and their basic rights and be ready to assert them.

Editors must support their reporters and make the appropriate arrangements for legal assistance if their reporters are facing harassment or threats.

## Resisting corporate pressure

**Guideline** Media owners, publishers and newsroom managers may not kill any story for business considerations.

Advertising money shall not factor into the decision-making process on whether to run a story.

Journalists must be allowed to pursue stories based on their own news judgment without regard for how their reporting may affect the corporate side of the news operation.

## Takedown of online stories

**Guideline** Media owners, publishers and newsroom managers shall take ownership of and stand by the reporting of their journalists, provided the story satisfies

professional and ethical standards.

Editors may not take down any story on the mere say-so of people in power or in fear of offending them.

But they may remove a story that has been belatedly found to be false, misleading or does not meet the standards of the news organization.

In such cases, the editor must be transparent and disclose the reason for a decision to remove a story as well as the process that led to it.

#### Self-censorship

**Guideline** News organizations and journalists may not practice self-censorship.

The difference between self-regulation and self-censorship in a newsroom, according to EJN founder Aidan White, is that the former is driven by editorial concerns and journalistic standards, while the latter is motivated by fear.

"When a journalist or editor makes an editorial decision over a story and its contents that is motivated by the threat of reprisal – whether from the state, the police, the owner, or the advertiser – it has nothing to do with the principles of good journalism," says White.

**Guideline** Editors and journalists must be alert to the dangers of self-censorship by critically examining themselves and whether their editorial judgment is being driven by fear of retaliation.

### Relationship with colleagues

**Guideline** Treat your fellow journalists respectfully, fairly and honestly.

Having a competitive spirit can produce good journalism, but it doesn't hurt to be courteous to one's peers.

It is inevitable that friendships will develop between colleagues who see each other constantly on the beat or during coverage. A journalist may maintain such friendships but must take care to treat work and personal relationships separately.

**Tip** Be friendly but do not be drawn into a "press cartel" or a group of pack journalists sharing information and unpublished stories with each other freely.

Journalists may on occasion exchange information and resources with colleagues, but they must avoid habitual sharing and maintain their independence and professionalism. A photojournalist must avoid sharing pictures if, for example, his or her colleague was late to a coverage.

**Guideline** Do not take undue advantage of a colleague by stealing information they obtained by enterprise work. Do not attempt to hide publicly available material or information to score a scoop.

### Dealing with unethical colleagues

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics says: "Expose unethical

conduct in journalism, including within their organizations."

This is easy to say but difficult to do in the Philippine setting, as it may cause journalists, especially reporters photojournalists covering a particular beat, to be ostracized by their peers if they expose the ethical lapses committed by a member or members of the group. They may also face internal repercussions for criticisms made in public of organization or other members of the staff.

Culture plays a role in this but there are other factors, such as the loose implementation of self-regulation mechanisms within the newsroom and the media profession as a whole.

Calling out unethical behavior and encouraging a culture of self-criticism, however, will go a long way toward professionalizing the media industry in spite of ill feelings and recriminations it may engender.

**Guideline** Journalists may respectfully call attention to unethical conduct or practice by their colleagues. But it is advisable to focus one's criticism on the report, behavior or conflict of interest rather than the person.

**Tip** Make it a conversation, instead of an accusation or an indictment. When in doubt, follow your conscience.

#### **Press embargoes**

On occasion, an agency or office may request an embargo and set a mutually-agreed time for news organizations to publish or air a news material, such as a report, statement or press release.

**Guideline** Journalists may agree to an embargo request, provided they ask for and are given a justifiable explanation for the need to delay breaking the story.

**Tip** Media outfits can have varying policies on embargoes. When a news organization violates an embargo, then the original agreement is no longer in effect, and you may break the story as you see fit.

#### **Press corps**

Journalists covering a particular government agency or beat may organize themselves into a press corps, but they must maintain their independence and professionalism in their work.

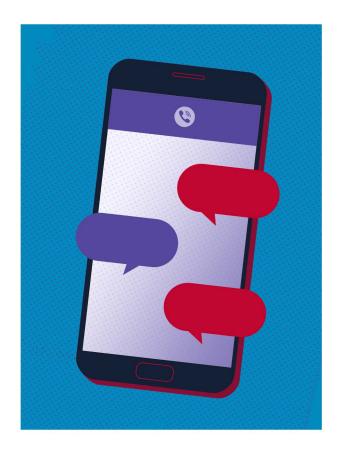
They may not promise officials positive or favorable coverage in exchange for access, information or other rewards.

Press corps may not solicit gifts in cash or in kind to be raffled off during a Christmas party or other events in the name of their members.

They must strive to protect their members from harassment, intimidation and pressure from sources on the beat.

#### **Group message threads**

Over the past few years, journalists on some beats have taken to forming Viber or Whatsapp groups with public officials and



other news personalities they cover, where they create a message thread to ask questions and clarify issues with their sources directly.

For beat reporters, joining such groups may be useful to keep tabs on their sources, especially when the sources are too busy to respond to reporters individually, but it is preferable to communicate directly and one-on-one with the subject instead of relying on information collected from the message thread.

If a journalist decides to use material retrieved from a message thread, he or she must make the proper attribution in the report.

**Tip** The best reporting is driven by enterprise work and reporters can only accomplish this by avoiding the lure of pack journalism.

#### Live-tweeting

Some newsrooms require their reporters to do blow-by-blow reporting on social media, particularly, Twitter. Live-tweeting a speech being delivered by the President, for example, has become common practice.

How may they report false or unfounded claims made by the President?

**Guideline** Journalists may not report falsehoods coming from official sources. Make fact-checking a habit.

Do not report, publish or broadcast statements you know or suspect to be false on social media until you have verified it.

**Tip** Being a step slower than the competition is better than being the first to get it wrong.

Treat your tweet as an extension of your journalistic work, not separate from it. Any tweet must be as truthful, responsible and fair as any report you will make ordinarily.

A wrong or inaccurate tweet must be promptly deleted and corrected in a subsequent post with an explanation as to why the original was erased.

If you must live-tweet an unfounded claim, always put it in context, preferably in the same tweet. If possible, post a quick fact-check with a link to an official source belying or debunking the falsehood.

Refrain from live-tweeting any accusation, insult or other negative remark made by a source against an individual or group, unless the subject under attack is on hand

to give his or her side of the story. (See Case Study: Live-tweeting the President).

#### Conduct on social media

Journalists are citizens too and may hold opinions on social, political and economic issues that concern their lives and communities.

Guideline Editors, reporters, photojournalists and other media workers may post personal opinions and commentary on their Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts outside the work they do for their media organization, provided reasonable limits are drawn.

For example, a journalist covering the House of Representatives must avoid making comments on happenings in the chamber that may show obvious bias or partisanship which may lead their readers or viewers to question their ability to report fairly and responsibly on the subject.

**Guideline** Do not take part in online bullying or harassment.

Journalists must remember that it is practically impossible to compartmentalize their professional and private identities. Social media, despite the existence of private accounts visible only to one's friends, must be treated as public platforms.

**Tip** Behave on social media as you would behave in any public setting. Engage with social media users as professionally and respectfully as you would talk to them in person.

Newsrooms are encouraged to craft social media guidelines in consultation with their staff.

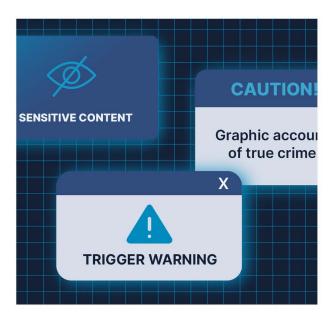
Media owners, publishers, managers and editors must take care not to curtail their staff members' right of free speech.

#### **Traumatic content**

Publications and broadcast stations must avoid showing or airing content that may be traumatizing to members of the public, such as acts of violence, suicide and torture, among others.

If journalists feel that it's in the public interest to show potentially traumatizing content, they must duly prompt their readers, viewers or listeners by issuing trigger warnings.

Newsrooms may use their editorial judgment in determining the type of content that is acceptable for showing on a case to case basis, with the understanding that context is important and public welfare is paramount.



### Moderating comment sections

The comment section of news articles has been and is still being used by trolls and disinformation agents to muddle and attempt to shape public opinion – or take the appearance of public opinion – in order to advance a certain agenda.

Newsroom leaders must ensure that their platforms do not become venues for disinformation and toxic exchange of ideas.

Newsrooms are encouraged to hire administrators who will moderate comments and ban people who try to spread false information or make vulgar, offensive and inappropriate comments that challenge the bounds of decency.

### Covering conflict and crisis

**Guideline** Journalists must prioritize their own safety and that of their crew during dangerous coverage, such as war in conflict zones or breaking stories like a hostage crisis or a mass shooting.

Reporters and photojournalists must refrain from recklessly entering a crime scene and putting themselves and others in danger.

**Tip** Report from a safe place where you can observe the developments. Exercise restraint and prudence.

When a rescue operation is taking place, do not disclose the movements and positions of innocent parties or the authorities. Always consider the possibility that such information may reach the suspect or the perpetrator.

In a hostage-taking, do not try to contact the suspect and potentially cut off a communication line with negotiators.

Newsrooms of TV, radio or online outfits must take extreme caution in broadcasting or live-streaming developments. They must weigh carefully how live coverage may affect the safety of those on the scene.

**Guideline** Make your report truthful, fair and complete. Do not exaggerate or sensationalize.

#### **Buy-bust operations**

Journalists on the crime or police beat, especially those who have cultivated sources in law enforcement, may on occasion be invited to join sting operations by narcotics agents or the police.

Media presence in drug raids or operations is not expressly mandated by law, but the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 includes media representatives among the persons who are supposed to observe the transfer of custody of illegal drugs or other contraband confiscated during the operation, as well as the disposal or destruction of seized evidence.

The rationale is that the media representative must be able to vouch for the chain of custody as an independent witness, but this is problematic for ethical reasons.

Tapping journalists as eyewitnesses effectively makes them an active party to the operation and later on the prosecution of the suspects, potentially putting them at risk for reprisal and compromising their professional identity as reporters.

**Guideline** Journalists must limit their participation in drug operations to reporting only what they observed truthfully and responsibly. They may not become an auxiliary of police or law enforcement offices.

Reporters and photojournalists must guard against being used to legitimize police raids or operations. They must watch for any sign of human rights violations as well as protocol breaches in the service of the search or arrest warrant and duly report it.

**Tip** Do not entertain offers to serve as eyewitnesses to an operation in exchange for access or invitation to future raids. Promptly inform your supervisor when such offers are made.

### **Embedding journalists** in conflict zones

Embedding is when journalists accompany military troops in their areas of operation, sometimes, in conflict zones, staying in close quarters with officers and soldiers and often developing deep camaraderie with them.

Embedded journalists must take care that their reporting meets all ethical standards and does not stray into propaganda for the side of the war or conflict they are covering.



Erwin Mascarinas

They shall not become cheerleaders for military operations.

**Guideline** Embedded journalists must scrupulously preserve their independence and maintain a critical mind for the entirety of the time they spend embedded in a military unit.

They shall examine themselves frequently and check if they have become too close to their subjects, and if they need to take a step back and recuse themselves.

They shall not jeopardize the operations of the unit they cover by divulging their locations, positions or movements. Reporters, photojournalists and crew members must prioritize their own safety at all times.

**Guideline** Do not recklessly go to dangerous places, or defy orders to stay within a safe area, and put your coworkers at risk.

News managers must provide all the support their staff members may need on the field, ensuring their safety at all times. They must be in constant communication with the commander of the unit where their journalists are assigned with. (See: NUJP's Safety Manual for more information).



#### **CASE STUDY**

## **Parachute Journalists and Fixers**

"Parachute journalism" refers to the practice by some news organizations, usually in the foreign press or wire service, of sending their journalists to cover a place they have little knowledge of or familiarity with, such as a disaster area or conflict zone, and have them rely on local media practitioners or "fixers" to fill the gaps in their coverage or reporting.

For a fee, fixers help arrange interviews, gather information, act as translators or interpreters and perform other odd jobs.

But an officer of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP), in a May 2021 interview with the NUJP, raises concerns about how some foreign organizations are treating these on-the-ground workers, especially freelancers.

She emphasizes the importance of ensuring the safety and protection of fixers working for foreign organizations, such as providing life insurance and hazard pay. Speaking of her own experience, she says fixers contracted by her network are not only well-paid but are covered by insurance on dangerous assignments. "Whether it is a fixer or a light-man working anywhere in Mindanao, as long as he or she has clearance, they are covered in case something happens to them," the FOCAP officer says.

But she notes that this is not always the case in other organizations.

A clear standard must be established, she says. "Is there an across-the-board standard when hiring? What is the minimum? What is the acceptable pay?"

It is also important, she says, to ensure that foreign correspondents do not take advantage of local fixers and producers by passing off their work as their own.

The FOCAP officer says newsrooms must duly recognize all the people responsible for a story instead of letting their staff take all the credit for work done by fixers. In dangerous places, local correspondents sometimes do not only serve as translators but also as security guarantors, "but they do not have the byline," she laments.

The journalist asserts that any practice of parachute journalism must be called out to give attention to the contribution of local journalists in the stories read or viewed by millions around the globe.

A byline, she says, could help local journalists establish their professional credibility and also as a form of protection from threats: "If they are published, this means that they are legit."

# How to Defend Against Libel or Cyber-Libel

Libel is defined under the Revised Penal Code as "a public and malicious imputation of a crime, or of a vice or defect, real or imaginary, or any act, omission, condition, status, or circumstance tending to cause the dishonor, discredit, or contempt of a natural or juridical person, or to blacken the memory of one who is dead."

On the other hand, cyber-libel as defined under the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 is essentially the same crime as libel, except that the former exacts a higher penalty because of the use of technology and the potential to cause greater harm.

Journalists are often told that if they adhere to ethical guidelines and report the news as truthfully, fairly and responsibly as they can, they need not fear getting sued. But the fact is that a perfectly true and fair report may still incur a libel case.

Media groups have long pushed for the decriminalization of libel, as it is being used as an instrument to harass and intimidate journalists. But little headway has been made with legislators and policy-makers. Thus, it is imperative that journalists arm themselves with the knowledge to avoid facing libel suits or to defend against them.

In a comprehensive summation of laws and jurisprudence on libel, lawyer Loreto Ata lists down a number of ways to guard against libel suits in the online piece, "Some Defenses in Libel Suits."

- 1. Parameters: Libel is written or visual defamation, while slander is spoken.
- 2. Absence of an element of libel: Libel has five elements, namely, defamatory imputation; malice; publication; and identifiability of the victim. "Where one element is missing, the libel action should be dismissed," writes Ata.

Of the five elements, malice is generally considered to be the hardest to prove. "The existence of malice is implied or presumed by law from the fact of a defamatory publication (malice in law). The particular intent of the offender to cast dishonor, discredit or contempt on the person libeled is termed actual malice, or express malice, or malice in fact," says Ata.

"However, if the plaintiff or complainant in the libel action is a public officer or a public figure, the element of 'actual malice' has a different connotation," he adds.

3. Absence of "actual malice" under the New York Times test: At explains that under the New York Times test of actual malice, which has been adopted in Philippine jurisprudence, the accuser must prove that the reporter knew that his or her report was false but still willfully chose to publish it.

"Actual malice does not incorporate mere suspicions or what a reporter should have known; it requires that the reporter actually knew that the information on which the article was based was false or the reporter acted with such disregard for the truth as to rise to the level of recklessness," he explains.

- 4. Truth of the libelous statement: In general, truth is not a defense for libel, but it can be used to support a journalist's assertion that he or she had good motives or justifiable ends for publishing the report. Proof of the truth can also be a defense when it is shown that a defamatory imputation against government employees is related to the discharge of their official duties, in which case, "even if the imputation does not constitute a crime, proof of truth is sufficient for acquittal," writes Ata.
- 5. Privileged communications: These are statements which, though having the elements of libel, are protected from liability "due to considerations or interests that outweigh the need for redress to the private injury sustained by the offended party as a result of the defamatory statements," according to Ata.

Examples include statements made by members of Congress in the discharge of their functions, which are an absolutely privileged communication, and "a fair and true report, made in good faith, without any comments or remarks, of any judicial, legislative or other official proceedings which are not of confidential nature, or of any statement, report or speech delivered in said proceedings, or of any other act performed by public officers in the exercise of their functions," which is a conditionally privileged communication.

- 6. Fair comment or opinion: A fair comment on a matter of public interest is a defense against libel. "The fair-comment privilege was established primarily to protect public debate by sheltering communications about matters of public concern," says Ata.
- 7. Fair criticism: Ata writes that fair criticism is also a defense against libel but "the criticism should be directed at the conduct but not at the person of the public official."
- 8. Good motives and justifiable ends: Under Article 361 of the Revised Penal Code, it is stated that the accused shall be acquitted "if he is able to prove not only the truth of the matter alleged to be libelous, but also that it was published with good motives and for justifiable ends."
- 9. Freedom of speech and of the press: "These constitutional guarantees are not for the benefit of the press so much as for the benefit of all the people, by giving the citizens unrestricted access to information and views on all sides of an issue," says Ata.
- 10. Correction or retraction: Ata writes that prompt correction or retraction "may tend to indicate that an erroneous statement was accidental, and it will therefore be admitted to help establish absence of 'actual malice,' although it is not conclusive."

# Covering Special Sectors

## Reporting on Children

Children, according to the Department of Justice (DOJ), need special care "due to their size, vulnerability and young age."

"Every effort must be exerted to ensure that children are accorded special protection to enable them to grow and develop in an atmosphere of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. The best interest of the child shall be the primordial and paramount concern of everyone," the DOJ says in its 2008 guide for media reporting on children.

A child, in the eyes of the law, is not only someone who is below the age of 18. The DOJ includes in the definition of a child "one who is 18 years of age or over but is unable to fully take care of or protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition."

In either case, the first rule of reporting on children is: "Do no harm."

At all times, journalists must respect the rights of children while interviewing them or reporting about them.

Guideline: Respect a child's right to privacy. Children who have been in traumatic or distressing situations or whose identity or condition could expose them to public humiliation or stigma may not be named in news stories.

Appropriate care must be taken to ensure that the report leaves no clues about the child's identity. For example, the full names of family members must be omitted and their address or specific location must not be mentioned. If the interview is filmed, the child's face must be blurred and the background must not expose the person's whereabouts.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recommends that media organizations change the name and obscure the identity of any child who is a

victim of sexual abuse or exploitation; a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse; HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent; is charged or convicted of a crime; a current or former child combatant; and an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internal displaced person.

A child may only be identified under special circumstances, such as when the child initiates contact with the journalist and expresses his or her wish to be named as part of a personal advocacy to raise awareness about the plight of children in similar hardships. But appropriate care must be taken to ensure that the child will be protected from harm.

**Guideline** To interview a child, journalists must obtain permission from the child and his or her parents or guardians. UNICEF recommends having this permission in writing and in the child's language.

In interviewing children, journalists must make sure that the child and his or her guardian fully know the purpose of the interview and how its publication may affect them.

**Guideline** Be sensitive in asking questions. Do not make inappropriate or judgmental comments and avoid questions that may cause a child to recall a painful or traumatic experience.

Do not force or pressure a child to talk about something he or she does not want to talk about.

Respect children's right to have their opinion heard and to take part in decisions affecting their lives and communities.

**Tip** Make sure that the child is comfortable at all times during the interview by limiting the number of people in the room and removing any source of distractions.

News organizations are encouraged to report stories about children's rights and welfare with regularity. Editorial judgment on whether to run a story on children must not be based on concerns that adhering to ethical guidelines is too tedious or may take too much time before deadline.

News organizations may not run exploitative or sensational stories on children. They may not use reports, footage and images that commodify or sexualize children or make them the subject of spectacle or humiliation.

Story-telling must not stereotype or expose children to negative public judgment due to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or disability, or mock them for belonging to minority or indigenous groups.



#### **CASE STUDY**

## Media Coverage of Children's Issues

One of the disturbing findings of a 2006 study of Philippine media reporting about children was that some newsrooms showed a tendency to "avoid" stories involving minors out of concern that they might violate ethical guidelines.

"Since journalists normally write and edit stories on deadline, it becomes too tedious to remember all the dos and don'ts in covering children," according to a CMFR study commissioned by UNICEF.

But deciding not to run stories on children in order to avoid mistakes on how children's issues must be reported is unfortunate because it misses the point of why the guidelines were created in the first place. After all, children deserve as much attention and media coverage as adults, if not more.

"In extreme cases, some journalists expressed that they have not even heard of the guidelines. Those who have heard of the guidelines had never seen them," UNICEF notes, based on a blog by the PCIJ.

The child rights body says it will help change attitudes among journalists and editors so they can become more knowledgeable of the guidelines.

Besides the tendency to self-censor children's stories, the study found other alarming trends: A good number of print and television reports violated the privacy rule, "as they gave pieces of information that could still lead to the child's identity even without naming him or her."

Of 40 newspaper articles reviewed, a quarter published the full names of the children who figured in the stories, as either victims, witnesses, or aggressors. Only three of the reports did not use any specific information that could lead to the identification of the child; the rest gave details such as the complete home address (22 percent) or the full names of parents or grandparents (17.5 percent).

The PCIJ says the results of the CMFR-UNICEF study showed that the local press is still struggling to comply with

international standards on reporting on children, which consider respecting a child's privacy to be paramount.

In all media coverage involving children, their best interests shall be the primary and paramount concern and that they should take into consideration the present, as well as the long-term implications of any publicity on the child's recovery and rehabilitation, the PCIJ says.

Other findings of the CMFR-UNICEF study are the following:

- Guidelines related to improving the quality of coverage are the most unheeded. Most of the stories are straight news reports, with very little effort to go deeper into the issues affecting violence or crimes against and by children.
- There was generally no use of words that tend to pass judgment on the child.

However, in two of the 40 newspaper articles, words like "drunk," "fugitive" and "rugby addicts" were used.

 There was minimal tendency to sensationalize. It was noted in four of the 40 print articles and one of the 11 television reports.

In both print and television reporting, police were the most "favored and convenient" sources for the news.

- Seven of every 10 newspaper reports used a single source; TV news reporters appear to use more sources for their stories, as seven of the 11 surveyed reports used more than a single source.
- In both print and television coverage, there was minimal attempt to raise awareness about the issues involving the cases that have been specifically reported.

## Reporting on Women

A December 2020 report titled "The Missing Perspectives of Women in News" finds a "stubbornly persistent underrepresentation of women in news organizations (especially at leadership and governance levels), as experts cited in reports, and as protagonists of news stories," according to Poynter.

Although the study does not cover the Philippines, where there are many women in leadership positions in media, it paints a familiar picture of the overall state of news production in the country, especially in the mainstream press.

"In the 21st century, news is produced mainly by men, featuring more men, and is consumed by more men," writes Luba Kassova, the author of the report.

**Guideline** News organizations must report women's issues with regularity and push for diversity and greater representation of women in media.

**Tip** Journalists must not limit their coverage of women's issues to domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse.

There are myriad topics involving women that deserve space in the media, among them reproductive health, the gender wage gap in the workplace, and the changing roles of women in business and governance.

Explore these subjects with sensitivity and draw upon research and women's experiences for insightful reporting on women.

**Guideline** Journalists must avoid implicit or subconscious male bias in their reporting.

Use gender-neutral titles. Do not say "congressmen" when referring to a group of lawmakers, or "chairman" when the person being referred to is a woman or of another gender.

#### Violence against women

Guideline Do not publish or broadcast the names of survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence, domestic abuse or assault. Take care not to expose their location, especially those whose safety may be put at risk by the exposure of their identity.

In their story-telling, journalists must describe violence against women in accurate and nonjudgmental terms. They may not use details that are too explicit and could further stigmatize the woman. But they may use enough description to show the seriousness of the crime.

**Guideline** Reporters and photojournalists shall not engage in victim-blaming by

stating or implying in their report that the women deserved to be attacked.

**Tip** The use of "victim" is discouraged, unless the woman describes herself as such. The term "survivor" is preferred, according to the guidelines on reporting violence against women by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

#### Interviewing survivors

The IFJ recommends that media organizations assign a female interviewer to handle interviews with survivors of violence or abuse.

The interview must be held in a secure location and away from earshot of anyone else but the interviewer. For television journalists, the number of crew members should be limited.

Guideline Be sensitive and respectful of the woman's privacy. Journalists must recognize a survivor's right to refuse to answer any question or reveal details they are not comfortable talking about. In their reporting, journalists must show the bigger picture instead of focusing on the tragic aspects of the story. Do not embellish or sensationalize women's accounts of their experiences.

Reporters must put their reports about violence against women in the proper context to give their readers and viewers a greater understanding of the depth of the problem.

Journalists shall add social and historical background on the communities in which such violence occurs, relevant statistics on how widespread the problem is, and other useful information.

**Tip** Include resources such as the hotline numbers of support groups that may be helpful to other women in similar situations.

## Reporting on LGBTQIA+

In 2004, an entertainment program on TV covered the wedding of two women. In response, the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) issued a memorandum with a stern warning against "positive depictions" of same-sex relationships.

In 2013, transgender woman Mimi Juareza won an acting award during the 9th Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Cinema. The fly in her ointment was that she was placed under the "Best Actor" category. Some media reports even referred to her as "he." In 2009, a newspaper columnist wrote that LGBT people "should not also go around town proclaiming their preferences as if it was a badge of honor."

These were just some of the findings of a 2014 report released by the United Nations Development Programme and the United States Agency for International Development on the state of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus (LGBT+) community in the Philippines, including how its members are represented in media.

Besides the above examples, news coverage on events involving LGBT people "also tends to be sensationalized," according to the report, which cited news stories about police raids on bathhouses.

The findings in "Being LGBT in Asia: The Philippines Country Report" show that while

there have been some advances in the movement for gender equality, the minority group, by and large, is still vulnerable to discrimination and hate speech.

Media organizations can help advance the conversation on LGBT+ rights by reporting on LGBT+ causes and directing deeper and more substantive coverage of the issues concerning them.

**Guideline** Newsrooms must strive for gender diversity in their daily coverage, work toward a more positive representation of LGBT+ in the news and shun story-telling that reinforces stereotypes.

Reports must not call attention to a person's gender identity when it is not relevant to the story. If a story can stand on its own without the reader knowing about the subject being gay or lesbian, then the subject's gender identity need not be reported.

**Tip** Do not use "gay" as a noun but as an adjective ("the gay man" instead of "the gay"). Avoid saying "gay couple" or "homosexual relationship" when "couple" or "relationship" will suffice.

Journalists must be careful in producing stories that may unwittingly incite hate or prejudice against LGBT+ people.

Educate yourself about acceptable terms used by LGBT+ people to refer to themselves and avoid words that are

outdated and no longer reflect their situation or experience.

At no time should you use demeaning and pejorative names, except when it is in the interest of the public to know that they were used, for example, in a hate crime or similar contexts.

Transgender refers to persons whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth. The term may be used for those who have transitioned or have not yet undergone gender reassignment surgery.

A transgender woman is someone who was born male and transitions to become female while a transgender man is someone who was born female and transitions to become male.

Intersex, on the other hand, refers to persons who were born with one or more variations in their bodies' sex characteristics that are neither typically male nor female. Asexual refers to the lack of or low interest in sexual attraction or activity. Queer is often used as an umbrella term for persons who are not heterosexual and not cisgender. Cisgender describes persons whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Guideline** In your reporting, use the chosen names of transgender persons and use their chosen pronouns. Do not use their old names except with their permission and when it is important to the story.

### Interviewing LGBT+ persons

**Guideline** Journalists must treat LGBT+ persons with respect. Reporters may not ask questions that intrude excessively into the personal lives of LGBT+ persons.

For example, do not ask transgender persons if they have had gender reassignment surgery unless the person volunteers the information.

Journalists must avoid harmful stereotypes in dealing with LGBT+ persons. Reporters may not ask LGBT+ persons if they have been tested for HIV.



Efigenio Christopher Toledo IV

### Reporting on Indigenous Peoples

The Philippines is home to about 110 indigenous cultural communities or indigenous peoples (IP), although the numbers of most groups are small – and shrinking fast. "Some have populations of a few thousand, while others are just a few hundred," according to a 2014 report of the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP).

It is clear that the country's IP communities deserve media attention, but they are some of the least reported minority groups in the Philippine press. "The situation of indigenous peoples is underreported or almost absent in Philippine media," laments the International Labor Organization (ILO).

"When indigenous peoples are reported on, it is often on cultural practices, as victims of conflict or discrimination. There is a need to heighten awareness on indigenous peoples' rights and empowerment," ILO says.

**Guideline** Newsrooms must support and direct coverage of issues concerning indigenous cultures that go beyond stereotypes.

Reporting on indigenous peoples must be imbued with respect for their culture and beliefs, sensitivity and compassion for their struggles and conditions, and must be bereft of any discriminatory language.

Editors and news managers must encourage story-telling that portrays indigenous groups as more than warriors resisting the encroachment of their ancestral domains or its helpless victims.

Journalists must refer to an indigenous group by the name they use to call themselves. Journalists may not use demeaning words such as "primitive" or "backward" in describing indigenous communities.

Reporters and photojournalists must be careful to depict indigenous peoples not as mere victims with no agency in their own lives.

Newsrooms are encouraged to look for positive or uplifting stories in IP communities.

But at the same time, journalists must "be wary of romanticizing" the situation of indigenous peoples, AIPP reminds journalists in a 2014 guide for media reporting on IP groups.

"No indigenous community is ideal, pure or totally traditional under the present times. Avoid portraying indigenous cultures as static or unchanging. Rather, be aware of the wider social context, its influences and the changes it has brought on the indigenous community," AIPP notes.

Journalists must avoid sensational reporting on indigenous groups. They must carefully consider how the publication or airing of a story may impact an IP community.

**Tip** Complicate the narrative of IP communities. Their issues and struggles are varied and complex, and so the stories about them must reflect those complexities. Avoid exaggeration and oversimplification.

Reporters and photojournalists must remember to look at indigenous peoples as people, not as symbols of a cause or a struggle or a lost era nor as mere victims of the modern age. They are real, living and breathing people with families who dream of a better future for themselves and their community.

"Dig deeper and write what you have learned about the complex issues, rights and struggles of indigenous peoples in order to educate and inform the public, civil society and government policy makers," advises AIPP.

## Reporting on Persons with Disability

Disability is an ordinary part of life. About 1 billion people, or 15 percent of the global population, have a disability, making them the largest minority group in the world.

Yet persons with disability (PWDs) also count among some of the most disenfranchised sectors and "are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and tend to be poorer than their counterparts without disabilities," according to the United Nations (UN).

The UN says the press must play a pivotal role to empower PWDs and give them a greater voice in the public sphere – by changing perceptions about disability.

"Attention should be drawn to the image of disability in the media with a view to an accurate and balanced portrayal of disability as a part of everyday life," the UN says.

**Guideline** Newsrooms must produce reporting that dispels negative stereotypes about PWDs and promote their rights and dignity.

Reporters and photojournalists must refrain from producing stories and images that portray PWDs as objects of mercy, charity or tragedy.

At the same time, stories about PWDs should not pander to them by only depicting them as champions in life who are here to

serve as a source of inspiration for the non-disabled for no other reason than having overcome disability.

In the Philippines, PWD groups "are unhappy with inaccurate and poor portrayals of their sector, but they also disagree that they should be portrayed as superheroes just because they can do what people without disabilities can do," The Asia Foundation and VERA Files observe in "Getting it Right: Reporting on Disability in the Philippines."

"Disability reporting is the same as any other kind of reporting and, at the same time, different. While the general ethical guidelines that apply to all news coverage must be observed, disability journalists must also be mindful that reporting on disability carries with it its own unique set of ethical issues," the 2015 report says.

"The important thing is to find the balance between the two, and, as disability activists say, give PWDs 'the opportunity to be equal and the right to be different," according to the report.

**Guideline** Treat PWDs as ordinary people who are no different from you and me in spite of their special needs.

Media organizations must realize its role "as a vital instrument in raising awareness, countering stigma and misinformation. It can be a powerful force to change societal misconceptions and present persons with disabilities as individuals that are a part of human diversity," the UN says.

Journalists must pursue stories that can help PWDs successfully integrate in their community and be seen as a regular part of the human landscape.

**Tip** Focus your reporting on PWDs with a view toward giving them equal access to education, employment, health and other areas as people who are non-disabled.

Newsrooms may be guided by the Guidelines for Assessing Media Adherence to the Convention on the Rights of PWDs drawn up by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2010, and cited by The Asia Foundation and VERA Files in their report.

1 Do the media report on persons with disabilities? If so, which media do that, in which sections of their products?

- 2 Are persons with disabilities portrayed as victims or rights holders?
- 3 Do the media represent the point of view of persons with disabilities?
- 4 Are language and images appropriate?
- 5 Does the media's message reinforce or counter stereotypes?
- 6 Has there been a change in media reporting on persons with disabilities over time? If so, in which way (for example, more or less reporting, different approach)?
- 7 Which factors contributed to the change?
- 8 Is it an accurate representation of real life?
- 9 Are the media accessible to persons with disabilities?



#### **CASE STUDY**

## Using Photos and Videos Without Paying

The fact that most media companies in the Philippines pay scant wages is not a secret to anyone in the industry, but acclaimed photojournalist Ezra Acayan opened a can of worms in December 2020 when he revealed on social media that some outfits do not pay at all.

He called out the public affairs department of a top television network for its practice of asking for free photos and videos to be used for its documentary programs.

The photojournalist wrote about an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) in France who had been asked by the network to shoot – for free – videos of his daily life under lockdown. The documentary later aired on TV, but the OFW did not get anything for his labor.

Embarrassed, the network issued a statement promising to "put a stop to the practice of our teams requesting for use of photos and videos without compensation, particularly requesting interview subjects to shoot video for us for free."

Acayan, however, says this is not an isolated incident but common media practice.

In an interview with the NUJP in May 2021, the chair of the Photojournalists' Center of the Philippines (PCP) says compensation is especially bad in the provinces. "If in Manila you get PHP300 (USD6) per photo, in the province they lower the bar further to PHP200 (USD4) to PHP150 (USD3). The highest you would get is PHP500 (USD10), not including foreign media," he says.

But even some international publications or wire services are known to shortchange photojournalists, according to Acayan.

He recalls a time when the tactic of foreign news agencies was to form a "cartel." "The chief photographers talked to each other to set the rate [for freelancers]... For such a long time, they set the rate at PHP2,500 (USD50) per day, and at PHP1,500 (USD30) per photo. If they published more than two photos, the pay automatically converts to the day rate of PHP2,500. So you end up

losing out, because you spent your own resources," he says.

The pandemic, according to Acayan, has only aggravated the situation of many photojournalists, especially those based out of Metro Manila.

How do they survive? "Some take part-time work, some go into business, then here comes unethical practices – you're forced to take extreme measures," he says. "You really can't blame them. The rates are too low."

"That's talking of Manila rates only. In the province, the rates are not only low, there is also too little work," Acayan says. "If there's a typhoon, there would be people coming in from Manila, they would end up being only 'fixers,' and that is only if they're lucky," he adds, referring to local reporters or photographers who are contracted by foreign or Metro Manila-based journalists to help with coverage.

The PCP conducted a survey in 2021 of economic and working conditions among photojournalists in the Philippines to determine how bad the situation was instead of relying on anecdotal evidence. Some of the group's initial findings, shared with the NUJP and listed below, give a stark look at their plight:

 Only 27 percent of the surveyed photojournalists work full time; 41 percent are part-time and do other photography jobs, while 32 percent are part-time and do other non-photography jobs.

- Eight of 10 respondents earn less than PHP300,000 (USD6,000) per year through photojournalism, while 27 percent report making less than PHP30,000 (USD600) per year. Only 20 percent of the respondents make more than PHP300,000 per year.
- Some 71 percent of the surveyed photojournalists are paid in day rates, of whom 29 percent get less than PHP1,000 (USD20) per day. Only 4 percent report being paid more than PHP15,000 (USD300).
- A large majority, 75 percent of the respondents, say they are paid per photo, of whom 17 percent get less than PHP300 (USD6) per photo, and only 2 percent are paid more than PHP4,500 (USD90) per photo.
- Nearly a third, or 31 percent of the respondents, say they are "rarely" or "never" reimbursed for expenses incurred at work.
- About 13 percent of the respondents get paid in three months or longer after the assignment has finished. One respondent says it takes more than nine months for him to get paid.
- Some 73 percent have experienced not getting paid by publications.

- Some 91 percent are now being required to do other tasks besides taking pictures, such as shooting or editing video, writing text stories, recording audio, updating social media or doing a livestream broadcast. A third do not get paid extra for the additional work.
- About 68 percent of the respondents own the copyright to their work, while 9 percent say they do not. The rest "have no idea."
- The surveyed photojournalists report facing the following occupational risks: natural or man-made disasters (81 percent), physical or psychological health risks (72 percent), abuse from authorities (62 percent), verbal assault (51 percent), online harassment (46 percent), and armed conflict (35 percent).
- Some 68 percent do not have company-covered health insurance.

 Some 88 percent consider themselves vulnerable to COVID-19, with 24 percent who find they are "extremely vulnerable."

Acayan says he intends to make the report public. "I don't believe it when others say this is only an internal problem and we must fix this only within the industry. No, I think the public also has the right to know the situation of our photographers, and media practitioners in general. They're also stakeholders. They're the public," he says.

The issue of professional compensation is sure to further divide the media industry, "probably because some are already content with their lot," Acayan says. But he insists on starting the conversation as a matter of principle.

He argues: "If we're making noise about press freedom, then why aren't we making noise about economic freedom?"

### Handling Special Topics

## Reporting on the Pandemic

The global coronavirus crisis has given rise to what the World Health Organization (WHO) calls an "infodemic," or the "overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that occurs during a pandemic."

"It can lead to confusion and ultimately mistrust in governments and public health response," warns the international body.

As the public struggles to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance, journalists must step up to fill the missing gaps in the dissemination of information, knowledge and resources about the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, according to UNESCO.

"Journalism is key to supplying credible information within the wider 'infodemic,' and to combating the myths and rumours," it says in a brief for World Press Freedom Day.

"Without it, false content can run rampant. Falsehoods in circulation can be



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categorized as both disinformation (produced and shared with malicious motivation), and misinformation, when these lies are spread without bad intentions. But in the context of COVID-19, the effects of both can be equally deadly," UNESCO says.

**Guideline** News organizations must base its news coverage on truthful and authoritative voices and credible sources of information, actively debunk falsehoods and mistruth, and prevent the spread of disinformation.

Reporters must seek the opinion of medical experts and scientists with the relevant credentials, and let science do most of the talking in their reports.

Journalists may challenge the claims of the people who give out information, including government officials, public health experts, medical professionals and other authorities. Ask them for evidence for a claim and check their sources of information.

Reporters must refrain from speculation and rumor. They may not quote sources who are not experts in the field they are reporting on.

**Tip** Be careful in the use of maps, projections, studies and statistics. Always explain the context and give the relevant sources of information. Let the readers or viewers be aware of the limitations of the data or error margins in the study.

Journalists may not cherry-pick data to support a particular position. They may not quote political leaders to try to counter or refute expert advice, unless they are experts themselves.

News organizations must stress in their reporting that the science on COVID-19 is still in its infancy, and prevailing knowledge can change or evolve as more information becomes available and more studies are done.

But they must avoid triggering perceptions that scientists are wrong or do not deserve trust. Instead, reports may direct readers and viewers to legitimate and reliable resources for more information.

### Social media and crowdsourcing

**Guideline** Use social media as a source of information very sparingly. Double- or triple-check information with other sources, particularly if the information goes against prevailing scientific opinion.

Journalists may quote from the social media posts of prominent scientists or doctors, provided they have verified the authenticity of the account. But it is advisable to reach out to the person directly to ask if they can use the quote for a story and to check for possible misinterpretations on their part.

If the social media user is a private citizen, reporters must refrain from quoting his or her posts on Twitter or Facebook in their stories without permission, especially when these contain sensitive information such as a private medical condition.

**Tip** Avoid quoting a tweet or a Facebook post and attributing it to a "netizen." The quote can still be traced to the person and may cause unintended backlash.

Crowdsourcing may be done on occasion but journalists must be very careful of any information volunteered by social media users. Ask them for evidence and strive to verify it independently with other sources. Journalists must ask crowdsourced persons if they may be identified by name.

who have lost family and loved ones.

#### Online interviews

Online interviews must be held to the same ethical and accuracy standards as regular face-to-face interviews. At all times, journalists must be professional in the conduct of the interview.

**Tip** Be on time, wear something presentable, reduce ambient noise, and use a professional background.

Ask in advance if the interview may be recorded. Explain the purpose of the interview and where it may be published or aired.

Be considerate and respectful when interviewing people online. Be kind to those

#### Reporting death

As the coronavirus continues to take lives, journalists must take extreme caution in breaking news of death. Verify the information from sources in a position to know.

Do not break the news until you are sure the family has been informed of the death.

Be humane in reporting mortality figures. Do not report numbers on deaths coldly and dispassionately but try to frame it as a loss to families and communities.

Giving a human face to statistics is recommended, but journalists must strive to be sensitive and empathetic. Do not exploit the grief of the bereaved.

### Reporting on Disasters

Disaster is an unwelcome but habitual visitor to the Philippines by virtue of its unfortunate geography. Not only is the country located within the Ring of Fire that leaves it vulnerable to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, it is also prone to typhoons blowing in from the Pacific and bringing hazards like landslides, flash floods, storm surges and tsunamis.

The Global Climate Risk Index 2020 by Germanwatch ranks the Philippines, among 180 countries, as the fourth most susceptible to weather-related loss events over a 20-year period, and the second in 2018 alone. That means Filipino journalists have faced some of the highest levels of exposure to calamity, death and destruction over the years.

In this, experience has been a good teacher - but not the best. In 2013, the Philippine press was tested to the limit by the arrival of the world's most powerful typhoon, "Haiyan," or locally, "Yolanda." Though the media at the time produced some reports, there were exemplary more examples of rash reporting based on sensationalism and hysteria.

The CMFR observes in a 2020 report "the improved quality of media's disaster reporting" in the years after Yolanda, but adds that reporting has fluctuated: "In one change of administration, the learning curve for disaster readiness has dramatically faltered."



Reporting on a disaster means covering loss, grief and trauma. The job requires reporters to approach their subjects with kindness and compassion, but too often, journalists lose their way and are driven to embellish details and sensationalize events under the economic imperative of ratings, ad revenues or clicks.

Journalists, according to the Dart Center for Conflict and Trauma, must never forget that the people they speak with in the aftermath of a storm or an earthquake "may be going through the worst experience of their lives." Their communities will be dealing with loss long after the reporters have left.

**Guideline** Journalists covering a disaster must show empathy and be sensitive to the pain of the people they cover or interview. Reporters and photojournalists must respect their right to private grief.

Be respectful in approaching victims or survivors to interview, photograph or film. Ask for permission and explain your purpose.

Do not "ambush" disaster survivors by shoving a recorder or camera in their faces.

Journalists must let the survivors tell their story. Do not interrupt even if they stray from the topic. Do not pressure them to talk about things they are not ready to talk about. If they cannot continue the interview, do not force them.

**Guideline** Journalists are human first before they are journalists.

If an interviewee becomes emotional, give them all the time to compose themselves. Offer clean tissues. Be empathetic. Do not underestimate the power of a few words of comfort.

Can you offer help?

By all means, do. Being a journalist does not mean being detached or distant. Journalists who are in a position to help are encouraged to do so. Give aid to distressed people who are in obvious need of it, by, among other things, offering a pack of biscuits or a bottle of water or a bit of cash or whatever else you are able to.

In reporting, journalists are advised to refrain from exaggeration or sensationalism. Let the facts and your

journalism speak, instead of making appeals to pity or emotion. Be truthful, compassionate and insightful in your story-telling.

Do not take liberties with quotes, details and facts. Even small errors can cause distress in your subjects. Check and double-check if you got their names right.

**Tip** Get your interviewees' contact numbers in case you may need to clarify things. But take care that you do not inconvenience them.

Guideline Journalists are advised to enrich their disaster reporting with relevant and supporting information, such as the historical background of the affected community, statistics from previous disasters, the calamity budget, and so on.

Newsrooms must encourage their staff to produce reports that focus not only on tragedy or misery but other facets of the disaster, such as individual acts of bravery or heroism, coping mechanisms within a community, the extent of the damage, the costs of rehabilitation, the impact on marginalized sectors, the role of civic organizations and local governments, and, most importantly, what the national government has or has not been doing.

**Tip** Be curious, ask questions, research and remember to give the appropriate context in your reporting.

For example, an inspiring story about public schoolchildren donating their lunch money to have their classroom repaired must be put in the context of the government not allocating enough resources to the school system.

Complicate the narrative. Your reporting must reflect the nuances and complexities of what a disaster-struck community is going through, instead of black-and-white explanations.

For example, do not simply report that the storm caused a bridge to collapse. Look at whether the bridge had been constructed with sturdy materials or with substandard ones from a dubious contractor. The real story might be hiding beneath the surface.

In covering disasters and emergencies, a journalist's role is to relay information to save or sustain the lives of those who are affected. The different phases of a disaster, pre-disaster, acute emergency, post disaster and rehabilitation, should clue journalists in on what information the affected population may need.

Reporting information at the right time would mean getting the right help to the affected community.

## Reporting on Suicide and Mental Health

A suicide occurred at the tracks of a Metro Rail Transit station in May 2013, resulting in a flurry of media reports that not only gave lurid and graphic accounts of how the man died but also showed camera footage of the scene.

The CMFR rightly called out TV stations and newspapers for their over-the-top reporting that violated international guidelines of responsible and ethical reporting on suicide.

Unfortunately, the consequences of sensational coverage of suicide are far graver than causing public outrage or offending audience sensibilities.

Systematic reviews of more than 50 investigations into suicides have drawn the same conclusion, according to the World Health Organization (WHO): "Media reporting of suicide can lead to imitative suicidal behaviors."

"These reviews have also observed that imitation is more evident under some circumstances than others. It varies as a function of time, peaking within the first three days and levelling off by about two weeks, but sometimes lasting longer. It is related to the amount and prominence of coverage, with repeated coverage and 'high impact' stories being most strongly associated with imitative behaviors," the WHO says.

The impact is accentuated "when the person described in the story and the reader or viewer are similar in some way, or when the person described in the story is a celebrity and is held in high regard by the reader or viewer."

**Guideline** Publications and stations shall not run or air spot or breaking stories on suicide to prevent copycats.

Any story on suicide must be dealt with sensitively, excluding the method of suicide and other details that may inspire imitation.

Journalists must refrain from giving detailed information on the location of the suicide to avoid promoting the place as a "suicide site."

The WHO says: "Particular care should be taken by media professionals not to promote such locations as suicide sites by, for example, using sensationalist language to describe them or overplaying the number of incidents occurring at them."

**Guideline** Do not use photos or footage of a suicide, especially when they reveal details on the method or location. Do not publish suicide notes.

Journalists must ask for permission from the family to use pictures of a person who died by suicide. **Guideline** Refrain from interviewing the family members of a person who died by suicide.

The WHO says: "People who have been bereaved by suicide are at heightened risk of suicide themselves. People who have experienced the death from suicide of a loved one are vulnerable and are working through grief and related issues. Their privacy should be respected at all times."

**Guideline** Do not glamorize suicide. Be careful in reporting about celebrities who died by suicide. Be careful in reporting or suggesting any upward trend in suicide rates, and avoid prominent and repetitive suicide coverage.

Editors must avoid using the word "suicide" in the headline.

Journalists may not use language that normalizes and desensitizes the audience to suicide, making sure to avoid such phrases as "political suicide" or "career suicide."

Reporting on suicide must always be accompanied by resources such as hotline numbers for mental health support groups or volunteer counseling services that may help persons suffering from mental health problems.

The WHO cites other ways to mitigate the harmful effects of suicide reporting, such as "highlighting alternatives to suicide, providing information on help lines and community resources, and publicizing risk indicators and warning signs."

"In Preventing Suicide: A Resource for Media Professionals," the WHO enumerates 11 ethical guidelines for reporting on suicide.

- 1 Take the opportunity to educate the public about suicide.
- 2 Avoid language which sensationalizes or normalizes suicide, or presents it as a solution to problems.
- 3 Avoid prominent placement and undue repetition of stories about suicide.
- 4 Avoid explicit description of the method used in a completed or attempted suicide.
- 5 Avoid providing detailed information about the site of a completed or attempted suicide.
- 6 Word headlines carefully.
- 7 Exercise caution in using photographs or video footage.
- 8 Take particular care in reporting celebrity suicides.
- **9** Show due consideration for people bereaved by suicide.
- **10** Provide information about where to seek help.
- 11 Recognize that media professionals themselves may be affected by stories about suicide.

#### **Covering mental health**

**Guideline** Journalists must be careful in reporting on mental health matters. The language one uses is important to prevent contributing to social stigma on depression and other mental health conditions.

**Tip** Do not use language that stigmatizes mental health problems. Avoid words like "psycho" or "crazy" or "lunatic" even when these are used by official sources.

For instance, don't say "released" from a mental health facility when you mean "discharged." In the Philippines, where there's a stigma associated with "mental hospital," it's better to use "psychiatric ward" or "mental institution."

Avoid defining people by their mental health problems and calling them "depressive" or "schizophrenic." Instead, say, "she has clinical depression," or "he has schizophrenia," provided the person has been duly diagnosed by a psychiatrist and has given you permission to disclose his or her condition.

Guideline Educate yourself on mental health conditions and use the terms accurately. If necessary, define the mental health terms to help your audience understand.

For example, avoid using the words "psychopath" or "sociopath" to refer to someone. Be guided by how mental health professionals define and use such words.

Refrain from using colloquial language like "shrinks" for psychiatrists or psychologists.

#### Violence and mental health

**Guideline** Do not amplify the popular misconception that people with mental health problems are prone to violence.

Always contextualize situations when a person with a mental health condition harms another person, instead of portraying the mental illness as the cause. Take note of studies showing that people with mental health problems are more likely to harm themselves before hurting others.

**Tip** Emphasize that certain mental health conditions like depression are often treatable or manageable. Leave advice on treatment and recovery to readers or viewers who may be similarly situated.

Provide your audience information and resources, such as hotline numbers, about support organizations that specialize in helping people with mental health problems.

#### Protecting journalists' mental health

Journalists are not immune to mental health problems. They may actually be more vulnerable as a result of their exposure to stressful work environments and toxic reporting subjects.

The EJN gives a number of tips that may help journalists deal with mental health problems:

- Your work is important. But so too is your health.
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep.
- Eat properly; try to avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine which increase anxiety.
- Take a break from work, digitally and physically.
- Switch off the news and social media.
- Recognise that it's normal to feel affected by difficult images or stories.

- If you can go for a walk, then do so.
- If you can't get outside, consider something else to give yourself a break: i.e. looking at images that make you happy (animals for instance); trying meditation or mindfulness; watching a comedy, reading a book.
- Spend time with family if you can, and friends if that is possible – even if this is only remotely. With more of us working remotely, isolation can be a big issue and isolation can put pressure on your mental health.
- If you need to take time off work, if you are unwell, mentally or physically, don't be afraid to ask. Often as journalists we are not very good at asking for help. Unless we do this, we are likely to get more unwell and less able to work.
- If you are a newsroom manager, ensure you are leading by example. Be clear about policies and priorities; be as transparent as you can, even though things are changing quickly and even if you are working remotely; in particular, be aware of those who may be more vulnerable in these situations.

## Reporting on Elections

Following a candidate on the campaign trail during an election year in the Philippines can be fraught with danger for a journalist, and the hazards one faces are not only of the physical type, like death threat, ambush or assassination, but of the ethical kind as well.

The election is a time when politicians are typically flush with cash and ready to spend it, including, or for the most part, on mass media and media practitioners.

Journalists who are ethical – or whose organizations can afford to be ethical – will be firm in drawing a line between them and the candidate. They will book their own flights and hotel rooms and pay for their own meals. Others who may prefer closer access to the candidate will accept the arrangements made by the campaign and have their organization reimburse the costs afterward.

For other journalists whose organizations don't have the same resources, however, the candidate will be the one to pay. Under circumstances, keeping autonomy as a media professional is next to impossible. Soon, the journalists will grow more familiar with the candidate and his or her campaign as they spend long hours together, and a friendship develops. At the reporters some point, photojournalists may start to feel they are part of the team, too.

The above scenarios are problematic for many reasons, but they barely scratch the surface of the ethical issues surrounding election coverage in the Philippines.

There are, however, ways by which newsrooms can protect their journalists from losing their integrity and independence while covering an electoral candidate. There are also ways for the journalist to maintain ethical boundaries despite the challenges on the campaign trail.

**Guideline** Newsrooms are advised to rotate their reporters and photojournalists instead of keeping a dedicated person to each candidate.

If this is impractical, they are encouraged to brief their staff on ethical guidelines before sending them out on the field. Set the ground rules first so there are no ambiguities later.

Guideline Newsroons must shoulder all expenses incurred by reporters, photojournalists, camera crew members and staff while covering a candidate out of town. This may include plane tickets, hotel accommodations, meal allowances and other incidentals.

If it is inconvenient to book separately, journalists may accept transport services, hotel accommodations and food provided by the candidate's team to all media, as long as their news organizations reimburse the costs later.

Newsrooms that are not willing to provide funds to cover expenses during such trips must disclose this in their reporting on the candidate.

**Guidelines** Journalists or photojournalists may not accept cash or any gifts from candidates, their campaign team or their political party for any reason.

Any attempt to give cash or gifts must be promptly disclosed to one's supervisor.

Guideline Expose incidents when а candidate or his or her staff gives, or attempts to give, cash or gifts to reporters or photojournalists before, during or after an election.

Journalists may not accept any part-time, full-time or contractual work with a candidate or his or her political party, regardless whether they are covering the candidate's campaign or not.

They may not seek or receive special favors from the candidate they are covering in exchange for positive coverage, nor shall they offer preferential coverage for any favor.

### **Reporting surveys**

Guideline News organizations must take extreme care in reporting the results of pre-election surveys.

Journalists must take the time to study the findings of the survey, check the credibility organization, examine methodology and sampling and consider the margin of error. Only then can they determine whether to publish the survey.

Commissioned with Tip surveys questionable or dubious methodology may not be published or broadcast, including those that limit the field of candidates to favor the one who commissioned the poll.

#### Political advertisements

Guideline News organizations must be transparent with any decision to accept political advertisements from candidates.

They may not publish or air any campaign material disquised as legitimate news reports. All paid advertisements shall be clearly labeled.

Note that the ethical standards for covering elections are stricter than for everyday reporting. This is because elections are vital to the operation of a free and independent press.

It is the responsibility of journalists to give truthful, independent and fair reports on the future leaders of the country; thus, any ethical violation that is committed by media practitioners to further the candidacy of a politician tarnishes not only the press as an institution but democracy as a whole.

For this reason, journalists must constantly check themselves, search their personal and professional associations for any

conflict of interest, and strive to preserve their autonomy and integrity in reporting elections.

An ethical code for covering elections crafted by the PPI in 2017 proposes a checklist that newspaper journalists, and for that matter, those in broadcast and online media, will do well to ask themselves while performing their job:

- 1 Am I being independent?
- 2 Could my action harm my integrity or my organization's integrity?
- 3 Is the mere appearance of conflict enough to diminish my credibility?
- 4 Am I willing to publicly disclose any potential conflicts?

A year ahead of the May 2022 elections, in July 2021, several media organizations and individual journalists signed a pledge vowing to uphold election integrity in their poll coverage.

#### The pledge reads:

Every election is a reckoning for democracy. As journalists reporting on another critical moment for our country, we have a duty to provide accurate, reliable and essential information that will empower voters and encourage public discussion and debate.

#### Affirming that:

Election integrity is not just about credible

counting of votes, but about clean, level, legal, transparent, and accountable campaigning;

Credible elections need credible media; conversely, corrupted media can further corrupt politics;

Citizens need issues and debates to be clarified, not simply amplified.

#### We pledge to:

- Put voters and the integrity of the electoral process at the center of our reporting.
- Focus on issues not just on personalities.
- Examine the track record and qualifications of candidates and political parties vying for public office and hold them accountable for the veracity and honesty of their every statement and promise.
- Cover as responsible and accountable the institutions mandated to ensure an even, orderly, and credible electoral playing field.
- Stand in solidarity with each other when any journalist or news organization is harassed by state agents, political parties, candidates, or private groups for their evidence-based journalism.
- Be accountable to the public. We will hold each other to higher standards of impartiality, credibility, and integrity.

In line with these principles, we commit to:

- Challenge and correct statements and claims that have no basis in fact.
- Avoid highlighting or amplifying falsehoods, hate speech and incitements to violence.
- Report on the partisan activities of government officials, including those working for national and local agencies, the courts, law-enforcement and the armed services.
- Monitor the independence of the Commission on Elections, the courts, the military, the police, teachers and all other individuals and entities involved in the conduct of the election.
- Highlight the efforts of the public and private sectors to uphold the honesty and integrity of elections.
- Monitor vote buying, campaign spending and the use of public funds to win elections.
- Contextualize reporting on surveys and the winnability of candidates. We will not report on surveys without verifying the source of the polling data, the track record of the companies conducting the polls, the methodologies used, and the questions asked.
- Focus on voter education, citizen participation and empowerment.
- Organize and report on town halls and debates and encourage candidates and citizens to take part in them.

- Uphold codes of ethics and professional conduct and disclose potential conflicts of interest.
- Make a clear distinction between reportage and opinion.
- Promote safety, public health and security protocols for and among journalists and be mindful of the impact of our work on the safety well-being of the people and communities we interact with in the course of our reporting.
- Share best practices, knowledge, and experience, and raise our individual and collective capacities and competencies in covering elections - as well as the politics, issues, policies, leaders, and people beyond the elections.



#### **CASE STUDY**

## Political Pressure and Article Takedowns

The Philippine media industry is no stranger to political pressure, having over the years resisted, weathered or barely survived dictators and despotic leaders. Until recently, talk of news stories being killed for political or business considerations was mostly done in whispers, since those at the bottom of the news production chain are rarely privy to the pressures bearing down on their editors, publishers and the owners higher up the ladder.

Still, perceptions are a powerful thing, which is why despite the absence of empirical data about the pervasiveness and scale of the problem, it comes as no surprise that a 2021 NUJP survey of media practitioners found almost three in five of the respondents agreeing to the statement: "All media companies have sacred cows."

In the traditional press, political pressures on media owners and publishers typically manifest before the story is aired or goes to print. If a news organization publishes anyway, there's little anyone can do to undo a report that has already been broadcast or a headline that is already on the front page (though the staff may later face reprisals like a libel suit or a regulatory squeeze).

Online reports, however, are a different story, because they tend to stay on the web for a long time, unless powerful people who happen to have been embarrassed by them decide to pull some strings.

In July 2018, the online platform of a top newspaper, whose editorial staff works independently from the broadsheet, grabbed headlines when it took down the articles about the rape case of a late actress on the request of a prominent Senate leader.

The senator had written a letter asking the editor to remove the stories written by a US-based columnist alleging that the senator was "involved in a whitewash of the actress's rape case," according to a GMA News report.

The Senate leader said the stories were all "fake news." In response, the news website

said: "The articles on the rape case are currently under review and are unavailable at the moment."

The senator's request and the news organization's decision to comply drew outrage. The NUJP called it an act of "humiliating self-censorship" that "betrays... the spirit in which the [newspaper] was founded."

The CMFR says any request to take down, or "un-publish" an article online "must specify how it failed the standards of accuracy or fairness or other legal issues about the content."

"It must be supported with proof in the same way that the writer or reporter had to prove to his editors that the article was factual and fair," the press watchdog says.

But the CMFR acknowledges that online articles may be taken down under certain circumstances.

"The Data Privacy Act of 2012 provides for 'the right to be forgotten,' which requires de-linking articles on the Internet once it is proven that the data subject has the right to

be forgotten. Libelous articles can and should be taken down, and in fact should never have been published. Whether committed against private individuals or public figures, libel is both an ethical and legal offense. But it has to be established, in this case after publication," it says.

Another article takedown, this involving the website of a competing newspaper, which is also run by a separate editorial staff, occurred in February 2019.

Rappler reported that the website had removed 2002 article describina allegations against a businessman, which had been referenced by a subsequent 2012 Rappler story on the businessman that later on became a subject of a cyber-libel case.

The website then issued a statement explaining that it removed the article from their platform "after the camp of [the businessman] raised the possibility of legal action."

Days before the takedown, Rappler founder Maria Ressa was arrested in connection with the cyber-libel case filed by the offended businessman.

## Responsibilities of **Media Owners and Newsroom Leaders**



Even armed with the truth, media is a frail power.

> Without the people's support, it can be shut off with the ease of turning a light switch.

Corazon Aquino



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An invisible line divides every media organization into two camps with clashing interests.

On one side are those who fulfill the "journalism" part of the operation: the people working in the newsroom, the editors, reporters, photographers, crew workers and staffers who do the daily grind collecting information, packaging content and putting the news out there for the public to consume. On the other side is "management," representing business part of the operation: the owners, publishers and managers who navigate the murkier, less savory aspects of the enterprise, such as dealing with the demands of advertisers, sponsors, audiences, and sometimes, the State.

Yet, most codes of journalism ethics, including the Philippine Journalist's Code, concern themselves only with the former, as though conveniently forgetting that the latter is integral to the success of the organization and the observance of ethical standards within and outside the newsroom. Some may ask: Are media owners, who typically have no background in journalism, considered journalists too? Should the corporate arm of a news outfit be held to the same ethical standards as journalists in the rank-and-file? How are media ethics and principles applied to business practices governed by a different set of rules and norms?

But these questions are beside the point.

Reporters and editors understand all too well that the influence of media owners, publishers and funders is a fact of life, for good or ill - mostly for ill - but the unequal balance of power compels them to work with or work around management constraints in their everyday newsroom duties, often to the extent of compromising their own values.

In the Philippine press, it is universally acknowledged that an ethical newsroom cannot coexist with unethical media ownership. A courageous reporter wilts under cowardly superiors, and, time and again, a management decision to bow to the will of the powerful has sent many principled journalists out the door. This was powerfully illustrated in 1999 by the resignation of senior editors and staff members of the Manila Times after their publisher apologized to then President Joseph Estrada for a banner story that described him as an "unwitting godfather" to a power contract. Estrada, who had slapped the paper with a multi-million libel suit, withdrew the case shortly after the apology came out, leaving the journalists mortified and demoralized.

Similar debacles involving other publications and under different regimes have since followed, without quite ending in as dramatic a fashion. Instead, these other cases would too often be resolved in favor of the management with the silent if unwilling capitulation of the editorial staff.

In July 2021, the Inquirer, a broadsheet known for intrepid reporting and a history of defying presidents, apologized, as part of a libel settlement, for its March 2014 stories stating that DZBB broadcaster Melo Del Prado benefited from pork barrel funds, to the chagrin of two former editors and a former reporter, who defended the articles. which were of part the paper's award-winning series on the Janet Napoles scam.

From the above examples, it becomes clear that it is not only the editors and staff but media proprietors who must be held accountable "for the sins of omission and commission that occur in the publications, broadcast networks, and other media they own and control," as described in a 2013 study of the US-based Center for International Media Assistance.

Conflicts of interest, according to the study, persist between media owners and the journalists in their employ, especially in emerging democracies where news media are less free.

Therefore, "[i]t is not only journalists who must show moral courage in media. Media owners and executives must also demonstrate deep commitment to the core values of journalism," writes Aidan White of EJN in a guide for self-regulation of the Egyptian press.

"Unless media are led by people of principle there is little chance that journalists will deliver the quality of information that communities need and democracies require," he says, adding that unethical and partisan behavior by media inevitably results in "corrupt or biased journalism" that "undermines public confidence" and "leads... to 'the poisoning of public discourse and public life."

"When this happens... lawmakers begin to consider using the law to discipline media and regulate journalism. This can be dangerous for democracy," White concludes.

In the Philippines, unfortunately, risks from corrupt or biased journalism go beyond official discipline or regulation of media. In a country known for its culture of impunity, an unethical press has far-reaching implications on media safety and press freedom, something that is painfully demonstrated every year by the rising body count of Filipino journalists killed in the line of duty.

"Ending the culture of impunity," writes Danilo Arao in a 2016 journalism paper, "requires strengthening the culture of resistance" within the press. What the professor leaves unsaid, however, is that a culture of resistance in the media cannot flourish without the support of their owners.

Such absence of involvement by media proprietors can help explain the lack of traction in the attempts to self-regulate the Philippine press over the years. This is only bolstered by the experience of the CCPC, the only functioning press council in the country, which owes its success largely to the support of public stakeholders and the media proprietors themselves – an element that is missing from unsuccessful efforts to form press councils elsewhere.

Without the interest and engagement of media owners, self-regulation of Philippine press will remain a pipe dream. Thus, it is only fitting that the final section of this Guide be devoted responsibilities of the proprietors of news organizations not only in upholding ethical standards and press freedom but also in promoting responsible media ownership.

In the pursuit of a truly free, independent and self-policing press, we urge media owners to exercise the following guidelines:

- Media owners and newsroom leaders must support, promote and encourage ground-breaking journalism that is truthful, independent. fair, iust. accountable and humane.
- Media owners must provide living wages for their staff, editors, reporters, photographers, crew members, production assistants, staffers, drivers and all involved in the operations of the news outfit.

- They must ensure a safe working environment for media workers.
- They shall give adequate compensation for any outside or third-party work, including the use of photographs, video footage and the like.
- Media owners must put a stop to any practice of self-censorship within the organization. They shall not curtail their staff's right of free speech.
- Newsroom leaders must promote and enforce ethical quidelines the newsroom.
- They shall vigorously exercise self-regulation, discipline staff for professional misconduct and reward ethical behavior. They shall encourage self-criticism and exercise transparency in the application of ethical standards.
- Media owners and newsroom leaders must resist government and corporate pressures and protect their editors, reporters, photojournalists, staff and crew from reprisals, threats harassment from people in power.
- Media owners and newsroom leaders must the fight lead against disinformation in the public sphere and actively work to debunk lies and falsehood.
- They shall stand with the rest of the Philippine press in protecting democracy defending and press freedom.

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## **Annexes**

#### **KBP Broadcasting Principles**

#### KATOTOHANAN: TRUTH

is the primary objective of broadcasting news. events and opinions. broadcaster is conscientious in giving the truth - does not slant or twist it by adding, omitting, changing or using information or details of events and statements inaccurately. Coupled with this is the practice of swiftly correcting an error when called for.

#### **BUKAS NA ISIPAN: OPENMINDEDNESS**

to all and opposing views and arguments is an important attribute of the broadcaster. He/she is not quick to judge by his/her own standards but rather studies the various ways of viewing an issue.

#### PANANAGUTAN: ACCOUNTABILITY

to the listening and viewing public is an obligation of the broadcaster. He/she exercises care in the choice of words to utter and images to exhibit. Public Service is the broadcaster's principal objective.

#### **BALANSE: BALANCE**

in the presentation of the news, views and discussions is the goal of the broadcaster, who airs both or all sides of an issue. The broadcaster does not use the air to malign, destroy, insult or disrespect anyone regardless of gender, view, religious belief, political position, culture, race or ethnicity.

#### **RESPONSIBLE: RESPONSIBLE**

use of his/her name, the name of KBP, and the Broadcast industry is a mark of the broadcaster. Opinions are expressed appropriately and clearly. Issues are researched and examined before they are aired. The broadcaster is critical but is not libelous.

## OTORIDAD NG SALIGANG BATAS: The AUTHORITY OF THE CONSTITUTION

is upheld by the broadcaster at all times. He/she vigilantly defends, advocates and protects the freedom of speech and of the press and the public's right to access to information.

## DANGAL AT KAGANDAHANG ASAL: DIGNITY AND DECORUM

are the marks of a professional broadcaster in word, thought, deed and personal conduct, whether inside or outside the station. The broadcaster exercise humility in dealing with fellow broadcasters and the general public.

#### **KATWIRAN: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

is expected of a true broadcaster, who at all times is determined to stand by what is right and to expose what is wrong. The broadcaster is always mindful of the values of integrity, honor and decency.

#### **ALAGA AT PAG-IINGAT: The broadcaster is CAREFUL AND PRUDENT**

in handling delicate and critical information protects the sources of such information.

#### SUMUSUNOD: The broadcaster is **OBEDIENT**

to the rules and regulations of the KBP as stated in the Broadcast Code of the Philippines and the laws of the country pertaining to all broadcast and broadcastrelated activities.

#### **TAPAT: TRUSTWORTHINESS**

is the broadcaster's quality, who does not put personal gain ahead of duty. He/she does not accept bribes, gifts or favors that influence him/her to change his/her stand or distort the truth. He/she is honest in the conduct of gathering information, photos, and images and does not resort to plagiarism. He/she respects the intellectual property rights of others.

#### **EPEKTIBO: EFFECTIVE**

use of Television and Radio in the promotion of what is right, orderly, and peaceful is a hallmark the broadcaster, of contributes to the development of our citizens and our nation.

#### **RESPETO: RESPECT**

for fellow Broadcasters, all humans and institutions is expected of the broadcaster, who upholds human rights and the principle that an accused person is innocent until proven quilty.

#### CCPC's Code of Practice

The Cebu Citizens-Press Council (CCPC) shall enforce this Code of Practice adopted by the editors-in-chief of the five daily newspapers in Cebu and ratified by the members of the 15-person CCPC membership during its quarterly meeting held at Cafe Georg, Cebu City on Feb. 3, 2006.

The Council shall seek the cooperation of the publishers or media owners and editors and news directors in the enforcement of the Code.

The Code is limited to the basics of fairness and accuracy.

Other aspects of journalism practice can be included when the industry and the public will have thoroughly appreciated the concept of the press council.

The Press Council notes that each newspaper, as well as broadcast stations that belong to the broadcast association KBP, has its own rules of conduct under which a complainant can seek redress.

Even without the prodding of the Press Council, editors and publishers and owners of news organizations aim for high standards, knowing that commercial success depends largely on public approval of journalism practice.

Even on subjects not covered by the Code, the Press Council in an en banc meeting may decide to entertain the complaint if it deems the subject so important that it can hurt the credibility of the Cebu press and the existence of the Press Council.

#### Right to Reply

- 1 Opportunity to reply is essential to fairness. Each media outlet shall allow an individual or institution mentioned and directly affected by a news or feature story the chance to give his side.
- 2 The reply shall be governed by the news outlet's rules on space use, news or feature evaluation, good taste, legal limits, and the like, seeing to it always that the spirit behind the right to reply is given meaning.

#### **Accuracy**

- Newspapers and broadcast news stations—amid pressure of deadline and limitations on reporting, writing and editing—shall strive to publish material that is accurate and not misleading or distorted.
- 2 Attribution is essential, particularly when the information is disputable or the claim is controversial, to avoid suspicion of fakery or falsehood and to remind the reader or listener that the news outlet is only the courier, not the source, of the material.
- 3 Whenever the news outlet recognizes that a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement, or distorted report has been published, it must be corrected promptly and with due prominence.
- 4 News outlets, while free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between news and opinion.

#### PCP's Code of Ethics

- 1 I shall be truthful, accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.
- 2 I shall respect the integrity of the photographic moment and resist participation staged in photo opportunities (drawing).
- 3 I shall avoid stereotyping and represent reality without personal bias to race, creed, sex and religious, political and cultural beliefs.
- 4 I shall treat all subjects with respect and dignity. I shall presume persons accused of crime of being innocent until proven otherwise. I shall avoid intruding on private moments of grief, crime or tragedy.
- 5 I shall not intentionally alter, contribute or influence events being photographed.
- 6 I shall maintain the integrity of the images' content and context during editing, being careful not to manipulate, add or alter.
- 7 I shall not pay, or reward materially, sources or subjects for information or participation.

- 8 I shall not let personal motives or interests influence me in the performance of my duties; I shall not accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
- 9 I shall avoid actions that can sabotage the efforts of other journalists.
- 10 I shall respect other individual's intellectual and property rights to his or her images and not misrepresent them as my own.
- 11 I shall respect the confidentiality of my sources.
- 12 I shall resort only to fair and honest methods in my effort to obtain news, photographs or documents.
- 13 I shall defend the rights of access for all journalists and strive for total and unrestricted access to subjects and seek a diversity of viewpoints. I shall strive by example and influence to maintain the spirit and high standards expressed in this code. Practitioners of this profession should continuously study their craft and the ethics that guide it.

### Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists

#### **Preamble**

The right of everyone to have access to information and ideas, reiterated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, underpins the journalist's mission. The journalist's responsibility towards the public takes precedence over any other responsibility, in particular towards their employers and the public authorities. Journalism is a profession, which requires time, resources and the means to practise all of which are essential to independence. This international declaration specifies the guidelines of conduct for journalists in the research, editing, transmission, dissemination and commentary of news and information, and in the description of events, in any media whatsoever.

- 1 Respect for the facts and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.
- In pursuance of this duty, the journalist shall at all times defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, and of the right of fair comment and criticism. He/she will make sure to clearly distinguish factual information from commentary and criticism.
- 3 The journalist shall report only in accordance with facts of which he/ she knows the origin. The journalist shall not suppress essential information or

- falsify any document. He/she will be careful to reproduce faithfully statements and other material that non-public persons publish in social media.
- The journalist shall use only fair methods to obtain information, images, documents and data and he/she will always report his/her status as a journalist and will refrain from using hidden recordings of images and sounds, except where it is impossible for him/her to collect information that is overwhelmingly in the public interest. He/she will demand free access to all sources of information and the right to freely investigate all facts of public interest.
- 5 The notion of urgency or immediacy in the dissemination of information shall not take precedence over the verification of facts, sources and/or the offer of a reply.
- 6 The journalist shall do the utmost to rectify any errors or published information which is found to be inaccurate in a timely, explicit, complete and transparent manner.
- **7** The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.

- 8 The journalist will respect privacy. He/she shall respect the dignity of the persons named and/or represented and inform the interviewee whether the conversation and other material is intended for publication. He/she shall particular show consideration inexperienced and vulnerable interviewees.
- 9 Journalists shall ensure that the dissemination of information or opinion does not contribute to hatred or prejudice and shall do their utmost to avoid facilitating the spread discrimination on grounds such as geographical, social or ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, disability, political and other opinions.
- 10 The journalist will consider serious professional misconduct plagiarism, distortion of facts, slander, libel, defamation, and unfounded accusations.
- 11 The journalist shall refrain from acting as an auxiliary of the police or other security services. He/she will only be required to provide information already published in a media outlet.
- 12 The journalist will show solidarity with his/her colleagues, without renouncing his/her freedom of investigation, duty to inform, and right to engage in criticism, commentary, satire editorial choice.

- 13 The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He/she will avoid - or put an end to any situation that could lead him/her to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his/her profession. He/she will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He/she will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.
- 14 The journalist will not undertake any activity or engagement likely to put his/her independence in danger. He/she will, however, respect the methods of collection/dissemination of information that he / she has freely accepted, such as "off the record", anonymity, or embargo, provided that these commitments are clear and unquestionable.
- 15 Journalists worthy of the name shall deem it their duty to observe faithfully the principles stated above. They may not be compelled to perform a professional act or to express an opinion that is contrary to his/her professional conviction or conscience.
- 16 Within the general law of each country the journalist shall recognize in matters of professional honour, the jurisdiction of independent self-regulatory bodies open to the public, to the exclusion of of interference every kind by governments or others.

#### SPJ Code of Ethics

#### **Preamble**

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. An ethical journalist acts with integrity. The Society declares these four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media.

#### SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.

Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.

Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.

Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.

Be cautious when making promises, but keep the promises they make. Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.

Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.

Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.

Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.

Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless. Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.

Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.

Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.

Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek

sources whose voices we seldom hear. Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.

Label advocacy and commentary.

Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Clearly label illustrations and re-enactments.

Never plagiarize. Always attribute.

#### **MINIMIZE HARM**

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.

Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.

Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.

Realize that private people have a greater right control information to about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention.

Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.

Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do. Balance a suspect's right to a fair trial with the public's right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.

Consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication. Provide updated and more complete information as appropriate.

#### **ACT INDEPENDENTLY**

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.

Journalists should:

Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.

Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality, or may damage credibility.

Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news.

Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.

Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.

Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two. Prominently label sponsored content.

BE ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public.

Journalists should:

Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.

Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.

Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.

Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.

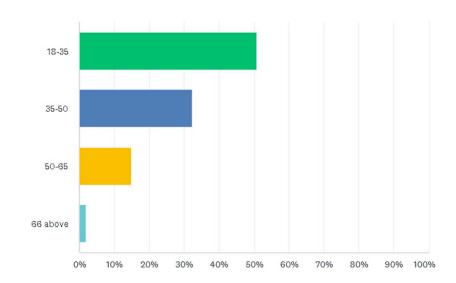
Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by additional explanations and position papers spj.org) that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium. The code should be read as a whole; individual principles should not be taken out of context. It is not, nor can it be under the First Amendment, legally enforceable.

# NUJP Survey on Journalists' Knowledge, Perceptions and Attitudes toward Ethical Journalism

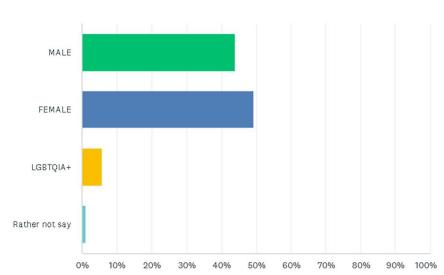
#### **AGE**

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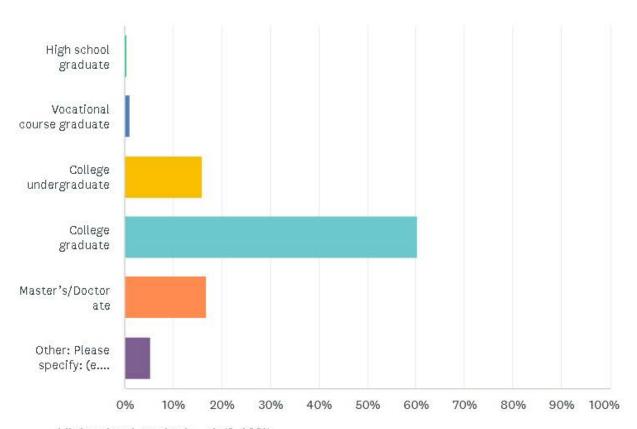
- 18-35 105 (50.72%)
- 35-50 67 (32.3%)
- 50-65-31 (14.98%)
- 66 above 4 (1.93%)

#### **GENDER**



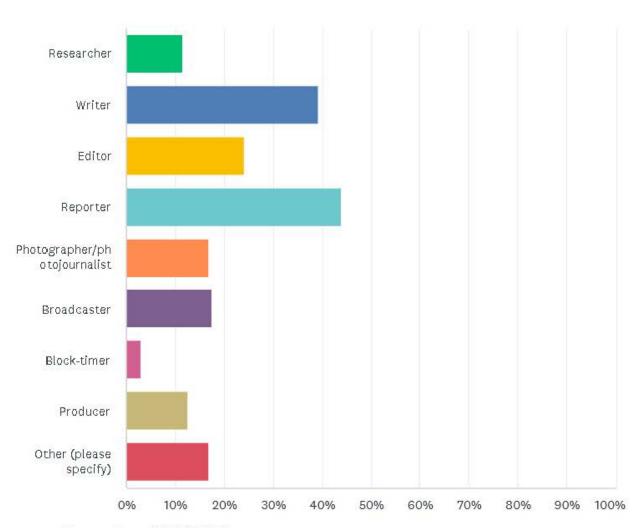
- Male 91 (43.96%)
- Female 102 (49.28)
- LGBTQIA+- 12 (5.80%)
- Rather not say 2 (0.97%)

## HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT:



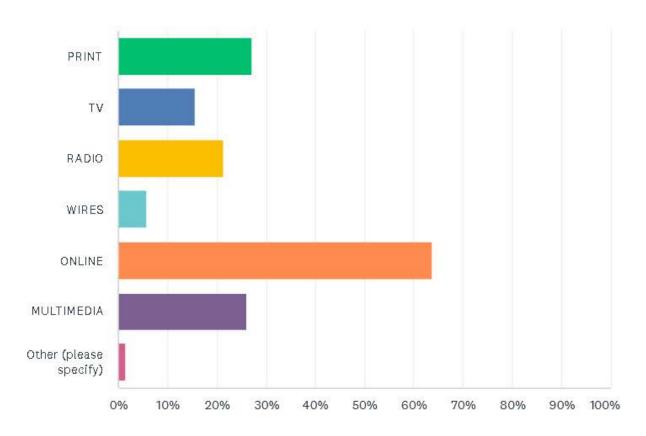
- High school graduate 1 (0.48%)
- Vocational course graduate 2 (0.97%)
- College undergraduate 33 (15.94%)
- College graduate 125 (60.39%)
- Master's/Doctorate 35 (16.91%)
- Others 11 (5.31%)

## TYPE OF WORK: (Check all that apply)



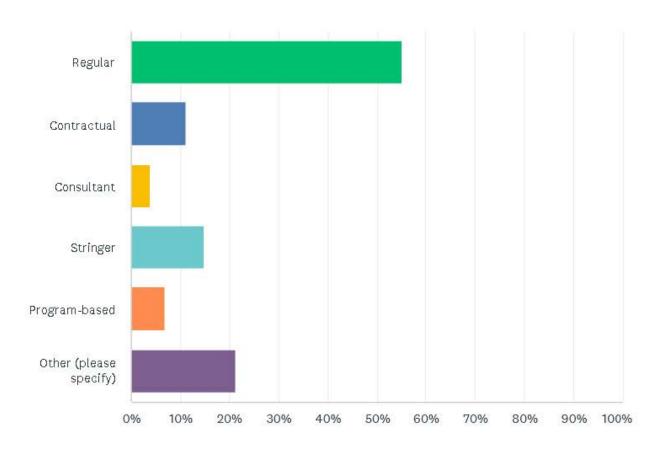
- Researcher 24 (11.59%)
- Writer 81 (39.13%)
- Editor 50 (24.15%)
- Reporter 91 (43.96%)
- Photographer/photojournalist 35 (16.91%)
- Broadcaster 36 (17.39%)
- Block-timer 6 (2.90%)
- Producer 26 (12.56%)
- Others 35 (16.91%)

## **PLATFORM**



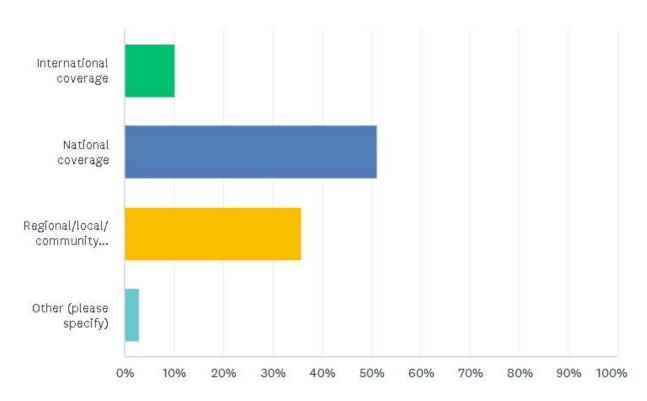
- Print 56 (27.05%)
- TV 32 (15.46%)
- Radio 44 (21.26%)
- Wires 12 (5.80%)
- Online 132 (63.77%)
- Multimedia 54 (26.09%)
- Others 3 (1.45%)

## Employment Status: (if multiple employers, check a that apply)



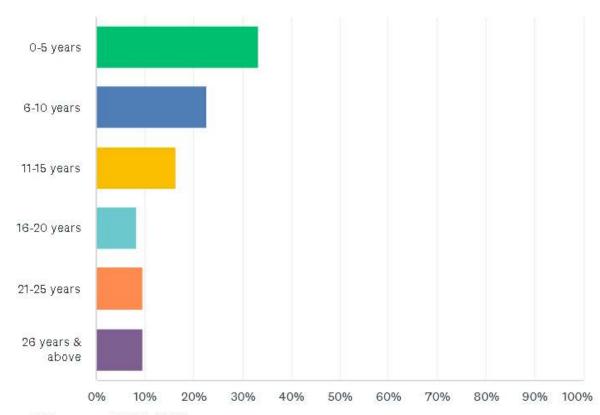
- Regular 114 (55.07%)
- Contractual 23 (11.11%)
- Consultant 8 (3.86%)
- Stringer 31 (14.98%)
- Program-based 14 (6.76%)
- Other 44 (21.26%)

## SCOPE OF WORK



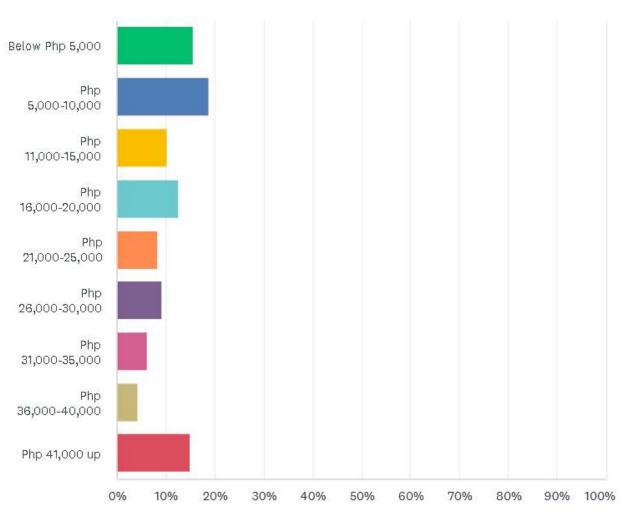
- International coverage 21 (10.14%)
- National coverage 106 (51.21%)
- Regional/local/community coverage 74 (35.75%)
- Others 6 (2.90%)

## NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE PROFESSION



- 0-5 years 69 (33.33%)
- 6-10 years 47 (22.71%)
- 11-15 years 34 (16.43%)
- 16-20 years 17 (8.21%)
- 21-25 years 20 (9.66%)
- 26 years & above 20 (9.66%)

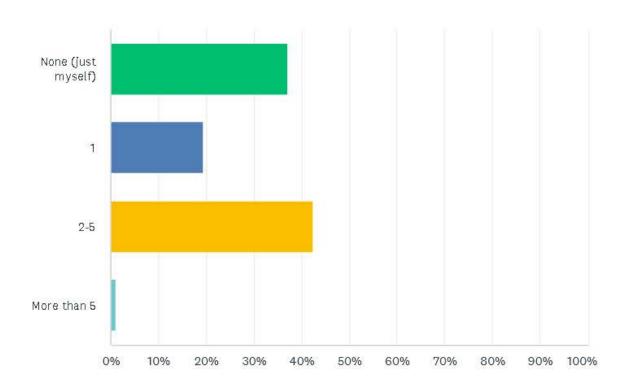
## MONTHLY SALARY RANGE



- Below Php 5,000 32 (15.46%)
- Php 5,000-10,000 39 (18.84%)
- Php 11,000-15,000 21 (10.14%)
- Php 16,000-20,000 26 (12.56%)
- Php 21,000-25,000 17 (8.21%)
- Php 26,000-30,000 19 (9.18%)
- Php 31,000-35,000 13 (6.28%)
- Php 36,000-40,000 9 (4.35%)
- Php 41,000 up 31 (14.98%)

#### NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS

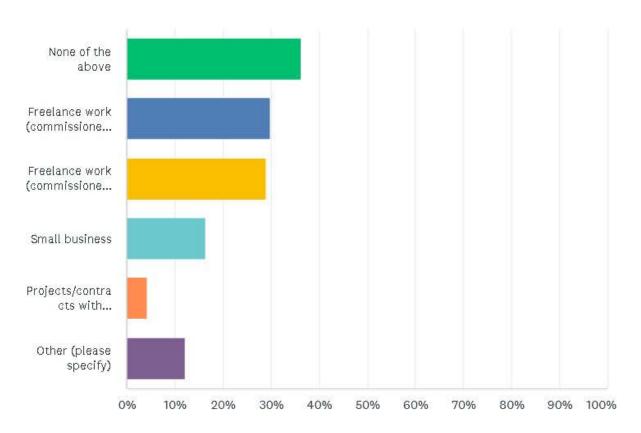
Answered: 207 Skipped: 0



- None (just myself) -77 (37.20%)
- 1- 40 (19.32%)
- 2-5 88 (42.51%)
- More than 5 2 (0.97%)

## OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME (Check all that apply)

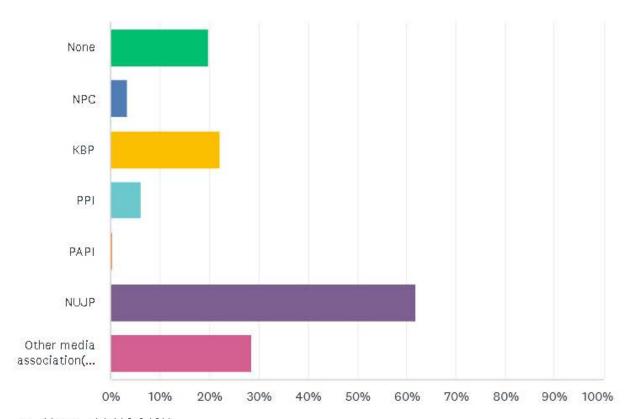
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- None of the above 75 (36.23%)
- Freelance work (commissioned work with non-government organizations) 62 (29.95%)
- Freelance work (commissioned work with private individuals/corporations) 60 (28.99%)
- Small business 34 (16.43%)
- Projects/contracts with Government 9 (4.35%)
- Others 25 (12.08%)

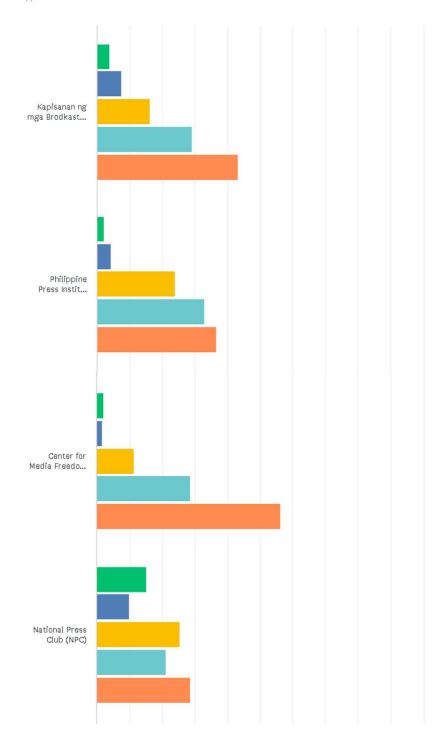
## MEDIA AFFILIATIONS: (Check all that apply)

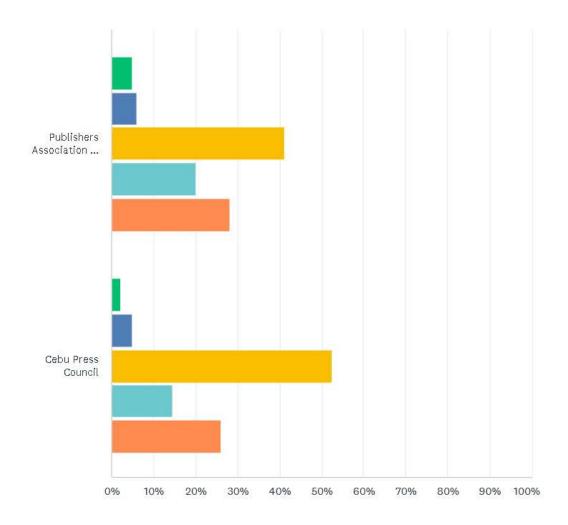
Answered: 207 Skipped: 0



- None 41 (19.81%)
- NPC 7 (3.38%)
- KBP 46 (22.22%)
- PPI 13 (6.28%)
- PAPI 1 (0.48%)
- NUJP 128 (61.84%)
- Others 59 (28.50%)

The following organizations have the mandate to uphold and promote excellence and high standards within the media industry.

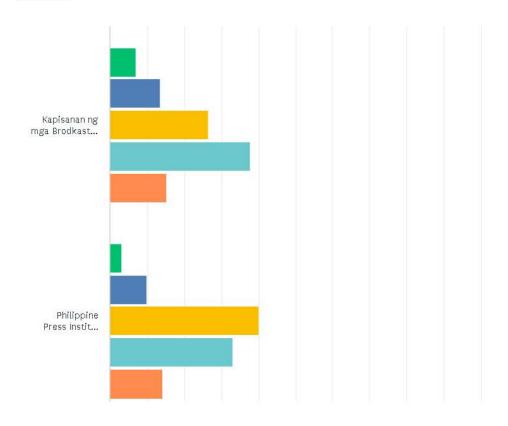


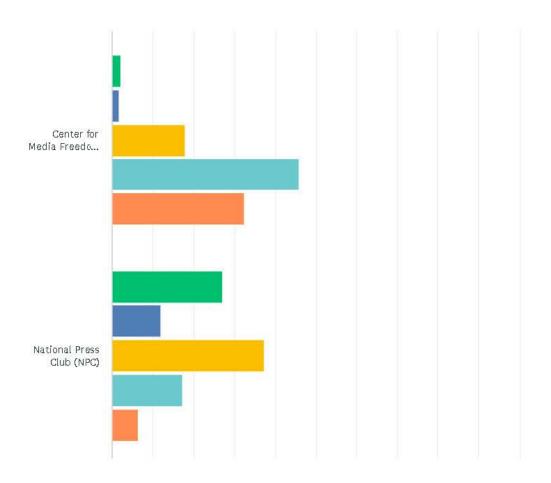


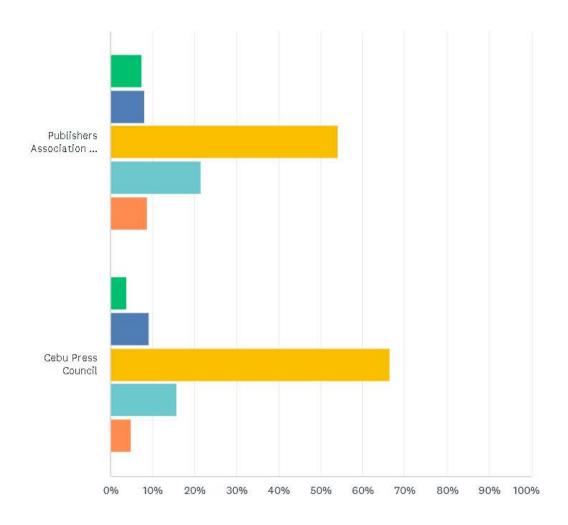
	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP)	3.78% 7	7.57% 14	16.22% 30	29.19% 54	43.24% 80	185
Philippine Press Institute (PPI)	2.16% 4	4.32% 8	23.78% 44	32.97% 61	36.76% 68	185
Center for	2.16%	1.62%	11.35%	28.65%	56.22%	

Media Freedom and Responsibi lity (CMFR)	4	3	21	53	104	185
National Press Club (NPC)	15.14% 28	9.73% 18	25.41% 47	21.08% 39	28.65% 53	185
Publishers Associatio n of the Philippines (PAPI)	4.86% 9	5.95% 11	41.08% 76	20.00% 37	28.11% 52	185
Cebu Press Council	2.16% 4	4.86% 9	52.43% 97	14.59% 27	25.95% 48	185

# The following organizations are effective in promoting self-regulation among media institutions:



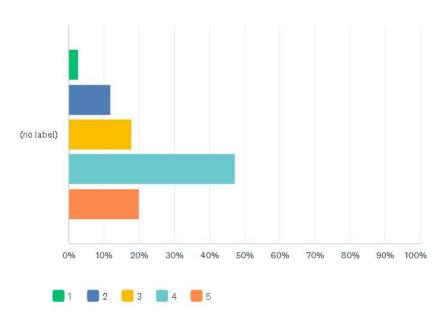




	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
Kapisana n ng mga Brodkast er ng Pilipinas (KBP)	7.03% 13	13.51% 25	26.49% 49	37.84% 70	15.14% 28	185	3.41
Philippin e Press Institute (PPI)	3.24% 6	9.73% 18	40.00% 74	32.97% 61	14.05% 26	185	3.45
Center for Media	2.16% 4	1.62% 3	17.84% 33	45.95% 85	32.43% 60	185	4.05

Freedom and Responsi bility (CMFR)							
National Press Club (NPC)	27.03% 50	11.89% 22	37.30% 69	17.30% 32	6.49% 12	185	2.64
Publisher s Associati on of the Philippin es (PAPI)	7.57% 14	8.11% 15	54.05% 100	21.62% 40	8.65% 16	185	3.16
Cebu Press Council	3.78% 7	9.19% 17	66.49% 123	15.68% 29	4.86% 9	185	3.09

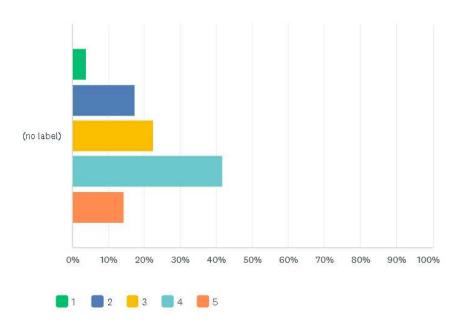
Sensational stories have increased in the area/beat I am covering in the past five years.



1 - Strongly 2 - Disago disagree	ee 3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
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2.72%	11.96%	17.93%	47.28%	20.11%	184
5	22	33	87	37	

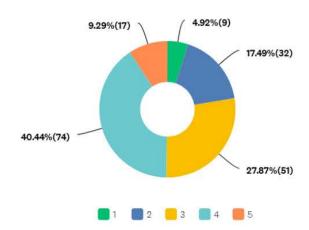
#### Media outfits follow the agenda of political and corporate elites



1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
3.85%	17.58%	22.53%	41.76%	14.29%	182
7	32	41	76	26	

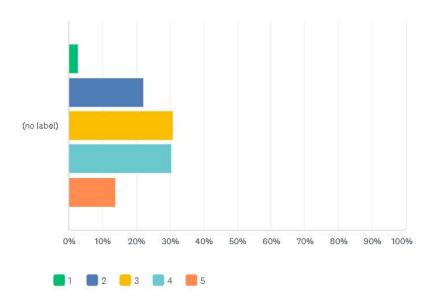
Fellow journalists follow the agenda of political and corporate elites.

Answered: 183 Skipped: 24



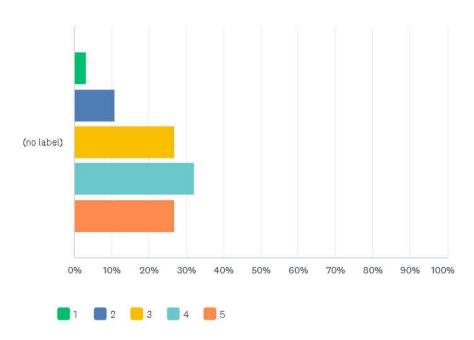
1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
4.92%	17.49%	27.87%	40.44%	9.29%	183
9	32	51	74	17	

The 'beat system' churns out only government pronouncements that often serve the ruling political / business elite and not the truth.



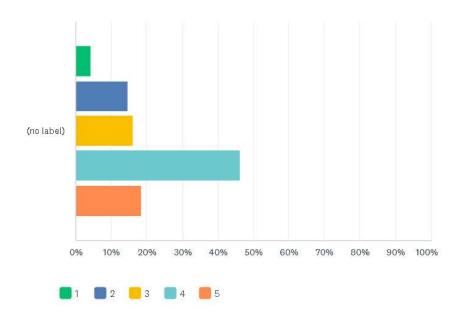
1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
2.76%	22.10%	30.94%	30.39%	13.81%	181
5	40	56	55	25	

### All media companies have sacred cows.



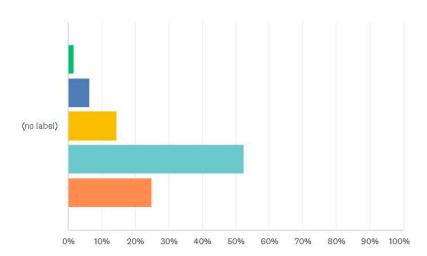
1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
3.28%	10.93%	26.78%	32.2 <b>4</b> %	26.78%	183
6	20	49	59	49	

Media companies are being used to promote or protect the image of a politician.



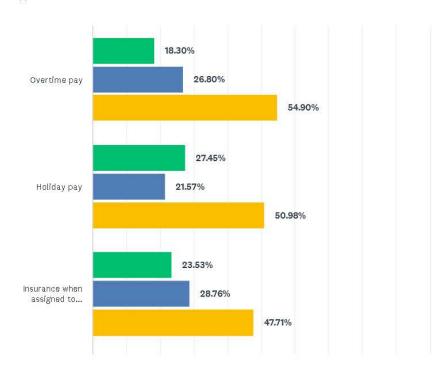
1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
4.35%	14.67%	16.30%	46.20%	18.48%	184
8	27	30	85	34	

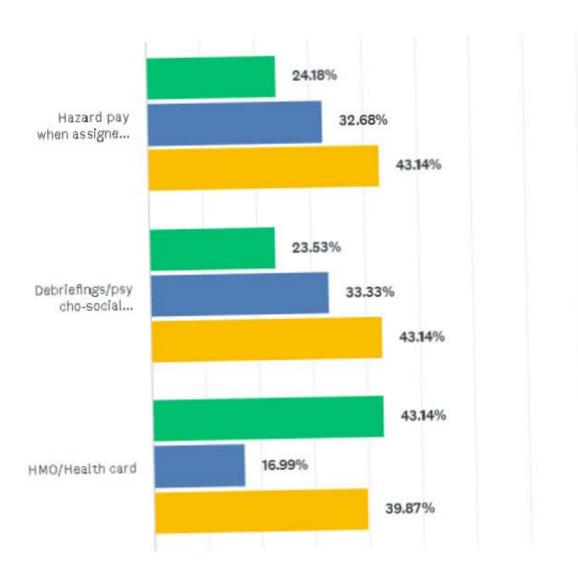
Media companies are being used to promote or protect products/services of the owners' other business/es.

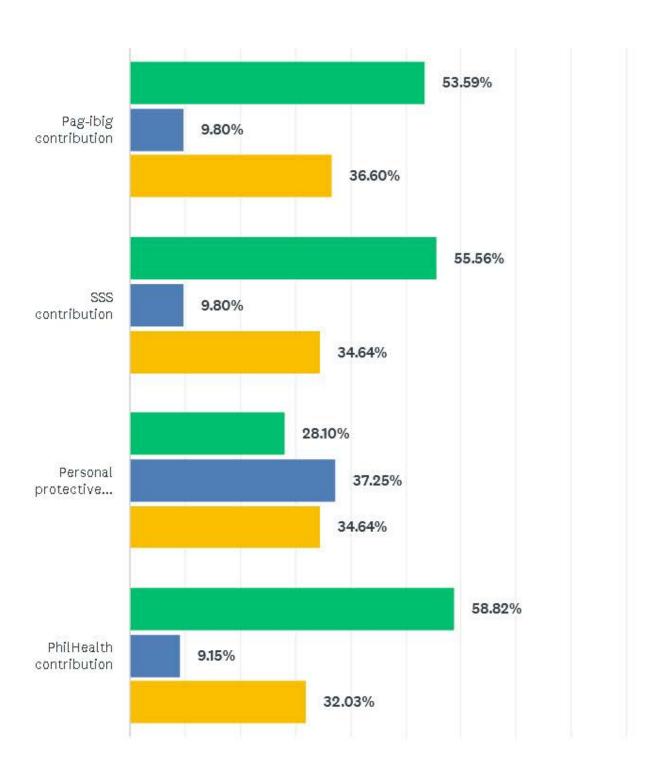


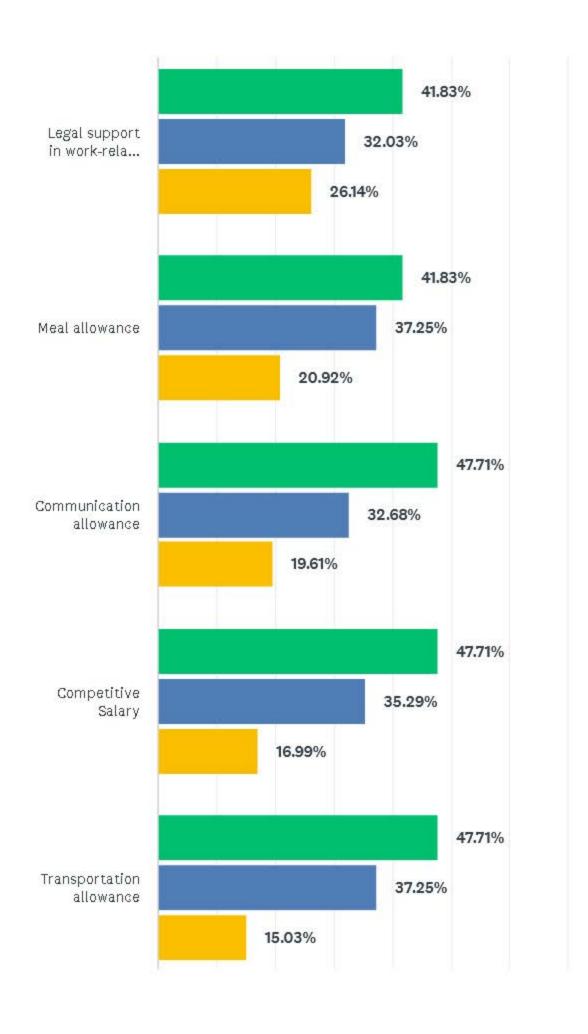
1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
1.62%	6.49%	14.59%	52.43%	24.86%	185
3	12	27	97	46	

#### Does your media outfit provide the following work-related benefits?





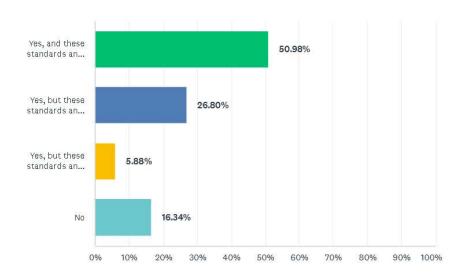




_	Always/Prov ided in full (1) –	Sometimes/ Provided partially (2)	Never provided (3) –	Total –	Weighted Average –
Overtime pay	18.30% 28	26.80% 41	54.90% 84	153	2.37
Holiday pay	27.45% 42	21.57% 33	50.98% 78	153	2.24
Insurance when assigned to hazardous/da ngerous coverage and/or out of town/out of the country coverage	23.53% 36	28.76% 44	47.71% 73	153	2.24
Hazard pay when assigned to hazardous or dangerous coverage	24.18% 37	32.68% 50	43.14% 66	153	2.19
Debriefings/p sycho-social support	23.53% 36	33.33% 51	43.14% 66	153	2.20
HMO/Health card	43.14% 66	16.99% 26	39.87% 61	153	1.97
Pag-ibig contribution	53.59% 82	9.80% 15	36.60% 56	153	1.83
SSS contribution	55.56% 85	9.80% 15	34.64% 53	153	1.79
Personal protective equipment	28.10% 43	37.25% 57	34.64% 53	153	2.07

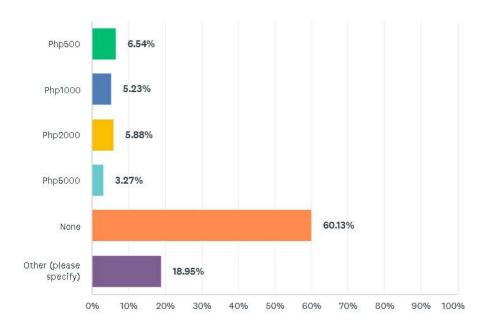
	T.	1	T		
when assigned to hazardous coverage					
PhilHealth contribution	58.82% 90	9.15% 14	32.03% 49	153	1.73
Legal support in work-related cases (lawyer, bail, etc)	41.83% 64	32.03% 49	26.14% 40	153	1.84
Meal allowance	41.83% 64	37.25% 57	20.92% 32	153	1.79
Communicati on allowance	47.71% 73	32.68% 50	19.61% 30	153	1.72
Competitive Salary	47.71% 73	35.29% 54	16.99% 26	153	1.69
Transportatio n allowance	47.71% 73	37.25% 57	15.03% 23	153	1.67

My media outfit has set standards and limits when it comes to accepting food, transportation allowance, and other non-monetary remunerations from sources during the conduct of my work as a journalist.



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, and these standards and limits are strictly implemented (1)	50.98% 78
Yes, but these standards and limits are loosely implemented (2)	26.80% 41
Yes, but these standards and limits are NOT implemented (3)	5.88% 9
No (4)	16.34% 25
TOTAL	153

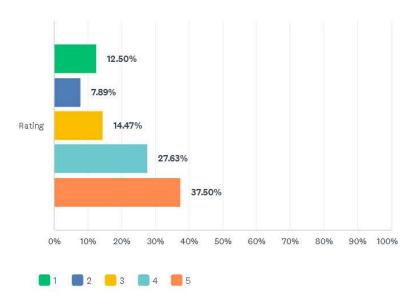
The maximum amount of cash or equivalent in cash of gifts/tokens /donations that our media outfit allows us to accept:



Answer Choices	Responses
Php500	6.54% 10
Php1000	5.23% 8
Php2000	5.88% 9
Php5000	3.27% 5
None	60.13% 92
Other (please specify)	18.95% 29
TOTAL	153

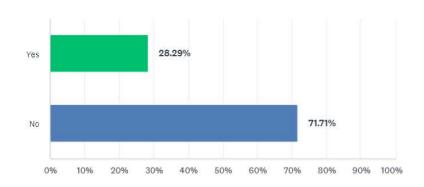
The compensation package (e.g. basic salary and benefits) I receive affects the work I produce. (1- strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree)

Answered: 152 Skipped: 55



1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
12.50%	7.89%	14.47%	27.63%	37.50%	152
19	12	22	42	57	

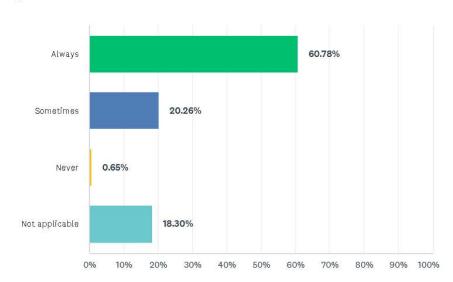
I have experienced labor issues/disputes that affected the practice of my profession.



Anayyay Chaicas	Dannanaa
Answer Choices	Responses

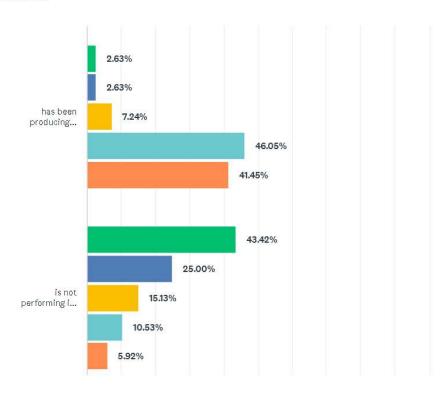
Yes (1)	28.29% 43
No (2)	71.71% 109
TOTAL	152

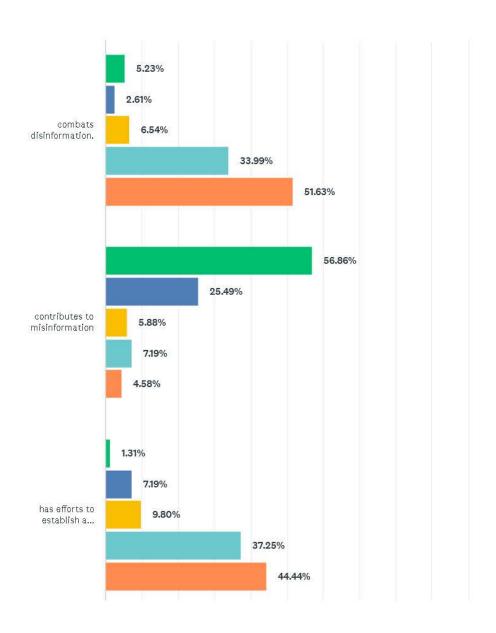
My media outfit respects my decision when I decline to cover dangerous assignments.

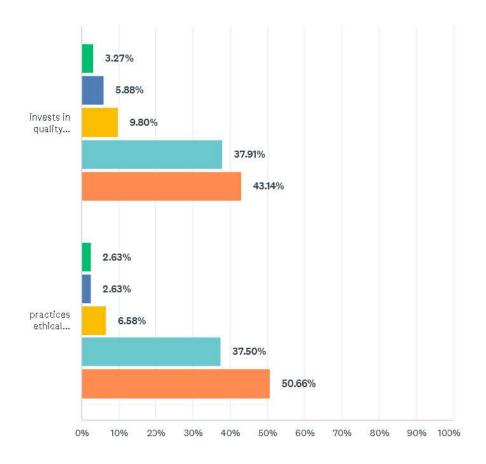


Answer Choices	Responses
Always	60.78% 93
Sometimes	20.26% 31
Never	0.65% 1
Not applicable	18.30% 28
TOTAL	153

My media outfit... (Rate the following statements from 1-5, 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- not sure/don't know, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree)



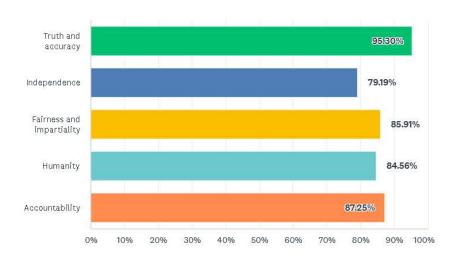




	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
has been producing balanced news and content.	2.63% 4	2.63% 4	7.24% 11	46.05% 70	41.45% 63	152
is not performing its watchdog role.	43.42% 66	25.00% 38	15.13% 23	10.53% 16	5.92% 9	152
combats disinformat ion.	5.23% 8	2.61% 4	6.54% 10	33.99% 52	51.63% 79	153

contributes to misinforma tion	56.86% 87	25.49% 39	5.88% 9	7.19% 11	4.58% 7	153
has efforts to establish a sound mechanis m for fact-checki ng.	1.31% 2	7.19% 11	9.80% 15	37.25% 57	44.44% 68	153
invests in quality reportage.	3.27% 5	5.88% 9	9.80% 15	37.91% 58	43.14% 66	153
practices ethical journalism.	2.63% 4	2.63% 4	6.58% 10	37.50% 57	50.66% 77	152

My media outfit follows the principles below in doing our reportage. (Select all that apply.)

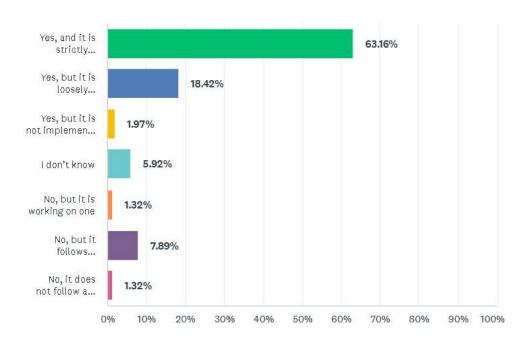


Answer Choices	Responses
	95.30%

Truth and accuracy	142
Independence	79.19% 118
Fairness and impartiality	85.91% 128
Humanity	84.56% 126
Accountability	87.25% 130
TOTAL	149

#### My media outfit has a standing code of ethics.

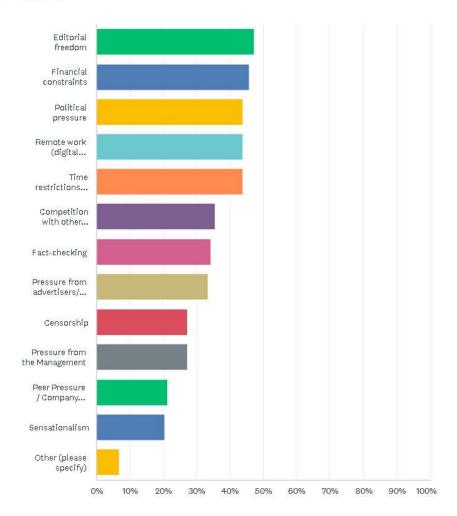
Answered: 152 Skipped: 55



Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes, and it is strictly implemented	63.16% 96
Yes, but it is loosely implemented	18.42% 28
	1.97%

Yes, but it is not implemented at all	3
I don't know	5.92% 9
No, but it is working on one	1.32% 2
No, but it follows externally existing codes of ethics	7.89% 12
No, it does not follow any code of ethics	1.32% 2
TOTAL	152

The following affect the practice of ethical reporting in my media outfit. Select all that apply.

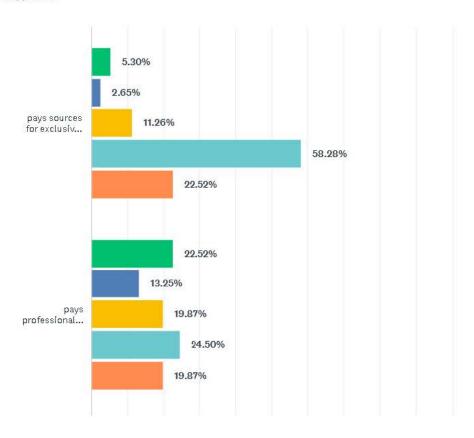


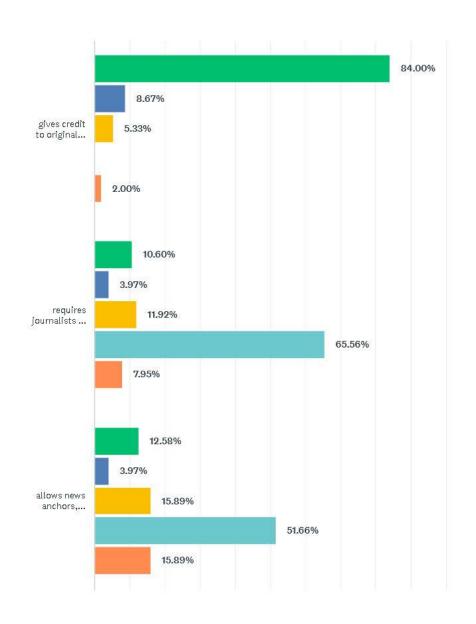
Answer Choices	Responses
Editorial freedom	47.26% 69
Financial constraints	45.89% 67
Political pressure	43.84% 64
Remote work (digital reporting)	43.84% 64
	43.84%

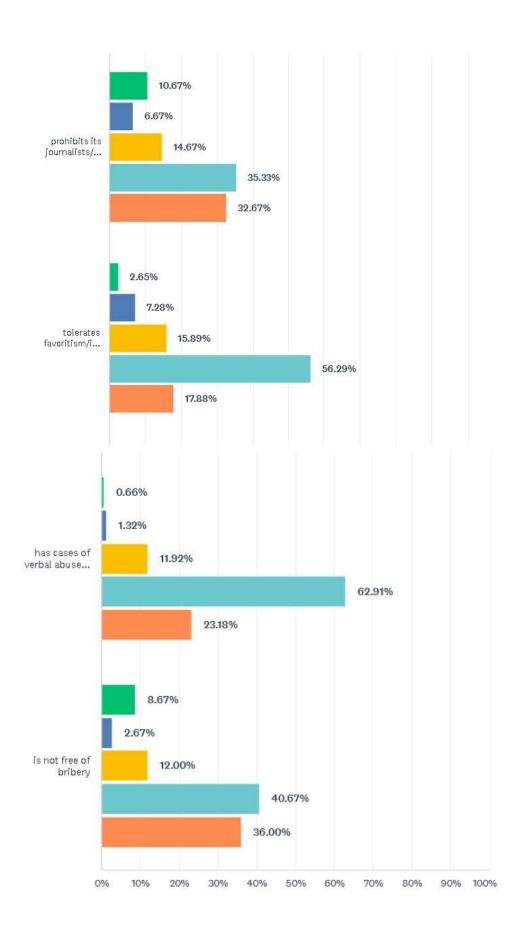
Time restrictions in creating stories	64
Competition with other media outfits	35.62% 52
Fact-checking	34.25% 50
Pressure from advertisers/businesses	33.56% 49
Censorship	27.40% 40
Pressure from the Management	27.40% 40
Peer Pressure / Company culture	21.23% 31
Sensationalism	20.55% 30
Other (please specify)	6.85% 10
Total Respondents:	146

#### My media outfit:

Answered: 151 Skipped: 56





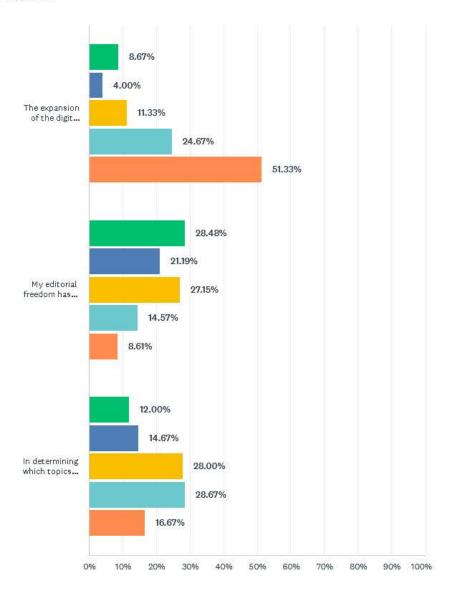


	Always	Frequentl y	Sometime s	No	l don't know	Total
pays sources for exclusive stories	5.30% 8	2.65% 4	11.26% 17	58.28% 88	22.52% 34	151
pays profession al fees for materials sourced from journalists other than those they employ.	22.52% 34	13.25% 20	19.87% 30	24.50% 37	19.87% 30	151
gives credit to original owners of materials scouted on social media platforms.	84.00% 126	8.67% 13	5.33% 8	0.00% 0	2.00%	150
requires journalists to actively look for and forge marketing/ advertising deals for our outfit	10.60% 16	3.97% 6	11.92% 18	65.56% 99	7.95% 12	151
allows news anchors, reporters to endorse	12.58% 19	3.97% 6	15.89% 24	51.66% 78	15.89% 24	151

commercia I sponsors						
prohibits its journalists/ anchors/e mployees to host corporate or news source events	10.67% 16	6.67% 10	14.67% 22	35.33% 53	32.67% 49	150
tolerates favoritism/i nternal politics in hiring, firing, promotions , or termination	2.65% 4	7.28% 11	15.89% 24	56.29% 85	17.88% 27	151
has cases of verbal abuse and/or sexual harassmen t within	0.66% 1	1.32% 2	11.92% 18	62.91% 95	23.18% 35	151
is not free of bribery	8.67% 13	2.67% 4	12.00% 18	40.67% 61	36.00% 54	150

In the practice of my profession... (Rate from 1-5, 1 very much disagree, 5 very much agree)

Answered: 151 Skipped: 56

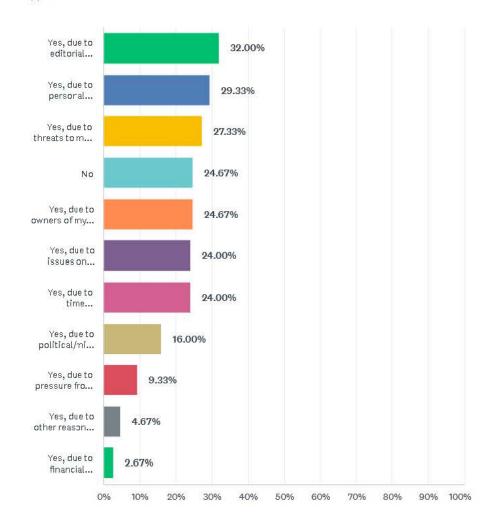


	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
The expansion of the digital	8.67% 13	4.00% 6	11.33% 17	24.67% 37	51.33% 77	150

sphere and Internet-ba sed reporting have affected my workflow.						
My editorial freedom has decreased over time.	28.48% 43	21.19% 32	27.15% 41	14.57% 22	8.61% 13	151
In determinin g which topics to write/produ ce, my most important objective is to provide news products that attract the largest audience.	12.00% 18	14.67% 22	28.00% 42	28.67% 43	16.67% 25	150

## I practice self-censorship (Select all that apply)

Answered: 150 Skipped: 57

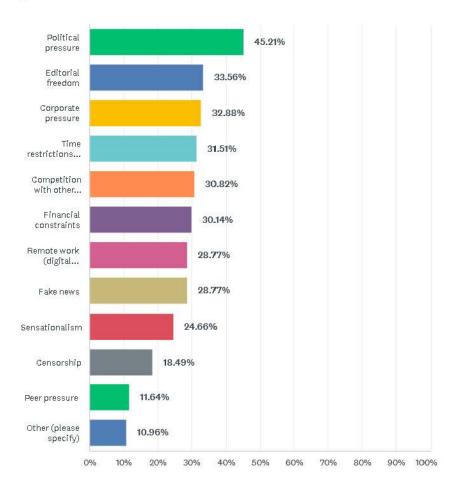


Answer Choices –	Responses –
Yes, due to editorial policy	32.00% 48
Yes, due to personal conflicts of interest	29.33% 44
Yes, due to threats to my personal security	27.33% 41
No	24.67% 37
	24.67%

Yes, due to owners of my media organization	37
Yes, due to issues on fact-checking	24.00% 36
Yes, due to time constraints	24.00% 36
Yes, due to political/military pressure	16.00% 24
Yes, due to pressure from businesses/corporate officials	9.33% 14
Yes, due to other reason(s) (please specify)	4.67% 7
Yes, due to financial offers	2.67% 4
TOTAL	150

What issues affect the practice of ethical reporting in your workplace? Select all that apply.

Answered: 146 Skipped: 61

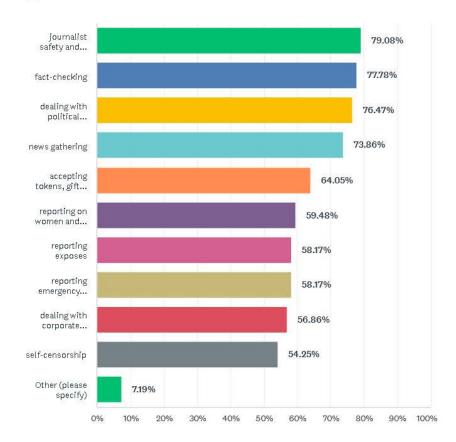


Answer Choices –	Responses –		
Political pressure	45.21% 66		
Editorial freedom	33.56% 49		
Corporate pressure	32.88% 48		
Time restrictions in creating stories	31.51% 46		
Competition with other media outfits	30.82%		

	45
Financial constraints	30.14% 44
Remote work (digital reporting)	28.77% 42
Fake news	28.77% 42
Sensationalism	24.66% 36
Censorship	18.49% 27
Peer pressure	11.64% 17
Other (please specify)	10.96% 16
Total Respondents	146

In crafting guidelines for ethical journalism, what specific issues/areas need to be highlighted? Select all that apply.

Answered: 153 Skipped: 54

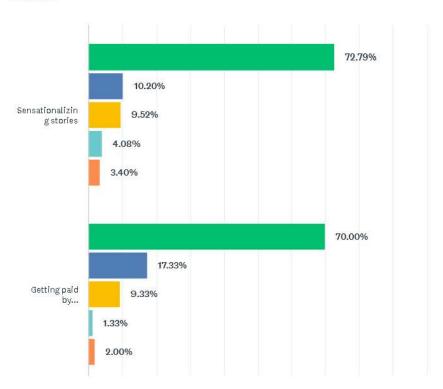


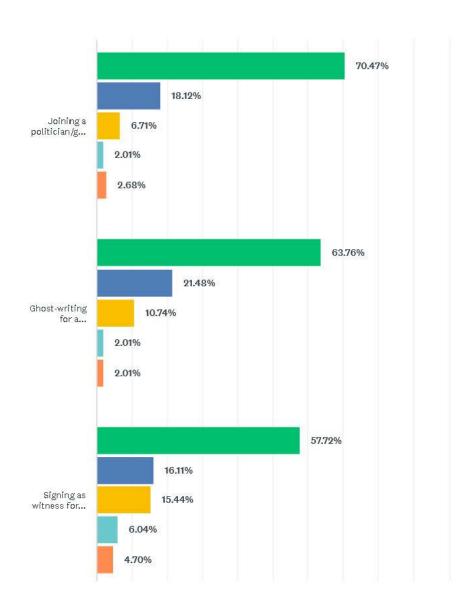
Answer Choices	Responses
journalist safety and security	79.08% 121
fact-checking	77.78% 119
dealing with political pressure	76.47% 117
news gathering	73.86% 113
accepting tokens, gifts, and other remunerations from sources	64.05% 98

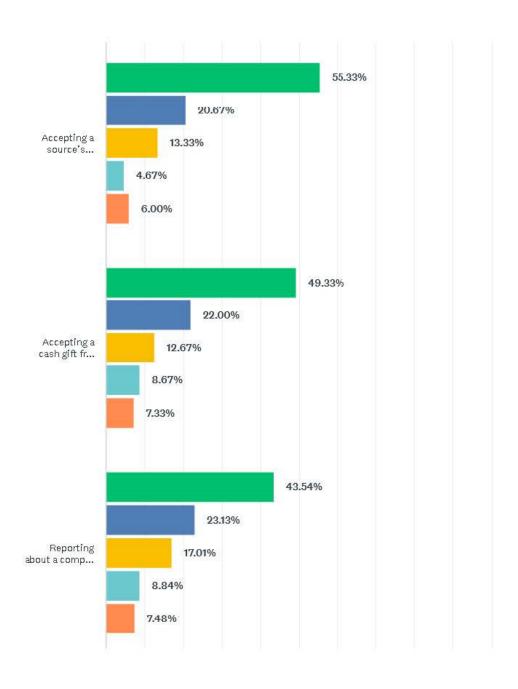
reporting on women and children	59.48% 91
reporting exposes	58.17% 89
reporting emergency situations	58.17% 89
dealing with corporate pressure	56.86% 87
self-censorship	54.25% 83
Other (please specify)	7.19% 11
Total Respondents:	153

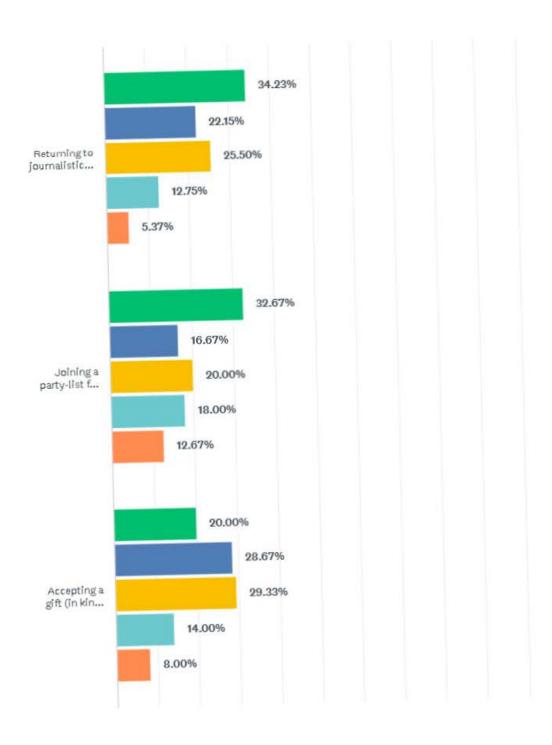
Please rate using a scale of 1-5, 1 being very unacceptable and 5 being very acceptable

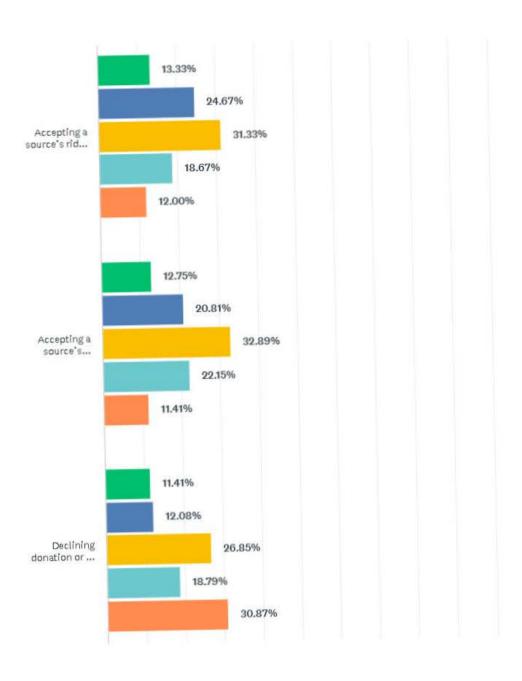
Answered: 150 Skipped: 57

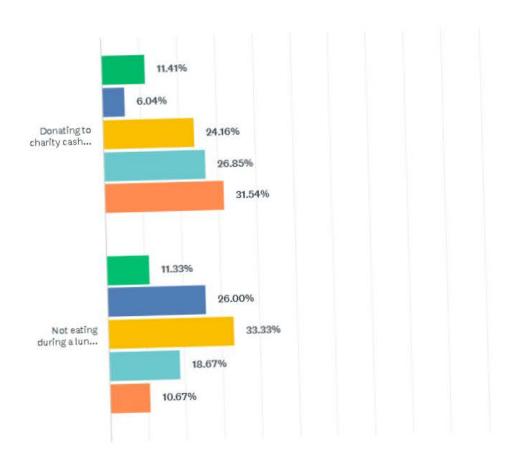


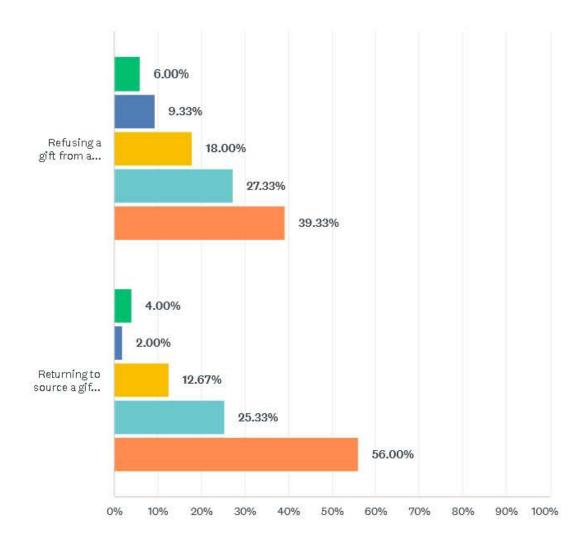












	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Not sure	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree	Total
Sensationa lizing stories	72.79% 107	10.20% 15	9.52% 14	4.08% 6	3.40% 5	147
– Getting paid by groups/peo ple I cover to report about them	70.00% 105	17.33% 26	9.33% 14	1.33%	2.00% 3	150
– Joining a	70.47% 105	18.12% 27	6.71% 10	2.01% 3	2.68% 4	149

politician/g overnment agency's holiday outing						
- Ghost-writi ng for a politician in preparatio n for/during an electoral campaign	63.76% 95	21.48% 32	10.74% 16	2.01% 3	2.01% 3	149
<ul><li>Signing as witness for buy-bust operations</li></ul>	57.72% 86	16.11% 24	15.44% 23	6.04% 9	4.70% 7	149
– Accepting a source's scholarshi p offer	55.33% 83	20.67% 31	13.33% 20	4.67% 7	6.00% 9	150
- Accepting a cash gift from the host of an event you are covering	49.33% 74	22.00% 33	12.67% 19	8.67% 13	7.33% 11	150
Reporting about a company with whom you have a project or side gig	43.54% 64	23.13% 34	17.01% 25	8.84% 13	7.48% 11	147
– Returning to	34.23% 51	22.15% 33	25.50% 38	12.75% 19	5.37% 8	149

journalistic practice after a stint as a politician or governmen t official						
Joining a party-list for media practitioner s	32.67% 49	16.67% 25	20.00% 30	18.00% 27	12.67% 19	150
- Accepting a gift (in kind) from the host of an event you are covering	20.00% 30	28.67% 43	29.33% 44	14.00% 21	8.00% 12	150
- Accepting a source's ride offer to the location of his/her event or operation	13.33% 20	24.67% 37	31.33% 47	18.67% 28	12.00% 18	150
- Accepting a source's invitation to free dinner/mea	12.75% 19	20.81% 31	32.89% 49	22.15% 33	11.41% 17	149
Declining donation or any form of help from a source or sponsor	11.41% 17	12.08% 18	26.85% 40	18.79% 28	30.87% 46	149

when a member of your family is sick						
– Donating to charity cash received from source	11.41% 17	6.04% 9	24.16% 36	26.85% 40	31.54% 47	149
- Not eating during a lunch treat for attendees during a press conference	11.33% 17	26.00% 39	33.33% 50	18.67% 28	10.67% 16	150
– Refusing a gift from a source during an occasion	6.00% 9	9.33% 14	18.00% 27	27.33% 41	39.33% 59	150
- Returning to source a gift (cash/in kind) that you deem expensive	4.00% 6	2.00% 3	12.67% 19	25.33% 38	56.00% 84	150

