

University of Tsukuba
Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spiraling Down into Corruption: The Case of Philippine Broadcast Media
(腐敗への螺旋的下降—フィリピンの放送メディアの事例)

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Scholarly literature as well as reports from national agencies and international organizations all agree that the broadcast media is a powerful institution that has important roles in varied areas of concern ranging from good governance, economic and human development, and even human security. These studies point to having a broadcast media institution that operates in an environment of freedom and independence, enjoying economic sustainability, an institution that enjoys the confidence of the public, having a wide reach, and having technically and professionally sound workforce, as what would bring about these promised positive outcomes. Philippine broadcast media has arguably achieved such as status, or at least very close to such as status, but has not been perceived as having made major strides in many of the aforementioned areas of concern.

Studies point to corruption as what impedes the broadcast media institution from performing these roles. Therefore, addressing this problem should be seen as a necessary step towards making the institution more responsive in areas that contribute to the people's social and economic well-being. However, very few studies focus on corruption within the broadcast media in particular, and even fewer studies focus on broadcast media institutions in developing countries, which may have different inner workings compared to that of their Western counterparts. This research fills this gap by contributing to the understanding of how corruption works within Philippine broadcast media, how forces and actors endogenous and exogenous to the institution contribute to the perpetuation and persistence of corruption, as well as its effects.

The primary methodologies employed in this research were interviews and surveys, complemented by secondary sources that include jurisprudence and official reports, newspaper and magazine articles, audio-visual materials such as documentaries and recorded television programs, and internet sources including blogs.

This research made use of the concept of *dyadic alliances*, augmented by the concept of *downward spirals of corruption* in analyzing corruption in the Philippine broadcast media. *Dyadic alliances* as described by Carl H. Landé are flexible, informal, personal relationships between two individuals for mutual gain. These relationships are characterized by being easy to form, compatible with existing formal structures and institutional relationships, having the ability to cut across occupational and class lines, and having particularistic rewards and benefits. *Downward spirals of corruption*, on the other hand, can be seen as conditions that reinforce dyadic alliances of a deviant nature, facilitating and perpetuating deviant behavior

(including corruption) until they become norms. Niki den Nieuwenboer and Muel Kaptein identified three spirals that cause and perpetuate corruption in organizations – the spiral of divergent norms, the spiral of pressures, and the spiral of opportunity.

The *spiral of divergent norms* suggests a process wherein a group's norms depart from outside norms, the results of which are rationalizations. Through this process, the collective norms and behavior deteriorate over time, and reinforces norms within the organization, that are seen as legitimate and positive, even when the group's members are in fact already engaging in corruption. The *spiral of pressures* explains that self-perpetuating increase in organizational pressures (individual or organizational) could lead to an equally perpetuating increase in corruption. The last spiral, the *spiral of opportunity*, meanwhile, points to factors that encourage corrupt practices. This spiral also relates to the institution's (team leaders, managers professional guilds, and broadcast industry associations) capability to deter corruption, and/or penalize individuals who engage in it.

The study was able to identify factors that contribute to these downward corruption spirals within the broadcast media. These include: (1) *personalistic* relationships and *clientelistic* structures that characterize many developing countries such as the Philippines; (2) the Philippine broadcast media being an institution comprised of different media traditions, some of which have values and norms that are open to unethical practices; (3) economic pressures (on the part of the individual to keep his source of income, and sustainability on the part of media organizations); (4) weakness of institutions to provide a credible deterrent to corruption (media corruption for instance is perceived more as an ethical and not a criminal concern even by media watchdogs); and (5) Filipino values such as *pakikisama* (camaraderie) and *utang-na-loob* (indebtedness), which makes whistleblowing, naming and shaming perpetrators and institutionalization of measures aimed at curbing corruption within broadcast media organizations difficult.

The study was also able to analyze the role of owners and upper-level media professionals in perpetuating and cultivating corruption within the institution. The research found that owners and upper-level media practitioners and media personalities continue to appropriate the institution to further their political and business interests, but have done so more discretely than in the past. Dyadic alliances and exchange relationships, allow the institution to be usurped, most especially during political crises and electoral exercises by powerful political interests. Business interest, meanwhile, continue to have a stranglehold on media through its control of advertisements, outright ownership of media organizations or both. Corruption in this level need further research because of what this study perceives as incentives and opportunities for collusion between these upper-level actors in media, and political and business interests. Some of these arrangements are even seen as legitimate business transactions, notwithstanding the ethical, if not criminal, implications of the use media to manipulate, distort, or hide information that may have bearings on important decisions that the public make, and such breach of public trust may have contributed to corrupt regimes holding on to power in the past.

Studies on corruption in Philippine broadcast media also focus on the corrupt act itself such as bribery and extortion, neglecting the need to check the early symptoms of such corrupt practices. These studies neglect these early symptoms' contribution to the acculturation or conditioning of media practitioners to unethical or even illegal practices. Deviant practices such as influence peddling, petty corruption, nepotism, cheating, and moonlighting, in one way or another, could lead to even more corruption if left unchecked.

Such apparently negligible practices also contribute to the perpetuation of corrupt practices that already exist within the institution.

This study approached corruption as a process, an act that is not done once, but a practice that is done with regularity, which in time becomes standard practice or a norm. Corrupt practices also incrementally become worse, as some form of positive outcome, such as an increase in advertising revenue or income, good relationship with news sources, “in-group” acceptance, prestige, and influence, may be positively related to doing corrupt practices – another area that would welcome further research.

The findings in this study appear to paint a pessimistic picture of the prospects of the Philippine broadcast media to fully perform its positive roles and contribute to the Filipino people’s social and economic well-being, as the institution seems to be weighed down with problems of corruption and capture. Nevertheless, there are developments that are being done, or have been initiated to establish what would be "reverse spirals." The study was also able to show that there are journalism groups and media watchdogs that have been working to instill positive journalistic values amongst broadcast media practitioners that they train. These groups and organizations have also adopted more comprehensive ethics codes or revised their codes to incorporate provisions that address concerns on ethics and corruption. The effects of these relatively new developments on the broadcast media institution may not be felt immediately, but this is a start. However, these steps need monitoring, to ensure that such steps toward reform do not go to waste. It is also important to point out that the the fruits of these necessary, welcome developments depend largely on its effective and strict execution, which point us to another important area that needs to be emphasized – implementation.