

**BROWN ENVELOPE JOURNALISM IN GHANA: PERCEPTIONS OF SOME  
MEDIA PRACTITIONERS IN KUMASI.**

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## STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

We have read the university regulations relating to plagiarism and certify that this report is all our own work and do not contain any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted.

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## SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by Christian Service University College

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the influence and effects of Brown Envelope syndrome on journalism practice in Kumasi. Data was collected by triangulation method, that is, quantitative and qualitative research methods which helped tremendously in obtaining rich and accurate data from participants. The major findings of this study showed that a lot of factors have contributed to Brown Envelope also known locally as ‘soli’ by journalists in Kumasi. Such factors include level of education of journalists; meagre salaries received by journalists; and the view that it is appreciation and/or transportation from news sources. The study also found that Brown Envelope or ‘soli’ takes various forms such as money, car, clothing and in some cases scholarships. Based on these findings the society should desist from giving Brown Envelopes to journalists and more importantly Media houses should improve remuneration of journalists as a measure to deal with the challenge. Again Journalism Training institutions should instill moral principles in trainees. Further studies need to be conducted in other parts of the country to further confirm whether Brown Envelope journalism undermines ethical reporting.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Countries, the world over, require journalists who are ethically and morally strong to refuse bribes in order to serve the good of their peoples. Vaidya (2008) quotes, “We pay our own way. We accept no gifts from news sources...” “Gifts in journalism are a form of bribe and should be declined”. Terje (2010) agrees with Vaidya when he said “informal incentives and bribes are common in African media practice.

Oshunkeye (2011) says brown envelope is a euphemism for corruption in the media. Borrowing the words of Reverend Jim Bakker, a former American minister of the Assemblies of God Church, Oshunkeye said “corruption, like a virulent cancer, blights what it touches. If it perches on a preacher, it makes him teach the exact opposite of what Jesus taught. Indeed, so devastating is the cancer of corruption that when it afflicts a judge, he stands the law on its head and perverts justice. In the same manner, in our noble profession of journalism, when a journalist gets hooked on the brown envelope malaise, professionalism and ethics get crucified” Certainly, news values as objectivity, fairness or accuracy are swept under the carpet.

The perception held by many critics is that brown envelope journalism is venomous to best journalistic practices especially in democratic societies as it influences editorial decision-making processes. Lengel, (2000) also equates brown envelope to bribery when she said “the

payment of news coverage, so called because payments are reportedly delivered in plain, unmarked brown envelopes. Such payments are tantamount to bribes. In totality brown envelope undermines the journalist's independence as the facts of stories are often distorted to suit the interest of news sources that have money to pay for coverage. Journalists and editors who turn up events such as news conferences, workshops, annual general meetings of banks or seminars are those who are paid to run stories for the news sources".

## **1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Several media experts have in their articles recognized that brown envelope is globally known. "Informal incentives and bribes are common in African media practice" (Lodamo & Terje, 2010). Vaidya (2008), wrote about the phenomenon in India that "almost every single press conference concluded with a "gift-giving ceremony", during which the organisers would hand each journalist a gift-wrapped box. It would mostly be a costly pen. Sometimes, the gifts would be far more expensive – a clock, a wrist-watch, digital organiser or some other thing – depending on whether the press conference was organised by a business entity.

"It would sadden some of us immensely when poorly-funded NGOs or labour unions, calling a press conference about some wage dispute, also succumbed to this practice of giving gifts to journalists, on the advice of their Public Relations consultants," (Vaidya, 2008).

In Vaidya's (2008) opinion, "there were some of us who were extremely uncomfortable with this convention. It would often be a nuisance for us to refuse these gifts because the Public

Relations person and the press conference organisers would plead with us to “accept their token of love and affection”.

The perception of Brown Envelope Journalism is one that has been extensively discussed by media personnel. According to Ransford Tetteh, President of the Ghana Journalist Association, ethical standard in journalism in Ghana is not the best. “The demand for money after covering events is a major challenge to professional conduct” (Tetteh, 2012).

However, at a media training workshop on ‘the media and the law’ held in Kumasi on January 13, 2012, Ransford Tetteh told journalists that “debate about soli (short for solidarity) will not end here... This is something we all came to meet”. He however maintained that the situation where some journalists threaten not to publish a story if they are not paid soli (brown envelope) must be discouraged. “Sometimes some of us fight over food, water and even drinks. This reduces the value people attach to the profession. Let us give our great profession credibility and dignity” (Tetteh, 2012). “The approach some of us use in demanding the money is wrong. No engineer or medical doctor will queue and accept GH¢5.00 or GH¢10.00” (Nsawah-Adjei, 2012).

Similarly, at a soli symposium on ‘cash for coverage’ in Accra in 2011, Ato Kwamena Dadzie, former news editor of Joy FM insisted that soli traps journalists. It’s demeaning, it’s cheap and unconscionable. “The more we see journalists running after money, the more we lose our professional dignity” (Dadzie 2011). According to Dadzie (2011), journalism is a profession that requires a lot of sacrifice, but at the end of the day it pays off.

In her contribution to the topic, Dr. Doris Dartey, a communications consultant observed that “many reporters are driven to accept the cash in order to put food on the table”. “What do you do if you haven’t got paid for six months? Is it wrong to take money for transport to allow you to attend an event”? Freddie Blay, Publisher of Daily Guide newspaper and former deputy speaker of Parliament asked rhetorically. According to him, every man has his own price.

## **1.2 EUPHEMISTIC NAMES FOR BROWN ENVELOPE**

Journalists in different nations of the African continent have given brown envelope various euphemistic names in their local parlance. In Ghana *solì* (solidarity) is the name given to the practice by reporters in both state and private media organizations (Terje, 2010). The history of *solì* is difficult to trace as Tetteh (2012) puts it “ we came to meet it. In Zambia, it is referred to as *Ndalama yamatako* (Kasoma, 2009) which is literary explained to mean “money of the buttocks”, having a connotation of “sitting allowance.” Other African terms according to (Terje, 2010) are that in Nigeria it is called “*keske*”, “*kola*”, “*goro*”, “*gbalamu*” and “*egunje*”, in addition to English euphemisms like “family support”, “better life”, “the journalists are going”, “energizer”, Ghana-must-go and “handshake” (Adebanwi, 2008, p. 55; Adio, 2001, p. 141; Agbanu, 2009 et al).

## **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

For multi-party democracy in a developing country like Ghana to flourish, it requires a vibrant and ethical mass media to keep its institutions in constant check. The integrated roles of the mass media (newspapers, television, radio internet etc.) are critical in the development-

processes of the nation. Without a vibrant mass media, the practice of democracy would be futile.

However, the media would be destructive and fail to observe their watchdog role in society if ethical standards are not maintained. In many media outlets today, good ethical practices are not upheld. According to Ransford Tetteh, president of the Ghana Journalist Association, “many journalists fail to realize that the newsroom is the ethical heart of every media organization and what comes out of it goes a long way to affect individuals and society as a whole”. The issue of *soli* has gradually gained roots in journalistic practice in Ghana to the extent that some journalists request them from programme organizers before putting forward a story for publication. “Some journalists cover conferences for the envelopes of free cash instead of chasing newsworthy stories, skewing the news agenda – what makes it into the newspapers is not necessarily the most relevant news of the day, but rather PR stories about the work of event organizers” (Bain, 2011, p. 2 ).

Whilst some media personnel argue to justify the practice in Ghana where most reporters take “*soli*” to supplement their meager salaries, others argue that the rewards compromise journalistic standards.

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether or not brown envelope journalism undermines ethical reporting and impacts on the practice.

## **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the various forms brown envelope journalism take place in Kumasi.
2. Identify the factors that influence the practice of brown envelope journalism.
3. Find out how brown envelope journalism affects good ethical journalistic practice.
4. Find out which categories of journalists are involved in the brown envelope journalism practice.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What forms does brown envelope journalism take in Kumasi?
2. What are the factors that influence brown envelope journalism?
3. Does brown envelope journalism affects good ethical journalistic practice.
4. Who are involved in the brown envelope journalism?

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

Conducting empirical research into the issue of brown envelope journalism in the city of Kumasi will not only address ethical concerns in journalism. The study will add to the wealth of knowledge by:

1. Clarifying media experts' opinion on the effects of brown envelope journalism on journalism practice in Ghana.
2. Serving as the reference point for future policy formulation for the promotion of ethical journalism standards in Ghana.
3. Making it possible for further studies to be conducted by other researchers and

4. Guiding Ghana Journalists Association, journalists and news sources to revise existing practices and institute new ones.

## **1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

Brown envelope journalism refers to a journalistic activity which involves transfer of various types of rewards from sources to the reporter.

Media practitioners refer to people who have in-depth knowledge about the media industry.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

##### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The theoretical aspect of this study is based on the Social Responsibility Theory, first developed in 1940s by Robert Maynard Hutchins' commission on freedom of the press. Functionalism theory also referred to as Structural Functionalist theory is also relevant to this study. The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) Code of Ethics is also useful for the study.

##### **2.2 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY**

The social responsibility theory asserts that media must remain free of government control, but in exchange media must serve the public. "Social responsibility holds that the government must not merely allow freedom; it must actively promote it...Siebert et al. (1956). However, the theorists posit that when necessary the government should act to protect the freedom of its citizens. The acts of government mentioned include legislation to forbid 'flagrant abuses'.

According to Hutchins (1947), "social responsibility should be reached by self-control, not government intervention".

The core assumptions of this theory are a cross between libertarian principles of freedom and practical admission of the need for some form of control on the media (McQuail, 1987).

From this theory, journalists are expected to “accept and fulfill certain obligations to society and meet these obligations by setting high standards of professionalism, truth, accuracy and objectivity” (Baran, 2009: 466).

The theory enjoins the media to be socially responsible by adhering to best journalistic practices. Thus it discourages acts and practices that have the tendency to lose their sound judgment in making editorial decisions. Social responsibility calls for responsible and ethical industry operation (Baran, 2009).

Leke (2010) explains this to mean that the media should reflect all shades of opinion to enable the public to reach rational decision. Journalists must be concerned about ethics considering its effects on their profession. “Today media ethics codes universally condemn gifts, rewards and gratification and certainly bribes but there are still many people who carry favour with the mass media” (Leke, 2010).

But how independent can the press be when journalists rely on outside sources for ‘transportation’? (Bain, 2011) asks. In the opinion of Adonoo (2011), journalists should make a decision on whether the money has a propensity to influence the direction of their stories.

According to him, “the money is more a show of appreciation and a way of ensuring wide news coverage rather than trying to influence how stories are written”. There are other schools of thought that believe that media personnel are serving ‘two masters’ – the public

interest and the journalist's self-interest. Hulteng (1976) said such dual service is possible and inevitably leads to conflicts of interest that have plagued news media for generations (P.33).

Sanders (2003), argues that brown envelopes and freebies are forms of bribery that mark ethical pitfalls of responsible journalism. However, the practice has continued undermining trust in the journalist's work and contradicting the social responsibility of the journalists themselves. Sanders (2003) believes in many cases self-interest wins.

But Diedong (2006) suggests, something is fundamentally wrong with journalism's core values if journalists give their best on condition that they receive financial and material benefits (p.10). He explains, "At times the reality is that selfish agenda of some journalists tend to override their professional responsibility to offer honest and dedicated service to the public on whose behalf they enjoy the status as the fourth estate of the realm". Diedong (2006, p. 11).

### **2.3 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALIST THEORY**

Functionalism or structural functionalism postulates social practices and institutions in line with the needs of the society and of individuals (Merton, 1957). Society is seen as an ongoing subsystems linked together with the tendency of making essential contribution to continuity and order. According to McQuail (2005) in an organized social life the mass media is a contributor to the needed continued maintenance of a more or less accurate, consistent, supportive and complete picture of the working of society and of the social environment.

In regard, brown envelop practices in journalism have the penchant to defeat the virtues of accuracy, consistency, supportiveness and the complete picture representation of the working of society and the social environment. This is because brown envelopes may be given on the leverage of tilting reportage towards a particular direction.

The mass media is viewed as maintaining society with ripple effects of its roles in society being its terminal reward. So McQuail further argues that “it is by responding to the demands of individuals and institutions in consistent ways the media achieve unintended benefits for the society”.

In McQuail’s opinion, to ensure that the subsystems of society work effectively in linkage, the mass media are essential for integration and co-operation; order, control and stability; adaptation to change; mobilization; management of tension; and continuity of culture and values.

Just like the social responsibility theory, structural functionalist theory states that, “both the press and its critics agree that the press should assume responsibility to be accountable to the public and avoid the abuse of their own power” Siebert et al. (1984, original edition 1957, p.84).

This situation, according to Ahuja (1996), called for the introduction of some form of regulatory mechanism to keep the press to function properly.

“Some regulation, as in the early days of practicing journalism in the western world, would inevitably be self-imposed, with media organisations developing ethical codes to shape the behavior of journalists and with journalists shaping their own behavior by acknowledging the social responsibility” Siebert, et al (1984 p.88).

It is against this background that the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) Code of Ethics is imperative. The preamble of the GJA Code of ethics calls on journalists to “adhere to the highest ethical standards, professional competence and good behaviour in carrying out their duties.

The Code entreats journalists to appreciate that as the fourth estate of the realm, the public expects the media to play their watchdog role with a high sense of responsibility.

“In collecting and disseminating information, the journalist should bear in mind his/her responsibility to the public at large and the various interests in society” (Article 2 of the GJA Code).

For journalists to have professional integrity, the Code further cautions them to avoid accepting bribes or any form of inducement to influence the performance of their professional duties.

## 2.4 RELATED STUDIES

A study conducted by Denis Mpagaze (2010) on “Corruption In The Media: Perceptions of Tanzanian Journalists” confirmed that corruption was rampant in the Tanzanian media.

According to his findings, journalists in Tanzania admitted taking money from their sources of information which they called *mshiko*, *kitu kidogo*, *mkukuta* and many others. Forty respondents “strongly agreed” that the brown envelope practice was rife in Tanzanian media with 32 and 10 stating “agreed” and “neutral” respectively while 3 disagreed and only 2 respondents strongly disagreed.

In the study, the researcher asked the journalists to mention by number and not by names who they think were corrupt journalists since it was assumed it could be difficult to find journalists in a position of accepting bribes. Sixty one respondents said that they personally “know” corrupt journalists whereas, 26 respondents said that they “do not know” of such journalists. When asked whether they had personally taken any form of bribes, only 12 out of the 87 journalists admitted to have taken bribes.

In his thesis submitted to Addis Ababa University in 2008, Berhanu Lodamo wrote on the topic, “Freebies’ and Brown Envelope in Ethiopian Broadcast media.

In Lodamo’s (2008) view, “unless the media are managed properly, struggles against corruption and attempts to bring development would be futile endeavours”. He observed that absence of trained media personnel and management is a problem imposed in the fight against media corruption.

According to him, his study might be the first of its kind in Ethiopia and therefore might lead to more research in Journalism ethics. Significantly, his study aimed at encouraging higher ethical standards in the broadcast stations as the work of journalists are examined by their editors.

Lodamo's (2008) study used the mixed method (triangulation) involving the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. His research however largely employed a qualitative research approach. As Patton (1990) said qualitative research uses different forms of data than those used in conventional research methods. In this type research; people's experiences, opinions, full range interpersonal interactions and organizations processes are depicted (p. 12).

Like Lodamo's (2008) study, this study also uses triangulation as both qualitative and quantitative methods are used. In his study, likert scale of five scales beginning with "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree" was used. He distributed questionnaires to 80 journalists and 61 of them representing 76.30% completed the forms. He also interviewed 9 journalists but in this study 5 editors are interviewed while questionnaires are distributed to 50 journalists.

In selecting the research samples, Lodamo used purposive sampling technique, a technique also used by this study. However, Lodamo used snowball sampling since his study was the first of its kind in Ethiopia.

In determining the factors that contribute to Brown Envelopes in relation to his findings, Lodamo identified Lack of Proper Training as one of them. “New recruits to a media house should get oriented to its ethical codes and trained in its work procedures,” Lodamo (2008). Another contributing factor he found out was Low Salary and Job Dissatisfaction.

He concluded that “training has an indispensable role in shaping the behaviour of journalists in reporting. However, the responses he got from the informants showed that there were no on-job and refresher trainings to make journalists work bearing appropriate responsibility. Again, low salary of journalists contributed to brown envelope and freebies. “Although salary of journalists throughout Africa is generally very low, the situation in Ethiopia is worse compared to other countries,” Lodamo (2008). The situation, according to him, compels journalists in Ethiopia to compromise their professional ethical standards thereby giving unbalanced coverage to certain news sources.

Similarly, Twange Kasoma conducted research on “Impact of Brown Envelop Journalism on Journalistic Practice in Zambia and Ghana (2009)”. The study sought to analyze the rampancy of Brown Envelope Journalism in Zambia and Ghana and how journalists perceived the practice.

In this study, Kasoma used the systematic sampling approach to distribute questionnaires to 300 journalists from Zambia and Ghana – 150 journalists from Zambia and Ghana each. He selected the respondents from the state-owned corporation, private-owned TV station, private-owned radio station, state-owned newspaper, private-owned newspaper and state-



owned news agency. For example, in Ghana the media outlets selected for the study included Ghana News Agency, Accra Daily Mail, Financial Times, People and Places, Statesman, Chronicle, Ghanaian Times, Daily Graphic, Citi FM, Joy FM, Peace FM, Radio Universe, TV 3, TV Africa and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.

Out of the 300 questionnaires he distributed, 218 were returned. Three of the 218 which were not completed were discarded leaving 215 valid questionnaires.

Besides the questionnaire, qualitative method of in-depth interview and participant observation were used. Kasoma interviewed journalists, editors, university professors, media foundation executives and professional association presidents. A total of 40 interviews varying in length from one hour to two hours were conducted.

In this study also media houses that are private and state-owned including radio and television stations as well as newspapers are selected. Some of them are Daily Graphic, Daily Guide, TV3, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Hello FM, Luv FM, Angel FM and Ghana News Agency. A total of 10 editors are interviewed while 50 questionnaires are distributed to reporters.

Kasoma's findings from his study showed that the practice was commonplace in Ghana and Zambia. Most of the journalists who were interviewed and answered to the questionnaires attested to engaging in the practice of brown envelope journalism. However, although the journalists had reservations about the impact brown envelope journalism had on their objectivity they still saw the practice as normal.

He concluded that news journalism is increasingly taking on a public relations function where news paid for by sources is the one that is finding its way in the media. Also journalists' meager salaries contributed to the high prevalence of brown envelope journalism.

Another study conducted by Chinenye Nwabueze, a lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Anambra State University, Nigeria. His topic was "Brown Envelopes and the need for ethical re-orientation: Perceptions of Nigerian Journalists.

Chinenye (2010) stated that the practice of accepting gratifications popularly referred to as the brown envelope syndrome has created a perennial credibility problem for the profession in Nigeria. The basis of his research work was to find out from practicing journalists their perceptions of brown envelope syndrome including their views regarding why the syndrome has continued to exist in the profession.

In the study, Chinenye (2010) used the survey methodology for data collection and the selection of journalists for the study was based on a non-probability sampling technique of convenience and the researcher's own discretion. A total of 150 journalists were selected from five cities across Nigeria. Out of the 150 copies of questionnaires distributed, 116 were returned giving a response rate of 77%.

Chinenye's findings showed that 84% of the respondents accepted brown envelopes in the practice of their profession while 16% of the respondents said they did not accept brown envelopes.

According to the findings, 78% of the respondents did not believe brown envelope affected their objectivity or stance in news coverage. 7% agreed that accepting brown envelopes make them less objective in the coverage of events; 10% believed that acceptance of brown envelop did not always affect their objective stance in news coverage while 5% could not say whether their objectivity was affected by accepting brown envelopes or not.

Again, in the findings, 51% of the respondents did not see the practice as unethical, but 32% of the respondents saw the acceptance of brown envelopes as an unethical practice with 17% remaining neutral to the position of ethical values.

**Chinenye's** findings corroborated the findings of the other studies cited earlier. It showed that 43% of the respondents agreed that poor remuneration was the basic reason for acceptance of brown envelope by journalists; 23% disagreed that poor remuneration was the basic reason while 34% did not have a clear opinion on the issue.

Chinenye Nwabueze concluded his study by stating that the basic reason behind the continued existence of brown envelopes in the profession was the orientation of journalists. He posited that most of the journalists saw nothing wrong with the acceptance of brown envelopes.

These related studies cited set the bases for this study to find out the impact of brown envelope on journalistic practice in Kumasi.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

A scientific study cannot be carried out without rolling out the methods that are used to collect the data. This chapter therefore outlines the techniques. The study makes use of the triangulation method as both the qualitative and quantitative methods are used for data collection. This is because by the nature of the research purpose and objectives, the researchers rely on self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews as the major data collection instruments in order to seek meaning of the phenomenon under study.

#### **3.2 STUDY POPULATION**

Media editors and reporters constitute the population of this study. The study is carried out in Kumasi, the Ashanti Regional capital and Ghana's second largest city. Kumasi has media and communication studies institutions with qualified lecturers. Also, most of the leading newspapers, television and radio stations have their offices managed by highly educated and qualified persons in the media.

#### **3.3 SAMPLE**

A sample size made up of 50 reporters are selected from 14 media houses namely Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, Daily Guide, Ghana News Agency, Ghanaian Chronicle, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Luv FM, Angel FM, Kessben FM, Kapital Radio, Hello FM, Mercury FM, Fox FM, Otech FM, media experts again 8 editors are interviewed on the subject.

### **3.4 SAMPLING METHOD**

Purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method is used to select the reporters while sample random technique is used to select the editors. Two major groups – news editors and reporters – are identified based on their characteristics. The editors are characterized by virtue of their managerial positions which place on them the responsibility to assign reporters to cover stories and also edit stories in the news room.

### **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Descriptive research design is used for this study because of the nature of the topic under study. This design allows for different data collections methods that include survey questionnaires, interviews and observation. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), descriptive research is a process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study.

A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are and attempt to describe such things as possible behaviours, attitudes, values and characteristics. A Likert scale is used in the data collection. The Likert scale consists of a number of statements which express either favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the given object to which the respondent is asked to react (Kathari, 2003). An in-depth interview is conducted in addition to the Likert scale after which the recordings are transcribed for data analysis.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

A total of 50 respondents made up of reporters are given questionnaires to fill at a sitting. The questionnaires are designed in both open and closed ended question format. In-depth interviews are conducted with eight news editors. The interviews are recorded in an audio format and were later transcribed.

The data is collected in the offices of the respondents which presented a confidential, friendly and familiar environment.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN**

This study uses the descriptive data analysis technique in analyzing the data gathered. This approach summarizes the findings and describes the sample. It makes use of simple graphics to reduce lots of data into a simple summary. The descriptive data analysis shows how a particular data looks like and what the relationships are between the different variables in a set of data. The data analysis software PASW (Predictive Analytical Software) is used to simplify pie – charts and analyse the data collected

The study largely uses pie charts, bar charts and frequency tables to give graphical representation of findings.

### **3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Access to respondents is formally negotiated before respondents are given the questionnaires and also the interviews are conducted. The researchers explain to respondents what the research is about and give an assurance of confidentiality of any information given by the respondents in the research process. Consent of interviewees is sought for the audit recording of their answers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It presents results of the demographic background of the respondents before looking at issues related to the brown envelope journalism. The chapter then presents results on the various forms brown envelope journalism take, factors that influence the practice of brown envelope journalism; and how brown envelope journalism affects good ethical journalistic practice. The chapter also looks at categories of journalists that are involved in the brown envelope journalism practice.

The study achieved a response rate of 96% as 48 out of 50 distributed questionnaires were responded and returned. The high response rate can be attributed to the fact that most of the questionnaires were given out with strict monitoring with the aim of achieving a 100% response rate.

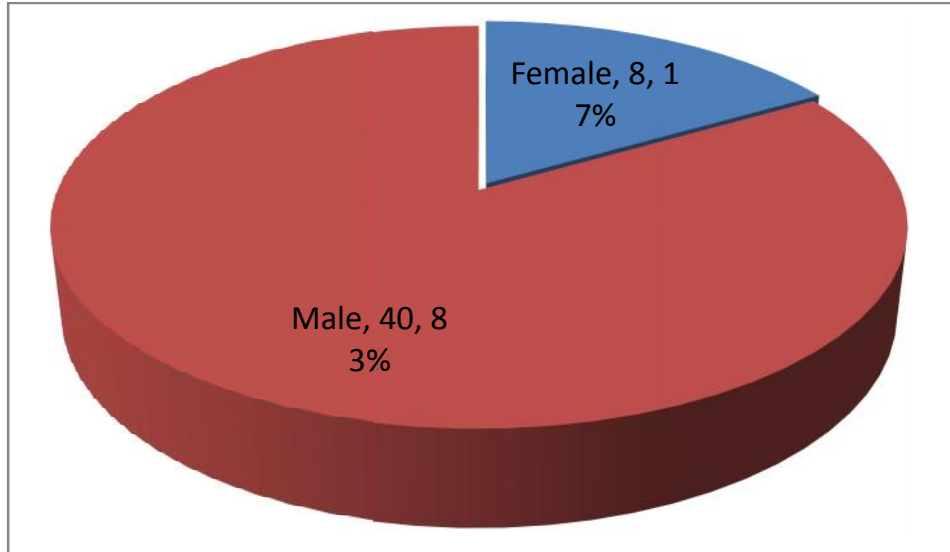
#### **4.1 DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS**

##### **4.1.1 Gender**

Majority of the respondents, 40 representing 83%, were males with eight (17%) being females. The resulted proportion demonstrates that the number of male journalists is likely to be higher than female journalists. Figure 4.1 shows the results in detail.



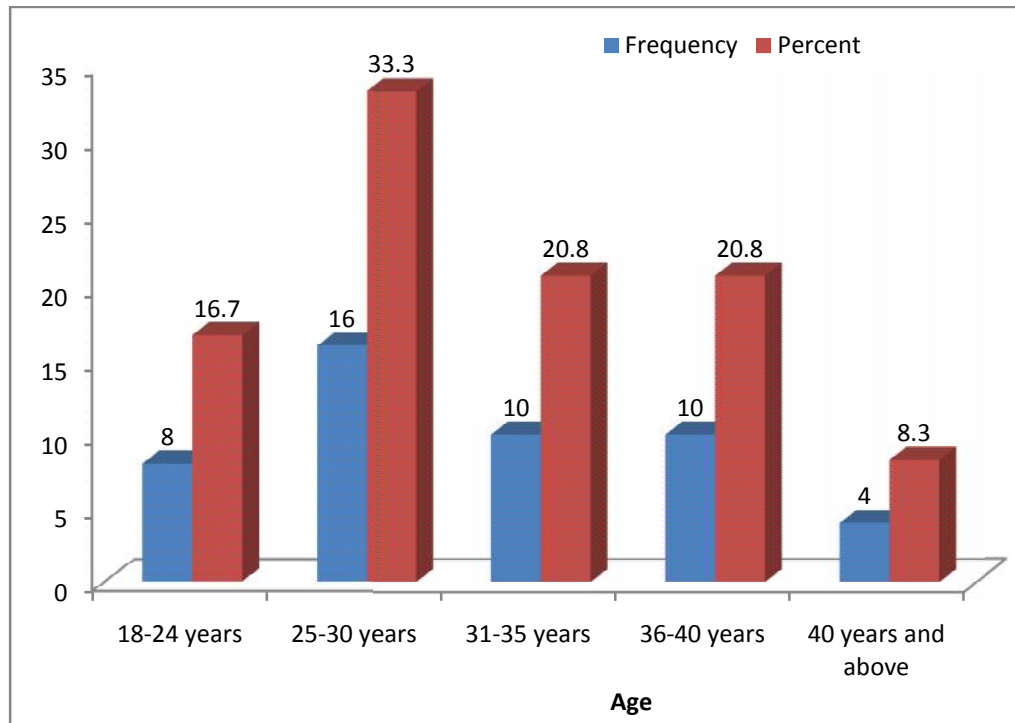
**Figure 4.1 Gender representations of the respondents**



#### **4.1.2 Age of the respondents**

The modal age groups of the staff is between 25 - 30 years. Sixteen of the respondents (33.3%) fell within this age group. Eight of the respondents (16.7%) were between the age group of 18 – 24 years. Ten each of the respondents (20.8%) were between the age group of 31-35 years and 36-40 years. Only 8.3% of the respondents indicated that they were above 40 years. Figure 4.2 presents the result in detail. The age distributions of the respondents indicate that the journalists are more of young adults and therefore with good condition of service they may practice for long period.

**Figure 4.2: age of the respondents**



#### **4.1.3 Educational Level**

All the respondents have had some form of formal education. Majority of the respondents, 21 representing 44% have had university and post university education. Eighteen of the respondents representing 38% have had professional education. Six of the respondents (12%) indicated that they had completed polytechnic education. Only 6% of the respondents had been educated up to secondary school. The results further show that in spite of the fact that majority of the respondents have had university education or professional training, yet they received meagre salaries. Figure 4.3 presents the educational levels of the respondents in detail. It was also observed that a good number of the respondents had not received professional training from neither the Ghana Institute of Journalism, nor the School of Communication Studies, Legon.

**Table 4.1 Educational level of the respondents**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>percent</b>
University and Post University	21	44
Polytechnic / College	6	12
Professional College	18	38
Secondary School	3	6
Total	48	100

*Source: Field data (2012)*

#### **4.1.4 Marital Status**

Many of the respondents (52.1%) are single. Those married comprise 43.8% of the total number of respondents. Two of the respondents indicated that they are divorced. Table 4.1 presents the result in detail.

**Table 4.2 Marital status**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single	25	52.1
Married	21	43.8
Divorced	2	4.2
Total	48	100.0

*Source: Field data (2012)*

#### 4.1.5 Employment Status

Table 4.2 shows the employment status of journalists that responded to the study. Majority of the respondents were practising journalism on a full time basis. This was confirmed by 39 (81.2%) of the respondents who indicated ‘working full time’. Four and five of the respondents respectively indicated that they are practicing journalism on parttime and intern basis.

**Table 4.3 employment status of respondents**

	Frequency	Percent
Working Full Time	39	81.2
Part Time	4	8.3
Intern	5	10.4
Total	48	100.0

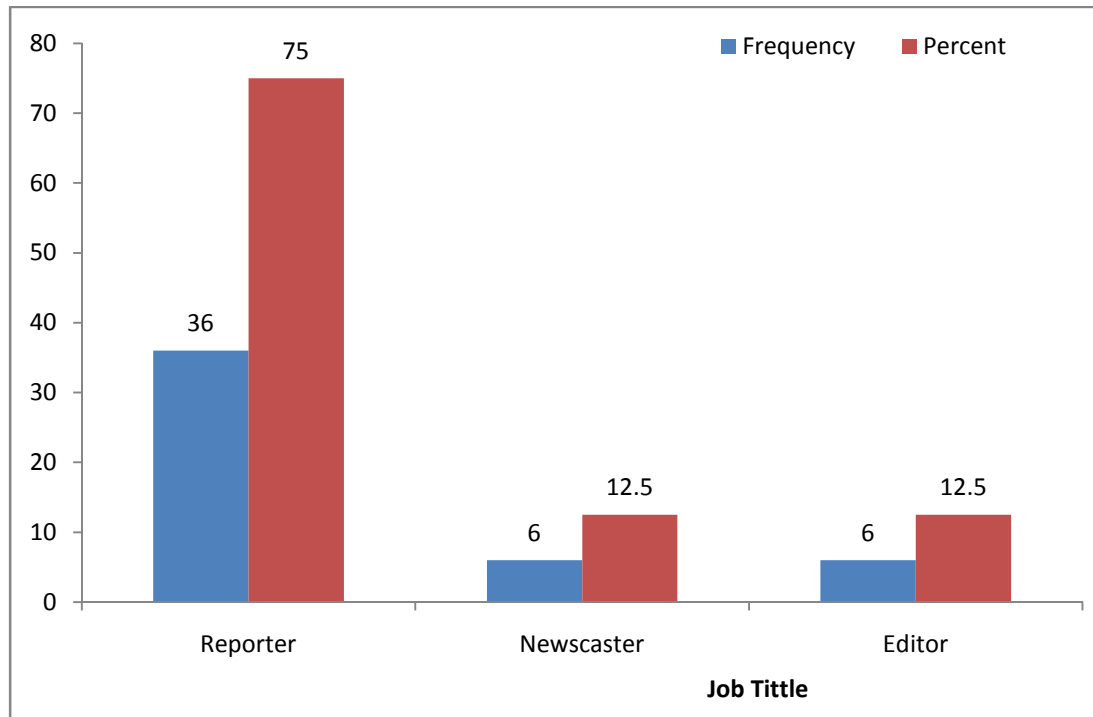
*Source: Field data (2012)*

#### 4.1.6 Job title

Figure 4.4 shows the job title of the respondents. Most of the respondents, 36 representing 75% were reporters. Also 6 each of the respondents representing 12.5% were newscasters and editors.

The job titles of all the respondents indicate that they are all journalists and therefore they can contribute adequately to the issues under study.

**Figure 4.3 Job title of the respondents**



#### **4.1.7 Income level**

Ten representing 20.8% mentioned that they earn a monthly income of GHC501 and above.

About 18.8% of the respondents earn between GHC50 -100 as their monthly income.

Table 4.3 shows that the income level of journalists responded to the study in details. From the table 4.3 it can be deduced that at least 43% of the respondents earn GHC200 and below as their monthly income. The results also show that about 28% of the respondents received below or just the minimum wage of GHC4.48 for the year 2012.

**Table 4.4 Income Level**

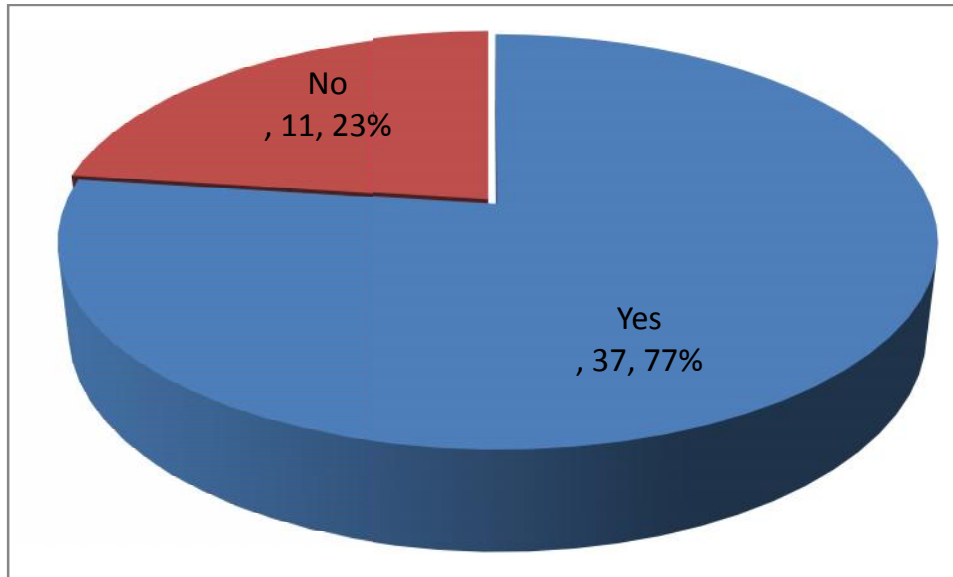
	Frequency	Percent
GHC 50 -100	9	18.8
GHC 101-150	5	10.4
GHC 151-200	7	14.6
GHC 201-250	4	8.3
GHC 251-300	5	10.4
GHC 301-400	4	8.3
GHC 401-500	4	8.3
More than GHC 500	10	20.8
Total	48	100.0

***Source: Field data (2012)***

#### **4.1.8 Training in Journalism and Ghana Journalists Association Membership**

Majority of the respondents, 37 (77%) have received training in journalism while 23% have not. Figure 4.5 shows the result in detail.

**Figure 4.4: Training in journalism**



In the case of the Ghana Journalist Association, 50% of the respondents are members while 50% are non members. Table 4.4 presents the results in detail.

**Table 4.5 GJA membership**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	24	50.0
No	24	50.0
Total	48	100.0

***Source: Field data (2012)***

## **4.2 FORMS OF BROWN ENVELOPE JOURNALISM ('SOLI')**

To ascertain the forms of brown envelop journalism ('soli'), the definition of the term was first sought from the respondents. According to a senior journalist with the Ghana News Agency at Kumasi office, 'soli' is the giving out of gifts in cash or kind to any reporter or any media person when the person has covered an event. It is purported to influence the journalist to do something in favour of the giver. She opined that, 'soli' could also be a gift given after a journalist has published a story. She observed that the controversy surrounding Soli is not the giving out of money per se but when it is given and the purpose for which it is given'.

Figure 4.6 shows the measurability of the various meanings of 'soli' that the respondents gave. Majority of the respondents, 21 think that 'soli' is the money given to show appreciation for attending a media programme. Whiles 14 of the respondents share a view that 'soli' is money for transportation, 4 of the respondents believe it is money given to journalists to influence reportage.



**Figure 4.5: Respondents' understanding of 'Soli'**

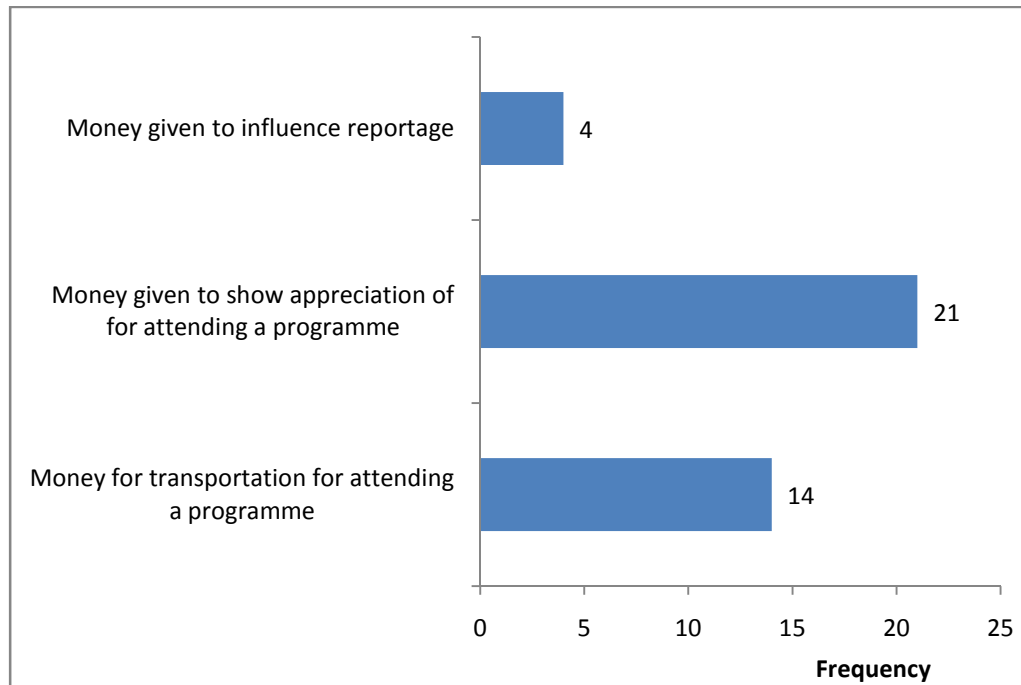


Table 4.7 shows the forms "soli" takes. Most of the forms "Soli" takes are monetary. Thirty nine (81.2%) of the respondents confirmed this. Surprisingly, three of the respondents indicated that soli takes the form of a car. About four of the respondents mentioned 'other' implying a different form other than the given options. A respondent mentioned scholarship and another respondent mentioned clothing.

**Table 4.6: Forms of 'Soli'**

	Frequency	Percent
Money	39	81.2
Clothing	1	2.1
Scholarship	1	2.1
Car	3	6.2
Other	4	8.3

**Table 4.6: Forms of ‘Soli’**

	Frequency	Percent
Money	39	81.2
Clothing	1	2.1
Scholarship	1	2.1
Car	3	6.2
Other	4	8.3
Total	48	100.0

*Source: Field data (2012)*

### **4.3 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PRACTICE OF BROWN ENVELOPE JOURNALISM**

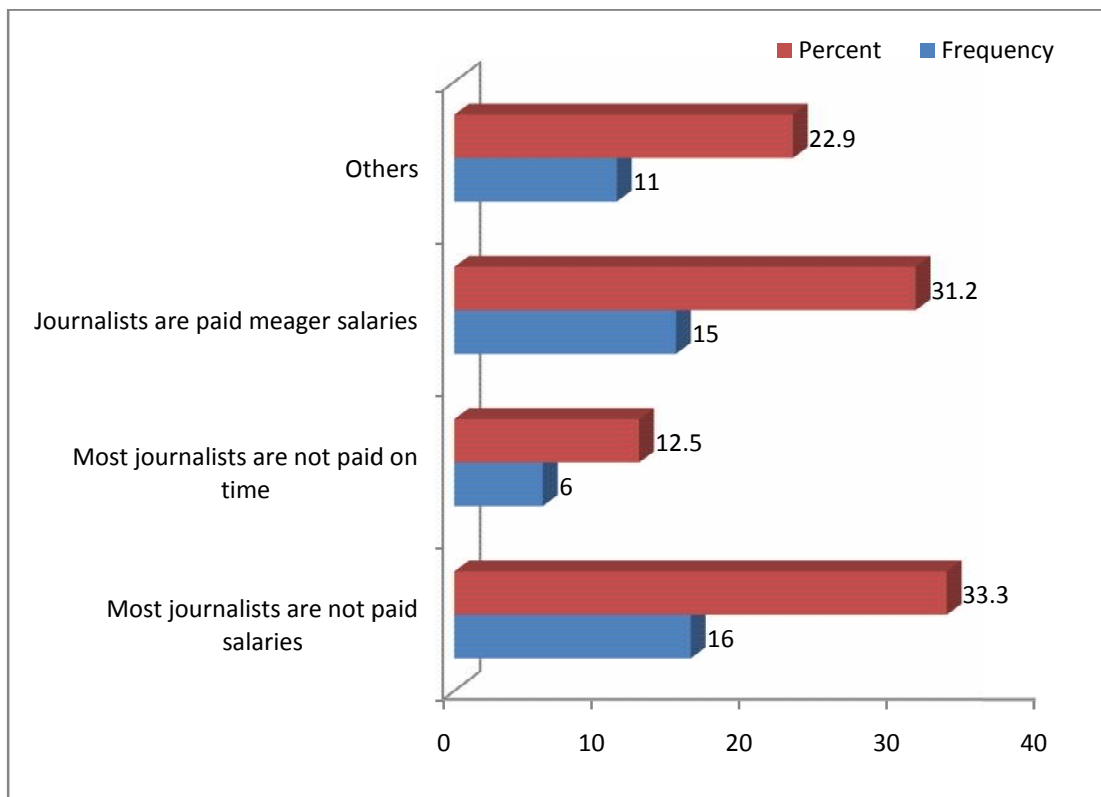
Some senior journalists with Kapital Radio and the Ghana Journalists Association Secretariat all in Kumasi observed that poor remuneration and bad morals – greed on the part of some journalists account for the practice of brown envelope journalism. As indicated by one,

*“If someone is paid GH200 and this person covers a story and is given GH50 for a story in just about 2 hours and the journalist could be given another opportunity depending on the story being carried, there is the likelihood of that person taking the money and ensuring that that story is carried”.*

Another senior journalist said that *“But when you earn decent remuneration, sometimes you have this self respect and dignity. For instance if you earn about GH¢1000 and somebody brings you GH¢200 or GH¢500 just to tarnish your hard earned image or create some problem for you somewhere I don’t think you will be moved so much by it”.*

Figure 4.7 shows the quantitative output of the factors that the general respondents thought influence the practice of brown envelope journalism. Majority of the respondents, 16 representing 33.3% mentioned that the fact that most journalists are not paid salaries, contributes to the brown envelope journalism practice growing. Fifteen (31.2%) of the respondents also opined that because journalists are paid meagre salaries is what is accounting for brown envelope journalism. ‘Most of the journalists are not paid on time’ as a reason of brown envelope journalism was expressed by 12.5% of the respondents. Eleven of the respondents representing 22.9% mentioned other as factors influencing brown envelope journalism.

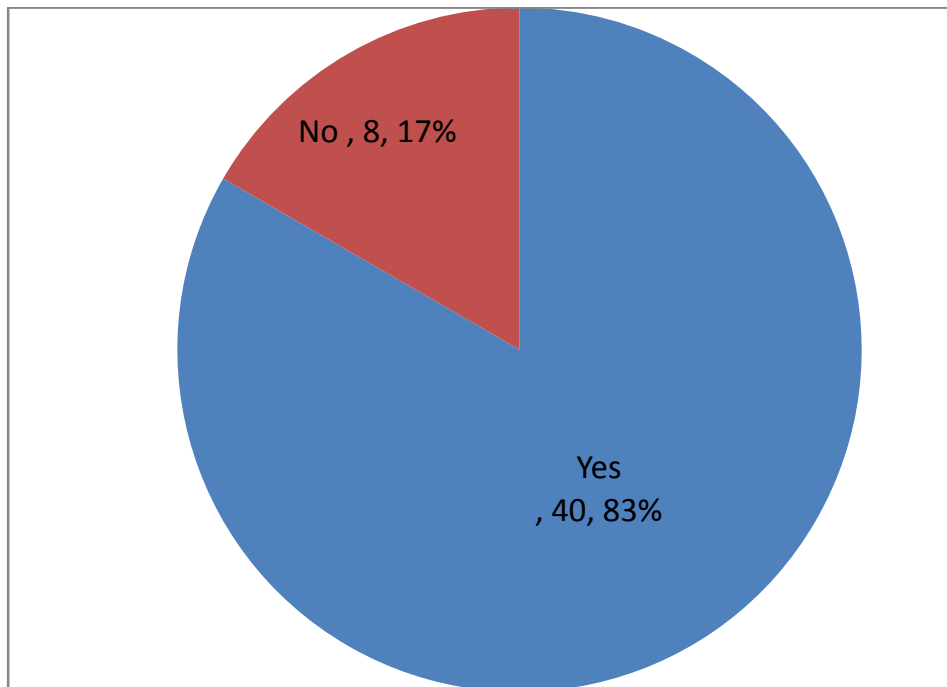
**Figure 4.6: determinant of brown envelope journalism**



These observations were confirmed by the income levels the respondents indicated that they earned. The salary levels of Ghanaian journalists in general are low and therefore they may tend to depend on ‘soli’ to supplement their income. This assertion is confirmed by the fact that 83% of the respondents have taken ‘soli’ before. Figure 4.8 shows the detail.

The situation is compounded as the General Manager of Fox FM, also a lecturer, George Arthur observed “*Media owners when fixing remunerations take into account Soli so it has become a factor in salary fixation. It has become part and parcel of our daily activities*”.

**Figure 4.7: Proportion of respondents who have taken ‘soli’ before**



#### 4.4 THE INFLUENCE OF BROWN ENVELOPE JOURNALISM ON GOOD ETHICAL JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE

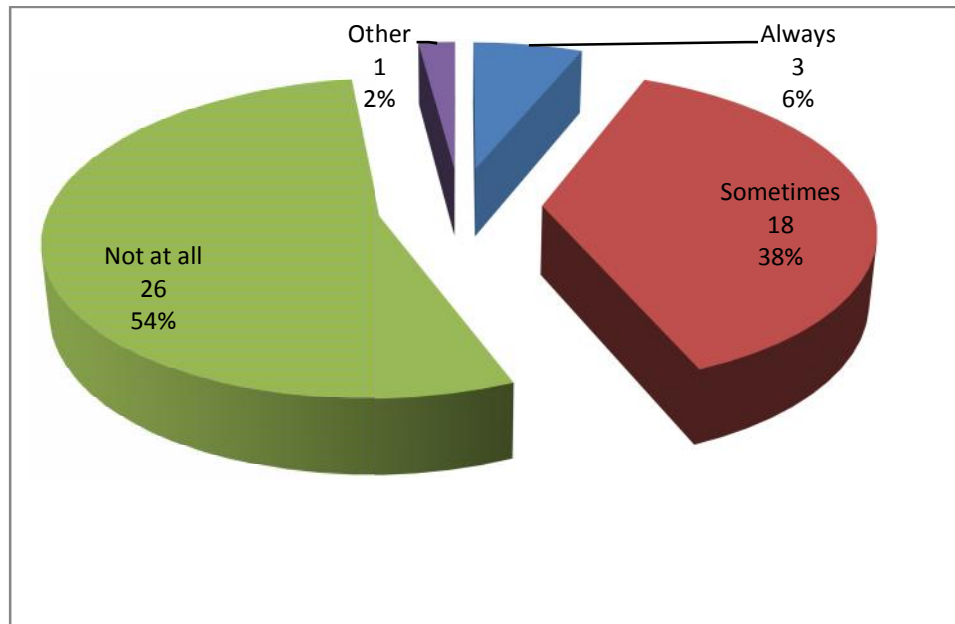
To ascertain whether brown envelope journalism influence good ethical journalistic practices, respondents were asked to express their opinion on the assertion that ‘soli’ is a bribe. Table 4.6 presents the result in detail. 12.5% agreed that soli is a form of bribe. However, more than half of the respondents, 21 representing 43.8% indicated that they disagree that soli is a form of bribe. About 29.2% of the respondents strongly disagree soli is a form of bribe. Seven, 14.6% of the respondents were not sure whether soli is a bribe or not.

**Table 4.7: Consideration of ‘Soli’ as a bribe**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	4	8.3
Agree	2	4.2
Not sure	7	14.6
Disagree	21	43.8
Strongly Disagree	14	29.2
Total	48	100.0

On whether soli influences news reportage and by extension good ethical journalistic practice, 18 (38%) of the respondents observed that soli sometimes does that. Whereas 6% of the respondents believes soli always affects good ethical journalistic practice, majority of the respondents, 54% opined that soli does not in any way influence good ethical journalistic practice. Figure 4.9 shows the result in detail.

**Figure 4.8: Extent to which soli influences reportage**



An in-depth interview with some senior journalists at Ghana News Agency, GJA secretariat, Kapital radio confirmed the assertions given by 44% of the respondents that at least soli does influence reportage in some form. As noted by the Ashanti Regional chairman of GJA, Nana Yaw Osei, also a legal practitioner:

*“The influence can only be negative. Because once brown envelope is taken, what good can come out of a reporter? What I mean is that the reporter will only do the bidding of the one who is asking for his help and once that is done, there will be no fairness and all those ground rules in news reporting will be missing. And you know the implication of bad stories on communities”.*

Another senior journalist narrated that *“exactly, there is something called motivation. As soon as money changes hands before a service is rendered, it motivates the person to bring the best out of him in favour of the giver.*

He said even if the news source assures a journalist to do the story with a promise to see the journalist after its publication, it is just as good as taking the money before rendering the story.

#### **4.5 CATEGORIES OF JOURNALISTS INVOLVED IN THE BROWN ENVELOPE JOURNALISM PRACTICE**

Table 4.7 presents a cross tabulation of the categories of journalists involved in the brown envelope journalism practice. According to table 4.7, 29 out of 40 respondents who indicated that they have taken soli before are reporters while six are newscaster and five are editors. Out of 36 respondents who are reporters, 29 representing 80.6% have taken soli before. All the six newscaster respondents indicated that they have taken soli before. Five out of six editors representing 83.3% have taken soli before. From the result one may conclude that reporters, newscasters and editors are all part of the categories of journalists involved in brown envelope journalism practice. This observation was confirmed by a senior journalist with Ghanaian Times. He indicated that

*“all the categories, editors, reporters and the likes are involved but I cannot blame one side”.*

**Table 4.8: Cross tabulation of categories of journalists involved in the brown envelope journalism practice**

			Have you ever taken Soli?		Total
			Yes	No	
Employment position	Reporter	Count	29	7	36
		%within employment position	80.6%	19.4%	100.0%
	Newscaster	Count	6	0	6
		%within employment position	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Editor	Count	5	1	6
		%within employment position	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
Total	<b>Count</b>		40	8	48
	%within employment position		83.3%	16.7%	100.0%



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter deals with the summary of the findings and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The chapter also outlines recommendations for further studies in the area of brown envelope journalism.

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

##### **Forms brown envelope journalism ('soli') takes**

The result of the study shows that brown envelope journalism ('soli') is a gift given to a journalist after he/she has covered an event or after publishing a story. However, the study revealed that the issues at stake are the time and purpose for which soli is given. Most respondents think that 'soli' is the money given to show appreciation for attending a media programme. Less than a third of the respondents share the view that 'soli' is money for transportation, about a tenth of the respondents believe it is money given to journalist to influence reportage. The study found that soli takes the form of money, car, scholarship, clothing, and other items.

##### **Factors that influence the practice of brown envelope journalism**

The outcome of the study shows that poor remuneration and bad morals (greed) on the part of some journalists are the reason for the practice of brown envelope journalism.

Another reason attributed to the practice of brown envelope journalism is a lack of sustainable income that fosters a sense of self respect and dignity.

About a third of the respondents stated that journalists are not paid salaries. Whilst some respondents cited other factors to brown envelope journalism others noted that most of the journalists are not paid on time.

### **The influence of brown envelope journalism on good ethical journalistic practice**

The findings of the study show that soli is not a bribe. This was confirmed by many of the respondents though a few of the respondents believe that it is a form of bribe.

Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents opined that Soli does not in any way influences good ethical journalistic practice but others observed that Soli sometimes influences news reportage and by extension good ethical journalistic practice. One senior journalist noted in an in-depth interview that

*“The influence can only be negative. Because once brown envelope is taken, what good can come out of a reporter? What I mean is that the reporter will only do the bidding of the one who is asking for his help and once that is done, there will be no fairness and all those ground rules in news reporting will be missing”.*

### **Categories of journalists involved in the brown envelope journalism practice**

The outcome of the study shows that reporters, news casters and editors are the categories of journalists who are involved in brown envelope journalism practice. The result found that 29 out of 40 respondents who have taken soli before are reporters while six are newscasters and five editors. Out of 36 respondents who are reporters, 29 representing 80.6% have taken soli before. Six newscasters have taken soli before. Five out of six editors representing 83.3% have taken soli before.

### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS**

The study explores whether or not brown envelope journalism undermines ethical reporting and impacts on the journalism practice. The findings of the study show that soli takes the form of money, scholarship, clothing, car and other items. The brown envelope ('soli') is a gift given to a journalist after he/she has covered an event or after publishing a story. However, the study revealed that the controversy surrounding Soli is not the giving out of money per se but when it is given and the purpose for which it is given. But all the editors, senior journalists and media house managers interviewed were of the opinion that brown envelopes exert some form of influence on ethical journalistic practice which usually is negative as the GJA chairman, Nana Yaw Osei noted

*“The influence can only be negative. Because once brown envelope is taken, what good can come out of a reporter?”*

The outcome of the study also revealed that poor remuneration and bad morals (greed) on the part of some journalists are the reason for the practice of the brown envelope journalism. Also, issues that some journalists are not paid salaries; journalists are paid meager salaries;

and journalists are not paid on time accounts for the brown envelope journalism. The outcome of the study shows that soli influences news reportage and by extension good ethical journalistic practice. Forty four percent of the respondents who are journalists observed that. Also the result shows that reporters, newscasters and editors are the categories of journalists involved in the brown envelope journalism practice.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that

- Media houses should resource journalists in the form of logistics such as adequate means of transportation for them to carry out their work effectively.
- Media houses should improve remuneration of journalists. The Ghana Journalists Association and National Media Commission should champion this. SSNIT should also check the media houses in the country whether they are paying their employees SSNIT contribution. This may control the canker to some extent.
- Media houses should institute stiff punishment to their employee who accepts soli.
- Journalism training institutions should instill moral principles in trainees. Ghana Journalists Association and National Media Commission should liaise with the various training institutions and also conduct regular research to ascertain the trend. Implementation of the recommendations from the research may minimize the practice
- The society should also desist from giving soli to journalists.
- The GJA should organize periodic in – service training and short professional courses for its members to improve their professional competence.

- The GJA should work to make the association attractive for practicing journalists to become members so that the body can regulate effectively the activities of its members by its code of ethics.

The following recommendations are also important with regards to future research in the area of brown envelope journalism:

- Further research into this topic in particular in other parts of the country be conducted to ascertain whether the finding of this study is on country specific or not.
- Repeated studies need to be conducted with more sample size probably across the country to further confirm whether brown envelope journalism undermines ethical reporting.

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## **APPENDIX I**

Appendix: semi-structured questions for in-depth interview with media experts.

1. In your opinion what is Soli?
2. Which category of journalists takes Soli?
3. What form does Soli take?
4. What factors influence Soli in journalism practice?
5. In your opinion, does Soli affect ethical journalistic practice?
6. In what ways can Soli be minimized if not eradicated?

Appendix: Questionnaire for data collection.

The categories of respondents to questionnaires and interviewees from the various media houses used for this study.

Media House	Category of respondents
Daily Graphic	reporter
Ghana News Agency	editor, reporter
Daily Guide	reporter
Ghanaian Chronicle	editor, reporter
Ghanaian Times	editor, reporter
Ghana Broadcasting corporation	reporter, newscaster
Otech FM	reporter, newscaster
Fox FM	manager, reporter
Kapital Radio	editor, reporter
Luv FM	editor, reporter
Kessben FM	editor, reporter,
Hello FM	editor, reporter
Mercury FM	editor, reporter, newscaster
Angel FM	reporter, newscaster