The 'brown envelop' and media practice in Ghana: a socio-cultural perspective

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Abstract

The brown envelop phenomenon (soli) continues to plague media practice in Africa in general and Ghana in particular despite high standards guiding journalism practice. Income levels and education are noted to have contributed to this trend. This study sought to unravel the factors accounting for the phenomenon and to determine their influence on media practice in Ghana. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were administered to forty eight media people. Irrespective of educational background and professional membership, over 80 per cent of journalists still took 'soli' and did not necessarily associate it with bribery. The study also found that income influences the acceptance of soli but that paradoxically respondents, except editors, indicate soli does not influence journalistic output. The study discovered that soli has become inextricably intertwined with the culture of media practice in Ghana. While the findings are limited to the views of these journalists, the study has implications for the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and the National Media Commission (NMC). It recommends that they take a look at the practical internalization of their code of ethics and guidelines so it becomes an acceptable norm of practice for the media.

Keywords: brown envelop, media practice, bribery, soli, culture

Introduction

Globally, the media profession requires journalists who are ethically and morally strong to refuse bribes in order to serve the good of their peoples in that a free and vibrant press is central to the expression of civil society and the processes of

good governance (Vaidya 2008). According to Transparency International (2013), there is broad consensus that a free press helps minimize corruption. They help improve citizens' accessibility to information which in turn makes it more difficult for politicians and public servants to get away with corrupt behaviours (Transparency International, 2013). The media are often referred to as the fourth arm of government as they are to work tirelessly to hold politicians to fiscal accountability and professional integrity (Hasty 2005). Article 162 clause six of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana enjoins the media to "uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people of Ghana".

However, in Africa, the realities of the daily journalistic practices put the media on a collision course with the state and society as well as with the public and the private sphere (Hasty, 2005). According to Ronning (2009), it appears corruption is imbibed in the daily life of many people in a number of African societies. This course often involves informal exchanges of money, bribes, favours and information which have been institutionalized informally as part of the culture of many organizations, in some cases, even determining interpersonal relationships (Ronning, 2009; Lodamo&Terje, 2010, Oshunkeye 2011; Mpagaze 2010). In Ghana, the scale of these informal exchanges could be as modest as taxi fares or drinks to large payoffs (Hasty, 2005). In journalism, these 'informal exchanges' are often referred to as the 'brown envelop', otherwise referred to as 'soli' in local Ghanaian parlance. Although, the meaning of the brown envelop might vary contextually, it is often used to connote the;

> little brown envelop delivered confidentially by a source to a reporter on a personal level denoting an informal contract between the source and the reporter whereby both parties have certain obligations… in the case of the reporter to cover the story in a positive and uncritical manner (and jeopardize journalistic or editorial independence) … or to kill a story. In the latter instance, the amount is quite high and it is tantamount to bribery (Skjerdal, 2010:369).

Lengel (2010), Hasty (2005) and Sanders (2003) assert that even small gifts given to journalists in the course of covering events can be categorized as bribery, thus criminalising the giving and the taking. These suggest that the journalist may be serving his own interest as well as that of the public's (Hulteng, 1976). Such dual service is impossible and inevitably leads to conflicts of interest that have plagued news media for generations. Sanders (2003) believe, in many cases, self-interest wins. However, Diedong (2006) suggests that something is fundamentally wrong with journalism's core values if journalists give their best when they receive financial and material benefits. At times the reality is that selfish agenda (or corrupt behavior) 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). Former president of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills in February 2012 during his State of the Nation's address alluded to a credibility crisis in the Ghanaian media when he stated that;

polarized or not; aligned or not; biased or not; the Ghanaian media has a responsibility to work to preserve Ghana's democracy. Speaking for myself, I have confidence in the ability of my brothers and sisters in the media to rise to the occasion. On the perception of polarization, alignment and bias, however, the media has to speak for itself through its deeds.

The Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), a local chapter of the Transparency International affirmed a credibility crisis within the Ghanaian media when it ranked the media as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country (Owusu, 2012: 12). Then vice president of Ghana, John DramaniMahama surmised that

> A cursory look at our media would seem like we are at war. Newspapers and radio stations are lined up in the political trenches with their political allies or paymasters. Throwing printed and verbal grenades and taking pot shots at the 'enemy lines', each side trying to outdo each other in inflicting maximum damage on the perceived 'enemies'.

In Ghana, the National Media Commission (NMC) urges media practitioners to avoid any action that could endanger their "integrity, judgment or the reputation of their organizations" through actions such as bluntly refusing to accept bribes and other inducement (NMC, 2008: 6). Media practitioners are also enjoined specifically to desist from accepting or soliciting for gifts and favours from political parties and presidential candidates (NMC 2008: 8).

Owusu (2012) investigated how unethical practices of media personnel undermine progress of the profession. Owusu (2012) examines the extent, nature and scale of unethical practices by looking at the factors that contribute to making the media engage in what the public perceive as unethical practices. He interrogated three journalistic standards namely; objectivity, cross-checking of facts and separating facts from comments. He finds that the media are not objective when they are carrying stories that do not favour these political elites and their parties and that some media personnel often give opinionated comments and they appear to work to favour various political parties and politicians with powerful political connections and interests instead of working for the interest of citizens (Owusu 2012:71). Owusu attributes this situation to the structure of ownership of the media, considering that many of them are owned by political elites and that it contributes to the media willfully violating the code of ethics and practice of journalism. These political and economic dynamics have marred the image and practice of journalism in Ghana.

Lodamo's (2008) study on "Freebies and Brown Envelope in Ethiopian broadcast media" prescribes a proper management of media houses as antidote to minimizing the malaise. Additionally Kasoma (2009 in Skerdjal 2010:368), in a study on the impact of Brown Envelop Journalism on Journalistic Practice in Zambia and Ghana, found that the practice was commonplace in the two countries. However, although the journalists had reservations about the impact it had on objectivity, they still saw the practice as normal.

He concluded that journalists' meagre salaries partly contributed to the high prevalence of brown envelope journalism. Nwabueze (2010) indicated that the practice of accepting gratifications popularly referred to as the brown envelope has created a perennial credibility problem for the journalism profession in Nigeria. Nwabueze's (2010) study showed that poor remuneration and the ethical orientation of journalists were the basic reasons for acceptance of brown envelopes and that most of the journalists saw nothing wrong with the practice.

This study looks at 'informal exchanges' or the brown envelop after Hasty's (2005) and Kasoma's (2009) studies on the brown envelop phenomenon in Ghana. It seeks to find out whether perceptions of journalists have changed over time with training and seeks to determine the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence the perpetuity of the practice. The study thus seeks to fill the gap identified by Skjerdal (2010) in which he recommends a more thorough study of the practice. The study addresses this gap by employing interviews to derive detailed explication of the phenomenon. It also examines specifically the prevalence of the brown envelop phenomenon, the socio-cultural factors influencing the practice and how these impact on journalism in Ghana.

Theoretical Considerations

The study is hinged on the Organizational Culture Theory of Corruption (De Graaf, 2008) and the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press. Organizational culture is defined as a set of frequently unstated tenets that members of an organization have and share in common (N'gang'a&Nyongesa 2012: 211). This definition is premised on the notion of beliefs and values. Beliefs are presuppositions about reality that are often made alive by experience. Values are about ideals that individuals and organizations yearn for and consequently work towards achieving. The effective interplay and prudent communication of beliefs and values in an organization create an organizational or corporate culture. According to Robbins (1986 in N'gang'a&Nyongesa 2012:211), organizational culture is a "relatively uniform perception of an organization, it has common characteristics, it is descriptive, it can distinguish one organization from another and it integrates individuals, groups and organization system variables". Thus organizational culture constitutes a predictable set of characteristics that epitomize the uniqueness of one organization, differentiating it from others. Organizational culture is marked by a specific set of values and norms that the individuals within an organization share, that dictate the way they communicate with each other and with other stakeholders outside the organization. Organizational values are conceptions of the type of goals members within the organization should pursue and ideas about appropriate types of goals that members within an organization often aspire to. They encapsulate the norms, guidelines or expectations that prescribe acceptable kinds of behaviour by members in particular situations. Hofstede (1998 in N'gang'a&Nyongesa 2012: 212) explains organizational culture as a mental phenomenon that manifests as the "collective programming of the mind". Thus organizational culture is more akin to the dynamics of the mindset or the manner in which a group of people have programmed their minds with regards to particular issues. In a study on organizational culture by Gordon and Christensen (1993 in N'gang'a&Nyongesa 2012:2), they found that industry served in tangible ways as a link between corporate culture and performance. However, some scholars assert that there

might be aspects of a culture that may be highly effective in one setting but may not be as effective in another setting. Consequently, although the brown envelop phenomenon might not be a canker in the advanced or developed countries, in developing economies, it is a menace to high journalistic standards. Deriving from this premise, the study builds on the concept of organizational culture by examining the Organizational Culture of corruption. The Organizational Culture Theory of Corruption attributes the causes of corruption largely to the culture and structure of the organization within which the agent is working. It goes beyond the micro level of individual corrupt agents to the meso level of their respective organizations (where an organization refers to a collective way of thinking, feeling and doing). This explication ties in perfectly with Hofstede's earlier linkage to organizational culture being a mental phenomenon. It traces a causal path as in a certain group culture (conditions) leading to a certain mental state that facilitates corrupt behaviour. Punch for instance claims that

…when we are talking about corruption…we are no longer dealing with individuals seeking ely personal gain but with group behavior rooted in established arrangements and /or treme practices that have to be located within the structures and culture of the … ganization (2000:304).

Additionally, this 'group culture' of giving and taking brown envelopes (soli) might explain why hough some journalists in Nigeria and Zambia perceive the practice as likely to affect their objectivity doing stories, they still found nothing wrong with the practice. The Organizational Culture Theory of rruption indicates that what leads public officials to act corruptly is when there is a failure in the oper machinery" of government (leadership) by creating a conducive environment for corrupt acts to ter within that context. The concept of 'organization' could refer to the way of thinking and acting by e media such as pertains within the Ghanaian culture, an arena where people are permitted to show atitude by offering gifts in exchange for or to solicit certain favours. The group culture within the media ganization and that of Ghana with regards to the taking and giving of gifts seem to superimpose article ee of the GJA Code of ethics on professional integrity. The code of ethics states that "a journalist uld not accept bribes or any form of inducement to influence the performance of his or her ofessional duties." However participants at the World Journalism Education Conference in ahamstown, South Africa (2010) contested that;

> bringing ethics into practice is a complex process that has to do with moral fitness and the politico-economic context in which journalism is practiced. The application of moral philosophies is context specific. It involves considerations such as how applicable moral philosophies are and when to apply them. Ethical questions tie into the core of the practice of journalism itself. After all, journalists must constantly evaluate what material should be published and what material should not.

The issue of the practicalisation of ethics from the background of appealing to the moral conscience and considering the political as well as economic circumstances of the environment within which the journalist operates, are the core issues underpinning the variables being interrogated in this study. The manner of enforcement of codes of

practice by the Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA) and the National Media Commission might be a contribution to this situation. Kunczik (2000 in Owusu 2012:22) however opines that the issue of which principles serve as the ultimate guide to the work of journalists can be best resolved by documents that stipulate the basic tenets of journalism, media codes, code of practice for editors among others but warns that there might not be any one single solution to the enigma of how codes of practice can influence behaviour. This thought is elucidated in Kasoma's (2009) study and Nwabueze's (2010) findings that the ethical orientation of journalists might partly account for the continuance of the practice. Implicit in the organizational theory of corruption is the contention that people in an organization act on the particular dynamics of the organization and these transcend the principles of the individuals. This concept is linked to a group of related theories that see corruption as contagious (Hulten 2002). One's failure to become corrupt then within an organization's culture might mean betraying the group (Punch, 2000). In terms of controlling corruption, there might be the need to influence the culture of an organization (cultural instruments) by for instance changing the organization's leadership and re-orienting the thoughts, feelings and actions of its members (Huberts, Kaptein&Lasthuizen 2004). Thus the culture of Ghanaians at the meso level and of journalists at the micro level pertaining to giving and taking gifts ought to be redefined and media personnel properly oriented.

The Social Responsibility Theory asserts that media must remain free of government control, but in exchange the media must serve the public. Social responsibility indicates that the government must not merely allow freedom; it must actively promote it (Siebert et al., 1956). The theorists also posit that when necessary, the government should act to protect the freedom of its citizens through legislation to forbid 'flagrant abuses'. According to Hutchins (1947), social responsibility should be reached by self-control, not by government intervention. Kunczik (2000 in Owusu 2012: 21) asserts that "many politicians want the press to be an instrument functioning as a government-controlled transmission belt, so to speak, helping to carry out important processes of social change." He advocates that the freedom and independence of the media ought not to be compromised but rather encouraged.The core assumptions of this theory are a hybrid between libertarian principles of freedom and practical admission of the need for some form of control of 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. It discourages acts and practices that have the tendency to make media personnel lose their sound judgment in making editorial decisions. Social responsibility calls for responsible and ethical industry operations (Baran, 2009). The media should reflect all shades of opinion to enable the public to make rational decisions. Media ethics codes universally condemn gifts, rewards and gratification and certainly bribes. But how can the media claim to be independent when journalists rely on news sources for financial inducements? (Bain, 2011).

Methodology

Unlike Owusu's (2012) study that focused largely on ethics in journalism juxtaposed three core journalism standards using content analysis of selected newspapers as sample, this study is more encompassing in that it seeks for information on both the dimension and the influence of the brown envelop phenomenon on media practice in Ghana. The study makes use of a triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. The researchers relied on self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews as the major data collection instruments for the study. Media editors and reporters in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city in the Ashanti Region constituted the population of this study. A sample size comprising 50 reporters were purposively selected from fifteen private and state-owned media houses. Five reporters were selected from each of the following 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, Otec FM, TV Africa. Eight editors were also interviewed on the subject. Altogether, 48 of them responded to the study. The non-probability sampling method was used to select reporters and editors based on their orientation to and knowledge of the brown envelop journalistic practice. The descriptive research design was used for this study because it allows for different data collection methods that include survey questionnaires, interviews and observation. An in-depth interview was conducted in addition to the Likert scale after which the recordings were transcribed for data analysis. The Predictive Analytical Software (PASW) was used to simplify bar-charts and analyze the data collected. The study used bar charts and frequency tables to graphically represent the findings. Access to the respondents and their permission was sought before the questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted and recorded.

Discussion and Analysis

The study achieved a response rate of 96% as 48 out of the 50 distributed questionnaires were returned. Eight of the respondents who were editors, were interviewed. Majority of the respondents, 40 representing 83%, were males while eight (17%) were females. The modal age group of the respondents was between twenty-five and thirty years. A third of the respondents fell within this age group. Some of the respondents (44.4%), have had university and post university education. Thirty eight per cent had had professional education at a journalism training institutions while only five per cent had been educated up to secondary school. A little over half of the respondents (52.1%) were single. Those married comprised 43.8% of the total number of respondents. Two of the respondents indicated that they were divorced. Fifty-two per cent indicated that they earned a monthly income of 250 GHC and below, while 48 % earned more. Majority of the respondents (81.2%) were practising journalism on a full time basis. Over two thirds of the respondents (75%) were reporters.

1. **Prevalence and nature of Soli within the research context**

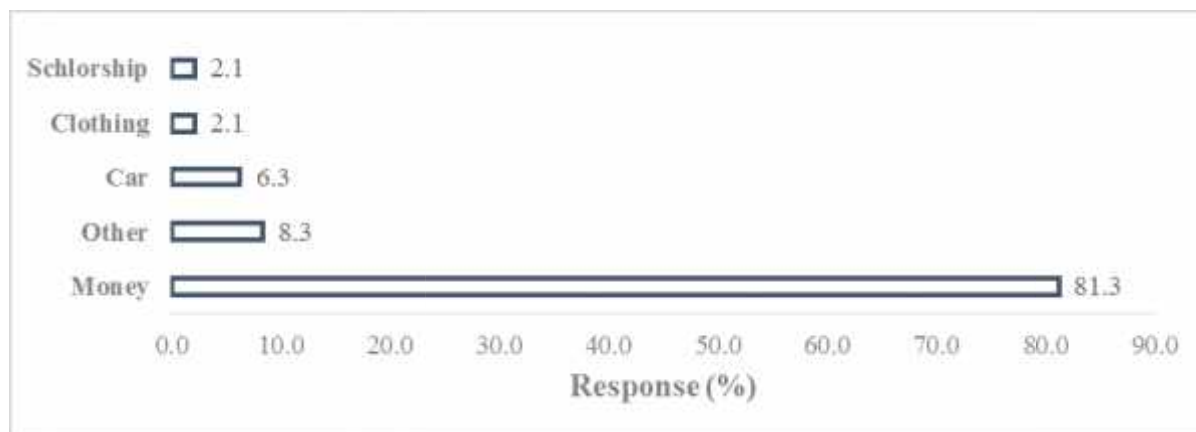**2.   What form does soli take?**

Figure 3: What form does soli take?

The first research question sought to find out the prevalence and nature of soli within the research context. The study found that over four out of every five journalists in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, accept the brown envelop. By implication, it can be said that the practice of taking soli is common among the journalists considered in the study (refer to Figure 2). Despite this finding, it is also seen that journalists who generally earn more are more likely to take soli to the extent that those with higher income levels might supplement their income through taking soli. Respondents indicate that the soli is often in the form of money and cars and rarely scholarships, whiles less than a fifth of the respondents indicate that soli takes other forms such as taxi fares, meals and so on. Over three quarters of the respondents indicated that they take soli for financial reasons such as no or meagre salaries and delayed payment of salaries among others.

3.   Journalists' perceptions of soli

Table 1: Perceptions on Soli

Items	%					
	SD	D	NS	A	SA	ASA
I consider Soli as a bribe	29.1	43.8	14.6	4.2	8.3	12.5
I do not see anything wrong with accepting Soli from news sources	4.2	12.4	10.4	54.2	18.8	73.0

Note: SD=strongly disagree; D=disagree; NS=not sure; A=agree; SA=strongly agree; ASA=sum of agree and strongly agree
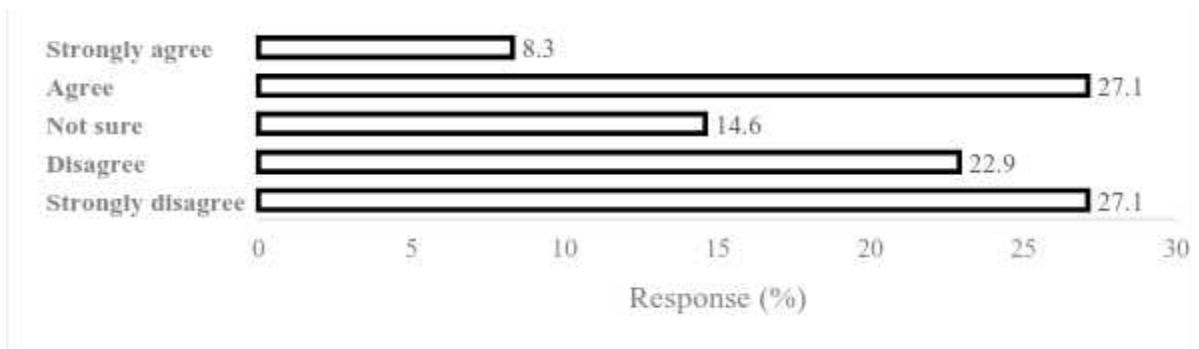
Perceived influence of soli on journalism

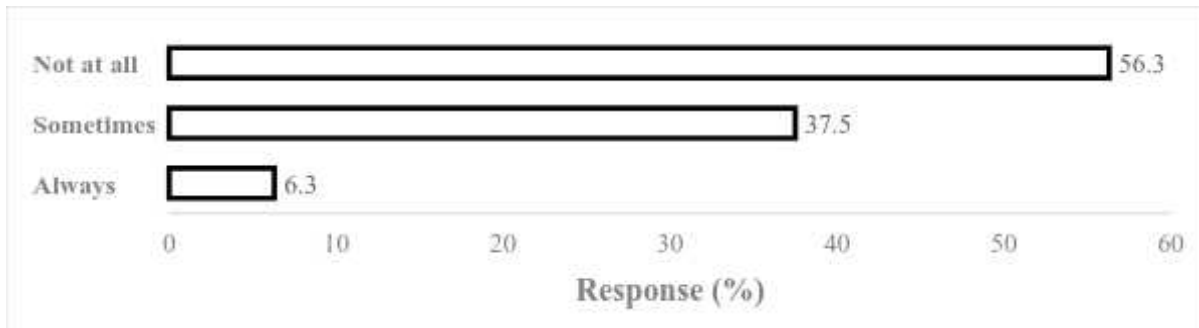**Figure 5**: Some event organizers/organizations influence me to take Soli

Figure 4: Does soli influence the way you write stories?

In terms of how journalists see the practice of the brown envelop, almost three out of every four journalists say they do not see anything wrong with taking brown envelops or soli from news sources. While over a third of the respondents indicate that soli influences journalism practice, over half of them feel it does not influence them whiles a little over a fourth are not sure. The data is corroborated with the response to the next question in figure four above where over half of the respondents say soli does not influence the way they write stories in any way, over a third say sometimes it does and

a less than a tenth say it always influences them. A cross tabulation of the journalist's background characteristics as against the acceptance of soli reveals that soli does not significantly influence journalists' perception on whether accepting soli is wrong. These findings suggest that the journalists who participated in the study generally have similar perceptions on viewing soli as not being wrong.

The fact that one out of every two of the respondents is a GJA member and over 80% of them have had university education or professional training, and still a majority (72.9%) of the respondents say soli is not a bribe is an issue that should be of some concern to the GJA and indeed to other media institutions. This is because the GJA is supposed to uphold the journalistic values of the profession and ensure that members adhered to its tenets. This is against the background that the literature has asserted that soli or any form of informal exchange in the form of gifts, money and other rewards given to journalists constitutes corrupt behaviour. Skjerdal (2010), Lengel (2010), Hasty (2005) and Sanders (2003) echo that "even small gifts from state officials to journalists are intended to exercise influence; …they can be technically defined as bribes in the professional sense, criminalising the giving and the taking." Punch says that

> "…when we are talking about corruption…we are no longer dealing with individuals seeking solely personal gain but with group behavior rooted in established arrangements and /or extreme practices that have to be located within the structures and culture of the … organization" (2000:304).

From this perspective then, it could be argued that 'soli' appears to have been institutionalized and accepted as part of journalists' culture and so most journalists find nothing wrong with the practice. This finding corroborates that of Ronning's (2009) study that contextualizes corruption as interwoven with the fabric of society. The present finding is also incongruent with the social responsibility role of journalists that enjoins them to adhere to the highest journalistic standards and to reject bribes in tandem with the GJA's code of ethics. This situation calls for 're-orienting the thoughts, feelings and actions of its members' by the GJA (Huberts, Kaptein et. al 2004).

On the factors contributing to the 'soli' phenomenon, the study found that the level of income also largely accounted for the preponderance of 'soli.' About 77%, comprising more than two-thirds of the respondents said their incomes were low and inadequate or they were not paid on time or not paid at all. A senior journalist, also a member of the GJA, during the interview indicated that

> *"if someone is paid GH200 and this person covers a story and is given GH50 for a story in just about two 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 journalist said;

> "*But when you earn a 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*".

The General Manager of another radio station also revealed: *"some 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"*.

This is a disturbing phenomenon. However, it appears that it is a continental challenge as the studies cited in the literature all mention income as a contributory factor to the soli issue in Africa and in Ghana.

On whether the brown envelop influences journalistic practices, over half of the respondents (54.2%) said soli does not influence them as they do their stories, whiles over 40% said soli influences them. This is in light of the fact that over two thirds of the reporters take soli, compared to just over a tenth of the newscastors and editors who admit to taking soli. This finding is inconsistent with one of the tenets of the Social Responsibility Theory that states that the media must "accept and fulfill certain obligations to society and meet these obligations by setting high standards of professionalism, truth, accuracy and objectivity" (Baran, 2009: 466). It is difficult to conceive how the acceptance of soli can promote the above standards.

Others observed that soli sometimes influences news reportage and by extension, 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".

An editor with the TV Africa noted that it is highly likely that once soli is taken ethical standards are likely to be compromised. He stated

> "*Of course if you have a scoop and you are offered a tempting sum of money to kill the story, you are likely to do that unless the nature of the story is such that if it is not published it is going to greatly affect the general good of the entire country. Frankly, some soli' can compromise the angle to a story or sometimes, even, put the story into a perpetual coma*".

This finding is buttressed by a journalist who is a member of the GJA that;

> *the influence can only be negative. Because once a 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.

The Ashanti Regional Chairman of the Ghana Journalists' Association says soli influences the angle of coverage of a news story.
We are humans and we cannot be hypocritical about it. Sometimes you are tempted to be influenced especially when you take an offer before the story is done. You think that you are committed to somebody because you have taken an offer from the person.

Thus even though the quantitative data seems not to suggests that soli influences journalists in the performance of their duties, the qualitative data is explicit and indicates that it does. What lends credence to this fact is the source of the information, namely top ranking media personnel such as editors and station managers.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The major limitation of the study is the sample size which makes it difficult to generalize to the wider population. The limited sample size is attributed mainly to journalists' hesitation in taking part in the study.This affected the chances of detecting significance results concerning whether (or not) journalists' background characteristics influenced soli practices. For example, chi square test is less likely to identify significance difference across groups when cells have counts less than five. In this light, it is suggested that future researchers make efforts to include an adequate number of journalists in their sample. However, the findings of the study have been illuminating in that it has established the informal institutionalization of the brown envelop phenomenon as part of the media culture in Ghana. The finding of this study appears to be in tandem withSHofstede's (1998) statement where he asserts that organizational culture is a "collective programming of the mind". Almost eighty percent of respondents in this study seem to see nothing wrong with the brown envelop phenomenon and more importantly its influence on media practice in Ghana. The ethical maze that soli presents to media practice in Ghana is exacerbated when considered against the background of Punczik's (2000) assertion that there might not be any one single solution to resolving the socio-cultural effects of the brown envelop phenomenon or soli on media practice. However, this study takes the position that a vigorous educational crusade can be embarked upon by the National Media Commission, the Ghana Journalists' Association and associated groups as a preliminary step in curbing this menace. The qualitative views of the editors and programmes managers at least offer a glimmer of hope that when the malaise in tackled with the support of senior media managers, there could be a cure. In as much as morality and the political as well as economic underpinnings at work in a society where the culture of informal exchanges is dominant, this study believes that consistent education of media personnel over an extended period of time, especially when reinforced by their own kith and kin (media owners, editors,

programmemanagers and other senior media personnel), would eventually snuff out the brown envelop practice in Ghanaian media.

In sum, the study explored whether or not brown envelope journalism undermined ethical news reporting and impacted on the journalism practice. The findings of the study show that soli takes the form of money, scholarship, clothing, car and other items. The controversy lays in the fact that soli or the gift given to a journalist to appreciate him or her for covering an event is perceived as an informal exchange and a bribe. And for that matter, it constitutes corruption (Hasty 2005, Skjerdal, 2010). However, the overwhelming (83%) acceptance of the phenomenon by most respondents and its implications on journalism practice coupled with the fact that most of the respondents are highly educated and are GJA members; suggest the practice is likely to be part of journalism culture in Ghana. Therefore the study recommends that the GJA, the NMC and other journalism training institutions as well as media employers and editors embark on a re-orientation of their members regarding the practice, even as the latter strive to improve the remuneration of journalists. Future researchers could investigate the issue from the perspective of the NMC, the GJA as well as from organizations and news sources.

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