

**'FREEBIES' AND 'BROWN ENVELOPES'
IN ETHIOPIAN BROADCAST MEDIA**

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Acronyms

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation
EEPCO – Ethiopian Electric and Power Corporation
ERTA – Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency
IRIN – United Nations News Agency
NIUJ – National Institute of journalists’ Union
UNMEE – United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

As in other media cultures, the effectiveness and accountability of journalists in Ethiopia depends on understanding and following professional codes of conduct/ethics. This research examines to what extent “freebies” and “brown envelopes” – media bribes – dominate the Ethiopian broadcast media. Data was collected by triangulation of research methods, with more qualitative than quantitative research. The study found bribery widespread among journalists in the state-owned Ethiopian Radio and TV Agency (ERTA), often attributed to low salaries and lack of ethical training. This research also discusses how bribes affect reporting and why sources pressure journalists to accept bribes. The study also explores how ERTA journalists boast about “buche” – their particular slang for bribery – and openly share information about a practice that would be considered unethical in international media outlets. Arguably, without a change of journalists’ attitudes, ERTA’s public credibility and professional integrity will be undermined.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the Scene

As a profession that serves the interests of the public, journalism has vast responsibilities. Everyday, journalists face challenges that test their ethical values and responsibility to ‘truth-telling’. Despite professional codes of ethics, journalists may violate the rules by for instance accepting bribes while covering news or features. This, in some cases, lowers the journalists’ credibility and undermines a professional career.

Journalists may use the media for their personal ends or for greater social good to serve the public. As human needs are insatiable, there are chances where some may sacrifice the public’s interest for their selfish motives ignoring the social responsibility. Such misbehavior damages journalists’ and the profession’s integrity and reputation.

This research paper tries to understand the relevance and impact of gifts and bribes – euphemistically known as “freebies” and “brown envelopes” – in the Ethiopian Television and Ethiopian Radio Agency (ERTA). Money and favors can flow two ways, from sources to journalists in the hopes of attracting or shaping coverage and from journalists to sources in the hopes of getting information. Such reporting may color news content or brighten stories with hidden agendas.

In guiding and giving insights about their career, ethical codes have great values. In this respect, although ERTA was established in 1963, it has no written ethical code for journalists to refer to. However, its editorial policy, in force as of June 2, 2004, includes some references to ethical behavior, which are very brief. ERTA journalists and stakeholders, however, had no chance to give input into the editorial policy and do not necessarily know its content or relevance.

Similarly, human power management and training are very important to avoid ethical pitfalls like brown envelopes and freebies. In this regard, ERTA seems to have low attention irrespective of its 45 years service. As Leykun Berhanu (1997) notes, “... within the Ethiopian Television servic[e], the knowledge of manpower planning is at lower level” (p. 304) and sees lack of motivation and encouragement. ERTA, he adds, has also ignored audience research that

may highlight its shortcomings. So unmotivated journalists, if also underpaid, may be involved in illicit bribes.

In theory, all journalists should work for the public interest, not for their own. But journalists who take bribes, including some at ERTA, may produce stories that fellow journalists and the audience identify as paid for. Without a strict ethical code, journalists may also contract airtime for a personal agenda. To improve conditions, ERTA needs to train its journalists in ethical behavior in order to maintain the public interest and trust. A fair salary will also help to make journalists become watchdogs of the public interest.

1.2. Problem Statement

Some newsrooms have arguably moved from being simply biased in reporting to being straightforward corruption. Media bias violates fundamental journalistic standards that undermine public trust. Furthermore, media corruption involves criminal manipulation of the public and/or media organization. Media corruption is a problem in most African countries including Ethiopia.

Among media corruptions, the problem of brown envelopes and freebies inevitably exists as news sources compete for popularity, using whatever power they have, including financial might. There are cases where sources bribe journalists in order to get access to and control of the news content. This leads us to question whether the media are actually serving the interest of the public. Unless their service for the public is the highest priority, they remain unreliable sources of information. Rather they become powerful tools for deception and manipulation. Bribing for information leads journalists to distort and fabricate stories. Facts are sacrificed for personal gain, or sometimes journalists even conspire with elements of society to sabotage rivals and control the audience.

As indicated above, among the types of corruption, media corruption needs more attention because the role of the media in promoting good governance and development is immense. Unless media are managed properly, struggles against corruption and attempts to bring development would be futile endeavors. Absence of trained media personnel and management is another problem imposed in the fight against media corruption. This problem may also be central in the case of ERTA, which is believed to contribute for the interest of the Ethiopian public.

Throughout Africa, journalists face challenges due to low salaries and training and high occupational dissatisfaction and mobility (BBC World Service Trust, 2006). Such problems are also prevalent in ERTA, where little or no training equips the managers or the staff to understand or apply ethical standards and thus may lead to biased or corrupt coverage. Unclear policies, lack of codes of conduct, the absence of a responsible internal reporting system and the absence of a professional media atmosphere may allow media corruption to grow, throughout Africa and Ethiopia. Though media are supposed to fight corruption, in some cases they are the cause of corruption. Sometimes journalists exploit media's power to sustain or enrich themselves. This, of course, affects the credibility of their reporting.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research into the impact of bribes on the media may be the first of its kind in Ethiopia. It may lead to more research in journalism ethics. It may also help media managers check how their journalists work and then put their broadcast stations on the right track by encouraging higher ethical standards. The research also offers insights for responsible journalists, non-governmental organizations and business institutions, perhaps triggering changes that can lead to better governance. In correcting the misbehavior, the research may contribute to an improvement of the profession's credibility.

1.4 Delimitation of the Study

This research focuses on brown envelopes and freebies given to journalists in state-owned media, specifically at the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency. It also tries to look at what factors contribute to these issues. The scope of the research includes ERTA journalists and media managers and some actors in non-governmental organizations. No reference is made to journalists working in private broadcasting because only two private FM stations began operating recently (2007) and do not yet broadcast programs in full. So, arguably, their exposure to media corruption is difficult to measure.

1.5 Initiating Research

This research began with observation and close working at some media houses in Addis Ababa. Questions came quickly: Why should sources pay journalists who cover their day-to-day activity? Why do journalists accept payments just to do their jobs? Indeed, many journalists mentioned the financial benefits of reporting in the field or covering specific

governmental and nongovernmental organizations. They also disclosed exact amounts paid for news and/or programs.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

Corruption is an illicit act done underground. The undertakers want to remain unnoticed and tend not to admit the crime even if caught red-handed. This research is conducted using snowball sampling in which first contacts built up the next contacts. The researcher feels that many other resourceful people were not included because they fear exposing others or telling about their corrupt deeds. The researcher also feels interviewees may hold back the most important views suspecting that the researcher could expose their actual names breaking his promise. On the other hand, the researcher was also not able include views of private broadcast media journalists as the media are at infancy level.

1.7 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

- Is accepting brown envelopes and freebies a problem for the journalistic profession and truth telling in the Ethiopian broadcast media in general, and in ERTA in particular?
- What factors drive journalists to accept brown envelopes and freebies while covering news and programs?
- What effect does accepting brown envelopes and freebies have on fair reporting and the development of the profession for ERTA?

1.8 Goal and Objectives

Goal

This research study aims to contribute to better governance of Ethiopia's broadcast media in specific and to improve the country's media landscape in general.

Specific Objectives of the Study

This research will:

1. Examine problems that drive journalists to accept gifts, freebies and envelopes.
2. Show how 'freebies' and 'brown envelopes' affect fair and balanced reporting.
3. Explain how journalists in ERTA practice their journalistic responsibility and forward valuable comments for future improvements.

4. View Ethiopia's media landscape critically and identify if media corruption is actually ERTA journalists' problem.
5. Initiate further studies into media corruption, especially corruption related to freebies and bribes.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Bribery

Bribery is the act or practice of giving or accepting money or some other payment with the objective of corruptly influencing the judgment or action of another person.

Brown Envelope

The journalistic practice of receiving cash from persons or organizations to influence media content. The phrase entered journalism jargon in the late 1980s when a member of Britain's Parliament accepted a bribe from a Saudi businessman in a brown envelope.

Buche

An Amharic term used by Ethiopian journalists to refer to bribery during or after reporting.

Freebies

An offshoot, perhaps milder form, of bribery, where goods or services – not money – is exchanged.

Junkets

An offshoot, perhaps milder form of bribery, where a source covers a journalist's expenses like transportation or accommodations.

Perks

Another word for junkets, considered compensation for journalists' low pay.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF PERTINENT LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

Early in the 20th century, U.S. media practitioners started to talk not only about journalists' duties but also about their responsibilities. Later, as broadcast media emerged, the social responsibility theory of the media was introduced. In 1947, an independent commission convened in the United States to address the growing dissatisfaction of U.S. citizens with the so-called liberal media. In its report, the Robert M. Hutchins' Independent Commission on the Freedom of the Press first used the term "social responsibility." It concluded that media:

... must be accountable to society for meeting the public need and for maintaining the rights of citizens and the almost forgotten rights of speakers who have no press. It must know that its faults and errors have ceased to be private vagaries and have become public dangers..... Freedom of the press for the coming period can only continue as an accountable freedom. Its moral right will be conditioned on its acceptance of this accountability. (Quoted in Sanders, 2003, p.151)

This warning did not go unnoticed. Proponents of the social responsibility theory defended its roots in the unrestricted freedom of libertarian press theory. They also pointed out how the social responsibility theory, instead of emphasizing only freedoms, also stressed media's accountability to society. Under this theory, "both the press and its critics agree that the press should assume responsibility" to be accountable to the public and avoid abuse of their own power (Siebert et al. 1984, original edition 1957, p.84).

Such thinking, Ahuja (1996) says, leads inevitably to a regulatory system that watches the press and keeps it functioning properly - i.e. keeps it socially responsible (p.10). Some regulation, as in the early days of practicing journalism in the Western world, would inevitably be self-imposed, with media organizations 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). But when broadcast media started gaining national stature and policymakers recognized that mainstream media could significantly shape how citizens think, some external regulation also seemed likely (Siebert et al.1984; first version 1956, p. 84).

Media not only shape the public thinking but they are also among those institutions entrusted with protecting the public's interest. In doing so, the ethics of the media themselves must inevitably come under scrutiny (Tettey 2006, p.233). If media were to be watchdogs and monitor the misbehavior and irresponsible acts of others, their own behavior had to be able to endure inquiry. But at times, just like other monitoring institutions of society, media failed to perform, risked their own credibility, and compromised their own ability to serve as legitimate watchdogs (Tettey, 2006. p.233). Indeed, Tettey notes, media themselves may operate without principles even while claiming to be agents of accountability. As a result of such misbehavior, media self-interest and lack of social responsibility are now under inspection. As Hulteng (1976) observes, some media organizations are serving "two masters": the public's interest and the

journalist's self-interest. But such dual service is impossible, he says, and inevitably leads to conflicts of interest that have plagued news media for generations (p.33).

At least one conflict of interest involves journalists' acceptance of brown envelopes and freebies. According to Sanders (2003), these are forms of bribery that mark ethical pitfalls of responsible journalism. In the 17th and 18th centuries, bribery was commonplace in journalism, but since then it diminished or disappeared in such developed countries as Britain. However, the practice of brown envelopes and freebies has continued elsewhere, undermining trust in the journalists' work and contradicting the social responsibility of the journalists themselves. So, in many cases, self-interest wins. But, as Diedong (2006) suggests, something is fundamentally wrong with journalism's core values if journalists do their best only on condition that they receive financial and material benefits (p.10). As he explains:

At times the reality is that the 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 their status as the fourth estate of the realm. (Diedong 2006, p.11)

And, as Sanders suggests, accepting brown envelopes and practicing checkbook journalism has two devastating effects: They undermine the public's trust and the media's social responsibility. In the most ethical journalism, media practitioners would be socially responsible to the public, by – for example – representing citizens with no voice, and remain accountable to the public's interest without expecting special incentives.

2.2 Incentive-driven Journalism

The impact of media to positively or negatively affect society is a generally accepted fact. That is why Hassen (2007) writes, "... that journalists are powerful is a globally accepted fact. That must have been why the leader of the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte, preferred facing more soldiers to facing fewer journalists."

However, this being the fact, journalists in Africa work amid corruption that infiltrates their profession. As Kasoma notes:

It is said that the cancer of African journalism is corruption, particularly bribes. A bribe is a favor done or given to a journalist in order to influence him or her to report favorably or unfavorably or not to report at all. For a gift or favor to qualify as a bribe, the journalist should know and understand that it is intended to influence his or her journalistic professional work. (Kasoma 2000, p.96).

Many journalists in the continent, he says, are underpaid and susceptible to bribes, euphemistically called 'oiling hands' or 'brown envelopes'. Besides brown envelopes, Forbes (2005) also notes such journalistic ethical pitfalls as gifts, freebies and checkbook payouts. All these bring a devastating effect on press freedom, Kasoma says, because such bribes will prevent journalists from reporting objectively. Rather, they falsify information to please those who have bribed them. This makes, Forbes adds, journalists dependent on freebies and brown envelopes putting journalistic independence and fair reporting at stake.

Ethiopian journalists also work in an environment noted for corruption. Despite the country's establishment of a Federal Anti-corruption and Ethics Commission in 2001, as IRIN (UN News Agency) reports, corruption is increasing annually (IRIN News, 2003). In its most recent report, in 2003, the German-based Transparency International scored Ethiopia a 2.5 out of a possible 10 and placed it 92nd among 133 corrupt countries.

In 2006, The Economist examined such bribery in countries throughout Africa and throughout the world. Most media practitioners do not take bribes openly, the article noted. In most cases, they accept sealed envelopes, passing money from one person to another in ways not observable by others. So bribes are sealed in envelopes and thus become known, throughout the world, simply as 'envelopes'. (The Economist, Dec. 19, 2006). The 1980s payoff to a member of the British House of Commons gave the color of the envelope 'brown' in which he was bribed (Forbes, 2005, p.62).

A direct hand-over is common even where detection is unlikely. Some journalists may take money right from a bribe-payer's hands but most find some ways to hide the money from view. Besides accepting money and gifts for fair coverage, some journalists accept favors, gifts and other special considerations from vested interests or news sources. In this respect, sources with some agenda behind pay journalists to cover news or a program. This raises serious questions about journalists' objectivity (Retief, 2002). Day (2003) adds that accepting something of value raises a question about credibility and future independence, even if no favor is promised in return. This undermines journalists' primary duty to serve the interests of the public (p.211).

Some may see no problem in receiving small meals or drinks from news sources. Previous meals from news sources may not be problematic, but the reporter's professional detachment could be undermined over time (Day, 2003). Still Retief acknowledges that a meal may serve to build up a relationship with a source but it is advisable that the company of the reporter should pay the bill. He further quotes Russell Wiggins, former editor of *The Washington Post*, "It is as improper for a newspaperman to accept [...] cash considerations, gratitude or favors as it would be improper for a judge to accept such inducements in his domain (p.135)." So, Retief advises reporters to return gifts from sources.

A case study conducted by Diedong (2006) on Ghanaian journalistic practices showed that the public at times accuses journalists of being corrupt. As he indicates, it is difficult to prove the allegations when some cases of bribery and corruption involve journalists, and the Ghanaians usually think that there may be more hidden cases. In such cases, reporters may threaten to kill the stories they produce. Diedong says even the press protects corrupt reporters and such the practice has also taken varying names in different countries. As indicated below, media houses protect their corrupt reports so that the media outlets will not tarnish their names. In some case, reporters give names to brown envelopes they receive from sources.

Since the press is the gatekeeper, it is unthinkable that they want to tarnish their self-image by vigorously exposing corruption within their ranks. It is a common occurrence that many journalists, after covering an assignment, usually expect the organizers of the event to give them some money, popularly known as “soli”. (Diedong 2006, p. 11)

In the Asian media, including Japan and Korea, brown envelopes are well-known. Tom Brislin (1997) says this act, common with Japanese journalists, is called “omiyage”. He notes:

In Japanese journalism, however, these small payments, sometimes in the form of gifts such as duty-free liquor, are seen as maintaining balance and harmony in an exchange of value....

In collectivist Japan, however, release of information is individually rewarded what is called “red envelope” journalism, for the traditional color of the envelope that contains the reward. (Brislin, 1997)

In Seoul, the color of brown envelope journalism changes to *Ch’ongi*, meaning ‘white envelope journalism’. This is an institutionalized payoff system for journalists and is one of several concerns of Korean journalists (Brislin, 1997).

Journalists that accept bribes in Africa are quite common according to various reports. In Angola, for instance, printed stories are often the result of bribery and bribery is rampant. Mendes and Smith (2006) say the expansion of brown envelopes in Angola is the result of low standard of the life of journalists; they seek payments from sources to sustain their lives. Mendes and Smith report brown envelopes impact on fair reporting and journalistic accountability at very low levels. On another instance, *The Economist* disclosed that in Nigeria, one of the world’s most corrupt countries, journalists are given hundreds of dollars in brown envelopes “for expenses” simply to attend conferences (*The Economist*, December 19th 2006 Edition). In some countries, government agencies even allocate funds to be paid for journalists (The Asian News Media Daily, July 23, 2006).

Accepting gifts from news sources is another form of reporters’ corruption. Diedong (2006) adds that some journalists take “high gifts” from their sources. After accepting such gifts, they are not expected to write a fair, balanced, truthful and comprehensive report about the happening in which the organizers of the event may have some serious questions to answer. Diedong adds that this indicates the loose fiber of society in which journalistic practice is decaying.

Some media associations in Africa endorse strict codes of conduct banning bribery in media outlets. Among these, the Liberian Code of Ethics of the Press Union states,

The journalist should refuse and denounce all attempts at bribery and corruption. No journalist should receive or expect any benefit from the publication/broadcast or the suppression of any information or commentary. The journalist should avoid all affiliations with any individuals/groups whose company is likely to call his/her credibility to question. The journalist should put himself/herself above partisan and ideological cleavages in order to give greater prominence to norms and professional practices. (Liberian Code of Ethics of the Press Union, 1997)

Developed in 1992, the Ivorian Code of Conduct article 7 orders journalists to “Refuse any compensation in cash or kind for services rendered or expected, whatever the value or source of it. Refrain from using one’s quality as a journalist for personal gain.”

Envelopes are among the issues that erode and undermine the independence of reporting. Mendes and Smith (2006) list low wages, poor access to information, difficult working conditions and poor training as contributions to brown envelopes. Such conditions make “brown envelope journalism” widespread in Angola, where journalists routinely seek payments for coverage. Yet such corruption frustrates journalists who need to improve their journalistic standards. A Similar report identifies printed stories as the result of bribery, i.e. information provided to journalists to guarantee good exposure. In Angola, bribery is so commonplace that little or no separation is made between media and the state (Mendes and Smith, 2006).

Keeble (2001) notes that British journalists rarely enjoy a free foreign trip, hotel bookings, or theatre seats. Many continental media have banned freebies, with a few such as the *Independent Traveller* that allow such cases in Britain. In foreign media, journalists accept freebies, junkets and longer loan cars. Airlines like Virgin Airlines offer mobile phones and unlimited calls (p.41). Keeble appends that freebies are forms of bribes paid for publicity. Freebies accepted from sources must be declared and should not affect reporting as Wilson (1996) states:

Much of the time it [freebies] is harmless. Some of the time it fails the public because editorial scrutiny is relaxed. The proper journalistic stance is that, whatever facilities are provided, they will be declared, no conditions will be accepted, no editorial favor granted and the nature of coverage decided independently. (Wilson 1996, p.168)

The issue of accepting freebies, gifts and junkets raises serious questions about the journalist’s objectivity. Day (2003) notes that accepting even a simple gift of some kind may raise some moral questions about the journalist’s credibility and independence (p. 211). Others

go to the extent of rejecting repeated meals that may over time harm the reporter's credibility. When journalists are offered gifts and freebies, Retief advises the following:

The best thing when a potential news source sends you a gift is to return it promptly and politely. The bigger the gift, the more important this becomes. The fact is that gifts are regularly used to "buy" journalists, to make them soft, to try to ensure that the person or company who gave the gift gets the most favourable press possible. (Retief 2002, p. 135)

Still, freebies and envelopes are not the only types of journalistic practice hindrances in Africa. According to Akinfeleye (2005), 'cocktail journalism' engages 'gin and lime journalists' found at parties and clubs of Lagos, Abijan, Accra, Lome, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, etc. They also frequent marriage ceremonies, chieftaincy installations, house-warming parties, VIP lounges at international airports, celebrity birthday parties, etc., pretending they have been assigned to cover activities. These journalists do not write anything in their notebooks; they will hang around celebrities with glasses or alcohol. After being wined and dined, they return to the newsroom with colored news that did not happen. As Akinfeleye reports, these reporters lack surface credibility and have lost trends with their professional callings. They may also receive 'brown envelopes' at the parties in addition to dining and drinking (Akinfeleye 2005, p. 6).

2.3 Professional Codes of Conduct and Training

To rule out misbehavior in journalistic practices, many media organizations and individual media houses have designed their own codes of conduct. Many of these codes have clauses that ban or limit bribes and freebies. Journalists in the South African newspaper, *The Star* (Retief, 2002), for instance, are required to be free of obligation to news sources and special interests, including political parties. The Ethiopian Radio and TV Agency (ERTA) also puts restrictions on government media journalists not to accept any financial and/or any kind of gifts from news sources (ERTA Editorial Policy 2005, p.67). Some Ethiopian private newspapers also ban accepting bribes and freebies in their codes of conduct. *Fortune*, for instance, under the article of ethics says, "Gifts, favors, special treatment or privileges can compromise our integrity. Nothing of value should be accepted (p.3)." *Fortune* also has a specific article on gifts and states,

We accept no work-connected gifts of significant value. We do not accept free lodging, sample merchandise, special press rates or any other reduced rate or no-pay arrangements not available for the general public. Gifts of insignificant value – key chain, pencil holder, calendar, etc. that are produced and distributed to the general public as promotion – may be accepted (Fortune Code of Conduct 2003, p.5).

Similarly, *The Star's* (South Africa) ethical code states, "No journalist may accept any gift, favour, or special treatment (including free or reduced-rate travel) if it puts her or him under any obligation to the donor." Retief quotes the South African Union of Journalists' code of conduct which says that "Journalists shall not accept bribes or allow other inducements to influence the performance of their professional duties. Nor shall journalists should lend themselves to the distortion of advertising or other considerations" (p. 42). According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), "[An] Individual must not accept personal benefits, e.g. goods, discounts, services, cash, gratitude, or entertainments outside the moral scope of business hospitality, from organizations or people with whom they might have dealings with on the BBC's behalf." (*Producers' Guide*, 1996).

Similarly, *The Economist* lays down clear rules for its journalists. According to the magazine's code of conduct, "an envelope stuffed with cash [...] would be inappropriate. Any gift," says the policy, "must be consumable in a single day. So a bottle of wine is acceptable, a case of wine is not." Likewise, *The Guardian* of Britain (2007) in its editorial code has the following to say concerning freebies:

1. Staff should not use their position to obtain private benefits for themselves or others.
2. *The Guardian* and its staff will not allow any payment, gift or other advantage to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence. Any attempts to induce favourable editorial treatment through the offer of gifts or favors should be reported to the editor. Where relevant, *The Guardian* will disclose these payments, gifts or other advantages. [...]. (*The Guardian*, updated in April 2007)

Many African countries also have media regulations banning freebies and gifts. The Nigerian Press council, for instance, in its article 7(i) and (ii) states:

- i. A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribes, gratifications or patronage to suppress or publish information.
- ii. To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event. (Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, 1998)

The Professional Code of Ethics of Ethiopian Free Journalists' Association in its article 15 states that "... a journalist shall not degrade the profession by directly or indirectly accepting bribes, gifts or other benefits for the news, commentaries, programmes, photographs or films he has disseminated."

The above-mentioned countries are not alone in publishing codes of conduct for their journalists. The Ugandan code of ethics denounces journalists who solicit or accept bribes in an attempt to publish or suppress a story (Code of Ethics observed by National Institute of Journalists' Union, NIJU). Similarly, the Zambian Media Council (2004) in its code of ethics says journalists should regard as "grave professional offence" accepting of bribes to disseminate or suppress information.

Journalists act unethically in Africa not because they do not have ethical codes, but knowingly or unknowingly, they trespass the rules. The Malian Code of Conduct in article 7 commands, "A journalist, in all circumstances, shows his integrity by refusing all forms of illegitimate payment, direct or indirect. He/she must refuse any advantage linked to the publication or non-publication of a story" (December 1991).

One of the explanations for bribery and brown envelopes is lack of professional training. The absence of such training in Angola, for instance, has impacted the overall quality of journalism, especially to investigate the power of the state (Mendes and Smith, 2006). As Mendes and Smith state, lack of training has a negative implication on the professional accountability. Similarly, lack of training undermines journalists' ethical standards and drives them to take bribes, according to Diedong (2006). Diedong expresses concerns on low standards of journalism in Africa and supports the perception that respect for ethical standards in many parts of Africa is below the public's expectation.

Still, much of the bad journalism in Africa today has been blamed on the lack of professional training (Onandipe, 1998:263 and Nyamnjuh, 2005:95). Improved training for journalists is a major factor in shaping their professional outlook. To some extent family upbringing and religious influence also play a significant role in shaping their behavior (Diedong, p.14). Diedong notes that Ghanaian journalists need to improve their ethical conduct in order to report in a socially responsible manner. Proper training, effective implementation of code of ethics, and better newsroom practices are believed to help.

It is important to draw a clear line in the codes to stop journalists from committing bribery. A survey conducted and reported by Asian News Media Daily (July 23, 2006) says that even though journalistic codes of conduct prohibit journalists from accepting bribes and freebies, the belief of journalists' is diversified on what they believe is a bribe. The newspaper cites a survey which shows that 85 percent of 400 journalists surveyed believed accepting money from a

news source is not bribery. 65 percent agreed that receiving valuable goods such as cell phones and cameras is bribery, whereas 33 percent called travel costs covered by news sources bribery (Asian News Media Daily, July 23, 2006).

Many journalists perceive bribery selectively. They think it only occurs when a source deposits money into their bank account. There are media organizations which limit the amount that journalists can accept. The Guardian of Britain says, "Gifts other than those of an insignificant value (say, less than £25) should be politely returned or may be entered for the annual raffle of such items for charity, 'the sleaze raffle'" (*The Guardian's Editorial Code*, 2007). *The Asian News Media Daily* (July 2007), reporting on the survey research, says some media houses allow their reporters to accept souvenirs worth less than \$5.30 from news sources.

2.4 Low Salary – An Excuse for Brown Envelopes and Freebies

Writing from an American perspective, Gans (2003) explains that the salaries of journalists remain modest, even below that of government employees. Gans portrays journalists as "scribblers" in plays, novels and movies of the 1930s and 1940s and he says this shaped the image of the profession's past. Gans adds that until about half the last century, journalism was not a prestigious craft, and undoubtedly a significant number of journalists once came, like most Americans, from rural or working class homes. Likewise, Day (2003) comments on journalists' low salaries: "There was a time where reporters, who tended to be underpaid, less educated than they are now, and less attuned to the ethics of the profession, routinely accepted gifts from news sources." In fact, the salary scale has great impact on the working conditions of any profession. For instance, Chishimba and Chhay report that Zambian journalists say they cannot survive with \$70 dollars per month and must get additional money from workshops and press conferences. They add that journalists in Cambodia who work for domestic media receive bribes but foreign Cambodian correspondents do not. Such unethical behavior is the result of low salaries paid for the domestic journalists in Cambodia. (Chishimba and Chhay, 2007).

When we observe the overall situation of African journalists, the problem becomes even worse. According to Nyamnjoh (2005), journalists are poorly paid and lack job security in Africa. Some are not guaranteed to regular salaries and any bit of money can lure a journalist to write anything, including blackmail (p.74). Similarly, according to a research summary report by African Media Development Initiative (2006), in Nigeria, for instance, journalists may work for

months without pay besides their salary being low. This report indicates that the salary of journalists varies across print and broadcast media – those in broadcast media are paid better. The report, covering 17 Sub-Saharan African countries, shares that journalists are poorly paid, excluding some exceptions like top radio stations in Ghana (p. 43).

The same report indicates that freelance reporters are mostly at risk. At least four countries' reports (DRC, Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania) reveal that freelance media reporters are in a vulnerable position. "With these workers having no contracts, employers can choose to ignore the employment laws and freelancers have little recourse. Freelancing is also particularly precarious as the journalist does not have guaranteed income (p.43)." In Tanzania, the report notes, 80 percent of journalists were not permanently employed. Ismail (2006) summarizes the whole picture of journalists' salary, "Bribery and corruption remain a problem because of the very low rates of pay of most journalists."

Rockwell (2002) notes that journalists' salary in Mexico and Central America remains low. He states, "Because of this many journalists must find other means, often through corrupt practices, to attain status in the middle class." He explains that media owners and editors ignore the problem of corruption in the newsrooms. Those who refuse bribes and favors are discouraged and neglected by corrupt colleagues. In radio and television stations, says Rockwell, if an organization wants activities covered or a press release run, usually there is an exchange of cash or swap of some favor.

Many African journalists say they take bribes, gifts and freebies because of low salaries. In Zambia, for instance, journalists regularly replied for a question posed on ethical standards by saying, "Can you eat ethics?" (Chishimba and Chhay, 2007). This raises a great debate around the world. The journalists say even if they do not take the bribe, their colleague will. Many journalists in Zambia worried that once a journalist who exposed a Member of Parliament who tried to bribe him, no other would give them money afterwards (Chishimba and Chhay, 2007).

Is low salary basically the root cause of bribe-taking for African journalists? Krüger (2004) believes: "Journalism is not the best paid profession, and many people in the field look for ways of augmenting their pay packets (p. 100)." Kasoma (2000) also reports Africa's journalists are likely to continue to take bribes due to poor working conditions. Though well paid

journalists may be bribed, Kasoma notes that impoverished reporters are more prone to surrender to bribery than well-to-do ones (p. 97).

Day (2003) wraps that the exposure and temptation of reporters to bribery and routine gifts from news sources is due to underpayment, under-education and less exposure to the ethics of the profession. He notes that the situation continues unless improvement is made in standards of the profession and life of journalists. Goldstein (1985) assesses the improper freebies and junkets as: “They continue to be unfortunate facts of journalistic life. For many these fringe benefits are what make it pay to be a journalist. They supplement the modest salaries most journalists [...] earn (p.169).”

2.5. Paying for Information – Checkbook Journalism

Although no other researches conducted on paying for sources to get information in Ethiopian broadcast media are available, paying for information is frequent in most parts of the world. The Editorial Policy of ERTA (2005) in Article 7 states, “Government media journalists’ [Ethiopian Radio, ETV, Ethiopian News Agency and Ethiopian Press Agency] are prohibited to get information by providing money, threatening, or by deceiving sources (p.65).”

Forbes (2005) uses the term checkbook journalism to describe the act of paying for stories. This is because, says Forbes, journalists do not always rely on reputable sources; sometimes they have to impress the society to get information they need (p. 58). But Day (2003) notes that such practices raise questions concerning the value of the information obtained. For media practitioners, including Retief (2002), “The hard-and-fast rule is never to pay for information that has been obtained by a person with a criminal record (p. 137).” According to Retief:

Paid interviewees may feel financially obliged to perform or produce something of journalistic interest, which could lead to exaggerations, distortions, or even outright fabrications. Even if these outcomes don’t materialize, the question is how much faith an audience should put in an interview that is conducted pursuant to arrangement between a news organization and a source. (Johan Retief 2003, p.138)

Checkbook journalism also raises questions of conflicts of interest and challenges the traditional journalistic commitment to truth and accuracy. Paying sources may taint the quality of information because economic motives could be involved. It also raises questions about

journalistic independence because an economic investment may elevate a source to a position of unjustified prominence relative to other sources of information (Day 2003, p.212).

Day (2003) adds that paying sources has long history in American media extending to the Watergate scandal, in which Nixon's convicted staff was paid US\$100,000. Although such bribery is publicly disparaged among most mainstream American news organizations, Day says it is still practiced. On the other way round, although criminals may be good sources of information, it is generally unacceptable to pay for criminals to get information. This inadvertently rewards a criminal and potentially glamorizes the crime (Forbes, 2005:58).

Forbes explains some media houses have codes that prohibit paying sources for stories and tips because such payment may cause the source to lie. On the contrary, some media houses allow payments to informants and sources. The British Press Council Commission Code accepts paying for sources on condition that "the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest and there is overriding need to make or promise to make a payment for this to be done" (Frost 2000, p.146). Frost advises that journalists must ensure that no financial dealings have influenced the information sources may give. Journalists who pay sources should demonstrate that public interest is at stake (Frost, p.146).

Although sources may bargain with journalists to be paid for information, South Africa's main codes of conducts for the media are clear about information obtained from criminals. According to Krüger (2004), the payment would be tantamount to allowing the criminals benefit from their crime. He reports that there are some magazines that buy exclusive stories from sources. For instance, Tim du Plessis, editor of Rapport, buys human-interest stories. Krüger declares the situation arose when a Cape Town woman, Nadia Abrahams, accused the manager of the British football club Manchester United, Sir Alex Ferguson, of sexual harassment in October 2002 (p.178). Du Plessis said he was completely outbid by British papers.

The Kenyan Code of Ethics developed by the Media Industry Steering Committee and published by Fredirick Ebert Stiftung in Article 8 says,

When money is paid for information, serious questions can be raised about the credibility of that information and the motives of the buyer and the seller. Therefore, in principle, journalists should avoid paying for information unless public interest is involved. In the same context, journalists should not receive any money as an incentive to publish any information. (Code of Conduct and Practice of Journalism in Kenya, 2001).

Sources do not always bargain for money. The South African TV journalist Jacques Pauw describes how Craig Williams, a former police in the country, would agree to an interview only if it took place in his lawyer's office. As Krüger notes, deals can be justified as long as they do not undermine the basic integrity of journalism. If they threaten the basic truthfulness of the report, they are not acceptable (p.178).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research approach in this study is mainly qualitative. Qualitative research typically attempts to study human action and behavior taking into account the social actors that have direct or indirect influence on humankind. In such a process, the researcher takes the insider's view and does not alienate him/herself from the process. Best and Kahn (1999) note that such a research is interpretive in its nature, making the researcher part of the research. The researcher thus plays a central role in the research (p.184).

Since this study deals with media corruption, it is intricate in nature, and it would be inappropriate to use a quantitative approach only. In such behavioral studies, qualitative research is dominant, although quantitative data may be employed to supplement the qualitative data. Therefore, this research largely employed a qualitative research approach with minimal quantitative method. In the course of the study, the researcher followed a participatory approach throughout the process allowing the involvement of direct stakeholders in the media businesses. Side by side, it was attempted to focus on primary and secondary data sources in consolidating the findings.

In general, the design of the research is framed into triangulation of information sources and on the basis of which data cross-checking and reliability would be ensured. Triangulation in this case acquired information from primary and secondary sources in addition to observation. As Patton (1990) said, qualitative research uses different forms of data than those used in conventional research methods. In this type of research, people's experiences, opinions, full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes are depicted (p. 12). The qualitative part included in-depth interviews, case studies and direct observation, while to cross-

check the attitudinal aspect, likhert-scale questionnaires were conducted. The analysis of written documents was also used as part of the research.

3.2 Research preparation

Beginning from the inception of the research idea, the research was started by reviewing relevant secondary sources and parts needed were photocopied. Relevant books, journals, articles and codes of conducts were collected consulting different people. Diverse internet sites related to journalism were also browsed. Following the approval of the topic, intensive collection of relevant documents commenced. Following this, sketching out the research design began. Then, thoroughly reviewing the documents began. The process also involved putting major strategies and activities to be undertaken during the research process.

In the course of secondary data collection, libraries, individuals, former students and other important personalities found to be to be helpful were contacted. Similarly, it was attempted to use the most recent publications available in the area of research. Attempts were also made to compare and contrast worldwide journalistic practices concerning brown envelopes and freebies in particular and ethical issues related to journalistic activities in general. The ultimate goal of utilizing extensive secondary data is to create conceptual clarity on the study and later on to identify whether the findings coincide with the secondary data collected or not.

3.3 In-depth Open-ended Interviews

Interviewing has many advantages as a research method. According to Best and Kahn (1999), the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in or on someone's mind (p.199). Qualitative interviewing is often conducted hand in hand with participant observation, as Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey (1994) stress.

While conducting the research, unstructured interviews were utilized so as to provide breadth and depth to the study. The interview format included 22 open-ended interview questions for journalists and 12 unstructured interview questions for media managers (see appendix I and II). A total of 8 interviewees were included in the research from ETV and the Ethiopian Radio. In fact, one is included from NGO area. The unstructured questions were generally concerned with the media atmosphere, journalists' salary and journalists' involvement with freebies and bribes. In the course of the study, greater attention was given to ERTA journalists and their

managers in addition to interviewing some stakeholders. In this research, journalists working in the area are highly focused since the core research is on the misbehavior and corrupt behavior journalists reveal while reporting. The research process attempted to gain experiences from amateurs, freelancers and other permanent journalists working in the area. The information was recorded and later on transcribed and arranged in thematic issues in the process of data analysis.

3.4 Direct Observation

Observation, as part of qualitative research, consists of detailed notation of behaviors, events and contexts surrounding the events or a specific behavior. According to Patton (1990), there are varieties of observations. Primarily, the observer may be complete outsider or full participant; secondly, the observer may conduct the observation covertly (hanging around) with full knowledge of those being observed; thirdly, those being observed may be given full explanations, partial explanations, or given false explanations; and lastly, the observation may take long time or may be conducted in fixed time duration.

Observation is more important because, as Deacon (1999) states, people's interactions and behaviors, and the way others interpret them, are central to social life. The researcher may also have an epistemological concern that only natural life or 'real life' settings can reveal social reality and that has to be experienced and shared by the researcher for research accounts to have any validity and adequacy (p.249).

Among the types of observations Deacon (1990) lists, participant observation is utilized. In this process, the researcher participated in conferences, editorial meetings and other pertinent activities journalists were doing. This was done in order to support and cross-check the findings. In the due process, on-the-spot discussions were also conducted and observations were made while journalists were undertaking their routines. The observation included meetings and conferences organized in different conference centers in which flocks of journalists hover in the name of reporting. Observations were also made while editorial assignments were made in newsrooms. In editorial assignments, preferences of journalists to be assigned to some locations and arguments arising in the process were seen and the reasons why they preferred some institutions rather than others were studied. Different check lists were also used to observe variables of each group (radio and TV) systematically. For instance, the indicators include the

type of program or news; why they show less or greater interest to work on that specific program or not; who is assigned to which activity; etc.

3.5 Case Studies

Best and Kahn (1999) say, “The case study is a way of organizing social data for the purpose of viewing social reality. It examines the social unit as a whole (p.193)”. Cozby (1977) also reiterates that case studies are valuable in informing us of conditions that are rare or unusual and thus not easily studied in any other way (p.97). It is evident that insights developed by case studies may also lead to develop a hypothesis that can be verified using other methods. The reason behind including case studies is to enrich the data with firsthand information.

Therefore, some selected case Studies were employed while clarifying the research ideas. Each case is important in bringing the fact to light in simple and understandable manner. Thus, some pertinent cases told by research participants were included. They are not made up cases, but are real situations from the journalistic works in the media under study. Best and Kahn also believe that a single case story emphasizes the depth of the analysis one is doing (p.193). Therefore, the cases are developed from interviews with research participants, recorded data.

3.6 Attitudinal Measure Questionnaires

In data triangulation, questions of scale are also helpful. Among the rating scales, the likhert-scale is one that is used in measuring behavior. As Cozby reports, “Rating scales ask people to provide ‘how much judgments on any number of dimensions – amount of agreement, liking, or confidence, for example (p.107)”. The format of scales varies and depends on the topic of study. In the case of this study, likhert-scale of five scales beginning with “Strongly agree” to “Strongly Disagree” was used. Attitudinal questions having both positive and negative views in the same idea were put side by side. These questionnaires were distributed to 80 journalists, and 61 of them (76.3%) completed the forms.

In order to ensure the scale’s reliability, after setting the questions, the questions were pre-tested and questions found to be ambiguous and hard to answer were discarded. This increases the validity of the research questions. The items were original and formulated and developed from readings in the research area by the researcher.

3.7 Sampling Techniques

In the process of selecting the research samples, purposive sampling especially snowball sampling was used. As Deacon and others (1999) describe, snowball sampling is mainly employed where no list or institution exists to help the researcher identify research samples. Here the initial contacts are very important in the research process. As a snowball rolling down a hill, snowball sample grows through momentum, i.e. initial contacts suggest further people for the researcher to approach, who in turn may provide further contacts (Deacon 1999, p.53). This type of research is mostly conducted in closed settings or informal social groupings, where the researcher goes to contact sources while opening up and mapping tight social networks. Snowball sampling is important in such research because information related to media corruption is very tight to gain from different stakeholders. Similarly, journalists and sources deal in hidden settings while giving and taking bribes and freebies.

Thus, purposive sampling especially snowball sampling was used for interviews and intentional sampling for finding respondents for the questionnaires. Purposively selected 80 samples (40 from radio and TV each) were given attitudinal test questionnaires, of whom 35 of TV and 26 of radio journalists responded to the questionnaires (76.3% of the journalists in total responded to the questionnaires.). While filling the questionnaires, journalists of diverse experience, divisions and different orientation were intentionally included. While interviewing, 9 in-depth interviewees (one of them NGO worker) were contacted, and the number of the interviewees grew up just like the technique of snowball sampling works. In the process, prior knowledge of friends in journalistic circles helped much to get more information in the research area. Some care was also taken to include views of female journalists in the interviews and questionnaires.

3.8 Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedure began with identifying research participants. Before beginning to collect the data, contacts and smooth relationships were made with the part-taker individuals and institutions. Informal talks about the research area before designing the interview and likhert-scale questionnaires helped a lot to differentiate areas to be addressed. Based on the contacts' experience and literature collected so far, tools were designed for the research, which were later commented and enriched by the internal and external advisors. While gathering the data, a research assistant was recruited to record, take notes and later on transcribe the raw data.

In the process of identifying journalists to participate, the researcher played a central role being assisted by close friends and media heads. The participant journalists were categorized according to the program, division and based on which national languages they work in. It was believed this would help to include various views of journalists who were exposed to brown envelopes and tempted in the process.

3.9 Data Analysis and Compilation

The raw data were transcribed and organized in various categories of items and in line with the breadth and scope of the study. The analysis of the data was done on the basis of the objectives of the study applying largely qualitative techniques. Some quantitative aspects were also included from findings of attitudinal test questionnaires, which were designed to measure the attitudes of journalists. Each draft of the research was commented chapter by chapter by the internal and external advisors from whom constructive comments and suggestions were incorporated and necessary adjustments were made.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To avoid any harm on research participants, the researcher has been careful to abide by the general research ethics. This is because the interview participants may be harmed with what they express to the researcher. Before directly going into the interview, each interviewee was informed about the nature of the research and they gave their consensus either to use their names or to anonymize them. Although some interviewees showed their consent to be named in the research, because it was found it may harm them, they were made anonymous. Except two of the in-depth interview participants, the rest have agreed to be kept anonymous. Therefore, two of them were used in their real names. Much care was also taken not to touch their personal privacy in sensitive areas.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes research findings from observation, in-depth interviews and case studies that clarify points in the interviewees' own voices. The chapter also analyzes attitudinal test questionnaires that complemented the in-depth interviews. Of 80 questionnaires (see appendix IV) distributed to 40 radio and 40 TV journalists in ERTA, 61 respondents offered feedback. The in-depth interviews and attitudinal test questionnaires concentrated on ethical issues and possible causes of unethical behavior.

This research tries to gauge the frequency of freebies/bribes and journalists' attitudes towards them. The findings also reveal how accepting such bribes affect the quality of reporting and raise ethical concerns about news coverage or program content. The research attempts to relate what makes journalists ignore to fairly interpret their social responsibility and what limits them to be true "watchdogs" of the public interest.

4.2 Factors Contributing to 'Brown Envelopes'

4.2.1 Lack of Proper Training

New recruits to a media house should get oriented to its ethical codes and trained in its work procedures. In South Africa, for instance, journalists are told to be free from vested interests and informed of their duty to provide accurate information to the public (Retief 2002). This does not happen in ERTA. Although ERTA'S editorial policy (2004) warns journalists not to accept anything from sources in order to do balanced reporting, newly-recruited journalists start without any orientation or training. This, of course, increases the chance they may misreport or misrepresent or ignore part of the agency's code of conduct/ethics. As one ERTA editor recalls, both good and bad habits get passed along:

Biniam [editor, ETV]: When a new reporter is employed, there is what the TV people call "attachment." This was what I also did later on when I became English desk editor. The new reporter goes to reporting attached to the senior so that he can learn from senior reporter. There is no orientation on the ethical codes or editorial policy. They learn the good and evil that the senior reporter does. Unfortunately, when I was first assigned, it was to the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EPCO) to report on power cut due to water shortage in dams. My first exposure was that we were given additional per diem at the end. I accepted that because the person I was "attached" to took it. Thus, I took my first lesson.

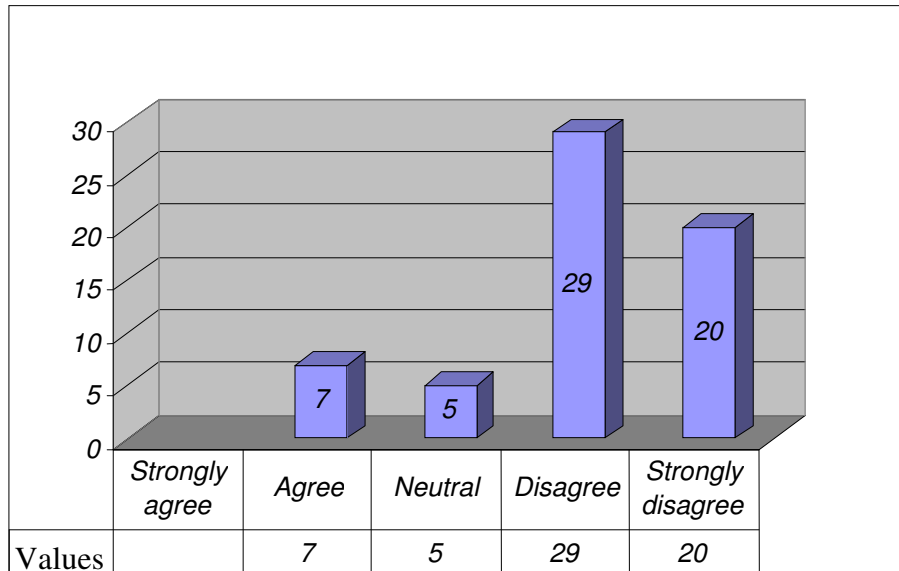
Other journalists also share Biniam's experience. Bereket [an ETV reporter] did not know about ETV ethical codes or editorial policy. Neither did specific training address questions of ethics in reporting.

Bereket: Some training on election coverage is given when it is time of election. Some NGOs give us training on HIV reporting. Otherwise, there is no professional and ethical training so that we act according to the rule and undertake professional and ethical reporting. Reporting in ERTA is rather done in routine way, not based on professional knowledge of reporting.

Mendes and Smith (2006) report absence of professional training in Angola, for example, which affected the overall quality of reporting there. Similarly, ERTA's lack of training and orientation on its editorial policies has affected the fairness of its reporting. When seen from long experience it has (45 years service) it should have had its codes but about seven of private press contacted, that were established only seven years ago have codes of conduct.

Any media institution that draws journalists from diverse fields of study – not only from journalism – should work hard on training in ethical reporting. However, ERTA does not structure its training this way. In responses to demographic questions, 80.3 percent of ERTA journalists who completed questionnaires came from disciplines other than journalism. Thirty of all respondents (49.3%) "strongly disagreed" and 32.7% "disagreed" to "I feel my education and training are directly related to my present career." The remaining 11 (18%) were neutral.

Graph 1: I feel my education and training are directly related to my present career



The majority of those answering the questionnaire – roughly 80.3% – said they did not make serious errors even though they did not study journalism. However, this contradicts observation of big errors. For instance, journalists confused the word “minister” and “ministry,” and errors in names and numbers are common in ETV and the Ethiopian Radio. This may be due to either lack of reporting experience and pertinent training. This reinforces Mendes and Smith’s (2006) report that lack of training negatively affects journalists’ professional accountability.

Yared [Ethiopian radio senior editor] says media managers make no effort to educate journalists to ethical issues. Instead, he notes, they accuse journalists of unethical behavior without exposing them to what is ethical. Codes of conduct are also missing, he says.

Yared: Two years ago, ERTA announced to the public to expose journalists requesting for money. First of all, I think the institution did not do its own homework. It did not give any training of ethics for the journalists and it should have informed them that taking bribes is misconduct. Before telling them their shortcomings, it announced their bribe-taking to the Ethiopian public. This is to consider your worker as thief. It is a shame for the institution and a shame to the journalists.

As Diedong (2006) says, journalists need to improve their ethical conduct in order to report in a socially responsible manner. As he notes, proper training enhances compliance with ethical codes and leads to better newsroom practices. Other interviewees also cited the

importance of training, but noted little training on ethics. So, they ask, how can journalists to discharge their social responsibilities?

Biniam: I remember there was no ethical training in ETV for the last six years. There are short-term trainings on news reporting, news writing, covering election and others. But I do not remember specifically trainings on ethics. A journalist without constant refresher trainings, particularly trainings on ethics, is like a soldier without a rifle.

Training, covering a wide range of topics, can shape professional outlook and ethical behavior. But questions arise regarding ERTA training, including: Do journalists in the agency have any training in journalism? And are they really professional journalists? According to the questionnaire results, 67.2% (41) reported a field of study not directly related to journalism and 33.8% graduate in journalism, including diploma graduates. Arguably, long-established stations like ETV and Ethiopian Radio should have professionally-trained journalists. But their training included streams like law, geography, library science, foreign languages and literature, etc. Although this expertise bolsters the practice of journalism, lack of journalism training may undermine journalism professionalism and practice at ERTA.

Professional training can emphasize codes of conduct that may stop journalists from violating ethical standards, as Asian News Daily (2006) reports. As Gebreamlak Teka, head of the national programs department at Ethiopian Radio, says:

Training is key to any field of work. Among these, indoor trainings are also significant besides putting vital directives and regulations for journalists. We are trying to bring drastic changes in terms of training based on the Business Process Reengineering we soon conduct. Currently, what we do is to make the journalists familiar with our work conditions and the do's and don'ts of the profession. What we used to do was giving orders to the journalists instead of providing intensive capacity-building trainings. But here afterwards, we believe intensive capacity-building is vital to conduct our work properly.

Many media organizations simply put their codes of conduct on a shelf, providing no orientation about them. A significant number of journalists, particularly newcomers, said they did not know of any editorial policy or code of conduct.

Yared: Currently, there is a tendency of accepting graduates from journalism schools. But most of us here work in traditional way. We do not have deep understanding about the profession. Traditional practice has its own side effects. You may perform many unethical things unknowingly.

Gebreamlak, the radio manager, says the radio agency provides some short-term training on what its journalists should avoid. But, he says, they may or may not bear, depending on the

nature of the individual journalist. Some journalists regularly misbehave, he notes, and some respect regulations. He concludes:

Capacity-building is the main issue we should focus on. It is decisive that we should also put strict laws to abide by. Bosses and reporters may change, but there should be basic rule[s] and intensive in-house training for reporters and newcomers. Now we are trying to produce stable media regulations. What we used to do 'til now was to give bird's-eye-view explanation for the newcomer journalists about reporting. But here afterwards we have realized there must be intensive capacity building work.

Almost all interviewees agreed on the importance of ethics training. If they find something that touches their conscious mind, they said, this may prevent them from taking unethical offers. Thus, lack of training in ERTA may lead to freebies and brown envelopes, among other ethical pitfalls.

4.2.2 Low Salary and Job Dissatisfaction

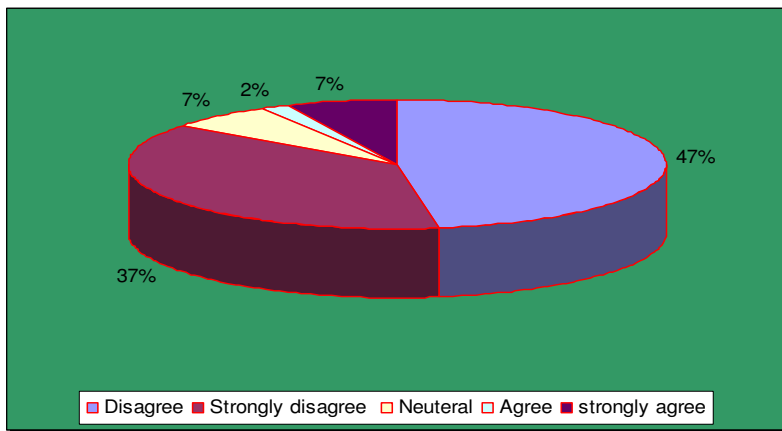
According to the African Media Development Initiative Report (2006), most journalists in Sub-Saharan Africa are poorly paid, though top radio journalists can earn significantly more than other media journalists like top radio journalists in Ghana. In ERTA, where the same agency covers radio and television, no such salary disparity exists even though ERTA salaries are reportedly low, even lower than the same batch in other government institutions.

Bereket: When I was employed, my salary was 636 birr. My batches who were employed in other institutions were paid 1040 birr as a beginner. Most of us were not satisfied with the salary here. But we try to compensate the low salary with per diems we get from the fieldworks. If you aspire to get promotion, you have to wait for your boss to die or leave the organization. You have to either go to other better places in search of better payment or you will decay there. This seems to me one of the root problems to practice unprofessional journalism in Ethiopia.

According to Smucker (2003), pay is among factors that contribute to job satisfaction. In his research, he showed that sports journalists who earned more showed more satisfaction than those who earned less. And, when Amanuel Gebru (2006) surveyed job satisfaction among journalists at the Ethiopian Press Agency and Ethiopian News Agency as well as at ERTA, he found 89.6% of those journalists polled “dissatisfied” with their work situation and 2.2% “very dissatisfied.” Arguably, because salaries of journalists are low in most parts of Africa, they improve their standard of living by other means, including acting unethically. During one month of observation at the ETV and Ethiopian Radio, reporters and senior editors called their salaries “insignificant,”

even ART (the HIV drug) only enough to keep them alive. Describing satisfaction with their monthly salary, 47% “disagreed” and 42% “strongly disagreed” as they answered questionnaires. In general, 89% expressed dissatisfaction. Based on questionnaire results, salaries varied from a low of 973 to a high of 2752 birr per month, with a mean of roughly 1,628 birr (approximately 162 U.S. dollars).

Chart 1: I am highly satisfied with the salary that I am paid in ERTA



This is in line with Gans’ (2003) findings from the United States where journalists’ salaries remain modest, even below salaries of government employees. ERTA journalists interviewed also confirmed their salaries being lower than employees in other governmental institutions.

Despite low pay, most journalists maintained their social responsibility to provide accurate information to the public. Of those responding to questionnaires, 54 journalists (88.5%) called social responsibility more important than their own needs. Conversely, 55% disagreed, noting: “A person who starves for bread should not be asked to fulfill his moral responsibility.” Twenty-four percent “strongly agreed,” 13% “agreed,” and 8% were neutral. Asked if they hate journalism because of its low salaries and society’s low regard, 85.2% said “no.” Overall, journalists claimed good moral standing, an attitude that could be enhanced by ethical training.

Krüger (2004) says, in general, journalists are not paid well anywhere in the world and, in particular, not in Africa. But ERTA’s salaries are particularly poor:

Case Study 1

Biniam [an ETV editor]: Once I was invited to attend a meeting in America along with journalists drawn from 11 countries. We were invited by CNN and were being given training on reporting for 15 days. In the course of the training, we were sharing many experiences related to each country’s

journalistic practices. In between, we started discussing about salary of journalists in countries from where we were drawn. Thanks to God, I did not rush to speak first.

The first female journalist to speak about her salary was from South Korea, Seoul, whose salary was US \$8,000 per month. Then a journalist from Abu Dhabi, Arab Emirates, reported he is paid US \$6,500 /month. That time, Kosovo was in war and a journalist from there was ashamed to tell the amount and finally he was forced by many to tell the amount. He reported that he was paid the least, \$1,500. Fortunately, I was the last to speak. Knowing that mine was not fair enough to tell and make laugh the journalists, I lied that I earn nearly US \$1,000. Actually my salary at that time was not more than \$100. I was really ashamed and shocked of the disparity.

As Chishimba and Chhay (2007) noted, Zambian journalists faced similar circumstances and they could not survive on a monthly salary of US \$70 and must find ways to fill the gap. At ERTA, more education may not necessarily help. Yared (radio senior editor) recently earned a master's degree in journalism, but his salary remained unchanged. Such dissatisfaction can lead to high turnover. "Unless you have any commitment, there is nothing that makes you stay here," Yared says. "If you look at most of the journalists, except for a few senior staffs, they are new graduates. Therefore, the basic question for such a high turnover is low salary." Responses to questionnaires show that more than 57.4.1% of all those interviewed at ERTA have less than two years' experience. Data also show that turnover is higher in ETV than in the radio, where 71.4% have less than two years' experience.

What does such low salary mean to the ERTA journalists? Do these journalists seek other ways to support themselves? Probably yes. Of those interviewed, 85% of the journalists said ERTA salaries are not sufficient to survive and that they look elsewhere for income. Almost all journalists responding to the questionnaires agreed to this point. In fact, journalists say they seek fieldwork because reporters receive per diems not only from ERTA but also from the institutions they will be covering. All but one interviewee agreed that, in fact, the government's low per diem for fieldwork does not even cover the cost of lodging let alone food. So taking additional money, they say, is essential just to complete the reporting.

Those journalists interviewed were also asked if they consider taking favors and money after reporting as unethical. Surprisingly, except one, all of them said this is not bribe since the journalist has finished his task. But one of them said in whatever way the payment may have an impact on later reporting.

Gebereamlak Teka, who heads the radio's national programs department, also confirms this, saying journalists take money from news sources even if the agency pays per diems for field

assignments. Biniam says, “As journalists in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and other countries do, our

I do not mind if I were paid additional per diems and pocket money from workshops and trainings I cover for news.	Strongly agree	23
	Agree	27
	Neutral	6
	Disagree	10
	Strongly disagree	4

journalists should also use similar ways. Journalists as human beings should live first to carry out their usual stuff.”

The interviewees said they must find ways other than salaries to sustain their life, and many journalists said they prefer to get additional money from news sources. In questionnaire responses, they also indicated their willingness to accept pocket money from training and workshops covered for ERTA news and programs. In all, 37.1% “strongly agreed” and 44.2% “agreed,” while 16.3% and 6.6% “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed,” respectively. Some 9.8% remained neutral.

Table 1: Attitude of journalists about accepting additional income

These findings contradict to the journalists’ responses about giving priority to social responsibility rather than to personal concerns. Mendes and Smith (2006) say almost all stories published in Angola can be attributed to bribery. Envelopes and freebies, being enemies of fair reporting, also deny the public its right to know the truth. In line with this, Sanders (2003) says that bribes and freebies are ethical pitfalls of irresponsible journalism. So, arguably, accepting bribes for reporting may jeopardize the reporters’ accountability to the public. In practice, ERTA’s Gebreamlak journalists end up promoting the organization rather than reporting the news in a balanced way. And as Tettey (2006) notes:

Media are one of the institutions entrusted with the responsibility of protecting that interest and upholding the values on which the society is built. This assignment of responsibility comes with expectations that the media will go about performing their function in a manner

that is consistent with the ideals and values of the society in which they operate. (Tettey 2006, p. 233)

Although many journalists complain about a low salary, some earning the same low salary appear to be affluent. As Hailu (a radio journalist) says, “You sometimes observe a journalist of low salary renting a villa that may cost three folds of his salary. This indicates that he must be using some other illegal means.”

4.3 *Buche* and Organized Bribery

Some media critics like Kasoma say media corruption, particularly freebies and brown envelopes, are “the cancer of African journalism” (Kasoma, 2000). Many journalists, Kasoma notes, fall prey to “oiling hands” and adversely affect objective reporting. Years ago, a Saudi Arabian businessman tried to bribe a British MP and, with that, attached the name “brown envelopes” to an activity that assumes different names throughout the world. As Brislin (1997) noted, in Japan brown envelopes are called “omiyage.” In Korea, brown envelopes are known as “chiongi” (white envelopes). Ethiopian journalists, especially those working at ERTA, also call bribes from news sources by a special name: *buche* (literally “snatching something,” derived from the Amharic *bucheka*). Journalists working on ERTA’s English Desk call *buche* a “lubricant.” Bereket said taking from 100 to 500 birr per assignment is common. As he notes:

In the last five years, as far as I know, taking money from news sources is rampant in ETV. There are many who do not consider it as unethical. The amount they take is insignificant. Generally, journalists in ERTA are not afraid of such act and no one feels bad for taking bribes, especially in ETV. Some of them do not know that it is unethical but do it because their fellow reporters do it.

Even government and nongovernmental organizations often in the news in Ethiopia have special names for money they set aside for journalists. So for example, an NGO that organizes a workshop may pay a per diem, enough to cover the workshop’s entire five days even if the reporter does just a few hours of actual reporting. And the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, for instance, pays a “blessing fee” in cash, similar to a “sitting fee” that journalists in other African countries receive for attending news conferences. Some GOs and NGOs also allocate budgets, included as miscellaneous expenses rather than a specific code. Journalists in Ethiopia also receive “reporting fees” after signing a payroll. This latter style of payout contradicts reporting in *The Economist* (Dec. 19, 2006) that direct handouts are uncommon, to avoid detection.

The interviewees identified Action Aid Ethiopia, World Vision Ethiopia, and other church-based organizations and private medical colleges as the most bribing institutions. They also listed governmental organizations like the Ethiopian Electric and Power Corporation (EEPSCO), the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Organization, South Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, Somali Regional State, and Afar Regional State.

In Ethiopia, bribery may also involve organized efforts. For example, *budnawi chawata* (team game) describes how ETV journalists work together in accepting bribes to, for instance, cover a conference or report on developmental activities. If one group member refuses to play, to accept bribe, others fear being penalized or being exposed to bosses. Of course, the group prefers to keep the team's secrets by *budnawi chewanet* (keeping group confidentiality). Some journalists also sell access to ETV, even working with brokers. As Henok, a radio senior editor, notes, "Some journalists are bold enough to sell the airtime as if it were their own. They insult others, who take an insignificant amount of money for the program and say, 'Rather than taking irrelevant amount of money, it is better to serve freely'."

In some cases observed and explained in interviews with ETV editor Biniam and others, ERTA journalists want to exclusively cover specific government units, non-governmental organizations, even regions and territories. Because some regional states pay a lot, journalists fight for such assignments.

Hailu [a radio journalist]: There was an incredible fight among journalists to be assigned to particularly Afar, South and Somali regional states. Those who are not assigned become highly disappointed. After staying for a week or two, they come back with some 2000 – 3000 birr. But later on, the officials in the region heard that journalists talk about the extravagance of the regional officials and started to deny them that much money. Journalists going to these regions are expected to invite their colleagues because everybody knows they are going get good *buche*.

Such continuing assignments may also be based on experience and language, but they may also mean that reporters and editors are collaborating to accept bribes for coverage. If, for example, the division head stands to gain from an assignment, he will always assign the same reporter.

4.4 Are Economic Status and Low Salaries the Primary Factors for Bribery?

Those ERTA journalists interviewed estimated that only 1% of all journalists practicing in Ethiopia are economically well off while an estimated 90% have no house or car. As ETV editor Biniam asked in response: "Who do you think has a car in ERTA, assuming that a car is a

symbol of class distinction in this country?” The low economic status of journalists in Ethiopia may explain why they take bribes. As radio senior editor Yared suggests:

It is poverty that obliges a journalist to accept envelopes and freebies. Journalists have no other option but accept what is given to them. For a journalist who does not have a 100 birr note in his pocket, 500 and 1000 birr is a big amount. I will not have any capacity to say “no” to the money handed to me living in a destitute situation.

Radio editor Henok agrees: “If you have no money to support yourself, being professional is like an empty pocket. It has no meaning. Professionalism may even become secondary where poverty has reigned.” However, is low salary or low economic status the only reason that journalists accept envelopes and freebies? Some agency reporters say more than salary is at stake:

Helen [ETV English desk reporter]: For me, salary is probably secondary. I do not mean salary is not a factor for the prevailing misconduct. The primary issue in ETV is correcting a sick management system. There is no clear way to make you aware of the code of conduct of the institution; the authorities should provide training for the journalists. In addition, journalists’ salary should be improved. Low payment always leads you to stealing.

Some ERTA managers say, in fact, low salaries or low economic status are not as relevant as other forces. Seifu Seyoum, ETV’s acting deputy manager and head of the programs department, cites lack of training and absence of ethical codes as crucial factors:

We do not have ethical codes till now. What we have is editorial policy, which focuses on the do’s and don’ts. We have now prepared ethical guidelines besides making use of civil service ethical standards. There are some journalists who work respecting ethical standards, and there are a few who pass the rule and receive petty bribes from sources. They also accept unnecessary receptions and accommodations from sources where they go for reporting. We know there are journalists who receive double per diems. There are also people who were penalized for receiving incentives and bribes based on tangible evidences. Some may do that because they do not have proper knowledge about ethical issues.

4.5 How Commonplace are Bribes in ERTA?

Taking money while attending workshops and conferences is not considered a shame in ERTA. This is similar to Ghanaian journalists who expect the organizers of workshops or event to pay money, popularly known as “soli” (Deidong 2006, p. 11). In Ethiopia, organizations have ready cash-to-pay for people of the press. Helen, an ETV English desk reporter, has the following to witness:

I was sent to a non-governmental organization to cover an event. We did what is expected from us and were packing to go. I was called to a room and requested to sign on a kind of payroll. I asked, "What is this?" The organizer pointed to the payroll and told me to sign and take the money. I said to him I am doing my job. We argued for some minutes and I refused to take. Everyone except me, including my colleagues, took the money. Later that person called my boss and reported him my refusal, instead of being ashamed of his act. What happened the next morning was astonishing. A newspaper called *The Press* [no longer exists] made that news and reported "An ETV female journalist refused to receive money while others received."

In the interview, Hellen recalled that the Auditor General reported ERTA journalists going to the regions were consuming additional government funds. She added the auditors called this fraud and asked that it be banned. ERTA, being accountable to Ethiopia's House of Representatives was warned to write letters to institutions. The House then ordered ERTA to inform the institutions in writing not to pay additional money to reporters already receiving per diems. Based on the house's decision, says ERTA ETV programs manager Seifu, ERTA is doing this; "We have reached to the stage of writing letters to organizations not to pay additional money to journalists." And in 2005, ERTA went on the air, on ETV, to ask institutions not to pay its journalists. However, the journalists themselves did not welcome this and many quit.

Some ETV and Ethiopian radio programs attract more bribes than others. For example, interviewees said ETV's *Aynachin* program (investigative reporting) reportedly benefited some of its former employees up to 40,000 birr per program. The same is true for ERTA's entertainment programs. ETV reporter Bereket described the case of one journalist, whom he did not want to identify by name, built a four-story house and bought a Euro truck as result of his reporting. As interviewees observed, many bribes involved negotiations, with ERTA reporters bargaining for "proper coverage." Radio interviewees said amount of birr stuffed in envelopes for ETV coverage is reportedly higher than for Ethiopian Radio coverage. "Negotiation in the amount to be paid in order to cover a program is common," said Bereket. "Otherwise, they (the journalists) threaten sources to kill the news or the program."

Many of those journalists interviewed saw no difference between a gift and a bribe because, to them, both are worth many thousands of birr. Competition for payment often dominates ERTA newsroom activities, from the average reporter to the highest manager. Sometimes, as radio reporter Hailu indicated, reporters gather information tips from outside sources or from the Ethiopian News Agency because such tips can lead to payments. Journalist

prefers stories that may carry financial favors to those that do not – they call those *derek tabiya*, which literally means *dry location* (without payment). High government officials inside ERTA, especially those linked to investors, business institutions and NGOs, may order coverage in order to collect bribes themselves. As ETV Biniam said, “When they order you such a thing, they also transfer the risk to others like ‘This is ordered by the minister.’” The following case illustrates this influence:

Case Study 2

Hailu, a radio reporter: Two years ago, the Addis Ababa Muslim Council called on city Muslims for demonstration. We know two factions were fighting for their individual interests in the council. The opposing faction that called for demonstration was led by elites. The other faction was sympathized by the government. That day I was assigned to cover the demonstration.

After interviewing and recording relevant sources, I prepared the news. I was the anchorman of the night and got ready to go on air. When I was left with fractions of minutes, the radio manager came and requested me specifically for that news. I said “no”. I in turn requested him, “Since when did you start editing our news? I am the person in charge and I will not give you the news.” He used all his power to frustrate me. Finally, I gave him and he edited the news. However, when I went on air, I read the original news leaving the edited one. He got mad and reprimanded me for doing that. I was pre-informed he was given 5,000 birr to kill the news from the opponents. The next day similar news was given a different angle and it was aired for about seven minutes giving broader chance for favored groups to voice against the others. It was unusual for news to be aired for seven minutes.

4.6 Sharing Information about Bribes and Its Consequences

Of journalists interviewed, 87.5% said ERTA journalists regularly shared information about bribes. As ETV reporter Bereket notes, some may talk about the amount, boasting of 5,000 birr and inviting others to share their good *buche* saying, “Today, I am the one to invite.” But others, Bereket adds, are more secretive, fearing consequences if their bosses learn of the bribe. Some journalists fear those who do not take bribes, calling them UNMEE (after United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia) because these journalists often come from regional states and are loyal to the ruling party. As Bereket says, these journalists do not claim such payments and, in fact, are not expected to because not accepting bribes is following the party line. ETV reporter Biniam shows this point:

Case Story 3

Journalists highly inform each other about *buche*. I also used to talk about it when I was a reporter. Even we condemn our heads for sending us to *derek tabiya* (dry station, where there

is no money). Later, when I became the head of my unit, I was in trouble because a journalist whom I did not assign to EEPCO or Somali Regional State (institutions notable to pay good sum) scorns on me. When the journalist comes back from the fieldwork, others ask him about the amount he “snatched” and he tells them in confidence. Actually, there are some who are feared by journalists. There was a cameraman, who is a member of Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and known for not accepting money from news sources.

When we assign him with other journalists, the crew becomes unhappy for fear that he may expose them. Later, he boldly told them, “Do whatever you like but I am not part of it.” One thing I also encountered was an NGO that wanted news coverage, and we sent a female journalist to cover it. At the end, they offered her money, but she refused. The organization called me and complained about her refusal, instead of getting ashamed of the act. Finally, a private newspaper made it news and said, ‘All ETV journalists except one took bribe from an NGO.’

Indeed, radio journalists have a special name for those who do not accept bribes: *wogami*, meaning deviant or conservative. Sometimes the group of reporters heading to the field shuns the *wogamis*, negotiating with ERTA bosses to leave them behind. This, radio editor Henok says, is because a *wogami* is not suitable for *ketefa* (illegal business). And if that *wogami* is assigned to the field team, other members obtain his loyalty or, if not, alienate him.

Henok described how common paid-for coverage is at ERTA, so common that ERTA journalists call this “nice reporting” attached with *buche*. By comparison, Henok says, ERTA journalists identify all coverage not paid for as boring. So an ERTA program with interesting words, lots of positive adjectives and many minutes of coverage is likely to involve good *buche*, Henok says. Journalists also talk with each other about *kezih program tebochikoal*, how the reporter has taken good sum of money from the program. Even a journalist appearing with new clothes will draw the comment: *tebocheke*, clothes that result from bribery.

Some journalists have been fired after taking bribes. For instance, ETV reporter Bereket recalls, once a continuity announcer for an ETV Sunday Entertainment program requested a big sum of money to introduce a singer’s clip. Later, the singer told the bosses, and the announcer was dismissed. Sometimes complaints come from sources who have paid but are unhappy with coverage or no coverage. As radio reporter Hailu explains:

A journalist went to Southern Regional State, stayed for three days but was paid 26 days’ per diem in the hope that he would produce a wide program. Nonetheless, the journalist failed to produce any. After his failure to produce any program, the regional authorities complained to

his bosses that they paid such amount so that he can produce 'quality' program about the region. For doing so, the journalist was given the last warning by the manager.

Despite such practices and perceptions about how common bribery is, the journalists interviewed still said practicing journalism in Ethiopia is not financially rewarding. This response matches Krüger's (2004) observation that journalism in Africa is neither prestigious nor profitable. Radio editor Yared confirmed this with yelling:

People never think that journalists have good income. Some people even sympathize with you after hearing your status. They say, 'We do not know you journalists financially suffer that much.' The reason why people may feel like that is because a journalist has chance of contacting people ranging from prime minister to beggars. Let me tell you what we discussed when we were attending a meeting at Sheraton Addis. A miserable person was coming to that meeting and we both exchanged glances and said "This must be a journalist!"

4.7 'Buffet Journalism' and Paying Sources

Among all ERTA journalists are a few known internationally as "cocktail journalists" and locally as "buffet journalists." They are those journalists who frequently appear at receptions, conference centers and such luxury hotels as the Hilton and Sheraton in Addis Ababa. Akinfeleye (2005), in Nigeria, calls them "gin and lime journalists" and suggests they may be found in most cities of Africa. Besides taking bribes, ETV reporter Bereket observes, these journalists enjoy free alcohol and meals. During observation at the conference center at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, ERTA journalists, uninvited, awaited drinks and food but produced no stories. However, journalists from private media, also uninvited, produced news stories.

Embassies actively solicit these journalists with a reception party or gifts distributed with a press release. For instance, interviewees mentioned the Saudi Arabian, Japanese and Iranian embassies as gift-givers. And ETV editor Biniam notes that these embassies invite only a few journalists but always get many participants. "On the contrary," he says, "many journalists do not go to the American Embassy receptions because they only offer highly alcoholic drinks or the traditional *kolo* (roasted barley)."

Do ERTA journalists pay for sources to get information? Six of interviewees and two media managers said no, though managers indicated that ERTA has no written policy addressing this possibility. Radio journalist Henok says small amounts are regularly paid for to take photographs. In Afar, for example, reporters pay about five birr to photograph someone; the

same is true for Surma, Hammer and other ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia. Each time a camera flashes, they want five birr – an amount that ERTA institution will not acknowledge or reimburse. However, those ETV and radio managers considered such payments valid and promised that ERTA would revise to allow reimbursements. In rare situations, sources may pay on behalf of a journalist. Radio senior editor, Henok describes one such effort:

Case Story 4

Biniam: The journalist was reporting from Oromia Regional State. He heard from news sources that some people are being killed because they are members [supporters] of the Oromo Liberation Front, OLF. He was informed that there was a list of 10 people to be terminated as ordered by regional executives. The radio journalist was fascinated and wanted to get the story, but it was damn expensive and beyond his buying capacity. Nonetheless, there were groups of people who were interested in revealing the deadly conspiracy of the government authorities. Therefore, they went to records office and paid over 10,000 birr to the record officer. When they got the information, among the 10 blacklisted men, three were already terminated and the officials were preparing to terminate the rest in the queue, turn by turn. Now the journalist got the information and was ready to release it. However, the officials were informed that the top secret was revealed to a reporter. The reporter was called and told he would be the next person to be terminated if he does that. So he quit it and the story remained secret forever.

4.6 Impact of Bribes and Freebies

The impact of envelopes and freebies may be more obvious in African countries other than Ethiopia. In Ghana, for example, Deidong (2006) says:

It is a common occurrence that many journalists, after covering an assignment, usually expect the organizers ... to give some money [...] Having received such “gifts,” how can they write a fair, balanced, truthful, and comprehensive report about a controversial happening in which the organizers of the event may have some serious questions to answer? (Deidong 2006, p.11)

However, the impact of envelopes and freebies on news and programs may also be evident in Ethiopia. News sources do not give gifts and envelopes without consequences; they expect something in return, with the amount directly or indirectly influencing what the journalist produces. ETV editor Biniam elaborates:

Case Story 5

A journalist was assigned to cover a 50-kilometer road to be inaugurated by the Ethiopian Roads Authority. The journalist has got all relevant cares and pocket money from the Authority. The General Manager presents the performance report of the road construction. He

reported that this 50 kilometers road has consumed 100 million birr and took five years time for its execution.

Then the journalist came back to ETV and reported that the road's performance was more than expectation and it was completed in the time frame set. Similarly, he reported the amount spent for the road construction was minimum compared to other roads constructed in the country. He also reported that the road is a standard type.

This case, Biniam suggests, exposes a wide gap between what the reporter knew and what he reported. The reporter knew that, in Ethiopia, single kilometer cost one million birr to be built. But he reported that a 50 kilometer road cost 100 million birr when, in fact, it should have cost half of that. However, the journalist did not bother to crosscheck the road costs by interviewing engineers or others. He also did not report whether the five years of road construction was reasonable or not. Radio editor Henok reinforces this point:

Case Study 6

Henok: Once there was an Italian NGO operating in Borena zone of Oromia Regional State. This NGO requested for program and news coverage by our radio station. Before assigning a reporter to the site, I was given tips that this NGO has neglected the beneficiaries and it was trading in the name of poor people there. I called the reporter assigned to my office and told him what was going on to report genuinely. I told I was tipped by a person working in that NGO and told him that the NGO was joking in the name of the people.

I wanted him to investigate the critical problems and discuss them with the beneficiaries. I also briefed him to report the progress everyday on telephone. However, the reporter, for unknown reason, stifled his voice and disappeared from the track. Finally, when he came back, what he brought was completely different form the tip I was given so far. What he brought was the NGO's performance report. He did not talk to the beneficiaries but collected the speeches and all the nonsense. I smelt a rat in his report.

From observation, the impact of bribes seems obvious, with irrelevant news given flesh and soul while important news is killed. Some reporters occupy a lot of airtime with undeserving stories. Bribed sound bites may be repeated over and over. Up to seven minutes, for example, may be allocated for one minute of real news. For instance, Henok says, the radio general manager assigned another journalist to work on counter news about Muslim factions that aired for solid seven minutes.

Radio reporter Hailu also wonders about some coverage, noting how "some reporters seem as if they represent that organization and they report in favor of the organization." Other interviewees frequently mentioned how private colleges are often covered for what they did not

do. He notes, for example, how colleges regularly pay 5,000 birr for radio reporters and 10,000 birr for ETV reporters to report positive news during registration periods. Such paid news coverage may be easily identified, with observed journalists saying: “This news echoes a lot.”

Radio senior editor Yared addressed the impact of paid news sources, with items of little news value exaggerated and given more air time. Similarly, radio manager Gebreamlak agrees that promotional programs may be negotiated even though this may violate general ethical standards. He also notes, however, sometimes journalists cannot understand the difference between reporting and public relations.

4.7 Why Do Sources Bribe Journalists?

In questionnaires, journalists identified most pressure to accept bribes comes from sources, with 50.8% and 22.9% respectively said they “agree” and “strongly agree.” Relatively few journalists (9.8%) equally “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed.”

ETV journalist Hellen said Journalists may be bribed for many reasons, including promotion and fuller coverage. Institutions may want information that glorifies their work. Such promotional programs save them a lot of money. She adds, for instance, an organization could pay up to 5,000 birr per minute on ETV primetime. Rather than paying that amount, the organizations may pay up to 2,000 birr to a journalist for up to 30 minutes of airtime. And, of course, friendship counts, with friends of journalists and managers getting airtime without any payment.

Some news sources pay to get more coverage. As Bereket reports, “The South Regional State, for instance, gets more news coverage because honey, charcoal and butter is sent to the managers from that region. We sometimes feel as if the media is owned by the region. The managers tell newsroom heads to give colors to the news while reporting.” Some states in particular - Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Somali and Afar - reportedly pay a lot. In most cases, government officials also allocate budgets for the media among themselves. Seifu, the acting deputy manager at ETV, says, “some institutions may be defamed because they do not pay. Some are also given what they do not deserve because they pay. Sometimes we see the two extremes in ETV because of exaggerations in reporting.” And sometimes, radio reporter Hailu says, sources pay for fear of investigation even if there is none.

Hailu: If there is something to be afraid of in reporting, it must be investigative reporting. But there is no investigative reporting in this country yet organizations try to bribe journalists. If you are doing investigative reporting, you become critical of that specific institution and you

may be feared and given bribe to soften your reporting. I do not understand why they try to pay journalists after all. I also wonder if you pay or not, ETV and the Ethiopian Radio journalists follow that routine format. However, I feel that payers want to be seen on TV screens for long minutes. What does not deserve to be a program will be given airtime. On the other hand, you work very little but want to tell much out of that. Some even report what they have never accomplished.

News sources also pay out of competition. For instance, the Ethiopian Football Federation began a big fight three years ago - one supported by the government; the other, not. As radio editor Henok recalls;

I remember one of the factions used to pay journalists in dollars. This is to influence the way you report. Sometimes the reporter does not recognize what is going on but in some cases may be called to bosses office and be reprimanded. You as a journalist may listen them as they tell you they are discussing about the welfare of the country's football. The other group again calls for press conference and you balance the situation. That time either the government or the other faction cries aloud for giving coverage for the other group. In the meantime, both factions pay journalists. And again both scold them after paying to keep their interest.

By observation, NGOs are also known for bribes. Some strong NGOs working Ethiopia for more than 20 years do not get coverage because they do not pay. But beginner NGOs may get TV coverage because, as Biniam says, "they have a six-month life span with 'talk' a lot on the media. They have nothing on the ground but brag as if they had done valuable things for the community." As journalists on English desks note, NGOs want productions in English because of donor interest and fund-raising. Getnet, an interviewee working as a program coordinator with Multi-Purpose community Development Organization, a local NGO, observes:

Getnet: Government media journalists do not equally view that NGOs are contributing to the development of the country. By covering an NGO news, they think they have favored that NGO. Sometimes, they personally come to our organization without being invited and say, "We are fascinated by your projects and let's produce a program." After producing a program, they expect money. Some of them demand money for transportation and lunch expenses.

For Ethiopian media journalists, local and international NGOs are considered money pots. Getnet, shares his experience:

Once, our organization built a public library which has a child corner, the first of its kind in the city. We invited journalists, and they came and covered the program. After the inaugural ceremony, the group leader came and asked me for transport cost. I said that there is no such money allocated to cover their expense. Finally, they did not air the news but we appealed to

their boss and made them produce a program later. I think they do not request government institutions for money.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This research tried to address issues of media ethics in general and the state of brown envelopes and freebies in particular in the Ethiopian broadcast media - among the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA) journalists. The findings in the research process can be concluded as follows:

- ✚ It is argued that training has an indispensable role in shaping the behavior of journalists in reporting. However, the responses from the informants show that ERTA does not have any on-job and refresher trainings to make its journalists work bearing appropriate responsibility. Rather, the agency has a unique experience called “attachment” in which journalists are attached to senior reporters. This process has two remarkable outcomes: one is the reporter learns matter-of-facts from seniors whereas the likelihood of learning misconduct from the senior is also high. Attachment is also seen as one way in which fresh journalists take lessons of accepting bribes and freebies. Some short-term training like covering election, human rights, HIV/AIDS, etc. are infrequently given; otherwise, there is no specific training conducted on journalistic ethics and professional codes of conduct. Furthermore, the Agency does not have codes of conduct that guide its journalists and ward them off unethical behavior. Lack of training in journalism ethics obviously affects the quality of reporting practiced in Ethiopia, ERTA being the vanguard broadcast institution.
- ✚ The educational background of ERTA’s journalists gives a clear picture that the institution lacks professional journalists and has many “journalists” from unrelated streams. Because of less exposure to ethical conducts and enhanced trainings, frequent misconducts are observed in ERTA and its journalists are observed committing trivial and serious ethical transgressions like envelopes and freebies.
- ✚ Among the factors contributing to brown envelopes and freebies in ERTA is low salary. Salary is cited by professionals as one of parameters of job satisfaction. Although salary of journalists throughout Africa is generally very low, the situation of ERTA’s journalists’ is worse compared to other countries. The monthly mean salary is only about

USD 162. Generally, the salary level is lower than equivalent journalists in other institutions. As a result, great proportion of the journalists in ERTA is dissatisfied with the salary. This is seen affecting the professional practice of the journalists.

- ✚ Despite their low salary, journalists feel their watchdog responsibility. However, it is troubling that most respondents believe a starving person cannot abide by ethical rules of the profession. Concern for social responsibility must be shown practically. Contrary to what they say, they strive to generate additional sources of income, including illegal means. They seek ways to compromise their low salary which ultimately leads some of them to take unfair offerings and give unbalanced coverage to certain news sources.
- ✚ There is disparity in the life standard and payment of some journalists. Some of them live in expensive villas that cost them as much as three folds of their salary. This is an indication that such journalists have unforeseen sources of income even if it can be a hasty generalization to conclude that it necessarily is the result of brown envelopes they get from their sources. Similarly, some ETV and Ethiopian Radio programs like entertainment and *Iynachin* are well-known for their nature of generating illegal income for journalists.
- ✚ Brown envelopes, *buche*, are rampant in both TV and radio. Interestingly, journalists in ERTA inform each other about the *buche* and share its benefits. As Nigerian journalists are thankful to the ‘oiling hands’, so are ERTA journalists to *buche*. *Buche* has its own characteristics – it is the result of a team game and team discipline. The way it is handed over to journalists also differs, ranging from signing on payrolls to handing envelopes. Institutions also have alternative names to *buche* such as ‘blessing fee’. Journalists unwilling to participate in accepting *buche* are alienated and given diverse names like UNMEE, *wogami* (conservative or deviant), etc. In the meantime, the group work journalists form in accepting bribes and freebies is called *budnawi chawata* (team game) while keeping the group secret (remaining confidential) is *budnawi chewanet*. Organizations unwilling to provide envelopes are threatened that their news would be killed. Similarly, a potential area where there are no bribes is called *derek tabia* (dry station; station without money). Among the dry stations, Tigray and Amhara Regional States are noted by journalists.

- ✚ A major reason for accepting bribes and freebies in ERTA is arguably the destitute life of journalists. A journalist without sufficient salary to sustain is highly exposed to accept envelopes. Thus, most journalists live in a way where they cannot cover their basic needs. Although what they accept ranges mostly from petty bribes to some large amount of money, this is the result of their life standard. At the same time it is doubtful that only increasing the salary of journalists will drastically improve the quality of reporting. Salary can nevertheless be a factor contributing to accepting bribes from sources. Generally, training in ethical standards and putting in place appropriate codes of conduct, besides correcting unhealthy management systems are crucial points to be addressed.
- ✚ Sources use journalists' weak sides as opportunity and tempt them with envelopes while reporting. Among the institutions most willing to bribe, NGOs are in the forefront. Journalists consequently assume NGOs as streams of money that never dry up. Using this opportunity, both parties live in a symbiosis – journalists receive money while NGOs use the opportunity to promote their institutions. So do some government institutions and private colleges. Such unfair relationships put fair reporting at risk and make the profession an issue of trade rather than a profession of social responsibility and watchdog of the public interest.
- ✚ Breaking the rules of reporting is common in ERTA. For instance, “paid news” takes unnecessarily long airtime. Some news items are completely against standard news format and broadcast. Besides being highly colored, they take abnormal airtime.
- ✚ Whatever amount is gained from sources, being a journalist in ERTA is not a prestigious job. This is similar to the situation of other African countries where the journalistic craft is seen as non-prestigious. The image of journalists the public sketches and their real life are diametrically different. The public values the journalistic craft as prestigious, while the life of a journalist is really terrible.
- ✚ What is most important in ERTA and in similar institutions is inability to show a clear demarcation of bribes. Almost all journalists interviewed for this research believe accepting petty cash from sources and having repeated meals does not impact on their reporting. They also do not believe it is bribe to accept money after covering a program. What impact such repeated meals and petty bribes bring on the future reporting is not taken into account.

5.2 Implications

- Refresher and long-term trainings need to be focused on in order to uplift the journalistic standards and fair reporting in ERTA. Particular attention ought to be paid to trainings in ethics, which may encourage journalists to abide by professional integrity. Those that commit mistakes while reporting knowingly or unknowingly are judged equally in front of the law. Therefore, providing enhanced trainings helps journalists to re-adjust their attitudes and behavior.
- Besides enhanced training, improving the life condition of journalists is vital to avoid problems like bribes and freebies. Teaching about ethics without considering life sustaining mechanisms becomes practically superficial. One of the reasons why the level of brown envelopes and freebies is likely to be lower in the western world is because journalists have better life standard. If journalists are at a good position, they will have power to say 'no' to bribery.
- Journalists are expected to abide by their professional integrity so as to make the profession prestigious and get the relevant esteem from the society. Unless journalists improve the way they behave and act, their status as watchdogs of the society becomes ostensible. They should also have their own professional associations to safeguard their interests.
- A distinction between promotion and news/journalistic programming needs to be made comprehensible. Lack of knowledge in both leads journalists to mix up. Therefore, ERTA has the responsibility to demarcate lines in such controversial issues in making its journalists aware of accepted professional standards.
- ERTA is also expected to lay mechanisms of control and should take practical measures on unfair reporting. In doing so, it ought to start working starting from top management and government level by providing journalistic independence for fair reporting. Similarly, the management system should be revised and codes must be put in place. The control mechanisms should go down to grassroots level so that the society will participate in taking measures when its voices are denied or 'sold' for special interest groups.

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Appendix I

Interview guide questions for radio and TV reporters

1. What do you feel about the work atmosphere in ERTA? How do you feel about your monthly earning? Is it enough to support your life?
2. In general, what do you feel about the salary of journalists in Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency?
3. If you think that journalists in Africa and Ethiopia are paid low wages, what do you think they do to augment their salaries?
4. Have you ever taken any incentives while covering news and/or program? If you did so, why do you think you did it? Are there cases that journalists accept bribes and gifts, free hotel accommodations or travel costs from their sources to give one-sided coverage?
5. What do you think are the main reasons journalists accept bribes and other incentives?
6. What is the feel impact of accepting freebies and bribes on the quality of programs or news produced?
7. Is it ethically wrong to accept bribes and incentives while reporting? Why or why not?
8. Are there journalists that consider being a journalist may create way for additional income? How?
9. Do editors or reporters discuss about bribes and gifts with their fellow journalists?
10. Can you tell me if there is any locally given name to bribes and gifts by journalists?
11. How do you perceive bribery in radio and TV reporting? Is it a commonplace or rare in ERTA? Which institutions give bribes to journalists?
12. Have you ever received big gift or bribe from a source? Can you give some instances where journalists took such high gifts?
13. Why do journalists in Ethiopia accept bribes and freebies? Aren't there economically well-off journalists who also accept bribes?
14. Why do sources pay journalists?
15. Are there journalists called "cocktail journalists" in your media sphere? How do they perform their activity and why are they given such a name?
16. Do you believe the problem of bribery will be got rid of without upgrading the payment of journalists? Why?

17. Does your organization have regulations that ban bribes and gifts? What editorial guidelines are there and what are they concerned about?
18. Are there any attempts to build the capacity of journalists? Just describe journalists in your institutions according to their training and professional background.
19. Some journalists are not permanently employed. What kind of impact does this have on the profession?
20. Which one comes first for you – having bread or respecting ethical issues? Describe why.
21. Do journalists pay for information in ERTA? /to get news and programs from sources/. Do you know when it becomes ethical problem to pay for information?
22. Where do you think the line be drawn to prevent bribery and gift taking in ERTA? Is it okay to take food, beverages and other invitations?

Appendix II

Interview guide questions for media managers

1. How do you explain the ethics and responsibility of journalists in your organization?
2. What kind of ethical problems do journalists encounter while covering news?
3. Is there any evidence of your reporters taking money and gifts for news or programs they produce?
4. Do you have complaints from sources for unfair coverage or not being covered after paying the reporter? If so would you tell us some?

5. Are there any examples of sources complaining that reporters ask for payments to cover programs and news? If so what for instance?
6. Why do you think journalists receive gifts and bribes from sources?
7. Can we say journalists trespass ethical standards because they are less trained in the field?
8. Do you have editorial guidelines to ban freebies or bribes in your media institution?
9. Are contract and freelance journalists there in your institution? Why do you think journalists accept bribes while reporting?
10. Does your organization have any rules about paying for information? In what cases does it prohibit paying for sources?
11. What about editorial influence – editors forcing journalists to cover news for payments they receive from sources?
12. Do you think lack of training has influence on such kind of unethical behavior? How?

Appendix III
The following are attitudinal test questionnaires for reporters and editors

S.N		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I do not like the profession of journalism because people have bad attitude towards journalists.					
2.	I believe that journalists are entrusted with high social responsibility.					
3.	I am highly satisfied with the salary that I am paid in ERTA					
4.	I feel that my education and training is directly related to my present career.					
5.	Because of lack of professional training, I sometimes act unethically since I do not know the profession's ethical values.					
6.	Social responsibility without having one's bread is meaningless.					
7.	Unless there is some other means to support my life, I cannot exist with the normal salary that ERTA pays me.					
8.	Sources put pressure on journalists to accept bribes and gifts while covering news and programs.					
9.	I do not mind if I am paid additional per diems and pocket money for workshops and training I cover for news.					
10.	Regardless of low salary, I have moral responsibility to provide the public with accurate information.					
11.	People I meet have positive outlook toward the profession of journalism and journalists in ERTA.					
12.	I won't change my mind to accept freebies and bribes although there might be encouraging force behind.					

Appendix IV
Interview Guide Questions for NGO Workers

1. Journalists say many NGOs pay to get news coverage. Why is that NGOs pay for journalists?
2. Is it on their own consent that NGOs pay journalists while they are covering news? Do journalists request for additional payments?
3. Has your organization ever paid for a program or news coverage? If so what was the occasion?
4. Do journalists negotiate in the process of news coverage with NGOs?
5. Did you ever accuse a journalist for his/her unethical behavior?