Soiled palm and tainted conscience: Influence of demographic variables on the perception of Nigerian journalists on freebies and gratifications

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of demographic variables on the perception of Nigerian journalists about freebies and gratifications, their perception of the role of news sources on the phenomenon, contributions of the media organizations as well as societal influence on journalist corruption. Anchored on the political economy of news sourcing and the Need theory, the study adopted survey method to generate its data. Questionnaires were administered on 120 randomly sampled journalists in the South West zone of Nigeria. Data were analyzed with SPSS statistical tools and findings revealed a strong linkage between the economic status of the journalists and their predisposition to accepting freebies and gratifications. The study also found that media organizations had been passive in addressing journalist corruption because of their poor wage system. Media corruption was also found to be influenced by graft in the larger society while it was discovered that corruption was a two-way affair between journalists and news sources. The study concluded that until the socioeconomic conditions that fuel media corruption were tackled, quest for professionalism and ethical journalism would continue to be a mirage.

Key Words: Soiled Palm, Tainted Conscience, Journalists, Perceptions, Freebies, Gratifications

Introduction

Throughout the nations of the world, it is a known fact that an ideal journalism is built upon the principle of truth, objectivity and the pursuit of public good. Any acts which compromise these are considered detrimental to the journalism profession and ethics. However, one of the infamous acts and practices that have plagued journalism for several decades, without visible solutions, is acceptance of freebies and gratifications which have been blamed on several factors, including poor adherence to ethical values, poor working condition, lack of motivation, career uncertainty and economic challenges faced by many journalists (Robie, 2006). These factors, among others, create conditions that encourage journalists to think mainly of their personal survival, rather than professional integrity and successful career. Beside these factors, Mudhai (2007) considered greed and consideration for personal aggrandizement as one that encourage practitioners to see the profession as passport to quick wealth.In many cases, self-interest does inform journalists' response to corruption temptation (Lodamo, 2008). Thus, Florentino-Hofileña (2010) posits that it is corruption that destroys journalism the most and tarnishes its noble intentions. It is argued that media corruption thrives because many media organizations turn blind eye to the practice or tacitly encourage it by withholding salaries for months, while some practitioners also consider it a norm that cannot be erased. Media corruption manifests in certain forms, such as monetary or material exchange between media personnel and news sources, either

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JCMR Journal of Communication and Media Research, Vol. 13, No. 2, October 2021, pp. 99-109

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to have access to media space (Quansah, Ako-Gyima& Boateng, 2012), promoting or endorsing certain viewpoints, eliminating unfavourable stories(Mudhai, 2007), settling scores, fabricating stories, or shutting out opposing views.

In Nigeria, for instance, the practice has become so widespread that some media houses, concerned about the unwholesome practices, have issued notices to members of the public to report unethical practices by media workers for official sanction. Such notices have become regular feature in *The Punch*, Nigeria's highest circulating newspaper. The newspaper publishes such warning regularly on its back page (The Punch, Wednesday, 04 January 2012, Back page).The same warning is contained in the *Daily Trust*, another highest circulating newspaper in northern part of the country. This shows how glaring and threatening the problem is. The practice is so widespread in spite of the prevalence of a Code of Conduct for Nigerian journalists, which frowns at it. The Nigeria Union of Journalists, for instance, in the Ilorin Declaration on code of conduct regarding reward and gratification on March 20, 1998, in its article 7, outlaws soliciting bribe or gratification or any form of patronage to suppress or publish an information, or demanding payment for publishing news which was considered to be at variance with the journalistic ideals of accuracy, unbiased or factual reports (Nigeria Union of Journalists, 1998).

Several studies have been conducted on the nature of media corruption, forms and pattern as well as the ethical challenges created by the acceptance of freebies and gratifications and the manipulation of news content as well as compromise of news values (Mpagaze, 2010; Quansah et al, 2012). This study however, takes the debate further by investigating the influence of demographic variables on the perception of Nigerian journalists about freebies and gratifications, their perception of the role of news sources on the phenomenon, contributions of the media organizations as well as societal influence on journalist corruption. This therefore, forms the fulcrum of the investigation and the data on which the findings of the study are based.

Research Questions

1. What influence does demographic status have on the perception of Nigerian journalists on freebies and gratifications?
2. How have the media organizations fared in checking corruption by journalists?
3. In what way does societal culture impact on freebies and gratifications in journalism?
4. What role do news sources play in the prevalence of freebies and gratifications among Nigerian journalists?

Conceptualizing Freebies and Brown Envelope Syndrome in Journalism

The prevalence of freebies and brown envelope in journalism is a serious subject of global discourse. The rate of its practice and prevalence varies from one country to the other. For instance, Vaidya (2008), in stereotyping the practice in India confirms that almost every press conference held in that country is concluded with a gift-sharing ritual, during which the organiserswould hand each journalist a gift-wrapped box. Also, according to Ven-hwei, Joseph and Zhongdang (2005), a sizable number of journalists in China Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan accept that freebies such as free gift, free meals and frees trips is commonplace among their peers. It has also been asserted that acceptance of freebies is not considered as corruption,in spite of the existence of the journalists' codes of ethicsin the three countries that frowns at such acts. Corruption has been reported to have permiated the media in Fiji and Papua New Guinea as many journalists have continued to betray their conscience for gratifications to augment low salaries (Robie, 2006).

Researching into the widespread nature of corruption in African journalism, Quansahet al, (2012), with particular emphasis on Ghana, report that the issue of brown envelope has gradually gained roots in journalistic practice in Ghana to theextent that some journalists request them from programme organizers before putting forwarda story for publication. They canvass that some journalists cover conferences for free cashinstead of chasing newsworthy stories, and skewing the news agenda, such that what makes it into thenewspapers is not necessarily the most relevant news of the day, but rather promotional stories aboutevent organizers. In Kenya, Mudhai(2007) reports that the newspapers were asking forKsh 250,000 ($3,800 or £1,812) to carry oneheadline story while some politicians werespending about Ksh 6m ($90,000 or £43,505)per month to suppress any headline materialthat may come from the government and politicians alike. He asserts that itis a known fact that some editors and sub-editorshave amassed great wealth from taking bribes. Mpagaze (2010) confirms that corruption was rampant in the Tanzanian media.According to his findings, journalists in Tanzania admitted taking money from their sourcesof information. Study has shown that in somecountries, government agencies even allocate funds to be

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paid to journalists (The Asian NewsMedia Daily, July 23, 2006).In Nigeria, journalists are given hundreds of dollars in brown envelopes 'forexpenses' simply to attend conferences(*The Economist*, December 19, 2006 Edition).

Prevalence and conflict of interests

Journalism's primary obligation is to the truth and its first loyalty is to the citizens. However,many journalists, it is observed, had become too immersed and trapped in the unpleasant realities as prevalent in the Nigerian situation that they findall sorts of justifications for compromises that are dictated by wealth accumulation or, simply survival measure.For others, complete ignorance or indifference to the basic tenets of journalism has caused themto compromise their integrity as journalists and engaging in unethical practices like corruption. Sanders (2003) observes that freebies and brown envelopes are forms of bribery that mark the ethical pitfalls ofresponsible 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, thepractice of brown envelopes and freebies has continued virtually in every parts of the world, undermining trust in thejournalists' work and contradicting the social responsibility of the journalists themselves to the society.

Media practitioners, especially journalists,are often overwhelmed by conflict of interest as to whether priority should be given to their profession or personal isssues. In this kind of situation, professional and ethical values are usually hung in the balance. Ven-hwei, Joseph, and Zhongdang (2005) observe that conflict of interests in any profession arises from conflicting pressures on and/or competing loyalities of professionals that hinderthe performance of their professsional role. In other words, itis a clash of loyalities between one's profession and outside interests that undermines the credibility of the supposed moral agent. In this context, journalists are often confronted by conflict of interests between professionalism and economic security; and any self-quest towards addressing their unfavourable economic status can actually sway their loyalities from the former to the latter.

Lengel (2000) equates brown envelope to bribery which is said to be detrimental to professionalism. She posits that payment for news coverage is tantamount to bribery. In totality, brownenvelope undermines the journalist's independence as the facts of stories are often distortedto suit the interest of news sources that have money to pay for coverage. Journalists andeditors who turn up at events such as news conferences, workshops, annual general meetings ofbanks or seminars are those who are paid to run stories for the news sources(Quansah et al, 2012). Further advancing this line of argument, Diedong (2006) reports that journalists are simply overwhelmed by their greed which overshadows their professjonal responsibility in offering honest and dedicated service to their public which they had sworn to serve as the fourth estate of the realm. According to Lodamo (2008), some newsrooms have arguably moved from being simply biased in reporting to beingenmeshed in corruption. Aluding to the fact that the issue of corruption has continued to demote the nobility of the media profession, Lopes (2007) observes that freedom of the media to report is never enough to tame corruption, especially where journalists lack professional decorum. In the same vein, former South African President, Tabo Mbeki,warns that the media ought to conduct itself in ways that would not undermine public morality and acceptable behaviour in a civilized state (Mbeki, 2007).

Gratification in Global Media Palance: Many Faces, One Soul

Obviously, corruption has been systematically structured into media profession to the extent that various names have been given to it by journalists in different parts of the world, particularly Africa. For instance, in Japan, it is called "*Omiyage*" i.e. red envelope journalism. Also, in South Korea, they called it "*Ch'ongi*" meaning white envelope journalism. The Ghanian journalists refer to it as "*Soli*" i.e. solidarity. In Zambia, it is called "*Ndalama yamatako*"(Kasoma, 2009), which is literaly explained to mean"money of the buttocks", a euphemism for "sitting allowance," while the Tanzanians call it *mshiko, kitu kidogo, mkukuta* and so on.In Nigeria, it is known by various names such as *"kola", "goro", "kwa", "riba", "gbalamu"* and *"egunje"*, in addition to English euphemisms like "family support", "betterlife", PR, "the journalists are going", "energizer", "Ghana-must-go," "handshake" (Adio, 2001; Adebanwi,2008; Agbanu, 2009),"last paragraph", "keske," "communiqué," among others.

Method of Study

This study investigated the influence of demographic variables on the perception of Nigerian journalists about freebies and

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gratifications, their perception of the role of news sources on the phenomenon, the contributions of the media organizations as well as societal influence on journalist corruption. Survey method was adopted to gather data for the study. There are 148 journalists in Kwara State. In view of the fact that the respondents were few, the researchers decided to make the entire population the sample for the study in line with the proposition by Park, Sullivan, Planeta, Gallezot, et al (2015, p.41) that "If we are carrying out an opinion survey from a large population, and we want the confidence intervals for our sample proportions to have a 95% confidence level with an error of plus or minus 0.03%, then the minimum sample size required is 1,068 individuals. If we are to sample a small population, the sample size would be smaller and as population size becomes smaller than 300, you might as well survey everyone in the population." This same proposition is corroborated by Piroska (2018) who notes that most statisticians agreed that the minimum sample size to generate any meaningful data is 100, and that if a population is smaller than 100, it is better to survey the whole population. Thus, 148 journalists from mainstream media in Kwara state were purposely selected to participate in the study. Of the 148 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 120 were returned. The survey instrument was a 25 –item questionnaire divided into two parts. The first part sought answers for demographic variables while the second part consisted of 15-item likert- type questions which measured the perception of the journalists on the research questions. The data from the study was computed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) 21. The data was presented using simple tables, frequencies and percentages.

Results

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	80	66.7
	Female	40	33.3
	Total	120	100
Years in journalism	1-5	40	33.3
	6-10	32	26.7
	11-20	26	21.7
	21 and above	22	18.3
	Total	120	100

Table 1 reflects the demographics of the respondents which include gender and number of years spent in journalism by respondents. From the gender data, majority of the respondents were male, representing 66.7% of the sampled population while the female was about 33.3%. Average year of experience of the journalists that participated in the survey was 6 -10 (26.7%), and 11-20 (21.7%); the highest spending 1-5 years in the profession, representing (33.3%), and the least being those on 21 years and above, representing 18.3%.

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Table 2: Economic status of respondents and predisposition to freebies and gratification

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Salary status	Less than N50,000	57	47.5
	N50,000 –N100,000	63	52.5
	Total	**120**	**100**
Regularity of salary	Regular	37	30.8
	Irregular	48	40
	Never paid salary	35	29.2
	Total	**120**	**100**
Owed salary	None- less than 6 months	26	21.7
	6 months to 12 months	32	26.7
	12 – 15 months	32	26.7
	15 – 20 months	30	25
	Total	**120**	**100**
Undertaking part time job	Yes	46	38.3
	No	37	30.8
	May have to	37	30.8
	Total	**120**	**100**
Ever taken freebies or gratification	Yes	34	28.3
	No	26	21.7
	May consider to	29	24.2
	Never thought of it	31	25.8
	Total	**120**	**100**

Table 2 represents the economic status of the respondents and their predisposition to freebies and gratification. Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) earned less than N50, 000 ($139)a month and 52.5% earned between N50, 000 and N100, 000 ($139-$278) a month. On regularity of payment of salary, a little over a quarter (30.8%) received their salary regularly while nearly half (48%) did not receive regular salary and about a quarter (29.2%)did not receive salary at all. As for the length of period respondents were owed salary, less than a quarter (21.7%) were owed salary for not less than six months, about a quarter (26.7%)were owed salary for six to 12 months, and about a quarter (26.7%)were owed salary for 12 to 15 months. A quarter (25%)of the respondents was owed salary for 15 to 20 months. This shows that majority of the respondents were owed salary, the least being owed for less than six months.

To make ends meet, more than one third (38.3%) of the respondents undertook part time jobs, a little less than one third(30.8%) did not undertake part time jobs while another of the same percentage said they might have to consider undertaking part time jobs to augment their poor pay. In spite of their economic status, only a little over a quarter of the respondents (28.3%) said they had received freebies or gratification, less than a quarter (21.7%) said they had never received freebies or gratification and about a quarter (24.2%)said they might consider receiving freebies or gratification and more than a third of the respondents (35%)said they never thought of collecting freebies or gratification. Thus, it could be said that more than half of the respondents had or might receive freebies and gratifications.

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Table 3: Role of the media in freebies and gratification

VARIABLES	SD	D	N	A	SA
Gratification comes handy when salaries are late in coming or not sufficient	20(16.6%)	18(15%)	04(3.3%)	40(33.3%)	38(31.7%)
It will be difficult for media owners to check gratification by journalists because their welfare system is poor	18(15%)	28(23.3%)	06(5%)	35(29.1%)	33(27.5%)
Media managers do not pay sufficient wages to make journalists shy away from receiving gratification	0	0	0	67(55.8%)	53(44.1%)
Media companies do not sanction collection of freebies, hence it grows	0	0	0	82(68.3%)	38(31.6)

Table 3 refers to the role of the media in encouraging freebies and gratification. The table shows that majority (65.0%)of the respondents agreed that gratification comes handy when salaries were late in coming or not sufficient. A little over half (56.6%) of the respondents also agreed that it would be difficult for media owners to check gratification by journalists because their welfare system is poor. All the respondents (100.0%) also agreed that media managers did not pay sufficient wages to make journalists shy away from receiving gratification. In addition, all the respondents (100.0%) were of the opinion that media companies did not sanction collection of freebies, hence it grows.

Table 4: Impact of societal culture on freebies in journalism

VARIABLES	SD	D	N	A	SA
Freebies and gratification have become entrenched in journalism practice and will be difficult to stop	20(16.6%)	22(18.3%)	28(23.3%)	23(19.1%)	27(22.5%)
Corruption is a culture, hence gratification is an inherent culture in journalism	18(15%)	20(16.7%)	14(11.6%)	32(26.6%)	36(30%)

Table 4 refers to the impact of societal culture on freebies in journalism. It shows that more than one-third (41.6%) of the respondents agreed that freebies and gratification had become entrenched in journalism practice and would be difficult to stop. On corruption as a culture, a little over half (56.6%) of the respondents agreed that corruption is a culture, hence gratification is part of journalism culture.

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Table 5: Role news sources play in the prevalence of freebies and gratification among journalists

VARIABLES	SD	D	N	A	SA
Gratification is mutual between journalists and news sources	15(12.5%)	21(17.5%)	12(10%)	42(35%)	30(25%)
Receiving gratification enhances linkages and ties with news sources	20(16.6%)	25(20.8%)	13(10.8%)	30(25%)	32(26.7%)
Cases of collecting money for news or money to kill news do exist but they are few	0	0	0	61(50.8%)	59(49.1%)

Table 5 refers to the role news sources play in the prevalence of freebies and gratification among journalists. The table shows that more than half of the respondents (60%) agreed that gratification is mutual between journalists and news sources. Also, a little over half (51.7%)of the respondents were of the opinion that receiving gratification enhances linkages and ties with news sources. Virtually all the respondents (100.0%) agreed that cases of collecting money for news or money to kill news exist but they were few.

Discussion

Media corruption is commonplace in Nigeria. Many journalists obviously consider it a norm, because corruption has permeated virtually every aspect of the national life. For instance, more than 50% of the respondents in this study said they had or might receive freebies and gratification, hence did not see the practice as corruption or professionally wrong. This might also have been influenced by culture as 41.7% said corruption had become so entrenched in the profession that it would be difficult to stop it, while more than half (56%) see corruption as part of culture, hence an integral party of the journalistic culture. They also considered freebies and gratification as complementary to salaries which were poor or often late in coming. The study reveals that corruption is endemic in Nigerian journalism because the conditions that encourage it abound. There are two views on the impact of freebies and gratification on journalists' work. While there appears to exist no total agreement among scholars on categorising freebies and brown envelope as corruption, some believe it is a way of showing appreciation to journalists and that it does not have anything to do with the content of media reports (Robie, 2006). Others are however, of the opinion that receiving favours or money from news sources is a corrupt practice that might likely influence whatever is published by the receiver-journalists (Lengel, 2000).

The study was able to reveal a linkage between journalists' economic status and predisposition to gratification as indicated in the RQ1 of the study. In view of the poor wage structure, owed salaries or not being paid salaries at all, more than half of the respondents said they had or might consider receiving freebies and gratifications in order to make ends meet. This indicates that the economic status of the respondents plays a role in the predisposition of the journalists to receiving gratifications. This is further buttressed by the revelation that majority (65.0%) of the respondents were of the opinion that gratification was relied upon when salaries were late in coming or not adequate to meet their needs. Thus, the finding of the study on the role poor wages play in media corruption is in congruence with similar revelations in other studies. For instance, Robie (2006) succinctly argues that meagre salaries has the potential of swaying a journalist's stand on an issue, while news sources will find it easy to persuade such a journalist with cash or some incentives. This scenario plays out easily among journalists and unscrupulous politicians in Indonesia,the

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Philippines, Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islandsas pointed out by Robie (2006).The phenomenon does not exclude Africa where, as indicated by Quansah et al (2012), ethics gets easily crucified with objectivity and fairness being thrown overboard as journalists, assailed by hunger and deprivations, get tempted to collect cash in order to feed their families or get induced as a result of not being paid for half the year, when a source offers money for transport to get them to a news event. As argued by Aliagan (2019), "In an industry where many journalists do not earn regular salary, it would be extremely difficult for many of them to discountenance financial temptation" (p.291). Aliagan further mentions the online medium, *Premium Times*, which reported incidents of picketing and strike actions by journalists over non-payment of salaries by *ThisDay*, one of the national dailies in Nigeria.

The issue of poor wages has always been on the front burner of discourses on corruption and journalism. World over, payment of wages that are not commensorate with labour had led to series of controversies. Krüger(cited in Lodamo, 2008), for instance, argues that journalism is not about the best paid profession in the world, and many journalists have had to do something else other than journalism to augmenttheir wages, as reflected in this study where more than one third (38.3%) of the respondents undertook part time jobs, and a little less than one third(30.8%) said they might have to consider undertaking part time jobs to augment their poor pay. Also, Day (2003) lamentsthat at some time journalists were poorly paid, were less educated and less conscious of journalism ethics, hence easily influenced to accept gifts fromnews sources. Robie (2006) argues that journalists in developing countries are one of the least paid in the world, hence are prone gratifications from news sources, and are easily prone to corruption. As reported by Chishimba and Chhay (2007), Zambian journalists say they cannotsurvive with $70 dollars a month and must get additional money from workshops and press conferences. Also, journalists in Cambodia who work for domestic media do receive bribesbut foreign Cambodian correspondents are excluded from such practices. Lodamo (2008) reports that low salary or low economic status are the reasons that journalists accept envelopes and freebies in Ethiopia.Thus, as long as the economic security of journalists are not assured, ethics will be in disarray, because as argued by a Zambian journalist quoted in Chishimba and Chhay (2007), ethics does not feed a journalist or his family. A senior journalist was quoted by Olukotun (2005) as describing a typical Nigerian journalist as an unsung hero, earning deplorable low wages and often suffered from delayed salary payment.

The media organizations have not done well in checking freebies and gratifications among journalists due to their poor wages. This is evident from the finding on RQ2 of the study which sought to investigate how the media organizations have fared in checking corruption by the journalists. More than half (56.6%) of the respondents opined that in view of the poor wages paid by the media organizations, it would be difficult for them to check gratification by journalists. All the respondents agreed that media managers were not in position to stop corruption because of inadequate wages they pay. Also, all the respondents were of the opinion that media companies did not sanction collection of journalist corruption, hence it grows without challenge. This appears a vote of no confidence on the media as virtually all the respondents were of the opinion that media houses have done nothing to check media corruption because they are also culpable. It is arguably that either the media themselves are corrupt through patronage system with news sources and/or the advertisers or because of their poor welfare system which hinders them from wielding the big stick during an infraction by their employees. It has been observed that the primary objective of establishing either electronic or print media outfit by many media entrepreneurs is profit. Thus, like every other business, media is about investing in information gathering/consultancy and selling of it or otherwise to whom or where it would be more profitable. Consequently, media owners tend to give more preference to profit at the expense of professional and ethical values.

The practice of accepting gratifications popularly referred to asthe brown envelope syndrome has created a perennial credibility problem for the media profession. Analysts generally concur thatthe media businesses and practitioners stand'accused,' as well as are culpable for the unholy practices that tell on the credibility of the journalism profession (Mudhai, 2007).This argument appears to be in tandem with the findings from this study that economic insecurity experienced through poor salaries, delayed salaries, owed salaries or salaries not being paid at all to some journalists foster media corruption.It has also been observed that one of the reasons for the poor performance of Africanjournalism is the difficult conditions under which African journalists are operating which naturally affect their reporting. Underpaid, poorly trained and workingunder both political and commercial pressures, many African journalists

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suffer from the devaluing of their profession, which has left them vulnerable and isolated.Typifying these conditions are journalists in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, where salaries are not paid or where journalists are simply left to rely on gratifications from news sources. One of the newspapers reported as giving its journalists identity card as 'meal ticket,' ostensibly to negotiate bribe, is *ThisDay* which has a well-known history of not paying many of its staff regular salary. This had resulted in series of industrial actions in the newspaper in the past.

The study was also able to establish that corruption in the larger society has had its imprint on journalism. As RQ3 of the study sought to unravel the impact of societal culture on freebies and gratification, corruption has been seen as an integral part of journalism, and would be difficult to stop, as opined by more than one-third of the respondents, just as more than half of .the respondents agreed that corruption is a culture, and has been part of journalism culture. Most journalists hardly see freebies and gratifications as a taboo or sin. It was seen as something that complements their poor wages. RQ4 of the study sought to find out the role of news sources in promoting corruption among journalists. This results from the growing debate about whether corruption in journalism is one-way or not,as to who between the journalists and news sources is guilty of corruption and whether offering or collection of freebies and brown envelope is tantamount to corruption.This study reveals that corruption is mutual between journalists and news sources, as canvassed by more than half of the respondents. It also enhances linkages and ties with news sources as reasoned by a little over half of the respondents. Virtually all the respondents stated that cases of collecting money for news or money to kill news exist but they were few. In essence, the finding from the current study affirmed that corruption is two-way; between the giver (news sources) and the taker (journalists). This partly conforms to the thesis by Lodamo (2008) that money and favours can flow in two ways; from news sources tojournalists in the hopes of attracting or shaping news coverage and from journalists to news sources in thehopes of getting information. Many authors in media corruption discourse appear to have adopted a one-way approach whereby the media practitioners are often accused of being guilty; whereas, news sources also have their own share in the blame.The journalists, news source trading in graft can be seen in the Nigerian context where stories are negotiated with news sources for a fee, before they are reported (Aliagan, 2019; Aliagan, 2020).

Apparently, journalism in Nigeria degenerates daily because some practitioners forget or do not know what its basic principles are. Florentino-Hofileña(2010), for instance, asserts that some practitioners who have no educational background whatsoever in journalism think that all it involves is interviewing, getting the story,writing, reporting, and outdoing the competition. She bemoans the little or no time allocated for reflection or constructive criticism of the work that is churnedout on deadline by practitioners. There is little debate about the rightness or wrongness of editorialdecisions because harmony in the newsroom is paramount. With emphasis on the situation in Asia, Florentino-Hofileñareports that there is little opportunityfor peer criticism because journalists are part of a small community whose membersare bound to bump into each other during coverage, and news is determined by the news gathering or news originating bureaucracy as opined by Tunstal (cited in Aliagan, 2006).For Cohen-Almagor (2008), professionalism in journalism can be promoted through objectivity whichinvolvesaccuracy, truthfulness, fairness and balance, and moralneutrality.However, he says these can only be attained where the journalists is not encumbered by any form of pecuniary interests. However, the profit motive of media owners as well as the economic security of journalists themselves have made the bastardization of these elements of professionalism inevitable, most especially in the developing countries of the world, including Nigeria.

Conclusion

Media corruption is as old journalism itself. The age-long debate about the nature of journalism has thrown up the issue of ethical dilemma for the profession. The political economy of the media or the news has shown that news media are under the constant influence of government, ownership and control, news sources, advertisers and the elite clique. In this study of freebies and gratifications, certain societal forces might be said to be at play to influence journalists in their work and shape their response to corruption stimulus. These are the forces of ownership, editorial control, news sources, advertisers, and the elite class who are constantly putting the journalists under undue pressure to manipulate the news. As journalists are not robots, they are persistently vulnerable to manipulations from these forces. The need theory suggests that once the basic needs of economic

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security and the expectations of the journalists for shelter, good wage, mobility, and advancement are threatened, professionalism will suffer. The social conditions that fuel media corruption, as indeed the freebies and brown envelope syndrome in journalism are constant and unresolved, and until they are tackled there is little that the drive for professionalism can achieve.

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