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Chapter

Media and the Uncertain Fight against Corruption

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Abstract

This chapter is an extract of a whole study conducted to examine the role of the media in fighting corruption in Lira city, northern Uganda. The objectives of this chapter are to: establish the reasons for the persistence of corruption in the public administration of Lira City, examine the role of the media as a critical tool used in the fight against corruption in Lira city, examine the limitations of the media in the fight against corruption in Lira city and identify solutions to the challenges that hinder media in fighting corruption in the City's administration. This chapter derives its data from media practitioners, public officials and business people through interviewer-administered questionnaires: A total of (139) respondents and eight key informant interviews (KIIs) from a sample size of 101 respondents out of a study population of 147 inform this work. The author reviewed relevant literature and documents on the role of the media in fighting corruption from various sources.

Keywords: media, corruption, role, fight, Lira City

1. Introduction

The notion of corruption means different things to different people. According to Buckland [1], Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption is a global challenge affecting both developed and developing countries such as Uganda. The effects of corruption include: retarding the effectiveness of service delivery, social welfare and general development of the affected area. As postulated by Jain [2], corruption increases the cost of investment and doing business while giving undue advantage to the corrupt who offer bribes leading to unfair competition and unbalanced socio-political and economic growth in the affected area.

In their discussions Flanary and Watt [3], state that in a bid to fight corruption in Uganda, the NRM government, since taking over power in 1986, embarked on among others, enacting several anti-corruption laws and established several anti-corruption agencies including: integrating the civil society, private sector and the media, to help in the fight against corruption. Whereas the media has been brought on board to complement government efforts in the fight against corruption [4], reveals that few studies have investigated the roles and effectiveness of the media in the fight against corruption. Researchers and authors have not extensively reported on possible reasons explaining why corruption has persisted in the public sector and the challenges faced

by the media in the fight against corruption in the country. This chapter, therefore, tries to shed more light on the gray areas in the fight against corruption with the hope that the situation and challenges in Uganda may not be different from other countries where corruption is endemic.

2. The roots of corruption

Corruption is a global phenomenon whose acts according to Arnold and Lal [5] are embedded in institutional practices and everyday lives and are perceived as fixed and uncontestable. Being a global vice, corruption knows no boundary; it affects high, middle as well as low-income economies alike and all individuals therein irrespective of race, nationality, language spoken or level of education. Corruption such as bribery causes insecurity in the economy by increasing the cost of transactions and impedes both domestic and foreign investments, reallocates talents leading to ineffective economic results. A study by Šumah [6] adds that corruption imposes a regressive tax which ends up burdening both commercial and service activities undertaken by the small entities that drive the economy, and it also destroys the legitimacy of the state. Corruption is classified into two major forms: grand corruption which [7] alternatively refers to as ‘Tigers’ and state capture, and petty corruption also referred to as ‘flies’. Grand corruption involves the manipulation of the state instruments by the politicians to benefit or profiteer from public resources and services. Here, the practitioners distort policies to a point that they own up to the state to pursue their interests. On the other hand, Graycar [7] reveals that petty corruption involves lower-level officials who may have the opportunity to do wrong things such as using their position to falsify official records that may lead to a person not paying taxes as the officer gets a kickback or other favors.

However, Šumah [6] believes that the causes of corruption vary from country to country though there are generic causes such as low media freedom, the influence of religion where Protestant countries are argued to have lower levels of corruption, the closed nature of the country’s economy, low level of a country’s income and low level of education in a country where the perpetrators are not easily identified or exposed.

The influence of a country’s political system and adherence to the rule of law is central in the fight against corruption as [8] argues that, in a democratic country where the corrupt are exposed and heavily punished, many would-be practitioners of corruption would shy away from it. He opines that a dictatorship and lassie-fare kind of political system are a breeding ground for high levels of corruption. Treisman reasons that this means a bad political system, lack of political will, weak judicial system and deliberate failure to punish the corrupt are a factor for the increase in corruption.

Research also shows that there is a positive relationship between corruption and economic development in China due to a transition to a market economy and that provinces with greater openness, anti-corruption efforts, higher educational attainment, historic influence from the Anglo-American church universities, higher wages to government employees and more media freedom had the lowest levels of corruption, and the reverse was true. Dong and Torgler [9] suggest that this means that the absence or the low levels of the above would end up encouraging and promoting corruption.

Due to its dangers to the economy and social welfare, the fight against corruption has attracted not only the international, regional and national actors but also the CSOs whose prominent actors include the media.

According to Enke and Borchers [10], media is a plural form of medium, and it refers to channels of communication. Traditionally, the media was categorized into major three types.

Print media, electronic and outdoor or out-of-home media. The print media entails newspapers and magazines, broadcast or electronic media which majorly includes radio and television and outdoor or out-of-home media (OOH) where the use of banners, flyers, pinned messages, paintings and writing materials on walls, among others. However, Peterson [11] states that the latest media category to join the rest is the internet-enabled social media. This category has become so significant of late with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and TikTok, among others. He also stresses that the media plays a critical role in the fight against corruption; each media outlet acts alone or in a unified national, regional or global network depending on the nature of corruption being fought.

Several legal provisions in Uganda lend the media and media practitioners the right to fight corruption, for instance, CAP 4 (41) of the 1995 Constitution and the Access to Information Act (2005) mandate any citizen including media practitioners to access information in the possession of state officials except for the information that [12] believe may jeopardize national security. Whereas the Leadership Code Act (1992) as amended in 2017 sets limits on the financial behavior of public officials, requires them to declare their assets and liabilities, which [13] believes is an enabler for the media to demand such accountability lawfully. Walyemera [14] argues that the Uganda Communication Commission was set out in the year 2013 as a regulator and to develop the media in Uganda, including mandating the media to take a lead in advocating for development in the communities. All these and the international protocols and declarations to which Uganda is a signatory such as the Universal Declaration of human rights Assembly [15] which mandates individuals to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Therefore, as guided by Schauseil [16] and Stapenhurst [17], the role of the media in fighting corruption anywhere can be both tangible and intangible. It is tangible when some sort of visible outcome can be attributed to a particular news story or series of stories – for instance, the launching of the investigation by authorities, the scrapping of a law or policy, the impeachment or forced resignation of a crooked politician, the firing of an official, the launching of judicial proceedings, the issuing of public recommendations by a watchdog body and so on.

A study by UNODC also observes that the media helps in empowering citizens of any given country to monitor and question the actions and inactions of elected or appointed officials in instances of corruption. This is the reason media reports on corruption have taken centre stage at the global level since there are even online platforms as an example of media that allow citizens in many countries to report instances of corruption by mail, phone, text message and other channels. Arnold and Lal [5] cite India, for instance, where an online platform dubbed ipaidabribe.com aggregates citizen reports to show which departments and institutions are most vulnerable to corruption. The platform also publishes reports of corruption, expert advice and links to news stories about corruption. A study by Enikolopov et al. [18] provides evidence that social media can influence the market and trigger accountability mechanisms in large and state-controlled companies even in a country with limited political competition and censorship of traditional media.

The broadcast media is equally critical in promoting good governance and controlling corruption: Ayoola [19] believes it not only raises public awareness about

corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies but also investigates and reports the incidents of corruption. By drawing attention to behaviors that are generally perceived as unacceptable and exposing such behaviors as corruption, Ackerman et al. [20] declares that the media can raise public awareness, activate anticorruption values and generate outside pressure from the public against corruption. Alluding to the role of the media, Kuznik et al. [21] states that fighting corruption is meticulous and broad-based and should be embraced by all echelons of a society with the media serving as a conduit of information and education.

According to Tangri and Mwenda [22], the press is the main instrument for news gathering and investigation of public officials' abuses and illegalities, uncovering scandals and 'misdeeds of the increasingly corrupt executive'.

To Sharma et al. [23], gathering available open-source information is the first and most approachable step of the data collection process on corruption, which is done by the media. While agenda-setting is a classic role of the mass media, ICT is very effective as a watchdog and a public forum in the fight against corruption. As such, a crucial element of a country's anti-corruption programme according to Staphenurst [17] is electronic media, especially broadcast media. The media does this by setting the agenda for public discussion on corruption cases, enhancing and energizing public debate and by heightening a sense of accountability among politicians through their news and programmes. Thus, Adeyemi [24] observes that the press serves as an agent of change and, as the watchdog of society, is expected to play a part in ensuring transparency and accountability in government as well as contribute to the efforts of crime-fighting institutions to curb corruption in the country.

In the circumstances, there are three mechanisms through which the media influence our perceptions and norms: media act as a watchdog, agenda setters and public forum for a diverse set of voices. Arnold and Lal [5] state that in their function as a watchdog, the media act as monitors of government behavior and guard the public interest by highlighting cases of maladministration, abuse of power and corruption. Thus, Nnaane [25] believes it is indisputable that the media have been quite pivotal in the fight against corruption.

In Uganda, since the 1990s, there has been a proliferation of media houses due to the liberalization of the media sector by the NRM government which [26] maintain enacted a national constitution in 1995 with provisions like Article 29 (a) which entails freedom of speech and that of the media and press. This was further strengthened by other legal provisions such as the UCC Act (2013), Uganda Journalist Statute (1995) and Electronic Media Act (1996). The media houses are owned by the state, private individuals and organizations and are all mandated by law to fight corruption.

Sanyu FM and Capital FM are among the oldest Frequency Modulation (FM) radio stations in Uganda after Uganda Broadcasting Corporation radio which is owned by the state. In the year 2013, ACME [27] revealed that there were over 100 FM stations but by December 2020, there were 309 stations in the country's 14 broadcasting regions, covering over 130 districts. However, in December 2020, the Uganda Communication Commission-UCC [28], which regulates the media in Uganda, published a list of only 199 radio stations as the approved ones. This has been a great leap in the media considering the few numbers in the 1990s.

Lango Sub-region and Lira City where the author focused much of his attention have witnessed a transformative media development trend from the year 1998 when Radio Lira went on air, followed by Radio Apac 92.9 FM in the year 1999, later radio

Rhino FM in 2000, Radio WA FM in 2001, Unity FM in 2001, and now Lango has a total of 15 radio stations in operation with seven broadcasting from Lira City. These radio stations, just as observed by Nogara [4], play a role in informing, educating and entertaining their audiences. Within key elements of their work, some of them have built a name in setting the agenda for the communities they serve, reporting about corruption, investigating corruption allegations and advocating against the vice. However, little has been documented through empirical studies on their fight against corruption. This chapter has therefore delved into several pieces of literature that collaboratively confirm the centrality of the media in fighting corruption not only in Lira City but throughout Uganda and globally in societies where media enjoy some degree of independence.

3. Uganda's corruption perception index (CPI)

Corruption is a global phenomenon whose practices [5] maintain are often embedded in institutional practices and everyday lives and are perceived as fixed and uncontestable. Corruption in Uganda is deep-rooted, occurring in all sectors – public and private, and several forms including grand and petty corruption. It has continued unabated, despite the numerous anti-corruption efforts and commitments that [29] claims the state and non-state actors have undertaken. In the global corruption perception index of 2021, Uganda was ranked 144th least corrupt country out of 180 countries or territories ranked, where Uganda scored only 27 points out of 100 on a scale of '0' as being the most corrupt to '100' is the cleanest. The report indicates that from the year 2013 to 2021, Uganda's best performance in reducing the level of corruption was only 28 points achieved in 2019 according to Bosman and Clifford [30], meaning that corruption in the country is persistent!

However, Krishnan [31] claims that Uganda had been on a steady corruption scale with the year 2012 holding the worst record for the country as a year where corruption was highest in the last 10 years at 29 points perception, followed by the year 2019 where the country hit 28 points. In the year 2020 and 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a slight reduction of one point, that is, 27 points from the 28 of 2019. The report puts the years 2015 and 2016 as the best years where the corruption perception index for Uganda stood at 25 points, much as in the two subsequent years, it climbed to 26 points before doubling to 28 in 2019. This trend shows that, much as there could be efforts to fighting corruption in Uganda, the vice remains a threat that needs concerted efforts to fight from different stakeholders such as the media, other CSOs, government and international stakeholders.

For the case of Uganda, the author relied on the available data on corruption and the role of the media in the fight against corruption from the Ugandan perspective, right from the inception of the UCC Act (2013) to date. The above legal provision has been emboldened by other legal provisions such as the Access to Information Act (2005), the anti-corruption Act (2009), which sets out specialized anti-corruption courts, Leadership Code Act (2002) as discussed by Gumisiriza and Mukobi [32] and most importantly, the 1995 Press and Journalists Statute discussed by [33] and the 1995 Constitution of Uganda as amended, where the entire Chapter 4 is dedicated to matters of rights and freedom including freedom of speech and that of the media to investigate and report independently on different issues including corruption.

4. Significance of this chapter to the study of corruption

This write-up offers significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the existing body of knowledge on media and the fight against corruption. In terms of theoretical contributions, while studies on corruption have largely used principal agency theory to investigate the subject of corruption, this chapter combines the principal agency theory by Delreux and Adriaensen [34] and the cultivation theory by Keim et al. [35] to help us understand the phenomenon of corruption because the latter bridges the gaps in the former, and this makes an interesting theoretical contribution to study and understanding of corruption.

The discussions in this piece are relevant to the following stakeholders and in the following ways: to media organizations and practitioners, the study can be useful in identifying media's shortfalls in effectively contributing to the fight against corruption and in resolving the contention or contradicting views on the role of the media in the fight against corruption in Uganda.

It is also significant for various stakeholders to appreciate the nature of corruption, its causes, effects, solutions or strategies for fighting the vice and the choice of partners in the fight. This chapter, therefore, comes in handy to help stakeholders examine the role of the media in fighting against corruption and establish reasons for the persistence of corruption in the public administration of local governments and central governments despite the existence of media, several anti-corruption agencies and actors to fight against it, identify limitations of the media in this war and find solutions to such limitations.

To the academics, this discourse may aid in identifying areas for further research especially new areas that can provide the potential for future research projects.

To the anti-corruption agencies such as parliament and the local governments, it can unearth critical areas that they could not discover or could have ignored in their fight against corruption and come out with policy recommendations on how best the anti-corruption agencies can use the media the fight against corruption.

5. Conceptualizing corruption

According to Jabareen [36], a conceptual framework is a network, or 'a plane', of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena. The concepts that constitute a conceptual framework support one another, articulate their respective phenomena and establish a framework-specific philosophy. It, therefore, explains the cause-effect relationships between variables, and in this case, the relationship between the independent variables, that is, the role of the media and the dependent variable which is the reduction in corruption prevalence/perception, and this eventually measures the role of the media in fighting corruption as shown below **Figure 1**.

The conceptual framework hypothesizes that when the media is effectively engaged in the fight against corruption through interventions such as playing a watchdog role, reporting, setting an agenda and advocacy, this may lead to increased awareness about the vice and dangers of corruption and increased collective action against corruption such as protests and demonstration, naming and shaming of the corrupt. This consequently may lead to a reduction in corruption incidences as may be evidenced by the increased unearthing of corruption incidences and improved service delivery. However, the effectiveness of the media in the fight against corruption

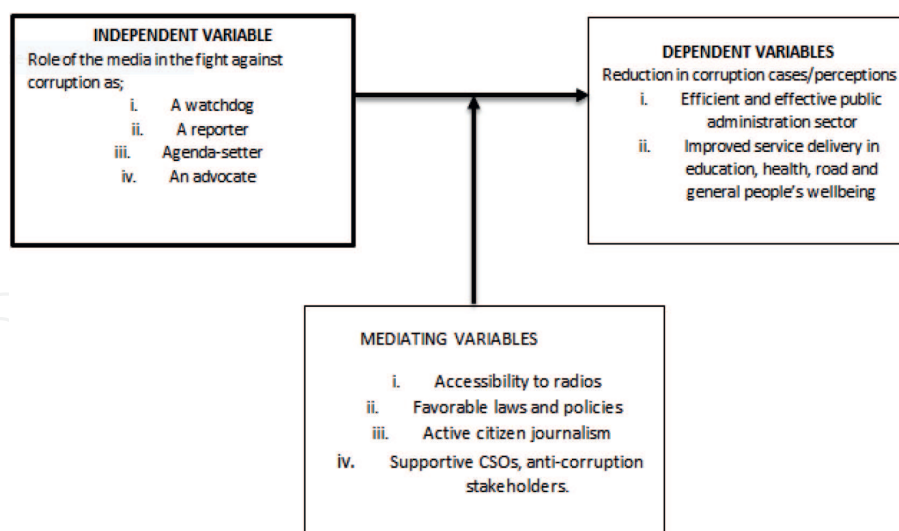


Figure 1.
 Conceptual framework. Source: constructed by the author.

depends on the accessibility to the radios by the citizens, the existence of favorable laws and policies, active citizen journalism and supportive anti-corruption institutions. The conceptual framework also assumes that there is a reciprocal relationship between the role of the media and the fight against corruption. This implies that when the media is stronger with good anti-corruption programs, then it leads to better results and a reduction in corruption prevalence, while a weaker media will lead to higher incidences of corruption.

5.1 Theorizing the concept of ‘corruption’

This discourse is anchored on the Principal Agency Theory which according to Mitnick [37] was coined by Michael Jensen and William Meckling in the 1970s. The theory postulates that, in the governance mechanism, there are two important partners; the ‘principal’ whom we can also refer to as the employer, and the other partner (employee) being the ‘agent’. In the fight against corruption case, the principal is the citizenry and the agent is the elected leader that forms the government. Their relationship is based on the self-interests of the parties, where the citizens hope to receive social services while the elected and appointed leaders want to satisfy their self-interests such as staying in power and also getting financial gain.

The degree of satisfaction of the citizens’ interest is determined by the standard of ‘Agency Loss’. Agency loss refers to the difference between the best possible outcome for the principal (citizens) and the effects or consequences of the acts of the government as an agent. When a government consistently acts in the best interest of the citizens, the ‘agency loss’ is zero, whereas consistent deviations would mean increasing agency loss. Agency loss is therefore reduced if both the citizens and the elected leaders share common interests and when the citizens understand the consequences of the government’s actions.

However, Bruce et al. [38] criticize this theory for its inherent weakness where the citizen and leaders/government pursue antagonistic individual interests by maximizing personal economic wealth rendering the theory prone to conflicts. In essence, therefore, the elected leaders should act in the best interest of the electorate so that the citizens achieve their output without competing with the leaders who ought to

represent citizens' interests. The major weakness of the theory is the information asymmetry that exists between the citizens and leaders in the government. The citizens are always kept in the information limbo as leaders in government do not provide them with necessary information, thereby creating a gap between the two parties, hence wanton corruption by government officials, suspicions and mistrust by the citizens of leaders in governments.

Therefore, the researcher employs the cultivation theory to bridge the gaps. This theory was initiated by George Gerbner in the late 1960s. Cultivation theory assumes that media exercises long-term direct, indirect and gradual influence on the public. The theory encompasses many concepts that Keim et al. [35] argues include cultural indicators, symbolic environment, the multidirectional process, the television's symbolic function, the value system cultivation, storytelling, the cultural model and television traits.

The cultivation theory hypothesizes that the whole system of value composes of assumptions, perspectives, images, beliefs and ideologies that are formulated by televisions. This is because television mirrors pervasive and hidden morals, values and rules for what is important, appropriate and right in an invisible way in the social discourse. Mosharafa [39] argues the theory adds that this is achieved through the repetitive abrasions from television from cradle to grave that become a foundation for a person's worldview.

Consequently Laranjo et al. [40], alluding to the Cultivation Theory observes that after long exposure to media, viewers' and/or listeners' social realities will be influenced. Thus, those individuals who are subjected to a higher level of exposure to news media, Laranjo et al. [40] argues, are more likely to be impacted by how the world is structured by the media they are exposed to. This would imply that the potential perpetrators of corruption would refrain from it after getting exposed to media reports regarding reprimand and embarrassment caused to other culprits of the vice. This, therefore, makes the cultivation theory most suitable to bridge the gap uncovered by the principal agency theory. The media, therefore, comes in handy to bridge the information gap between citizens and government by way of investigating, reporting, playing a watchdog role and advocacy. However, the extent to which this has been achieved remains a subject of investigation.

6. Why has corruption persisted in our communities despite numerous efforts against it?

A lot has been written about corruption as there exist several endeavors at global, national and local levels to fight corruption, but these measures fail to achieve set goals leading to the persistence of corruption. These reasons for the persistence of corruption include:

Williams [41] argue that the use of mere rhetoric without actions was identified as one of the reasons for the persistence of corruption. Several attempts and strategies have been put in place across the world by international organizations such as the G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration (2020), transnational bodies, individual countries and institutions to fight corruption. However, another school of thought by Hutchinson et al. [42] believes that these strategies have had fewer actions than rhetoric. Their report on fighting corruption in the health sector notes that there has been much talking with very little action. This they argue is responsible for the persistence of corruption.

Lack of political will is also cited as key in frustrating the fight against corruption because the political classes, including those in charge of the government, are believed to be key beneficiaries of the vice. Hutchinson et al. [42] blame a lack of political will to enforce the arrest and prosecution of the corrupt, especially on the political class who practice grand corruption. Faisal and Jafri [43] believe this failure by the political class to clean their own house has made them resort to arresting small government officials who practice administrative corruption involving a little amount of money while those stealing in billions and trillions are left to enjoy and in some cases, the powerful perpetrators offer support and protection to the small perpetrators, hence the persistence of corruption at all levels.

The absence of true democracy, coupled with a bad political system in a country, has been identified by Rose-Ackerman and Palifka [44] as being responsible for the setbacks always encountered in the fight against corruption. They enumerate other reasons for the persistence of corruption as being the size and structure of governments, democracy and the political system of a country, economic freedom/openness, the quality of institutions, salaries of the civil service and culture of a given community among others. A big cabinet with many unnecessary bodies most of which are set to reward political supporters end ups duplicating work and devising means of defrauding the public and levying multiple taxes on the citizens to maintain their statuses and power. In the thoughts of Rose-Ackerman and Palifka [44], liberalized economy with no or very little state intervention is also a great breeding ground for corruption as the rich can connive and hoard certain supplies and overcharge the people for the little available ones. This can be worsened in a situation where civil servants are paid meager salaries when they preside over huge government resources. To make ends meet, they can resort to corrupt means to enhance their pay, thereby promoting corruption as seen in Uganda and many developing countries.

However, Rose-Ackerman and Palifka [44] believe that Press freedom and that of the judiciary is very instrumental in the fight against corruption. When the media is legally freer to investigate report and agitate for the tackling of corruption without being curtailed by unfriendly laws such as libel, defamation and slander among others, they would expose corruption and call for action without fear.

According to Cai and Zhu [45], this also means the judiciary should be allowed to independently adjudicate corruption-related cases without being directed by the political class and the wealthy, whereas Faisal and Jafri [43] believe that failure by the state to take stringent actions against the corrupt has also motivated and encouraged the corrupt to continue practicing corruption since there is no deterrent factor or punishment for it.

The use of old and ineffective strategies to fight corruption besides adopting generic approach to fight all forms of corruption irrespective of their varying levels of effectiveness has not helped arrest the situation either. Clarke [46] points out that, 'the current legalistic anti-corruption measure for health systems, such as prohibition, criminalization, legal reform and capacity building, are not up to the job, and it seems likely that this is the case in other sectors where anti-corruption interventions have also been spectacularly ineffective'.

To reduce the incidences of corruption as discussed above, the use of mere rhetoric or use of words of mouth without taking serious action against the corrupt, lack of political will, use of old and ineffective strategies to fight corruption, absence of democracy, absence of press freedom, the bad political system in a country and the meager salary of the civil service should all be addressed.

7. A dive into the role of media in the fight against corruption

The UNODC; World Bank [47]; Brunetti and Weder [48]; Fardigh [49] agree that the media can play important roles in the fight against corruption unearthing corrupt dealings, investigating corruption, demanding for accountability from both public and private actors.

According to Schauseil [16], the media can fight against corruption by launching investigations on cases of corruption, adding that the media further plays its watchdog role by offering a key route for information about governmental, administrative and business activities to be disseminated throughout society and thus providing the public with a critical capacity to hold those in power accountable. Similarly, alluding to the watchdog informational role of the media, Kuznik et al. [21] states that fighting corruption is meticulous and broad-based and should be embraced by all echelons of a society with the media serving as a conduit of information and education. [23] echo the same on the role of the media in fighting corruption when they posited that the media gathers available open-source information as the first and most approachable step of the data collection process on corruption.

Alluding to the watchdog role of the media, Mendes [50] posits that the media fights corruption by uncovering, exposing, informing and educating the populace about the detrimental effects of corruption for society at large. This way, he agrees with [5], who earlier observed that the media informs the public about corruption and solutions to this problem. He adds that this way the media significantly increases the political risk of those exposed for their corrupt practices and fosters the critical awareness of civil society.

However, Baer et al. [51] observes that in democracies, mass media is an important instrument for monitoring the behavior of public officials, limiting corruption and reducing the political rents of incumbents. OECD (2018) held that media reporting in general, and especially investigative journalism by affiliated or independent journalists, or indeed non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are among the most important sources of public awareness-raising on corruption. Ayoola [19] stresses that the role of the broadcast media is critical in promoting good governance and controlling corruption: It not only raises public awareness about corruption, its causes, consequences and possible remedies but also investigates and reports the incidence of corruption. Gbadamosi et al. (2019) concur on the monitoring role of the media when they wrote that the media empowers citizens of any given country to monitor the actions and inactions of elected or appointed officials in instances of corruption. Equally, according to Adeyemi [24], the press serves as agent of change and plays the watchdog role of ensuring transparency and accountability in government. This is because if there is no searchlight on corruption and inequitable practices, hence, Adeyemi [24] explains that you cannot build the public consensus needed to bring about change.

The Panama Papers investigation is testimony to how the media helps in fighting global corruption. OECD (2018) and ICIJ [52] maintain that investigation grew out of a 5-year investigation by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that dug into financial secrecy haven for the top 10 countries where intermediaries operate in concurrence with the foregoing finding observed that the media investigated the hiding of ill-gotten wealth in financial secrecy havens involving transnational bribery paid on behalf of companies in countries across the globe. Arnold and Lal [5] equally agree, providing an example of the Philippines where investigative media investigation of the president exposed his illegal assets. In further concurrence, they add another example of how in India, in 2000, the Tehelka news

website uncovered deeply entrenched corruption in the defense industry and motivated many other reporters to use similar methods.

Sharing a similar thought, Arnold and Lal [5] concur on the role of the media as a reporter when they posited that the media inform us about corruption and solutions to this problem. They add that the media as reporters make politicians pay attention through widespread coverage. Alluding to the same they observe that in many countries, online platforms allow citizens to report instances of corruption by mail, phone, text message and other channels, giving an example of how in India ipaidabribe.com platform was launched in 2010 to aggregate citizen reports to show which departments and situations are most vulnerable to corruption. This validates [19] earlier view that the role of the broadcast media is critical in fighting corruption by reporting incidents of corruption.

As reporters, Ackerman et al. [20] posits that media draws attention to corrupt behavior. In concurrence, Kuznik et al. [21] states that in fighting corruption, the media as reporters serve as a conduit of information and education. This validates Wasswa and Kakooza [53] finding that the media fights corruption by utilizing new media tools to showcase its activities and expenditures, which CSOs and the public can then interpret and query. They add that new media platforms such as WordPress, Blogger, Webs, Joomla, Drupal, among others, also allow more interactivity by allowing members of the public to report incidents of corruption.

Giving further credence to the role of the media as reporters against corruption, the OECD [54, 55] shows how the Panama Papers investigation grew out of a 5-year reporting push by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that published figures for the top 10 countries where intermediaries operate, namely Hong Kong (China), United Kingdom, Switzerland, United States, Panama, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Brazil, Ecuador and Uruguay. Similarly, ICIJ [52] reports how in April 2016, after a 6-month investigation, two major media outlets reported on the Unaoil Scandal, an alleged transnational bribery scheme involving bribes paid on behalf of companies in countries across the globe as another example of how media reporting helps in fighting corruption.

According to Tangri and Mwenda [22], the press is the main instrument for news gathering and investigation of public officials' abuses and illegalities, uncovering scandals and 'misdeeds of the increasingly corrupt executive' in Uganda on regular basis. Again, one of the important monthly activities of the Uganda Media Development Foundation (UMDF) in 2011 as observed by Wasswa and Kakooza [53] was the countrywide training of journalists in how to report on corruption in all the major regions of the country.

According to Schauseil [16], they set the agenda for fighting corruption by issuing public recommendations. This validates Stapenhurst [17] earlier observation that the media puts the fight against corruption on the policy agenda, subsequently resulting in the scrapping of a law or policy.

Similarly, Arnold and Lal [5] concur that the media as agenda setters mobilize public pressure to compel politicians to act on incidents of corruption. They add that the media as agenda setters make politicians pay attention through widespread coverage of incidents of corruption. They also provide platforms for citizens to voice their opinions and demand accountability from those in power, observe [5]. This concurs with Stapenhurst [17], who earlier contended that the media as classic agenda setters provide platforms for citizens to put corruption on the public agenda by voicing their opinions and demanding accountability from those in power. Stapenhurst [17] adds that by enhancing and enlivening public debate and by heightening a sense of

accountability among politicians through their news and programmes. Recently, UNODC agrees on the agenda-setting role of the media in the fight against corruption when it observed that the media plays an important role in the fight against corruption by making corruption a public issue, thereby goading the public to demand accountability and transparency from the public and private sectors.

Whereas according to Mendes [50], the media sets the agenda in the fight against corruption by educating the public about the detrimental effects of corruption on society at large [56]; on the other hand, gave an example of how the media put the certificate forgery of a former speaker of the House of Representatives – Ibrahim Salisu and former Senate President Evan Ewerem on the public agenda; bring public pressure to bear on them – forcing them to resign. Similarly, Arnold and Lal [5] gave an example of how in the Philippines, investigative media as an agenda setter put corruption of President Estrada on the public issue that the populace gravitated around and subsequently ousted the president in 2001 through the mass uprising.

In a similar vein, Arnold and Lal [5] held that social media as an agenda setter amplifies people's disapproval of corruption through websites where citizens can report instances of corruption and through initiating a discussion about it. This validates [53] earlier observation that the new media platforms such as WordPress, Blogger, Webs, Joomla and Drupal, among others, put corruption on the public agenda by allowing more interactivity by allowing members of the public to post comments and articles on corruption incidents. Arnold and Lal [5] and Wasswa and Kakooza [53] give credence to Nogara [4], who earlier alluded to how here in Uganda popular talk shows such as the 'Capital Gang' on Capital FM put corruption on the public policy agenda for discussion with government officials, donors, members of civil society and sometimes even the president.

Maintaining that media serves as an advocate Arnold and Lal [5] contend that the media influence public perceptions against corruption as something wrong. Adeyemi [24] concurs that the media plays the role of an advocate in the fight against corruption by advocating for accountability from the government and other corruption-fighting institutions to fight corruption. OECD [54, 55] reports how the media as an advocate in the fight against corruption petitions anti-corruption institutions including parliamentary committees, ombudsmen, etc. to take action on incidents of corruption and/or abuse of public power.

On the other hand, Kuznik et al. [21] observes that the media sets the agenda for the fight against corruption through public education corruption. UNODC observed how the media as agenda setters have put corruption not only on the national public agenda but on the global policy agenda. All the above validates the [47] position that the media are agenda setters by way of building public consensus against corruption.

According to Schauseil [16], the media as an advocate in the fight against corruption advocates against crooked public officials by causing judicial proceedings against them. This is in tandem with Wasswa and Kakooza [53] observation that media practitioners as advocates against corruption use media platforms to advocate for a more transparent, accountable and better government. UNODC agrees with Schauseil [16] and Wasswa and Kakooza [53] assertions that the media as advocates play important roles in the fight against the vice as it demands accountability and transparency from the public and private sectors.

In the same spirit, Human Rights Watch [57] concurs on the advocacy role of the media in fighting corruption when it reports that 'Media attention of Uganda's corruption often focuses on the "big fish who got away" and who were allegedly protected from prosecution by other elites'. Human Rights Watch [57] for instance gives

an example of how in late 2012 the news that US\$ 12.7 million in donor funds had been embezzled from Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) hit the headlines in many donor capitals, prompting serious questions about Uganda's commitment to fighting corruption. As a result of the report, according to Human Rights Watch [57], the European Union, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Norway suspended aid as an action against corruption.

Contributing to this role of media in fighting corruption Ranjan and Kashyap [58] also allude to the role of the media in condemning atrocious crimes, which includes corruption and putting tremendous pressure on formal judicial processes to take action on the culprits. While according to Williams [41], court proceedings that are covered widely by the media are concluded by the courts fast by and large. Keim et al. [35] validates [35, 41] when she observes that the media plays a role in influencing high-profile trials – adding that this includes public opinion regarding the court's handling of a case and gauging the court's efficiency in doing so. For instance, NBS (2021), part of Uganda's electronic media, has been advocating for the speedy disposal of the case of Giwatude, the former Permanent Secretary in the Office of Uganda's Prime Minister for mismanaging 2020 COVID-19 relief funds. Her trial has stalled for many months now.

However, on the downside, there have been several cases in which the media has been blamed for influencing court judgments, Platania and Crawford [59], maintaining that this is a media trial which is an unwarranted interference in the justice process, arguing correctly that a fair trial is an important element of the judicial system. Newburn and Peay concur with Platania and Crawford [59] when they averred that the media pushes people to prejudge verdicts of criminal proceedings, including in the trial of corruption cases. Some people use the media to influence case outcomes, yet courts are required to decide cases independently. With Ranjan and Kashyap [58] concurring that trials by media are not regulated and put tremendous pressure on formal judicial processes, further observing that the media should neither usurp the functions of the judiciary nor engage in subjective, biased reporting of formal criminal justice proceedings.

Whereas various scholars found that media play a positive role in the fight against corruption, others such as Sharma et al. [23] debunk the positive role of the media in the fight against corruption by alluding to how the media, especially some social media sites, may alert the subject of an investigation that their profiles are being monitored and therefore impede the investigation of corruption allegations or suspicions against them. They add that LinkedIn as an example requires a login and alerts users when their profile has been viewed and by whom. Similarly, Arnold and Lal [5] observed that the media can also propagate false perceptions about corruption, which can hinder the work of organizations that engage in the fight against corruption. From the various studies, it can be detected that there are mixed views about the roles the media play in the fight against corruption, and the extent to which the media play such roles, especially in Lira City. It is such gaps that this research seeks to bridge through investigation.

On the other hand, Sharma et al. [23] debunk the assumed positive role of the media in the fight against corruption. For instance, they posit that sometimes the media, especially some social media sites, may alert the subject of an investigation that their profiles are being monitored and therefore impede the investigation of corruption allegations or suspicions against them. They add that LinkedIn as an example requires a login and alerts users when their profile has been viewed and by whom. Similarly, Arnold and Lal [5] observe that the media can also propagate

false perceptions about corruption, which can hinder the work of organizations that engage in the fight against corruption. However, from the author's perspective, this observation could be true but does not over-weigh the numerous benefits and strengths of the media in fighting corruption in Lira City and the Ugandan community.

8. Limitations of the media in the fight against corruption

According to Schauseil [16], for the media to effectively play its role in fighting corruption, the following should be in place: professional ethics and skills, protection from oppression and physical abuse, media independence, sufficient resources and accessibility. However, the absence or lack of these elements constitutes some of the prominent challenges the media face in fighting corruption as hereunder discussed.

Lack of professional ethics and skills is one of the limitations of the media as Graeff [60] opines that some journalists face the challenge of maintaining a high degree of integrity and display of professional skills as expected and yet the absence of these core erodes their credibility in the fight against corruption, and yet the more accurate, unbiased and credible the media reports, the more pressure and responsibility it piles on the political class and other relevant actors to take action. The situation has however according to Mehra [61] been worsened by the growing debate and contention about media's credibility as a result of incidences of false reporting, inconsistencies in media reports and branding of news reports as 'fake news' propagated by big names such as former US President Donald. J. Trump.

The infiltration by masqueraders into the media work and profession of the media practitioners is one of the challenges. Ibelema [62] argues that polemic masquerading as a journalist have infiltrated the media's fight against corruption and have therefore undermined the credibility of the media in the fight since they can now be seen as self-seekers trying to vent their vendetta against privileged members of the society.

On the other hand, journalism is one of the poorly paying professions and this hinders journalists' effectiveness and can greatly compromise their professionalism. Karyeija [63] writes that low salaries and little facilitation that is given to investigate stories make them more susceptible to accepting bribes, especially in cases involving corruption itself. When a corrupt officer is faced with the reality of getting humiliated by media reports to come, they will resort to using part of the loot to also bribe the journalists to ensure that the story does not surface in the media.

According to Schauseil [16], the media is also limited by a lack of access to information in their fight against corruption. Much as he argues that for the fight against corruption by journalists to be effective, the public should access the information the journalists, process through the various media channels and this accessibility should be easy and cost-effective. For instance, in many rural locations of Uganda and other developing countries, TV signals are hardly accessible for people to access information passed through the TV. Radio sets also seem expensive for the peri-urban and rural people who could be the best beneficiaries of this medium, leave alone newspaper and internet that are even more expensive and the high level of literacy they demand. Kabata and Garaba [64] reveal that Uganda as a country has in place the Access to Information Act (2005), but this has not stopped some public officials from denying the media access to the pieces of information in their possession, citing the oath of secrecy they undertook under the Oaths Act CAP (19) to keep certain information a secret.

The media is also hampered by the inability to enforce accountability as it is not their mandate; however, Ditmore and Thukral [65] contend that the media can make the issue of corruption become a public matter by investigating incidences of corruption, reporting and causing debate about corruption, the media does not have the legal mandate or authority to arrest and prosecute anybody over corruption. They argue that the media's role ends at pestering duty bearers to take action, and yet the duty bearers can either choose to renege on their role and render the media's effort in fighting corruption unsuccessful. This has been made worse by the restrictive and selective application of the media laws in Uganda which has been cited by Oxford Analytica as a restriction on the media in Uganda. These findings, therefore, open the doors to academicians and other stakeholders whose wishes and aspirations are to bring corruption under control and to devise effective mechanisms that can adequately address these above-identified factors. All the above-discussed challenges do apply to the local media houses of Lira City in Uganda as observed critically by the author who has been a practicing journalist for more than 15 years in the locality.


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