

Media Profession: Its Pains and Strains in the Radio Broadcasting

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Abstract-*Radio broadcasting is still one of the most dependable media portals of today's society. Majority of households in Camarines Sur still owns a radio monitoring set for their news, information and entertainment. This study focused on the pains and strains in media profession of Radio Broadcasting in Camarines Sur which reflects the state of the radio broadcast industry in the locality. How the issues and challenges affect the credibility of the radio broadcast practitioners and sustained its factual and balanced programming. This employed descriptive survey using qualitative-quantitative approaches on the data gathered. Survey questionnaires were administered to five (5) Amplitude Modulation (AM) stations and seven (7) Frequency Modulation (FM) stations with news and public affairs in the Province. Findings revealed that only 17.9% of the current practitioners having a graduate degrees leading to media practice. Furthermore, communication skills were extremely important in the profession. The internal and external problems were seldom encountered except for management and being influenced by politicians, which were moderately encountered by the radio practitioners. These factors can affect in the presentation of unbiased news and information and in sustaining balanced programming. And there is no other way but to let these radio practitioners publicly accountable by adopting the highest ethical standards in the practice of their profession. Considering its high risk on the nature of the job of media practitioners might experience, the Kapisanan ng mga Broadkaster ng Pilipinas should design a program giving for security protection, insurance, training programs and additional benefits to its practitioners.*

Keywords: *radio broadcast media practitioners, credibility*

INTRODUCTION

Despite advanced technology and rapid development of online media, radio broadcasting is still the “voice” which the society “listens” and even the millennials still find radio as popular as the internet and television. However, the failure of some radio stations to develop creative broadcasting techniques. This resulted to non-attainment of sustainable business operation and has negative impact in terms of social responsibility. This affects the media practitioners of their essentials to be credible, factual, objective and fair [1] in presenting reliable reports and unbiased news and information. This critical function, however, should be handled with cautions including news reports and discussion of public issues. These are important instruments that will address the needs of the community especially those in the far-flung areas particularly in times of emergencies during natural disasters and other critical governmental issues which affect their lives.

Recent reviews indicate that technology such as different digital devices are combined to create a ‘self-media’ environment [2] that resonates radio broadcasting. This can be noted that radio broadcast media practitioners can work across the spectrum of print, radio and even television and on-line media [3]. Unfortunately, broadcasting systems for most of the developing countries are beset by numerous problems including government interference, poor and lack of funding, unfavorable ownership structures and poor infrastructure making them unable to reach their intended audiences in rural areas [4]. Most of the radio stations serving the community were not owned by the people in the community, but a private individual’s entrepreneurial effort [5]. Thus, media practitioners must strengthen its foundation through responsible programming and reporting. Recently, radio has become a medium of communication where some people developed ways to control the national government. However, with the importance attributed in the radio broadcast industry, one still wonders the

pains and strains of Radio Broadcasting Profession in Camarines Sur.

In the Bicol Region, Camarines Sur is the most progressive where the biggest number of radio stations where located. Unfortunately, there were limited recorded study related to broadcast industry with regard to the practice of their professional credibility or in locality no one has ever dared to study the real scenario of radio broadcasting profession. In effect, only a little has given importance on their competencies. Speculations on their qualifications and sustaining credibility were being questioned by the public. Do these radio broadcast media practitioners deserve to be called "one"? A veteran broadcaster articulated "the trainings of the most people engaged in various phases of broadcasting has remained incomplete".

Hence, this study takes an in-depth analysis on the real situation on the practice of radio broadcasting, somewhat, unveiling negative media practices – biased broadcasting, yellow journalism and sensationalism. It is also interesting to look into the status of radio practitioners that the Camarines Sur have, and know whether they deserve of being "the one".

OBJECTIVES

The study focused on the pains and strains of radio broadcast media practitioners in Camarines Sur for the year 2017. This aimed to expose the real scenario of the radio broadcast profession in the locality; determined the issues and challenges that affected the practice of their profession by exploring the internal and external problems by unveiling negative media practices such as biased programming, yellow journalism and sensationalism.

METHODS

The study focused on the real scenario of broadcast profession, issues and challenges and internal and external problems radio broadcast in Camarines Sur. This employed descriptive survey using qualitative-quantitative approaches on the data gathered. After the research study was approved by the ethics committee of the school, survey questionnaires were administered among seventy-eight (78) practitioners such as 33 anchorpersons, 16 anchorpersons-reporters, 17 reporters, 4 newscasters, and 6 anchor-newscasters of the five (5) Amplitude Modulation (AM) stations and seven (7) Frequency Modulation (FM) stations with news and public affairs programming. Respondents completed the questionnaires after a detailed explanation of the

researcher. Respondents who were not available the time of interview were excluded in the study.

The Likert scale was used to measure the degree of the factors that affect the profession as well as the frequency of occurrence of the problems they encountered.

Table 1. Scale on the problems encountered by the Radio Media Practitioners

| Scale | Description | |
|-------|-------------|----------------------|
| 4.21 | 5.00 | Extremely Important |
| 3.41 | 4.20 | Moderately Important |
| 2.61 | 3.40 | Slightly Important |
| 1.81 | 2.60 | Least Important |
| 1.00 | 1.80 | Not Important |

The next scale was used to measure the factors that influence the profession. A cross-sectional validation through focused group discussion, observation and interviews were also employed to attain the objectives of the study.

Table 2. Scale on the issues and challenges in the profession

| Scale | Description | |
|-------|-------------|----------------------|
| 4.21 | 5.00 | Extremely Important |
| 3.41 | 4.20 | Moderately Important |
| 2.61 | 3.40 | Slightly Important |
| 1.81 | 2.60 | Least Important |
| 1.00 | 1.80 | Not Important |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This period in the Philippine history is currently in a new kind of "golden age" of creative sound work and the internet [6]. Ever since the time radio broadcasting started, this had been very important in the lives of the people. Until now, some issues being discussed on radio broadcast can become an agenda of the local community. The news and information being aired in different radio programs are being disseminated to the community [7]. These news and public affairs program may not be acceptable to, the public, they may be in doubt if the news being presented whether factual or plain propaganda. Whatever it maybe, this will create influence or sets the mind of the listeners. This is the reason why radio broadcast media practitioners are influential in terms of shaping the listeners' perception as well as their collective opinions. This highlighted that radio station/network owners/managers should hire manpower for broadcast of their station based on the needed and required educational qualifications.

This is to meet the expected services of their clientele – the listeners, they so deserve.

The Real Scenario of Radio Broadcast Profession

Radio broadcasting opens peoples’ eyes to a wider world by bringing truth and beauty of the news and information into the lives of every listener. The government recognizes the vital role of radio broadcast media profession in nation building through communication and information dissemination [8].

The requirement in employing radio broadcasters is generally a combination of the educational qualification and work experience. However, these requirements vary by employer, and how these employees are being hired – whether permanent or contractual, and their salaries and compensation benefits.

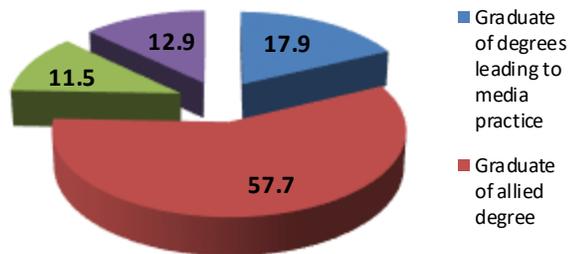


Figure 1. Educational Qualifications of Radio Broadcast Media.

Majority of the current radio broadcast media practitioners or 57.7% as reflected on figure 1 were graduates of allied degree programs like Bachelor of Arts majors in Political Science, Philosophy, Psychology and in English. With the aim of professionalizing the radio broadcast industry, radio stations/networks preferred that applicants that should be hired in the radio broadcasting industry should have earned degrees leading to radio broadcasting such as Mass Communication, Broadcast Communication, Development Communication, Communication Arts, and Journalism. This will mean higher level of familiarity and orientation parallel to their job. Unfortunately, only 17.9% of the current practitioners meet the standard requirement of the industry. Less than twelve percent or 11.9% were graduates of other degree programs like commerce and education. And sadly, there were undergraduate radio broadcast media

practitioners (12.9%). This implies that radio stations/networks in Camarines Sur did not conform to the standard educational qualification requirements of their radio broadcast personnel. This also implies that these personnel were not able to meet nor satisfy the demand and services of their listeners. Clearly, there is an effect in their performances as radio broadcast media practitioners along credibility of the news and information they are disseminating.

A study conducted wherein the majority of journalists practicing in Nigeria were not also graduates of degrees leading to media practice [9]. Although educational qualification is part of the requirements to effectively perform their job well, but for the respondents – communication skills, dedication, discipline, attitude and reputation could also be associated to better radio broadcast practices as long as they have passed the KBP Accreditation Examination. The absence of just compensation or standard wage rate and contractualization of on-air radio personnel were among the major internal problems besetting the local media industry. On-air radio personnel also decry the practice of radio owners of hiring on contractual basis thereby depriving them of the security of tenure. The absence of media workers’ union serves as their evils that pull them down away from good media practice. Figure 2 shows the financial incentives categorized as salaries, commissions and other benefits.

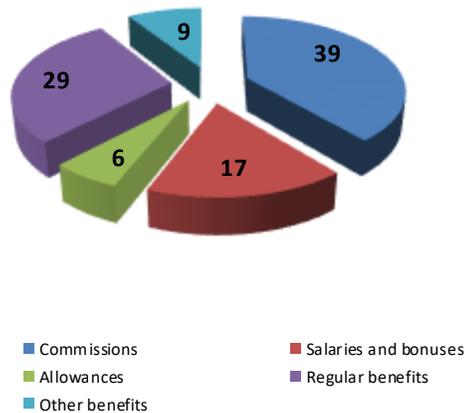


Figure 2. Financial Incentives

In terms of financial incentives like compensation and benefits, commission (39%) is the most enjoyed benefits by the radio practitioners in Camarines Sur. Regular benefits such as monthly premiums with employers share in SSS, GSIS, PhilHealth and Pag-

IBIG (29%) were also enjoyed just like the employees in other private sector and in the government service. However, salaries and bonuses (13th and 14th month pay) with 17%, other benefits (9%) such as hazard pay, clothing allowance and insurance, and allowances (6%) such as food and transportation, were not given attention.

This crisis hitting the radio broadcast media practitioners leaves the small radio broadcast networks to reel off, with cost cuts, and others – closure of stations. But still, some respondents whose salary fall below Php10,000 believed that their efficiency and effectiveness are not affected by the financial and material deficiencies. They believed that credibility is earned and not granted, where the Radio Broadcast Code of Ethics put high value on their sound judgement, non-partisan and being balanced. The data further imply that in the presentation of issues and concerns, balanced programming with factual data is given emphasis. Thus, credibility of radio broadcast media practitioners should not be hampered by low benefits, both financial and material.

Table 3. Issues and challenges in the Profession

| Categories | WM | Qualitative Description |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Presentation of Issues | 4.18 | Moderately Important |
| Communication Skills | 4.30 | Extremely Important |
| Balance Programming | 4.16 | Moderately Important |
| Financial Stability | 3.95 | Moderately Important |
| Working Environment | 3.95 | Moderately Important |
| Professionalism | 4.12 | Moderately Important |
| Credibility | 4.26 | Moderately Important |
| Character | 4.19 | Moderately Important |
| Average Weighted Mean | 4.13 | Moderately Important |

When a radio broadcaster’s voice is constantly heard, he/she becomes popular, highly regarded, and sometimes idolized next to movie stars. Relative to this, table 3 shows factors important to the radio broadcast media profession which made them popular. The factors were evaluated as to level of importance. It is shown that “communication skills” rank first (4.30) followed by credibility (4.26), character (4.19), presentation of issues (4.18), and balanced programming (4.16) while professionalism, financial stability, and working environment ranked last with

4.12 and 3.95, respectively. The over-all weighted mean was 4.13 which mean the different factors mentioned were moderately important to the profession.

The data implied that communication skills, credibility and presentation of issues were important in a radio broadcast profession. This serves as a tool for assessing journalistic quality. This further implies that the radio broadcast media practitioners’ attitude should be reflective on how they discuss issues on air; reputable in giving their views or general opinion to their listeners; exhibited factuality and truthfulness in bringing out issues on air based on facts; impartial in discussing topics and issues on air and has the ability to use proper words and language that is socially acceptable. Also, have the ability to perceive and describe in his on-air issues without being influenced by personal emotions or prejudices. Since they have the responsibility to inform the public without malice or any bias about the news and current events; publicly discuss relevant and timely issues. Being rated having balanced programming, radio broadcast media practitioners must also be client-oriented on the issues presented in the news, commentary and public affairs program.

“but despite the critical of radio broadcast media, this can also be used to injure the integral good of persons by alienating or marginalizing and isolating them; fostering communities’ hostility and conflict; demonizing others and creating mentality of “us” against “them” [10].”

It is a must that radio broadcast media practitioners should not just be contented with press releases but must really look for the story, must investigate it, be critical about it and see through all the evidences. They should write a story that can best synthesize all information. This will make them credible in their profession.

Internal and External Problems

The problems relative to the profession of the radio broadcast practitioners are divided into internal and external factors. Gone were the days when radio broadcast practitioners were idolized and treated with great respect. Nowadays, some of these personalities are in the hands of few powerful people who have access in government resources. This raises new questions concerning the relationship between radio

broadcast practitioners and politicians and between news media and politics[11]. If this perspective between radio broadcast practitioners and politician’s scenario will continue with its mediatized interdependency in the province, this will affect the kind of public service we have in the country as a whole.

Internal Problems. Internal problems are classified in terms of Language Proficiency, Ethical Practices and Management. Table 6 shows the internal problems commonly encountered by radio broadcast practitioners in performing their duties.

Table 4. Internal Problems relative to the Profession

| Problems | WM | Qualitative Description |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Language Proficiency | 2.27 | Seldom Encountered |
| Ethical Practices | 2.30 | Seldom Encountered |
| Management | 2.78 | Moderately Encountered |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.44 | Seldom Encountered |

Management (not compliance to labor laws, delayed release of salaries and radio station owners meddling on radio programming) (\bar{x} =2.78) or “Moderately Encountered”; However, Ethical Practices (clumsy reporting, vulgarity/filthy language, slimy, with malice and incorrect commentaries) with \bar{x} =2.30 and Language Proficiency (presence of illiterates/vagrants, distorted English language, semantics, wrong logic) with \bar{x} =2.27 were “Seldom Encountered” by the broadcast media. Thus, data revealed that the internal problems (2.44) were “Seldom Encountered” by them, although they “moderately encountered” the management problems.

We are in the era that radio broadcast media practitioners should maintain public trusts, it is therefore a must for them to promote truth-seeking capability [12] regardless of the delay in the release of salaries. This supported the findings that material things or financial matters did not affect the radio broadcast media practitioners’ credibility and effectiveness as previously mentioned. There were also some radio broadcast media practitioners who have extra work outside of the industry. But there were also some, resorting to “envelopmental broadcast journalism” where journalists were given money so they would write and broadcast favorable reports about the person giving them money/bribe.

Radio station owners meddling in the radio programming affects the work of radio practitioners, radio station owners have big roles in decision making on the kind of radio programming they want to implement regardless of its deviation on the broadcast code of ethics. There are also some proprietors not complying with the labor law on the implementation of the minimum wage law. Some radio stations do not consciously address listeners desire and hunger of quality programming. As a result, they fail in the rating game, and as an outcome they can hardly generate sufficient revenues from advertising business to sustain the radio station’s operation. This leads to high turnover of staff due to low pay, low quality of program content, and lack of capacity in serious programming [13].

Lack of English language proficiency is not a problem when it comes to on-air programming because they can use the local dialect. But, at times, distorted English can cause a lot of problems because it sometimes leads to inaccurate or misleading news or information. Although Bicol dialect is being used in the radio broadcast industry, announcers have to deal with documents written in English or at times they conduct interviews in English especially if the interviewee is a foreigner or even a Filipino who prefer to use the English Language. As it is shown in the previous table, 82.1% of the on-air personnel degree courses were not aligned with broadcast media job and the worst there were some who were college undergraduates. Furthermore, vulgarity counted a lot when the on-air personnel tasteless way in carrying out on-air issue affects their credibility.

External Problems. In democratic societies, the radio-media today can also be the source of social and political power. Table 5 shows the external problems encountered by the media/radio practitioners. With the overall weighted mean of 2.18, the influence of political groups (2.74) is “moderately encountered” by the radio broadcast practitioners. Media effects on politics are realized through manipulative and propagandistic techniques of persuasion, contrary to the professional standards and criteria of the functioning of the mass media communication [13]. Numerous studies have demonstrated the power of media influence to attitudes and behaviors especially to marginalized groups; it is a common notion of people in the community that the radio broadcast practitioners tend to become political machines by powerful and influential politicians. And most of the time, a government-owned radio station is “internally”

managed by incumbent politicians. The data mean that the practitioners seldom encounter external problems although influence of political groups is moderately felt.

Table 5. External Problems Relative to the Profession

| Problems | WM | Qualitative Description |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Libel | 1.75 | Not Encountered |
| Influence of Political Groups | 2.74 | Moderately Encountered |
| Bribery | 2.24 | Seldom Encountered |
| Invasion of other People | 2.22 | Seldom Encountered |
| Assault of persons | 2.00 | Seldom Encountered |
| Death Threats | 2.16 | Seldom Encountered |
| Average Weighted Mean | 2.18 | Seldom Encountered |

Politicians also tend to see the importance of radio broadcast practitioners' worth to their political career, that is why, bribery, (2.24) as one of the highest ranks, because the nature of work is exposed for receiving bribes. The media people might not be able to resist some of the bribery acts of external forces but some tried not to accept such act especially that they seldom encounter this kind of problem. Assault (2.0) and libel case (1.75) were "seldom encountered". The practitioners considered the external factors like libel and bribery as natural occurrences relative to their profession so there was no great effect on them since they were used to them.

These results are reflective of the data given since "social broadcasting services serve as innovative platforms connecting people's need for information and attention" [6]. TV and Radio open people's eyes to the wider world. In this way, it is inherent in the power of radio practitioner to inform, teach and challenge people to choose to live their lives. "This move triggers a line of question about the borders between the public and the commercial, the control of content and the shifting power in media policy" [7]. It is therefore a must that broadcasters should not just be contented with press releases but must really look for the true story by investigating at it, be critical about it, see through all the evidence and write a story that can best synthesize all that information.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Radio broadcasting opens peoples' eyes to a wider world by bringing truth and beauty into the lives of every listener. Study revealed the real scenario of the

radio broadcast profession in the locality where only 17.9% of the current practitioners meet the standard requirement of the industry by having a graduate degrees leading to media practice. Less than half or thirty-nine (39) percent of practitioners enjoyed the benefits and sadly, there were undergraduate radio broadcast media practitioners (12.9%). Most of the issues and challenges were moderately important to the profession except for communication skills. Also internal problems and external problems are "Seldom Encountered" except for management problems and the influence of Political Groups.

Considering the high risk on the nature of the job that a radio broadcast media practitioner and owners of the commercial radio stations might experience, the KBP should design a program giving extra security protection, insurance, training programs and additional benefits to its practitioners. They should also hire additional on-air staff, it has to employ graduates of mass communications, and journalism related graduates. A competitive salary scheme comparable to that of the radio broadcast practitioners in the government sector should be given attention.

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