



Country Report

Journalists in the Philippines

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Background of Journalists

The typical journalist in the Philippines is about 38 years old and holds a university degree in journalism or communication. Of the 325 interviewed journalists, 166 were women, or 51.1 percent of the overall sample. The average age was 37.86 years old ($s=10.68$) and half of the journalists were younger than 37 years. Filipino journalists are also well-educated: 74.6 percent have a university degree while 18.3 percent have a master's degree. Another 5.5 percent had undertaken some university studies but did not complete their degrees. Of those respondents who held a university degree, the majority (73.8%) specialized in communication or journalism: 44.8 percent had specialized in journalism, 17.0 percent had studied in another communication field, and 12.0 percent had specialized in both journalism and communication.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The majority of journalists interviewed in the Philippines held a full-time position (87.1%). Some 3.5 percent had part-time employment while 6.7 percent worked as a freelance journalist. Of those with full or part-time employment, 94.8 percent had permanent positions while 5.2 percent worked on a temporary contract.

Filipino journalists tend to have long journalism experience. On average, they had worked as journalists for 14.10 years ($s=9.13$), and about half of them had more than 13 years of professional experience. Most journalists worked on various topics and subjects (53.6%) while the remaining 46.4 percent worked on specific desks or beats, such as politics, crime, or business. On the average, Filipino journalists worked for 1.36 newsrooms ($s=1.77$) and 38.3 percent of them had additional jobs outside journalism. The majority of the interviewed journalists were also members of a professional association (62.1%).

The biggest group of the journalists in the survey worked for print media: 45.3 percent worked at daily newspapers and 1.1 percent at weekly newspapers. The next biggest group in the sample was the online journalists: 16.0 percent worked at online outlets of either a newspaper or a television company while 12.6 percent worked at online-only outlets. Another 18.9 percent worked at television companies, and 5.2 percent worked at radio stations.

Journalistic Roles

In terms of professional role orientations, Filipino journalists found it most important to report things as they are, educate the audience, and advocate for social change (see Table 1). Most journalists were in strong agreement in the importance of these roles, as reflected by the relatively low standard deviations. In contrast, there were significant disagreements in the roles that were ranked the least important: providing entertainment and relaxation, being an adversary of the government, supporting government policy, and conveying a positive image of

political leadership. A majority of journalists in the Philippines also found it important to promote tolerance and cultural diversity, let people express their views, monitor and scrutinize political leaders, provide information people need to make political decisions, and provide analysis of current affairs.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	349	95.1	4.49	.60
Educate the audience	349	95.1	4.62	.63
Advocate for social change	347	85.3	4.30	.84
Let people express their views	349	83.4	4.22	.81
Provide analysis of current affairs	348	81.3	4.15	.85
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	349	81.1	4.22	.86
Provide information people need to make political decisions	348	81.0	4.17	.91
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	347	80.7	4.18	.88
Support national development	347	73.5	4.01	.97
Monitor and scrutinize business	346	72.8	3.99	.94
Be a detached observer	346	70.8	3.88	.86
Motivate people to participate in political activity	349	68.5	3.84	1.09
Influence public opinion	347	67.1	3.80	.96
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	348	52.3	3.49	1.07
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	349	45.6	3.38	1.07
Set the political agenda	348	44.3	3.29	1.10
Provide entertainment and relaxation	348	27.9	2.91	1.10
Be an adversary of the government	349	26.1	2.77	1.13
Support government policy	346	24.9	2.84	1.07
Convey a positive image of political leadership	347	15.6	2.37	1.12

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

While strongly committed to professional standards of ethics, Filipino journalists also demonstrated some contradiction in terms of ethical relativism and absolutism. They almost unanimously agreed that journalists should always adhere to the codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (see Table 2). But while the majority disagreed with the view that ethical decisions depend on specific situations, less than half agreed that ethical journalism is a matter of personal judgment and that sometimes it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "strongly" and "somewhat agree"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	346	96.0	4.60	.75
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	345	62.3	3.34	1.42
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	344	49.1	3.00	1.38
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	345	38.3	2.78	1.35

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Such contradiction was evident in how Filipino journalists responded to a selected number of potentially controversial reporting techniques. The majority of journalists surveyed found the use of confidential business or government documents without authorization, as well as using hidden microphones or cameras to gain inside information, justifiable at least on occasion (see Table 3). The majority also considered using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors as justifiable on occasion. In contrast, the practice of “envelop journalism,” or taking money from sources, presumably in return for positive coverage, was almost unanimously condemned by Filipino journalists. Almost everyone also considered altering quotes and photographs as unjustifiable under any circumstances.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	339	5.3	55.2
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	345	3.8	64.1
Using hidden microphones or cameras	344	2.0	61.9
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	342	2.0	33.6
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	343	.9	30.0
Claiming to be somebody else	344	.6	24.1
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	344	.6	29.4
Paying people for confidential information	343	.3	29.4
Publishing stories with unverified content	342	.3	10.5
Accepting money from sources	342	0	4.7
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	343	0	3.2
Altering photographs	342	0	5.3

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Filipino journalists reported a high degree of professional autonomy. The majority of the respondents said they had either complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting stories (77.5%) and in deciding what aspects to emphasize in their stories (78.0%). Half of the respondents reported that they participated in editorial coordination activities (such as meetings and news management) either “always” or “very often” (49.9%).

Professional autonomy, however, is subject to different influences, and news production is influenced by a variety of factors. Of the potential sources of influences mentioned in the survey, Filipino journalists rated “journalism ethics” as most influential in their work (see Table 4). A majority of journalists also found their work substantively constrained by routine-level factors: information access (or lack thereof), the availability (or non-availability) of news-gathering resources, editorial policy, and time limits. More than half of the respondents also admitted that their personal values and beliefs, as well as their supervisors and editors, influenced their work.

In general, internal factors were found to be more influential than external constraints. Filipino journalists felt less influenced by sources from the political and civic realm: the government, politicians, censorship, religion, the military, police and state security, pressure groups, business people, and public relations. They also reported even less influence from friends, acquaintances and family as well as from colleagues in other media. Similarly, economic influences, stemming from

owners and managers, market competition and profit expectations as well as advertising, exerted less influence than routine-related factors, with the exception of audience research and data, which more than half of the respondents considered to be either extremely or very influential in their work as journalists.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	338	92.9	4.47	.66
Information access	335	80.6	4.13	.77
Availability of news-gathering resources	339	79.1	4.06	.80
Editorial policy	340	76.8	4.03	.84
Time limits	340	73.5	3.91	.94
Media laws and regulation	336	68.2	3.84	.90
Your personal values and beliefs	340	61.8	3.74	1.04
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	340	59.1	3.64	.89
Audience research and data	338	56.2	3.59	1.00
Managers of the news organization	340	52.4	3.49	.96
Owners of the news organization	338	39.9	3.26	1.13
Competing news organizations	336	39.9	3.25	.98
Feedback from the audience	337	38.3	3.21	.93
Relationships with news sources	334	35.9	3.11	1.02
Censorship	337	35.3	3.01	1.19
Religious considerations	338	28.4	2.78	1.23
Advertising considerations	339	24.2	2.71	1.08
Profit expectations	339	22.4	2.65	1.10
Government officials	337	21.7	2.57	1.09
Your peers on the staff	339	20.4	2.83	.89
Military, police and state security	335	18.2	2.46	1.08
Politicians	337	16.6	2.38	1.07
Public relations	336	13.4	2.36	1.00
Business people	337	12.8	2.37	1.02
Colleagues in other media	336	11.9	2.53	.91
Friends, acquaintances and family	337	10.1	2.28	.96
Pressure groups	337	8.9	2.23	.96

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

The field of journalism is evolving, and the responses of the Filipino journalists in the survey describe a substantive deterioration of working conditions in the profession. A large majority of respondents reported an increase in their average working hours, while some respondents also reported a decrease in the time available for researching stories (see Table 5). Filipino journalists also reported an increase in the use of search engines as well as the use of technical skills in their work over the last five years. A large majority also recognize the increase in journalists’ interactions with their audiences.

Influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. In general, the extent of influence exerted by journalism education and ethical standards remained almost the same (see Table 6). But for Filipino journalists, the most significant changes were in the influences facilitated by new technologies, such as social media, audience feedback, audience involvement in news production, and user-generated content. The majority of the respondents also reported an increase in the influence of market-related factors, particularly from profit-making pressures, advertising considerations, and the pressure toward sensational news. The

questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	276	96.0	1.8
Technical skills	276	86.6	8.0
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	276	82.6	8.3
Average working hours of journalists	276	73.6	4.7
The relevance of journalism for society	276	68.8	11.6
Having a university degree	276	57.2	7.6
The credibility of journalism	275	50.5	24.7
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	276	48.9	15.9
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	274	47.1	17.2
Time available for researching stories	276	35.9	42.0

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the following aspects of work in the Philippines. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	278	92.8	2.2
Audience feedback	278	87.1	4.0
Competition	280	84.3	4.3
Audience involvement in news production	279	82.4	3.9
User-generated contents, such as blogs	279	79.2	7.5
Audience research	278	71.6	6.8
Profit making pressures	277	71.5	3.6
Advertising considerations	279	71.0	5.0
Pressure toward sensational news	278	62.2	10.4
Public relations	278	51.8	6.1
Journalism education	277	47.7	33.6
Ethical standards	280	39.6	37.1

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in the Philippines. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

In general, Filipino journalists are skeptical of most institutions in society (see Table 7). The only institution they trust is themselves, the news media. Religious leaders are also trusted more than any other institution. The Philippines is predominantly Catholic. In terms of the state, the judiciary is the most trusted branch. In contrast, Filipino journalists have low levels of trust in their politicians and political parties. They also do not seem to trust either the government in general, or the Congress in particular. In terms of security forces, Filipino journalists are also skeptical of their police and military.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
The news media	326	46.3	3.40	.69
Religious leaders	325	21.5	2.88	.91
The judiciary/the courts	325	17.8	2.94	.71
Trade unions	325	11.1	2.70	.75
The military	326	9.5	2.67	.75
The government	325	8.9	2.64	.76
The police	326	6.4	2.55	.72
The parliament [Congress]	326	2.1	2.40	.72
Politicians in general	325	.9	2.10	.73
Political parties	325	.3	2.10	.70

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	3,500 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	stratified proportionally random sampling for newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	349 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	online
<i>Response rate:</i>	52%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	05/2015-12/2015