



RESEARCH ARTICLE

On-Air Ethics: Examining Professional Conduct in AM Radio Broadcasting

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In an era where media plays a vital role in shaping public opinion, the ethical responsibility of radio broadcasters is more critical than ever. AM radio, while considered traditional, remains highly influential in the Philippines, especially in local communities. However, recurring ethical violations such as unverified reporting, sensationalism, and personal commentaries highlight the gap between ethical standards and broadcasting practice. These concerns emphasize the need to examine the professional conduct of AM radio announcers and assess their compliance with established codes of ethics. This study investigates the best practices and ethical violations committed by announcers in selected Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters ng Pilipinas (KBP)-accredited AM radio stations in Cebu City, with a focus on adherence to the KBP Broadcast and the Code Media Code of Ethics. It specifically examines announcers' personal profiles, including educational background, years of experience, participation in training, and results in the KBP Announcer's Accreditation Examination. Furthermore, the study identifies commonly observed best practices, violations, and proposes actionable recommendations. A mixed-method was employed, utilizing survey questionnaires and content analysis. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting ethical media practices and institutional accountability. Findings reveal that while most announcers apply ethical standards and demonstrate strong communication skills and preparedness, some lapses persist. The study recommends forming a task force to monitor KBP compliance and holding quarterly conventions among media stakeholders to strengthen ethical awareness and professional development in radio broadcasting.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical evidence shows that many get often disoriented especially students in Communication and Journalism. These two are interconnected yet have dissimilar meanings. Mass Communication is an umbrella term that pertains to the study of masses i.e., human interactions to all extent. While mass communication tackles various areas of communication consisting of news, public relations, advertising, films, and the internet, on the other hand, journalism is one of the several specializations of mass communication. Writing about news and current events is one of its examples. Journalism is more conventional in its approach with fact-checking straight from the news sources while mass media is broader with more options (Mass Communication vs Journalism: What's the Difference?).

To have an in-depth understanding, the person who does journalism is called a journalist. He writes for newspapers, magazines, or news websites or produces news to be broadcasted on traditional tv or radio. Thus, he could either be a broadcast journalist such as on tv or radio or print journalist (Radio and Television Broadcasting). As an ethical guide for the journalists (34), Journalism students are often taught about Joseph Pulitzer's so-called three rules of journalism: "Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy." What has become increasingly clear, however, is that accuracy may not be enough to set out the ends of journalism in the age of disinformation.

Veteran journalist Ellen Tordesillas, speaking to lawmakers in a Senate inquiry on disinformation in 2017, says: "If an official says, you quote as accurately as you can. If it is a lie, do you report a lie accurately?" A lie that is reported accurately is still a lie, even if the lie comes from high officials like the President. Journalists always bear in mind that their role is different from stenographers who only capture what was said accurately. It is the journalist's job to listen beyond "he said, she said" and go in search of and report the truth.

On the other hand, President Benigno "P-Noy" Aquino III expressed about malpractices such as corruption which was the theme of the conference in a speech at the 9th Media Nation Summit on November 23, 2012. He requests the media industry to create standards to prevent corruption. He said that he saw drawbacks in the industry and he wanted the needed standards, which made him appreciate the role of the Ombudsman for local officials where the people can seek assistance and file complaints against media practitioners (Corruption in the Media).

In the Philippine setting, it is a reality that rewards to journalists have already been a part of the journalistic culture that they use jargon on their own. One particular term applied in the journalistic community about media corruption is "envelopemental journalism". It became popular in the 1970s and contain an envelope of money given to journalists to entice their reportage. Another term is "ATM journalism" which refers to receiving discreet and regular payoffs using automated teller machine (ATM) accounts. This also means depositing money into these accounts by news sources instead of releasing it through cheques. Frequently, the accounts are under the names of relatives, instead of the reporters themselves. ATM journalism became known in the 1990s, replacing the simpler term "envelopemental journalism" which occurred in the 1970s and '80s (Hofilena 15- 16).

In Cebu, the media members may be a whole lot better when it comes to professionalism compared to some media practitioners in the country, however, it is a reality that it also has its share of corruption. This was based on a documentary produced by the Cebu Citizens Press Council, and presented to a forum at the University of the Philippines with Mass Communication. Some media practitioners shared their experiences with media corruption such as bribery. Assistant Ombudsman. Hence, Cebu Citizens-Press Council (CCPC) was also organized as a media local press council (Cebu Citizens-Press Council). CCPC's core function is consultation wherein it caters for a forum.

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Objectives

This study investigated the best practices and the violations of the Media Code of Ethics, and the KBP Broadcast Code of the program handlers working in selected Kapisanan ng mga Brodkasters ng Pilipinas Accredited AM radio stations in Cebu City.

Specifically, the study focused on personal circumstances in terms of educational qualifications, tenure in the broadcast industry, seminars and training attended, and KBP Announcer's Accreditation Examination; the best practices of these announcers; violations of the Media Code of Ethics and KBP Broadcast Code; and proposed courses of actions.

Additionally, this study supports Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting ethical standards, institutional responsibility, and the role of media in fostering transparency and trust in society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design. The study employed a mixed-method approach employing content analysis and survey questionnaire. Content analysis was applied to assess on-air programs for ethical compliance, while a survey questionnaire was used to gather data on the announcers' educational background, tenure in the industry, training and seminars attended, and KBP accreditation.

These combined approaches provided both qualitative and quantitative insights into the ethical conduct and professional practices of AM radio broadcasters.

Research Procedure. This study had four phases. The first phase of the study was conducted by examining the personal circumstances of the program handlers in terms of educational qualifications, tenure in the broadcast industry, seminars and training attended, and KBP Announcer's Accreditation Examination using a survey questionnaire via google form that is sent to all the respondents. The second phase of the study was also be conducted by acknowledging the best practices of the announcers in terms of their communication skills, program preparedness, and proper use of stingers using the radio station's Facebook page where they are connected. Such factors are determined depending on how these are being applied and practiced by the announcers when they do their broadcasting. The third phase of the study is administered by investigating the violations of announcers on the Media Code of Ethics and KBP Broadcast Code still, using the radio station's Facebook page where the program handlers work. The fourth phase of the study deliberates the proposed courses of action based on the violations of the media code of ethics and the KBP Broadcast Code of the announcers. This phase also examines action plans beneficial to broadcasting and the media industry as a whole.

The data which were collected from the review and observation of the selected KBP- accredited AM radio stations were encoded and categorized according to their thematic similarities and/ or differences. Furthermore, the data are analyzed and evaluated using the media code of ethics, and KBP broadcast code with the help of the theory used and related readings to further support the study.

Sources of Data. The data were taken from the Facebook pages of the five selected KBP-accredited AM radio stations.

To date, the oldest station not just in Cebu City but in the entire Philippines went on air on July 15, 1939, and it broadcasts nationwide through an array of sister stations while the most recent station started to broadcast some time in 1978. Almost all of them operate with sister stations in the different key cities in the country. Aside from being KBP-accredited all of the five radio stations are chosen in this study based on the following reasons: they have high-caliber programming content that will reach its desired audience as it is also a vital commodity of radio, and all belong to the top ten in radio audience measurement currency such as Kantar and AC Nielsen, and all were within the parameters of Cebu City.

For further questions, the investigator Michelle Dialogo-Tubilan can be communicated at dialogm@cnu.edu.ph. For respondent rights and grievances, the Ethics Review Committee can be contacted at cnuerc@cnu.edu.ph.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretation of the study included personal circumstances of the program handlers, best practices, violations of the media code of ethics, and proposed courses of action.

Personal Circumstances. This section presented the educational backgrounds, length of service in the broadcast industry, media-related seminars and training, and KBP accreditation of the announcers.

Table 1. Personal Circumstances of the Announcers

Announcers in KBP- Member Stations	Educational Qualifications	Tenure in the Broadcast Industry	Journalism- Related Seminars and Training Attended	KBP
				Accreditation
A1R	Development Communication- Graduate	More than 20 years	-KBP seminars and training	Accredited
			A Forum on Libel	
			-Ethical Journalism	
A2	AB Political Science- Graduate	Almost 3	None	Not Yet
		years		Accredited
A3	AB Political Science- Undergraduate	More than 40	All KBP seminars and training	Accredited
		years		
A4	Bachelor of Science in Information Technology	30 years	All KBP seminars and training	Accredited
	(BSIT)- Graduate			
A5	AB Mass	More than 20 years	-All KBP seminars and training	Accredited
	Communication- Graduate		-Media Information and Literacy	

Table 1 data explains that the majority of the respondents are not communication graduates, and there are only two of them who are graduates with the said baccalaureate degree. These results provide an implication that the executives in KBP-member AM radio stations do not only limit to accepting applicants who are their educational backgrounds are not journalism-related.

Table 1 data demonstrates that the most tenured respondent has already been in the broadcast industry for more than 40 years while the newest has already been for almost three years.

A survey reveals that exemplary and skillful employees stick around in a company for several intentions. It may be because they feel as if being valued, appreciated, and paid well by their employers (What Are the Reasons Why Employees Stay in the Company?).

These results entail that handling radio programs is enjoyable and that one gets to love it and find it a privilege since not everybody was given the chance to speak on-air, be listened to, and be idolized. One of the respondents noted that:

For almost 30 years of being a program handler, I was able to build relationships among my news sources and listeners. I love to talk and discuss the issues that matter to the public.

Moreover, Table 1 explains that the majority of the respondents have undergone KBP seminars and training. Only one respondent out of the five did not acquire it yet. According to Glimoto and Payandee, radio broadcasters and officials who have not yet finished their baccalaureate degree should be highly encouraged to take a diploma course and in-depth series of drills and seminars related to the chosen career. Moreover, those who have already obtained their post-graduate studies must also be encouraged to do the same.

Based on the results, it implied that the majority of the announcers have high regard for journalism-related seminars and training despite their tenure in the broadcast industry.

Lastly, Table 1 data further discusses that the majority of the respondents are certified by the KBP. Out of the five respondents from the different KBP-member AM radio stations, only one is not yet KBP- accredited.

From the data gathered, the results indicated that the announcers who are tenured in the radio broadcast industry are KBP certified. It is noted in Article 30 of the KBP Broadcast Code that, KBP

accredits announcers and other regular on-air personnel of member stations to ensure that they are knowledgeable enough about professional and ethical broadcasting.

Best Practices. This section deliberates the best practices applied by the announcers in the KBP-member AM radio stations.

Table 2 manifests that three out of the five announcers have good communication skills in broadcasting. The first factor that contributes to this best practice is the eloquence of the Cebuano-Visayan language. The majority of the respondents are articulate in the Cebuano-Visayan language which they use in catering to the C, D, and E types of audiences. An example of this audience type is taxi drivers. One of the announcers had a program on April 3, 2022, wherein some of the audience commended his or her fluent way of broadcasting using the Cebuano-Visayan language through interactions on Facebook live streaming.

Boyer says that “people watch people”. They do not watch helicopters or satellites and they prefer to watch anchors on TV or listen to anchors on the radio that they like and are enjoyable. Boyer looked back at one of his anchors named Bill Elder, who worked for WWL for 20 years. Boyer mentioned that Elder was like an old friend telling them what has been happening and it was easy for them to watch his program. Highlighting Elder’s career a few years ago, he emphasized the importance of the involvement of anchors in the production show (White and Barnes 272).

The second factor is the enthusiastic tone of voice. One particular announcer showed enthusiasm and energy when Cebu City Mayor Michael Rama was interviewed on April 25, 2022. That announcer sounded lively all throughout the interaction between his or her news source and audience. Studies have shown that speakers who have a high level of enthusiasm have a greater return on their presentations than those who lack enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can be communicated to the audience through vocal tones. The audience is engaged with the speaker by creating vocal tone variations. A difference in tone also allows the audience’s attention to be retained (Embracing Enthusiasm in Every Presentation).

The third factor is that the three announcers have good storytelling skills. They always impart to their listeners the experiences that they have in their vocation. They tell stories of wars, calamities, tragedies, success, and hope in their programs as evaluated on their program airing dates.

The last factor that contributes to the communication skills is having no dead air as documented on the different program airing dates. All three announcers did not have an unintended period of silence that interrupt their broadcast. Rankin states that dead air is a broadcasting term for the unwanted absence of plotted content. In television broadcasting, for instance, it refers to a black screen or silence on the audio track. In radio, where the term originates, it means a complete lack of sound. Technical problems, equipment failure, or mistakes by station staff usually result in dead air. Stations sometimes have experienced dead air intentionally, but this is rare as it is considered a cardinal sin in broadcasting (Rankin).

Table 2 data exhibits that three out of the five announcers are prepared for their programs. One element that contributes to preparedness as one of the best practices in broadcasting is a well-delivered intro and extro. Each announcer uses intro which is a short unique line at the start of the program and also uses extro which is a short distinctive line at the end of the program. It was evaluated according to their program airing dates. One of the announcers has a distinct intro to his or her program such as saying a Latin quote translated into the Cebuano-Visayan language and saying a short prayer. A survey suggests that the intro must grab attention and create a first good impression. The average attention span of a person is eight seconds, but the truth is it varies depending on the activity. When listeners are exploring new podcasts and scanning the dial, they tend to listen to the first seconds. They stay if the content is compelling or skip for the next show (Radio Intros Guide: With 7 Tips and Example).

The second element is being knowledgeable about the issues. All of the three announcers manifest that they do research in their news and issue presentations. Based on their program they presented to the public such as the reading of the articles, background checking on the subjects of the issues, and even verifying issues straight from the source. It was proven by Announcer 3 when he or she presented different credible sources of articles on the Bongbong Marcos issue to the public.

The last element that attributes to program preparedness is the confidence applied by the three announcers. Based on the program airing dates of those three announcers they sound confident when they do their broadcasting as their voices are authoritative and they do not stutter. Kush concluded in his research that being a confident radio speaker depends on how a speech is well-crafted and rehearsed. He added that if the speaker is prepared and has followed the vital elements of radio speech then the speaker, can control the communication anxiety, eliminate the fear of public speaking, and overcome nervousness. Thus, become a confident radio speaker (Khush).

Table 2 expounds that three out of the five announcers use stingers or sounders incorporated with them to emphasize a thought. Each announcer uses unique stingers as observed when they do their broadcasting.

According to Jaimeson, it is important to create radio imaging or to use stingers to have a brand recall. He noted that radio image scripting is important with the use of voiceover that can give the station a distinct style and tone. These stingers and transitions help remind the listeners which station they are listening to and an effective Call-To-Action can keep them tuned in during breaks or commercials.

On the other hand, Announcer 1 is a veteran broadcaster and columnist for a tabloid newspaper. Announcer 1 earns the trust of vast and loyal listeners and has been attacked, bruised, and threatened over his commentaries and crusades for telling the truth. Announcer 3 is an old-timer broadcast journalist whose connections among the news sources nationwide and listeners are built.

Announcer 3 was not able to finish his baccalaureate degree but remained respected by colleagues in the media industry and in the community. Lastly, Announcer 5 is also a seasoned radio broadcast journalist and columnist. Announcer 5 has the weekly release of an issue on a tabloid newspaper. In terms of the number of interactors during broadcasting through Facebook aside from the traditional radio, Announcer 5 has the highest number. Moreover, Announcer 5 is exemplary based on the data gathered on the educational qualifications.

The study is limited to quantify the listeners if the above-mentioned factors that contribute to the best practices in broadcasting are their motivations for following and idolizing an announcer.

However, the Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that audiences are active and can articulate their reasons for consuming specific media to satisfy their needs (Venney).

The results indicated that majority of the respondents applied the best practices in radio broadcasting specifically good communication skills, program preparedness, and use of stingers.

Violations of the Media Code of Ethics. This section investigated the violations of the announcers to the media code of ethics namely Seek Truth and Report It, Minimize Harm, Act Independently, and Be Accountable and Transparent.

Table 3. Violations of the Media Code of Ethics of the Announcers

c	Minimize Harm	Act Independently	Program Airing Date
A2	Criticizing Media Colleagues	Political Promotion during Program	April 27, 2022 May 6, 2022 May 7, 2022
A3	Profanity Overn the Subjects of Commentary	Advertisement Promotion	April 25, 2022 April 28, 2022 April 29, 2022
A4	Subjective Toward the Listeners	-Advertisement Promotion -Political Promotion during Program	April 30, 2022 May 1, 2022 May 3, 2022

There are four codes in the Media Code of Ethics namely: Seek Truth and Report It, Minimize Harm, Act Independently, and Be Accountable and Transparent. However, Table 3 indicates that out of the four codes, there are only two being violated by the announcers particularly Minimize Harm ad Act Independently. Three of the five respondents commit violations of the mentioned codes. Based on the results, the first component that contravenes the code on Minimize Harm is criticizing media colleagues. The instances of violating such guidelines are noted on these particular dates an

announcer handled a program, April 27, 2022, May 6, 2022, and May 7, 2022. That announcer used to malign another radio station he or she found as their competitor toward the end of his or her program. That announcer used to say that that radio station is stupid, untrue, and manipulative. In vernacular terms, he or she uttered:

Ayaw mu'g tu-u ana'ng radyu nga tinuntu, sinurambaw, inamaw. (Do not believe in that radio station that is stupid, mediocre, and manipulative.)

The second component that breaches the code of Minimize Harm is profanity over the subjects of the commentary. One particular announcer who does not also conform to this guideline calls the subjects of his or her commentary *Kwanggul* in vernacular terms or empty-headed during his or her program on May 3, 2022.

The study by Coleman titled *Professional-Client Relationships: Rethinking Confidentiality, Harm, and Journalists' Public Health Duties*, cited one notable case which was a well-intentioned visit of Michael Jackson to the children still recovering at a local hospital. It draws a positive connotation to his fans. It also benefited him through publicity; however, it did not minimize harm to the juveniles recuperating at the hospital.

The last component that breaks Minimize Harm is being subjective toward the listeners. It is documented on Announcer 4 that he or she used to contradict the ideas of the listeners that are not in favor of his or her perspectives.

According to the *SPJ Code of Ethics*, to minimize harm ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues, and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

Moreover, Table 3 data show that those three respondents do not conform to the guidelines of Acting Independently in the Media Code of Ethics. The first factor that violates this code is political promotion during the program. An announcer oversimplifies the candidacy of former Vice-President, Leni Robredo giving an implication of promoting her during elections to the public on April 25, 2022.

The second factor that breaches this code is the promotion of the advertisements during the program.

Based on the gathered data, it is done particularly by Announcer 3 and Announcer 4. For an instance, Announcer 3 during his or her program promotes a money remittance center and Announcer 4 advertises a certain herbal food supplement capsule.

The *Society of Professional Journalists' Ethics* encourages journalists to act independently. To act independently is to avoid conflicts of interest and corruption

and countering the advertisers and special interest groups in the attempt to influence the news and issues (Crichton, et al).

From these results, the general picture would be that the announcers are aware of the Media Code of Ethics as guidelines toward accountable, credible, and transparent journalism most importantly in broadcast journalism. However, there are still some announcers who do not apply this rule.

Proposed Courses of Action. This section declares the proposed courses of action deemed appropriate for the KBP-accredited announcers and the AM radio stations they represent and the KBP organization.

Task Force on the Miss and Hits of the KBP Standards. To maintain the standards of broadcasting a special committee may be created by the KBP that evaluates all the member radio stations quarterly. With the KBP Broadcast Code guidelines, the announcers will be assessed according to the best practices applied and the violations committed. The announcers with exemplary performances or considered top performers will be commended by the KBP by giving a plaque of excellence. The announcers with violations at the same time are given a written warning or penalized with those offenses already gone beyond three times.

This committee may also organize the hall of Famers for broadcasters whose performances are exemplary. By doing this way, the broadcasters are motivated of doing their job and in return, KBP can maintain setting its standards for broadcast.

Quarterly Convention Among KBP, Media Organizations, Government Information Agencies, and the Academe. This is a two-day event wherein KBP, media organizations, and stakeholders will discuss the issues arising in the broadcast and media industry as a whole and come up with solutions essential in the process. At the same time, KBP will showcase those broadcasters with the best performance. There are also workshops and seminars conducted especially for those who have not undergone rigorous training in the said profession.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the announcers in the KBP-accredited AM radio stations in Cebu City incorporate the best practices in broadcasting and only have a few violations in the Media Code of Ethics and the KBP Broadcast Code. The findings and conclusion recommend that radio executives may hire competent and credible announcers for their stations. Announcers may also review the recorded copy of their programs to evaluate their best practices and violations through Tape on Air (TOA) or Facebook page. Officials in radio stations may always give importance to conducting journalism-related seminars and training that will contribute knowledge and hone the skills of the announcers. Moreover, KBP as the country's regulating body for the broadcast industry may strictly monitor the radio stations and penalize violators.

Authors' Contributions

This scholarly work was conceived, designed, and authored by Michelle Dialogo-Tubilan, DA. The author independently conducted all phases of the research, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensuring the scholarly rigor and integrity of the study.

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Bio Note

Dr. Michelle Dialogo-Tubilan is the Chair of the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Cebu Normal University. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Master of Arts in Communication, and Doctor of Arts in Literature and Communication, all from Cebu Normal University.

An educator, researcher, and writer, Dr. Dialogo-Tubilan specializes in literature, communication, and media literacy. She gains extensive experience in broadcasting through her work with Bombo Radyo Philippines as a program handler, news reporter, and newscaster. She also serves as a judge for the Cebu Archdiocesan Mass Media Awards (CAMMA).

In addition to her academic work, she builds a strong background in marketing, contributing to various promotional campaigns and communication initiatives. She also ventures into real estate, where she earns recognition as a top seller in a leading Cebu-based firm. Deeply committed to community engagement, she participates in workshops and forums aimed at making education more inclusive and impactful.