

REPORTING CORRUPTION: HOW JOURNALISTS MANAGE CHALLENGES**ANURAJ MANIBHANDU 5538604 HPHR/M****M.A. (HUMAN RIGHTS)****THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: MICHAEL GEORGE HAYES, Ph.D.,
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This thesis examines the ways journalists manage challenges when they try to uncover corruption threatening the country economically, politically and socially. The research questions were: 1) What are the challenges of investigating corruption in the Thai media? 2) How do journalists deal with the challenges? The objectives of the research were to analyse the challenges and difficulties of reporting corruption, including access to the truth, access to information, business and legal constraints, to evaluate how journalists manage the challenges, and to determine how the context of changing media impacts on corruption reporting. A sample of 14 journalists with diverse experiences were interviewed for the research, which for comprehensiveness also reached out to two media executives, a scholar, a lawyer and a corruption expert. The journalists were asked to respond to 10 hypothetical questions, many of which were based on real cases. Many were interviewed a second time to triangulate information that emerged during the first round. From the interviews, the researcher found that most journalists have become verifiers rather than seekers of information given the extensive availability of information in present-day media conditions. The researcher also found that access to the truth was more problematic than access to information, that journalists preferred to use personal connections due to the cumbersome procedures of obtaining information about the State through the Official Information Act. However, given that access to information about State spending is vital to counter-corruption work and corruption reporting, many journalists agreed on the need to amend the OIA. The research also found that the military and Buddhist clergy posed the strongest obstacles to verification efforts and that the patron-client system ingrained in Thai society was both a cause of corruption and an obstruction to the work of journalists needing to cultivate sources, while keeping a distance from the issue at hand. The plurality of corruption forms, lack of understanding about the forms, and narrowness of corruption perceptions posed other challenges. A long history of military regimes imposing restrictions has obstructed reporting in general with the coup d'état on May 22, 2014 curbing media freedoms.

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