

# Exploring the Practice and Challenges of Investigative Journalism on OBN's 'Caayaa' Program: A Focus on Uncovering Truth and Promoting Accountability

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## Abstract

This research conducted investigative journalism on Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN), focusing on the "Caayaa" investigative television program. Qualitative research methods, including interviews and analysis of five programs from 2022, were used. The study finds that the programs address public and national issues but lacks in-depth research. It relies heavily on community complaints but has succeeded in holding officials accountable and influencing policy. To enhance its effectiveness, the program should broaden its scope beyond governmental organizations. The practice of investigative journalism on OBN faces challenges such as the lack of protection for journalists, limited access to information, and resource constraints. Investigative reporting requires time and analysis, necessitating adequate planning and allocation of resources. In conclusion, this research highlights the strengths of the "Caayaa" program in accountability and public influence while identifying the need for improvement in research depth and expanding its coverage to non-governmental institutions and individuals. It also emphasizes the importance of addressing challenges to enhance the program's impact.

**Keywords:** investigative journalism, OBN, 'Caayaa' program, journalism practice, media practice challenges

## Introduction

The world we live in is complex, and staying informed is crucial for survival and fulfilling our obligations (Dyikuk, 2017). Mass media, a modern means of communication, plays a significant role in society by reaching and involving nearly everyone (McQuail, 2000). Scholars have explored the functions of mass media, such as setting the agenda for discussion, facilitating change, and spreading propaganda (Miroshnichenko, 2016; Murphy & Daramola, 2005). Investigative journalism, a branch of journalism that uncovers crimes and wrongdoing,

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involves in-depth research and fact-checking (Dyikuk, 2017; Spark, 1999).

Investigative journalism aims to reveal concealed matters and expose corruption, government policies, and social, economic, political, or cultural issues (Nazakat, 2016). It closely monitors the actions of governments and individuals in power to inform the public and hold them accountable (Hunter, 2011). Unlike the work of police, lawyers, auditors, and regulatory bodies, investigative journalism is not limited in its targets and is closely tied to journalism (Burgh, 2008).

Scholars agree that investigative journalism, also known as muckraking in its early years, is as old as newspapers themselves (Ntibinyane, 2018). Hunter (2011) on his manual called *Story-Based Inquiry* conceptualized investigative journalism as one which requires “using both secret and open sources and documents..., in this way, investigative journalism crucially contributes to freedom of expression and freedom of information”. (Ibid)

Investigative reporting, However, not only requires the highest standards of accuracy, but also presents more ethical dilemmas on a daily basis than any other type of journalism (Houston, 2009). Therefore, this research puts emphasis on exploring both the practice and challenges of investigative journalism on OBN's 'Caayaa' program. It highlights the program's role in uncovering truth and promoting accountability while acknowledging the hurdles faced in its pursuit. This topic sets the stage for an in-depth examination of the program using investigative journalism approach and it also explores the obstacles encountered along the way.

Media plays a vital role in providing accurate information, influencing public opinion, and shaping social policy (Kantumoya, 2004). Investigative journalism, essential for promoting democracy and development, holds leaders accountable and uncovers human rights abuses, systemic issues, and international crimes (Kaplan, 2013). However, developing countries face challenges in establishing investigative journalism practices (Kantumoya, 2004; Wegayehu, 2017).

Challenges in practicing investigative journalism in developing countries include weak legal and security environments, restrictive laws, media ownership, corruption, and limited governance and transparency (Forbes, 2005). The development of investigative journalism varies across countries, and research suggests limitations in its depth and content in Ethiopia (Wegayehu, 2017). Furthermore, studies reveal difficulties faced

by investigative journalists, including pressure from higher officials, inadequate reimbursement, and restrictions on broadcasting (Ademe, 2019). However, OBN's "Caayaa" program has expanded its coverage to include previously untouched issues such as politics, religion, and government administration systems (Ademe, 2019).

This research delves into the intricacies and complexities of investigative journalism within the distinct context of OBN's "Caayaa" program. Its primary objective is to explore the program's approach to covering diverse subjects while distinguishing it from previous endeavors, thereby addressing any shortcomings and broadening its horizons. It is worth noting that scholars such as Wegayehu (2017) and Ademe (2019) have made commendable efforts to investigate related areas, but the specific focus of the present study remains unexplored.

## **Theoretical framework**

### **Social Responsibility theory**

Investigative journalism is rooted in Enlightenment principles of press freedom and liberty. In Europe during the 16th to 18th centuries, social and political progress was no longer solely dependent on absolute authority but on reason, rational debate, and freedom of speech (Rosner, 2008).

Sheila Coronel (n.d.) emphasizes that classical liberal theorists from the late 17th century argued that publicity and openness are essential in preventing excessive power. The press as the Fourth Estate exists to check those in public offices, ensuring that powerful states do not exceed their boundaries.

According to McQuail (2010, as quoted in Ntibinyane, 2018), there are four normative theories of the press: authoritarian theory, libertarian theory, social responsibility theory, and Soviet Media theory. Among these, the social responsibility theory is applicable to this study.

The social responsibility theory asserts that media have a responsibility to inform society, address social injustices, and combat corruption. It goes beyond self-interest and envisions a positive notion of freedom with mechanisms of accountability in place (McQuail, 2010).

The social responsibility theory requires the media to serve various functions, including providing information, enlightening the public, safeguarding individual rights, servicing the economic system, offering entertainment, and maintaining financial self-sufficiency (Siebert et al., 1963). However, the theory also emphasizes the moral responsibility of

journalists to fulfill their duties to both their profession and society (Peterson, 1996).

In summary, the social responsibility theory of media encompasses the principles of freedom and accountability. It allows for media freedom while also promoting the public interest. This theory has influenced the shift from objective reporting to interpretative reporting, particularly within investigative journalism. By analyzing and interpreting facts, the press can provide accurate information to the public, expose social evils, such as corruption, and contribute to social harmony. The application of the social responsibility theory will be explored in relation to investigative journalism within the Oromia Broadcasting Network Television and its "Caayaa" program.

### **Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to examine the practice and challenges of investigative journalism in the "Caayaa" program of Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) in Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To assess the current status of investigative reporting activities in Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN).
2. To identify the major challenges faced by investigative journalism in OBN.
3. To evaluate the criteria and strategies employed in the prioritization of issues covered in the "Caayaa" program.
4. To examine the types of issues addressed by the "Caayaa" program and assess their relevance to the needs and interests of the audience.

## **Litrature Review**

### **Concept of Investigative Journalism**

Investigative journalism involves in-depth research and aims to expose wrongdoing, corruption, and failures in governance (Ararsa, 2017). It is a challenging and risky profession that requires commitment to impartiality, accuracy, and honesty (Hargreaves, 2005). Investigative journalists often face dangers and threats, as they uncover secrets and hold powerful individuals accountable (Forbes, 2005).

However, in spite of the benefits, investigative journalism faces challenges in developing countries. These challenges are related to economic conditions, government control of resources, and limited

independence (Yusha'u, 2009). In Ethiopia, studies have found shortcomings in investigative journalism programs: lacking depth, accuracy, and adherence to standards (Ararsa, 2017). Despite these challenges, investigative journalism plays a crucial role in promoting accountability, exposing corruption, monitoring democratic institutions, providing the public with information they need to make informed decisions and by shining a light on issues that would otherwise remain hidden (Waisbord, 2002).

To ensure the safety and security of journalists, governments should take measures to protect them from threats and intimidation (Leach, 2013). Additionally, media organizations have a responsibility to provide information of public interest while staying within certain boundaries (Leach, 2013).

In conclusion, investigative journalism is a critical form of journalism that aims to uncover wrongdoings, expose corruption, promote good governance, and hold those who abuse power accountable in one of the most challenging working contexts.

### **Investigative Journalism Ethics**

Ethics are fundamental in investigative journalism guiding journalists to report responsibly. Key principles include seeking the truth, minimizing harm, being accountable, and acting independently (Ward, 2006; Chala, 2019). Critical thinking is necessary to verify information and ensure accuracy (Ongowo, 2011).

Investigative journalism takes different forms, including original reporting and interpretation of information (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Regardless of the approach, journalists should uphold ethical standards and prioritize the public interest (Dejene, 2017). Respect for sources and consideration of potential impacts are crucial (Ararsa, 2017). Ethical investigative journalism contributes to transparency, accountability, and addressing societal concerns (Ararsa, 2017).

In summary, ethics are integral to investigative journalism, guiding journalists to seek the truth, minimize harm, and act responsibly. Critical thinking, respect for sources, and upholding the public interests are essential. Investigative journalism that is undertaken under such ethical conditions serves as a powerful tool for transparency, accountability, and addressing societal issues.

## Challenges of Practicing Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism faces numerous challenges that threaten its practice, setting it apart from conventional journalism that focused on daily events. While investigative journalists strive to uncover hidden facts and bring them to the public's attention, they encounter various barriers that hinder their work. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

1. **Brown envelope and courage:** One of the primary constraints may arise from the journalists themselves. They may fear the risks associated with their investigations, which can lead to self-censorship. Journalists may avoid offending authorities or individuals affiliated with parties that could cause problems. Additionally, journalists may find themselves susceptible to engaging in brown envelope journalism due to inadequate compensation (Lodamo & Skjerdal, 2009).
2. **Secrecy:** Investigating private organizations is often difficult and sometimes even impossible. These organizations may have strict regulations in place that force employees to sign agreements safeguarding the organization's interests. Employees are often advised not to disclose any information, citing confidentiality or legal secrecy. Such tactics are designed to delay investigations and discourage journalists from pursuing them (Forbes, 2005).
3. **Reluctant sources:** Unearthing crucial information and making it public relies heavily on the willingness of sources to provide information. However, sources may be reluctant to share information due to fears of reprisals or lack of protection for whistleblowers. Investigative journalists must work to persuade sources by establishing trust and confidence in the potential consequences (ibid).
4. **Threats:** Investigative journalism inherently involves challenging and dangerous assignments that can put journalists' lives at risk. Threats can come from the subjects under investigation or those associated with them. Journalists may face intimidation or even direct threats to themselves or their loved ones. Investigative journalists often seen to choose to pursue their stories despite the dangers involved (Forbes, 2005).
5. **Media ownership:** Challenges can arise from media institutions themselves. In privately-owned media, investigative stories that do not align with the owner's interests may not be encouraged or supported. The same applies to government-owned media when the investigative agenda conflicts with the government's interests (Rudin & Ibbotson, 2002).

6. Ethics and standards of investigative reporting: As investigative reporting expands globally, the importance of upholding standards and quality becomes increasingly crucial. In some cases, even respected investigative reporters may produce stories with few sources or fail to explain the origins of their information adequately. Some journalists may misuse the term "investigative journalist," using it to describe stories that lack substantiated allegations (Kaplan, 2013).

Ethical considerations in investigative reporting are of paramount importance. Investigative journalists must prioritize accuracy, fairness, contextual accuracy, and ethical conduct. They must ensure that their stories are fair, factually accurate, and not defamatory. Journalists should avoid accepting gifts, travel, or free meals from sources and should never invent facts or plagiarize. Journalists working in newsrooms with ethics codes should review and discuss those codes, while those without codes can refer to model codes provided by professional journalistic organizations (Houston & Ire, 2009).

7. Fairness and the law: Journalistic practices may be legal, but ethical questions can still arise. For example, while it may be legal to record someone during a phone conversation without their knowledge in some states, journalists may debate the ethics of such practices. Journalists should be aware of laws related to libel, privacy, and emotional distress to ensure they operate within legal boundaries. Having a basic understanding of relevant laws, such as freedom of information acts, can aid investigative journalists in gathering information effectively (Houston & Ire, 2009).

In summary, investigative journalism faces numerous challenges that can impede its practice. Journalists must navigate ethical dilemmas, confront secrecy and reluctant sources, overcome threats, and consider media ownership dynamics. Upholding high ethical standards and understanding relevant laws is crucial for investigative journalists to carry out their work responsibly and make a positive impact.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design and Approach**

This qualitative study explored the challenges and prospects of investigative journalism, specifically focusing on the OBN Caayaa program. In-depth interviews with producers, executives, and media experts were conducted to gather detailed information. Thematic analysis was employed to address research questions regarding the

implementation of investigative journalism, program themes, adherence to ethical principles, and challenges faced by investigative journalism in OBN TV.

### **Sampling Techniques**

Patton (2002) highlights the widespread use of purposive sampling in qualitative research, and these researchers utilized purposive sampling as the sampling technique for this qualitative research study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling approach that is particularly suitable when the focus is on studying a specific cultural domain and gathering insights from knowledgeable experts within that domain. This technique allows the deliberate selection of information-rich cases, ensuring the efficient use of limited resources.

In this study, a total of seven participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. The sample included five investigative journalists, the program editor, and the deputy general director from OBN. The interviews took place between April 15 and April 30, 2023. To maintain anonymity, unique codes were assigned to each respondent, such as IJ1, IJ2, IJ3, IJ4, IJ5 for the investigative journalists, ED1 for the editor, D1 for the deputy director, and "O" for OBN as the media station (Bos, 2020).

### **Data Collection Instruments**

This study collected data through face-to-face, in-depth interviews to gain deeper perspectives on the practice and challenges of investigative journalism. Participants included producers, editors, directors of the program, and the Deputy General of OBN media. Open-ended questions were used to allow participants to express their ideas and views. The interviews provided unique access to firsthand insights and in-depth details. Additionally, qualitative analysis of sampled broadcast programs examined how investigative journalism was practiced within the OBN Caayaa television program.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The study utilized in-depth interviews analyzed thematically and presented in a qualitative manner. Relevant points from the literature review on investigative journalism were incorporated, including responses from journalists, editors, and directors, as well as an analysis of five selected investigative stories. The data presentation followed a narrative and descriptive structure, maintaining respondent anonymity through coding techniques. Sample programs from OBN's "Caayaa" were



analyzed based on criteria such as addressing hot issues, attracting attention, high viewership, and timeliness. The analysis focused on investigative practices and challenges encountered during the investigation and production process. The number of investigative programs presented to OBN viewers was also considered in selecting the sample.

## **Data Analysis and Discussion**

### **Data from Media Interview**

#### **What is current status of investigative reporting at OBN?**

Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) broadcasts a variety of programs in multiple languages, including Afan Oromo and international languages like Arabic, English, and Swahili. Among these programs, "Caayaa" is a live investigative program that distinguishes itself from others like "Mil'uuQorannoo" and "Iftoma" by involving government authorities in discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand participants' perspectives on investigative journalism, focusing on its essence and the intent to uncovering crimes against the public interest. The editor in chief of caayaa program (ED1) explained it as:

Investigative journalism is a very noble job which is exposing hidden facts from the public. It is revealing what is done in secret. As the Motto of OBN is voice for voiceless, one of the quality investigative journalist is being voice for those forgotten and hindered with different bad works; currently; we are striving to be voice for voiceless. (ED1 of O)

According to this respondent, investigative journalism serves as voice for the voiceless. Uncovering the wrong doings and working for the public interest are very important according to the respondents from this media station.

Another interviewee also explained investigative journalism as a science and commented about its current status in the OBN media station especially at caayaa television program as follows.

Before few years we are only know the investigation journalism as it is one kind of journalism and as it are practiced only western countries. This is because of we watch when big secret things are revealed by western journalist. Even as a joke we are saying investigation reporting in Ethiopia is only on television drama. But currently by some extent we are working investigative journalism. Caayaa revealed many hidden facts .as

its recent investigation reporting, many problems has been solved by this television program. Frankly speaking this program elucidated many wrong doings which was done secretly. As the producers of the program currently we are practicing what we are learned in class currently the science of investigation is started at OBN practically. IJ3 of O.

The deputy general director of OBN also stated OBN's status of investigative reporting as:

Now a days OBN investigative program have been taking as a brand for the overall OBN program. We have a feedback from our society that there is paradigm shift. In history of our countries media OBN started live transmission of investigative programs. Currently, the producers of this program can ask the government officials whatever comes from the public. This is a new trend. We see much progress within short period of time. Therefore the current status of OBN investigative reporting is promising (D1 of O)

According to the media experts mentioned above, the practice of investigative journalism in the OBN media station is still in its infancy. However, they emphasized that they follow the widely accepted principles of investigative journalism. While each respondent provided their own interpretation of investigative journalism, there was a common thread among their explanations. They all agreed that investigative journalism involves uncovering concealed information of public interest through thorough research. As Williams (quoted in Protess et al., 1991, p.4) states, it is a process of gathering and organizing ideas and facts, identifying patterns, analyzing options, and making logical decisions, even including the decision to reject certain paths at various stages.

Additionally, deputy of general director of OBN explained about the caayaa program as

With the trends of our countries media investigation work, caayaa television program one of flourishing investigative program. You may reveal whether it is investigative or not by your study. However, in Ethiopian media history there is no media station that transmits live program by inviting government officials and all concerned bodies in the studio to respond for their wrong doings, for public complaints, and the like. Therefore this television program (caayaa) a hopeful investigative platform that is currently fixing a lot of problems.

Many complaints of our society is solved by this program. In the past some investigative program that was done by many media stations including our media( OBN) is dealing with exposing irregularities which are observed in government institutions in relation to good governance and unfair activities to the concerned bodies to take corrections; in order to strengthen democracy and good governance the country has been doing for.” It indicates that contextually investigative journalism mainly targets government institutions when irregularities observed to promote the policy and strategies of the government. More of it is doing for government policy and developmental programs. So, it mainly targets on individuals rather than government institutions. But currently Caayaa is working in all segments peoples as well as deeply investigating in all organisations.it is practiced everywhere (D1 of O)

According to the above respondent, it can be understood that investigative practice at Oromia broadcasting network (OBN) exposes issues hidden behind the curtains that affect the public at large. As the media is region based, in many parts of the region, caayaa program tried to cover issues hidden from the public using a diverse range of sources, from the individual to the public, as well as by using different sources information.

The other investigative journalist at the media station described the status of investigative journalism at the media station as:

In my understanding, investigative journalism is a voice of the voiceless which encompasses deep searching to get to the bottom of stories that involve abuses committed unlawfully and unfairly for the sake of personal gain affecting the benefit of the public at large. The aim is to offer a proper solution to eradicate of the problem for once and forever. Currently caayaa, as its names implies digging out issues hidden from the public and makes decision with concerning bodies by inviting concerned bodies in to studio. Caayaa television program is an investigative television program that transmits live to the public. (IJ3 of O)

The explanations given by different practitioners of investigative journalism at OBN caayaa program appears similar with the definition given by Hunter. He expressed as investigative journalism is finding, reporting, and presenting news which other peoples tried to hide. As a

result, it is very similar to standard news reporting except that the people at the center of the story will usually not help you and may even try to stop you doing a job.(Hunter ,2006)

In the same vein, an investigative program producer and host of the caayaa program also expressed how they do their job as

With respect to our countries media industry CAAYAA program is somewhat better. There is a trend of presenting complains of the public directly on media. This is not known before in our countries media history when the government officials are presented in live broadcasting to respond for complains given on them by society. The other is there is a trend of taking as their responsibility to be found on media directly and respond from higher government officials including the president of regional court. This is new phenomena. As much as you dig out the public problem and reveal them to be solved it is investigation journalism. Our duty is not only presenting the public complains but also there is follow up by this team whether it is solved or not. Even though there are challenges on the program there is a tendency of being voice for voiceless in our production. IJ 4 of O

The current state of investigative reporting at OBN demonstrates promise, with notable changes and a focus on holding government officials accountable. The program has successfully exposed wrongdoings and revealed hidden information that certain individuals or entities would prefer to keep secret. This aligns with the definitions provided by scholars in the field, highlighting the station's commitment to transparency, accountability, and informing the public about issues of public interest. OBN's investigative reporting has had a tangible impact in promoting transparency as it ensured individuals and institutions to be held accountable for their actions.

Overall, the current state of investigative reporting at OBN showcases the station's dedication to exposing hidden truths, promoting transparency, and contributing to the public discourse on important matters.

### **What are the Challenges of Investigative Journalism in OBN caayaa Program?**

Investigative reporting faces numerous challenges, as described by Dyikuk (2017) and Kaplan (2013). These challenges include limited budget, logistical constraints, concerns for personal safety, potential influence from ownership, threats and legal actions, time limitations,

restricted access to information, inadequate follow-up, and inaction from authorities, and personal life impact. These obstacles highlight the demanding nature of investigative journalism and the complexities involved in delving into complex and sensitive topics. Insufficient resources can hinder thorough investigations while safety concerns and ownership influence add additional layers of complexity. Time constraints, limited access to information, and inadequate follow-up can impede the effectiveness of investigations, and the lack of action from authorities undermines accountability in reporting.

Furthermore, the challenges faced by investigative journalists can extend beyond their professional lives, affecting their personal well-being and psychological state due to the nature of their work.

It is important to acknowledge and address these challenges in order to support and foster effective investigative journalism, as it plays a vital role in uncovering hidden truths and holding individuals and institutions accountable for their wrongdoings.

### **Time constraint**

Investigative reporting is a time-consuming process that requires careful attention and dedication, according to Dyikuk (2017) and an interviewed investigative journalist from OBN. The challenges faced by investigative journalists should not be underestimated as the depth and thoroughness required demand significant time and effort. Engaging in investigative journalism involves extensive research, meticulous fact-checking and persistent follow-up to uncover hidden truths and expose matters of public interest. By recognizing the demanding nature of investigative reporting, we can appreciate the invaluable role that investigative journalists play in holding power to account and ensuring transparency in society.

According to these respondents,

...There are lots of difficulties we face on field. It varies and depends on the nature of the story. As OBN is regional media stream we are doing this investigative work by revolving in to all corners of Oromia. It takes from 2-3 days even to reach the capital city of each zone. It consumes a lot of time. Caayaa is bi weekly program. All ways it needs preparation and coming with a new work. It takes to dig out the issue. Therefore the first problem we are facing as producers of the program is lack of enough time. IJ3 of O

Both investigative reporting and other forms of conventional reporting require adequate time for fact gathering, story preparation, news production, and reporting. However, investigative reporting goes beyond these basic requirements as it involves delving deep into societal issues. Therefore, attempting to uncover and address complex problems within a week is unrealistic. The producers of the CAAYAA program have acknowledged the challenges of producing investigative programs within a short timeframe. Planning is an essential aspect of investigative journalism, and it requires considerable time investment.

Investigative journalism, often compared to a jigsaw puzzle, requires a systematic approach to put pieces of information together and reveal the bigger picture. Forbes (2005) emphasizes the need for comprehensive research, meticulous fact-checking and careful assembly of various elements in order to successfully carry out an investigative assignment. Rushing through the process can compromise the quality and impact of the investigation, highlighting the importance of allocating sufficient time for thoroughness and credibility.

“An investigation is like a jigsaw puzzle: it requires the methodical fitting together of apparently unrelated pieces to reveal the big picture. Similarly, thorough and systematic piecing together of issues, resources, techniques and sources is needed to assemble an investigative assignment” (Forbes, 2005)

Another interviewee explained in the same tone

Investigative journalism is not reporting an event. It requires time. Time to think, to plan, to investigate, to write, to find source and resource. Therefore it is not reporting an occasion. In caayaa program time is not adequate. Since the program is weekly and sometimes it also transmitted twice a week, you can't get the time to think deeply and investigate an issue. Therefore when we evaluate caayaa program with the science of investigation there are a lot of things missed with this program. From planning to the end production investigative journalism requires many steps. But with respect to current Ethiopian media, the footstep of OBN media is promising. Most of Ethiopia medi do things with the favor of government. However caayaa invites government officials to respond directly for problem happened. As beginning somewhat it is good. But in terms of properly analyzing there is time constraint. IJ5 of O

Investigative reporting, according to Forbes (2005), involves dedicated organizational resources such as money, time, effort, and personnel beyond regular activities. However, the practice of effective investigation is hindered by factors like limited time, skilled manpower, and resources. The respondents agree that investigative journalism is time-consuming and requires thorough planning from initial coverage to final production. The CAAYAA program, operating with only two personnel, faces challenges with time constraints, making it difficult to produce in-depth reports. These viewpoints underscore the importance of allocating sufficient time for investigative journalism and the need for detailed research and planning to achieve desired outcomes.

**Unfamiliarity of people with investigation work:** one of the challenges that the media experts explained in investigation work of caayaa program is strangeness of investigation work.

Concerning this IJ2 of O expressed that

“Not only in OBN, but also in other media outlets of the country investigative journalism is not familiar. This is because of peoples assumes many media in the country including OBN as mouth piece of government. They saw you as lobbyist. When you ask them for some evidences, they deny informing you. This is because of they fear to give information or because they assume media as it have not power to solve public problem (ibid)

Respondents highlight the lack of public confidence and familiarity with investigative journalism, posing challenges in obtaining information easily. Tong (2011) emphasizes the reliance of investigative journalism on public participation and cooperation to effectively exercise its power. Human sources are crucial for investigative journalists, but the unfamiliarity of people with investigative journalism and their fear of providing information hinder the gathering of evidence. Building trust, raising awareness, and addressing fears associated with sharing information are essential in creating a collaborative environment and overcoming this challenge in investigative reporting.

Another respondent added

Every job is risky; the investigative reporting part is just different from the normal reporting. There are some persons who ordinarily do not want you to speak with you when you are working as investigative journalist. Even government officials deny giving information for you when you ask some information

concerning their duty and responsibility. Caayaa is live program...let me tell you one challenge encounters me. We gathered some problems and difficulties concerning the service given to the peoples by courts. There are some complements. After we collected some human and document sources from different Oromia zones, we invite the head of Oromia higher court. But the answer was refusal ... even you don't get the responses from some government officials. It has great challenge.IJ2 of O.

### **Lack of Budget and Logistics**

Insufficient funding is a significant challenge in investigative reporting, as highlighted by Ganiyu (2010) and the interviews with investigative journalists. The lack of adequate budget, specifically mentioned by respondents from the CAAYAA program, hampers their work and affects the entire profession. Insufficient financial resources limit the capacity of investigative journalists to conduct thorough research, access necessary tools and technologies, cover travel expenses, and allocate sufficient time and manpower for comprehensive investigations. This lack of funding undermines the potential impact and scope of investigative reporting in uncovering hidden truths and holding power accountable. Addressing this funding challenge is crucial for the sustainability and effectiveness of investigative journalism, requiring adequate support from both private and public institutions to empower journalists and uphold transparency, accountability, and the public's right to information.

According to the respondents,

OBN is a big institution. It has more than 800 human resources and transmits its program by more than eighteen languages. All of each department needs resource and budget. Sometimes there are overwhelming of programs. ...it needs transportation facilities to go outside, to gather facts, evidences, documents, even problems. Therefore it needs budget and logistics even there are times when we not get camera due to crowdedness of the work. IJ 4 of O

According to other respondents,

We travel a lot of Kilometers. May be more than one thousand kilometers away from our studio to gather complaints of the public. In this case it needs budget and transportation facilities. OBN have little resource. These logistic facilities are one



challenge when we do investigative journalism in OBN. (IJ2 of O)

....IJ is not cheap, it's very expensive venture. Budget is the major challenge. Without enough budgets you can't do good stories. Because the peak of stories take a lot of effort to do, you have to travel, do research, you need tools to be able to pick into hidden files to get information. (IJ4 of O)

The respondents in the study highlighted that one of the major challenges faced by the CAAYAA program is lack of sufficient budget and logistical support. They emphasized that investigative reporting requires resources to effectively address the issues affecting the public. The process of investigative reporting involves various stages, starting from gathering information (tips) to uncovering the core issue, and each step requires adequate budget and resources. Therefore, budget plays a crucial role as the backbone of investigative journalism for the successful implementation of programs like CAAYAA.

Without a proper budget and necessary resources, investigative journalists face limitations in conducting thorough research, carrying out fieldwork, conducting interviews, and pursuing leads. Insufficient funding hampers the ability to dedicate sufficient time, manpower, and technological tools needed to uncover hidden truths and shed light on matters of public interest.

Recognizing the importance of investigative journalism and providing a robust budget is essential to overcome these challenges. Sufficient financial support enables journalists to carry out comprehensive investigations, hold those in power accountable, and serve the public's right to information. By allocating adequate resources, organizations and institutions can empower investigative journalists, strengthen the impact of their work, and contribute to a more transparent and informed society.

### **Risk of security**

Death represents the gravest danger faced by investigative reporters. In addition to that, there are other severe consequences, such as unjust imprisonment, particularly prevalent in developing nations where democracy has not firmly taken root (Ganiyu, 2010). During the interviews, the investigative journalists emphasized that insecurity is a significant challenge they encounter. This insecurity encompasses the inherent risks associated with investigative journalism, as well as the lack of security and protection for journalists.

Engaging in investigative journalism is inherently risky, as it involves exposing corruption, unveiling hidden truths, and challenging powerful individuals or entities. Journalists who delve into sensitive topics can become targets of threats, intimidation, and violence. In some cases, they even face the risk of losing their lives. The absence of adequate security measures and protection mechanisms further compounds the challenges faced by investigative journalists.

Ensuring the safety and security of journalists is crucial for the promotion of investigative journalism and the protection of press freedom. It requires the implementation of robust safety protocols, training programs, and legal frameworks that safeguard journalists' rights and provide them with the necessary support and protection. Additionally, creating an environment where journalists can work without fear of reprisal is essential for fostering a vibrant and accountable society.

Addressing the challenges of insecurity in investigative journalism requires a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between media organizations, government authorities, civil society, and international bodies. By prioritizing the safety and protection of journalists, we can encourage the pursuit of truth, defend democratic values, and ensure that investigative journalism continues to play a crucial role in exposing wrongdoing and promoting transparency.

The respondents explained:

...And also security, there are no security for journalist. For instance in my own platform let me tell you a challenge faced me when I want to Asella to expose some wrongdoings concerning the lease land. The story is few peoples are taken urban land without fair competition. Even due to that land many farmers were displaced from their home in the name of development. So by hearing this complaint we go there. But we were beaten by some peoples. I don't forget that event. So, investigative journalism has a risk. (IJ 2 of O)

Investigative journalism indeed faces various challenges, and throughout history, journalists worldwide, including those in Western countries, have encountered significant difficulties, even at the risk of losing their lives. The respondents in the study also shared their experiences of confronting diverse challenges during their investigative practices.

The field of investigative journalism inherently involves risks and obstacles. Journalists who delve deep into sensitive issues and expose corruption or misconduct often face threats, intimidation, and violence.

Tragically, in some cases, investigative journalists have paid the ultimate price for their work, losing their lives in the pursuit of truth and accountability.

Apart from the dangers to personal safety, investigative journalists encounter a wide range of challenges in their day-to-day practices. These challenges can include difficulties in obtaining reliable information, obstacles in accessing official documents or sources, resistance from powerful individuals or institutions, legal threats and lawsuits, and limitations due to insufficient resources or funding.

The experiences shared by the respondents highlight the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by investigative journalists. These challenges can vary depending on the social, political, and cultural contexts in which journalists operate. However, the common thread is the determination of investigative journalists to uncover the truth, expose wrongdoing, and bring about positive change despite these obstacles.

It is crucial to recognize and support the vital role of investigative journalists in society. Ensuring their safety, providing legal protections, and advocating for press freedom are essential steps in creating an environment where investigative journalists can operate without fear and continue to hold power accountable.

### **Threat**

Investigative journalists who uncover problems and wrongdoings in society often face threats from the individuals or entities they investigate. In some cases, those being investigated may resort to legal actions, such as libel suits or seeking court injunctions, to impede or halt the investigations. In countries where the courts are known to grant frivolous injunctions, this can severely hamper the progress of investigative journalism (Ganiyu, 2010).

During the interviews, several investigative journalists mentioned that they also encounter significant threats from the subjects of their investigations. These threats can manifest in various forms, including intimidation, harassment, and even physical harm. Journalists who shine a light on corruption, misconduct, or powerful individuals can become targets of retribution, aiming to silence their voices and deter them from pursuing their work.

The legal challenges faced by investigative journalists, such as libel suits and injunctions, add further complexity and obstacles to their investigations. Frivolous legal actions can drain resources, consume time,

and create a chilling effect that discourages journalists from pursuing important stories. This ultimately hampers the ability to expose the truth and hold individuals or institutions accountable.

Protecting the freedom of the press and ensuring the safety of investigative journalists are crucial in upholding democracy and promoting transparency. It necessitates robust legal frameworks that safeguard journalists' rights, prevent the misuse of legal actions to stifle investigations, and provide avenues for journalists to work without fear of reprisal. Additionally, fostering a culture of support and solidarity within the journalism community and society at large is essential in standing against threats and protecting the integrity of investigative journalism.

According to some respondents, whenever we want to do a story, we use to receive call threats from people, especially public officials, threatening us not to go ahead with a story... (IJ2 of O). Another investigative journalist also remembered the case he was threatened as follows:

Most of the time since we cover the case of government organization, there is a trend of threatening by phone call, slander, defamation as well as accusation. Because shortage of transportation facility most of the time we use public transportations. I remember one day when somebody is insulting me in car and tried to beat me. Therefore IJ is very dangerous task. IJ4 of O)

Based on the experiences shared by the respondents, it becomes apparent that practicing investigative journalism carries the inherent risk of losing one's life. Threats to the lives of journalists and accusations directed at both individual journalists and media organizations are significant challenges in the field of investigative journalism.

The pursuit of truth and the exposure of wrongdoing often bring investigative journalists into direct conflict with powerful individuals or entities. As a result, journalists may become targets of threats, intimidation, and violence. Tragically, in some cases, investigative journalists have paid the ultimate price for their dedication to uncovering the truth.

In addition to personal threats, both individual journalists and media organizations can face accusations and attacks. Those who are exposed or implicated in investigative reports may retaliate by leveling false accusations or launching smear campaigns against journalists and media outlets. These tactics are aimed at discrediting the journalists' work,

undermining their credibility, and impeding their ability to continue their investigative practices.

Addressing the challenges of personal safety and the protection of journalists requires a comprehensive approach. It involves implementing robust security measures, providing legal protections, and fostering an environment that supports and values the role of investigative journalism in promoting transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, it is essential for societies to recognize the importance of a free and independent media in democratic systems. Safeguarding press freedom and creating mechanisms to protect journalists from threats and false accusations are fundamental to upholding the integrity of investigative journalism and ensuring a vibrant and informed society.

### **Lack of skilled and committed man power**

Inadequate availability of experienced investigative journalists poses a challenge in the field, as highlighted by the respondents. Investigative journalism requires a unique skill set and deep understanding of research techniques, critical thinking, and data analysis. The shortage of qualified journalists can be attributed to limited training opportunities, low financial incentives, and the associated risks. To address this challenge, media organizations, educational institutions, and journalism associations should prioritize training and development programs for aspiring investigative journalists. Mentorship, workshops, and resources can help cultivate a new generation of skilled professionals in the field.

Additionally, creating a conducive environment for investigative journalism is crucial. This includes offering competitive compensation, ensuring job security, and providing legal protections for journalists. Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of investigative journalists can also inspire more individuals to pursue this demanding but essential field.

By investing in the development of specialized skills and supporting investigative journalists, society can foster a robust ecosystem for investigative reporting. This, in turn, enables the uncovering of vital information, the exposure of wrongdoing, and the promotion of transparency and accountability in public life.

Concerning this the deputy director of OBN elucidated that

... Our first challenge is lack of human power in the field. We are doing this program by very few journalists. Even those who are doing this investigation haven't equal commitment. Such

like risky profession need cooperation and team work. Therefore, enough man power is required. But we are performing it by insufficient man power.(D1of O)

The other interviewee also explained that

This program is produced by two or three person. Not more than that. Even these peoples have other duties. For example, I lead one directorate, I read news, and I prepare news. So additionally I also do caayaa program. As you know every work need plan and deep analysis. Investigative journalism is more than that. Therefore it is important if the journalist of investigation is independent and free from other duties.

The importance of teamwork in investigative journalism cannot be overstated, as emphasized by the investigative scholar Malan (2018). Collaboration within a team is considered one of the pillars that uphold the practice of investigative journalism. Working together with a team of journalists to cover public issues is crucial for the success of investigative reporting.

Investigative journalism often involves tackling complex and multifaceted stories that require extensive research, data analysis, interviews, and verification of facts. The collaborative efforts of a team enable journalists to pool their skills, expertise, and resources to tackle these challenges more effectively.

Teamwork allows for the division of labor, where each team member can focus on specific aspects of the investigation, bringing their unique perspectives and strengths to the table. Through collaboration, journalists can share insights, exchange information, and provide critical feedback to ensure the accuracy, depth, and integrity of the investigative work.

Teamwork plays a vital role in investigative journalism by enhancing safety, providing support, and promoting learning. Working as a team allows journalists to watch out for each other, provide assistance in challenging situations, and mitigate potential risks. Collaboration fosters a culture of learning, where journalists can learn from each other's experiences and develop their skills collectively. The synergy created by a cohesive team enhances the quality and impact of investigative reporting, enabling journalists to effectively cover public issues and uphold the principles of the profession.

## **Lack of access to information**

Access to information is a noteworthy challenge for investigative journalists, as highlighted by the study respondents. Investigative reporting relies on thorough research and obtaining accurate information, but sources may be reluctant to come forward, documents may be restricted, and information may be intentionally withheld or manipulated. Overcoming this challenge requires persistence, resourcefulness, and potentially legal action, such as filing FOIA requests and cultivating sources. Advocacy for transparency and freedom of information is crucial, with media organizations, journalism associations, and civil society playing a role in promoting policies and legal frameworks that support openness and facilitate access to information. Reforms for government transparency and accountability can create an environment where investigative journalism can thrive.

In conclusion, the lack of access to information poses a significant challenge for investigative journalism. Overcoming this challenge requires journalists to be resourceful, persistent, and proactive in seeking information. It also necessitates broader efforts to promote transparency and freedom of information in society, ensuring that the public has access to the information it needs to hold power accountable.

A journalist of the station gives a justification:

First there is no trust framework between journalists and the public; journalists and institutions (public or private). It is not yet developed in the community and there are people who do not recognize that journalists are doing this for good. IJ3 of O

Another respondent highlighted the existence of an information gap between journalists and society, stemming from the unfamiliarity of investigative journalism in the country. The respondent explained that investigative reporting is not well-known among the public, leading to a lack of trust and appreciation for the value of investigative journalism. As a result, when journalists seek information, they are often met with skepticism and dismissive attitudes. Some individuals may perceive journalists as mere mouthpieces of the government or other powerful entities, further discouraging them from sharing information.

The lack of familiarity and trust poses a barrier for investigative journalists, as people may be afraid of sharing information, or believe their voices won't be respected. However, the Caayaa program has brought slight changes in perception with individuals starting to provide information as the program gained recognition. Nonetheless, accessing

information remains a challenge. To address this, bridging the information gap and building trust is crucial. Media organizations, educational institutions, and civil societies can raise awareness about investigative journalism. Journalists can contribute by maintaining ethical standards, transparency, and demonstrating the value of their work. Fostering openness and accountability within society through government transparency, whistleblower protection, and advocating for freedom of information can create an environment where people feel more comfortable sharing information and exposing wrongdoing.

In conclusion, the unfamiliarity of investigative journalism in a society can create information gap between journalists and the public. Building awareness, trust, and understanding is vital to overcome this challenge. By promoting the value of investigative reporting, fostering transparency, and advocating for access to information, the barriers to obtaining crucial information can gradually be diminished.

The deputy director (D1 of O) also explained that:

There are some changes with the program if we compare with the earlier. But the cooperation of the public is stagnant because they think the program is only reporting they issue rather than searching a solution for public grievances. But still our society cannot fully accept as caayaa is working on public interest or for public interest. Even some times there is a trend of uncertainty in the public on the program. But it is a matter of time. Our society is on adaptation. The problem of access to information could be solved in a near future. (D1 of O)

Based on the statements mentioned, it is evident that obtaining information for investigations is challenging due to its nature of uncovering wrongdoing that brings uneasiness to the wrongdoers. This difficulty arises from a lack of trust between investigators and the subjects being investigated, which stems from a misunderstanding of the importance of investigative journalism. To address this, investigative journalists must work in persuading and instilling confidence in the subjects by emphasizing the potential positive outcomes of their reporting.

In summary, maintaining source confidentiality is crucial for investigative journalists to foster trust and to encourage individuals to share valuable information anonymously (Kantumoya, 2004). The respondents identified numerous challenges in the Caayaa program of OBN, including a shortage of skilled personnel, budget and logistical



limitations, lack of experienced journalists, security concerns, limited access to information, threats, time constraints, and general misunderstanding of investigative journalism's importance within the community. These challenges represent some of the obstacles faced by investigative journalism in the Caayaa program of OBN.

### **What types of issues are investigated on OBN caayaa Program?**

The review of related literature highlights that investigative reporters in both global and African contexts tackle a wide range of subjects, from private individuals to high-ranking government officials. Kaplan (2013) emphasizes that investigative journalism has yielded impressive results in promoting public accountability and developing professional news media worldwide. Through in-depth investigative reporting, various issues have been investigated on a global scale, including corruption among politicians, activities of organized crime groups, consumer fraud, corporate misconduct, social and economic problems affecting society, urgent matters with broad implications, challenges within healthcare systems, environmental hazards, difficulties faced by farmers, and human rights violations (Kaplan, 2013; Lublinski, 2015).

The scope of global investigative journalism is extensive, covering a wide range of issue areas. Consequently, public matters encompassing social, political, and economic domains have been investigated and reported in different parts of the world. In light of this, the researchers aim to explore the areas of issue coverage within the OBN Caayaa program.

Please note that the specific areas of issue coverage within the OBN Caayaa program would require further investigation and analysis.

Accordingly, ED1 replied as follows

Regarding areas of issues of coverage on the caayaa program Caayaa program haven't scope. That means since it is regional media it covers all issues in the Oromia region. To prove this let us see one example. Currently we investigated the performance of Oromia region court system. After we collected information and complains from the public we directly invited the president of Oromia regional state supreme court on caayaa live program. Though in first round refused to respond, the president appeared at the second round to studio and responded for public complaints. Look, even though the country's constitution say the supreme power resides in the hand of peoples, court have highest power in this country. Because caayaa is all inclusive it covers

without boundary. Basically our focus areas of issues coverage is characterized by timeliness of the issue and as per it assess the mass problem. Hence we believe that we are the voice of the public.

On the other hand, IJ2 of O replied for similar question as;

There is no issue which is not raised by our program in regards to any activity committed deliberately by private individuals or groups that can directly affect the benefits of the public at large. For instance, we had deeply investigated the issue of land grabbing around ten zones of the region and each Zone administrators responded accordingly by presenting in studio on live transmission. Some of wrong doers are also becomes accountable for their bad work. (IJ2 of O)

The respondents highlighted that the Caayaa program does not limit its scope of coverage. Instead, it aims to investigate issues of public interest wherever they may arise. However, it is worth noting that the majority of the programs covered by the Caayaa program currently focus on government institutions. Concerning the type of issues possible to cover on caayaa investigative Television program, the deputy Director stated:

As OBN motto illustrate first this program started to be voice for voice less. Therefore our program covers issues that hinder the public. Especially those who are offended due to crime, corruption or other wrong doings Caayaa program stands for victims. For example, most of the time we investigate land grabbing in different zones of Oromia Region. In this case many farmers are victims due to the maladministration. Without adequate compensation they are displaced. In this case the program is started being the voice for voiceless. We have numerous examples for those this investigative program solved such like problems. (D1 of O)

There is a multitude of issues in this country that warrant investigation. Despite the challenges associated with investigative journalism, it serves the purpose of unveiling information that certain parties wish to keep hidden. Scholars have referred to investigative journalism by various names such as expose journalism, adversarial journalism, in-depth journalism, muckraking journalism, advocacy journalism, public service journalism, watchdog journalism, and journalism of outrage, depending on the specific areas of issue coverage in different parts of the world (Houston, 2010).

In summary, the Caayaa program serves as a platform for broadcasting content that addresses issues of public concern. It strives to promote social justice for the majority and endeavors to hold accountable those responsible for wrongdoing and abuse.

## Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the practice and challenges of investigative journalism in the Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) Caayaa investigative television program. The study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with seven selected respondents and content analysis as data collection instruments.

The research findings led to the following conclusions:

- The content and live transmission of the Caayaa program have proven to be impactful, holding government authorities accountable for their actions and fostering a culture of transparency and responsibility among public servants.
- Respondents demonstrated a common understanding of the essence of investigative journalism, recognizing its role in exposing hidden wrongdoings, crimes, corruption, and other matters of public interest.
- The practice of investigative journalism in the country still requires dedicated and hardworking journalists.
- The Caayaa program, although in its early stages, strives to practice investigative journalism with a focus on government institutions that fail to implement government plans and promote democracy and good governance.
- The program's independence from government pressure and higher authorities in investigating social issues is a positive aspect.
- However, the program lacks in-depth research and adequate journalist preparation.
- The study revealed several challenges faced by the producers of the Caayaa program, including limited time to inquire into social issues, insufficient human resources, logistical and financial constraints, and a lack of skilled and committed journalists.

It is important to note that these conclusions are specific to the OBN Caayaa program and may not necessarily reflect the broader landscape of investigative journalism in the country.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researchers put forward the following recommendations:

1. The Caayaa program in OBN should expand its scope of investigation beyond government institutions and work as an independent agent that reveals hidden truths and makes an impact on policy and administration.
2. While the program covers issues of public and national concern, the extent of investigative journalism should be strengthened to uncover hidden facts and hold accountable those involved. The program should continue raising public and national issues.
3. OBN media station should provide the necessary facilities and resources to support investigative journalism to strengthen democracy and good governance.
4. Government, media institutions, higher education institutions, citizens, private sectors, and journalists should collaborate to promote strong investigative journalism in Ethiopian broadcasting media, particularly in OBN, for the benefit of the country.
5. Investigative reporters should be relieved from job overload and given the freedom to focus on investigative reporting. The media house should also hire skilled manpower to support investigative journalism.
6. The right to access information should be applicable in all sectors of the country, and the media should educate the public about the importance of investigative journalism to create awareness and understanding.
7. Measures should be taken to protect investigative journalists from threats and ensure their safety from actors involved in wrongdoing.
8. Establishing a responsible, transparent, and committed investigative journalism department within the media industry that is free from external intervention would be beneficial.
9. Adequate time should be allocated for cross-examining sources and conducting in-depth analysis, as investigative reporting requires thorough research and analysis. OBN media station should provide sufficient time for planning and reporting.

These recommendations aim to enhance the practice of investigative journalism within the Caayaa program and contribute to the overall development of investigative reporting in Ethiopia.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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