

# Causal Factors Affecting on Trustworthiness and Success of the National Press Council of Thailand in Regulating Professional Ethics in Views of Newspaper Journalists

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**Abstract**—The objectives of this research were 1) to study the opinions of newspaper journalists about their trustworthiness in the National Press Council of Thailand (NPCT) and the NPCT's success in regulating the professional ethics; and 2) to study the differences among mean vectors of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinions on the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics among samples working at different work positions and from different affiliation of newspaper organizations. The results showed that 1) Interaction effects between the variables of work positions and affiliation were not statistically significant at the confidence level of 0.05. 2) There was a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the views of journalists (reporters, heads of news desks and editors) at newspapers in the Bangkok metropolis and at local newspapers in other regions regarding their level of trustworthiness in the NPCT's fulfillment of its duty to regulate professional ethics.

**Keywords**—National Press Council of Thailand, newspaper journalists, regulation of newspaper professional ethics, trustworthiness and success in fulfilling duties.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE newspaper is a very old type of mass media that is very important for informing the population about current events. However, in their reporting work, newspaper journalists are often accused of making mistakes or being inaccurate. In many instances, citizens have accused newspaper journalists of invading their personal privacy. A report by [1] stated that the most common legal complaint against newspapers was alleged inaccuracy in reporting (60.50%), followed by violation of privacy and misrepresentation (13.60% and 2.80%, respectively). The top three issues that have come under scrutiny are the same—inaccuracy 41.30% of cases, followed by violation of privacy and misrepresentation (21.60% and 5.90%, respectively). These problems led to the establishment of press councils in many countries with the objective of letting journalists regulate themselves with genuine responsibility and sincere conscience for professional ethics. The press must be responsible for the common good and must fulfill its duties as necessary and appropriate. Similarly, [2] wrote that one important measure to control the press is self-control through

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the utilization of professional ethics to guide the actions of journalists. The broad-scoped research of [3] in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) project, which was a worldwide survey about the regulatory systems employed by 87 press councils in different places around the world, revealed that 86.00% of them were self regulated. In the same vein, the Senate Committee on the Canadian News Media concluded that press councils were able to perform valuable functions for the work of newspapers [4].

In Thailand, the National Press Council of Thailand, or NPCT, was founded on 4 July 1997 by the owners and editors of 25 titles of Thai and English newspapers, out of a total of 32 titles in the country, with the participation of ten related organizations. They signed a memorandum of intent to establish the NPCT as a self regulatory body to promote freedom of the press, to make newspapers responsible to society, and to make journalists aware of the importance of professional ethics. The NPCT was also charged with writing regulations, and on 30 March 1998 the first set of Regulations on Professional Ethics for Newspapers was issued as an operating standard for all members of the NPCT. On 29 April 1998 the NPCT issued Regulations on the Consideration of Complaints to set guidelines for how grievances are to be processed [5]. Now 13 years have passed since the founding of the NPCT. The NPCT, as one of the first self regulatory bodies in Thailand, has gained a great deal of experience in the enforcement of professional ethics. However, there has not yet been any research on factors affecting on trustworthiness and success of the NPCT in the perspectives of newspaper journalists who directly involve with the NPCT. This led to my interest in undertaking this research on “Causal factors affecting on trustworthiness and success of the National Press Council of Thailand in regulating professional ethics in views of newspaper journalists.” The research findings may be applied to form recommendations for the formation of operational policies and strategies to make the NPCT's work more efficient.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to study the views of newspaper journalists on their trustworthiness in the NPCT and its success in regulating professional ethics, and to study differences among

mean vectors of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and its success in regulating professional ethics among journalists working at different work positions and at different affiliation of newspaper organizations.

### III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There is an interaction effect between the variables of work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations that causes differences in the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics.
2. The variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics differ among journalists working at different work positions and at different affiliation of newspaper organizations.

### IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This was a comparative survey research carried out using the following methods:

#### A. Sample Group and Method of Selection

The sample population consisted of people working in the newspaper business at the position of reporter, head of news desks, and news editor at newspapers that either were or were not members of the NPCT, out of which 296 samples were selected using purposive sampling.

#### B. Variables

The independent variables were work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations, and the dependent variables were trustworthiness in the NPCT and the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics.

#### C. Research Tools

Data were collected using a questionnaire that passed a content validity test via the method of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) using two experts from the newspaper field. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of closed-ended questions about the general status of the respondent. The second part consisted of closed-ended questions about the respondents' trustworthiness in the NPCT and the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics.

#### D. Data Analysis

The distribution of the variables was studied using the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics were used to analyze and compare mean scores on trustworthiness in the NPCT and its success in regulating professional ethics. Two-way MANOVA was used to study the differences in mean vectors of the two variables between journalists at different work positions and at different affiliation of newspaper organizations.

### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Status of Survey Respondents

More of the respondents were male than female (55.10%

and 44.90%, respectively). The largest number was in the 25-35 age group (41.20%). Most had earned bachelor's degrees (82.10%), mainly in the field of communication arts (53.30%). The majority worked for newspapers in the Bangkok metropolis (80.10%) and 19.90% worked for local newspapers in other provinces. The majority of samples were members of the NPCT (73.30%). Considering work positions, 64.90% of the respondents were reporters with 1-5 years work experience (44.70%) and worked in economic news (39.50%). Next, 19.70% were heads of news desks with 11-15 years work experience (25.50%) and worked in economic news (42.40%). Lastly, 15.20% were news editors with more than 20 years work experience (36.80%).

#### B. Analysis of Respondents' Trustworthiness in the NPCT and their Views of the NPCT's Success in Fulfilling its Role of Regulating Professional Ethics

Overall, less than half of the respondents were trustworthy in the NPCT's regulation of professional ethics (36.00%). Most of them were trustworthy that the NPCT was an organization that played a direct role in regulating professional ethics (16.00%), and secondly, many agreed that the NPCT was an independent organization founded by newspaper professionals (14.30%). This could be because if you consider the intent for which the NPCT was established, it was intended to be a body for the self regulation of the newspaper profession to make sure that people in the newspaper field uphold professional ethics, so as such the NPCT is expected to play a very strong and clear role in promoting professional ethics and making sure newspaper professionals follow professional ethics. A strong expression of this role would bring about greater trustworthiness in the NPCT. When asked to rate the NPCT's success in fulfilling its role of regulating professional ethics, the largest number of respondents (43.30%) rated it as "medium" or "moderately agree." This could be because the NPCT mainly relies on the cooperation of all its members in being conscious of professional ethics in undertaking their duties, rather than relying on the use of legal power to try to enforce legal penalties on anyone who violates the code of professional ethics. Thus, if any NPCT member does not put a priority on their responsibility for ethical conduct in reporting, it will naturally be an impediment to the successful work of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics. This is consistent with the report of [6], who wrote that he did not believe that the NPCT's operations under the "self regulation" principle would be successful, because the facts showed that there were still problems with violations of professional ethics by reporters and newspapers.

#### C. Analysis of Causal Factors that affect Journalists' Trustworthiness in the NPCT and Opinion of the Success of the NPCT in Regulating Professional Ethics

1. *Descriptive statistical analysis of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics, dividing respondents by work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations*

The results of an analysis of the means of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics, dividing the data by the two independent variables of work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations, showed that reporters working at local newspapers gave the highest mean score for trustworthiness in the NPCT's regulation of professional ethics (mean =1.629), followed by news editors and heads of news desks (mean =1.588 and 0.857, respectively). As for newspapers in the Bangkok metropolis, heads of news desks gave the highest mean score for the NPCT's success in regulating professional ethics (mean =1.920), followed by news editors (mean=1.610) and reporters for both Bangkok metropolis and local newspaper had the equivalent mean score (mean=1.570). A test of the relationships between the variables using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed that the variance-covariance matrices within the group were not an identity matrix. Tests of the homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices using Box's M Test and Levene's Test revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the variance-covariance matrices between the 6 groups for each independent variable. The variance among the 6 groups did not differ to a statistically significant degree at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that all the dependent variables are related, so the data is suitable for analysis by two-way MANOVA, as shown in Table I.

success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics among respondents from different work positions and different affiliation of newspaper organizations showed that there was no interaction effect between the variables of work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations with statistically significant at the level of 0.05 (Hypothesis 1 was rejected). However, there was a main effect of the variable of affiliation of newspaper organizations that was statistically significant at the level of 0.05; that is, the mean vectors of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics differed between journalists from different affiliation of newspaper organizations to a statistically significant degree at confidence level 0.05, while the mean vectors of the two variables between journalists with different work positions was not statistically significant at confidence level 0.05 (Hypothesis 2 was partially supported).

Because the results of the two-way MANOVA showed that there was a difference in the vectors of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics between journalists at newspapers in the capital and local newspapers in other provinces, the researchers thus performed one-way ANOVA as well. The results showed that there was no interaction effect between the variables of work positions and affiliation of

TABLE I  
 MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF THE VARIABLES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN THE NPCT AND OPINION OF THE NPCT'S SUCCESS IN REGULATING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, DIVIDED INTO GROUPS BY WORK POSITIONS AND AFFILIATION OF NEWSPAPER ORGANIZATIONS

Dependent Variable	Affiliation	Work positions									Total		
		Reporters			Heads of news desks			News editors			Mean	S.D.	N
		Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.	n			
Trustworthiness in NPCT's operations	Bangkok metropolis	0.783	1.411	157	0.731	1.523	52	0.679	1.307	28	0.760	1.419	237
	Local newspaper	1.629	1.647	35	0.857	1.464	7	1.588	1.623	17	1.525	1.612	59
	Total	0.938	1.489	192	0.746	1.504	59	1.022	1.485	45	0.912	1.489	296
Levene's Test: F=1.699, df1=5, df2=290, Sig.=.135													
NPCT's success	Bangkok metropolis	1.570	1.850	157	1.920	1.610	52	1.610	1.770	28	1.650	1.790	237
	Local newspaper	1.570	1.720	35	1.290	1.600	7	1.530	1.500	17	1.530	1.620	59
	Total	1.570	1.820	192	1.850	1.610	59	1.580	1.660	45	1.630	1.760	296
Levene's Test: F=2.139, df1=5, df2=290, Sig.=.061													
Bartlett's Test: $\chi^2=10.397$ , df=2, Sig.=.006													
Box's M Test=12.447, F=.790, df1=15, df2=6895, Sig.=.690													

2. Analysis of differences in mean vectors of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics, comparing respondents divided by work positions and affiliation of newspaper organizations

The results of two-way MANOVA of the variables of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the success of the NPCT in regulating professional ethics to compare the mean vectors of trustworthiness in the NPCT and opinion of the

newspaper organizations with statistically significant at level 0.05. However, there was a main effect of the variable of affiliation of newspaper organizations that was statistically significant (p<0.05). That is to say, there was a statistically significant difference in the opinions of trustworthiness in the NPCT's operations in regulating professional ethics between journalists at newspapers in the capital city and those at local newspapers, as shown in Table II and Figure 1. This could be

TABLE II  
 RESULTS OF TWO-WAY MANOVA OF THE VARIABLES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN THE NPCT AND OPINION OF THE SUCCESS OF THE NPCT IN REGULATING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS COMPARING RESPONDENTS GROUPED ACCORDING TO WORK POSITIONS AND AFFILIATION OF NEWSPAPER ORGANIZATIONS

Fixed variable	Statistics	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Observed Power
Work positions	Pillai's Trace	.006	.401	4.000	580.000	.808	.143
	Wilks' Lambda	.994	.400	4.000	578.000	.808	.143
	Hotelling's Trace	.006	.399	4.000	576.000	.809	.143
	Roy's Largest Root	.006	.804	2.000	290.000	.449	.187
Affiliation of newspaper Organizations	Pillai's Trace	.021	3.037	2.000	289.000	.049	.585
	Wilks' Lambda	.979	3.037	2.000	289.000	.049	.585
	Hotelling's Trace	.021	3.037	2.000	289.000	.049	.585
	Roy's Largest Root	.021	3.037	2.000	289.000	.049	.585
Positions * Affiliation	Pillai's Trace	.007	.522	4.000	580.000	.719	.177
	Wilks' Lambda	.993	.522	4.000	578.000	.720	.176
	Hotelling's Trace	.007	.521	4.000	576.000	.721	.176
	Roy's Largest Root	.007	1.035	2.000	290.000	.357	.230

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects							
Source of variance	Independent variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Observed Power
Work positions	Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation	3.447	2	1.723	.803	.449	.179
	NPCT's success	239.500	2	119.700	.004	.996	.052
Affiliation of newspaper organizations	Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation	12.137	1	12.137	5.658	.018	.674
	NPCT's success	1.763	1	1.763	.566	.452	.122
Positions * Affiliation	Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation	2.921	2	1.461	.681	.507	.168
	NPCT's success	2.061	2	1.031	.331	.719	.094
Error	Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation	622.121	290	2.145			
	NPCT's success	903.014	290	3.114			
Corrected Total	Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation	653.716	295				
	NPCT's success	909.122	295				

\*p<.05

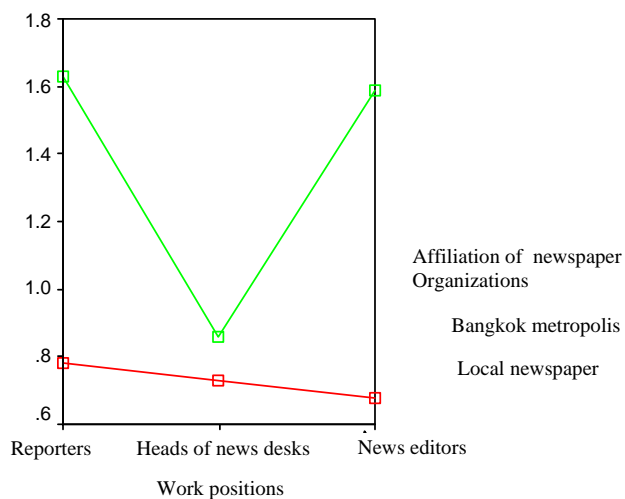


Fig. 1 Trustworthiness in NPCT's operation

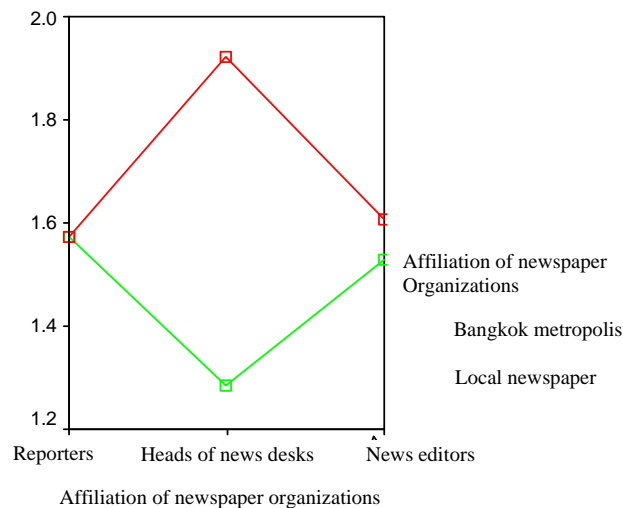


Fig. 2 NPCT's success

because most of the journalists working at newspapers in the capital were involved in the founding of the NPCT and participated in the framing of the NPCT's regulations on professional ethics, which were set as a standard for newspaper professionals to follow. This could explain the differences in different journalists' trustworthiness in the operations of the NPCT to regulate professional ethics.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the NPCT plays an important role in the self regulation of the newspaper profession. The majority of journalists surveyed were trustworthy in the NPCT's fulfillment of its duties as an organization with a direct role in regulating newspaper professional ethics. The majority agreed that the NPCT was moderately successful in regulating professional ethics. The researcher recommends

that the NPCT should clearly express its role as an organization responsible for professional self-regulation under ethical principles. The NPCT should promote professional ethics and stimulate member newspapers and newspaper journalists to pay attention to professional ethics while carrying out their duties. The NPCT should join with other journalism organizations to organize training workshops on reporting in the real-world context for journalists from every newspaper so that they can fulfill their duties ethically. The NPCT should also coordinate with educational institutions that teach journalism to develop courses and programs geared specifically towards newspaper work with a greater emphasis on practical work so that the journalism students can be better prepared to perform their jobs as high quality journalists in the future.

The major limitation of this research was that it only assessed the opinions of journalists about their trustworthiness in the NPCT's operations and its success in regulating professional ethics, without any data on the opinions of other stakeholders. A survey of the opinions of newspaper consumers, including academics in the field of media and the general public, would give greater breadth to the data. Another limitation of the research is that it was a survey that gathered information from only one point in time, whereas opinions of the NPCT can change over time. It would be informative to repeat the research at another time period to compare. In addition, the use of other research methods would allow greater depth of discoveries.

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