

Print Media Ethics

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Abstract

Print media is the form of media that disseminate printed matter, it includes newspaper and magazines. Journalists have the power to make or break event, a person or even institutions, hence it is highly imperative that these media follow strict codes of ethics and exercise this power judiciously. There are five core principles of journalism and that are journalists first obligation is the truth, second, journalism practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover, third- journalism must serve as an independent monitor of power fourth journalists must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience and lastly journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.

The principles of journalistic codes of ethics are designed as guides through numerous difficulties such as conflicts of interest, to assist journalists in dealing with ethical dilemmas. Journalism is guided five important values including journalists should work hard to try to gather all the facts In this research article I have journalists should work hard to try to gather

all the facts In this research article I have tried to find out some of these code of ethics and its importance I think in addition to codes of ethics there should be self regulation

Introduction

comprise principles of ethics and of good practice as applicable to the specific challenges faced by journalists. This subset of media ethics is widely known to journalists as their professional "code of ethics" or the "canons of journalism".[1] The basic codes and canons commonly appear in statements drafted by both professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast, and online news organizations. While various existing codes have some differences, most share common elements including the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability, as these apply to the acquisition of newsworthy information and its subsequent dissemination to the public.[1][2][3][4] Like many broader ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of "limitation of harm". This often

involves the withholding of certain details from reports such as the names of minor children, crime victims' names or information not materially related to particular news reports release of which might, for example, harm someone's reputation.[5][6]

Print media in general is the form of media that disseminates printed matter, it includes newspapers and magazines. Even in this modern age of live 24x7 news channels and smartphones where you get the latest information at the click of a button, newspapers and magazines still hold a powerful sway over the masses and it still remains the primary source of information. They have the power to make or break an event, a person or even institutions, hence it is highly imperative that these media follow strict codes of ethics and exercise this power judiciously. Broadly there are three areas of ethical concern - Plagiarism, Photo Manipulation and Conflict of Interest. Plagiarism is basically when a writer copies the work of another and uses that as his own. Many cases of plagiarism have been reported and it is not confined to print media alone. One of the more infamous such incident in the Indian context would be Arun Purie. Although being one of the more prominent names in the Indian media he still went on to plagiarize from an online magazine called Slate. Photo manipulation is more commonly used in print ads. You find many instances,

especially in beauty care products , wherein the model's physical traits are complimented using photo editing software's and misleading the masses at large. Another instance of photo manipulation in India would be the Gujarat Congress party's "Join hands for Change" which had featured in some newspapers.

Apparently the claim that 45% of the children in Gujarat are malnourished was backed by a photo which was actually a photo of a flood victim and her mother in Sri Lanka. Conflict of interest is another area and this is harder to identify. A reported may publish articles in support of a party with whom he was a vested interest or against him if he has any hidden agenda. Also we find many political parties, in India and abroad, being patrons of several leading newspapers and magazines and using them to promote their own agenda. For eg: The Pioneer, the second oldest English newspaper in India, is owned by a BJP member of Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh, Chandan Mitra, who also happens to be its editor in chief. Apart from these we also find many instances where reports are gilded or even faked completely. A classic example of this would be the case of Janet Cooke. She had done a piece for The Washington Post on an 8-year old heroin addict. This piece later on went on to win a Pulitzer Prize. It was subsequently found out that the entire story was fabricated without any shred of substance.

There's no denying that news produced to the masses should be credible, honest and substantiated. But then here comes another ethical issue, how far can they go to expose the truth? How justifiable is it to break the law or invade one's privacy in such pursuits?

Is it ethical to reveal sensitive government secrets that could have international implications, even if they are true? How ethical it is to plaster the personal lives of public figures across the pages for the amusement of the masses? The ethics in media is definitely a gray area with each one entitled to one's own views

. It is neither possible nor feasible to take extreme sides on either case. To give complete freedom to the journalists is

tantamount to handing them the key to each and everyone's privacy

. To restrain them by the strict code of law would seriously tie the hands of sincere journalists who at times even lay their lives on the line to

uncover cover ups, scams and crimes that rocks the foundation of democracy and human rights. In this context it might be worthwhile to note that according to the World Press Freedom Index (2013) released by Reporters Without Borders, India ranks at a miserable 140 (out of a total of 179 countries indexed). Top of the table occupied by France and towards the bottom lays North Korea

five core principles of Journalism;

1.) Journalists' first obligation is the truth;

– Journalists in Cameroon have difficulties to access information especially in government offices. So, they end up broadcasting rumours or 'hear say' and this brings about the problem of media credibility in Cameroon.

– 'Gombo journalism' in Cameroon has hampered truth in journalism and given birth to 'praise Singing journalism'.

2.) Journalism practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover;

– Journalists in Cameroon have allowed themselves to be influenced when they accept 'gombo' from those they cover. This act causes them to bring in bias when writing or reporting the story.

– Due to the fact that journalists in Cameroon are not well paid, especially those in the private media, they would do anything to make ends meet

3.) Journalism must serve as an independent monitor of power;

– Only the private media in Cameroon plays the part of a watchdog to an extent. Freedom of the press in Cameroon is a mere theory. Journalists are not given the real freedom to exercise their job.

– The national broadcasting corporation is a praise singer to the government and her activities.

– As an effort to monitor power in the country, many journalists are still

being harassed and imprisoned. They dare not to venture into political issues.

4.) Journalism practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience;

– The government of Cameroon still has a strong hand on Journalists in Cameroon. The government is trying all it can to make the media dance to her tune which results in conflict especially with the private media in Cameroon.

– Many journalists in Cameroon have sidelined the journalism ethics and have turned to many unethical practices. They take bribe to favour some top politicians either by killing a story or publishing stories which will uplift them.

5.) Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise;

– Journalism in Cameroon especially the private sector has many forums or talk-shows which call for public views. These programs at times are very critical of the government and her activities.

media ethics

The principles of journalistic codes of ethics are designed as guides through numerous difficulties, such as conflicts of interest, to assist journalists in dealing with ethical dilemmas. The codes and canons provide journalists with a framework for self-monitoring and self-correction. Journalism is guided by five impor-

tant values. The first is honesty: a journalist should not make up news or share news that give off wrong impressions. The second is independence: a journalist should avoid topics they have an interest in. The third is fairness: a journalist should not tell the truth if it is with bad intentions. The fourth is productiveness: a journalist should work hard to try to gather all the facts. The last value is pride: a journalist needs to be able to accept all credit for their work, bad or good.

Accuracy and standards for factual reporting

Reporters are expected to be as accurate as possible given the time allotted to story preparation and the space available and to seek reliable sources.

Events with a single eyewitness are reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent eyewitnesses may be reported as fact.

Controversial facts are reported with attribution.

Independent fact-checking by another employee of the publisher is desirable.

Corrections are published when errors are discovered.

Defendants at trial are treated only as having "allegedly" committed crimes, until conviction, when their crimes are generally reported as fact (unless, that is, there is serious controversy about wrongful conviction).

Opinion surveys and statistical

information deserve special treatment to communicate in precise terms any conclusions, to contextualize the results, and to specify accuracy, including estimated error and methodological criticism or flaws.

Slander and libel considerations

Harm limitation principle

During the normal course of an assignment a reporter might go about gathering facts and details, conducting interviews, doing research and background checks, taking photos, and recording video and sound. Harm limitation deals with the questions of whether everything learned should be reported and, if so, how. This principle of limitation means that some weight needs to be given to the negative consequences of full disclosure, creating a practical and ethical dilemma. The Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics offers the following advice, which is representative of the practical ideas of most professional journalists. Quoting directly:[4]

Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

Recognise that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

Recognise that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.

Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.

Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Self-regulation

In addition to codes of ethics, many news organizations maintain an in-house ombudsman whose role is, in part, to keep news organizations honest and accountable to the public. The ombudsman is intended to mediate in conflicts stemming from internal or external pressures, to maintain accountability to the public for news reported, to foster self-criticism, and to encourage adherence to both codified and uncodified ethics and standards. This position may be the same or similar to the public editor, though public editors also act as a liaison with readers and do not generally become members of the Organisation of News Ombudsmen.

An alternative is a news council, an industry-wide self-regulation body, such as the Press Complaints Commission, set up by UK newspapers and magazines. Such a body is capable of applying fairly consistent standards and of dealing with a higher volume of complaints but may not escape criticisms of being toothless. Ethics and standards in practice
Main articles: journalism scandals, media bias, media ethics, and yellow journalism

One of the most controversial issues in modern reporting is media bias, particularly on political issues, but also with regard to cultural and other issues. Sensationalism is also a common complaint. Minor factual errors are also extremely common, as almost anyone who is familiar with the subject of a particular report will quickly realize.

There are also some wider concerns, as the media continue to change, for example, that the brevity of news reports and use of soundbites has reduced fidelity to the truth, and may contribute to a lack of needed context for public understanding. From outside the profession, the rise of news management contributes to the real possibility that news media may be deliberately manipulated. Selective reporting (spiking, double standards) are very commonly alleged against newspapers, and by their nature are forms of bias not easy to establish, or

guard against.

This section does not address specifics of such matters, but issues of practical compliance, as well as differences between professional journalists on principles.

Standards and reputation

Among the leading news organizations that voluntarily adopt and attempt to uphold the common standards of journalism ethics described herein, adherence and general quality vary considerably. The professionalism, reliability, and public accountability of a news organization are three of its most valuable assets. An organization earns and maintains a strong reputation in part through the consistent implementation of ethical standards, which influence its position with the public and within the industry.

Conclusion

Ethics are important in Journalism because they create guidelines for journalists to follow that help people from feeling unequal or outcasted. They're also important in making sure that media stays true and further helps journalists maintain a sense of equality.
