

# **Media Ethics**

**A Training Material**

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# Unit 1

## Ethics and Media

### 1.1. What is Ethics?

Ethics deals with what is good and bad, with moral duty and obligation. It specifically evaluates human actions by making distinctions between right and wrong – with the moral consequences of human actions. It is also can be defined as a set of moral principles or values. Ethics is about the principle of conduct governing an individual or group.

The subject of ethics - the word comes from the Greek *ethos*, meaning 'character'. Greeks divided philosophy into of three parts: aesthetics (the study of beauty and ways to analyze beauty objectively); epistemology (the doctrine of knowledge); and ethics (rational choices between hat is good and bad for the individual and /or society). as a philosophical discipline of ethics is a systematic approach to understanding analyzing and distinguishing matters of right or wrong , good and bad admirable and deplorable as they related wellbeing of and the relationship among sentient beings.

As a discipline, it is one of the branches of philosophy together with other branches of philosophy: *Epistemology* studies about knowledge, *Metaphysics* is about the study of existence or reality, *aesthetics* is about creative art and imagination, and *logic* is about reasoning .

The term, ethics is technically used by philosophers to mean **a philosophical study of morality** (morality is understood as a set of social rules, principles, norms that guide or are intended to guide the conduct of people in a society), and as beliefs about right and wrong conduct as well as good or bad character.

Commonly ethics is associated with morality, which is the subject matter of ethics, it is most often used interchangeably with ethics. The basic features, the core elements of the morality of a society, those moral principles and values that actually guide and influence the lives of a people, continue (Meriel & Kelly, 1978).

## 4.1. Western Ethical Traditions

Ethics are best understood in our evaluation of human actions. These actions are taken to achieve a certain end, often with a view to a more distant goal. When ends are a means to a more distant goal, they are referred to as *instrumental ends*. Ends that are achieved for their own sake are *intrinsic*. **Hedonism**, happiness, for instance, holds that this end is pleasure or delight. This criterion for action dates back to the time of classical antiquity. One problem that the hedonists have been up against is how to rank different dimensions of pleasure. How is it possible to compare a brief, yet, intense, pleasure with one that lasts longer but that is not quite so intense?

The Greek philosopher Epicurus (342/341-270/271 BC) draws the conclusion that **the end is not physical pleasure but the satisfaction of the needs of the spirit**. Moreover, **the pursuit of physical pleasure as an end would lead to all kinds of evil**. Feeding one's spiritual pleasure is, to his mind, significantly more valuable and leads to a lasting sense of well-being

### 4.1.1. Natural law Tradition

Natural law theory' is a label that has been applied to theories of ethics, theories of politics, theories of civil law, and theories of religious morality. **A law that counts as a natural law includes any moral theory that is a version of moral realism and holds that some positive moral claims.**

For Thomas Aquinas, there are two key features of the natural law,

1. God's role as the giver of the natural law, the natural law is just one part among others of the theory of divine providence.
2. Human's role as recipient of the natural law,

The natural law constitutes the principles of practical rationality, those principles by which human action is to be judged as reasonable or unreasonable; and so the theory of natural law is from that perspective the preeminent part of the theory of practical rationality.

The fundamental thesis affirmed here by Aquinas is that the natural law is a participation in the eternal law. The eternal law, for Aquinas, is that rational plan by which all creation is ordered. The natural law is the way that the human being “participates” in the eternal law .

For law, as Aquinas, is a rule of action put into place by one who has care of the community; and as God has care of the entire universe, God's choosing to bring into existence beings who can act freely and in accordance with principles of reason is enough to justify our thinking of those principles of reason as law.

#### **4.1.2. The Aristotelian Tradition**

Aristotle came up with logos, ethos and Phatos. The Greek words, “logos” means word or language or reason where as “ethos” is the root for our word “ethics.” Pathos” means suffering, but the best word we can substitute is probably “emotion.”

#### **4.1.3. David Hume (1711-1776)**

As an ethical tradition, **Humean Sentiment** is worth mentioned. Hume is a **radical empiricist**. Hume holds that all knowledge comes from sense experience. On the other hand, exponents of rationalism such as Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz argue that truth, as opposed to appearance, is arrived at through reason. Thus, true knowledge depends on reason. *The Humean focus is on giving an explanation of how we recognize character traits as virtues and vices, and how we form standards for the appraisal of these traits as praiseworthy or blameworthy rather than giving an account of how we are to become virtuous, or of what virtue might require of us in various situations.*

#### **4.1.4. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)**

Immanuel Kant developed a powerful theory in which moral rules are based in pure reasoning instead of intuition, our conscience, or the consequences of action. He is known for his *The Categorical Imperative*. His theory can be characterized as a monistic, rule-deontological theory. Kant does not subject incidental actions but rather types of actions (such as lying, keeping promises) to moral judgment.

**All moral rules can be traced back to a general rule: the categorical imperative.** He was a true representative of *Enlightenment* thinking and active in various fields. Since Kant, speaking of the way knowledge is acquired purely in terms of either rationalism or empiricism is no longer possible. He argues that **our observation of the world is more than the passive function of the mind**; there is always an aspect of reason involved. For Kant,

1. *Experience is located in space and time.* These are not properties of the things themselves but of the intellect. He calls these “forms of observation.”
2. *The intellect presides over a number of categories* - such as “unity,” “denial,” and “causality” - which make knowledge of experience possible.

The nature of reality itself cannot be known. All knowledge of experience relies on our forms of observation and the categories.

### **Kant’s the Categorical Imperative**

The general principle at the root of all moral rules according to Kant, is “the categorical imperative.” This is an imperative - a command that is unconditional or categorical. Kant sets “categorical” off against “hypothetical.” An imperative is hypothetical if its validity were tied up with specific conditions. For instance, “If you want to achieve this or that goal (e.g., succeed in your job), then you need to do such and such (e.g., work hard).” These rules of behavior are not unconditional in nature; they only apply if the relevant conditions are established, in this example, the desire to succeed in one’s job.

The categorical imperative applies to everyone in all situations. It often takes the form of “**Thou shalt . . .**” for example, “**Thou shalt not tell a lie.**” Commandments like these are unconditional. What exactly is the categorical imperative? Kant formulates this general moral law in several different ways. The most formal variant reads: “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.” Another formulation of the categorical imperative is: “Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature.”

### Questions

- How does Kant's categorical imperative relevant to a professional practices?
- Is Kant's categorical imperative relevant to a code of conduct in various situations?

To act morally, the agent must determine whether it is reasonable to expect others in a similar situation to follow the maxim that he is about to follow. What if an immoral maxim is considered as a law of nature? In this regard, Kant points out that to elevate an immoral maxim to a universal law would be contradictory. Promoting immoral maxims to universal laws should be refrained from, as it is logically inconsistent.

#### 4.1.5. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Bentham is widely considered the father of utilitarianism. Adam Smith advocated the pursuit of individual self-interest in the belief that this would indirectly serve the common good. According to utilitarianism, the criterion for evaluating actions is the welfare of society. Bentham was a true revolutionary of his times. His criterion is the "greatest pleasure for the greatest number" on the basis of which all actions must be judged.

**To Bentham's mind, pain and pleasure are quantifiable units** take account of the value of each distinguishable pleasure that appears to be produced by it in the first instance. It is also to take account of the value of each pain that appears to be produced by it in the first instance.

For Bentham it is possible to formulate the utilitarian criterion in quantitative terms. Ethics in his opinion is simply a matter of counting. The meaning of the "greatest pleasure" can be explained in quantitative terms. Happiness lies in the greatest possible amount of pleasure and the absence of pain. **To achieve the greatest pleasure for the greatest number**, he devises a hedonistic calculus to weigh pleasure and pain.

Generally, Bentham sums up all the values of all the pleasures on the one side, and those of all the pains on the other. The balance, if it is on the side of pleasure, it will give the good tendency of the act upon the whole, with respect to the interests of that individual person; if on the side of pain, the bad tendency of it upon the whole.

#### **4.1.6. John Stuart Mill (1806 – 873)**

With regards to the present condition of human knowledge, more unlike what might have been expected, or more significant of the backward state in which speculation on the most important subjects still lingers, there is **little progress has been made in the decision of the controversy respecting the criterion of right and wrong**. From the dawn of philosophy, the question concerning the *summum bonum*, or, what is the same thing, concerning the foundation of morality, has been accounted the main problem in speculative thought, has occupied the most gifted intellects, and divided them into sects and schools, carrying on a vigorous warfare against one another. And after more than two thousand years the same discussions continue, philosophers are still ranged under the same contending banners, and neither thinkers nor mankind at large seem nearer to being unanimous on the subject, than when the youth Socrates listened to the old Protagoras, and asserted (if Plato's dialogue be grounded on a real conversation) the theory of utilitarianism against the popular morality of the so-called sophist.

Like Bentham Mill is known as hedonistic utilitarians. He holds that **there is only one intrinsic good**: pleasure or enjoyment. Pleasure is a good unto itself. Pleasure and enjoyment are synonymous to them. **Pluralistic utilitarians disagree with the assumption that all values are a means to pleasure**. Aesthetic values and knowledge can be pursued for their own sake as well.

## **4.2. Ethiopian Ethical Tradition**

### **Zera Yacob (1599 -1692) Morality and Ethical perspectives**

According to Brendan Ritchie (2012) it can be possible to argue that Zera yakob is one of the great philosophers in Ethiopia who focused on rationality and morality. It can be said he is a consequentialist in his philosophical stands. He was born in 1599



near Axum, in northern Ethiopia, and as a youth received a thorough traditional education in poetry and scripture—Ethiopia had long been a literate and Christian country. Afterwards he spent several years teaching. Zera Yacob avoided taking sides, but his neutrality won him no friends. He was convinced of God’s goodness and providential concern, for himself personally and for human beings generally like what Thomas Aquinas used to think about.

One of his disciples was Walda Heywat. In 1667, with Walda Heywat’s encouragement, Zera Yacob wrote his short (roughly twenty-page) treatise, which was simultaneously the first auto-biography and the first philosophical work in Ethiopian history. He died in 1692, but Walda Heywat later put down his own thoughts as well, very much in the same vein as those of his master, though marked by a less personal style, and at just slightly greater length. The two treatises (their common title, *hatata*, means something like ‘investigation’) are primarily **concerned with showing the errors of various religions, and they correspondingly treat of various moral topics**; they are also concerned to put confidence in God on a rational footing, and so to defend the goodness of God in the face of evil and injustice. Zera Yacob’s treatise is “an absolutely original work,” and if philosophy in Ethiopia starts with Zera Yacob it also ends with Walda Heywat.

### 4.3. Ethical Theories

#### 4.3.1. Teleological Theory

Teleologists (the study of the purpose or design of natural occurrences) are particularly interested **in the latter kind of ends**. One or more of such ends are chosen as a standard for judging the moral content of actions. The ends that function in teleological theories are not moral in itself. They become morally charged in their use as a standard for the moral content of actions. Depending on the number of intrinsic ends that a teleological theory employs, we call it either **monistic or pluralistic**.

- **Monistic theories** hold that there is only one intrinsic end to which all other ends lead, and on the basis of which all actions can be morally evaluated.

- **Pluralistic teleological theories** hold that there is more than one such intrinsic end. Teleological theories are also subdivided according to the nature of the end employed.

#### 4.3.2. Consequentialism Theory

**Consequentialist ethics**- the moral content of an action is determined by the real and expected consequences of that action. An action is morally good if its consequences are desirable and bad if they are not. *Consequentialist ethics* employs a certain standard (the purpose or end) against which the consequences of an action are judged. This is why it is also referred to as teleological ethics .

In everyday life, we very often think in terms of consequences for the persons involved. A common example illustrates this: anyone who buys a car and uses the highway system knows that he or she runs the risk of getting involved in an accident. Everyone in the market for a car has to decide what is more important: safety or price. We weigh the extra cost of a safer car against the extra benefits of greater safety.

#### Objections to Consequentialism

There are two kinds of practical problems. These are the problem of measurement and the problem of comparison. The fundamental problems are the problem of justice and the problem of rights. For Bentham it is possible to formulate the utilitarian criterion in quantitative terms. Ethics in his opinion is simply a matter of counting. The meaning of the “greatest pleasure” can be explained in quantitative terms. **Happiness lies in the greatest possible amount of pleasure and the absence of pain.** To achieve the greatest pleasure for the greatest number, he devises a hedonistic calculus to weigh pleasure and pain.

In consequentialism, there is a problem of measuring and comparing consequences.

#### Measuring Consequences

- Is it desirable to quantify the costs and benefits and by implication, the common good? To conceive of pleasure in qualitative terms, however, is also problematic.

- How can it be determined which situation contributes most to the common good? Example: How do we calculate damage to people's health in qualitative terms?

### Comparing Consequences

- The problem of comparison follows from the above point of criticism.
- How is it possible to compare fundamentally incomparable goods in order to determine the extent to which they promote happiness or the common good?

### 4.3.3. Utilitarianism Theory

Utilitarianism is the general term for all ethical theories that hold that actions should be judged on the basis of their total costs and benefits for society.

#### Classical utilitarianism

It is considered that **the pleasure of vagabond just as important as that of a well-to-do citizen**. Everyone counts as one and no one counts for more than one. The core of his universalistic hedonism is articulated in several passages in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* published in 1789. **Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters**, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, to determine what we shall do as well.

By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered:

- If that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community
- If a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual . . .

**Monistic utilitarianism** holds that there is only one value that should be used as a criterion: pleasure or enjoyment.

**Pluralistic utilitarians** reject the idea that all values can be reduced to one value, holding instead that there are several values that are intrinsically good.

**Preferential utilitarianism**- a value is that which people find valuable.

### **Features of utilitarianism**

There are different features of utilitarianism. The features of utilitarianism include

#### **1. The intrinsic good**

Utilitarianism is a term that covers many theories. The different strands of utilitarianism share a number of features. **All utilitarian theories depart from the assumption that an intrinsic good exists that can serve as a criterion for evaluating actions.**

#### **2. Aggregating and comparing utility on an interpersonal level**

The intrinsic good or the common good can be aggregated. According to utilitarian thinking, it is possible to sum the different goods that people attribute to an action. Moreover, it is possible to compare the consequences of an action for some with the effects it has on others. The common good is thus comparable on an interpersonal level, which means that it is possible to aggregate the well-being of different individuals.

#### **3. Utility as criterion for action**

The third feature of utilitarian theories is that utility or the common good is used as the moral criterion for action. People should act with a view to maximizing the common good of society as a whole. The consequences for all people, directly and indirectly involved, need to be factored into their actions.

#### **4.3.4. Deontological Theory**

**Deontological ethics**- The word “deontological” comes from the Greek **deon**, “**one must.**” Duty-based or deontological ethics solves a number of problems associated with consequentialist ethical theories such as utilitarianism. **According to deontology, all persons have certain obligations. These obligations are non-negotiable:** they cannot be bought off or disposed of.

Different kinds of inalienable rights form the basis of these obligations. Rights, obligations and justice are concepts that consequentialism has no answer to. According to deontological theory, **an action is morally good if it honors a given obligation** (which does not depend on the consequence of the action). Such a theory entitles certain people or groups to rights or a claim to justice. Deontological theories stipulate **duties that must be observed irrespective of their consequences**: legitimate rights must be respected and unjust action is prohibited.

The essential difference between deontological and teleological theories lies in the role that is attributed to the consequences of the action under review.

### **Principles of Deontology**

An action's consequences do not determine its moral character, but does not imply that deontologists (or at least most of them) do not take consequences into consideration. **An action that violates a moral obligation is immoral without doubt.** However, acting in accordance with moral obligations does not necessarily mean that such actions are morally right. Three types of deontological theories can be distinguished in this regard.

1. Duties are God-given,
2. They are based on common sense,
3. They are founded by a social contract.

### **Fundamental Ethical Principles**

There are major principles that is followed in a society and that is also applicable in a professional practice. There are principles that have been practiced in old and modern days. Some of the principles followed in the old days were virtue principles, which is about good quality of a person that is seen from how it bring happiness, eudaimonia. Virtue, together with its active exercise, is

- identical with happiness
- the most important and dominant constituent of happiness;
- the only means to happiness.

**Agent-centered vs action-centered-** Old principles are agent-centered while modern moral theory is action-centered.

#### **4.3.5. Virtue theory**

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322) is known for it. Aristotle's ethical theory is based on the concept of virtue which is defined to be a character a human being needs to flourish or live well. Virtue is coming from the Latin word 'virtues' and the Greek mean excellence of a person. A virtuous agent is one who has and applies the virtues (i.e., an agent that acts virtuously). Aristotle's theory virtue ethics argued in two categories of excellence. The intellectual virtue and character or morale virtue. The intellectual comes into existence and increase as a result of teaching (which is why it requires experience and time).

Thus, virtue theory is actually concerned with building good personality (character) by creating tries and habits to ward acting with. Analysis of language, concepts and methods of reasoning in ethics. It addresses the meaning of ethical terms such as right, duty, obligation, justification, morality, responsibility

#### **Virtue ethics**

In addition to the theories of moral obligation that focus on action as the object of moral evaluation, there is another where the agent, not the action, takes in center-stage. **Virtue** or **quality ethics** refers to every ethical theory that formulates norms on the basis of human characteristics or qualities. In this approach, it is not the action or the consequences that are evaluated, but the person in question. Instead of judging what people do, it looks to who people are. The object of analysis is the qualities of a person.

A person can be ascribed a wide variety of characteristics, such as abilities, intentions and motives; class of traits that is relevant from a moral perspective. These qualities determine how an individual will act in morally problematic situations and can be evaluated in moral terms. For example, it is possible to say someone is honest, just, or reliable. These are morally desirable traits that are traditionally designated as moral virtues.

## **Modern Principles**

*Truth- Accuracy and verification:* How much verification and context is required to publish a story? How much editing and “gate-keeping” is necessary?

*Independence and allegiances:* How can journalists be independent but maintain ethical relations with their employers, editors, advertisers, sources, police and the public. When is a journalist too close to a source, or in a conflict of interest?

*Deception and fabrication:* Manipulation

*Loyalty/fidelity-* Sources and confidentiality

## Unit Two

### Journalistic Ethics and Principles

#### 2.1. Rationale and Evolution of Journalistic Ethics

The journalists' professionalization process has been difficult, ambiguous and often contradictory in its own terms. It is a relatively recent process – it occurred basically in the last decades of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century. It is still somehow fragile and incomplete- journalism still shouldn't be regarded as a true 'profession', but rather as a 'craft' or as a 'semi-profession'(Fidalgo, 2008; Ruellan, 1997).

Journalists' professional group to try to have their craft socially acknowledged and legitimized as a true profession, there is the need for journalistic ethics. Following ideal-typical model of the 'established professions', journalism has been regarded in various ways. The ethics followed in journalism has been considered from how the profession has been regarded in its history of professional practice

(1) **Journalist regarded as an artist;** the journalist regarded as a skilled worker. This perspective isn't without consequences: for an artist, the important thing is his/her talent, his/her 'call' to the activity, his/her creative freedom, rather than any specific education or school degree.

2. **The way journalism is actually performed:** journalists are usually workers in a media industry, receiving orders from who owns the company and pays for their salary. The ideal-typical model of a professional working autonomously, serving his/her clients in the best (and free) possible way and being accountable to them, is hardly recognizable in the context of a press industry, In the context of a press industry routines must be followed, an hierarchical chain must be respected and the individual performance is often submitted to internal rules.

3. **Put the emphasis on its social responsibility.** The choice to stress the pole of individual freedom in journalism or, to put the emphasis on its social responsibility.



Siebert, Peterson (1956) and Wilbur Schramm (1963) came up with the four theories of the press: 'libertarian' theory of the press, authoritarian' theory of the press, social responsibility' theory of the press and Soviet Socialist theory of the press. In addition, two normative theories of the press were added, that includes developmental theory and democratic participant theory.

When one thinks of media ethics, it is seen in light to the rights are the responsibilities the media enjoys. The 'libertarian' or 'authoritarian' approaches were matched with the 'socially responsible' model for the press. A free and responsible press is key for democracy and the media ethics is seen in relation to this (The report of the Hutchins Commission in the USA, in 1947).

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are the commonness in the ethical lines followed by various professions?
2. How is media ethics important in democracy?
3. How does ethics help in building a democratic culture?
4. How do you see the ethical element in practising media?
5. Does the nature of government affect the type of the press and ethics?
6. How is the ethical lines be followed in journalism different or similar to other professions?

## **2.2. Media Ethics in Democracy**

Democracy is about freedom. It is 'the provision of regular mechanisms for registering the people's wishes about who should govern them and what their policies should be, and for providing a check on the actions of government if it disregards these wishes or deprived the people of such basic rights as freedom of speech and

association. Freedom of speech plays an important role in the process of democratization.

Exercising freedom of speech and expression and also the press is a guarantee to citizens to participate effectively in the working of democracy. **Journalists have qualified and absolute rights while working in media.** They work for defending the public right to know, and they are expected to act in ethical lines in entrusting these responsibilities. If that is done citizens would be able to exercise their rights to information and enable the act responsibly and ethically in a democratic system. A democratic nation is characterized with the democratic practices that:

- (1) the citizens participate in choosing government leaders,
- (2) candidates for elective offices compete against one another, and
- (3) the government recognizes citizens' civil and political liberties (Neher and Marlay, 1995).

Democracy is rule by the majority. There are two forms of democracy: direct and indirect. In a direct democracy, every citizen can vote on every measure. In an indirect, or representative, democracy, each citizen can vote to elect representatives (Congress, Parliament) who then do the voting, and it is the majority of the representatives rather than the majority of the citizens themselves who determine the outcome.

The right to freedom of expression and the democratic system have a directly proportional relationship. If you make the system more democratic, you increase the effective capacity of individuals to exercise their right to freedom of expression of individuals, and conversely, if you increase the effective capacity for individuals to exercise their right to freedom of expression you create a more democratic system

Neher and Marlay (1995) definition of an ideal democracy should include the following elements:

- free speech,
- free press,
- meaningful elections,

- freedom to organize,
- majority rule,
- minority rights, and
- an independent judiciary.

For example, when a journalist covers the court, he/she must be careful about the following legal elements which can be seen also from the ethical lines, otherwise turn out to be criminal activity. That is, interfering with ‘pending or imminent’ court proceedings; contempt in the face of the court; scandalizing the court are very crucial in the case of court therefore categorizing these three concept as criminal. There are also automatic prohibitions that restrict reports relating to, for example: committal proceedings before magistrates’ courts, hearings concerning sexual offences and indecency, divorce cases, documents made available on disclosure. The law of contempt of the court is considered as the one who limit freedom of the press, it may limit but one thing the writer should bear in mind is that, freedom of press is not absolute right and even not more important than freedom of court.

### **2.3. Role of Journalism and its Ethical Perspectives in Society**

Walter Lippman, a renowned writer and John Dewey an American Philosopher debated on the role of journalism in the 1920s as modern journalism was taking form.

#### **Lippman Views**

Lippman Views journalism role at the time was to cat as a mediator or translator between the public and policy making elites. The journalist became the middleman. An intermediary was needed to filter news for the masses he says: the public is not smart enough to understand complicated, political issues. Moreover, the public was too consumed with their daily lives to care about complex public policy. The public needed someone to interpret the decisions or concerns of the elite to make the information plain and simple. He believes the public would affect the decision making of the elite with their vote. *The journalist’s role was to inform the public of what the elites were doing. It was to also to act as a watchdog over the elites as the public had the final say with their votes.*

## **Dewey's Views**

It is the public forum that decisions should be made after discussion and debate. Journalists not only had to inform the public, but should report on issues differently rather than simply passing information. *Journalists should take in the information, then weigh the consequences of the policies being enacted by the elites on the public.* His ideas introduced the concept of 'community journalism'. He celebrates expertise. He believes shared knowledge of many is far superior to a single individual's knowledge. There is no hierarchal structure present unlike Lippman's understanding of journalism and society. Conversation, debate, and dialogue lie at the heart of a democracy.

## **2.4. Functions of Journalism in Society**

Journalism has many important functions in a society. The functions of journalism are sought from building a healthy system in which democracy and decent live of citizens would thrive. The followings are the key functions from the journalistic practices are evaluated from ethical perspectives.

1. **Information function-** journalism provides information about events happening in and around our surrounding environment.
2. **Educational Function-** Journalism helps the audiences in the formation of opinion and guiding perception about events, ideas, and phenomenon
3. **Entertainment function-** journalists in today's world teach and inform as well as entertain the receiver.(talk shows, songs, movies, soap operas, jokes, etc)
4. **Integration function-**Journalism helps in creating solidarity among people by focusing on their commonness. It boosts the feeling of belongingness.
5. **Socilisation function-** Journalism socializes and presents a picture of social norms, features, and beliefs.
6. **Debate and discussion-** help individuals to reach consensus on different controversial issues. It is a platform for diverse viewpoints to be discussed and reflected.
7. **Cultural promotion-** Journalism promotes different culture world wide
8. **Motivation function-** by providing role models for audiences journalists motivate the audiences.

## 2.5. Journalists Responsibilities

The role of journalists can be seen from the functions that journalism is entrusted with in a given society. A journalism practice and the condition in which the activities of the media journalists are evaluated. Based on this stand point, the following are the major professionalism and ethical responsibilities.

1. Gather and write news to the respective media organization
2. Presenting news based on truth and serve the public honestly
3. Presenting news fairly, honestly, and accurately
4. Take any kind of responsibility and meet deadlines
5. Carry out research
- 6., Required to cultivate sources
7. Respect sources and defend their confidentiality
8. Take assignments given by editors and act accordingly
9. Probe beyond the official version of what is taking place
10. verify, verify and verify information

## 2.6. Principles of Journalism

There are a number of principles that shape the practices of journalism and this can be also viewed from the point of view of ethical journalism.

**Seeking Truth-** this is the first Principle

Most journalism codes emphasize that telling the truth—being accurate— is essential. “Seek truth and report it” is the first core principle of the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.

**Avoid Surreptitious and Undercover Reporting Techniques-** Journalists should avoid deceptive reporting techniques, like using hidden cameras, tape recorders, and microphones, or assuming a false identity. In some jurisdictions, they are illegal. But equally important, they can undermine credibility. Readers and viewers often won't believe that a reporter who essentially lied in order to get a story will tell the truth when he reports it. Generally speaking, a journalist should identify herself as a member of the news media and make clear that she may use whatever she learns in a story.

**Objectivity in the News-** Journalists in the United States strive to achieve objectivity. This model has been criticized in recent years. Some question whether objectivity is desirable. They suggest that true objectivity essentially has no moral compass and treats all facts and all viewpoints as equally deserving of respect.

**Encouraging Diversity of Views-** In many countries, a partisan press is the norm. Readers and viewers in these nations may expect that a news organization will approach topics from its own particular point of view and select the subjects that it covers accordingly. They also know that competing news organizations may advocate different perspectives. **This can be consistent with journalism ethics** but only if the news organization distinguishes between advocacy and reporting. *Opinion columns and editorial commentary should be clearly labeled and should neither distort nor falsify the facts that underlie the opinion.*

**Respect for the Individual-** *Minimize harm...treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.*

**Cultural Sensitivity-**Journalists should not reinforce stereotypes. The practice is intellectually lazy and can lead to misperceptions and inaccuracy. They should consider carefully whether it is necessary to identify an individual by race, religion, sexual orientation, or similar characteristic. Gender-neutral language is often appropriate.

**The Independent Journalist-** The journalist's highest loyalty should be to the public. This means avoiding conflicts of interest that could compromise her ability to act independently and to inform the public free from other influences and considerations.

**Ethical Issues When Covering Government-** Reporting on government raises particularly difficult challenges. The public generally expects journalists to act as watchdogs, guarding against improper government behavior.

**Being Accountable to the Public-** An important part of a journalist's job is to hold those in positions of authority accountable to the public. News organizations have a similar ethical obligation of accountability.

**Self-Regulation of Digital Media Converging on the Internet:** Codes are adopted for one or more of the following reasons: As an alternative to direct statutory regulation;

- To prevent direct statutory regulation by the state;
- To build public trust, consumer confidence;
- To avoid legal or user-perceived liability;
- To protect children and other consumers;
- To exert moral pressure on those who otherwise behave in an “unprofessional” or “social irresponsible” way;

## Unit Three

### Challenges of Journalism today and Ethical Concerns

#### 3.1. Journalistic Challenges

There are a number of challenges that journalists often face. However, the journalistic activities must be considered in light to ethical aspects so that they can be professionally done no matter how the constraints be encountered.

**Deadlines**--Journalists are ruled by deadlines. Miss one and your story will not make it into the paper. All newspapers have deadlines – for written copy, finished pages, printing, hitting the streets – but different newspapers have different deadlines. Junk Journalism- Also, when information travels as fast as it does today, it can wreak destruction before there is time for it to be understood. In the world of instant journalism, reputations are destroyed and privacies trivially invaded in the time it takes to switch TV channels. Junk food may be convenient and taste OK at the first bite, but its popularity raises longer term questions of public health. So too with junk journalism.

**Technological Change**- call for new ethical perspectives. This, in fact, can be best epitomized in the use of social media and particularly facebook. This is about the media dynamism and reducing the danger by working on the legal and ethical line , which, of course, requires for establishing pragmatic ethical measures to protect the citizens from the potential harm emerge form the technological change.

**Deregulation of the media**- deregulation of telecommunications and computerization have been called the parents of media globalization. Three technologies—computers, satellites, and digitalization—have converged to form a global network that covers the earth as completely as the atmosphere. The era of globalization is based on falling telecommunications costs, thanks to microchips, satellites, fiber optics, and the Internet.

**Western hegemony/ domination**-The increasing capability to broadcast and publish news globally has changed our world as well as our perceptions of our world. Some



effects have been global or geopolitical in nature, others are more media related, and some are felt mainly by individuals. Thus, journalists need to be the safeguarder of their citizens by respecting their rights through acting ethically.

**Global Audiences Growing-** There are greater tendencies for media to become global. Consequently, non-western media are troubled to cope up with the global situation. With satellite dishes and antennas proliferating everywhere, even in the face of governmental opposition, Africa and other parts of the world, are flocking to join the global village. As a result of this, there could be ethical issues that arise in the way media acts in a society.

**Media manipulation** is a series of related techniques in which partisans create an image or argument that favours their particular interests. Such tactics may include the use of logical fallacies and propaganda techniques, and often involve the suppression of information or points of view by crowding them out, by inducing other people or groups of people to stop listening to certain arguments, or by simply diverting attention elsewhere. Hence, the journalist must be socially responsible in filtering them out and protecting citizens from any potential pain come out of that.

**In Propaganda:** Public opinion can only express itself through channels which are provided by the mass media of communication-without which there could be no propaganda. It is used within public relations, propaganda, marketing, etc. While the objective for each context is quite different, the broad techniques are often similar. As illustrated below, many of the more modern mass media manipulation methods are types of distraction, on the assumption that the public has a limited attention span.

### **1. Activism**

Activism tends to be created by smaller movements or individuals. It consists of efforts to enact, impede, or direct social changes. Activism can take a wide range of forms from writing letters to newspapers or politicians, political campaigning, economic activism such as boycotts or preferentially patronizing businesses, rallies, street marches, strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes. Some activists try to persuade people to change their behavior directly, rather than to persuade governments to change or not to change laws. The cooperative movement seeks to build new

institutions which conform to cooperative principles, and generally does not lobby or protest politically, and clergymen often exhort their parishioners to follow a particular moral code or system.

## **2. Hoaxing**

Hoaxes are a form of practical joke that typically uses the techniques of media manipulation to encourage people to believe in some outlandish lie or object. It differs from most other media manipulation contexts in that there is rarely any attempt to influence behavior, though occasionally a hoax may form part of a fraud or a hoax item may be promoted as a commercial attraction. The journalist, as a result, need to figure out the ethical elements and work accordingly by knowing the possible manipulation arise from vested interests.

## **3. Marketing**

Marketing is a series of systems used by companies to communicate the value of a product or service to customers. Marketing might sometimes be interpreted as the art of selling products, but selling is only a small fraction of marketing. It is broader and less focused than "advertising," it is an overall strategy to promoting a product or service. Sales is a key part of marketing, in media manipulation terms it is a way of matching producers and consumers.

## **4. Political campaigning**

Political campaigning is an organized effort which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group. In democracies, political campaigns often refer to electoral campaigns, wherein representatives are chosen or referendums are decided. In modern politics, the most high profile political campaigns are focused on candidates for head of state or head of government, often a President or Prime Minister. Political campaigns are often organised by wealthy individuals and political parties working in concert.

## **5. Propagandising**

Propagandising is a form of communication that is aimed at influencing the attitude of a community toward some cause or position by presenting only one side of an argument. Propaganda is commonly created by governments, but some forms of

mass-communication created by other powerful organisations can be considered propaganda as well. As opposed to impartially providing information, propaganda, in its most basic sense, presents information primarily to influence an audience. Propaganda is usually repeated and

## **6. Advertising**

Media ethics is essential while advertising commercial and other contents. Commercial advertising tends to be created by companies to encourage consumption of their products or services. Non-commercial advertisers who spend money to advertise items other than a consumer product or service include political parties, interest groups, religious organizations and governmental agencies. This is a form of communication used to encourage or persuade an audience to continue or take some new action. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behavior with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media; including mass media such as newspaper, magazines, television commercial, radio advertisement, outdoor advertising or direct mail; or new media such as blogs, websites or text messages.

**7. Public relations(PRs)**- is the management of the flow of information between an individual or an organization and the public. Public relations may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. PR is generally created by specialised individuals or firms at the behest of already public individuals or organizations, as a way of managing their public profile. PR may have symmetrical and asymmetrical functions.

## **Self-regulation**

The call for media ethics also invites the need to 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 and or external pressures, to maintain accountability to the public for news reported, and to foster self-criticism and to encourage adherence to both codified and uncoded 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/press council/commission an industry-wide self-regulation body, such as the Press Complaints Commission set up by UK newspapers and magazines.

Such a body is capable perhaps of applying fairly consistent standards, and of dealing with a higher volume of complaints, but may not escape criticisms of being toothless. ARTICLE 19 believes that independent media organisations, media enterprises and media workers have a moral and social obligation to make a positive contribution to the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, to combat intolerance and to ensure open public debate about matters of public concern.

As far as Public Service Broadcasting is concerned, ARTICLE 19 is of the view that they have a legal obligation to play such a function. There are many ways in which media can make a contribution to the fight against intolerance, including by: designing and delivering media training programmes which promote a better understanding of issues relating to racism and discrimination, and which foster a sense of the moral and social obligations of the media to promote tolerance and knowledge of the practical means by which this may be done;

- ensuring that effective ethical and self-regulatory codes of conduct prohibit the use of prejudicial or derogatory stereotypes, and unnecessary references to race, religion and related attributes;
- taking measures to ensure that their workforce is diverse and reasonably representative of society as a whole;
- taking care to report factually and in a sensitive manner on acts of racism or discrimination, while at the same time ensuring that they are brought to the attention of the public;
- ensuring that reporting in relation to specific communities promotes a better understanding of difference and at the same time reflects the perspectives of those communities and gives members of those communities a chance to be heard;

- ensuring that a number of voices within communities are heard rather than representing communities as a monolithic bloc – communities themselves may practice censorship;
- promoting a culture of tolerance and a better understanding of the evils of racism and discrimination

### 3.2. Journalists Ethics

Journalists are professional persons who work for the betterment of their society. While they work in media they are expected to uphold to many ethical aspects. Journalist ought to communicate what is good for their society and what is truly found in their minds. They are needed to follow the ethical elements that are indicated under.

- Do treat news sources just as fairly and openly as it treats readers.
- Do not inquire pointlessly into someone’s personal life.
- Do not threaten to damage uncooperative sources.
- Do not promise favorable coverage in return for cooperation.
- Do not pay for interviews or unpublished documents.

Moreover, journalists must carry out their jobs in the following manner.

- Staff members should disclose their identity to people they cover (whether face to face or otherwise), though they need not always announce their status as journalists when seeking information normally available to the public.
- Staff members may not pose as police officers, lawyers, business people or anyone else when they are working as journalists.
- Relationships with sources require the utmost in sound judgment and self discipline to prevent the fact or appearance of partiality.
- Cultivating sources is an essential skill, often practiced most effectively in informal settings outside of normal business hours.

#### **Questions**

1. What are the major responsibilities of journalists?
2. How should journalists work being honest and accurate?

3. Can the issue of verification have some thing to do with media ethics?

There are a number of responsibilities that journalists need to bear while carrying out their job. Some of the major responsibilities of journalists are:

1. Presenting news based on truth and serve the public honestly
2. Presenting news fairly, honestly, and accurately
3. Carry out research
4. Respect sources and defend their confidentiality
5. Probe beyond the official version of what is taking place
6. Verify, verify and verify information

Still, the responsibilities of journalists can be seen in light to the following key points as indicated under.

- Provide truth- fact
- Exactness- tell what has really happened instead of telling something far from the actual
- Depend on first-hand sources
- Maintain accuracy
- Make double fact checking
- Validation of material submitted
- Confirmation via two reliable sources
- Corroboration of any claims or allegations made
- Objectivity- free from subjectivity and personal opinion
- Fairness- Balance, comprehensiveness
- Trust- not biased- autonomy, avoid all sorts of influences, credibility

### **3.3. Major Ethical Dilemmas in Journalism**

Today, the major ethical dilemmas that journalists are facing in the digital age are many. In our growing complexity and use of social media professionals must explore the continuing ethical fault lines around accuracy, bias, fairness and objectivity,

chequebook journalism, the problems of the foreign correspondent, the conflicts between ethics and the law and between journalists and public relations consultants.

Towards understanding the the ethical dilmemas in Journalism it would be wise to say types of ethics.

**Meta ethics:** it is the fundamental branch of philosophy it examines the nature of morality and justifies morale judgment and in specific theory virtue theory (Aristotle) ethical theorist in his premise virtue theory is coming from Latin words and meaning is excellence of a person. According to Aristotle (384-322BC) human should act in accordance with virtue.

**Normative ethics:** Normative ethics attempts to provide a system of principles, rules and procedures for determining what (morally speaking) a person should do and should not do. A typically to way normative ethics is to describe norms as to believe and to fell in the Kant theory (deontology) it (1724-1804) argue that an individual ought never to act except in such a way that he could also will (rational desire ) that his maxim become a universal law.

The difference between meta ethics and normative ethics is in the concern of Meta ethics is meaning of moral language and Meta physics of moral fact but it the concept of normative theory it is about standard for the rightness and wrongness action. In the other point of view we can take Meta ethics as a foundation for normative ethics because normative is an expiration of meaning and moral language human mind act after translating. Accordingly, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) argues that human act in accordance with compassion, egoism or malice.

**Applied ethics:** the applied ethics is investigation the application of theories in actual life. The philosophical examination for moral standard of particular issues individual and the mass life that are subject of moral judgment .The combination of the tow theory or conceptual ideas the basement is Meta ethics and normative also Kant (deontology) theory is the ethical theory based on deity, obligation right. But specifically it is the pert of normative ethics philosophy. It is a conceptual principal of either categorical or hypothetical.

There is a need to emphasize by journalists responsibility about what individuals should take when consuming the massive amounts of media we encounter on a daily basis. This includes information we gather from online media, streaming, podcasts, social media and other formats. The tools found here will help students critically evaluate any incoming media and, in turn, produce their own media with their own message. This book aims both to help readers understand the current state of news media through theory and provide practical techniques and skills to partake in

**Journalists have moral & ethical standards developed through process.** They rule themselves & their fellows by own rules or one can say on the basis of what they categorize and perceive as good and bad. Hence, ethics is the fundamental aspect for humans to identify what is practiced as good or bad.

**Ethics affects people's day to day activity in life; how they talk, how they live with other and how they make decision on their life.** In this regards Jorgensen and Hanitzsc (2009: 295) state that ethics is the analysis, evaluation and promotion of what constitutes correct conduct and virtuous character in light of the best available principles. Ethics does not simply ask how to live well. It asks how we should live well ethically, that is, in goodness and in right relation with each other, a task that may require us to forego personal benefits, to carry out duties or to endure persecution. (Jorgensen K. & Hanitzsc T.(2009: 295). These are the key things that journalists must work on.

While one talks about ethics, what is often raised is the issue of reasoning and ethical reasoning. Ethical reasoning is about how people interpret, balance and modify their principles in light of new facts, new technology, and new social conditions (ibid: 295).

**Ethical reasoning is often associated with the notion of ethical dilemma**, which is a situation where a person or institution has to decide between two; right or wrong situation. Journalists reflection on beliefs, rule and values on morality is all about exchanging and using knowledge and information ethically. **The systematic and ethical information flow creates ethical & active generation.** Mass media is the popular information transmitter in our world; now it had terrible or good said of roles



& impact significantly on the manner in which people, community and society understand or misunderstand. A communicative ethics of impressibility highlights how humans act, interact, and shape their practical and moral identities by receiving impressions from, and making impressions on their “triadic” fields of experience. Jorgensen K. & Hanitzsch T. (2009: 297)

Moral practices and standards evolved through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; as journalism very slowly took on the characteristics of a profession. As Hazel Dicken-Garcia (1989) explains, until the 1830s the American press operated according to a political model. Subsequently the expansion of the media develops in day to day activities of man now in throughout the world because of human’s modernity.

**Once information has found its way into public space it is difficult to take back.** Journalism by its nature needs ethical consideration for every moment /space of report because of its sensitivity character of profession.

One of the most difficult ethical tensions in journalism professionalism those who comes face-to face with human affliction and suffering is to establish the appropriate relationship between attachment and disinterest.

To avoid human suffering the media needs to work ethically. As it is understood, ethics is the analysis, evaluation and promotion of what constitutes correct conduct and virtuous character in light of the best available principles.

**The need for ethics is just to make objective and responsible reporting** in media. Objectivity was originally used to describe a journalistic approach or method; journalists would seek to present the news in an objective way, without reflecting any personal or corporate bias. Deborah P. (2006: 9). Ethics, especially journalism ethics, is essentially a practical activity (Black, Steele, & Barney, 1999) that seeks reasons to questions of how to act.

So as to overcome the challenges and the ethical dilemma in journalism it would be appropriate to see Kruger's (2004) individual elements or guiding principles of ethics as follows:

1. **Truth telling:** Journalists should "seek the truth and report it as fully as possible".

This

Principle has two sub themes that include accuracy and fairness of reports.

2. **Minimizing harm:** This refers to being aware of potential harms and minimizing them. It includes being compassionate, giving a due respect and balancing the "negatives by choosing alternatives that maximize your goal of truth telling".

3. **Independence:** This refers to keeping editorial independence intact. Journalists should be aware of the potential influences from other parties who want to manipulate the press for their own means.

4. **Accountability:** This relates to readiness of journalists to respond to their audience and to the society they serve; this helps the press get credibility.

## Unit Four

### Issues in Journalistic professional standards and Media Ethics

#### 4.1. Issues in Journalistic professional standards

There are a number of issues in Journalistic professional standards or code of ethics. A **journalistic code of ethics** refers to a set of principle of professional conduct that are adopted and controlled by the professional or journalist themselves. Another relates to the supposed independence and neutrality of journalism, when in practice most journalism operates in rather close symbiosis with government, political parties, powerful economic interests and other authorities.

**Most codes concentrate on the provision of reliable information and avoiding distortion, suppression, bias, sensationalism and the invasion of privacy.**

Regarding with professional code of ethics there is a **basic principle of journalism under code of ethics: loyalty, objectivity, fairness, balance and truthfulness.**

However, there are the challenges in media while working on ethical dimensions. These are as discussed below.

#### **Bias**

In reporting and particularly in political news reporting bias may occur whether intentional or not, often appear in a story when a reporter covers only one side of an issue or gives one side disproportionately more space or time than others. Reporters may talk to more sources supporting an issue than those opposed. While it may be impossible for reporters to write about every conceivable side of an issue in their stories, they can provide readers with many sides rather than just one. By treating various sides of an issue equally and allowing partisans for each to state their case, reporters provide their audiences with facts they need to understand a story more fully. While total objectivity may be difficult to achieve, balance and fairness in a story can be achieved through thorough reporting and clear writing the news.

#### **Types of Bias**

According to John Steer() there are different types of bias.

**Partisan bias-** Here a cause explicitly and deliberately promoted. It is little difficult in detecting such examples. This can be for example, explicit recommendations to vote for one party or another, there is a blatant endorsement of the cause.

**Propaganda bias-** This is about story that is reported with the deliberate intention of making the case for a particular party or policy, or point of view, without explicitly stating this.

**Ideological bias-** The bias is hidden and unintended, and it can be detected only in a close reading of the text, where the hidden assumptions and value judgments can be revealed.

**Unwitting bias-** Newspapers have a finite number of pages; news broadcasts have limited time slots in the schedule. Hard choices have to be made about what to include and what to exclude. These decisions are about the 'importance' to be given to a story, and they are reflected in the item's place in the running order or its place in the paper or on the page.

### **Sensationalism**

The word sensationalism has described an emphasis on or exaggeration of story dealing with crime, sex, politics and oddities. In the west, **sensationalized reporting** is called **yellow journalism** and with some other names. The main reasons to sensationalize the news story is

- **The nature of the issue** is the first one.
- **Personal interest-** the journalist has to cover story or issue and news story do not make such event sensational but the news media reporter on them because of their importance.
- **Editorial bias- Sensationalism is as a type of editorial bias** in mass media in which event and topic in news story are over-hyped to increase viewership or readership figures.

However, Garst and Bernteis (1982) argue that sensationalism is the practice of writing or reporting to entice, attract stimulate, arouse, exaggerate and generally provoke an emotional response in viewer and readers also.

## **Truth**

In the principle of journalism truthfulness or journalistic truth is about a process of assembling and verifying the fact Truthfulness in the concerns of journalism is taken as the first ethical principle of the professional standard. Kovach and Rosentiel,( 2000:P42). Argue that” Truthiness is a sorting –out process that develops between the initial story and interaction among the public, news maker and journalist over time.” Sometimes medias misled there society for the sec of get attention from people or their audience and in a cases political or economical via personal interest. Though according to Ronning H.(20002p.80).” There is tree point to be truth the first is accuracy fact should be based on solid evidence; a news story should also promote understanding and finally reporting should be fair and balanced.” But the combination of those which principle of ethical journalism the first is truth.

## **Verification of the source**

It is about verifying the sours of information or news. For the first point of view this discipline of verification is what separates journalism from other mode of communication such as propoganda, fiction story and etc...

## **Independence from the source/party**

Journalism ethics is defined as a species of applied ethics that examines what journalists and news organizations should do, given their role in society. The main problem areas include editorial independence, verification, anonymous sources, the use of graphic or altered images, and norms for new forms of media. Independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality is the principles of journalist most have remain.

A media organisation will be judged on the accuracy and reliability of its journalism, which must be well-sourced, supported by strong evidence, examined and tested, clear and unambiguous. Verified facts must form the basis of all news, not rumour and speculation.

**Accuracy is essential if journalism is to inform the public debate.** Accuracy comes ahead of speed. If you are not sure, hold fire. Being first and wrong is not a model to aim for. Being right, always reliable and measured is. Don't take for granted what you

read on a third-party website. It might look professional and sound convincing, but that doesn't mean it is true.

If you copy material from an online site you are running a great risk, especially if you reproduce it word for word. It is fine to research information and check it out yourself, but you must never take as fact information that is published elsewhere.

#### **4.2. Media Ethics and Online Media**

*Don't be fooled by images, videos, audio and reproduced documents.* Digital manipulation is commonplace. In the past, an edit in a filmed interview often had to be covered by what is known as a cut-away shot, which took the eye of the viewer away from the point in the interview that was being edited. Now, with digital manipulation, that is no longer necessary. So don't be fooled by what you see and hear in audio/video footage. It may have been altered.

Unless you know the person who created the material, and are absolutely sure they are genuine and honest, remain cautious until you have verified it. Or, if you feel you must refer to it, qualify and qualify again so that your audience is not led to think you are recommending the material as proven fact.

When people turn to you they expect you to deliver facts. You can refer to material gathered elsewhere, but always qualify it by saying that this material is from another source, and state that source. It is also worth adding that you have not been able to verify the information given, if that is the case.

#### ***Keeping notes and records***

Most reporters, when they start work for the first time, are given a notebook and told to keep it safe and never throw it away. You never know when you may have to refer to your notes as evidence in a legal case.

***Accurate note-taking*** is essential. The usual rule is that notes must not only be accurate, they must also be reliable and contemporaneous. That means that you need to have spoken to reliable sources at the time an incident happened, rather than jot

down from memory casual conversations long after the event. The latter is unlikely to stand up in a court of law. You will also need to keep records of the research you carried out in reaching your conclusions. These should all be contained in your notebook, or, in the case of those using computers, in folders and files.

**Always keep a track of all bookmarks and email correspondence** relating to your stories. However, where anonymity has been requested or where it is essential, make sure that your records do not identify those you have interviewed.

### **Protecting sources**

You must always make sure that you protect your sources. Great care must be taken when you agree to anonymity and an off-the-record briefing, but once you have agreed to it you must honour it. You need your anonymous source to agree to you using as much information as possible without identifying them, particularly if they are making serious allegations. This is so that the audience is not misled, and can put some value on what they say.

**Anonymity also raises some ethical issues** about misleading the public. You might agree to any of the following to disguise identity:

- using a voice-over
- using blurred images
- hiding locations
- avoiding using real names
- not giving an age range

These are fine as long as you make it clear that you are using such techniques, and state clearly why you are using them. However, sometimes, media organisations have misled the public. **You must not use any methods that could be seen as a false representation of the truth.**

When agreeing to anonymity, ensure that the person you are interviewing is happy with you sharing their identity with your senior editor. It will be difficult for you to use the material if those who are in charge of the output are not able to make their

own judgement as to the authenticity of the person and the information they are offering. It will also help protect you and your sources in the long run.

If you are dealing with an anonymous source who is making serious allegations you will need to decide whether:

- the story is of significant public interest
- the source is credible and reliable
- the source is likely to be in a position to offer accurate information
- there are any legal issues
- anyone's safety could be at risk
- a response to the allegations can be found.

If you agree to go ahead with the interview, then you need to make clear to the user/audience/reader the conditions under which the material was gathered. You must never mislead the audience.

### **Reconstruction and archive material**

If you can get by without staging a reconstruction, try to do so. Reconstructions can confuse the audience. If you do create a reconstruction it needs to be as accurate as possible. So, too, can the use of library material. Always make it clear where the material is from, when the event happened and the circumstances surrounding it. Never use library material to represent a current event without labelling it as such. To neglect to do so would be dishonest.

Seasons change, people paint their properties, roads get widened and bypassed, street signs change. Library and archive material doesn't keep up with such changes.

### **Misleading the audience**

The concern over misleading the audience extends to some everyday journalistic practices that many in the profession consider to be the norm. These include:

- reverse questions added after the interview ends
- cut-away shots of items used to cover edits
- set-up shots of the interviewee and interviewer used to lead into the interview
- overlay shots that show the interviewee at work.



All these can be fairly innocent editing techniques used to make a long and sometimes boring interview more digestible, however they can also be used to mislead. Be careful how you use them, and do so bearing in mind that the methods you use need to stand up to scrutiny.

### **Third-party material**

Always make clear when material has been provided by others. Attribution is essential. Say "according to..." or "it's being reported by..." and you are covered.

However, in contentious issues, you will also be judged on who you turn to, so those sources you use need to be balanced and representative of the widest opinion base in order to protect your credibility. Sourcing such information is part of your commitment to accuracy. Who you go to will build on or damage your integrity.

At times you will want to build a report around statistics. Sometimes those statistics are offered to all news outlets via the wires. Even so, it's worth qualifying. "According to" is useful in these circumstances.

Always state that there is a margin of error, particularly with trends. It is conceivable that businesses, political parties and individuals may make important decisions based on what you say. Qualify your comments so that you are less likely to mislead.

### **Admitting mistakes**

The willingness to admit mistakes is another part of being accurate. This has become all the more important in the age of online archives, although it has always been the case that mistakes in old newspaper cuttings could be repeated and result in an inaccurate report being circulated again years later.

Your news organisation will have a correction strategy. To sum up, your journalism must be well-sourced, supported by strong evidence, examined and tested and clear and unambiguous

### **4.3. Principles of Ethical Journalism**

The core principles of ethical journalism set out below provide an excellent base for everyone who aspires to launch themselves into the public information sphere to show responsibility in how they use information. There are hundreds of codes of conduct, charters and statements made by media and professional groups outlining the principles, values and obligations of the craft of journalism.

#### **Five Core Principles of Journalism**

##### **1. Truth and Accuracy**

Journalists cannot always guarantee ‘truth’, but getting the facts right is the cardinal principle of journalism. We should always strive for accuracy, give all the relevant facts we have and ensure that they have been checked. When we cannot corroborate information we should say so.

##### **2. Independence**

Journalists must be independent voices; we should not act, formally or informally, on behalf of special interests whether political, corporate or cultural. We should declare to our editors – or the audience – any of our political affiliations, financial arrangements or other personal information that might constitute a conflict of interest.

##### **3. Fairness and Impartiality**

Most stories have at least two sides. While there is no obligation to present every side in every piece, stories should be balanced and add context. Objectivity is not always possible, and may not always be desirable (in the face for example of brutality or inhumanity), but impartial reporting builds trust and confidence.

##### **4. Humanity**

Journalists should do no harm. What we publish or broadcast may be hurtful, but we should be aware of the impact of our words and images on the lives of others.

##### **5. Accountability**

A sure sign of [professionalism and responsible journalism](#) is the ability to hold ourselves accountable. When we commit errors we must correct them and our expressions of regret must be sincere not cynical. We listen to the concerns of our audience. We may not change what readers write or say but we will always provide remedies when we are unfair.

***An Example of media Code of Ethics, Professional Code of Ethics of the Ethiopian Free press Journalists' Association***

*(EFJA) as endorsed by its General Congress in December 1998.*

1. The Journalist has the obligation to inform the public on the malpractice of officials. The information must be corroborated by evidence.
2. In recognition of the fact the public has the right to get information, the journalist is obliged to reveal the truth based on accurate information.
3. The journalist shall be dedicated to his profession and enrich his experience and knowledge.
4. The journalist shall not disseminate information that endangers the nation's unity, security or sovereignty, or creates divisions among people, or destabilises peace, or facilitates or foments discrimination based on race, tribe or religion.
5. The journalist shall observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence.
6. The journalist shall not use any material belonging to others without giving credit to the author.
7. The journalist must be sharp-minded , trustworthy , modest , and meticulous in performing his duties.
8. The journalist shall not disseminate information that slanders individuals or organisations.
9. If the journalist happens to disseminate defamatory information on individual or organisation he shall present the denial or response of the individual or organisation.
10. The journalist shall maintain the integrity of his profession and association.
11. The journalist shall not engage in socially or morally unacceptable activities.
12. (a) The Journalist shall not present to the public obscene literature, pictures, films or utterances that corrupt culture.  
(b) The journalist shall identify the news item from his own subjective judgement . If at all he has personal views, they should be clearly and explicitly stated. The journalist shall, while performing his duties, not be dominated by his own emotions and shall not be in pursuit of his own personal interests.
13. The Journalist shall not without permission of the giver reveal the source of information or national secrets which he may have obtained in the course of performing his tasks.

14. The journalist shall not, out of scrupulousness or lame excuses or shunning responsibility, refrain from compiling and disseminating information that should be known by the public.
15. The journalist shall not degrade the profession by directly or indirectly accepting bribes , gifts or other benefits for the news , commentaries , programmes , photographs or films he has disseminated.
16. The journalist shall not act as an intermediary between another journalist and an individual or organisation that wants to be publicised in the media.
17. (a ) The journalist shall not abuse his profession to acquire illegal benefits or be a cause for the acquisition of illegal benefits.  
(b) The journalist shall not engage in activities that are inconsistent with his profession. The journalist shall immediately rectify the mistakes he has made regarding an individual or organisation.
18. (a) The Journalist shall work in close collaboration with other professional colleagues.  
(b) The journalist shall not try to harm other journalists or obstruct their activities for personal fame or to get other benefits.
19. If a journalist encounters problems while making efforts to fulfil his tasks , the association shall, in collaboration with those concerned, do its level best to help the journalist.
20. Enforcement of the code. The code of ethics shall be enforced exclusively by the Ethiopian Free press Journalists' Association.
21. A professional journalist shall be governed by the regulations embraced in the Code of Ethics.
22. The decisions made by the association would be applicable to a professional journalists who violates any of the provision(s) of the Code of Ethics.
23. Revision of the Code of Ethics : The provisions of the code shall be revised when the idea is supported by seventy five per cent of the General Congress of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association.

## Questions

1. What are the elements of professional code of conducts?
2. What are the weaknesses and strengths of the above code of conduct by EFJA?
3. How does respecting media help the news room?
4. What does the media ethics do with individual and organizational credibility?
5. What does ethics do for professionalism?
6. How does the media ethics help for business to thrive in a commercial media and how is it related to public interest?

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