

Journalism ethics case study essay

[Entertainment](#), [Journalism](#)



It is always important for reporters to remember to incorporate the right ethical guidelines when writing a story, so that the news remains objective, informative and proper. However, some like to ignore ethics in order to make their news story more interesting to read and thus, gather a wider readership. Some of the many issues of journalism ethics include the limits of free speech, accuracy and bias, fairness and privacy, the use of graphic images, conflicts of interest, the representation of minorities, and the role of journalism (Ward 2008). In the beginning of the article, the author called the person responsible for the crime, a 'sick monster'. Although everyone would agree on the truth of that statement, the journalist should have remained objective when writing the article. The journalist must keep their own opinions out of the article and allow the readers to form their own opinions on the basis of the facts which the journalist has presented (Wein).

There is the assumption of the possibility of unmistakably distinguishing between facts and opinions emerges clearly and accords precisely with the positivistic way of understanding the concept of objectivity, where everything that the journalist can and must write is that which he can directly observe and that which is factual (Wein). That is not what the writer of the article did, instead emotions became involved. The graphic description of how the child was raped would seem uncalled for, but it is difficult to set limit of details when faced with such a shocking crime. News writing is essentially about writing facts; it would be difficult for the writer to avoid upsetting the readers when the facts are essentially violent. Just as it is mentioned in the Tragedies and Journalists guide, they advise journalist to avoid unneeded gory details about the victims' deaths. They can achieve this

by asking themselves if the images are pertinent or will do unnecessary harm to certain members of your readership or broadcast audience.

In the Star, the description of how “ the killer had placed a cucumber and a brinjal in the girl’s private parts” is shocking and unnerving no matter how it is phrased. Unfortunately, it was a significant detail in the case, considering that there had a similar case before, and so it couldn’t have been completely stripped from the article. This is because, to be factually accurate is to contain objectively verified facts (FIGDOR). An article in The Age, used the phrase “ vegetable forced into her private parts”. By doing that, they decreased the amount of detail. It might seem less graphic if the readers did not have the image of a cucumber or brinjal in their mind. However, they later used the term “ forced” instead of “ placed” which seems very violent. An article on Crime Watch Malaysia website used the sentence “ the girl had a cucumber and a brinjal stuffed in her private parts.

This caused a rupture between her vagina and rectum”. This article compared to the others provided the most amount of detail about the crime and thus provided a more graphic image. The sentence “ This caused a rupture between her vagina and rectum” shows just how cruel the crime was but it also may be too graphic for some reader to accept or be comfortable with.

In another follow-up article in the Star, they changed the way they phrased the incident, the sentence “ a brinjal and a cucumber inserted in her private parts” was used. Instead of the word “ placed”, the term “ inserted” was used. Compared to the other articles, this phrase seems the most

acceptable. It provides adequate detail on the crime without painting a too graphic image for the readers. It also seems unethical that the Star newspaper published the post mortem photo of Nurin Jazlin. The corpse photograph is ethically condemned for including traumatic pain and crippling individual agency by denying the reader choice and an opportunity to escape the pain (Fishman 2003).

They did not consider what kind of impact the photograph would have on the readers or whether the family of the victim would even approve of it being published. The photo was probably published with the notion that readers would be interested in seeing it, and most probably were. Newton (2009) says that we are particularly drawn to look at violent activity or the color of blood, among other things. The person who published the photograph might have thought it was “muted” based on the fact that the picture only showed the girls’ face and not the rest of her body (Fishman 2003). Nowadays when information is so easily obtained from the internet with very modes of censorship used, people sometimes expect to get that same type of information from their local newspaper. Despite the fact that it is unethical, some people want to be able to view this kind of graphic information and images.

Just like what occurred with Nur Jazlin’s post-mortem photos, where it was distributed online without any concern on what kind of effects it might have on the family in mourning (crime watch). Newspapers and journalist should always follow the ethical guidelines that have been set. Although some

choose to push the boundaries and overstep ethics in order to achieve more sensational news and boost their readership.

By right, they should consider the feelings of the readers and especially the victims involved before making decisions on what they publish.

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