

Ethics in media

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Through the years, many things have happened and new technologies have appeared which have both raised questions regarding the ethical behavior of media. With the expanse, diversity and power that the media is now enjoying, it has hugged the limelight because of the increasing incidence of unethical behavior among the different kinds of media practitioners. It is thus necessary that the main points of the statement mentioned be discussed and explained. First thing is to ask what unethical behavior is.

This can be explained by pointing what it is not. Ethics can be defined as moral principle (Oxford, 2000). It associates to behaving in a good, honest, just, and righteous manner. Ethics in media can help newsroom staffers make sound decisions and build journalism credibility about many ethical problems they may encounter in their work (Steele 1999). When a person listens to what another wants to say, if a person speaks objectively about an issue and if a person respects the properties and opinions of others, he is living an ethical life.

So unethical behavior is exactly its opposite. If a person takes advantage of his fellowmen, put into danger the life of another and violates the rights of an individual he is behaving unethically. But it must be noted that not only those criminals are culprits here, even an ordinary man can behave unethically sometimes unknowingly. When a vendor intentionally use a non-calibrated weighing scale to weigh his goods for sale he is unjust. When a student submits a project that he did not do that is cheating and it is dishonest.

And when an officemate say bad things behind another co-worker just to get the promotion he is unrighteous. It does show that every sector of the

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society has code of ethics to be followed so that life is lived fairly. And every sector of the society thus experience incidence of unethical behavior. Media, has also its share of incidence of unethical practice of conduct. And the alarming reality now is that it is increasing by the day. The media in all its form has been recently in the limelight for the many incidents of unethical behavior among its practitioners.

And why is this happening? What contributes to this kind of behavior? And why can't it be controlled? To shed light to these questions, the writer would like to go back and discuss one at a time the points raised at the beginning of this paper. Media today is so diverse and its expanse is so far-reaching that monitoring it becomes difficult. With the diversity and expanse of media comes power and influence. Media has evolved and aside from the early forms like print, theater and arts, it now includes broadcast, film and electronic.

Their role has also increased from merely informants to now a more influential and powerful role of shapers of society. As cliché has it, media can either make or break. The word "PRESS" has often been used as ticket to the world of the privileged and thus has also been a source of abuse. Then it poses another question. When do media behave unethically? In what media form is it the most prevalent? Discussing good behavior that media is supposed to adopt is proper here. One of the most important aspects of media work is being objective.

Media is supposed to give accurate information to the audience setting aside personal biases. Objectivity holds it that the primary loyalty of the media is to the public (Singer, 2007). Thus violating this or subtly saying going <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-in-media/>

against the principles of objectivity is unethical. Say for example, when a reporter writes an article about the result of elections, he becomes unethical when he makes generalization such as the winner is not capable or the win came out of cheating. He also is unethical when he merely presented the figures and did not expound on the truth behind the facts.

Objectivity by the media also occurs when a television network edits contents of an interview of a personality involved in an issue resulting to removal of the salient points of his argument that could shed light to the controversy. Another form of violation of the principle of objectivity is not getting both sides of the story. This has been a common point of contention especially on the part of those involved in the issue. The failure to get the two sides of the coin lead to the idea that some media take sides and does not take into consideration that the public needs to know everything.

Veracity or truthfulness is another ethics the media must need to consider. Journalists should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error (Society of Professional Journalists, 2007). And its violation comes in the form of plagiarism. Plagiarism is always an issue, especially because it relates to the written medium. Print media, it must be noted, does not only include the newspapers and magazines. Books, scholarly journals and annuals are part of the print media industry.

Through the years, there have been numerous cases of plagiarism especially now that electronic media is flourishing. Plagiarism encompasses issues as fabricating facts, copying and infringements. With the propagation of internet research, many incidents of copying ideas from the written works posted in different websites entices the researchers to write them down and

make them appear as their own. And those guilty of this misbehavior is growing in numbers. The most common form of plagiarism committed in print is making up stories. This most especially true to increasing number of fly-by-night newspapers.

Reporters often exaggerate stories to the point of adding half-truths or even untrue facts just to make it sell. The audience therefore takes precedence this incidence and tends to make a sweeping generalization that there is nothing true anymore in the papers. This puts into question the credibility of the media. The fabricating of facts according to (Kortner, et al. , 1999) in the Issues in Media Ethics which appeared in the EIRC Digest it is due to the growing consolidation of already large media corporations that puts pressure on journalists or media practitioners to make good stories for profit purposes.

Photograph manipulation has also surfaced as unethical practice of most media outfits. The same report by Kortner et al, states that photographic methods improved, enabling newspapers and magazines to show to their readers images that reflected an " improved" vision of reality. And Reaves (1989) as cited by Kortner et al, said that different sectors are raising concerns on why editors permit the alteration of the contents of photographic images. Colors are controlled and people or objects are even be removed or added to the entire image.

And what is alarming is that changes are almost unnoticeable for they are done very carefully. This is unethical in the sense that it equates to cheating the audience - presenting them of something that is not really true. The media is the voice of the people and they often decry harassment and curtailment of the freedom of expression. But this freedom of expression

that they adhere to is also the same things that they violate and become a source of misbehavior on their part. Freedom of expression is sometimes if not most of the times abused by unscrupulous mediemen.

Freedom of expression has limits and is bounded. It is not anymore freedom of expression if a reporter divulges a military operation that he got from a source that would entail danger on the lives of those involved in the operation. And it is not freedom of expression if there is an intention to malign somebody by targeting his person and not the issue he is involved in. Finally, it is to say that media will continue to evolve and its diversity and expanse will still grow and will even get more influential.

With this, incidence of unethical behavior will likewise increase. This is so because power and influence is blinding and in most cases pushes a person to show that he has these attributes - that is behaving against the norms of society, against the norms of the industry he part with. If media will not do a self-scrutiny of its actions and unless somebody or some institution takes the initiative to at least control these people who are blinded by their pride, the media business will slowly loose the trust of the common people that it supposed to serve.