

## **Media Ethics**

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Media possess great power as well as responsibility to deal with all the necessary and accessory information to be disseminated to the public for peace and social justice. Social justice is a broad term that has often been taken general in meaning. Although this term has its origin in 1840s yet there is much to be explored about this term. Previously, a shallow meaning of equal distribution of good to all was associated to this term. Recently, it is related to compassion, cooperation and association. In this regard, the role of media in dealing with sensitive information in the form of pictures or videos of victims or oppressors is of utmost importance and needed to be handled with a lot of care. So, it is important to analyze the role of media in this scenario and address emerging issues after displaying pictures and videos of victims after the disaster.

This essay talks about how the media works to disseminate information with different meaning of social justice changing from time to time and context to context in a democracy. For this purpose, the case of Philando Castile is analyzed with main focus on how to promote social justice in a democratic society. This inquiry is made in the light of code of ethics for professional journalists.

### **Ethical Promotion of Social Justice Through Media**

The media's involvement in reporting events is absolutely essential. As societies develop more and more complex, its reliance on media for information has increased. Max Weber first identified media content as a way to measure the "cultural temperature" of society. Similarly, sociologists have been interested in the content of mass media since 20th century (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). It is not only the watchdog on systematic and efficient communication channels of government but also the platform to help reach the assistance to the people in need.

Commonly, social justice refers to the equal distribution of goods and services to the public for public welfare. According to Michael Novak (2009) social justice is not limited to distribution of advantages or disadvantages, but it is deeper in its comprehension. With emerging needs of the progressing world, social justice is much about freedom of society and democracy. It is organizing people and volunteers by cooperating with each other and taking responsibilities to solve problems by their own.

In the case of Philando Castile, principle of justice is violated. Life safety and security is a human right in a society. If it is violated publically through social media platform or live streaming videos, the role of media in reporting and broadcasting requires a watchful eye.

Pertaining to the sensitivity of the matter, state and code of ethics, an urban-based journalist must keep a watchful eye on fast changing demographics and socio-economic factors to be able to analyze and even predict a harmful effect on public. He must have a brave heart in exposing power struggles, vested interests, social and historical factors involved and censuring oppression and injustices of the case. It is important because little knowledge may be perceived differently by people and may affect majority in a wrong way.

A journalist must highlight people's ability to take responsibility for themselves and not rely completely on external help and this is what connects it to the social justice. In the case of Castile, although the social media platform supported people's ability to take responsibility for themselves (as the victims go on live streaming at the onset of the trouble) yet it brought nothing helpful for them. They faced the worst of the happening and lost life. In such scenarios, the actual essence of the social justice that is organizing to help each other is found missing.

According to the standard principles of code of ethics for professional journalism, it is essential to search for reality and broadcast it accurately without distorting facts or context. The way

visual information of the case was streamed, stored, and shared repeatedly can bring negative impacts on the psychology of children and victims. Similarly, the dissemination of the sexual assault or personal information may lead to severe harm to the victim, and it is really very sensitive. Making such private events public needs critical analysis to understand the consequences associated with the broadcast of the affairs and its long-term impacts on the reputation of the organization.

Another principle of the ethics is minimizing harm. This principle works for making wise decisions concerning what to broadcast, how to show and what will it address. The people's welfare is the priority in promoting the themes of justice in democratic society. By publicizing images of bloodshed, crime, assault, or other offenses may lead to major bad health and psychological impacts not only on victims but also on general public specially the children. This is the principle that is violated in this case and its impacts can be seen largely.

Proper weighing potential harm or discomfort against the public's desire for information is an important ethical consideration in journalism. Following the news does not give one permission to act haughtily or intrusively. It is a matter to be kind to anyone who might be harmed by news coverage. When working with trivial, sex crime victims, inexperienced sources, or people who are unable to consent, it comes upon a great responsibility on the shoulder of a reporter to exercise extra caution. Most importantly, respecting cultural diversity and its implications in different societies is a notable factor to be considered that is seen superficially in this case. For example, in different cultures pictures of women on live telecast or broadcasting screenshots of videos (having women) is considered unethical for privacy or other concerns. In this way, this case report may harm their cultural values and moral reason. So, in this scenario a media person should have the ability to distinguish between legal data access and ethical reason for publicizing

images and pictures. Finally, individuals have a more right to privacy and security as compared to public leaders, or other figures. This should be considered more thoughtfully.

Blurring the faces and hiding the identities may not completely serve the purpose of disclosure. Thus, it needs proper monitoring of the sources and protagonists before portraying different videos or images. Calculation cannot be used to determine how to convey horror in the most powerful way. And yet, it would be crucial to investigate the underlying causes instead of merely the startling outcomes, regardless how striking they may be. Also, it would be beneficial to start looking for alternatives to such calamities and to cite evidence of even simple answers. Then, after the spectacle of the conflict has passed, depict those who must bear the horrors of war—the physically and psychologically injured, orphans, widows, and parents without children—and remember them in the years to come. Finally, start reflecting on the best examples of peace photography rather than only those depicting battle, including the splendors of rehabilitation and some of the horrors that were averted.

## **Conclusion**

This increasing public trend of live social media broadcasting is quite alarming. When it comes to a crime being conducted publicly with thousands of people watching it but not able to do anything helpful can be very disappointing for them. These media sites should be restricted with proper limits and check points to monitor any harm and promoting appeals for help. As per the use of images of destroyed buildings, killing, fighting or disaster is concerned its sources and access should be handled with care and purposefully.

In a nutshell, media has a very critical and enduring impact on the lives of people. An ethical and watchful analysis of the report should be done before publishing any content specially related to

the personal data or images etc. The case of Castile supported the human right to take responsibility by their own and violated the ‘minimizing harm’ principle of the ethics.

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