

A Study on the Impact of Media Ethics for Social Development in Sri Lanka (Case study)

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Abstract

The government and the general public communicate with one another through the media. For the goal of preserving a robust democracy, it serves as an educator, a motivator, or a leader at every level. Individuals utilize their ethics to assess or analyze a situation and then choose how to act appropriately in that context. Ethics may be viewed as the internal guardian of honorable morals, values, and viewpoints. It is acceptable for media professionals to carry out their duties in society; yet, they have a responsibility to uphold moral principles when gathering and disseminating news by upholding principles of objectivity and fairness when providing information to the general audience. Media ethics are absolutely essential for accurate information distribution, preventing factual distortion, and avoiding conflicts of interest. Promoting universal ideas and furthering the concepts of equality, the rule of law, truthfulness, and accountability are crucial. More study is necessary, and suitable laws and regulations for media ethics should be created on a worldwide scale in order to defend the interests of both people and society as a whole.

Keywords: Media; media ethics; news; freedom of press; social responsibility.

1. Introduction

In order to address questions regarding human morality, the study of ethics seeks to define various amoral terms, such as "good" and "evil," "right" and "wrong," and so forth. These words encompass, respectively, "good" and "evil" as well as "right" and "wrong." The development of technology has a variety of impacts on how we live our daily lives. This is why the discussion of technology, media, and ethics places a strong focus on the core values of ethics in the digital age, in the media, and in its impact on society. We deal with the effects of these repercussions on a daily basis in terms of the social, educational, and economic systems.

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Media ethics is one of the subfields of ethics that focuses on the precise standards and rules that all media, including film, theater, the arts, and broadcast media, are required to abide by. To address the ethical issues brought on by technological advancements has been the only objective when it comes to the ethics of digital media. This has been the field's motivating factor. The promotion and protection of all values, notably an unflinching respect for life, the rule of law, and legality, is a vital aspect of the practice of ethical journalism.

1.1 Background of the Research

Providing readers with all the news and information they could possibly need on subjects that are important to the general public is the fundamental goal of journalism. This must be done with accuracy, objectivity, and decorum in both tone and language. In addition to acquiring and disseminating information, ethical behavior includes confirming the veracity of reported events, using language that is acceptable in society, and maintaining an awareness of the possible effects that one's actions may have on society. Given that the fast development of technology and the widespread use of digital media have a significant influence on modern culture, this is of the highest importance. Today's technologically sophisticated media place a heavy focus on upholding respectable standards of behavior as part of their journalistic ethics. These criteria include the notion that the media shouldn't discriminate or incite hatred based on a person's nationality or religion and that it shouldn't prejudge an accuser's guilt prior to the court's final ruling. These guidelines also include the premise that the media shouldn't make assumptions about an accused person's guilt prior to the court's final ruling. In ethical theory, the right to privacy is given great weight since actions like this put individuals in risk, which is wrong and shouldn't happen.

1.2 Research Problem

In the current era of information, a person's internet reputation may have a significant impact on whether or not they achieve their goals. It's critical to keep in mind the negative effects of any unethical conduct or contacts on social media, both on a professional and a personal level. Users must take care while publishing online because, by definition, the Internet represents the "last chapter" in the history of human amnesia. Unauthorized use of social media can have detrimental privacy effects and put users' physical and online safety at risk. Because so much personal information is exposed on social media, using it may also result in less privacy. One runs the danger of a data breach if their social media profiles are not well managed and don't reveal any personally identifying information.

Thus, it is essential to spread knowledge about the dangers of disclosing personal information online. This might result in less immoral and reckless usage of social media and make the community more secure overall. Social media usage should be governed by commonly accepted moral and ethical standards that promote peaceful interactions between individuals from diverse backgrounds.

1.3 Research Objective

To investigate how the media ethics impact for social development in Sri Lanka.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The research "Ethics of Indian News Media Aberrations and Future Challenges" by Jhumur Ghosh [1, 2] examines problems with the ethics of the Indian news media. The author gave examples of times when traditional mass media outlets, such newspapers and television, violated the generally acknowledged journalistic norms and moral principles that the Indian news media upheld. Julie [3, 5] asserts that every media organization has the right to choose the moral principles that will guide its reporting. The claim "All the News That's Fit to Print," which was first trademarked in the year 1896, is still printed on the front page of "The New York Times," one of the most significant newspapers in the world and one that is published in the United States. This suggests that each media firm has the authority to create their own ethical standards to direct journalists and editors in their work, without getting too deeply into the debate over how effectively the newspaper has adhered to its concept.

Editorial independence is a key element of ethical reporting in the media, according to Lasson [6]. The United States and the United Kingdom made substantial contributions to the creation of the term "objectivity" in the context of the professional journalistic business. Some of the guidelines that reporters and journalists must adhere to in order to maintain their neutrality include relying on eyewitness accounts of events, fact-checking with various sources, and making an effort to present all important details of a story. Plaisance [7, 9] said that idealism and relativism are significant components of media ethics. Relativism refers to a belief in one's own capacity to judge what is good and wrong, whereas idealism defines an attitude that incorporates the pursuit of altruistic goals. It entails having faith in one's own judgment and awareness of one's own talents. According to Ralph E. Hanson [10], media ethics may be applied to all types of media and are linked to morals, laws, and rules. One of the many varied categories of ethics is media ethics, which may be challenging to understand because it is linked to specialized or professional organizations. Esan [11] argues that because of the media's importance, there are many of them, each of which disseminates unique knowledge and points of view.

2.2 Concept of Media

The media is a channel of communication networks, a broadcasting and narrowcasting medium through which different types of information are conveyed among individuals. These types of information include news, entertainment, education, mail, government, legal, and other forms. It educates the public and makes them more aware of the many actions occurring in the political, legal, social, economic, and educational arenas. All digital means of communication, including social media platforms, the Internet, digital music and video files, personal computers, and mobile devices, are referred to as new media. Social media is an online platform that makes it easier for people to engage with one other. It enables users to create content and interact with others across the globe. Websites, blogs, audio and video streaming, chat rooms, email, Internet communities, social networking and file-sharing websites, mobile applications, and web advertising are examples of new media that are readily available and cost nothing.

2.3 Concept of Ethics

Individuals utilize their ethics to assess or analyze a situation and then choose how to act appropriately in that context. Ethics can be viewed as an internal inspector of honorable morals, ideas, and viewpoints. According to the Macquarie Dictionary of Australian English, "ethics" is "a system of ethical ideals by which specific actions and suggestions may be regarded proper or wrong." The Greek term "Ethos," which denotes character or what it means to have a good character, is one of the notions Jay-black and Chris Robert [12] believe ethics stems from in their book "Doing Ethics in Media." The news is very important in the media. Information ethics is the area of ethics that focuses on the relationship between the creation, organization, dissemination, and use of information and the moral ideals and ethical principles guiding human behaviour in society. News, data, and material fall under this umbrella. It's also known as informational ethics or information ethics. It offers a crucial framework for thinking about moral issues related to news privacy, moral agency, new conservation difficulties, and dilemmas brought on by the information life-cycle.

2.4 Media Ethics

Media ethics is a subfield of ethics that focuses on the rules and guidelines that all forms of media, such as film, theater, arts, and broadcast media, are required to adhere to. The primary goal of journalism is to provide the general public with news and information on issues pertaining to public interest in a manner that is not prejudiced, is truthful, and is communicated in a good and appropriate manner. Ethical behavior entails not only the gathering and dissemination of information but also the verification of the veracity of reported events, the use of language that is socially acceptable, and the maintenance of a focus on the potential effects of one's actions on society. Journalism scandals are one type of incident that violates the generally accepted ethical standards of the media, as it is possible for corporations and governments to seek to influence the news, and it is possible for the media to manipulate the behavior of public leaders. Media ethics is a set of rules that must be adhered to when dealing with issues that pertain to the media in society.

It includes truthfulness, impartiality, protecting people's privacy, and taking responsibility. One aspect of media ethics is the dress code that all presenters and professionals must adhere to. There are a lot of reasons why studying media ethics has been questioned in the past, such as fair use and avoiding plagiarism on previously distributed content. An intensive look at the idea of media ethics reveals that growth in every facet of society is possible only via the cultivation of morality as a foundational principle.

The fight for the proper moral principles to be upheld in each area of production is one that the media should be at the forefront of leading. Learning about the concept of media ethics enlightens a student on the necessary ways that may be used to build a working atmosphere that is welcoming to all employees. Establishments associated with the media ought to demonstrate a high level of care for behavior and an appropriate code of conduct. It is essential to make use of the existing literature written by other authors if one wants to acquire a more in-depth comprehension of the principles underlying media ethics. Users of social media should also consider the ethics of the media and take precautions to keep information from being viewed or accessed by third parties who are not permitted to do so.

2.5 Challenges for Media Ethics

The rapid growth of technology related to media and information has created a number of challenges in the field of media ethics. These include political issues, fluctuating legislation, giving precedence to one's own personal advantage, and safety concerns. Traditional forms of media are having a difficult time competing with digital technology and other forms of advanced technology. The establishment of standards for dealing with gossips and rectifications in an online environment that are reliable with the moralities of correctness, verification, and transparency is an ethical problem that needs to be solved. The deviation of those who work in the media from the generally acknowledged ethical norms and established traditions of the society has incited anger among the critics of the society, resulted in demonstrations and attacks on media organizations by members of the general public, and spawned a wide range of additional topics for debate and discussion.

2.6 Media Ethics in the Future

The approach to reporting the news based on a free market has led to a number of problems, including prejudice in the media and censorship by corporations and governments. This is due to the general population not taking an interest in international politics and the tendency of Western media outlets to focus their attention solely on those political candidates who have the financial resources to pay for commercials. This has led to a lack of ethics in the media and an abundance of material that is entertaining, but may not be the most relevant information. Despite this, the media industry is always moving in a new direction, with the advent of the internet having multiplied the number of chances for the dissemination and sharing of information.

2.7 Link between loneliness and social media

This text discusses the importance of individuality in the social environment in which children and young people are expected to develop and mature. Research and anecdotal evidence demonstrate that despite all of the connections available to them, the feeling of isolation in today's society is far higher than it was twenty years ago. Researcher Rebecca [13, 16] Nowland and her colleagues point out that the context is the most important factor to consider when it comes to the interpretation of the results, as the usage of social media can either exacerbate or alleviate feelings of isolation. Young people want more friends and more in-depth direct interactions than they currently have, which is why the sensation of loneliness is so frequent among them. The concept of friendship among adolescents has evolved, shifting away from the notion of quality friendships and toward the notion of quantity friendships. Additionally, the amount of time people spend on Facebook is directly correlated to how lonely they feel.

3. Methodology

This chapter's goal is to give a general overview of the research approaches that will be covered in more detail in subsequent chapters. It is made up of the conceptual design, hypotheses, and operationalization, which are all based on the information found in the pertinent literature. Deductive, inductive, and additive theories can all be developed. A broad rule leads to an inference that resembles a law in deductive reasoning. A single observation is made more universal via inductive reasoning. In his futures studies, Kuosa [17] employs both inductive and

deductive reasoning. First use "intuitive" techniques, second, physical. Based on the aforementioned explanation, this investigation is being conducted using a deductive methodology. A research strategy is a broad technique that directs a researcher's choice of various data gathering methods in order to answer a research question and accomplish a study goal. In futures studies, List [18] distinguishes between quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Research methodologies include exploratory and normative groupings in addition to quantitative and qualitative ones. The exploratory and normative methods of issue resolution exist. Exploratory approaches focus on opening up new avenues and investigating potential outcomes, whereas normative methods aim to establish a certain future state.

These methodologies can all be used in futures studies to accomplish specific research objectives, such as explaining the precise patterns of future development and what the future will look like, prescribing a set of steps to take in order to achieve the desired future, and analyzing the likely course of future events. As a result, the three main research approaches are descriptive, normative (prescriptive), and exploratory. This study gathered secondary information from news stories that appeared in reputable publications and looked at secondary literature. Television, print media, and radio were the only media types that met the criteria for being considered "mainstream." The top five newspapers in Sinhala and Tamil [19], as well as the top three most frequently read English newspapers, were picked for print media. The television networks and publications were chosen based on circulation and viewership. All national news networks that streamed primetime news segments online were watched on television. This study's two key components are the collecting of secondary data from news reports in major media sources and the analysis of secondary literature. Only television, print media, and radio are considered "mainstream" media for the purposes of this study. A case study will be used to assess the secondary data that has been acquired.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

The persistent reporting of information disorder in this case led to the production of a false narrative, which stated that a 'Muslim' doctor of gynecology and obstetrics, namely Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, [20, 22] intentionally and illegally sterilized thousands of Sinhala Buddhist women while performing caesarean operations in order to 'exterminate' the Sinhala race. A qualitative investigation of the data revealed that mainstream media played both an amplifier and producer of the false narrative, using four interconnected elements: building on pre-existing narratives, establishing legitimacy through authoritative sources, creating an emotional connection through sympathy, sensationalism, and justice, and giving prominence to the story. These components can be used to analyze any and all forms of information disorder, including those spread across mainstream and social media.

4.2 Building on pre-existing narratives

Stereotypes about Muslims in Sri Lanka, such as the fear of Islamist terrorism and the belief that Muslims are actively attempting to render Sinhala-Buddhist women infertile, have been related to the Dr. Shafi case [23].

Researchers have connected the long-standing violence and anti-minority attitude that has resulted in attacks on Muslims to the long-standing existential insecurity among segments of the majority Sinhala-Buddhist community. The alleged surgical "sterilization" was covered in news articles, along with claims that Dr. Shafi gave Pani Walalu, boondi, and wattalappan to a canteen at a sizable girl's school in Kurunegala. Shafi has been accused of utilizing a variety of medications to improve food sterilization, according to reports. The title "Thowheed Jamath doctor sterilized 4,000 Sinhala [24] Buddhist mums following caesarian surgeries" and the similarities between Shafi and Zahran Hashim, the guy generally suspected of being responsible for the Easter Attacks, seemed to support this. When Shafi was presented as a component of a wider effort to support Islamist terrorism, the accusations of sterilization were more appealing and believable.

4.3 Establishing legitimacy through authoritative sources

In the Dr. Shafi case, the media referenced well-known specialists, yet it's likely that even trustworthy sources had something to hide. Members of parliament, Buddhist monks, and medical experts all responded to the allegations or provided supporting stories. Divaina cited UPFA MP Rohitha Abeygunawardana [25] as adding that the UNP and he both respect and appreciate Dr. Shafi Siyabdeen's discovery. Because of Ven. Rathana Thera's [26] standing in the Sinhala-Buddhist society, Shafi's reputation as a "villain" was cemented, and the sterilization allegations were given more scientific support.

The charges were discussed by medical experts such Prof. Channa Jayasumana of Rajarata University's medical school [27], who was mentioned in the media. These accounts contributed to the believability of the information disorder and bolstered existing perceptions of Muslim oppression against the Sinhalese.

4.4 Creating an emotional connection through sympathy, sensationalism and injustice

The media used emotional manipulation to further paint Shafi as a "serious" threat.

The need to evoke sympathy ignited the original feeling, which was grief. The second feeling was panic, which was fueled by how over-the-top the narrative was. The third feeling was anger, which was brought on by a cry for justice. This connection helped the narrative of Shafi's guilt since it proved that he constituted a "real" threat to the Sinhalese.

4.5 Giving prominence to the story

Media coverage of the episode in question, with an emphasis on loudness and prioritization, contributed to the spread of false information about Dr. Shafi. Shafi was often treated poorly by the Sinhala media, which caused erroneous perceptions of him to propagate. Shafi-related news was prioritized over other updates. Between May 23 and June 30, 2019, the Shafi case received the greatest news coverage in the Sinhala language media. One of the 58 items monitored in English-language media made it onto the front pages, but 113 of these pieces were heavily featured there. 147 remarks regarding Shafi were shown in prime-time Sinhala television news programs, which helped to support and spread the false narrative.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to add a fresh perspective to the continuing discussion about information disorder by demonstrating that traditional media, such as social media, may both cause and spread the condition. The study's findings suggest that in order to assess the mainstream media's impact on society as a whole, it is vital to include their involvement in all three phases of information disorder: its origin, production, and diffusion. The study looked carefully at how the media covered the Dr. Shafi case in order to achieve this purpose. The results of this case study suggest that information disorder is produced and amplified by both social media and traditional media, particularly the Sinhala media. The Sinhala media in this specific case. Media sources from Sri Lanka wrote the first article regarding Dr. Shafi. The media in Tamil and English were used to amplify and redistribute the disorganized information. There were a total of 322 articles and 222 claims made regarding the Dr. Shafi case that were covered in the press in the first five weeks after the first report was published in Divaina.

These allegations were covered on evening news shows. As a result of this news, the Sinhala media created a piece of media based on a fictitious Shafi-related plot. A framework made up of four elements can be used to analyze the spread of this false narrative: the use of pre-existing anti-Muslim narratives; the use of reliable sources to give the claims credibility; the use of emotive language and descriptions to arouse grief, fear, and anger; and the prominence given to the narrative. The information disorder had two sorts of consequences, both of which were interconnected: biased and political. The damage generated by the information disorder came into both of these kinds. These repercussions have the potential to undermine not just the political and professional standing of certain people, but also the standing of the whole Muslim community. This is owing to the fact that they serve as the presumptive justification for asking for the removal of individuals from various roles because of their racial and religious ties. Moreover, these effects may damage people's standing. Despite the wide-ranging effects that this instance of information disorder had, there was no formal reaction that was organized by the government. PCCSL was the only group to respond in a formal manner. Even after this, no attempt was taken to undo the damage or hold those accountable accountable in order to stop a recurrence. In view of the disastrous results that were demonstrated via the Dr. Shafi case as well as the constrained solutions that were described, it is critical that further study be done on the part that the mainstream media plays in information disorder. It's probable that not all instances of information disorder will fit within the scope of some of the study's results. On the other hand, this study may be used to further explore the mechanisms by which information disorder develops in both conventional and social media, as well as to help address the rising problem of information disorder in contemporary society.

6. Limitations of the Research Study

The fact that this study does not take into consideration the background of Sri Lankan society is by far its worst flaw. There were fewer researchers working in the study region. As a result, when searching for relevant material, the author had a tough time finding it. Information will also be acquired from people throughout the course of this study using their own words. Because the questionnaire asks questions about people's personal lives, it is challenging to gather information because respondents are hesitant to provide their personal

information out of concern that they would face consequences for doing so. This makes it challenging to collect data.

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