

Mass Communication Charter: Concepts, Theories and Ethical Standards

Adipon Euajarusphan

College of Innovation, Thammasat University, Thailand

adiponman@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Mass Communication is a mechanism that creates understanding, build relationship and connect people in the society together. The ethical issue of data and news presentation of mass media has become one of the most controversial issues in society. Particularly, in present, mass communication is facing crucial ethical issues. This article is written with the objectives to explain and explore concepts, theories and ethical standards of mass media to elaborate background of media ethics, including the needs and requirements to establish professional media ethics, structural differences between media systems of each country group, ethical standards, concepts and theories, media ethics standards which have been developed since the 1980s and become the foundations of the present media ethics, level of governance in the media ethics system and professional media ethical decision-making process in order to provide proper and appropriate practical guideline. This article presents the mass communication charter to be adhered and maintained by the mass media as well as to fully comply with the principles of media ethics for the utmost benefits for recipient of information

Keywords

Media Ethics, Code of Conduct of Media, Mass Communication

Article Received: 18 October 2020, Revised: 3 November 2020, Accepted: 24 December 2020

Introduction

Professional media ethics and code of conduct are mechanisms for supervising the behavior of mass media while performing their duties. They were formulated by various relevant organizations such as professional media bodies. The objectives are to establish ethical standard and code of conduct, social responsibility of the mass media, non-violation of other people's rights and to create maximum benefit to the society. The word "ethics" derives from "éthikos" in Greek, which means moral characters, or what a decent person would do in order to obtain moral characters. However, in general, *based on philosophical discipline, ethics is defined as human decisions to choose between right and wrong. Ethics involves preferable social mission which should be practiced by a person toward others in order to make the world a better place. Ethics are guidelines that may or may not be complied with* (Black, Steele & Barney, 2017). Meanwhile for "Code of Conduct", the word "Code" refers to conducts and behaviors to be adopted by individual when being in group such as media professional code of conduct, medical code of conduct. The word "Code of Conduct" is often used in a good sense. For example, "Code Compliance" means having good behavior. Therefore, the term "*Code of Conduct*" refers to set of rules determined by model professional to maintain and promote the honor, reputation and status of fellow members. *Code of Conduct may or may not be in writing* (Woods, 2015).

In addition, ethics and code of conduct are also explained in many other aspects. Clifford G. Christians (2010) defined ethics as liberal arts principle that evaluate human behaviors classified by the rights and wrongs according to the stipulated principles. Practically, they are a branch of moral science that outlines the decisions that an individual must make during Moral Dilemma. Particularly, media professional has to face with a situation which conflicts with the ethical principles such as the Right of Public to Know,

which is based on Representative Government Principle as well as other ethical rules including Individual's Privacy, etc. (John, 1861).

For media professional, broadcasting and television businesses, ethics and code of conduct are vital factors in the development of a liberal democratic society. Since Sir Edmund Burke (2015) mentioned about Estates of the Realm (the Three Estates) which consisted of clergy, nobles and peasants in the British Council in the 18th century. He also mentioned about the Fourth Estate of the Realm, which was the media professionals who, according to Burke's concept, were more important than the prior the Three Estates. It was because the media professionals are responsible for presenting the facts to society and are part of the social structure as a major mechanism for creating and protecting diversified points of views, freedom of expression and democracy.

Therefore, it can be concluded that media ethics are "Issues of moral principles and moral standards governing behavior, roles and content of the media." (Oxford, 2020) and consists of moral principles and standards that define professionalism and roles of mass media, content producer, business owner, regulatory bodies and various types of content such as news, entertainment, attitudes, etc. and journalism.

Media professional code of conduct refers to moral principles of media professionals established as practical guideline for media professionals to be socially responsible, not violating other people's rights and to create maximum benefit to the society (Adipon E., 2020).

Ethics and code of conduct are, therefore, charter for good conducts to be adhered by media professionals to create a positive image to the public that the mass media is socially responsible. Compliance of ethics and code of conduct are based on voluntary decision. Ethical professionals rely on their discretion from depth of their minds, decisions for their action factors for consideration, and the reason for making such decision. Media ethics are intended to supervise media

professionals to present accurate and fair information, carry out their duties with honesty taking into account the public benefit. These are reflected in the requirements of media ethics that are enacted in detail. If the mass media can uphold their ethics or fully adhere to the code of conduct, the public, who are recipient of information, would greatly benefit from this.

Freedom of the media was initiated as a result of hard struggling between the authoritarian regime and the people in the western media world. Mass media began when Johann Gutenberg invented rotary printing press which allowed mass production of publications. The discovery was a starting point for mass media because the invention allowed knowledge to be disseminated to the public in a wider scope. In addition to presentation of information and news, in the early days, the media also served as spokesperson for the people to the clergy and the nobles to demand for fairness and carried out duty to meet the public requirements. These roles of the mass media have therefore been implicitly established since then. Nonetheless, the media must first possess freedom right in order to be able to perform such duties (Adipon E, 2020). Therefore, every society (democracy) must exert effort to create an environment that supports freedom of speech and freedom of opinion according to the fundamental human rights which are set out in Article 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights that

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (United Nations, 2015)

In order to promote and protect freedom of opinion and expression, it was required to establish communication channel for the exchange of ideas, opinions and information, which were the roles of mass media. UNESCO (2011) explained the needs to create environment that encourages media to have independence and freedom to present data and information covering various social issues (Diversity). Due to variety of operating structures in the media industry (plurality), in addition to government media, there should be private and public media as well as media that represent various groups in society. These media are subject to self-regulation. Foundations of freedom of expression are exchange of attitudes, ideas, opinions, and information with rationale, without prejudice under the concept of encouraging various sectors of society to jointly participate in the supervision (UNESCO, 2011).

Requirement to establish media professional ethics

Due to the abovementioned reasons, media professional ethics and code of conduct are required to be established. UNESCO (2008) identified the importance of media professional ethics and code of conduct in broadcasting and television business in various dimensions. The works of media have impacts on society because how the media present and report information can have both positive and negative influence on people in society. Irresponsible media can have negative impact on society by exposing danger to the public and loss of social acceptance, loss of role as scrutinized organization and undermining the principle of

liberal democracy. In addition, the works of media are very important philosophical/ethical mechanism. There are both positive and negative sides in human nature. On the positive side, human can lend a hand and provide assistance to one another. Meanwhile, on the negative side, human can harm one another as well. Therefore, the media has a very important and essential duty to promote philosophy/ethics of generosity, kindness and considerateness, monitor and report misfortunes, unpleasant experiences, persecution, desertion, trauma, war as well as other events to warn, alert and request society to uphold the philosophy/ethics to maintain the positive aspects of human beings and limit the negative side that can lead to harming of others. According to the principle of liberal democracy, an individual is entitled to the freedom of expression.

At the same time, it was essential for liberal democratic society to develop professional communication under the principles of media profession. It was because such communication can provide knowledge and enhance analytical thinking skills and self-awareness to the public, audiences, and listeners. Mass communication process involves gathering of facts, creating various points of view and concepts, eliminating rumors and false news, and presenting the truth to society. The objectives were to allow people to develop logical thinking and make informed decisions which is one of the important pillars of liberal democratic society (UNESCO, 2008). Moreover, media is part of the economic system but cannot be treated in the same manner as of general business because media is an important tool for maintaining a democratic system. Nonetheless, the media can also be misused as a mechanism to destroy democracy. In addition, it is also important to maintain the Rule of Law in the country by creating quality media based on the structures of systems that protect the freedom of media, including sovereignty between government, parliament, and bureaucracy (Helbardt, 2020).

Structural differences between mass media systems and media ethics in the world

Different structures of the media systems lead to distinctive media ethics in each country. Hallin and Mancini (2011) described structural differences of the media systems and divided media ethics into 3 systems namely Mediterranean Model, Northern European Model and Northern American Model as per following details:

Mediterranean model is described as pluralism. However, the media are under influence of governments, political parties and the patronage system, leading to polarized pluralism of the press. Regarding ethics and professionalism, although, the mass media practice professionalism and are governed by strong law enforcement, their self-regulations are weak. This is because regulators are also under dominance of governments, political parties and the patronage system. Examples of the countries in this group are France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Northern European model is also described as pluralism. Nonetheless, there is empowerment in the public media because they are not subject to interference from government political parties, and patronage systems, leading

to consensual pluralism. Regarding ethics and professionalism, the mass media strictly adhere to media professionalism and have strong self-regulation and are subject to efficient law enforcement. This is because regulators are not under dominance of governments, political parties and the patronage system. Examples of the countries in this group are Austria, Belgium and Denmark. Northern American Model can be defined as pluralism. The media under this model are not subject to interference from government political parties, and patronage systems, leading to consensual pluralism. The mass media firmly adhere to media ethics and professionalism and have strong self-regulation. Although, the mass media has a relationship with the private sector but they are not under the influence of the private sector. This may be because of rigorous regulatory laws on market concentration and supervision by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Chairman of the FCC is appointed by the President. Nonetheless, the Northern American Model is developing toward polarized pluralism. Examples of the countries in this group are USA and Canada.

Concepts, theories and ethical standards of journalism

Media ethics are branch of applied ethics which applies the ethical principles to the scope of professional practices under the principles of good governance, specialized research field and related professions (Dimock & Tucker, 2004). Media ethics are the study of micro-ethics covering the code of conduct and appropriate and inappropriate media behaviors in a particular situation, considering the role of media as a member of society with rights, duties and norms as a citizen and a human being. They consist of some important principles such as Tell the Truth and Minimize Harm and as media professionals who can have influence on the mind of people and to have social impact to create or conceptualize public opinions (Elliott, 1986).

Media ethics have only been recently developed as a specialized branch in the 1980s as a result of Internet development which led to new challenges in the media profession, especially in terms of copyright, freedom of access to information and freedom of retention of personal information (Helbardt, 2020).

Therefore, media ethics are set of code developed from conflictions of major ethical principles that affect the profession. Such conflicts are beyond the scope of laws and have to take account of public interest and principles of accuracy and fairness, as well as other ethical principles. It is because, many times, content presentations of media may be legal, but they may conflict ethical principles. As ethical considerations depend on the context of the situation, principle of suitability (Due) must therefore be taken into account (BBC, 2019). Presently, there are several sensitive issues which may cause conflicts in media ethics including accuracy and verification, independence and allegiances, deception and fabrication, graphic images and image manipulation, sources and confidentiality, special situations and ethics across media types. Accuracy and verification of the sources of information as well as the environment involved with the events are major controversial factors in media ethics. In this regard, the media professionals always

have to question themselves whether it is necessary to verify the accuracy before any such information is published and the need for editorial service for sensitive content and, if necessary, how much content can be edited. Media professionals have freedom of expression, however, at the same time, they are members of organizations in various levels, such as being employees in organizations and editors in news agencies. Their works involve professionalism in advertisement, the need to protect news sources, relationship with police and government agencies as well as duties and responsibilities to the public. This raises the question of the likelihood that there may be conflicts between their independence and allegiances. For example, there may be a chance that the media become too intimate with the news source and may affect the objectivity and cause conflicts of interest or any other problems that may affect the balance between independence and allegiances. Deception and Fabrication are another ethical issues that media professional has to take into account. When they investigate facts, whether the media should adopt deceptive method by impersonating others or recording events using hidden cameras, as well as creating conversation content to allow audiences to understanding only certain degree of the event. Moreover, media professionals also encounter issue of graphic images and image manipulation in a situation where the media professionals have to question whether the use of gruesome, sensationalism or exploitation images are appropriate and to what degree, or level of necessity to modify the image in order to maintain the accuracy of the information or in which events that the images should be modified and the suitable extent. Sources and confidentiality are also media ethical conflicts as, sometimes, media professionals have to protect the source of information as well as to consider the scope for protection of the source or to collect information without mentioning the source. Regarding special situations, for sensitive news, such as a hostage situation, suicide attempt, important events or events that may lead to violence, the key question in media ethics are how to report the situation in order to prevent the situation from becoming worse or instigate violence while protect personal freedom of those involved in the incident. Ethics across media types are another important ethical questions in the age of convergent media, such as question of whether standards of mainstream media, namely print media or radio and television, should be applied for online media, or internet media as well as the suitability for allowing citizens to make news coverage (Citizen Journalists) (Ward, 2010).

In order to answer sensitive issues and conflicts in media ethics, media professionals must rely on principles of media ethics which consists of 4 important concepts and theories which are Deontological Ethical Theories/Act-Oriented Theories, Teleological Ethical Theories, Liberal Theory, Objectivism and Social Responsibility Theories, Interpretation and Activism Theories, and Communitarian Ethics Theory.

Deontological Ethical Theories/Act-Oriented Theories support obligations as key criterion in ethical decision-making, that is, a right action shall be decided based on reasons for the obligations but not consequences of the action. Hence, these theories are against exploitation of wrong means to achieve goals (Ends) because goals are not

proofs that the methods are correct. The advantages of these theories are that they can give a clear picture of the expectation and take account of both contractual and professional binding relationships. However, the disadvantages are that the theories place emphasis on the rules and regulations and, sometimes, may not consider the needs of other stakeholders in society. Philosophers who support this concept are, such as, Immanuel Kant, Aristotle and John Rawls (Adipon E, 2020).

Immanuel Kant (2020) stated that ethics are based on rationale and not emotion, have unchanging absolute and definite characteristics and is independent from the human mind. Ethical acts are actions in accordance with absolute law without exceptions. Nothing in the world can be called good without conditions except a good will. Intention is therefore something that is fixed and attached to the action at all times. Therefore, from Kant's points of view, good media ethics are practices that arise from good will. Under this concept, a person should carry out his/her obligations because it is the right thing to do, not because of the consequences of practice regardless whether the consequences are beneficial or harmful and whether the consequences will incur to oneself or others. Therefore, a person would comply with ethical practices for the benefit of his/her duties. In addition, the media ethics should also comply with universal law/universalizability. This means if one rule applies to one person, the same rule should also be applied equally with other people. What is fair and right to a person will also be fair and right for all persons. The principle of justice is the first principle of moral reasoning. Ethics must be applicable to everyone who should comply with the rules unconditionally and based on rationale. The objective for the action is to create a good deed without any other purposes. When treating humans, whether for oneself or any other person, do not treat another merely as a means but should consider their self-worth. Humans can set goals by themselves and is self-governing without dependent on human emotions or needs. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use human beings merely as a means to achieve one's goals. It can be concluded that the only ethical criterion emphasized by Kant was "intention". Good practice is a result of good intentions. Practices that arise from good will are obligatory performances or ethical acts which are obligatory commitments based on universal reasons. Therefore, a person should do what is right regardless of the consequences.

Aristotle (2012) was a Greek philosopher who stated that ethics reflect on character, and emphasize on virtues which are traits that enable individuals to live peacefully in the society (well-being). Therefore, virtue is something that must be learned from practice. Aristotle reckoned that ethics reflect human development which can be divided into 2 approaches. The first approach is functional context. Under this approach, virtue must be a condition or character possessed by human in order to perform their duties well. Therefore, a practically knowledgeable person must know what is all good for him/herself, not just partly good or the things that person will benefit from. The second approach is human development which is performance of unique obligations that are special traits related to rationale and thinking. A decent human must be a rational person. Therefore, human development is based on rationale and

thinking.

Therefore, ethical actions must be consistent with virtue. Whereas virtue is what brings happiness desired by all human beings. In addition, ideals related to ethics should focus on performance or actions based on rationale and emotion. It can be said that this ethical behavior determines desirable middle point between the excess and deficiency or the golden mean.

In this regard, it can be concluded that Aristotle's ethical theory places emphasis on "virtue" which is character that brings happiness for each individual in society or causing growth by staying on the middle path.

John Rawls (1999) was a modern American philosopher and Egalitarian who believed that humans should be treated equally in terms of rights and opportunities. Ethical behavior is possible if everyone is being treated equally without social differentiation, such as social recognition or economic class, etc. Therefore, the principle of justice aims to promote benefits of all groups, regardless of their nature.

Rawls believed that "original position" is a condition that reflects principles of justice behind veil of ignorance which stimulates development of an ethical system based on equality and focus on what each person deserves rather than privileges.

Teleological Ethical Theories are belief-based theories that consider consequences as the basis for judging whether an action is morally right or wrong rather than the intention behind the action. Thus, ethical decisions must produce the best results. The advantage of this theory is that it is flexible and allows persons to independently propose solution to a situation. The disadvantage is that it is difficult to assess all aspects of the impact and may affect rights of individuals in society. The bottom line is that decision made by majority of people may not be the best ethical decisions. It is because even the best decision may be unfair to certain vulnerable groups of people in society.

John Stuart Mill (2018) was a British philosopher who played a major role in Utilitarianism which emphasizes the concept of "Consequentialism". In this concept, ethical decisions are based on consequences. The right action must be the one with the most plausible consequences or benefit majority of people. Consequentialism consists of 2 basic principles. The first principle defined ethical behaviors as means to obtain the best results for the majority of people. This principal of utility is the fundamental criterion of ethics. The right cause of action depends on the tendency to promote overall human happiness. On the other hand, unethical decision tends to lead to unfavorable outcomes. An action that results in happiness/benefits to the greatest number of people is the right decision. The second principle stated that social emotion incurs as a result of living together with other people in society. Therefore, each person should consider oneself as part of society as a whole. Coexistence is therefore essential and it is necessary to place public happiness before one own happiness.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Utilitarianism comprises multiple ethical decision-making criteria depending on the consequences. An action that results in happiness to the greatest number of people is the right decision by 1. Consider all consequences, both positive and negative; 2. Choose the option that offers the most value or the least loss.

Judeo-Christian (Glazier&Stephen,1997) emphasized on "Principles of Self-Determination" with the fundamental belief of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, humans have unconditional value and fundamental right to make their own decisions without being violated or merely a means to any goal. Ethical decisions should rely on the basis of respecting a person as a goal rather than merely a means of reaching it.

Liberal Theory was a concept that values freedom of media and freedom of expression as illustrated in the concept of John Milton (Milton, 1951) which protected freedom of expression and freedom of media by opposing censorship, David Hume (Hume, 1987) which described freedom of the press as a pillar of monarchy democracy, and J.S. Mill (Mill, 1965) which stated that principles of liberalism are freedom of thought and freedom of speech and are the supreme principle and Society's Highest Good, in which liberalism must be preserved at whatever cost, and Thomas Paine (Paine, 2011) which supported logical reasoning and freedom of thought.

These concepts were part of the political reforms that took place in many countries as a result of growing middle class and challenges to the elites and religious class as well as aristocratic class. The concepts also influenced Adam Smith's economic theory of free competition in industry without government intervention (Laissez-Faire) (Viner, 1927). They also promote protection of freedom of media as independent organizations that are responsible for providing information to citizens and as state auditor to prevent abuse of state power. Presently, liberal concept is an ethical reason for prevention against media restriction, such as censorship and the use of legal powers to enforce or shut down media organizations.

It can be concluded that the liberal theory places importance on freedom of media focusing on freedom of thought and freedom of speech. Both of these 2 freedoms must not be restricted or censored in any case, either by any state authority, capital power or any other authority.

Objectivism and Social Responsibility Theories were concepts that have been developed against the liberal theory of the mass media. It was because since the late 18th and early 19th century, media organizations had grown into large corporations under control of powerful businessmen. Therefore, development of the ethical principles of media professionals was a social contract. Darwall (2003) stipulated that society has granted the media with freedom to make news coverage in exchange for the social responsibility to report events which are important to society. Since 1920s, several media associations in the United States began to request that Code of Conduct for media be established. When reporting news, media professionals should be independent and free from government or private intervention. In addition, there was a clear separation between news reporting and opinion expression which required media professionals to report just the facts (Mindich, 1998). The concept of social responsibility has developed into two major media ethical principles namely Proactive and Restraining. In principle, proactive determined duties of the mass media rather than freedom of publication or expression but covered duties to seek truth and report it and act independently. The principle of restraining means to use the freedom of news reporting

with responsibility and minimize harm toward victims, youth or other persons involved in the incident and be accountable for the public based on editor's decision.

The concept extended to principle of Hutchins Commission (officially known as Commission on Freedom of the Press) which prescribed the media ethics principles including truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account, and act as forum for the exchange of comment and criticism, and representative picture of the constituent groups in society, provided presentation and clarification of the goals and values of society, as well as provided full access to the Day's Intelligence (Cronin & McPherson, 1992). This concept has become mainstream ethical principles that influenced the media in Europe (Christians & Nordenstreng, 2004) and Japan (Tsukamoto, 2006) until present. It has also become the ethical basis for other media professional ethical concepts such as women's rights or community responsibility.

Interpretation and Activism Theories were a group of theories which believed that the function of liberal media should not only be limited to news reporting but should be mechanism for social movement and to explain the significance of the events for the purposes of seeking to reform society. Under this concept, the media should not be perceived as stenographers of fact but also as agents for social movement. After the 1930s, international media academics and various media associations realized the importance of news reporting rather than fact finding due to the need to provide in-depth description of important events around the world, including wars and major economic crises such as the Great Depression (MacDougall, 1982). The newspapers piloted and promoted the idea by publishing weekly analysis of important events columns through weekend newspapers. The media stream under Interpretation and Activism Theories has begun to grow in the latter part of the 20th century through TV broadcast mass media, literary journalists and online journalists at a later date. Meanwhile, since the 1960s, activist journalists began to educate the public (Informing the Public) which challenged aristocratic class, resist war and promote social benefits by organizing campaigns to encourage society to resist the injustice or imprudent state policy as well as public and private fraudulent act (Filler, 1993).

This concept has developed into Civic Journalism, which recommended that the media should raise the issues and stimulate social participation taking account of people as the center, and present in-depth analysis of problems, create public mind, giving opportunities for the people to participate in discussions on issues incurred in the society, play a role in solving problems, or determine solutions for society and impartially coordinate with all parties to solve problems for the betterment of society (Rosen, 1996).

Communitarian Ethics Theory was a media ethical concept that reflected the development of politics, law and community ethics and emphasized on the nature of human being and the public interest (Peden & Hudson, 1991). This concept reckoned that liberal media or other concepts could not effectively promote public interest. Therefore, media professionals were required to support the common values of society and principles of improvement of quality of life. The concept has been developed to objectives of media ethics and create reasonable exchange of concepts between

different sectors in society for civic transformation (Christians C., The Case for Communitarian Ethics, 2006). The development of these groups of concepts were in align with theories of care which perceived that preservation of good human relationships and community protection were more important than freedom of media as in the past (Patterson & Wilkins, 2002). Development of media professional ethics under Theories of Care was one of the responses to the development of modern media which has been criticized for reporting the news insensitive to story subjects and sources. If media professionals adhered to Theories of Care when carrying out their practice, they would be able to make comprehensive news report covering all dimensions and meet the requirements of audiences and empathy for persons involved (Compassion, Subjectivity, and Need) (Black, 2006).

Governance structure of media ethical system

Governance structure of media ethical system has impact on media ethics relating to social media governance. The structure consisted of 4 levels. The first level is ethics which determines morally right and wrong actions of media professionals. The second level is moral which defines right and wrong under the determination of principles of media ethics. The third one is law and moral standard which classifies the governance approaches between social governance using the legislation and supervision based on moral standards which is the internal supervision of individual. The last level is social sanctions and conscience which is a form of legal punishment and regulation based on social sanctions. Meanwhile, supervision of media moral standards is based mainly on consciousness of media professionals. Both types of supervision can be enforced by the regulatory institutions which may be legal governing body or supervisory body established to govern themselves via consortium or may be caused by the consciousness of individual to supervise oneself.

Due to the above information, it can be seen that media professionals have always been confronted with ethical conflict situation, including data collection and acquisition, access to sources and news reporting. In this regard, media professionals would be decision-maker in such situation where ethical conflict arose. More often, these ethical issues are difficult to judge, especially when they involved matter that affects interests of others, whether directly and indirectly. Therefore, media professionals should rely on ethical decision-making process when dealing with ethical conflict situation on the basis of media ethics. We can classify decision-making process into 1) fact identification, 2) selection of values, 3) selection of principles and 4) selection of loyalties. There are 4 basic concepts of media ethical decision-making process presented by scholars which would be elaborated below.

The Potter's Box concept was presented by Dr. Ralph Potter of Harvard Divinity School and used as an ethical decision-making tool, especially in cases of conflicting violence. The concept can help the media to make systematic decisions when being confronted with ethical question related issues and consists of four interrelated questions including facts, values, principles and loyalties (Christians, Rotzoll, Fackler, McKee, 2004; Carveth, Ferraris and Backus, 2006;

Dominick, 2013; Seib and Fitzpatrick, 1997; Darunee, et al., 2015).

Facts are understandings of the actual situation incurred which is necessary to clearly understand the related details, "what are possible actions?", "what do we know / don't know?", "do we have any alternatives? If so, what are they?", "what are the possible consequences of our actions?". Values reflect the beliefs deemed important by an individual. Values would prevent an individual from making decisions based on personal bias. Therefore, values are basis for ethical behavior. Important questions are, such as "what are your values?", "do your values affect ethical decisions?". Principles demonstrate ethical principles that can be applied in situations where ethical conflicts arose. Some of the examples are principles of Kant or Aristotle, etc. Loyalties are decisions of whom the media professional prefer to be loyal to. There are different levels of loyalties, such as loyalty to oneself, profession, organization, audience, acquaintance, sources, benefactors, in order to join the profession, general citizenship or society, etc. Nonetheless, Potter defined meaning of loyalty based on social commitment.

In more detail, each dimension of this concept linked with one another in a circular system. The transition from one dimension to another provides a clear view of the thinking system and deeper perspective. From the concept of Potter, professional media ethical decision-making process can be expanded into 8 steps (Marsh and Guth, 2000; Carveth, Ferraris and Backus, 2006). The concept begins with empirical definition. This step defines the meaning of situation, with as least bias as possible. Therefore, the information must have details pertaining to ethical circumstances. The second step is to identifying values. This process compares advantages of different values. Each value can affect discussion and reasons of moral questions. Values demonstrate the notion of authenticity, belief and question to facts. The third process is appeal to ethical principles which involves demanding for ethical principles respected by each value. This means anticipating each value as a fundamental principle for the actual needs. The fourth step is to make consideration and comparison of the ethical principle with others, and whether the related ethical principles suggested new values for consideration. The fifth stage is decision making to choose which principle to be loyal to. Then assessment of additional loyalty should be conducted by suggesting new principles and values that have never been considered. The seventh step is selection of the course of action where values, principles and loyalty are most compelling. Review the course of action based on stipulation of individual's definition. If such course of action is perceived as the best option, it shall be complied with until completion. In each course of action, an individual can observe values, principles and loyalties of such person. The last process is assessment on impact of decision-making.

Kidder (1995) described the logical and sequential processes involved in the ethical issues incurred in everyday life and suggested 9 steps of Ethical Checkpoints. The first step is moral issue which requires media professionals to determine an actual ethical situation or problem. After an ethical problem is identified, the media professionals must identify an actor (who is responsible for the problems incurred, that is, whose ethical issue is it?). Then they must consider

relevant facts (what are the main facts in an ethical situation?) Regarding this, “correct”, “sufficient” and “current” information is therefore important to make effective decisions. The next step is to make consideration based on Right versus Wrong Issues (whether there is clear right or wrong answer). Then, the media professionals make consideration based on Right versus and Right Issues. Many ethical issues have two core value loopholes that oppose each other. Determining whether both values are right or accurate would contradict the other values via such situation. The values between right versus and conflicting right issues would be a problem such as the truth versus loyalty, personal need versus need for the community, short-term benefit versus long-term negative consequences. Ethical Principle is the application of ethical principles which are most relevant and useful to a specific problem. In addition, the media professionals may have to apply Trilemma Option as, sometimes, values are not conforming to each other. Therefore, decisions can be made through compromise or development of constructive solutions. Negotiators must determine a third way to allow joint participation of all parties. After application of these steps, the media professionals shall determine the best solution. Lastly, after the decision was made and consequences were observed, the media professionals shall ask themselves whether this was the best decision to make (Revisit and Reflect on Decision).

Ethical Decision of Deni Elliott (2007) stipulated a set of 5 questions to determine a solution to ethical problems. The first question is “What are the ethical related factors?”. The question can be define as whether such specific action the cause of the ethical issue, or whether such type of action the cause of the ethical issue. If the answers are “No” for both questions, the action is not an ethical issue. If the answer is “yes” for any of the abovementioned questions, the following questions must be considered. The next questions are “Should ethical issue be prevented or handled?”, “if you are a journalist and in a specific position to protect or deal with media ethics violations, are you going to handle the problem?”, “if you break your own rule, would you allow yourself to be exempted from the rules that others have to follow?”, and “will an uninvolved person appreciate your reasons for breaking the rules? Can you provide clear alibi for such reason?”.

SAD Formula aimed to create major components of critical thinking which is a rational approach leading to decisions based on analysis and deliberate evaluation. SAD Formula can be divided into 3 steps (Day, 2006; Darunee, et al., 2020) namely situation definition, analysis and decision. Situation definition involves description of facts, identification of principles and values, and statement of ethical issue or question. Analysis requires evaluation or weighing of competing values and principles that can be clearly observed in a situation, consideration of external factors, examination of duties related to moral or loyalty in various groups (loyalties can be classified as loyalty to oneself, loyalty to others in the same profession and loyalty to the public), and discussion of applicable ethical theories. Lastly, Decision is expression of moral agent’s decision and defense of that decision based on moral theory.

From the 4 concepts of the professional media ethical decision-making process, it was found that there are

similarities in the ethical decision-making process which consists of 4 steps including fact identification, selection of values, selection of principles and selection of loyalties (Adipon E, 2020).

The ethical decision-making process is the most important principle for media professionals when performing their duties. This is because, during their daily works, media professionals tend to face ethical conflicts in the process of seeking, gathering, and collecting information, selection of information and/or dissemination of information. In addition, they are subject to pressures within media organizations such as economic pressures, pressures from various groups and receivers, as well as external pressures, such as capital power, political pressure, etc. Moreover, personal factors may also have effect on pressure of media professionals such as their backgrounds, experiences and working hours. These factors affect the decision-making process of media professionals. Therefore, media professionals have to rely on media ethical decision-making processes in order to carry out their duties appropriately.

Conclusions

No matter how much the media landscape has changed, media professionals still have to uphold media ethics and code of conduct. Especially in the digital age, there has been increasing demands for media professionals to be subject to examination and professional media ethics. If the mass media can uphold their ethics or fully adhere to the code of conduct, the public, who are recipient of information, would greatly benefit from this..

References

- [1] Adipon Euajarusphan (2019). HIM338 Television Industry and New Media in Digital Era (handout). College of Innovation. Thammasat University.
- [2] Aristotle (2012), Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Robert C. Bartlett, and Susan D. Collins (eds/trans.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- [3] BBC.(2019). BBC Editorial Guidelines. Retrieved October ,18 ,2020, from BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines>
- [4] BBC.(2019). THE BBC’S EDITORIAL VALUES. Retrieved October 18,2020 from BBC: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/pdfs/Section_01_Value.pdf
- [5] Black, J. (2006). Foreword. Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 21(2&3), 99–101.

- [6] Black, Steele & Barney (2017). Doing Ethics in Journalism. Accuracy and Fairness. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from <https://silo.tips/download/black-steele-barney-doing-ethics-in-journalism-accuracy-checklist#>
- [7] Burke, E. (2015). The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke. Press: London.
- [8] Carveth, R., Ferraris, C., & Backus, N. (2006). Applying the Potter Box to Merck's Actions Regarding the Painkiller. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://home.zhaw.ch/~wys/ipmz/literatur/09ABC06.pdf>
- [9] Christians, C. (2006). The case for communicational ethics. In M. Land, & B. Hornaday, Contemporary media ethics (pp.57-69). Spokane, WA: Marquette.
- [10] Christians, Clifford, Rotzoll, Kimand, Fackler, Mark, (1990). Media Ethics : Case and Moral Reasoning, 3 rd. edition, New York : Longman.
- [11] Christians, C.G. (2010). The ethics of privacy. In C. Meyers, Journalism Ethics: A philosophical Approach (pp.182-193). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] Clifford Christians, John Ferre, and Mark Fackler. (2011). Ethics for Public Communication. Press, London: Oxford University.
- [13] Clifford G. Christians, Mark Fackler, Kathy Brittain Richardson, Peggy J. Kreshel, Robert H. Woods, Jr. (2015). Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning. Pearson.
- [14] Cronin, M., & McPherson, J. (1992). Reaching for Professionalism and Respectability: The Development of Ethics Codes in the 1920s. A paper presented at the annual conference of the American Journalism Historians' Association, October, at Lawrence, KS.
- [15] Dailysabah. (2015). Aylan Kurdi: A victim of an indifferent world. Cited from <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2015/09/30/aylan-kurdi-a-victim-of-an-indifferent-world> Retrieve on November 10, 2020.
- [16] Darwall, S. (Ed.). (2003). Contractarianism/contractualism. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- [17] Dimock, S., & Tucker, C. (Eds). (2004). Applied ethics: Reflective moral reasoning. Toronto: Thomson.
- [18] Elliott, D. (1986). Responsible journalism. Beverly Hill, CA: Sage.
- [19] Elliott, D. (2007). Ethics in the first person. Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, INC.
- [20] Ethical Journalism Network. (2017). MU Director On Media Ethics Using Refugee, Migrant Photos. Cited from <http://media-unlimited.info/topics/ethicaljournalism-network-ejn/> Retrieve on February 10, 2020.
- [21] Ethical Journalism Network. (2017). EJA ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 Ethical Journalism: The Key to Building Trust in the News. United Kingdom Company. UK.
- [22] Filler, L. (1993). The muckrakers. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- [23] Glazier, Stephen D. (1997). Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook.
- [24] Guth, D. W., & Marsh, C. (2000). Public relations: A values-driven approach. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- [25] Harb, Zahera. (2018). A case of ethical neglect: How journalists failed Yazidi women. Online <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/ethical-neglect-journalists-failed-yazidi-women>. Retrieve on 15 February 2020.
- [26] Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P. (2012) Who We Are. Retrieved October 18, 2020, from Free TV Australia: <http://www.freetv.com.au/who-we-are/>
- [27] Ireton, Cheryl; Posetti, Julie; UNESCO. (2018). Journalism, fake news & disinformation: handbook for journalism education and training. United Nations Educational.

- [28] Immanuel Kant. (2020). Kant's Conception of Freedom: A Developmental and Critical Analysis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [29] John Rawls. (1999). *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- [30] John Stuart Mill. (2018). *Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy*. Retrieved January 18, 2021, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>
- [31] Kidder, R. (1995). *How good people make tough choices*. New York: Morrow .
- [32] MacDougall, Curtis. (1982). *Interpretive reporting* (8th ed.). New York: MacMillan.
- [33] Mindich, D. T. Z. (1998). Just the Facts: How 'Objectivity' Came to Define American
- [34] Oxford Dictionary. (2020). *Defining Media Ethics*. Oxford Dictionaries Language matters. Retrieved November 5, 2020, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/spellcheck/english/?q=Media+Ethics>
- [35] Paine, T. (2011). *The Age of Reason*. In K. Wallters, *The age of reason* (p275). Calgary: Broadview Press.
- [36] Pasek, J. (2006). *Fueling or Following Democracy? Analyzing the Role of Media Liberalization in Democratic Transition*. Retrieved 18 May, 2020, from <http://www.allacademic.com>
- [37] Patterson, P., & Wilkins, L. (2002). *Media ethics: Issues and cases* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [38] Peden, C., & Hudson, Y. (Eds.). (1991). *Communitarianism, liberalism and social responsibility*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press.
- [39] Rosen, J. (1996). *Getting the connections straight: Public journalism and the troubles in the press*. New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press.
- [40] Spectator. (2015). *Sharing a photo of a dead Syrian child isn't compassionate, it's narcissistic*. Cited from <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/sharing-a-photo-of-a-dead-syrian-child-isn-t-compassionate-it-s-narcissistic>. Retrieve on February 15, 2020.
- [41] Stephen JA Ward, Herman Wasserman. (2010). *Towards an open ethics: Implications of new media platforms for global ethics discourse*. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 25(4), 275-292.
- [42] Stone, G. C., O'Donnell, K.M., & Banning, S. Winter (1997). *Public perceptions of newspaper's watchdog role*. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 18(1-2), 86-102.
- [43] Tsukamoto, S. (2006). *Social responsibility theory and the study of journalism ethics in Japan*. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 21(1), 54–68.
- [44] United Nations (2015). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from www.un.org › udhrbook › pdf › udhr_booklet_en_web
- [45] Unesco. (2011). *Assessment of Media Development in Croatia. The International Programme for the Development of Communication*. France.