

MODULE: JOURNALISM ETHICS

CODE: JST04110

CREDITS: 6

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SUB ENABLING 1: ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR JOURNALIST

- ▶ Ethics
- ▶ Norms
- ▶ Media ethics
- ▶ Ethics of journalism
- ▶ Importance of ethical journalism in news gathering

Ethics

- ▶ Comes from a Greek word 'ethos' which means character.

- ▶ Great philosophers divided ethics into three groups

Aesthetics which is the study of beauty

Epistemology which is the study of knowledge

Ethics which is the study of choices between good and evil, truth and falsehood, virtue and vice.

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Ethics is the subject that seeks to use rational and systematic principles, values and norms to determine what is good or bad, correct or incorrect, right or wrong as far as human actions are concerned

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- ▶ **Norms** is the standard patterns of behavior that is accepted in journalism industry
- ▶ **Media ethics** is the branch of philosophy which has moral principles used to guide all media practitioners and programs when collecting, processing and disseminating news to the society
- ▶ Book: *Code of Ethics for Media Professionals, 2020* by Media Council of Tanzania.

Ethics of journalism

- ▶ Truthfulness; ‘adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interest of the organization served and communicating with people.’
- ▶ Accountability and responsibility; journalists have to recognize their obligations to the society (to serve for the public). Should be ready to make the society’s well being a priority and treat information as a social good not a commodity.

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- ▶ Accuracy and factuality; do not mislead or misinform readers or audience. Ensure the information is accurate, have credible source with credible information. Check and verify names of the source.
- ▶ Fairness and balance; give a fair treatment, an equal chance to respond to questions, to add comments. Treat them well and use the tone to interview each part.

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- ▶ Confidentiality; “they should observe professional secrecy regarding the source of information obtained in confidence” .Also have the duty to inform confidential sources about some conditions that might force them not to honor confidentiality promise including an order from the court of law.

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- ▶ Attribution, make sure you attribute the source of your information, acknowledge that the information is not yours.
- ▶ Neutrality; do not show your side, remain neutral and report the matter as it is, and leave the public to judge

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- ▶ Privacy; “reporters shall strive to understand the boundaries of private and public life. They shall report one’s public affairs but never about his private affairs.” Inversion of privacy is allowed for the public interests. Like exposing ant social behavior, protecting public health and safety

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- ▶ Minimize harm; do not publish or air indecent words or content or any content that may cause panic. Learn how to edit these contents, e.g. you may put blur, cut indecent words, putting pre caution words before broadcasting or showing the content and other means
- ▶ Independence; journalist, editorial board, and the media house in general should be independent, work alone without any external or internal form which may shift interests of the public to become someone's interest

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- ▶ Conflict of interest; remain free from of associations and activities that may influence professional judgements, compromise personal integrity leading to undermining of the reputation of the profession.

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- ▶ Mechanism for feedback; every media should have a mechanism for them to receive feedback from listeners. E.g. phone in, messages, letter to the editor. Helps media to do its work in a participatory manner or media becomes interactive

Discussion

- ▶ Difference between confidentiality and privacy.
- ▶ Anonymous source and non-disclosure of sources

Importance of ethical journalism in news gathering

- ▶ Avoid the conflict between journalists and society(sources), the governing institution like TCRA and media houses because media practitioners shall follow ethical principles when performing their roles to the public.

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- ▶ Reduces shock within the public because journalists shall not publish false news (mal information; false info to harm society or organization, misinformation; false information not created to harm society or organization and disinformation; false info based on reality created to harm society or organization.)

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- ▶ Gives sources of information a chance to choose whether to be known or not according to the kind of information he or she is providing (anonymous source)
- ▶ Helps to make media interactive since journalists are guided to have the mechanism for feedback. So audience and viewers contribute their opinions and thoughts through phone calls, letters to the editors and messages

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- ▶ News become fair and balanced
- ▶ Helps to protect the rights of children by not exposing their names and pictures even if they have committed crime or they are victims of sexual violence
- ▶ Media houses and journalists gain trust and power from the society