



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

Ethical Journalism: News Coverage of Terrorism

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Abstract— This article aims to examine how news media cover terrorism, and how public opinion has been influenced by the media coverage, with examples from different parts of the world. Media coverage of attacks, attackers or the activities of terror organisations informs the public, but it also serves as a major channel to spread the terror, and at the same time, these news get the attention of possible recruits to terror organisations. Thus, media coverage can directly and indirectly assist terrorist organisations to reach their goals. This paper will try to reveal whether the media, intentionally or unintentionally, reflects exaggerated accounts of violent terrorist acts or not. In this regard, ethical standards in the coverage of terrorism will be discussed. Content analysis of the recent attacks in the mosques of New Zealand and explosions in the churches and various places in Sri Lanka from Al Jazeera, the BBC, CNN, and The New Zealand Herald's (for New Zealand), and The Daily Mirror (for Sri Lanka) website articles, are undertaken by keyword searching. The findings highlight that all of the studies' mediums avoided giving their own commentary or opinion, Al Jazeera framed the news mostly from the view of Muslim groups and the CNN and the BBC avoided to use "terrorist" phrase. Besides, in terms of the ethics of journalism, both indicating the attacker's identity in the news and approaching the events with moderate words due to the identity of the attacker are problematic.

Index Terms— Media, Journalism, Ethics, Terrorism.

Received: 23 October 2019; **Accepted:** 13 November 2019; **Published:** 27 December 2019



Introduction

Today, the relationship between media and terrorism is at the focus of the ethical journalism debates. Public media must broadcast information that enlighten, enrich, and empower the public. In doing so, many outlets decide to cover on terrorist attacks while others may err on the side that the media covering terrorism were in fact supporting the terrorists. Media's role on the global spread and coverage of terrorism and how media itself is utilized as a medium by terrorist organizations are this paper's main focuses.

Terrorists base their actions on a numerous reason. Such reasons include ethnic, national, religious, racial and/or ideological hostilities. These actors attempt to legitimize themselves by clashing with the society and gaining attention from the government officials (Fisher & Laura, 2019; Kechedji, 2018). Their acts are symbolic and they generally target innocent people. This goes without saying, terrorism is a crime.

The specifics of the definition of terrorism varies between institutions and countries. A widely accepted sense of the word was formulated by the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation. Their definition reads 'the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives. (28 Code of Federal Regulations Section 0.85)

Schmid & Jongman (2005) define terrorism "as a method of violence in which civilians are targeted with the objective of forcing a perceived enemy into submission by creating fear, demoralization, and political friction in the population under attack." According to another definition, terrorism is the "violence—or equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim" (Hoffman, 2018). Similarly, Richardson (2007) of Oxford University believes terrorism is "deliberately and violently targeting civilians for political purposes." Under these definitions, if there is no political aim, it is simply a crime and, if there is no violence, it is not terrorism (Ward, 2018).

According to Wilkinson (2016), there are four types of terrorism. They are criminal, psychological, war, and political. He then identifies five key characteristics of terrorism:

1. Premeditated and creates a climate of extreme fear,
2. Directed towards a wide audience, and further than the immediate victims,
3. An attack on random or symbolic targets,
4. Considered by the society as a violation of the norms that regulate disputes, protest and dissent
5. Used primarily to influence the political behavior of the government, a community or specific social groups

In light of recent terrorist acts, there appears to be an emergence of new trends between the media, terrorist groups, and governments. One

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of these trends is a shift towards anonymity and more violent acts as compared to previous decades (Mezei, 2019). The term of "Anonymous Terrorism" is the act where no organization or person claims responsibility and makes no demand.

Anonymous terrorism and more violent terrorism trends have changed the outlook of media and governments. Usually, coverage of violent or anonymous violent acts by media is inevitable, especially if it involves unbridled speculation, false threats, or hoaxes. Media thus has a role in advancing terrorist agendas by spreading fear and panic, damaging tourism, and provoking strong government reactions. Another consequence of violent acts is government-ordered restriction on individual liberties. For instance, the recent terrorist attack in New Zealand showed that no nation in the world has an immunity to terrorism threat. After the attack, the world witnessed New Zealand go from a nation paying only half-hearted attention to a security-oriented nation. From tighter borders and gun controls to the media's regulation of the words 'terrorist' and 'attacker,' the relationship of the terrorist groups, media, and government are changing. Terrorists, in particular, are depending more and more on media. Notwithstanding, media have a duty to ethically cover such events and other attacks.

The clash of terror acts against society and government continues today with indiscriminate killings and violates the basic human right, i.e. security of the individual. When threatened with terrorism, every nation has the obligation to take appropriate measures to protect their citizens from violence and to eradicate terrorism. At this point, a balance must be established between fundamental rights, including the media's freedoms, and legal restrictions imposed by governments to preserve national security.

Media have many roles in a society and government. They provide necessary information to the public, and give instructions regarding available services or additional information to victims and their families. Because of this duty, media cannot ignore public attacks. Of course, media is the medium for informing the public.

To clarify, media must uphold an ethical standard to inform the public of truth. This is the first element in journalism's gold standard (Kovach, 2014; Gonzales et al., 2018). Unfortunately, today's media may falter from their gold standard and covering news ethically – especially when sharing information about attacks.

Within this perspective, the media plays a vital role in constructing terrorism. Terrorism uses media to spread fear on mass base. The paradox is that the media while it covers the incident of terror; it also becomes a medium to terrorize the audience. In other words, the prevalence of media reporting of terror events creates the risk of being a victim seem worse than it really is. Most people are much more at risk from other forms of violent crime than from terrorism.

Media is the fourth power together with executive, legislative and judiciary. Attackers may manipulate this power for their own gain. The reality of today is that 'terror and terrorism' largely depend on media coverage and its rapid sharing via the Internet (Conway, 2016; Polat et al., 2018). From an attacker's perspective, media coverage and the victims of terror are likely measures of success. They are vehicles for the attackers to spread terror.

People are keen on terror news. The question is why? People seek for more information as they are fearful of further attack. Some watch and read the news coverage in an effort to digest and process the event. The media may also utilize violent acts an opportunity to gain popularity and may intentionally create reactive images that they make them insensitive to the terror.

Caple (2018) made a historical overview on the theory of news worthiness and effectiveness of the news coverage and suggested that there are 12 factors are at play any time an event is considered worthy of reporting as

"news." These include Frequency, Threshold (absolute intensity, intensity increase), Unambiguity, Meaningfulness (cultural proximity, relevance), Consonance (predictability, demand), Unexpectedness (unpredictability, scarcity), Continuity, Composition. These first eight factors are to be read as "culture-free," solely based on perception, whereas the remaining four factors are culture bound. These are Reference to elite nations, Reference to elite people, Reference to persons (Personification), Reference to something negative (Negativity). In the following sections, the aim is to point out how the attackers utilize media as an instrument for their cause, and additionally, how the media should be ethical in the covering of the attacks. These ideas will then be applied to a case study on New Zealand and Sri Lanka's attacks on 15 March 2019.

The attraction of media to cover attacks

Media have a desire to cover acts of terror and its surrounding issues in a timely manner, as dramatic, professional, and accurate as possible. 'Old news is no news' is a popular aphorism from Harper's 1921 issue. The pressure on news groups and media outlets to transmit news instantly in today's competitive online mediums is very high. Journalists generally tend to cover any incident without enough external restraint. Such restraint must come from the media owners, advertisers, editors, or from the government. Nevertheless, due to the competitors' pressures, journalists in general intend to make stories as timely and as dramatic as possible. While at the same time, they intend to be professional, accurate, and not give credence to disinformation, however newsworthy it may seem.

At the same time, the other aims of media include protecting their ability to cover issues freely, protecting their audience from threat, and protecting society's right to know. These are paired with barriers of news coverage.

- Journalists generally want to cover issues without external restraint, and ensure that their right to publish is relatively unrestrained.
- Journalists also protect the public from future violent acts or threats through the media. They also need personal security in order to do so freely.
- Lastly but most importantly, the society has a right to know. Media outlets may construe this to make the story more dramatic. For instance, airing emotional reactions of those affected by the attack. However, other powers, such as the government, may withhold some information for security measure among other reasons

Other primary motives for the media are to gain monetary profit, fame, or furtherance of a particular agenda. This goes to say, media members often have no objection if it's possible to have a constructive role in resolving a violent act if it can be done and without excessive loss of a potential story or compromise of values.

Despite the beneficent efforts by media outlets, they are enticed to cover news on attacks and must give headlines that will attract the most viewers.

Terrorists' requirements from the media

The attacker's benefits of media covering attacks include free publicity, recognition of their organization, and sharing of propaganda. Firstly, terrorists require free publicity and the mass sharing of their act or ideals. The media provides an outlet to create terror, convey their aim, and possibly gain recruits among other benefits (Mahan & Griset, 2012; Holbrook, 2019).

Terror is a resort to gain a political change. In order to do so, terrorists need publicity. They often depend on free publicity since they may not be able to afford to buy or find an outlet who will sell to them time in the

public eye.

They seek a mutual understanding of their cause, if not their actions. Ongoing contact with the media is vital for their organizations' influence over the public and government. Usually the relationship between media and violent political organizations are cultivated and nurtured over a period of years. Such organizations may also seek to have sympathetic journalists and their personnel in press positions. There were some instances that the organization would fund smaller news organizations in order to control their public exposure. The media thus serves as a bridge between the attackers and the public.

They also want the media to provide public legitimacy to their organization and other institutions that they control. These institutions may sheath their fundraising, recruitment, and travel of terrorists into the target country. In hostage situations, actors may need to have details on identity, number and value of hostages, details about pending rescue attempts, and details on the public exposure of their operation – which may be given by the media. Particularly where state sponsors are involved, they would want details about any plans for military retaliation. In these cases, the media again serves as the bridge between the organization and the targeted country.

Lastly, they seek media coverage that is damaging to their enemy. This is particularly noticeable when perpetrators and their rationale for their act remain unclear. The media tends to amplify the panic and fear, resulting in economic loss and a loss of the public's faith in their governments' ability to protect them. From there it creates mass fear.

This was especially true with the Irish Republic Army (IRA). They manipulated the media to recruit volunteers who identified with their values and to gain financial contributions. For Clausewitz (1989), war is the means for the continuation of politics; while for terrorists, politics is the means for the continuation of terror.

Ethical regulation of terror news

Over the years, terrorist attacks have become regular news items but covering terrorism news in an ethical fashion remains a challenge for journalists. Certain aspects of media's coverage on violent acts are seen across the board. Images are often picked up from social media platforms, rushed into publication, and rebroadcasted incessantly; on-site live reporting excites and dramatizes the coverage; witnesses are solicited; academia experts or partisan advocacy groups, are called in to 'interpret' the event - often with very little real information available and in the middle of confusion and mayhem. The tenor of terrorism coverage depends on many factors: degree of freedom of the media in that country, economic resource available for the media, and cultural factors including the perception of ethical journalism (Marthoz, 2017).

The definition of terrorism is still debatable, resulting in a chasm between journalists and lawyers Gunduz (1996). However, in order for the law to be upheld and terrorist attacks to be minimalized, there must be an internationally accepted definition of terrorism.

Modern violent political organizations have recognized the value of the media especially because the media may distribute their propaganda. However, media outlets may have overlooked this maneuver due to various barriers of ethical journalism. As a result, journalists may share their propaganda with intent or with gullibility, which would lead to the development of better actor- journalist relationship, and thence more original and emotional news coverage. Western countries have reacted to this, and tried to regulate the media through ethical codes. As a consequence, ABC, the BBC, CBS and NBC have adopted written policies and reported journalism guidelines to set rules for their staff how to cover terror news. At the national and international levels, the United Nations organized international efforts in order to prevent crimes against humanity such as terror-

ism. From there, the European Council also implemented legal regulations on terrorism. The legal regulations and initiatives for ethical journalism in USA, Britain, and other nations are remarkable. Today in many western countries, the media is regulated and restricted through ethical codes and legal regulations, which have arisen because of the sensitivities that have emerged from past terror news.

The media is the 'oxygen of terrorism', in the famous words of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Journalists and news outlets bring their acts into the public eye if it qualifies as newsworthy. Terrorist attacks are often choreographed to attract the attention of the media and be deemed worthy enough to be in the public eye. Terrorism is aimed not at the casualties itself, but at the audience which media reach out to (Marthoz, 2017).

In democratic countries the media ethics are protected through self-control methods. Thus legal complications are largely prevented (Gilbert, 1998). For instance, the BBC approached ethical media coverage of IRA's acts and chose to not televise the IRA leader's name, photos and images. After the September 11's events, the media in USA avoided broadcasting images which would disturb or affect their psychology, and additionally tried not to create the impression of furthering the terrorist message. American Professional Journalist Association has adopted a policy that a publication which encourages crime or bad behavior should not be broadcasted. The BBC also controlled how it reported events, describing September 11's event as an attack rather than as terrorism. The connotations of these two words vary; the stranger, more negative word (i.e., terrorism) is more gripping and catches more viewers. Words, especially in headlines, must be carefully chosen as to only share the truth with accuracy.

Marthoz (2017) key points for covering terror news are "take care when broadcasting live; take note of media blackouts during security operations; source information and qualify informants, correct and errors immediately and visibly; be cautious about leaks and confidential sources; explain why anonymity has been granted to a source; make use of experts but exercise caution; keep a sense of proportion; don't glamorize terrorists; respect the dignity of victims and particularly children; don't use respect for privacy to justify obscuring the truth; don't leave the others to qualify and act or group; avoid a moralist ideological approach that blurs reality; remember that not all words *jihadism, war* can be used objectively; take figures and polls with a grain of salt; what to show and how? The balance between the duty to inform and respect for privacy; publish essential images without resorting to sensationalism; be careful publishing images of onlookers; check the veracity of images before publishing; avoid am-nigams and generalizations; control and deconstruct hate speech, rumors and conspiracy theories."

"As the New Zealand attack showed many are still making basic mistakes, worst of all in providing the oxygen of publicity for the terrorist. There's loads in the news that is extremely relevant to the debates around coverage of Christchurch such as narrative framing, choice of language, avoiding harm, verification and transparency, guidelines and codes, geographical or cultural bias, as well as dealing with social media and the platforms" (Beckett, 2019).

Ethical rules after New Zealand attack. No news organization is obliged to publicize everything, especially of the material created by the violent political organizations or actors themselves (i.e., censorship). All newsrooms should have in place a system for fact checking and a guideline for approaching 'terror' story breaks. Fast reporting to quickly publicize an issue is beneficial for the public and the outlets, but newsrooms must have systems in place that prevent them the sharing of fake news or spreading misleading and inflammatory information (i.e., breaking news). Media must avoid giving prime placement to images or personal information about the killer (i.e., humanize the victims not the perpetrator). About using the word 'terrorist', the default should be not to use it unless (as in

the New Zealand case) the authorities use it (i.e., language). Journalists and reporters must ask themselves, "Is there constructive journalism that you could do to complement the reporting of the pain, anger and fear?" (i.e., social cohesion) (Beckett, 2019).

News covering terrorism must take an ethical approach. The media can take certain actions to maintain ethical journalism, including the protection of underage audiences from gruesome footage, censorship of sharing propaganda, adoption of written policies, implementation of legal regulation, among others. To further the ethical approach on terrorism, governments can provide incentives for traditional and social media to adopting new strategies and enforce regulations to minimize terror.

The relationship between the media, terrorism, and ethics

Where media and terrorism meet is where one finds ethics. The first three core principles of journalism are the obligation to the truth, loyalty to the citizens, and being disciplined in verification (Kovach, 2014). These align with the four ethical principles: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice. Terrorism is a crime and ethics is not possible where terrorism exists. Silantieva (2003) quoted Shpiro's who highlighted "the role of media in both the coverage and conduct of modern conflict," and Shpiro concluded "an effective media strategy is an essential tool of warfare that is used by states and terrorist groups."

The Society of Professional Journalists (SPA) created the journalist's Code of Ethics stated, "[Journalists must] show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage; use heightened sensitivity when dealing with victims." This goes to say, journalists must use language that is informative and not inflammatory; avoid using word combinations such as 'Islamic terrorist' or 'Islamist extremist' that are misleading because they link whole religions to criminal activity.

Due to the unclear definition of the terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' they are left to be defined according to the ideology of the media companies. As one outlet might declare an act as terrorism, another one might define it act as a revolution. Instead, media should be mindful of how authorities coin the event (i.e., language) and conduct cross-verification. Media, is often the first source of information for the general population, and has great influence on the accepted definition and reconstruction of political, social, economic, technological, and cultural fields. As a result, various actors compete and attempt to influence the media (Pazarbasi & Akgul, 2010).

Moreover, the media does not transmit neutral information. Because each media group has its own ideology, their coverage is then affected by their specific ideology. As a result, they share relatively biased and subjective information. Headlines, screamers, mastheads, sub headlines, interrogative headlines, images, page designs and writing style of the media group can demonstrate how they approaches terrorism ideologically (Pazarbasi & Akgul, 2010). Because media has the power to influence their viewer's opinion, they should be wary to not be exploited by unethical groups.

Reports covering any attack, including violent political attacks, must be weary of dramatizing the event to encourage criminal acts. Indira Lakshmanan, chair of Poynter's journalism ethics, stated in an interview with the National Public Radio, "By playing this endless loop of the same images of terrified people running away from the scene of an attack, we are essentially playing into the hands of terrorist" (Martin, 2017). When available, such news coverage should be paired with reactive demonstrations of solidarity, unity, and compassion—the opposites of a terrorist's desired horror and chaos. Lakshmanan's theory of media overdose can extend the reaction to the attack's coverage as opposed to desensitization. Nevertheless, media outlets struggle to regulate the avalanche of the attack's coverage (Marthoz, 2018).

The psychological and political consequences determine a 'terrorist' act's success rather than the number of casualties or economic lost caused by this act. in accordance with the first principle of SPA's Journalist's Code of Ethics, the main purpose and responsibility of the journalist is to find the truth and report it. However, media faces a dilemma in this regard because what is news may consequently be propaganda. Thus, the media should verify whether or not the act is terrorism or different type of attack such as hate crime or genocides as they do not involve political agendas.

Media organizations are commercial businesses. Terrorism news get relatively higher ratings and circulations which would increase the media group's profit. This is one reason why news coverage may ignore ethical considerations, especially in light of newsworthy events. The media many also be influenced by several other interests mentioned previously.

Nevertheless, terrorism news should be published in accordance with ethical rules in order to not be exploited. Media should bear the responsibility of ethical journalism while fulfilling public obligations. The lack of media's self-control have caught the attention of ethicists and legislators because terrorist organizations' the exploitation of media. Censorship on terror news restricts the media's effectiveness to fulfill their obligation. For this reason, the code of ethics must be reviewed by media groups or develop new ethic codes to better expose the truth. Additionally, due to the lack of standardization of the ethic codes, journalists are criticized by ethicists and governments if they do not comply with ethical principles or state policies. The media-terrorist-ethics relationship triangle is summarized into three major aspects:

1. attackers' dependence on media coverage
2. media's contradiction of covering terrorism
3. terrorist acts are not ethical and media should be more ethical.

Case Studies: Framing the Christchurch Mosque Shootings and Sri Lanka Easter Bombings

The shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand were took place during Friday Prayer on 15 March 2019. At least 49 people were killed and at least another fifty were wounded in these two mosques shootings. The first shooting took place at 1.40 pm that day at the Al Noor Mosque, located in central Christchurch. The gunman, identified as Brenton Tarrant, live-streamed the footage of this first attack on Facebook Live using a head-mounted camera. The footage showed the man, armed with a shotgun and an AR-15, an assault rifle, among other weapons, firing indiscriminately at men, women and children at close range. The second attack was five kilometers away. The same gunman began shooting at Linwood Islamic Centre, east of the city centre at about 1:55 p.m. (Bailey et al., 2019; Wakefield, 2019).

The bombings at three churches across Sri Lanka and three luxury hotels in the commercial capital Colombo took place on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019. The first four explosions occurred at 8:45 a.m. Later that same day, there were smaller explosions at a housing complex as well as at a guesthouse, killing two civilians and three police officers investigating the situation and raiding suspect locations. Several cities in Sri Lanka were targeted. The last explosion occurred at 2:15 p.m. It was total of 8 explosions. At 10:30 p.m. they were two more attacks on two shops owned by Muslims were reported in two different parts of the country. At least 293 people were killed in the bombings, including at least 35 foreign nationals along with three police officers and at least 500 were injured (Bastians et al., 2019; Sirilal & Aneez, 2019).

Gerhards & Schafer (2013) compared how four terrorist incidents (Madrid, London, Amman, and Sharm El Sheikh) were covered in the main news of Al Jazeera, Working group of public broadcasters of the Federal Republic of Germany (ARD), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Cable News Network (CNN). Their study found that the terrorism cov-

erage among the four groups show considerable similarities but all present a one-sided view. All four groups devoted nearly identical amounts of attention to the four attacks. They all did 'interpretive framework' such as 'war on terror' and 'crimes against humanity'.

In this study, we analyzed world mainstream's media news websites because they are the commonly used and easily accessible to the general public across the world, and these mediums also race for time. The news outlets chosen are Al Jazeera (Pan-Arab), the BBC (UK), CNN (US), and The New Zealand Herald (NL) –it is the mainstream newspaper in the country and, The Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) –it is the daily mainstream newspaper in the country.

Searching on Google of 'breaking news Christchurch' Al Jazeera had 525 thousand, the BBC News 2 million 50 thousand, CNN 2 million 420 thousand and The New Zealand Herald 4 million 990 thousand results were received. And 'breaking news Sri Lanka' Al Jazeera had 647 thousand, the BBC 19 million 300 thousand, CNN had 41 million 700 thousand and Daily Mirror Sri Lanka 491 thousand results were received.

In digital world, media needs to be rapid, ironically terror news need time to retrieve information and data in addition acting rapid may violate ethical rules. We determined our study on how they covered the incident as breaking news on 15 March and 21 April 2019 in the first hours. For this study, we were inspired by Entman's categorization of news frame that he focuses on four elements of news frames:

Attribution of responsibility in the news

In Al Jazeera, it was attributed that "28-year-old Australian man" was responsible of the incident. In the BBC, a man called Brenton Tarrant was written as a "single murder charge". In CNN, firstly it was said that "Three people were arrested in connection with the shootings. A 28-year-old man was charged with murder and two others were arrested on suspicion of possession of firearms" (Regan & Sandi, 2019). After that he was written as 'chief suspect Brenton Tarrant, 28, an Australian citizen, who appeared in court on a murder charge'. In The New Zealand Herald the attacker was given initially as 'four arrested-three women, one man' then again without mentioning his name he was called 'Man, 28 due in court tomorrow charged with murder' (Al Jazeera, 2019b; BBC News, 2019a).

In all reviewed news media, the attribution of responsibility in the news were described as 'suspect' (Al Jazeera, 2019a; BBC News, 2019a; Daily Mirror, 2019).

Definition of events and news actors

In Al Jazeera, the incident was described by using "terrorist attack" phrase by quoting New Zealand Prime Minister's rhetoric. In the BBC, it was described as 'NZ mosque attacks' whereas the attacker was defined as 'chief suspect' and 'attacker'. Similarly, in CNN, the incident was described as 'mosque shootings' and 'terrorist attacks'. In Al Jazeera and in The New Zealand Herald, the attacker was defined as 'gunman' and in CNN he was defined as 'shooting suspect', 'gunman' and 'suspect'. Both in the BBC and CNN, the actions were described as an 'attack' (Al Jazeera, 2019b; BBC News, 2019a; Beckett, 2019).

Al Jazeera and the BBC described the Sri Lanka attacks as an 'attack'; CNN called it as an 'attack' and 'explosion', The Daily Mirror Sri Lanka called it 'explosion' and 'blast' (Al Jazeera, 2019a; BBC News, 2019b; Daily Mirror, 2019).

Maintaining moral high ground

Al Jazeera, quoted the New Zealand Prime Ministers use of the phrase 'terrorist attack' in its main headline. The New Zealand Herald used the

word 'massacre' in its headline. The BBC used 'New Zealand Mosque Attacks' and CNN used 'Dozen killed in Christchurch Mosque Attack'. In the BBC and The New Zealand Herald, the shooter's blurred face was used as a leading image, Both Al Jazeera and CNN, used video of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. The BBC showed close up images of the attack scene, whilst the images CNN used were taken from further afar. In both the BBC and CNN, news was reported using the What, Where, When, Why, Who and How model. Headlines, subtitles, intros, and photo information were captioned with factual rather than emotional statements - for example 'New Zealand Prime Minister received e-mail with manifesto minutes before attack' On the other hand, in Al Jazeera, chose to use comment by using negative quotations such as 'anger towards Muslim through media'. The BBC used shorter headlines compared to CNN. Headlines in Al Jazeera were longer compared to the BBC. In Al Jazeera and The New Zealand Herald, there was more news about victims and eye witnesses than the attacker. In addition quotations were taken place more than statements in the news. In CNN, there was more news about attacker than victims. In the BBC, this was balanced. News was longer in The New Zealand Herald than the other three news websites (Al Jazeera, 2019b; BBC News, 2019b; Westcott et al., 2019).

About the Sri Lanka attacks, Al Jazeera framed the news mostly from the view of Muslim groups. Al Jazeera released firstly about the attack but it was removed as it could not be verified. Soon after the BBC made it first post about the incident they quoted the President of Sri Lanka Maithripala Sirisena addressed 'the nation and appealed for calm in the wake of the attacks'. CNN used and headlines 'attack' and 'explosion' such as 'Sri Lanka attacks leave more than 200 dead' and 'Hotel issues statement about explosion.' CNN used quotations of state broadcasters such as 'Six explosions in three cities.' The Daily Mirror Sri Lanka first quoted the police statement about incidence. (Al Jazeera, 2019a; BBC News, 2019b; McKirdy et al., 2019; Daily Mirror, 2019).

The BBC showed close up images of the attack scene such as image in the church, whilst the images Al Jazeera, CNN and The Daily Mirror Sri Lanka used were taken from further afar such as Sri Lankan security personnel who kept watch of the surrounding church grounds. All reviewed media news was reported using the What, Where, When, Why, Who and How model. Headlines, subtitles, intros, and photo information were captioned with factual rather than emotional statements - for example 'An ambulance is seen outside the church premises with gathered security personnel following a blast at the St. Anthony's Shrine in Kochchikade, Colombo on April 21.' (Al Jazeera, 2019a; BBC News, 2019b; McKirdy et al., 2019; Daily Mirror, 2019).

Proposing solutions to crisis

All of the studies' mediums Al Jazeera, the BBC, CNN and The New Zealand Herald avoided giving their own commentary or opinion. Instead they conducted interviews and reported their opinions and comments - (such as New Zealand Police Association supports call for gun law changes), relatives of victims, survivors so on (Al Jazeera, 2019b; BBC News, 2019a; Regan & Sandi, 2019). On Sri Lanka attacks, all of the studies mediums avoided giving their own commentary or opinion (Al Jazeera, 2019a; BBC News, 2019b; McKirdy et al., 2019; Daily Mirror, 2019).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study included Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN and The New Zealand Herald to investigate terrorism coverage and ethics in journalism. This study could be replicated with adding more channels/reporting units from different regions. This will provide deeper insights and enhance our understanding of the significance of ethical journalism in various countries.

Conclusion

Media have the power of shaping public opinion. The media groups' knowledge, attitude, and expression deliver certain ideologies, values and thoughts. The attribution of responsibility of an event in the news, definition of event and its actors, maintenance of a moral high ground, and proposal of solutions to the crisis defines the media's approach to the concept of ethical journalism. Barriers to ethnical journalism are internal (e.g., prejudice and personality, professional experience) and external (e.g. circulations, profits for the media group).

Media groups are commercial enterprises ultimately, which semi-legitimize their claims and may damage ethical values. This background should not be overlooked when ethical journalism in the media is evaluated.

International journalism standards detail they role of media and deter the media to not be exploited by terror groups. The distinction between freedom of speech and censorship of propaganda should be made by professional journalists. Ethical journalism is not only in the hands of reporters, but editors and state officials should show the same responsibility.

As a solution to the need of improved ethical journalism, the authors suggest that a "Media Ethical Codes Research and Analysis Unit" should be established in order to investigate current ethic codes and adapt up-to-date policies or develop new guidelines on how to cover news about violent political attacks.

This unit should consider the ethical and legal implications and analyze the social sciences. Its team should be interdisciplinary, and include government officials, academia, lawyers, ethical scientists, media group representatives, and representatives of civil society. The rules and regulations in the coverage of terror news adopted by this unit would significantly reduce ethical debates on media's presentations of the violent political acts.

The government's representation in the ethical journalism unit is certainly essential. The media and government have common interests in seeing that they are not manipulated into promoting the cause of terrorism or its methods. Additionally, neither the media nor policymakers want to see terrorism, or the erosion of constitutional freedoms including that of the free press. This unit also serves as an opportunity for better communication between the government and the media. With this unit, the public may prevent the cause of terrorism from prevailing as well as preserve the free press. If terrorism sustains itself or flourishes, freedoms shrink, and it is likely that the free press is one of the first institutions to be rid of. The challenge to both the governmental and press communities is to understand the dynamics of violent political enterprises, and to develop policy that serve the interests of government, media, and society.

The case study on how world mainstream's media news websites covered the incidents as breaking news on 15 March and 21 April 2019 in the first hours show some problematic aspects in terms of journalistic ethics. While Al Jazeera tends to treat the incidents as more of terrorist events by using "terrorist" phrase and specifying the identity of the shooter as "28-year-old Australian man" phrase, the BBC and the CNN have mostly referred to the incidents as 'attacks' and the attacker was defined as 'chief/shooting suspect' and 'attacker'. Although all of the studies' mediums avoided giving their own commentary or opinion, Al Jazeera framed the news mostly from the view of Muslim groups and the CNN and the BBC avoided to use "terrorist" phrase. Besides, in terms of the ethics of journalism, both indicating the attacker's identity in the news and approaching the events with moderate words due to the identity of the attacker are problematic. To conclude, in the context of Entman's categorization of news frame, the coverage of Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN, and The New Zealand Herald show considerable similarities but all present a one-sided view.

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