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Ethical decision-making in the digital age: the case of graphic images in Kenyan print and online newspapers

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ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE CASE OF GRAPHIC IMAGES IN KENYAN PRINT AND ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

By

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APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION PAGE

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Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Catherine, and to my parents, Davidson and Jane.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how the online environment has influenced ethical decision-making in Kenyan print and online newspapers with regard to graphic images. A review of the literature showed scant academic attention has been paid to the role ethics play in the selection of images for publication despite acknowledgement of the increasing power and cultural diversity of audiences. The theoretical framework of the study was based on Gatekeeping Theory and Spiral of Silence Theory. Through in-depth interviews with senior editors and a review of internal and external guidelines and policies, the research revealed that audience demands for ethical decisions from editors are transmitted mainly through the corporate hierarchy. However, media houses have developed few effective internal systems to guide newsroom decision-making, relying mostly on vague prescriptions buried in editorial policies and ethics codes, which in practice are rarely consulted by newsroom decision makers. Further, the systems developed for the cycle of print production, including scheduled editorial meetings and the use of photo editors to filter images, have proven to be inadequate for the fast-paced world of online news production. The research also revealed that when confronted with graphic images, editors' resort to their own intuition and experience as well as consultations with colleagues rather than on methodical ethical reasoning. This creates geographical and cultural blind spots which, when coupled with the internet's expansion, diversification and empowerment of audiences, as well as the lagging development of a media ethics for the digital age, can have potentially serious adverse consequences for editors and the media enterprises themselves. Recommendations from the study include training of editors in the use of methods such as the Potter Box model of reasoning in day-to-day decision-making as well as the development of practical procedures for fast sourcing and selection of images for online publication especially as relates to breaking news. The study also contributes to the literature on Network Gatekeeping Theory, suggesting the need to take into account the hierarchical nature of networks, and demonstrates how the Spiral of Silence Theory can also account for the effect of online audiences on newsroom decision-making. Finally, the study emphasizes the role of ethical decision-making in image selections and recommends that news values research takes more cognizance of ethical considerations.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

MCK: Media Council of Kenya

CCPJ: Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism

NMG: Nation Media Group

SMG: Standard Media Group

RMG: Royal Media Group

NYT: New York Times

NGT: Network Gatekeeping Theory

NACOSTI: National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

On the afternoon of 15 January 2019, six attackers stormed the Dusit D2 Hotel complex in downtown Nairobi, killing nearly two dozen people. An image published by the New York Times in its print and online editions showed the bodies of three of the victims slumped over coffee tables (Freytas-Tamura, 2019). It sparked a furious reaction from Kenyans on social media and led to calls for the paper's incoming Nairobi bureau chief to be deported as well as government threats to withdraw her accreditation.

Responding to the uproar, The Times director of photography, Megan Looram, acknowledged that while in the past news outlets may have applied different standards to images from far off places, that was no longer an option. Despite the fact that more than 70 percent of New York Times readers are in the United States, the paper's editors were now required to "make decisions based on the fact that we serve a global audience" (Takenaga, 2019) .

The episode neatly illustrates some of the difficulties faced by editors across the world as a consequence of the digital revolution. In the pre-digital age, journalists were the gatekeepers of the public sphere and, through codes developed by their professional associations, to a large extent determined the ethical rules to be observed there (Ward, 2014). However, today the internet has transformed the public sphere, opened new gates thereby diminishing the power and authority of the media. On social media and on blogs, online communities have found a means to assert their views and police the media's actions – even when, as in the case with Kenyans and the Times, they do not form a significant part of a particular outlet's audiences.

There has been, so far, little agreement on what the ethical rules are for publishing in this globalized, digital age (Ward & Wasserman, 2010). That makes it daunting for editors, especially when it comes to a subject as sensitive as the publication of graphic images. How editors in Kenya are navigating these challenges is the theme of this study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Media ethics relate to the norms governing relationships between journalists, their subjects and audiences (Silverstone, 2007). They are at the core of professional media practice and govern what is covered and how that coverage is done. Traditional media ethics grew out of an era when access to news sources and the ability to distribute the news widely was largely limited to journalists and media organizations (Singer, 2012). But even then, journalists' discretion over what is fit to publish was never absolute. It was circumscribed by the values and culture of the society in which the journalists operated (Kasoma, 1996).

Today, internet, digital and mobile technologies have completely transformed how news is produced and consumed. In the globalized online spaces, media organizations are forced to contend with diverse audiences having differing and sometimes conflicting sets of cultural norms and expectations. As illustrated in the case of the New York Times above, the global is no longer "remote or 'over there'". That can create difficulties for editors used to catering to familiar local norms as opposed to the eclectic mix of cultures online.

From its inception, journalism has also been concerned with reporting tales of tragedy and since the invention of photography in the 19th century, images have become central to how tragic stories are told. Switching on the TV, glancing at the newspaper

front page or going on social media, can instantly transport one too far off battlefields or to scenes of terrible human suffering. Today's audiences can personally witness to the horrific aftermath of atrocities, conflicts and disasters in ways their forebears never could (Hanusch, 2010; Epstein, 2017).

Because of this, news organizations face ethical dilemmas when deciding how or even whether they should use such images. News coverage does more than simply portray situations and events; the way it is told can dramatically shape how both citizens and policymakers react to them. Used injudiciously, photographs and images can mislead and traumatize audiences, especially the young. They can abet the objectives of bad actors such terrorists. There are therefore "frequent tensions between the imperative to report as truthfully as possible and the imperative to prevent harm and maintain a sense of decency" (Horner, 2015, p. 94).

Resolving these tensions is a question of ethics. But with traditional media ethics offering limited guidance in the globalized, digital space (Ward, 2014) and in the absence of a global media ethics (Ward & Wasserman, 2010), it is unclear how editors are doing this. The New York Times, for example did not have "a consistent policy for the publication of graphic images" and it was only after the Dusit D2 incident that it promised to "draft a guide for editors who are faced with making these kinds of consequential decisions".

1.2.1 Newspapers and the Digital Environment

The digital revolution has heavily impacted the newspaper publishing. Circulation, already in decline before the invention of the Internet, has plummeted as audiences moved online and advertisers followed. In response, many newspapers began publishing online editions in the early 2000s and today, some have even ceased

producing print editions. According to the International Center for Journalists, hybrid newsrooms, using a combination of traditional and digital formats to distribute their content, are on the rise worldwide (Owen, Bahja, & Moshavi, 2019). The move to online publication has had implications for newspapers in terms of content, audience relations and the level of control or power that journalists have over the news agenda.

Though often produced by the same people, the news items offered these platforms online can differ significantly, especially in the use of images and other contextual elements such as infographics. (Smith, 2005; Koundal & Sarkar, 2019; Ngoge, 2014). While in their infancy online newspapers mainly contained "shovelware" (content originally created for the print product and repurposed for online distribution), today some media organizations, such as Radio Africa in Kenya, which owns the Star Newspaper, are implementing a "digital-first" strategy in which news content is initially produced and optimized for online distribution and only later repurposed for the physical paper.

Publishing content online is significantly different from publishing in print primarily due to time constraints. Print newspapers have a predictable production schedule – the newspaper is printed and distributed at a specific time. For the most part, decisions on content can be made at regularly scheduled meetings and by designated personnel.

However, systems developed for the processing and filtration of content into - to quote the famous New York Times motto - "all the news fit to print", can be inadequate when applied to the fast-paced online news environment, where journalists are under pressure to report stories as they happen, and to respond faster to audience

metrics. Yet most newspaper publishers in Kenya have not developed systems to cope with the requirements of the digital age.

In addition to publishing their content on their own websites, the online editions also published on online platforms like Google News and Facebook news and thus were also subject to the rules and standards of these platforms. Google search results are also an important determinant on whether audiences could find the content on their websites.

1.2.2 Images of Death and Dying in the News

What are graphic images? According to the Longman dictionary, "a graphic account or description of an event is [one that is] very clear and gives a lot of details, especially unpleasant ones". The Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya (Media Council of Kenya, 2013) refers to "photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes". In their analysis of 47 ethics codes proposed or adopted by US professional, media and news organizations, Keith et al (2006, pp. 253-254) noted references to "graphic footage of dead bodies and death … exaggerated grief, blood or other bodily fluids … photos that may otherwise shock or appall readers". Concerns seem to center on the clarity of depictions of death and violence and especially using corpses or bloody images – images that vividly portray death or the process of dying in a manner likely to elicit extreme discomfort or negative emotional reactions from the audience. Other words used to describe such images are "horrific" and "gruesome".

While there is considerable variation between and within countries and cultures, in general and contrary to popular wisdom, media tends to be rather reticent about showing death. In his book on the reporting of death around the world, Folker Hanusch (2010) notes that "newspapers show very little actual death, when they do, the dead are

more likely to be from abroad, and even more likely to be from distant cultural backgrounds". Graphic representations of death can be assumed to be even rarer.

1.2.3 Effect of the Internet on Ethical Decision-Making

The increased pace of news production as well as the influence of diverse audiences on the telling of the news can generate ethical conundrums for editors in the selection of news stories. The ability to precisely measure audiences for particular stories can mean that commercial considerations have an outsized influence on editors' decisions, fragmenting the traditional "Chinese wall" that insulated journalists from the business side of publishing (Bruns, 2018; Satell, 2015).

Editors may also be tempted to gratuitously employ graphic images to sensationalize a story and stoke controversy with the aim of attracting an audience. Conversely, out of fear of alienating audiences or being the subject of an online backlash, they may desist from using such images even when they feel circumstances warrant it.

This does not just affect online editors. Using social media, audiences can share news items with their networks and followers and provide instantaneous feedback to news outlets (Newman, 2011). This means publishing errors, even those committed in print, can very quickly be circulated online, exposing editors to the "outrage machine" or "cancel culture" – the online tendency to concentrate the outrage of thousands on supposed missteps (Badat, 2018).

In September 2013, a screenshot of the front page of the Sunday Nation which featured a photograph of a bloodied victim from a terrorist attack on a mall in the capital, Nairobi, was circulated online generating a huge uproar even as the paper was being printed. By morning, when most Kenyans would be getting their copy from local

vendors, the online furore had already led to an apology and the suspension of the paper's Editorial Director (more on this later in this chapter).

Further, even when editors in one publication are disinclined to publish particular stories and images, the same may be availed online by others. Intensifying competition between journalists as well as between journalists and other online content producers, could lead to a lowering of the ethical bar for publication in print as well as online (Posetti, 2014). For example, though some editors were initially reluctant to publish images of a Syrian toddler whose body washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, as noted by Pekel and de Reijt (2017, p. 19), "the fact [that] the images were shared so much online legitimised publishing them … resulting in some editors diverging from their own ethical views."

1.2.4 Ethical Controversies

Despite their relative absence in the news media, the publication of graphic images offline and online can still lead to ethical controversies. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, the publication by several American newspapers of Richard Drew's famous photograph of an unidentified man, one of dozens who had jumped to their deaths in attempt to escape the burning towers, caused a storm of protest. An article in Esquire magazine noted that "in most American newspapers, the photograph … ran once and never again. Papers all over the country … were forced to defend themselves against charges that they exploited a man's death, stripped him of his dignity, invaded his privacy, turned tragedy into leering pornography" (Junod, 2016).

National laws can also limit the discretion of editors when it comes to graphic images. During the two World Wars, and later in the Korean War, the US government

suppressed images of war casualties, keenly aware of "the rhetorical power of war corpses" (Malkowski, 2011; Rainey, 2010). More recently, from 1991 to 2009, it controversially banned the photographing of flag-draped coffins as the bodies of soldiers were returned home from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Kenya's government too has sought to ban the publication of images of victims of terrorist attacks and the country's media law includes legal restrictions on "photographs showing mutilated bodies [and] bloody incidents".

Editors also face ethical questions when deciding which bodies are appropriate to show since, as Sentilles (2018) argues, "hiding some dead bodies affects how other dead bodies are viewed". Pizzaro (2014) points out that "when it comes to making an editorial call on how graphic an image can be, it doesn't just depend on what the images show but who it shows and where it's taken". Such choices may be based on hierarchies of grief which treat some deaths as more significant for reasons of proximity, nationality and race.

Choosing not to publish graphic images can also have negative consequences that ethical decision-makers should take into consideration. Studies have suggested that images of graphic violence may actually be a "moral motivator" (Grizzard, et al., 2017) which increases the public appetite and will for early intervention to stop atrocities. Not showing the images could see editors accused of self-censorship, covering up the news and unnecessarily prolonging suffering. Further, as Ritchin (2014) observes, the choice not to publish may harm the photographers who may have taken great physical and mental risks to get the pictures. Not being able to share what they have seen can make it harder to recover from trauma of what they have witnessed. This is especially so when their hope was that the photographs would compel decision makers to act to stop the horror. There can also be a sense that an implied duty to show the suffering of the

victims they have interacted with (again in the hope of it being stopped) has not been fulfilled (Ritchin, 2014).

1.2.5 Graphic Images in Kenya Media

Like its western counterparts, Kenyan mainstream media publishes and broadcasts relatively few gory images. When using them, decision makers balance the public interest in conveying the scale of dramatic and gruesome events with professional norms and ethics (Kibet, 2015; Openda, 2014).

A major incident that is mentioned when Kenyan editors discuss controversies involving the publication of graphic images was the Sinai fire tragedy which occurred on September 12, 2011. Fuel from a leaking pipeline flooded the Sinai slum in Nairobi and the resulting inferno killed approximately 100 people, many burnt beyond recognition (Mayoyo, 2012). Media coverage of the incident was excoriated on social media for gratuitous use of horrific pictures of burnt bodies. “Almost all the media houses carried repulsive photos without regard to public interest and those of affected families,” declared the MCK (Kariuki, 2011).

The Star newspaper came in for particularly harsh criticism even from journalists in other media houses, for its choice of front page image - a close up of a burnt corpse with white bones sticking out of the blackened flesh (Madowo, 2011; Kariuki, 2011). An editor involved in the Star’s decision to run the photo says it was a group decision achieved after deliberation between senior editors. “You want to have as big an impact as possible. It was a very artistic brilliant photo which really showed the enormity of what happened. You know, that’s why we run it whether or not, in hindsight, it seemed a bit extreme. But at the time it seemed reasonable” (personal communication, 3 December 2019). Several editors working at the time at the Daily

Nation also remembered that the choice of images elicited much debate among editors and that they eventually decided to publish an image that showed the bodies from a distance. “We said: “If we tell this story the way we are about to, we are sanitizing it. The full horror of what has happened in this city is not coming out’. And everybody said, ‘Actually, we need to show the bodies,’” one editor explained (personal communication, 9 December 2019).

Two years later, on Saturday September 21, 2013, terrorists attacked the Westgate shopping mall in the upmarket Westlands district of Nairobi killing 69 people in a siege that lasted 4 days. The Sunday Nation’s front-page photograph of a bloodied and screaming victim (who would later die) again ignited an online uproar which led to the removal of the image from its online edition, an apology for the “poor judgment” and the suspension of a senior editor (Apple, 2013). In explaining the rationale for using the photo, editors working at the Nation at the time said that the decision to publish the photograph was taken by the Editorial Director after consultations with other senior editors. At the time, the editors had been told that the victim in the photograph had survived. They say they wouldn’t have used the picture had they known that she had died.

“We tried to look for a picture which we thought was acceptable, which would also show a bit of the violence that there was,” explained one of the editors (personal communication, 3 December 2019). The editors also took note that international wire agencies were already circulating the picture and took that as a confirmation that it was safe to publish. The decision was made just before midnight and within an hour a screen shot of the front page was already circulating online. The furore it caused on social media led to a flurry of calls between the CEO and the Editorial Director and by the

morning, a board meeting had been called during which the decision to suspend the latter was taken.

However, some editors at other newspapers felt that there was more to the board's decision. One felt that there was nothing wrong with the picture and that the Editorial Director was being scapegoated. "He was made to fall on his sword and resign because of that... The President [of Kenya] was very upset because the mother of the girl complained to him and said, 'How can you allow this in Kenya?' But I don't think the board of directors of the Nation should have been so feeble" (personal communication, 3 December 2019).

On two other occasions in April 2014, The Star found itself inundated with audience complaints - and in one instance reported to the MCK for ethical violations of the Code of Conduct - following the publication of images of corpses on its front page (Openda, 2014). Yet in 2016, The Star's publication of a photograph showing the body of a demonstrator killed by police on its front page and on its online edition did not elicit similar complaints (Reuters & Olal, 2016), illustrating the inconsistent expectations that editors are compelled to navigate.

1.3 Problem Statement

Internet and digital technologies have empowered online communities and radically transformed the relationships between journalists and audiences on which traditional media ethics was based. Media no longer enjoys a monopoly on either the news or on audiences. Their discretion is limited by laws and the cultural environment. Today, via social media and online comments, audiences can express displeasure and impose serious reputational and financial costs on publications with content they find offensive whether in print or online. At the same time, the internet has vastly expanded

and diversified potential audiences for online newspaper content. The use of graphic images in this climate can generate controversies with serious consequences. As the example of the New York Times demonstrated, even those whom editors may not consider to be significant part of their audiences can still highlight ethical problems and force the newspaper to respond. Given that a media ethics for this globalized, digital age is yet to emerge, it remains unclear how newsroom editors are making ethical decisions on the publication of graphic images.

Furthermore, theoretical descriptions of the selection process usually focus on the newsworthiness of the published items and relatively little attention is paid to how ethical considerations inform decision-making.

1.4 Research Purpose

This study seeks to investigate these theoretical and practice gaps in knowledge by investigating how in the digital age Kenyan newspaper editors on both print and online platforms make ethical decisions on the publication of images of death and dying.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To establish what Kenyan editors understand by the term "graphic image" when considering the publication of images of death and dying.
2. To identify the ethical considerations that Kenyan newspaper editors take into account when making ethical decisions on the publication of death and dying for their print and online editions.
3. To explore the extent to which the online environment influences Kenyan newspaper editors when they are making ethical decisions about the publication of images of death and dying in their print and online editions.

4. To inquire how editors' perceptions of media ethics have been impacted by the digital age.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What do Kenyan editors understand by the term "graphic image" when considering the publication of images of death and dying?
2. What are the considerations that Kenya newspaper editors take into account when making ethical decisions on the publication of graphic images of death and dying in online and print newspapers?
3. How does the online environment influence editorial decisions on whether to publish graphic images of death and dying in print newspapers and online editions?
4. How have editors' perceptions of media ethics been impacted by the digital age?

1.7 Rationale of the Study

The digital age has done away with many of the roles that used to distinguish journalists from non-journalists. Today, anyone with a mobile phone and internet connection can become a publisher of news, disinformation and misinformation. As Singer (2006, p. 3) notes, "in this environment, while all journalists still publish information, not all publishers of information are journalists". If journalism and newspaper publishing is to survive, it is critical that journalists find ways of distinguishing themselves from the crowd. Singer offers that "as the nature of the media environment changes, the definition and self-conceptualization of the journalist must shift from one rooted in procedure – the professional process of making information available – to one rooted in ethics" (p. 24). To do this, journalists will need to understand the evolving ethical environment that is driven in large part by their

changing relationships with audiences online (Singer, 2010). This study will contribute to that understanding.

Despite the power of graphic images to influence the perceptions and reactions of both policy makers and the general public, how the local news outlets decide when to use them has not attracted much scholarly attention. This is problematic because ignorance of how Kenyan editors' publishing decisions are affected, for example, by the prevalence and sharing of graphic images online, creates opportunities for manipulation by bad actors. The lack of clear guidelines over the use of such images also leaves editors vulnerable to the online outrage machine.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to filling several gaps identified in the literature. Griffiths (2010) points out that "the decision making processes of editors have not received the same [scholarly] attention as that of journalists, despite the critical role played by editors - particularly in the case of controversial stories where there is a trade-off of values". There are also few studies of how non-Western media reports on death (Hanusch, 2010) and this is also the case regarding gatekeeping studies focusing on images (Schwalbe, Silcock, & Candello, 2015).

There have been attempts, by industry bodies, media house editorial policies and the MCK Act 2013, to provide guidelines for newsroom decision-makers on the use of graphic material. However, this tends to focus on the output, or the verdict, rather than the inputs and processes that go into the decision. By understanding the considerations that newsroom decision-makers take into account and how they address the ethical challenges of publishing images of death and dying online as opposed to

offline, this study hopes to contribute to the development of better guidance and support that is appropriate to the actual circumstances newsroom staff face.

The digital revolution has fundamentally changed the way in which news is produced and consumed across the globe. By applying a qualitative case study methodology to examine the experiences of newsroom editors to make ethical decisions in this new environment, this research will contribute to the emergence of a theory of media ethics for the internet age.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that the digital networked environment is influencing the ethical expectations audiences have of journalists. It also assumes that newsroom editors are attempting to make ethical publishing decisions and that the decisions on publication of images of death and dying are taken in a considered, and sometimes deliberative, fashion.

1.10 Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation of the study was that some of the events and decision-processes that were investigated pertained to events and discussions that took place several years ago. Though being honest, people may have mis-remembered crucial details or mis-report conversations. By interviewing several of those who may have participated in these decisions and discussions, the study was able to attain a more accurate picture of the events.

Another limitation was that some of those who were engaged in the decision-making were unavailable or unwilling to be interviewed. In case of the latter, the study offered anonymity as an incentive to participation. The study used multiple sources and triangulated information to compensate for cases where some sources were unavailable.

1.11 Scope of the Study

The study focused on individual newsroom editors and the effect of online audience feedback and reactions on their ethical decision making. The findings may be analytically, though not statistically, generalizable to other editors in similarly organized newsrooms.

The study focused on the decisions of news processors not news gatherers. While it is acknowledged that photojournalists are initial gatekeepers in the processing of news images through their choice of what to photograph and which photographs to forward to editors, this study was concerned with the decision to publish taken by terminal gatekeepers rather than with the ethical decisions taken along the entire gatekeeping chain.

The study was not a case study of how entire newsrooms process images.

The geographical scope was online and print newspaper newsrooms in Nairobi.

1.12 Operational Definition of Terms

Graphic Images: Photographs clearly and vividly portraying scenes of death or dying in a disturbing or distressing manner

Cancel Culture: the practice of boycotting online people, entities or products associated with questionable, offensive or unpopular opinion

Pre-digital Age: the period before 1998 when the first digital newspaper website was launched

Digital Age: the period after 1998

1.13 Summary

This chapter has introduced the subject of the study. It has explored how newspapers have been affected by the digital environment and the rise of the internet. It has also looked at the coverage of death in Kenyan and Western news media as well as highlighted some of the ethical controversies that have resulted from publication of graphic images.

Such controversies pre-date the digital age. However, the internet's empowerment of diverse audiences online as well as the changes it has inaugurated in online publishing and distribution, have meant that editors and news organizations no longer solely determine what is ethically fit for publication.

This chapter thus presents a background for investigating how Kenyan editors' ethical decision-making is impacted by this relatively new environment. The next chapter will present the theoretical framework for the study and well as review the literature on image selection and ethical decision-making in newsrooms.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The purpose of the research is to explore the effect of the online environment on the ethical decision-making of Kenyan newspaper editors with regard to the publication of images of death and dying.

The emerging field of global media ethics will be the overarching framework for the study while Network Gatekeeping Theory, which has grown out of gatekeeping theory, and the Spiral of Silence theory helps to construct a framework for understanding how ethics are operationalized in today's newsrooms. Strictly speaking, journalism ethics are a subset of media ethics which apply to a broader range of media workers, including advertising and public relations professionals as well as citizen journalists and bloggers (Ward, 2014). This paper concentrates on journalism ethics as practiced by professionals in media newsrooms but, for stylistic variation and in line with scholarly practice, will use "media" and "journalism" interchangeably.

The theories were used to help identify the relevant variables and the relationships between them, develop questions as well as generate codes and categories to guide analysis. The chapter then proceeds to review and discuss the general and empirical literature related to newsroom decision making, the effect of online audiences on publishing decisions, media ethics, as well as the representations of death in media.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Media Ethics

Roger Silverstone defines media ethics as "relating to practice and procedure: to the ways in which the journalists go, don't go or should go, about their business; and to the ways in which the relationships between reporters, film-makers, storytellers and image producers and their subjects and their viewers and listeners are construed or assumed" (Silverstone, 2007). Media ethics can thus be considered as the application of moral principles to the conduct of journalists.

However, journalism ethics and the moral principles and values that inform them do not belong to journalists alone. Rather they are reflections of "society-wide expectations on [the] media system" (Ward, 2014, p. 463) and a product of relationships and interactions between journalists and their publics. In turn, these relationships and interactions are mediated by technology. Journalists also "engage in boundary work and community construction" that distinguishes between the society they are accountable to, and "the other" (Breit, 2011, p. 88).

Professional journalism ethics codes that developed in the US in the early 1900s were informed by this dynamic. Technological revolutions in print and later, broadcasting, allowed media enterprises to grow into national, and later international, news purveyors. In the pre-digital era, these technologies gave the media a near monopoly on the publication of news and editors virtual gatekeeping control over the content that was available in the public sphere. In this environment, journalistic ethics were still bounded by the dominant social culture (Kasoma, 1996; Rasul, 2014; Thomas, 2014). However, because audiences had few channels to independently participate in public debate, questions of ethics primarily reflected journalists' interpretations of and influence over societal values (Breit, 2011). These were then

expressed in ethics codes developed by national associations of media professionals (Ward, 2014).

Digital, internet and social media technologies have now changed this fundamentally and undermined the dominance of the media in the public sphere. Many more people from many more places can now participate in public debate, including about the role and performance of the media, independent of media gatekeepers. The online emergence of a vocal, global public means journalists and editors are now exposed to a wide array of sometimes conflicting cultures, with differing values and expectations. It has radically altered the relationship between journalists and their publics with "fatal" implications for a media ethics created for a non-global, non-digital news media (Ward, 2014, p. 459).

A global media ethics for this digital age does not yet exist (Ward & Wasserman, 2010). Some scholars and practitioners assert that there is no need for it. It is, as Ward (2014, p. 460) paraphrases, "just a matter of 'pouring new wine into old bottles'" or the application of existing journalistic norms such as editorial independence and objectivity, to the digital age. He however rejects this approach on the basis that there is little agreement on application of values beyond "a paper-thin agreement on abstract principles, such as truth-telling".

Singer (2010, p. 118), on the other hand, notes that "when it comes to ethics, the medium does matter". She argues that in a network, while the principles such as fairness and truth-telling may not change, the rationale for them does. Rather than a requirement of professional conduct, journalistic ethics are based on the need to maintain relationships with others in the network, including audiences.

As practitioners struggle to adapt to the new environment (Takenaga, 2019), two approaches to journalism ethics have emerged. Integrationists assert that journalists can and should agree on a common set of principles to guide ethics in the new age while fragmentationists reject the possibility of such agreement and instead encourage "a diverse set of practices and forms of journalism" (Ward, 2014, p. 462). The latter leads to a "personalized" media ethics with practitioners encouraged to design and develop their own guidelines (Ward, 2014, p. 464). However, it important to keep in mind that regardless of approach, the new ethics would still be bounded by the expectations of the global, online public.

On the integrationist front, Silverstone (2007) sees the philosophies of moral minimalism and cosmopolitan realism as creating the possibilities for common morality and ethics in a globalizing world. The former "both recognizes that there are limits to what can be accepted, as well as sees sameness emerging from the otherwise incommensurability of difference" (p. 16), while the latter embraces the possibility, and even necessity, of recognition, identification and communication across diversities. In the newsroom, this gives rise to the possibility of editors from differing social and cultural backgrounds agreeing on the ethics of a particular course of action. Cosmopolitan realism suggests that "non-intervention in the crisis of the other is no longer possible because we are, in this new global era, intimately connected to each other as never before" (p. 17). That also presents the possibility that editors in one region of the world can identify with, and be afflicted by, the ethical struggles of editors elsewhere in the world.

Here it is useful to consider the concept of distance as a moral category. Even as media engages in boundary making and definition of the other, there is need to consider just how much space is necessary in order to maintain a perspective that fully

recognizes both sameness and difference. That is, not too close that difference is erased and not too far that one fails to recognize oneself in the other. Silverstone (2007) proposes that one should adopt a 'proper distance' when it comes to depicting the other and for media workers this has been an acute challenge.

2.2.2 Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping is "the process of selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating, and otherwise massaging information to become news" (Tandoc, 2014). Gatekeeping theory provides a framework within which to study how news items are made available to audiences. It was first applied to journalism in David White's ground-breaking 1950 study. Though White concentrated on the wire editor as the "terminal gate" following a linear process of transmission, he acknowledged that other gatekeepers – reporter, rewrite man, bureau chief, state file editors – were involved in the transmission, each playing a part in the "choosing and discarding" of news items (White D. , 1950).

Gatekeeping theory thus allows researchers to view newsgathering and news-processing as a series of "gates" which open or close to let news items through. By mapping the considerations that the "gatekeepers" take into account, scholars can gain insights into why and how particular news items, including photographs, are stopped at specific decision points within the newsroom while others make it to publication (Roberts, 2005; White & Gieber, 1964; de Smaele, Geenen, & De Cock, 2017; Bro & Wallberg, 2015).

As the digital revolution has changed the role of the media and empowered others to perform roles previously reserved for journalists, including sourcing and distributing the news, some have questioned the utility of gatekeeping as a model for

the media today. However, the framework is still useful for two reasons. First, although the media is no longer *the* sole gate through which the news gets to the public, it still mans *a* gate and is still an important source of public information. Secondly, as noted above, the gatekeeping still provides a framework for tracking the movement of news item within the media and, importantly for this study, analyzing the operation of the gate.

Still, gatekeeping theory has evolved to try to explain the new roles the media is playing in the digital age. Bro and Wallberg's (2015) review of the literature on gatekeeping suggests three interconnected models of gatekeeping, each focusing on the different roles that media plays – linear information transmission from news sources to audiences; as the prime intermediary for back-and-forth communication between citizens and authoritative decision-makers; and a third model where media's gatekeeping role is gradually eliminated as digital technology allows both citizens and decision-makers to establish direct communication with and among each other.

2.2.3 Network Gatekeeping Theory

Network Gatekeeping Theory (NGT), one of a variety of new approaches that have sought to adapt gatekeeping theory to the information age (Wallace, 2017), can perhaps be situated at the intersection of these three as it sees the media within the context of a network, with multidirectional flows of information. Although, unlike traditional theories, NGT conceptualizes gatekeeping as more than just a selection mechanism and expands it to include other forms of information control (Barzilai-Nahon & Neumann, 2005), it is still relevant for understanding how interactions within a network can affect the choices of gatekeepers.

According to NGT, although the media is still engaged in newsgathering, processing and distribution, it now shares these functions with others in the network who have varying capacity and opportunity for news production as well as for interaction with and influence over both newsroom gatekeepers and others within the network (Barzilai-Nahon, Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control, 2008; Beckett, 2010).

Network gatekeeping suggests "a dynamic and contextual interpretation of gatekeeping, referring to gatekeepers as stakeholders who can exchange gatekeeping roles depending on the stakeholder with whom they interact and/or the context in which they are situated" (Barzilai-Nahon, Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control, 2008, p. 1494). Thus the "traditional notion of sender-receiver has no significance to the gatekeeping process because these roles are repeatedly exchanged between the gatekeepers and the gated" (Barzilai-Nahon & Neumann, 2005, pp. 14-15).

In this conceptualization, the media is no longer the sole "terminal gate" even of its own news products, which can be further gated by entities such as influencers, friends and family members on social media platforms. For example, Welbers and Opgenhaffen (2018, p. 4744) found that while newspapers' own Facebook pages can have a significant influence on the circulation of their content on the platform, "a large portion of the news that circulates on Facebook arrived there through channels other than the newspaper itself".

Bruns (2018) has called this "gatewatching" - the continuous observation of material that passes through the output gates of news outlets and other sources, in order to identify relevant material for publication and discussion in the gatewatcher's own

site. Gatewatching may have impacts on the considerations of editors especially in online newspapers where analytics increasingly dictate what content is published (Tandoc, 2014).

Print newspapers are not immune to the impacts of gatewatching practices either. In some regions, including Kenya, it is quite common for people to take pictures of newspaper articles using their phones and to distribute them to their networks online. That even print news items might end up circulating online may be a factor print editors take into account

A criticism of NGT, at least as espoused by Barzilai-Nahon, is that it pays little heed to the structure of networks and appears to assume that they are essentially flat. Although she acknowledges concentrations of power in a few stakeholders within the networks, she attributes this to resource accumulation rather than the structure of the network itself. Ernste (2014) says that this is an inaccurate view. He notes that

> scholars have observed that within a given network there is a tendency for a few relatively large sub-networks or clusters of nodes that are referred to as "modules" that contain nodes that more frequently interact with each other than with others within the network (p. 16).

This suggests that networks are inherently hierarchical and thus NGT will need to take into account how this affects the nature of gatekeeping mechanisms as well as the roles and decision-making of gatekeepers. For example, research suggests that news work within local networks is "bound and shaped by the structures of local social, civic, and public networks" and "often reflect them somewhat straightforwardly" (Friedland, Long, Shin, & Kim, 2007, p. 45).

2.2.3 Ethics and Gatekeeping

From a gatekeeping perspective, traditional journalistic ethics can be viewed as stemming from the gatekeeping role of journalists which carries with it a particular set

of responsibilities to people on both sides of the gate —the audience as well as employers and colleagues (Singer, 2012). She suggests that ethical gatekeeping was intimately tied to journalists' conception of their role in society. For example, where they perceive themselves as the indispensable defenders of democracy, then

> ethics are necessary to protect the quality of that information and thus the value of the information delivery role. Without the ethical gatekeeper, in this view, information may circulate —but it may be disinformation or misinformation that, according to the journalist, is worse than no information at all (p. 62).

Much of the gatekeeping research, however, fails to engage with the implications of a changing media ethics on publishing decisions. It concentrates on *newsworthiness*– why journalists think a particular news item might attract a significant audience. Yet while editors may decide that a story is newsworthy, they may still opt to leave out elements of it or even not publish it entirely due to ethical concerns.

2.2.4 Ethics as News Values

This study draws heavily from the work of Helen Caple and Monika Bednarek on the categorizations stemming from news values research. In gatekeeping theory, news values are seen as the primary influence on the selection to publish (Caple & Bednarek, 2015, p. 436). News values are the attributes that make a particular item newsworthy. They can be seen as external to the news story (existing in journalists' minds or embedded in journalistic procedures and professional codes) or as a function of the news event itself (attributes such as the importance of the actors involved, unexpectedness or negativity) or a combination of both (Caple & Bednarek, 2015, p. 437).

The term "news values" however, can be problematic as it covers a range of news processes. Caple and Bednarek (2015) suggest distinguishing between *news writing objectives, selection factors* and *news values*. They reserve "news values" for

the elements that are intrinsic to the subjects of news reporting, while "news writing objectives" speaks to the exigencies of journalistic styles (clarity, brevity, conciseness and so on); and "selection factors" refer to the "relatively consistent set of conditions that guide the way a news worker approaches his or her work" (p. 438).

Gatekeeping literature only tangentially addresses how ethical issues may impact on the everyday decision-making process of editors in the digital age. Even though Caple and Bednarek (2015) include "professional tenets such as ethics and codes of practice" in their definition of "selection factors" (p. 438), Keith et al (2006) note that such codes rarely determine day-to-day behavior. Although they note that editors can react to changes in professional codes as a result of "perceived missteps in the use of controversial images" (p. 247), in normal practice, the codes "may be useful for moral or professional beginners, individuals new to ethical reasoning or to journalism" (p. 247) rather than for experienced editors.

When making newsroom decisions, especially those in which quick, evaluative judgments are required editors may be largely influenced by their own psychological needs rather than by high-vaunted professional norms. Donsbach (2004), for example, argues that two sociopsychological process – journalists need for validation from their peers and their predispositions or biases – can explain why particular news decisions are made. Harrington (1997) suggests that working at high speeds encourages journalists "to fall back on well-worn themes and observations — interpretive clichés" rather than to make well-considered decisions.

In everyday practice, editors may at times subdue their professional ethical judgments in order to preserve such relationships. For example, regarding pictures of Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian toddler whose body washed up on a Turkish beach, Misja Pekel

and Maud van de Reijt (2017) note that "the fact [that] the images were shared so much online legitimised publishing them … resulting in some editors diverging from their own ethical views" (p. 19). In this respect, ethics, at least as defined by the relationship with the audience, may not be as consistent as Caple and Bednarek's (2015) taxonomy supposes. When seeking to understand news selection decisions in a networked environment, it is important, in addition to traditional news values, to take into account editors' perceptions of how the item might impact their relationship with the audience as an independent news value.

2.2.5 News Values in Images

Although images have become increasingly important in the telling of news stories, especially in the digital age, they have been "consistently marginalised in journalism research" (Caple & Bednarek, 2015, p. 445). Schwalbe et al (2015) note that "only a few gatekeeping studies focus on images" (p. 468). Caple and Bednarek criticize researchers who have dealt with news values in photography for not basing them on the actual content of news images but rather conceptualizing them as relating to availability of images and photo opportunities. Employing a discursive approach to examine news image selection, Caple and Bednarek show that news values are primarily constructed through the content of the image and depend to a lesser extent on the technical aspects of how the image is created. However, while they criticize other researchers for using "the yardstick of traditional [news] values", the terms they employ for their own taxonomy (pp. 447-448) are remarkably similar to those employed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Harcup and O'Neill (2016).

Values related to the technical execution of the image such as composition and aesthetics would seem to belong to the category of "news writing objectives" rather than "news values" as they define them. Regarding these, it is useful to note that De

Smaele et al's (2017) observation that photo editors tend to be more concerned than news editors about the aesthetic value of news images.

2.2.6 Spiral of Silence

However, it is not just image values that determine selection. Audiences can also have a marked effect. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory is pertinent when describing the possible effect of audiences. The theory proposes that successful social systems threaten individuals with isolation in order to enforce consensus (Scheufele & Moy, 2000). A built-in, natural fear of isolation or exclusion leads individuals, in their turn, to regularly scan prevailing public opinion and they may refrain from expressing opinions that diverge significantly from it (Cooper, 2006).

Noelle-Neumann (1977) defines public opinion as "controversial opinions that one is able to express in public without becoming isolated" (p. 145). She suggests that individuals employ a "sensitive quasi-statistical sense" to gauge the distribution of majority and minority opinions and that their willingness to join in conversations is "an indication of the degree of confidence to be on the winning side".

A similar dynamic may be at work online. One of the conclusions of this study is that publication decisions can be considered as the expressions of opinion by news organizations. It is at that level, rather than at the level of the individual editor, that the fear of isolation is felt.

While in the offline environment, individuals may "base their idea of public opinion, as a collective mindset, on mass-mediated news reporting" (Cooper, 2006), the preponderance of news providers online means traditional news organizations do not have a monopoly over the mediation of public sentiment. They can thus find themselves subject to the same threats of ostracism which may curtail the freedom of editors in the

selection of news. Further, Noelle-Neumann (1977, p. 144) suggests that "we can distinguish between fields where the opinions and attitudes involved are static, and fields where those opinions and attitudes are subject to changes", citing "customs" as an example of the former. However, the increased cultural diversity of potential audiences means this may not be the case online.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Green (2014) identifies that one of the ways in which qualitative researchers use conceptual frameworks is "in the design of the study where, if it is explicit, the framework can often be found as a section in the literature review" (p. 36). A conceptual framework linking findings "into a coherent structure" can also make them "more accessible and so more useful to others" (p. 36).

The phenomenon this study investigated is ethical decision-making pertaining to the selection of graphic images of death and dying in news coverage. This was conceptualized as part of the function that editorial gatekeepers perform within newspaper newsrooms when selecting images for publication on both online and print platforms (*See Figure 1*).

Gatekeeping theory holds that selection of images is informed by news values, which can further be broken down as detailed by Caple and Bednarek (2016) into news values, selection factors and news writing objectives. Although Caple and Bednarek assume editors' ethical judgments to be relatively consistent and thus include them in their definition of "newswriting objectives", this study proposed "ethical considerations" be included as a separate category that is largely affected by the online environment (Singer, 2010; Pool & Shulman, 1959). While news values, newswriting objectives and selection factors together construct "newsworthiness", ethical

considerations stand apart as a factor in decision-making constructing "appropriateness" and are informed by editor's sense of ethics, the interactivity fostered by online technologies and the reactions of online audiences.

In this study, "ethical considerations" are defined as the editors' judgment of the appropriateness of a particular news item and the impact it might have on the news outlet's relationship with the audience – in other words, how the audience may be expected to respond to it and the pressures the audiences may bring to bear on the outlet.

As scholars have noted, the way journalism is practiced has always been circumscribed by the culture in which it is practiced (Kasoma, 1996; Thomas, 2014; Kitch & Hume, 2008) and ethics are embedded in cultural environments. In the digital age, this is now not limited by physical or national geography but by the geography defined by the internet and digital technologies that have empowered audiences (Singer, Norms and the Network: Journalistic Ethics in a Shared Media Space, 2010).

According to Donsbach (2004, pp. 136-137),

> journalists have to decide what is true, what is relevant and what is, in a moral sense, good or bad… For many news decisions they lack objective criteria and their decision becomes immediately public, i.e. visible to many others, which carries the risk of public failure.

To mitigate this "risk of public failure" when confronted with difficult ethical decisions, editors may rely on their own personal values or consult professional colleagues for validation. They may also scan the online environment, perhaps by searching for reactions to similar news items.

Donsbach's concept of "fear of public failure" can be equated to Noelle-Neumann's "fear of isolation" (Scheufele & Moy, 2000) which implies that the latter's spiral of silence theory may also be relevant in explaining why editors may sometimes take decisions that are at variance with their own ethical leanings (Pekel & Reijt, 2017).

The online outrage machine and cancel culture would then be mechanisms employed by the online society to enforce ethical norms.

Other conceptual influences on editors' decision making on images are news values relating to the event being portrayed as well as the content of the image such as Negativity Immediacy and Prominence, as well as news writing objectives which are inherent in image execution such as aesthetics and composition. Selection factors include professional obligations, such as adherence to ethics codes as well as demands of media owners.

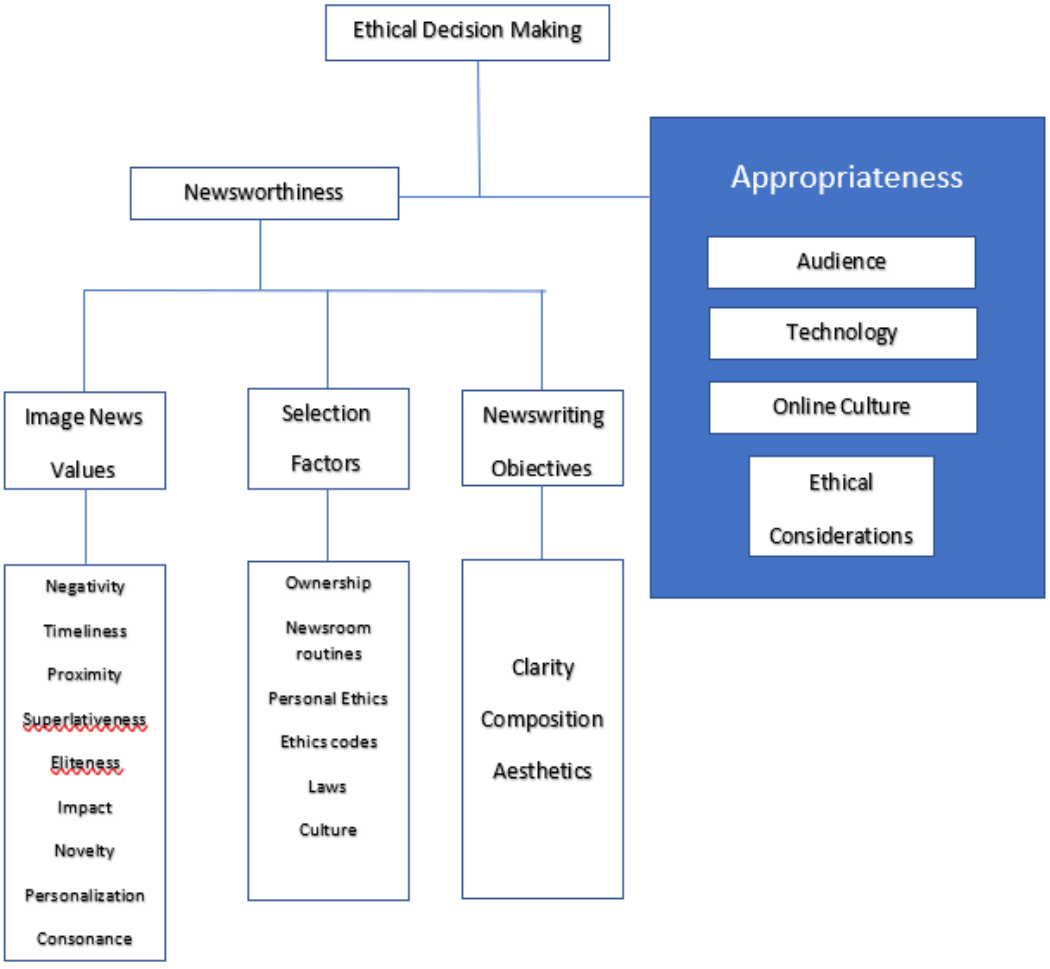

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

2.4 Moral Reasoning and Ethical Behaviour

Lawrence Kohlberg argued that as people mature from childhood through adulthood, so too does their moral reasoning proceed through "a sequence of age-related stages … linked to their cognitive development" (Miner & Petocz, 2003, p. 15). He identified six stages, grouped under three levels. These levels are, in ascending order of ethical quality with increasingly complex sets of ethical considerations, Pre-conventional, Conventional, and Post-conventional levels (Coleman, Moral Development and Journalism, 2010). Later revisions to his theory added that while generally, people are likely to use the higher stages more often as they grow older, they can also regress and use the lower forms of ethical reasoning.

In the first level, concern for one's own welfare predominates. Initially, obedience to rules made by authority figures and considered sacrosanct - in order to gain rewards or avoid punishment - defines what is ethically right. As one progresses through this level, what is ethically right is seen as what is in one's interest (for example, publishing a story to further one's career). Awareness of the self-interest of others means reasoning may also take into account concepts like reciprocity and fairness and opens the door to trade-offs with others.

At the Conventional level "rules begin to be respected for their own sake and are eventually seen as serving society… This level is defined by conformity to the expectations of society" (Coleman, 2010, p. 28). Authority is vested in the social groups that one belongs to, initially friends and family but in the latter stage, expanding to include strangers and professional colleagues. In the case of journalists, this may include audiences as well. "What is morally right is what the law says" (p. 28). This is the level at which most adults operate most of the time.

In the final level, universal ethical principles are seen as the basis for ethical reasoning. At this level, people "are willing to challenge both social norms and self-interest" and to develop "individual principles of conscience" (p. 28).

While attitudes to authority shaped by religion and political ideology can negatively influence the level of moral reasoning, age and education are positively correlated with progression through the stages of ethical reasoning (p. 30). This implies that editors at senior levels, who would most probably be the ones to be asked to make decisions on potentially highly controversial issues such as the publication of graphic images, would be likely to utilize Post-conventional reasoning. In fact, studies have shown that "professional journalists consistently scored higher than adults in general and several professional groups including nurses and orthopedic surgeons" in the Defining Issues Test, an instrument used to operationally define moral development (Coleman & Wilkins, 2004).

However, it is useful to note that moral reasoning is but one of the inputs into ethical behavior and that such tests are not necessarily predictive of what journalists do when faced with actual ethical dilemmas. Miner and Petocz (2003) urge caution in drawing conclusions about ethical decision making from descriptive models as "it would appear that people actually use a range of considerations, as found in moral philosophy, and not only one approach. However, models suggesting that people consistently use specific complex combinations of theories have not been well supported" (p. 17).

2.5 Ethics and Graphic Images

The media's use of graphic or gruesome images of death and dying has long been an ethical minefield. For example, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001

terrorist attacks on the US, the publication by several American newspapers of Richard Drew's famous photograph of an unidentified man, one of dozens who had jumped to their deaths in attempt to escape the burning towers, caused a "storm of protest" (Klonk, 2018). An article in Esquire magazine noted that "in most American newspapers, the photograph … ran once and never again. Papers all over the country … were forced to defend themselves against charges that they exploited a man's death, stripped him of his dignity, invaded his privacy, turned tragedy into leering pornography" (Junod, 2016).

In the digital era the potential for similar controversies has multiplied. Schwalbe (2005) notes that "discussions about the dissemination of grisly news images will likely grow louder in the years ahead". Beyond concerns of exploiting victims, and offending audiences, editors also have to consider the effect of publishing images. News coverage does more than simply portray situations and events; the way it is told can dramatically shape how audiences and policymakers react to them (Keith, Schwalbe, & Silcock, 2006). Photographs and videos appeal to people on a raw emotional level and can more powerfully influence judgements and decisions than can numbers and statistics which are processed along more rational and deliberative pathways (Ritchin, 2014; Klonk, 2018; Cope, et al., n.d.; Joffe, 2008).

While it is precisely this emotional impact that news providers target in their use of images (Cope, et al., n.d.), there are "frequent tensions between the imperative to report as truthfully as possible and the imperative to prevent harm and maintain a sense of decency" (Horner, 2015, p. 94). Such harm can come in the form of traumatized audiences, especially the young; in the furtherance of the objectives of bad actors such as terrorists; or in abetting misperceptions of the scale and severity of tragedies or atrocities (Keith, Schwalbe, & Silcock, 2006; Cohen-Almagor, 2005).

Further as Susan Sontag (2003, p. 12) notes, the portrayals of some deaths "should not distract … from asking what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are not being shown". Editors face ethical issues when deciding which bodies are appropriate to show since, as Sentilles (2018) argues, "hiding some dead bodies affects how other dead bodies are viewed". She wonders, for example, about the relative absence of images of dead American soldiers when compared to images of the bodies of murdered African Americans in US media. The media's "practice of keeping some bodies protected from view while other bodies — be they victims of bombings or natural disasters or police violence — are visible everywhere" may reinforce racist and nationalist ideas that some deaths are more significant than others – "those visible dead do not belong to us". One of the criticisms levied against the Western press is precisely that it applies "different standards to material from locations broadly thought to be remote or 'over there' rather than close to home" (Takenaga, 2019). As Pizzaro (2014) points out "when it comes to making an editorial call on how graphic an image can be, it doesn't just depend on what the images show but who it shows and where it's taken".

The choice not to publish disturbing images can also be problematic. Experimental studies carried out by Grizzard et al (2017) found that the conventional wisdom that showing graphic media violence leads to antisocial outcomes is not always true. On the contrary, they found that "displaying graphic violence—as compared to sanitizing graphic violence—elicits higher levels of moral emotions, prompting (a) greater moral sensitivity, (b) greater willingness to stop terrorist organizations, and (c) eudaimonic motivations" (p. 777) which they define as "motivations related to being a better person and seeking meaning in life" (p. 768). While acknowledging that showing disturbing imagery risked exaggerating the public perception of risk beyond what was reasonable, they noted that current journalistic codes "fail to acknowledge any potential

benefits" of showing graphic violence which may include cultivating the public appetite and will for early intervention to stop atrocities (p. 769).

Weighing in on the debate on the appropriateness of publishing graphic imagery, Ritchin (2014) argues that not publishing graphic images can open up journalists and news organizations to accusations of "unethically withholding from readers certain horrific imagery of contemporary conflicts and disasters because of a fear of offending or shocking, or even from a fear that readers will abandon the publication altogether".

He also hints at the ethical obligations that editors have to their staff, particularly photographers who may have documented horrific scenes in the hope that getting their pictures published would compel action from those in a position to stop the suffering. By electing not to publish them, editors may be unwittingly harming photojournalists. "The trauma of witnessing such devastation, and the powerlessness that may accompany it, can be more difficult to resolve if one is prevented from sharing what one has seen with others—the reason the photographer was there in the first place" (Ritchin, 2014).

2.6 Audience Influence on News Selection

Publishing decisions are also prone to "individual, organisational and extra-media influences" on publication decisions (de Smaele, Geenen, & De Cock, 2017, p. 58). These levels are:

> "1) the individual level of experiences, attitudes and values, 2) the professional routines (among them the reliance on news values, but also routine sources and working practices), 3) an organisational level including ownership and structure of the enterprise, 4) social institutions such as advertisers and interest groups and, finally, 5) the outer circle of the social system including ideological, cultural, political and economic factors." (de Smaele, Geenen, & De Cock, 2017, pp. 58-59)

Located at the fifth level, audiences have long had a limited influence on newsroom decisions (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr., 2018). Shoemaker and Vos (2009, pp. 78-80) report on disputes between gatekeeping scholars as to how this influence is achieved. Economic theory suggests that news media that do not give the audience what it wants will eventually lose out in the battle for advertisers. Other theories hold that the since the media's direct knowledge of what the audience wants is limited and they can only rely on approximations generated by surveys, media workers tend to rely on what has worked before which is ingrained into the level of professional routines. Reference group theory suggests decisions may be determined by the expectations that editors have of audience reactions. Pool and Shulman (1959) found that when writing stories, journalists engage in fantasies with imaginary audience interlocutors and that the tone of these fantasies, whether positive or negative, influences the accuracy of their reporting.

2.7 Impact of Audiences in the Digital Age

There is little dispute that journalism in the 21st Century is evolving new models both of organizing, delivering and profiting from the news. The very idea of what news is and the values that inform it has been transformed. Beckett (2010) says "News is no longer a product that flops onto your doormat or springs into life at the flick of a remote control… And journalism is no longer a self-contained manufacturing industry" (p. 3). In the era of networked digital media, everyone can be at once a producer and consumer of news -a "prosumer". News is no longer what professional journalists and media companies say it is. Rather, audiences now have much more say over what they wish to read, watch or listen to. The internet has not just increased news choices for consumers; it has changed the way news is gathered as well as the media itself. "We

now have a political news media that has audience interactivity, participation and connectivity built into every aspect" (Beckett, 2010).

Audiences can also respond to editors' decisions in real time and can impose costs, both reputational and financial (in the form of cancelled subscriptions or loss of advertisers), on an offending outlet. Here the literature indicates an ongoing struggle between providing what the audience wants versus what editors and journalists think they need.

Zamith (2015) reviewed the literature on how audience analytics and metrics impacts on newsroom decision-making. He notes that although these have become appealing to news organizations, the extent to which they influence newsroom practice is not uniform across media outlets, even within countries. He says that "there exists an exploitable gap between what editorial news workers consider to be newsworthy and what audience members noteworthy" (p. 51). So, while this type of audience feedback is increasingly important, we must be careful not to overestimate the extent to which it impacts editorial decision-making (Donsbach, 2004). It is also important to clarify, as Zamith does, that much of the literature has concentrated on the impact on journalistic practice rather than on content, with the latter being assumed to follow from the former.

Still, a literature review conducted by Schwalbe et al (2015), for their study into the changing roles of visual journalists and the audiences in the digital age, identifies "perceived audience needs" as one of the factors shaping photo selection at newspapers, along with "market size, … tradition, the changing roles of copy editors and designers, and national trends". Although less than a quarter of respondents in their survey of primarily American visual journalists and editors "saw their role as shaped by readers and viewers", the authors also note that "journalists at traditional outlets might be

reluctant to admit they chose a particular visual simply because it had mass appeal." Gatekeeping scholars have responded to this. For example, Harcup and O'Neill (2016) have revised their famous 2001 updating of Galtung and Ruge's influential 1965 taxonomy of the factors that influence news selection to include new ones, such as shareability, that reflect the different ways news is consumed and distributed online as well as the increasing power of audiences.

Despite the consensus that digital technologies have created new ways of interaction between audiences and messages and opened up journalistic gates to the influence of the audience (Tandoc, 2014), Lee et al (2014) note, "scholars know comparatively little about the potential influence that audiences wield in the gatekeeping of news items" and this is especially so in the case of images.

2.8 Decision-Making in the Newsroom

As Latif and Ibrahim (2012) write, "story selection is a decision-making and choice-making process but a hurried one. As a result, the considerations must be quickly and easily applicable so that choices can be made without too much deliberation". Thus, it is important to examine decision-making theories and models to see how well these fit into the newsroom. In her phenomenological study of decision-making by South African news editors, Nikki Griffiths, after giving a description of the evolution of theories of decision-making, notes that editorial decision-making is a highly complex affair and "to date there is no single empirical theory which integrates all the factors which influence news decisions" and "no one model which can predict whether a story will be published or not" (Griffiths, 2010). She adds that "the decision-making processes of editors has not received the same [scholarly] attention as that of journalists, despite the critical role played by editors - particularly in the case of controversial stories where there is a trade-off of values".

Donsbach (2004), explains that because such an all-encompassing theory is probably impossible, the focus has been on theories explaining the "influence of individual factors in the news flow" (p. 132) such as the theory of news values. According to him, "most communication scholars would agree that research so far has led to four main factors that seem to influence a journalist's decision whether to print or dump a story and how to present it: news factors, institutional objectives, the manipulative power of news sources and the subjective beliefs of journalists" (p. 134). However, he asserts, theories built on the first three factors have failed to have any explanatory value: they describe the realities of newsroom production and relations, but not the processes that generate them. Similarly, he criticizes studies on the fourth factor - the impact of subjective beliefs on news decisions – which, while able to "relate either a journalist's prior knowledge of or attitude towards an issue or a public figure or his or her general ideological beliefs to news decisions" (p. 136), tend to concentrate on correlation rather than explanations. He concludes that "we treat the process of news in many aspects without really unveiling the underlying processes" (p. 136).

2.9 Culture and Media Representations of Death

The literature suggests individual editors' perceptions of their ethical obligations regarding the publication of images of the dead or dying may be influenced by their specific cultural backgrounds including perhaps cultural attitudes towards death. According to Thomas (2014, p. 24) "studies have found that journalism practices vary across cultures". As cited in Kasoma (1996), journalism and philosophy professor John Calhoun Merrill asserted that "a nation's journalism cannot exceed the limits permitted by the society; on the other hand it cannot lag very far behind" (p. 96).

In the introduction to their book on the reporting of death in American journalism, Carolyn Kitch and Janice Hume write that

> journalism itself is a cultural process embedded within a much broader (and older) web of cultural practices. Narratives about death always have had powerful cultural implications … Moreover, as many scholars have noted, death stories are less about the dead than about the living (Kitch & Hume, 2008, p. xiv).

On the other hand, Traber (1989, p. 93) says that "if one were to subject African newspapers to a scrutiny of how rooted they are in African values and traditions, the likely outcome would be that they are foreign bodies in the cultural fabric of Africa."

There is reason to be cautious about the term "African values and traditions" which might be taken to imply that there is a common set of such values and traditions across the continent. Or, as Marais (2016, p. 124) puts it, "that there is simply one unifying 'African' idea". Still, there may be some truth in Idang's (2015) assertion of "underlying similarities shared by many African societies which, when contrasted with other cultures, reveal a wide gap of difference."

Ekore and Lanre-Abass (2016, p. 371) in their paper on say that "Africans do not like facing the reality of death and often do not encourage the contemplation of death, be it their own death or the death of their loved ones. It is somewhat a taboo to think of or discuss one's death … people do not write their living wills or set aside money for their funeral while still alive, contrary to the practice in the western world". Yet, like its counterpart in the West, African journalism is also full of reports of death and dying, from road accidents and natural disasters to homicides and civil wars.

Kenyan newsrooms are multi-cultural settings and the Kenyan mass media can be an arena for "ethnic self-assertion" (Orao, 2009, p. 84) which may or may not affect the approach editors take when covering violence and death. Rasul (2014, p. 42) opines that "journalists in multicultural societies have to face a great deal of difficulty in striking a balance between the dominant culture of majority and the cultural patterns of

minorities. As there is always a conflict among values in such societies, the journalists prefer to advance consensual values of the dominant group in times of crises". There are few studies that document whether this is the case in Kenyan newsrooms especially as concerns the portrayal of death.

Kasoma (1996) would be skeptical of this as in his view, "the continent's journalists have closely imitated the professional norms of the North (formerly known as the West) which they see as the epitome of good journalism [and] refuse to listen to any suggestions that journalism can have African ethical roots and still maintain its global validity and appeal" (p. 95). If this is the case, then perhaps the "dominant culture" in the Kenyan newsroom may be a Western import rather than a reflection of the cultural realities amongst Kenyan audiences. This may account for the trend identified in this study where some editors validate their image selection decisions by checking them against those of Western media outlets and agencies.

2.10 Africa Media Ethics

White (2010) looks at the moral foundations of a peculiarly African media ethics. He observes that "too much of [such] analysis has been purely speculative: starting with a conception of values supposedly operative in African societies without examining whether these values are actually influencing the behavior of media professionals" (p. 63).

His review of studies of media practice concludes that there is "little evidence that a communalistic worldview rooted in a socialization into loyalty to family, ethnic ties, and community is a direct influence on a sense of moral obligation in journalistic practice" (p. 64). While noting that "there probably is no one typical ethical journalistic practice" and that "the reasons for ethical journalism can vary greatly in different

African contexts (p. 63)", he hypothesizes that ethical behavior may nonetheless be rooted in idealistic conceptualization of the role of the journalist within liberal-democracy as defender of the weak and marginalized and afflicter of the powerful. African journalists, he says, however lack "ethical consistency. They can be idealistic in reporting violations of human rights in one moment, and then selling out their independent conscience in the next moment" (p. 64). This he attributes to "a lack of 'system awareness,' that is, the awareness that because of the interdependence of all people in contemporary organic societies, my actions not only result in immediate benefit or harm but that they tend to reverberate throughout the system and eventually come back to harm or benefit me also" (p. 64).

Such rooting of behavior in the notion of the journalist's role is not a uniquely "African" idea and may be a link to classic deontological theories of ethics, which in Western philosophy, as Breit (2011) notes, "encompasses the concept of social contract, on which many journalists rely to found their right to freedom of speech" (p. 100).

It is important here to note Francis Kasoma's (1996) push for a media ethics founded on "Afriethics" – which grows from African cultural exceptionalist and relativist conceptions of how stereotypical Africans distinguish "good from bad behaviour, a good person from a bad one" (p. 102) - which he hoped would rescue the African journalist from the tag of "professional liar" (p. 102).

However, Banda (2009) has criticized Afriethics' historicity for its "romantic reconstruction of the pre-colonial situation and a frozen view of harmony in rural Africa" (p. 235). He argues that Afriethics makes "it seem that precolonial African values are frozen in a cocoon of essentialism" (p. 236), ignoring the "imprinted marks of colonialism, postcolonialism and globalization" (p. 236). As noted by White (2010,

p. 51), Afriethics can be faulted for its tendency "to reinforce the propensity of journalism students and journalists to uncritically idolize authoritarian leadership". Tomaselli (2003) also criticizes "the utterly reductive assumption that the 54 African countries, and myriad array of cultures, religions and languages, can be prescriptively reduced to homogeneous sets of continent-wide social and cultural 'African values'" (p. 428).

Tomaselli (2003) identifies two schools of thought that have emerged from the debates over the ways in which journalists in southern Africa should approach the news. One believes that journalists should "adhere to the principles of a free press as these are understood internationally" (p. 429) while remaining sensitive to the cultural values of their societies. The other sees African journalists as catering to the unique needs of contemporary African society and acting in the service of nation-building, as more of 'guide dog' than 'watch dog' (p. 430).

While attempts to integrate the two approaches often succumb to the deceptive lure of pan-African values, he notes that some scholars have "fractured the opacity of the concept of ubuntu in theoretically compelling ways, balancing community–individual relations in less confining interactions" (p. 430), which may open the way, at least theoretically, to addressing White's concern about a lack of "system awareness".

In all these, there are echoes of utilitarian approaches to resolving ethical issues posed by journalistic practice. According to Horner (2015) a moral dilemma involves a clash between different moral principles when those principles may equally be applied to the same situation" (p. 94). In a chapter on the depictions of violence, he points out "frequent tensions between the imperative to report as truthfully as possible and the imperative to prevent harm and maintain a sense of decency". In either case, there are

undesirable consequences – either some harm is committed, or aspects of the truth are suppressed. For the editors caught on the horns of such dilemmas, the utilitarian viewpoint would require choosing the option of the least harm.

2.11 Death Images in Kenyan Media

There are few academic studies that focus specifically on the factors influencing how death is portrayed in Kenyan mainstream press. As Folker Hanusch (2010) notes in his book on the reporting of death in the media, "there is currently very little research available from non-Western countries' reporting of death... there is in fact an important gap in the literature in this regard".

Kenya's mainstream press is largely in private hands (Nyanjom, 2012) . In looking at the effect of ownership on reporting, Croteau and Hoynes (2005) say private US media can be viewed through two prisms: the market model and the public sphere model. They see a fundamental conflict between the two perspectives. One framework views the audience as consumers, values popularity and has as its primary role the maximization of profit for shareholders. The other sees them as citizens, values the substance of news content, and aims to generate an active citizenry. Given that private media organizations are both businesses and custodians of public interest, this leads to difficult ethical dilemmas forcing journalists to weigh profitability against social outcomes.

Simiyu (2013) notes that Kenyan media outlets often put profit first and "abrogate their role of being independent watchdogs to that of corporate mercenaries who adjust their critical scrutiny to suit their private purpose". In examining the coverage of terrorist attacks in Kenya, Adhoch (2014) observes that a competition for scoops "might have resulted in lapses in professional and ethical journalism" (p. 14).

Respondents to his study indicated that Kenyan media's "use of gruesome and horrific pictures and footage and the choice of words in describing terrorist activities had also aggravated the fears and anxiety among the public" (p. 51). The example of the Sunday Nation's publication of the Westgate photo cited in the previous chapter could be instructive. One editor felt that the publication of the offending photo "may have been purely driven by the desire to break the news in an alarming way to get wider readership and revenue" (MCK, 2014, p. 23). It should further be noted that the Sunday Nation also manipulated the photo, flipping it horizontally, so it would work better with the layout – a practice which appears to fit within Deni and Paul Elliott's definition of "journalistic misconduct" (Elliott & Elliott, 2003).

Regardless, relatively few gory images make it onto Kenyan newspaper pages and TV screens. An analysis of Kenyan print media coverage of terrorism in 2015 found that the use of images increased significantly following a terrorist attack (Kiarie & Mogambi, 2017) and a content analysis of stories on insecurity in Kenya print and TV media over a six month period in 2014 found that just 5 percent of stories were accompanied by "bloody, gruesome and unpleasant photographs and scenes" (Kibet, 2015). On the other hand, a study of Kenyan print media reporting of road traffic accidents found that although newspapers tended to cover incidents involving high numbers of deaths and serious injuries, overall very few stories on road accidents were accompanied by photographs (Mogambi & Nyakeri, 2015).

In her study of the photographic representation of death and grief in Greek newspapers during the Second Gulf War, Christina Konstantinidou notes that while demand for the "photographic representation of war, especially the 'human casualties' genre" can be to a great extent ascribed to market pressures, it is also "grounded on the European ideal of moral universalism which posits that … publicising misery is

sufficient to stimulate the conscience of the public and motivate citizens to acts of benevolence or political action" (Konstantinidou, 2007, p. 148). The publication (or non-publication) of disturbing images of violence may therefore also have something to do with the desire to achieve or avoid particular political outcomes.

Kenyan editors sometimes take steps to prevent images of violence that may inflame situations. In a tweet posted in the aftermath of the Times publication of the Dusit D2 photo, photojournalist and activist, Boniface Mwangi, commented on the use of graphic photographs he had taken during the post-election violence that had engulfed Kenya a decade earlier: "The wise editors [at The Standard, the country's second-largest newspaper] made an editorial decision, 'if we publish the images of the dead it will lead to revenge attacks.' After the violence ended we used the pictures for awareness and reconciliation purposes" (Mwangi, 2019).

In fact, some scholars see the media's role in reporting terrorist attacks as going beyond relating the facts about the conflict, but as a participant taking sides for or against the terrorists. Kisang (2014) for example, asserts that "the media should cooperate with the government in the war on terrorism" (p. 83), faulting the media for the "considerable amount of terrorist and victim images" that accompanies their reporting and the use of "positive words in describing people linked to terrorism" (p. 79).

Konstantinidou (2007) also discusses the weaponization of photographic images during the Iraq conflict. "Images of war were not indiscriminate explosions of visuality but rather carefully and precisely targeted tools'; that is to say 'smart weapons' in the media campaign, planned and enacted by the US military and its allies" (p. 149). She argues that wars involving Anglo-Americans since the 1990s have been substantively

"media-ised and PR-ised" with imagery reflecting military war propaganda rather than traditional news reporting including "a concerted effort to keep the visual representation of death off Western television screens and front pages" (p. 149).

A similar logic can be seen in the Kenya government's attempts to influence and control media reporting on the country's military operation against Islamic extremists in Somalia - and the terrorist attacks it has engendered (Otieno, 2015). In 2014, the ruling Jubilee party forced through a chaotic Parliament the Security Laws Amendment Act, which sought to criminalize, among other acts, the publication of photographs of victims of a terrorist attack "without the consent of the National Police Service and of the victim" (Article 19, 2014). The effect of the law, provisions of which were subsequently struck down by the courts, would have been to introduce prior censorship on the reporting of terror attacks.

Just over a year later, after the Al Shabaab attacked an African union Mission in Somalia base manned by Kenyan troops near the Somali town of El Adde – killing nearly 200 in the process - the government was quick to clamp down on any publication or distribution of images of the dead soldiers, equating such to "sympathising with the terrorists" (Muyanga, 2016; Einashe, 2016). While mainstream publications tended to steer clear of such images, their reasons for editors doing so are yet to be investigated.

It is also important to consider to what extent editors' decisions are informed by their organizations' editorial policies as well as industry codes of conduct and laws. In Kenya, the first industry Code of Conduct and Practice of Journalism published in 2001 by the Media Industry Steering Committee, reads in part: "publication of photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents, and abhorrent scenes should be avoided unless the publication of such photographs will serve the public interest" (Accountable

Journalism, 2015). This is the same language that has been incorporated into the statutory Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism which is enshrined in law within the Second Schedule of the Media Council Act 2013 and applies to all local and foreign journalists practicing in the country. On images of violence and death, it says:

> (2) Publication of photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes shall be avoided unless the publication or broadcast of such photographs will serve the public interest.
>
> (3) Where possible an alert shall be issued to warn viewers or readers of the information being published" (MCK, 2013).

The code also contains requirements to "respect the personal dignity and privacy of others" and restricting photography of children, with special care accorded to those "in difficult circumstances".

The Daily Nation's Editorial Policy (Nation Media Group, n.d.) essentially restates these same requirements, sometimes word for word, but also requires that editorial content be selected solely "for its inherent news value" which is to be determined by "interrogating the extent to which it satisfies the 'so what?' element." How editors determine what serves "the public interest" as well as what constitutes sufficient satisfaction of the "'so what' element" is seemingly left up to the editors themselves.

While examining the influence of proprietors on news processing and coverage, Joe Kadhi, himself a former Managing Editor of Kenya's Daily Nation as well as Deputy Editor-in- Chief, conducted a series of workshops with over 300 journalists from English-speaking countries of Africa including Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, The Gambia and Sudan. He reports that "Almost all the journalists participating in media workshops agreed that newspaper proprietors in Anglophone Africa seem to have succeeded in making puppets out of their editors. They seem to

have also succeeded in commanding total control of their newspapers" (Kadhi, 1999). However, they also identified seven "principles" - freedom of the press, independence, impartiality, fair play, decency, accuracy and responsibility – concerning which "no self-respecting newspaper owner in the region could claim to have any say in his establishment if he could not guide his editors" and "no newspaper editor worth his salt would blindly allow the owner or any other authority to bend rules" (p. 85). This seeming contradiction, which Kadhi does not address, might be an example of the reluctance by journalists at traditional outlets to admit to external influences on their editorial decision making noted by Schwalbe et al (2015).

It is worth noting that the seven principles are borrowed from the "Canons of Journalism" adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April 1923 (Rodgers, 2007). Kadhi (1999) discusses how the principle of decency, which covers "incentives to base conduct, such as to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for general good" as well as "pandering to vicious instincts" (p. 97), was implemented in Kenya's two top print newspapers. He asserts that "on the issue of morality, both The Nation and The Standard editorial management teams did not seem to need any guidelines from newspaper owners" (p. 97). He also provides an example from his own experience of "how [increasingly] sensitive people become when owners of newspapers are in town" (p. 98).

2.12 Summary

This review of the academic literature has indicated gaps in our understanding of how editors make decisions to publish graphic images in the digital era. Prior gatekeeping studies have focused on values relating to newsworthiness as determinants of image selection decisions and have tended to downplay or disregard the ethical considerations that inform such selections. Yet the digital age has reshaped the media

ecology, empowering far off audiences and requiring gatekeepers to be cognizant of both local and global contexts when making determinations around what is publishable. So far, there is little agreement among scholars and on a global media ethics to help editors navigate this new era and the new relationships it has spawned.

Network Gatekeeping theory and the Spiral of Silence theory offer clues about how the internet has reconfigured relationships and the role of media as well as insights into how online audience reactions can impact editors' selection decisions. The picture that emerges is one where editors have to contend with diverse audiences who hold differing and sometimes contradictory values and expectations and who have the power to impose significant reputational and financial sanctions on media enterprises.

The literature also shows that media representations of death, and especially violent death, as well as horrific injury have been a crucible of significant ethical and cultural contestation between editors, media establishments, governments, audiences and new gatekeeping entities such as online platforms. What is less understood is the fact that these new realities are influencing newsroom workers understanding of media ethics obligations and ultimately their decision-making around the publication of graphic images.

By documenting the lived experiences of Kenyan print and online newspaper editors this study generates insights into some of the ways that media workers are responding to this new environment.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

All researchers should be cognizant of the philosophical assumptions that guide their work. Creswell (2014) urges that individuals make explicit the larger world view they hold and how it explains their research choices.

This study was informed by a transformative worldview which builds on the notion of socially constructed realities. Social constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand the world they live and work in. These individuals develop subjective meanings about phenomena from their experiences and from interactions with others in society. These socially constructed realities can be varied, multiple and even contradictory, and are greatly influenced by the context, personal histories and cultural perspectives. A transformative worldview builds on these notions of socially constructed realities but includes a specific focus on how power affects these constructions, taking care not only to include the voices of the marginalized, such as women or ethnic minorities, but also to reflect on the power dynamics the researcher brings to the research process (Creswell, 2014; Corlett & Mavin, 2018).

In doing this, the transformative researcher recognizes he is not a blank slate or a neutral actor; and that "research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants" (Bourke, 2014). Therefore, both in the design of the study and in his interpretation of findings, he will take into account his own personal, cultural and historical experience and biases, as well as his power relationships with the participants.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Creswell (2014) the three main research approaches – quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods – are not discrete but rather part of a continuum. "Research tends to be more qualitative than quantitative or vice versa" and mixed methods resides in between these two extremes, incorporating elements of both. This research adopted a qualitative research approach which was "grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and explores the meaning individuals ascribe to social phenomena. The selection of this approach in informed by the philosophical worldview espoused above as well as the requirement to understand the ethical reasoning employed by the participants.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is the road map of an investigation or a study. It demonstrates how the research data was collected and analysed. A good research design ensures that the research findings and the conclusions drawn from them are valid and trustworthy. At the outset, it is important for researchers to state their intent in conducting the research. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) "historically, qualitative methodologists have described three major purposes for research: to *explore*, *explain* or *describe* a phenomenon". However, these are not exclusive categories. As they go on to note, "many qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: They build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in literature".

The purpose for this research was both exploratory and descriptive. The research design was a case study. Case studies are well suited to in depth exploration of phenomena (Creswell, 2014). It involves carrying out "an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 15).

For the purposes of this study, senior Kenyan newspaper editors based in Nairobi were considered as a single case. The boundaries of the case were defined by seniority and decision-making capacity within the newsroom and the study used the individual newsroom editors as the unit of analysis.

3.4 Population

The study population was based on media houses with nationally distributed print newspapers which also publish online editions, and which are based in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Newsroom personnel working within five publications -The Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star, The People Daily and Nairobi News – from January 1998 to December 2019 formed the study population. All the publications have both a print and online edition except for Nairobi News, which was previously published in print but has been reborn as an online tabloid newspaper (Mutunga, 2016). The choice of dates is informed by the fact that the Daily Nation, which has the oldest online presence, has online holdings that date back to 1998 (Howard-Reguindin, 2008).

3.5 Target population

The specific target population consisted of the personnel involved in the processing of news images within the newsroom. These include photo editors, page editors, chief sub-editors and managing editors. The 2019 Media Council of Kenya List of Accredited Journalists (MCK, 2019) contained 184 Nairobi-based news processors from the Nation Media Group (76), the Standard Group (79) and Mediamax Network Limited (29) publishers of The People. The list includes 19 Nairobi-based accredited journalists from The Star/Radio Africa Group. However, all but one (listed as a Training Editor) were listed as news gatherers - correspondents, photojournalists, reporters (See *Appendix A*).

A separate list was obtained of newsroom personnel at The Star from an insider which identified 17 people. One experienced senior editor who had retired was also included in the study (See *Appendix B*).

3.6 Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select interviewees. Etikan et al. (2016) define purposive sampling as "the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses". On the basis of the nature of the research problem and his or her understanding of the problem and variables identified in the literature, the researcher decides "what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience… It involves identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest" (p. 2).

The sampling strategy was suitable as the knowledge sought was only limited to a small group within the larger sampling frame, that is, those who had actually been involved in publishing decisions to do with graphic images. Potential interviewees still working in newsrooms were identified using their roles and seniority. The latter consideration was based on two assumptions. One is that extremely controversial publishing decisions, such as those involving graphic images, are most likely to be taken by senior and experienced newsroom workers. The other was that the most experienced and knowledgeable study participants would also be more likely to occupy senior positions in the newsroom. Once approached, potential participants were asked to confirm whether they had been involved in decision-making on graphic images before sitting for an interview.

In all, 15 editors (See *Appendix C*) were interviewed including 3 women editors. The sample was made up of 4 photo editors, 4 online editors, 4 print editors including one chief sub-editor, 1 managing editor overseeing print, 1 editorial manager overseeing both print and digital editions, and 1 retired editorial manager who also had overseen both print and digital newspapers. Their years of experience as newsroom editors ranged from less than 3 years to over 40 years. The average newsroom editing experience for online editors was 7.5 years. For print and photo editors as a group, this was 13 years. The two editorial managers, on the other hand, had each worked in an editorial capacity for over 40 years.

3.7 Data Collection

The study relied on qualitative primary data. The data was primarily collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews using an interview guide (See *Appendix D*) composed of open-ended questions as well as a document review. Interviews can be useful for uncovering participants' perspectives and describing complex interactions such as occur within the newsrooms (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The interviews were in a one-on-one format and were recorded and later transcribed. The researcher also maintained a field journal to aid in analysis as well as reflexive practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Documents detailing ethical procedures such as editorial policies, guidelines and codes of conduct were collected and reviewed. In total 3 internal editorial policies were analysed as well as the statutory Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism and publisher guidelines for online platforms, Google News and Facebook News.

A research license was also procured from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed thematically using theory-generated codes and codes which emerged from the data. The theoretical review had identified values that were considered to determine image selection which were categorized into news values, selection factors and newswriting objectives. These values, such as proximity and aesthetics were used as codes. Other codes emanating from the literature indicated levels of moral reasoning such as seeking rewards, following rules and reliance on conscience (See *Appendix E*). Codes originating from the data included concepts such as abstraction.

The data was hand-coded using the constant comparison method which involves "a line-by-line analysis, asking, 'What is this sentence about?' and 'How is it similar to or different from the preceding or following statements?'" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 91). Codes were generated by identifying words, phrases and sometimes sentence groups within the data that conveyed similar meanings. For example, the code "audience distress" encompassed words such as "revolting" and "shocking", as well as longer sentences like "I work for a family paper… Will people really be happy to see this kind of image in our paper?"

The coding then allowed for identification of patterns, trends and themes which, in line with Creswell (2014) were presented as the major findings.

According to Ryan and Bernard (2003) "at the heart of qualitative data analysis is the task of discovering themes" which they define as "abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects" (p. 85). These themes originate from "coding, categorization, and analytic reflection" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 14). Patterns and trends are

identified within the assembled data (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 43) and themes emerge from the analysis of these patterns and trends.

"Patterns are regularities," offers Hatch (2002)

> They come in several forms, including similarity (things happen the same way), difference (they happen in predictably different ways), frequency (they happen often or seldom), sequence (they happen in a certain order), correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events), and causation (one appears to cause another) (p. 155).

A trend can be thought of as "a recurring pattern" (Trend Analysis, n.d.). The strength or validity of a trend was ascertained by the frequency with which the underlying patterns occur in the data. In this study the strength of the trends was indicated by the use of words and phrases like "a few", "some", "many" and "most" which related to the proportion of participants or documents showing a particular pattern.

In the study, an example of a pattern was editor's statements that what was ethically acceptable was what "felt right". The frequency of such descriptions, in this case "most" constituted a trend and the emergent theme from this was that editors relied on their intuition and experience rather than on a methodical analysis of factors when making moral judgments.

3.9 Validity

Triangulating the perspectives of multiple participants both within and across media houses added to the validity of the study. Major findings were also be shared with selected experienced and knowledgeable participants along with follow-up interviews as another measure to check validity.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations during the conduct of the study included complying with all relevant laws and regulations for the conduct of research such as getting a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (See *Appendix F*) and adhering to the conditions of the permit. Prior to this, ethics approval was sought and received from the Aga Khan University – Graduate School of Media and Communications' Ethics Review Committee (See *Appendix G*) which resulted in an introductory letter to NACOSTI (See *Appendix H*).

Informed consent was achieved through the use and explanation of a clearly articulated consent form (See *Appendix I*) which stated the purposes of the research and how findings would be utilized. Participants were also be offered an opportunity to review the major findings as well as a copy of the final product.

Confidentiality of the participants was assured by anonymizing the data through scrubbing off any identifying and personal details from the data, including any identifiable references to employers. Personal contact information was only collected for the purpose of follow up and was not shared with anyone else. The collected data was immediately transcribed, stored securely and deleted from recording devices.

Participants were not be paid nor offered any financial inducements or promises for participating in the study. The choice of locations for the interviews as far as possible sought to maximize the convenience, comfort and confidentiality of participants.

Given the nature of the images discussed, care was taken not to traumatize or re-traumatize participants by prior warning of the subject of the interview, avoiding gratuitous reference to traumatic events in the formulation of questions (Kallio, Pietila,

Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016), avoiding venues that may be associated with such events (e.g. Westgate Mall and Dusit D2 Hotel) and not pressuring participants to reflect on events they were uncomfortable speaking about.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected during the study. The questions it sought to answer are:

1. What do Kenyan editors understand by the term "graphic image" when considering publication of images of death and dying?
2. What are the considerations that Kenya newspaper editors take into account when making ethical decisions on the publication of graphic images of death and dying in online and print newspapers?
3. How do potential online audience reactions influence editors' decisions on whether to publish graphic images of death and dying in print newspapers and online editions?
4. How have editors' perceptions of media ethics been impacted by the digital age?

To answer these questions, fifteen in-depth interviews were carried with senior newsroom editors over a period of two weeks between December 2 and December 13, 2019. In addition, editorial policies and the codes of conduct from three media houses as well as the statutory Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism (CCPJ) contained in the Media Council of Kenya Act 2013, and Facebook and Google guidelines were reviewed. This was done to explore and describe the institutional contexts within which the editors were operating and to ascertain the extent to which these mirrored their constructed realities.

Participants included former and present editorial managers, senior print editors, photo editors, chief sub editors, and online or digital editors in the Daily Nation, Nairobi

News, The Standard, The Star and The People newspapers in Kenya. The interviews were each about 45 minutes long and were mostly carried out in private meeting rooms or offices within the participants' workplaces. The interviews were thereafter transcribed and all identifying features stripped from the data before it was coded and analysed.

In general, digital editors tended to be younger and less experienced than their print counterparts and within the two groups, there was no great variation in views that would need to be accounted for by gender or age.

4.2 Data Analysis, Presentation, and Interpretation

4.2.1 Theme: Editors largely rely on their own discretion as there is no standardized definition in the various documents meant to guide them in decision-making.

A major trend to emerge from the interviews was that in relation to graphic images was editors' concern over whether images would be expected to cause distress to individuals or significant sections of the audience. The need to protect audiences from distress was a widely repeated pattern.

According to one editor:

> Content that I would call graphic is something that is inappropriate that would not suit, would cause a bit of anxiety, or even traumatize the person who is coming to contact with it.

Another said:

> a graphic image basically in publication is anything that is shocking to the audience.

Another trend was that most editors exercise their own discretion and rarely consult any guideline when deciding whether images are distressing. One editor who had worked in newsrooms for eight years noted:

> In all the years I have been in media, I haven't come across any guidance on what exactly is a graphic image. So I guess it is left to your own discretion.

Another editor also spoke of the lack of reliable guidance

> Starting right from the Media Council guidelines. It's very fake and very vague. It just says that something that is offensive, but there's no clear guidelines. What might be offensive to me, might not be offensive to you!

4.2.2 Theme: What makes an image potentially disturbing is a function of both the content of the image and the context in which it was taken.

Many editors used similar terms to describe the elements in a graphic image. In terms of content, they mentioned elements like blood, dead bodies, severed limbs or horrific injuries and disfigurement. One photo editor included:

> Any photo that shows blood.

Another editor said:

> Beyond blood, blood is just one of them but beyond blood. It would be something to do with death, dead bodies.

One online editor included images “of animal brutality” although others said images of animals slaughtered for food during ceremonies were not considered disturbing to Kenyan audiences.

In addition, some also included elements that could enable personal identification of victims of tragedy are also considered to be disturbing. For example, one editor noted regarding images from car accidents:

> I insist we blur the clothes because here, you might sit and you see this is your mother’s handbag.

The context of the image includes where it was taken, who was in them, the nature of the event, and, in the case of photographs showing injured victims, whether they survived or not.

One editor noted that images of emaciated victims of starvation were generally not distressing to audiences

> We don't get complains from the Media Council, whoever, or indeed from readers, about pictures of starving children.

However, this was not mentioned by other editors.

Regarding the publication of a photograph of a victim of a terror attack, one editor said:

> If we knew she had died, we would not have used it.

Another averred that:

> If something is happening in Asia, is happening in Russia, and we're here in Kenya, some sort of [graphic] pictures might find a way that you can still use them. But when they are too close to you, then they affect your consumers.

The analysis of codes supported many of these themes as described below.

There is no standardized definition of graphic images in in-house editorial policies, the CCPJ, nor in the codes and standards employed by online platforms. Within some of these documents, there are scattered refences to elements that might relate to images of death and dying.

For example, the CCPJ in Rule 10(2) under the heading "Obscenity, taste and tone in reporting" mentions

> photographs showing mutilated bodies, bloody incidents and abhorrent scenes.

Then in Rule 21(3), under the heading "Use of pictures and names", it speaks of

> pictures of grief [and] disaster

while Rule 23(1) under the heading "Acts of violence", it includes presentation of

> acts of violence, armed robberies, banditry and terrorist activities in a manner that glorifies such anti-social conduct.

In-house editorial policies for the most part mirrored the language of the CCPJ.

Guidelines issued to Google search quality raters, who generate data from search results which is used to improve Google's search algorithms, urge them to

> represent users in [their] locale and use [their] judgment to determine what constitutes upsetting or offensive content.

Facebook has a detailed "Community Standards" which contain lengthy and detailed descriptions of graphic content. For example, it requires warnings for

> photos of wounded or dead people if they show: dismemberment, visible internal organs, partially decomposed bodies, charred or burning people, victims of cannibalism, and throat-slitting.

4.2.3 Theme: Editors used graphic images for their shock value

A strong trend is editors exploiting the distressing nature of graphic images to achieve editorial and agenda-setting objectives. The associated patterns include using the images to vividly communicate the magnitude and gravity of a tragedy when it is felt words would not suffice as well as employing them as agenda-setting tools to incite pressure for political action. According to one editor:

> Every editor has found themselves in that situation, because the story requires the bodies to be shown. You feel like you will not have done justice to the story.

Explaining the decision to publish images of emaciated victims of starvation, another editor pointed out that:

> Shaking the Kenyan conscience was an editorially compelling reason.

This is somewhat in line with the guidance offered by the CCPJ and editorial codes as well as in the Facebook Community Standards which emphasize "public interest" and newsworthiness as legitimate reasons for using potentially disturbing images.

4.2.4 Theme: Media house systems were better suited to print rather than online news processing.

The policies and systems for processing and filtering images in place in most media houses cater to the routines of print production but were deemed by most online editors as inappropriate for their needs. These include the use of photo editors to gather and pre-select images from photographers in the field as well as regularly scheduled editorial meetings.

The in-house guidelines reviewed prescribe regular meetings to manage content on both print and online platforms. For example, the Nation Media Group's editorial policy requires daily editorial conferences - in the morning to review "the previous day's efforts" and in the afternoon to:

> review coverage at hand and possible later developments, selecting possible lead stories for each medium, identifying content from NMG's African correspondents, for syndication and for common usage across the regional platforms.

While print editors generally followed these policies, their digital counterparts tended to circumvent them due to the limited time for online production. They had few editorial meetings and many times bypassed the photo editors and sourced images directly from photographers in the field or from the internet. As one digital editor noted:

> For the newspaper itself, the physical paper it is more structured. All the photographers usually drop images through the photo editors and the images are uploaded into software, you know same pool... But for online, it's a bit unstructured because first, you do not have the latitude to wait for that process to be completed… You know the photographers will just forward the photos on your email or you can borrow a photo from social media and use it. So, most of the times online you find that the checks are fewer as opposed to the print.

The situation can be partly explained by the fact that the media houses originally only published in print and the physical paper is still their main source of revenue. Despite their claims to "digital first" production, they have not invested in developing

policies and systems that cater to the needs of online news distribution and instead have sought to adapt the existing rules designed for the routines of print production.

4.2.5 Theme: Editors do not employ methodical reasoning processes when resolving ethical dilemmas

The researcher sought to know how ethical dilemmas regarding the publication of graphic images were resolved. A strong trend was that moral judgments are made intuitively. The underlying pattern was that most participants said they relied on what felt right and on their own experience to determine what was ethically acceptable. According to one editor:

> The thinking is that, if your judgement is that the image is too graphic to show, then there's no need to put it out there.

Another said:

> I don't think we have very clear guidelines on what is offensive. And what is not offensive at times is left your own judgement.

There were several justifications offered for the reliance on intuition. Some felt that they had no choice since, they said, ethics codes and policies provided little guidance. One editor said:

> In all the years I have been in media, I haven't come across any guidance on what exactly is a graphic image. So I guess it is left to your own discretion.

Another suggested that editors saw their intuitive judgments as reflecting societal standards. One editor said:

> I think editors use themselves as a test.

Another said:

> Myself as a gatekeeper … I represent the audience.

One photo editor felt his long years of experience had aligned his judgment to the requirements of ethics codes and editorial policies and so he did not need to refer to them:

> I've been in the industry for long and so those rules, even when they're being brought to us, I think I'm used to them.

Some in-house policies frowned on intuitive decision-making but do not provide an alternative. For example, the Nation Media Group's editorial policy specifically forbids basing publishing decisions on personal moral judgment.

> Journalists and editors must not allow their … views or morals and ethics [to] influence their editorial judgment.

Yet the same policy also requires editors to use images that comply with "prevailing social norms" but does not explain how these norms are to be determined without recourse to subjective judgments.

Though the Standard Media Group's policy urges editors to use "their common sense" when applying its guidelines, it fails to acknowledge that "common sense" is a problematic and ever-shifting standard and in this context may only refer to what the editor assumes, rightly or wrongly, to be commonly held beliefs (Kelly, 2008). It may thus be difficult to divorce "common sense" from personal judgments about ethics and morality.

However, contrary to what the editors said, this study identified that some of the editorial policies do contain specific guidance which details specific steps and considerations that the editors could take when faced with ethical dilemmas relating to graphic images. The Nation Media Group and Radio Africa Group editorial policies, for example, contain this test for assessing photographs:

a) Is the depiction of a particular scene and the language used likely to be regarded as filthy, revolting, repugnant, dirty or lewd?
b) With regards to pictures, the following should offer guidelines:

1. Is it vulgar and indecent?

11. Is it mere pornography'?

c) Is it invasive of a person's privacy? If yes then is the use of the content justified by a clear and indisputable public interest?

The Standard Group editorial policy also contains “The Omand Principles” a list of five questions that editors should ask about a situation that borders on privacy intrusion.

Another strong trend common to both print and online editors was that they relied on consultation with colleagues as a strategy for navigating ethical dilemmas. However, they do so in markedly different ways. The identified pattern for consultations among print editors is that they are usually done during regularly scheduled editorial meetings. Noting that decisions can involve the input of up to seven senior editors, one photo editor said:

> Nothing is published on the front page of the [newspaper] without collective decision.

In such meetings, decisions are sometimes voted upon by editors present while at other times, the most senior editor present makes the decision.

For online editors, the pattern involved impromptu one-on-one discussions, sometimes between writers and editors. Given the youth and relative inexperience of many of the personnel working for online newspapers, this can lead to poor decisions or “slip ups” as one editor described them.

> Once in a blue moon, you will find that there was a slip-up in print but it is mainly the online people.

A weaker trend involved validating selection decisions by checking them against “international” Western media outlets and agencies. The pattern is to observe whether or not those outlets and agencies had published or distributed similar images online. The trend was not very strong as only a few editors mentioned this as a strategy

they employed. Describing the choice to use a graphic image in the coverage of a terrorist attack in Nairobi, one print editor noted:

> [A] Western agency had actually already processed their pictures. I remember someone coming to me and saying, 'You see even these guys have used this picture'.

An online editor also said he sometimes scans what has been published online by international outlets as a guide to making ethical decisions.

> There was an incident, I don't know where, where the villagers were butchering buffaloes. I think they butchered 10,000 of them. You could see the BBC, had published, Guardian everyone, you know the New York Times, everyone… And I thought why not?

This speaks to the fact that "international" Western news outlets are generally, though not always, assumed to uphold a higher standard than local outlets. As one editor reflected, poor publishing decisions by "global media houses" like the BBC and the New York Times, had more to do with individual failures of judgment rather than with their policies. This is interesting in light of the admission by most Kenyan editors that they did not consult in-house editorial policies when making decisions.

Another trend mentioned by only a few editors involves using the online newspaper and social media accounts to test online audience reactions to images before they are published in print. One online editor said:

> If for instance we have an image that we would want to publish in the newspaper, on print, we would sometimes … post it online; just to see the reaction.

The thinking behind this seems to be that if images attract a negative audience reaction online, they can quickly be pulled down unlike in print where they are permanent. This is a way of "consulting" with the audience and speaks to the importance some print editors attach to online audience reactions even when they are reluctant to admit it.

4.2.6 Theme: Kenyan editors do not feel they have ethical obligations to non-Kenyan online audiences

A strong trend was that both online and print editors conceptualize their audiences as almost exclusively Kenyans, located in Kenya or in the diaspora. This might seem obvious given that most physical newspapers circulate within Kenya and online analytics, according to online editors, demonstrate that the vast majority of their online readers are Kenyan as well. However, it is important to note considering that this study was conducted less than a year after the uproar over the New York Times coverage of the Dusit D2 attack. Kenyans form a tiny proportion of the NYT audience but were able to force the paper to respond. There was a pattern among Kenyan editors of disregarding or minimizing consideration of foreign audiences. According to one editor who oversees both print and online platforms:

> We just think of our audience completely Kenyan... We don't think about or discuss about the international [audience].

Another online editor said:

> For me, honestly, I don't worry too much about those people abroad.

When asked whether he worried about offending non-Kenyan audiences, one photo editor said:

> Our rule of not using bloody photos… applies to even pictures from out there.

However, the same photo editor also noted regarding graphic images from incidents in far off places like Russia, that

> some sort of pictures might find a way that you can still use them, but when [the incident is] too close to you, then they affect your consumers.

The editor was thus willing to relax the general rule against using graphic images when they featured foreigners, even though they might offend foreign audiences.

The audience is an important consideration in print and online editors' decision-making. According to one editor, the fear of antagonizing audiences outweighed that of violating professional ethics when considering publication of graphic photos:

> When an editor or a journalist or a photographer sees a good picture, they would like to smuggle it into the paper. One thing that will stop them ultimately is not the ethical constriction, is that, well, it will be public tomorrow. And I'll have to contend with public reaction. That's a bigger restraint than knowing that it's unethical.

However, with the notable exception of photo editors, few print editors said audiences exerted a powerful influence on their publishing decisions. Said one editor:

> One is very alert to what people are saying and taking it to account post-publication. But I don't think pre-publication it dominates our thoughts.

This is in line with Schwalbe et al., (2015) findings that journalists at traditional outlets might be reluctant to admit to the power audiences exert on their choice of images.

Online editors on the other hand were more forthcoming about the effect of audiences, some suggesting that this was because they had to maximize engagement metrics. One said:

> I am looking at how the audience will receive [an] image, the retweets, and all. So, the audiences usually play a critical role in terms of, when I decide which photo to use and which one not to use.

4.2.7 Theme: Online audience effects are channeled through the corporate hierarchy

A strong trend was that editors saw themselves as primarily responsible to their news organizations rather than to the online audiences. There was a pattern of stressing accountability to the management and to the shareholders. According to a former editor:

> It's a question of can you actually defend [the decision to publish graphic images] to the board, to begin with, and to your audiences the next day.

An online editor indicated that when audiences react negatively, she must answer to her boss:

> So, in case the audience even comes at us, … when the CEO asks, 'What the hell happened?' or the Editor-in- chief asks, I mean, I have to take responsibility.

A photo-editor who was concerned about unauthorized use of graphic images by online editors was keen to distance himself from the decision if his superior took issue but did not mention the audience.

> If in case the managing editor has an issue on that, it will not be my responsibility because I've got to take care of my job.

This perhaps speaks to the diminished editorial independence enjoyed by journalists in an era where the traditional "Chinese" walls between the business and editorial sides of media houses are crumbling (Satell, 2015).

Another trend was that print and online editors felt that management and shareholders are overly sensitive to social media criticism, much of which, they said, is neither genuine nor persistent. According to one online editor:

> We are still in a very legacy type. Even two comments, you tend to find our colleagues get worked up. I'm thinking, what are two comments? There's a troll... One small person who has just been paid a thousand shillings.

Another editor explained that the board of the Nation Media Group was pressured by social media into suspending the Editorial Director following the the Sunday Nation's publication of a graphic picture from the 2013 Westgate Mall on its front page in 2013. He however thinks that newspapers have become better at managing social media reactions since then.

> It was the very early days of social media, Kenyans on Twitter. If you like to call those Kenyans. It was those early days. Right now, if [the paper] had a similar incident on social media, they won't rush. People have learnt. Give it time.

It is noteworthy that while reactions on Twitter were the most cited by editors, the platform is mostly utilized by a highly educated, urbanized and relatively wealthy minority (SIMElab, 2019). The editors are thus justified in querying whether any outrage on the platform is representative of the feelings of the wider Kenyan society.

4.2.8 Theme: Editors believed the internet had both positive and negative effects on ethical behavior.

A strong trend was the feeling that by shortening the news cycle, the internet had made it harder for online editors to live up to traditional media ethics. The underlying patterns were the associations between time constraints and poor decision-making. Said one print editor:

> Print editors will take more time to refer to various ….and even consult on various issues, but online because of the time limitations, I find at times that the ethics are kind of ignored in that rush to break the story.

On the other hand, some editors felt that journalists working online are subject to greater scrutiny and thus held to a higher standard than print journalists. One online editor said:

> I think the Web ethics are higher because now, you have a lot more eyes… When [print] graduates to Web, there is even greater accountability.

Another trend was that editors also believe audiences have become more sensitive and that their standards and expectations were fluid and unpredictable. Some described publishing in that environment as “walking on eggshells”. Others said that they are no longer certain about what is acceptable to audiences. According to one:

> We used to get awards for capturing a picture of emotion, but it is not possible anymore. That is a grey area now.

4.2.9 Theme: Flagging by online platforms is standardizing media ethics online

The analysis of platform codes showed two distinct approaches to ethical standards – one which relies on aggregating cultural standards and norms regarding disturbing content; and another which imposes a predefined "Community Standard".

Flagging by Google search quality raters does not directly alter Google's results but it does mean Google will not place advertisements within stories carrying content they have flagged, leading to a loss of revenue to publishers. It also alerts the algorithm to effectively downgrade such results in future searches (Google, 2019).

Flagging on Facebook News can be done by Facebook users. However, the vast majority of posts that violate standards on "Violent and Graphic Content" are found by the Facebook algorithm and though there is the opportunity to appeal, a relatively small proportion of content that is taken down is eventually restored (Facebook, 2019).

A major trend was that online editors tend to comply with the standards of online platforms like Google News and Facebook News, rather than challenge them. When content was flagged, editors said that it is easier to comply. One noted that:

> [Platforms] go through so much content every day and by the time we respond to them [it is too late]… the beauty of it is they tell you exactly what your violation is. So, we can change it.

Comparing publishing graphic images in print and online, another editor said:

> Print at times people get away with it. But for online… you find that you cannot really escape being like flagged by Google.

4.3 Summary of themes and patterns

In relation to publication of images of death and dying, the main concern for editors is whether such images contained elements that would be expected to cause distress to the target audience. While guidelines contained in the CCPJ and in in-house policies tend to focus on the gory content of images, editors had a broader

conceptualization of what could be disturbing, including contextual considerations such as the nature and geographical location of the incident, cultural and racial similarity of those affected to the target audience, and whether the images contained clues to the identity of victims. In general, when determining what images were potentially disturbing to their audiences, editors felt they exercised wide discretion, relying on their own intuition and experience, rather than on guidelines provided by media houses.

Both print and online editors used graphic images to communicate the gravity and magnitude of the tragedies on the ground when it was felt words would not be sufficient. They also used graphic images as agenda-setting tools when they wished society to take action to prevent further suffering.

Systems and procedures prescribed in editorial policies for the sourcing and processing of images in newsrooms are geared to the demands of print newspapers, which have a regular production schedule. However, they are proving to be inadequate for the fast-paced and unpredictable circumstances of online news work. As a result, online editors tend to circumvent them. The same time constraints also preclude online newsrooms from adopting the collegial decision-making practices of their print counterparts.

When it comes to making moral judgments, both print and online editors rely on their intuition and experience rather than on a methodical analysis of factors. Oftentimes editors will seek the opinion of colleagues and superiors when confronted by difficult decisions. Publication of similar pictures by Western news outlets is taken as validation of the ethical quality of the images and, in some cases, online editions and social media accounts are used to test out audience reactions to images before they are published in print.

Both print and online editors conceptualize their audiences as predominantly local – either located in Kenya or in the Kenyan diaspora. The audiences exert indirect pressure on editors through the corporate hierarchy rather than though "cancellation". In fact, many editors are distrustful of the authenticity of online social media reactions and doubt whether these reflect the values and norms of the wider society.

Kenyan editors believe that journalistic ethics have not been significantly altered by the rise of the internet. Similarly, they distinguish between professional ethics as embedded in ethics codes and the cultural values and norms of Kenyan society. There is thus potential for ethical conflict between societal and professional expectations.

The internet also generates conflicting pressures on online editors. The increased scrutiny by online audiences provides an incentive to conform to both audience expectations and professional expectations. At the same time, fast-paced online production as well as the competition for online attention and engagement can tempt editors towards sensationalism, ignoring ethics in the pursuit of clicks and pageviews.

The CCPJ and in-house editorial policies have little effect on day-to-day decision-making, even though the latter contain some advice on methodical approaches to ethical issues related to graphic images. However, the rules of online platforms like Google News and Facebook News are important to online editors who are keen to avoid their content being flagged by them.

The two main online platforms, Google News and Facebook News, have differing approaches to ethical standards regarding disturbing content. The former relies on aggregating global cultural standards, while the latter imposes a predefined

“Community Standard”. Both use a system of flagging content and algorithms to identify and potentially take down content they consider problematic.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in the light of the existing literature, theoretical framework articulated in Chapter 2 and the research objectives and questions. It also presents the conclusions drawn from the study, makes recommendations and identifies key areas for further research.

5.2 Discussions of Key Findings

5.2.1 What is a Graphic Image?

The first objective of this study was to establish what Kenyan editors understand by the term "graphic image" when considering publication of images of death and dying.

It is clear from the emergent themes that the primary consideration when determining whether a particular image was graphic was whether it was deemed potentially distressing to the audience. Although there were references within editorial policies and the CCPJ to some of the elements that would be expected to be distressing, the study established that, in line with prior scholarship (Keith, Schwalbe, & Silcock, 2006), the policies and codes did not play a part in the day-to-day decision-making of editors.

However, an interesting finding was that while the policies and codes stressed the gory aspects of photographs, such as bodies and blood, editors also went beyond this and also took into consideration the possibility of identification of victims by relatives or friends. Thus, pictures showed faces or personal items that offered clues to

the identity of victims were also considered graphic, and especially so if the victims had died.

5.2.2 Ethical Considerations in the Publication of Graphic Images

The second objective of this study sought to identify the ethical considerations that Kenyan editors take into account as well as the reasoning processes they employed when making ethical decisions on the publication of graphic images of death and dying for print and online editions.

Gatekeeping theory postulates that editors make content selections based on news values, which Caple and Bednarek (2015) further distinguished into news values, selection factors and newswriting objectives. Their discursive examination of news images found that the news values that determined the selection of images for publication are primarily constructed through the content of the image as opposed to the technicalities of execution.

However, this study suggests that this view is incomplete, at least as it concerns the selection graphic images. When faced with these pictures, editors went beyond considerations of newsworthiness ad include ethical determinations in their decision-making.

The study found no major differences in the factors that informed the publishing decisions of print and online editors when it came to graphic images. Both took into consideration the content of images, the context in which the images were generated as well as the cultural norms and values of their target audience. They also considered their editorial objectives as well as the impact that the publication of the pictures would have on their news organizations and on their own professional careers. These factors

relate to the editors' perceived ethical obligations to the various stakeholders, that is, the local audience, the wider society, their organizations and to themselves.

The foreign online audience is not included as a stakeholder despite the fact that the internet has enlarged the possibility of moral interaction. These audiences are no longer "over there" and the moral distance, while not erased, have been dramatically shortened. However, as this study has shown, Silverstone's (2007) challenge of maintaining "proper distance" when depicting the other so far remains unanswered by Kenyan editors.

Decision-making involves the resolution of ethical dilemmas emanating from these at times conflicting sets of obligations. The following section briefly discusses each of these obligations in turn.

5.2.2.1 The Local Audience

The key ethical consideration with regard to the local audience is the prevention of harm. This harm is in the form of distress or trauma which may be visited upon sections of the newspaper's readership through the vivid display of gory elements like blood, corpses and horrific injuries. Similarly, images that contain distinguishable clues to the identity of dead victims can be potentially distressing to relatives and close friends of the deceased.

The possibility of harm is mitigated by the use of abstraction. Editors favor images that allow audiences to abstract away from the reality of violent death. This is achieved by several devices including the blurring out of elements like blood, using pictures that show dead bodies from a distance and those that anonymize the victims.

It is not just in the content of images that abstraction is relevant. It is also achieved by considering the context and avoiding images of victims with whom the

target audience can be expected to easily relate. As such editors will be more likely to publish gruesome images from events in far off lands and that feature exoticized victims – that is those who are geographically, culturally and even racially remote from the audience. This reflects Hanusch's (2010) observation that "newspapers show very little actual death, when they do, the dead are more likely to be from abroad, and even more likely to be from distant cultural backgrounds".

5.2.2.2 The Society

Truth-telling, agenda-setting and preventing harm are the key ethical obligations that editors have towards society when deciding whether to graphic images (is this from your data or from literature?). Editors fulfill the first obligation by ensuring that their reporting is as accurate as possible and provides society with as clear an understanding as possible of the situation they are covering. Sometimes this cannot be achieved solely using descriptive language and may require the use of graphic images to bring home the gravity and magnitude of a tragedy.

The agenda-setting obligation is fulfilled when editors use graphic images to incite action to stop or prevent tragedies, such as famine. Prevention of harm, on the other hand, is achieved by desisting from publishing graphic images in situations where they would be likely to incite further violence.

5.2.2.3 The News Organization

The editors' ethical obligations to their employers and are also related to preventing harm - ensuring that their decisions do not bring the media enterprise into disrepute or imperil its profitability. The sense of this obligation has been especially heightened by internet which has not only fragmented the Chinese wall between editorial and commercial departments within news organizations, but also allowed

editors to access more detailed analytics on how specific news items are generating readership and subscriptions (Leonhardt, et al., 2017).

With regard to graphic images, the obligation is fulfilled when editors make publishing choices that comply with applicable laws, maximize the readership, do not alienate audiences and advertisers and that do not get flagged by platforms.

5.2.2.4 The Self

Ethical obligations to self with regard to the use of graphic images include maximizing career prospects and maintaining self-respect by upholding professional ethics. With regard to graphic images, it involves avoiding choices that do not imperil the relationship with employers as well as making ethical decisions even under difficult circumstances.

It is noteworthy that some of the above considerations while similar to those identified by Caple and Bednarek (2015), operate quite differently. Take for example the news value of Proximity which they define as related to "the geographical or cultural nearness of an event or issue". This was clearly evident as a consideration for ethical image selection but operated in a negative sense. In their study, Caple and Bednarek associated proximity with relevance which would mean the value would make the content more attractive to the audience. In the case of images containing disturbing elements such as blood or corpses, the opposite is true. Geographical and racial proximity was repulsive force in the minds of editors and made it less likely that images would be published.

Caple and Bednarek's (2015) suggest professional ethics fall within the category of news writing objectives which they define as "general goals associated with news writing, such as clarity of expression, brevity, colour, accuracy and so on" (p. 438).

However, this study suggests that ethical considerations be considered as a separate category entirely and that newswriting objectives, at least as relates to photographs, should be reserved for attributes related to how the image is technically realized (technical and compositional facets).

5.2.3 Ethical Reasoning and Decision-Making

Donsbach (2004) argues that newsroom decisions reflect journalists need for validation from their peers and their predispositions or biases rather than professional ethical norms. Similarly, this study found that editors relied on their own intuition as well as to seek out the views of their peers and superiors and there was no evidence of systematic, methodical decision-making. Though in-house editorial policies and ethics had some useful advice on assessing the suitability of images for publication, they were generally ignored by the editors referred to them when making selections for print or online editions referred to them for guidance.

This is an interesting contrast to what Obonyo and Owilla (2017) found in their study on the journalism culture in Kenya. Less than 4 in 10 of their respondents agreed with the proposition that "what is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment" while over 95 percent believed "that they should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context" (p. 4). It suggests that what editors think they are expected to do and what they actually do are rather different. This may indicate a failure of training institutions to align the normative prescriptions of the classroom to the practical realities of working in the newsroom.

That Kenyan editors rely on experience and intuition rather than systematic reasoning to make ethical decisions need not be construed to mean that they function at lower levels of moral reasoning on the Kohlberg scale (Coleman, 2010). It may be

evidence that they do not mechanistically follow the prescriptions of editorial policies and ethical codes. That their decisions refer to their conscience and at times cause controversy suggests they are sometimes willing to challenge conventional social norms and substitute self-interest for a higher objective such as preventing or stopping violence.

However, simply relying on intuition and one's own experience can create cultural and geographical blind spots about the appropriateness of publishing particular graphic images or of the potential effect on audiences outside one's immediate purview. These blind spots may not necessarily be eliminated by a strategy of consultation with others of a similar background. Adopting systematic procedures for ethical reasoning, can help journalists in identifying considerations that would otherwise be missed.

5.2.4 Impact of Online Audiences

The third objective of this study was to explore the extent to which the online environment influences Kenyan newsroom editors' ethical decisions about the publication of images of death and dying in their print and online editions.

The study found that print and online editors conceptualize their audience as predominantly local – either located in Kenya or in the Kenyan diaspora. The audiences exert indirect pressure on editors through the corporate hierarchy. Though many editors were distrustful of the authenticity of online social media reactions, online editors were more likely than their print counterparts to admit to taking account of potential audience reactions when making publishing decisions, the editors also felt that audience standards and expectations were harder to predict.

The reluctance by print editors to admit to the effect audiences had on their decisions is not surprising given the finding by Schwalbe et. al., (2015) that journalists

at traditional outlets might be reluctant to admit to the power audiences exert on their choice of images. Print editors are concerned about online audience reactions as evidenced by the fact that they sometimes take measures to anticipate and mitigate such reactions, for example by pre-publishing images in the online edition. The willingness of photo editors to admit the role audiences play might be due to the fact that they do not make the final decisions with regards to publication of images and thus are somewhat removed from accusations of pandering to audiences.

Seeing their audiences as local rather than global means editors don't take into consideration the potential consequences of alienating non-Kenyan audiences. This may be a function of the lack of a methodical approach to making ethical decisions which may mean considerations outside the immediate needs of the editors are ignored. It may also be a symptom of editors' perception that they both represent and speak for the audience in the public arena (Rodny-Gumede, 2014). In this case, the editors may see themselves as only addressing and reflecting the values of a Kenyan audience.

How editors perceive audiences has implications for Network Gatekeeping theory. Even when their content is available online and is distributed on global platforms such as Google News, Kenyan editors mainly see themselves as publishing within a localized network limited to Kenyan audiences and the Kenyan diaspora. Reflecting offline hierarchies of newspapers as local or national, regional and global, the online editors also perceive larger "international" publishers, like the New York Times as operating within a global network that also includes Kenyan audiences. This matches Ernste's (2014) view of networks as hierarchical and implies that the conception of a flat network underlying Barzilai-Nahon's (2008) articulation of Network Gatekeeping Theory is inaccurate. The theory will thus need to be re-conceptualized to take into account network structure.

The Spiral of Silence Theory also has some explanatory value when it comes to the effect that audiences have on editor's decision-making. In this case, the publication of an image can be taken to be the expression of an opinion, not by the individual editor, but by the media house as a whole. Rather than a medium for channeling popular opinion, the media house is itself a participant and consumer of media and can be exposed to consequences for the expression of unpopular opinions. In this conceptualization, at least online, social media has taken the place of the news media as "the most important way for people to … determine the dominant opinion" (Hopkins, 2015).

Sometimes, there is no need for a "quasi-statistical" sense to determine the dominant opinion online as clues are made explicit on social media through the number of likes, retweets and shares that a particular opinion attracts. The spiraling process is also vastly accelerated online as dominant opinions can be very quickly established. Similarly, the sanctions for expressing minority opinions can be imposed very fast. "Cancellation" and the expression of outrage on social media is the mechanism through which the minority opinion is sanctioned and spiraled down – people and entities become afraid to express this opinion of publish a particular image.

This pressure is not transmitted to editors directly, but via personnel outside the newsroom, especially CEOs and board members. The editors comply to preserve their standing within the news organizations even when they personally feel the initial choice was not unethical. For example, though several editors felt that the Sunday Nation's front page photograph of a terror victim from the 2013 Westgate attack was appropriate, such opinions were not readily expressed and it appeared that they would be reluctant to use a similar image under similar circumstances given the consequences that ensued

from its publication. The spiraling effect is evident in that such “opinions”, while not necessarily absent, increasingly go unexpressed out of fear of social exclusion.

5.2.5 Media Ethics in the Internet Age

The fourth objective of this study was to inquire how editors’ perceptions of media ethics have been impacted by the digital age.

The study identified that Kenyan editors believe that journalistic ethics have not been significantly altered by the rise of the internet. They distinguish between professional ethics and the cultural values and norms of Kenyan society are keenly aware of potential for ethical conflict between the two. They see the internet as providing both incentives and disincentives for online editors to conform to professional ethics.

While the editors say they subscribe to unchanging professional norms borrowed from Western journalistic practice which many interpret as having global application, it is clear that in practice the picture is a lot more complex. Considerations of culture have a significant bearing on decision-making. The Kantian insistence on a media ethics that holds true across all cultures and circumstances is in practice, somewhat reluctantly and begrudgingly transformed into a more forgiving, utilitarian conception. Perhaps what is needed is a reconceptualizing of media ethics on the part of the editors, Rather than global media ethics and local cultural norms being perceived as engaged in a zero-sum competition, glocalization theory may help editors to conceptualize a media ethics where perceived Western media norms are both reinterpreted in local contexts and intertwined with local societal values (Wasserman & Rao, 2008) to produce a unique framework for ethical action.

5.3 Conclusion

It is clear that ethical considerations play an important role in the selection of images of death and dying for publication in both print and online papers. Yet gatekeeping research is focused almost exclusively on how journalists establish elements of newsworthiness when explaining selection decisions. This study has revealed that ethical considerations can help provide, not an alternative explanation, but can be integrated into conceptualizations of news values to provide a more accurate description of the factors that editors take into account when making publishing decisions.

This research has also demonstrated that pressure from audiences is transmitted through the corporate hierarchy. This suggests that editors are more likely to respond to the internal demands and pressures within media houses than to external ones. In short, the onus is on media owners and managers to prioritize and demand ethical performance from their editors.

Yet to date, Kenyan media houses have failed to create and provide effective systems and training to support their editors in ethical decision-making. While editorial policies do contain some advice, research has shown that they are not useful tools for guiding day-to-day newsroom decision-making. Editors are thus forced rely on their own intuition and experience rather than on methodical reasoning which creates ethical blind spots. Coupled with the internet's expansion an empowerment of audiences, as well as the lagging development of a media ethics for the age, this can have potentially serious adverse consequences for editors, their publications and the media enterprises themselves.

5.4 Recommendations

This study has shown that one of the existing gaps is in institutional support for editors when it comes to methodical ethical reasoning. One way such support could be given is through improving training in the principles of systematic and methodological ethical reasoning, both in journalism schools and on the job. Such training should go beyond simply emphasizing compliance with policies and codes. It should instead focus on how methods such as the Potter Box model of ethical reasoning can be employed in real-life situations. Using case studies and simulating the fast-paced online environment can help prepare journalism students as well as both novice and experienced editors to better utilize their knowledge of ethics in day-to-day decision-making.

As they converge newsrooms and implement "digital first" policies, media houses also need to urgently develop practical procedures for fast sourcing and selection of images for online publication especially as relates to breaking news, rather than rely on processes developed for print. They should also discourage the practice of using their online publications and social media accounts as testing grounds for potentially controversial imagery and rather invest in helping editors make ethically justifiable decisions.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

In her study of journalism education in Kenya, Egbujor (2018) identified the need for "a more in-depth contextual investigation of the dichotomy between theoretical epistemological expectations and normative practical realities" (p. 118). In agreement with this, this study recommend more research into how the theory-based policies and codes can be made more practically relevant to the day-to-day decision-making of both print and online editors. This will also include research to establish the training needs and support mechanisms needed by editors.

Discursive news values analysis of the graphic images published by Kenyan newspapers would establish whether the views of editors presented in this study are reflected in the actual selections they make.

A core contribution of this study is the highlighting of the value of "appropriateness" as signified by ethical concerns, as an important consideration in the choice to use graphic images. News values research that explicitly incorporates ethical considerations may help illuminate the extent to which ethics play a role in other editorial selection decisions and how these are being influenced by the digital age.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A List of Accredited News Processors

Mediamax	**29**	**NMG**	**76**	**Standard**	**79**
Digital Editor	1	Assistant Editors	2	Associate Editor	1
Digital Sub editor	1	Assistant News Editor	1	Chief Sub Editors	4
Editors	7	Associate Editor	1	Content Editor	1
Editor in Chief	1	Chief Sub Editors	5	County News Editor	1
Managing Editor	1	Deputy Chief Sub Editors	2	Current Affairs Editor	1
News Director	1	Deputy Photo Editor	1	Deputy Chief Sub Editor	1
News Editors	3	Editions Editor	1	Deputy Director	1
Photo Editor	1	Editors	18	Digital Sub Editors	11
Quality Editor	1	Editor, Sunday Nation	1	Editors	16
Revise Editors	2	Editor Africa	1	Managing Editors	3
Senior Sub Editors	3	Executive Editor	1	Managing Editor Digital	1
Sub Editors	7	Group Editorial Director	1	News Editors	4
		Head of Content	1	News Sub Editor	1
		Head of Digital	1	Online Editor	1
		Managing Editors	2	Online Sub Editor	1
		Multimedia Editor	1	Photo Editor	1
		News Editors	7	Revise Editors	3
		Online Editors	3	Senior Sub Editors	6
		Online Sub Editors	4	Senior Digital Quality Editor	1
		Quality & Output Editor	1	Sub Editors	19
		Revise Editor	1	Team Leader Digital	1
		Senior Sub Editors	3		
		Sub Editors	16		
		Sub Editor Digital	1		
		Visual & Syndication Editor	1		

Source: Media Council of Kenya 2019 List of Accredited Journalists

Note: The list includes 19 accredited journalists from The Star/Radio Africa Group. All but one (listed as a Training Editor) are listed as news gatherers (correspondents, photojournalists, reporters).

Appendix B The Star Newsroom Personnel

Convergence Director	1
Head of Content	1
Business and Weekend Editor	1
News Editor	1
Deputy News Editor	1
Associate Editor	1
Digital Editor	1
Photo Editor	1
Deputy Photo Editor	1
Revise Editors	2
Political Editor	1
Features Editor	1
Chief Sub Editor	1
Digital Sub Editors	2
Sub Editor	1
Total	**17**

Source: The Star newsroom insider

Appendix C List of Participants

Participant	Role	Years of Experience
1	Photo Editor	13
2	Print Editor	15
3	Rtd Editorial Manager	40
4	Editorial Manager	41
5	Photo Editor	14
6	Digital Editor	17
7	Online Editor	5
8	Chief Sub-Editor	8
9	Digital Editor	3
10	News Editor	20
11	Managing Editor	25
12	Photo Editor	3
13	Photo Editor	5
14	Digital Editor	5
15	Print editor	14

Appendix D Interview Guide

1. What are the considerations that newsroom decision-makers take into account when making ethical decisions on the publication of images of death and dying in online and print newspapers?
    - How often do you have to make decisions on whether or not to publish graphic or disturbing images?
    - What makes a photograph a graphic or disturbing image?
    - What are the differences in how you handle disturbing images as opposed to other images?
    - Please think back to a specific instance where you approved (or rejected) a disturbing image for publication. Could you please describe how you arrived at your decision?
    - Under what circumstances have you ever needed to consult your colleagues or superiors when deciding whether or not to publish a disturbing image?
    - How do you resolve disagreements with your colleagues or superiors regarding the publication of graphic images?
    - Please describe a situation where you decided to publish a graphic image in print but not online (or vice versa). What factors influenced that decision?

2. How do potential online audience reactions influence editors' decisions on whether to publish images of death and dying in print newspapers and online editions?

- How have online controversies generated by the publication of graphic images affected how you make decisions regarding publication of such images?
- Please describe a situation where you have perceived a potential conflict between your professional ethics and the expectations of online audiences. How did you resolve it?
- Do you consider the potential feelings and reactions of audiences who are not Kenyans or are not in Kenya when deciding whether or not to publish graphic images?
- How do you minimize potential social media backlash when deciding whether or not to publish graphic images?
- How, in your opinion, have audience reactions on social media impacted on the editorial freedom of editors?
- In your opinion, why do graphic images of victims of terrorism appear to be more controversial than those of hunger victims or victims of other violent incidents such as road accidents or domestic violence?

3. What are the values, principles, concepts and ethical reasoning processes that editors employ when determining whether or not to publish graphic images?
    - Under what circumstances would it be appropriate to publish graphic images?
    - How does your cultural upbringing influence your approach to ethical decision-making?

- How useful would you say is the guidance you get from your newspaper policy or from the Code of Conduct regarding the publication of disturbing images?
- What is your opinion about how Western media covers tragedies in Africa and how does local media do it differently?
- In your opinion, how differently do online and print newspapers cover tragedies?
- How do you think journalism ethics have been affected by the internet?

Appendix E Coding Sheet

	Code	Evidence
Ethical concerns		
Does the participant refer to ethical concerns like safety, privacy or decency?	Yes= 1 No=2	
Ethical Reasoning level		
What level of ethical reasoning does the participant display?	Level 1 = 3 Level 2 = 4 Level 3 = 5	
Fragmentationist or integrationist approach to ethics		
Do they refer to personal ethical codes?	Yes = 6 No = 7	
Does the participant refer to commonly accepted ethical media standards?	Yes = 8 No = 9	
Individual or collective decision-making		
Does the participant consult with others before making a decision?	Yes = 10 No = 11	
Fear of audience backlash		
Does the participant refer to potential negative audience reactions?	Yes = 12 No = 13	
Does the participant refer to audience expectations?	Yes = 14 No = 15	
Religious and cultural preferences		
Does the participant refer to religious or cultural considerations?	Yes = 16 No = 17	
Legal issues		
Does the participant refer to legal restrictions or protections?	Yes = 18 No = 19	
Image News values		
Does the participant refer to news values like proximity, negativity, prominence, etc.?	Yes = 20 No = 21	
Selection factors		
Does the participant refer to selection factors like ownership, newsroom routines editorial policy, ethical codes, etc.?	Yes = 22 No = 23	
News writing objectives		
Does the participant refer to news writing objectives like aesthetics, composition, etc.?	Yes = 24 No = 25	

Appendix F NACOSTI Research License

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **721012**

Date of Issue: **09/January/2020**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. Patrick Gathara of Aga Khan University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: Ethical Decision-Making In The Digital Age: The Case of Graphic Images In Kenyan Print And Online Newspapers for the period ending : 09/January/2021.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/20/3354**

721012

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Appendix G Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

REF: AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/007

Date: November 27, 2019.

Dear Patrick Gathara (Student No. 535153)

RE: ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE CASE OF GRAPHIC IMAGES IN KENYAN PRINT AND ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

This is to inform you that Aga Khan University – Graduate School of Media and Communications Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your approval period is November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020 and your application's approval number is AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/007.
This approval is subject to compliance with the following, under the supervision of your two supervisors:

1. Only the approved documents including the informed consent form and the data collection instruments will be used.
2. Any changes, made on the approved documents that may increase the risks or affect the welfare or safety of the participants or compromise the integrity of the study must be reported to GSMC within the shortest time possible. The amended documents will be taken through a fresh review and the due process of approval.
3. In the event that the research cannot be completed within the one year approved period, the researcher will request for renewal of approval 30 days prior to the end of the approved period.
4. The researcher will be required to submit a comprehensive progress report when applying for renewal of approval.
5. Submission of an executive summary report to the GSMC's Ethics Review Committee within 90 days of completion of the study.
6. Produce all the data collected using the approved tools as and when required by the Ethics Review Committee within the 90 days of completion of your study.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be required to obtain a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). You can access the application portal from the website on https://www.nacosti.go.ke/.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nancy Booker
Director- Academic Affairs

Appendix H Introductory Letter from AKU

THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P. O. Box 30623 – 00100
Nairobi

November 27, 2019

Dear Sir/Madam.

PATRICK GATHARA (STUDENT NO. 535153)

Patrick Gathara is a registered student at the Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications. He is enrolled in the Master of Arts in Digital Journalism Programme and has completed his course work. He is now working on his Master's thesis. Mr. Gathara's topic is "**Ethical Decision-making in the Digital Age: the case of graphic images in Kenyan print and online newspapers**"

The purpose of my writing is to request you to assist Mr. Gathara complete this important academic exercise. Any information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. Upon completion of the research, Mr. Gathara's thesis will be available at our library. He will also submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of his completed work to your department.

We appreciate your support to our student towards her successful completion of his thesis research.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely.

Dr. Nancy Booker
Director – Academic Affairs

Appendix I Informed Consent Form

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF STUDY

Ethical Decision-making in the Digital Age: the case of graphic images in Kenyan print and online newspapers

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Patrick Gathara

0720546474

patrick.gathara@gmail.com

I am Patrick Gathara from Graduate School of Media and Communications, Aga Khan University and doing a research on ethical decision-making with regard to the publication of graphic images.

This project studies the way how online audiences have affected how editors in Kenyan newspapers decide what is suitable for publication. It will describe the decision-making process that they use and seek out the values, principles and ethical reasoning processes they employ in choosing whether or not to publish a graphic image. Few previous studies have addressed how ethical reasoning is employed in real life newsroom practice and this research hopes to fill that gap. The focus of the research in on newspapers that publish nationally on both print and online platforms.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to describe how newspaper editors in Kenya make ethical decisions with regard to publication of images that vividly portray death and violence. It will conduct interviews with senior editors, both retired and practicing, based in Nairobi who have had to make such decisions. It will also look at existing ethical guidelines and recommend how these can be improved.

STUDY PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your experience with making decisions on the publication of graphic images. The interviews will take between 30-45 minutes and will be recorded for purposes of accurate transcribing. The total duration of the study is expected to be 6 weeks.

RISKS

The interview will focus on the subject of graphic images which may be traumatizing to some. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may stop the interview. You may also decline to answer any or all questions.

BENEFITS

This research hopes to contribute to the development of better ethical guidelines for editors faced with the decisions on publishing graphic images. It will also help academics better understand how editors make real-life decisions in the digital age.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no financial compensation for your participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses to this interview will be anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality. The recordings will not be used for any other purpose nor shared with anyone else. At all times, your identity will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Your name and any details that can be used to identify you will not appear on any transcripts, notes or documents.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher, please contact

The Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications

9 West Building, 7th Floor, Mkungu Close, Off Parklands Road, At the Sarit Centre roundabout.

P.O. Box 30270-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

Email: info.gsmc@aku.edu Tel: +254 20 374 0062 /63, +254 731 888 055, +254 719 231 530

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be provided a copy of the signed consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

AUTHORIZATION

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this project. I understand I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, and I understand my consent does not take away legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this project.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____