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Ethical Issues in New Media Journalism: The Example of TRNC Political News

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Abstract:

This study purposes to identify ethical violations and to offer solutions to prevent ethical violations on political news in the future on digital newspapers. In this context, the press scanning technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was preferred. Four digital newspapers operating in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) such as Kıbrıs Postası, Gıynık Gazetesi, Hakikat Gazetesi, and Özgür Gazete were included in the sample. Of the 4009 news published in the relevant newspapers between December 22, 2021, and January 22, 2022, 895 of the 1296 political news about the 2022 TRNC Parliamentary Early General Election, those that violated the principles of journalism were analyzed by content analysis. The findings of this study show ethical violations in the relevant categories: personal rights, public order, the reputation and privacy of the state, and moral values. Most of the ethical violations detected related to personal rights. In addition to qualitative analysis, quantitative statistical data were included, and the findings were supported. In this context, ethical violations were detected in 10% of the news reviewed. As a result, to solve the unethical digital journalism problem (to reduce the rate that cannot be underestimated and/or prevent the ethical violations in future), it is recommended to increase the frequency of vocational training activities for members of the press, to make legal regulations and to increase the controls and sanctions for digital broadcasting. This study contributes to the literature and practice in terms of communication and journalism ethics. Since the study focuses on the recent period, it offers novelty and originality in the context of including the current and specifically the analyses of the news.

Keywords: political news, new media, restrictions on freedom of expression, ethical violations, TRNC.

新媒体新闻中的伦理问题：以TRNC政治新闻为例

摘要：

本研究旨在识别道德违规行为，并提供解决方案，以防止未来在数字报纸上出现政治新闻道德违规行为。

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在这种情况下，作为定性研究方法之一的新闻扫描技术成为首选。样本中包括在北塞浦路斯土耳其共和国（TRNC）运营的四家数字报纸，例如塞浦路斯邮政、盖尼克报纸、哈基卡特报纸和厄兹古尔公报。在2021年12月22日至2022年1月22日相关报纸刊登的4009条新闻中，对2022年TRNC议会提前大选的1296条政治新闻中的895条进行了内容分析，分析了违反新闻原则的新闻。这项研究的结果显示了相关类别的道德违规行为：个人权利、公共秩序、国家的声誉和隐私以及道德价值观。大多数检测到的道德违规行为都与个人权利有关。除了定性分析外，还包括定量统计数据，并支持研究结果。在这种情况下，在10%的审查新闻中发现了道德违规行为。因此，为了解决不道德的数字新闻问题（以降低不可低估的比率和/或防止未来的道德违规行为），建议增加新闻工作者职业培训活动的频率，使法律法规，并加强对数字广播的控制和制裁。这项研究有助于传播和新闻伦理方面的文献和实践。由于该研究侧重于近期，因此它在包括当前和特别是新闻分析的背景下提供了新颖性和独创性。

关键词：政治新闻、新媒体、言论自由限制、道德违规、TRNC。

1. Introduction

The lives of human beings are divided into ages based on production. During the foraging period, when people lived a life intertwined with nature, human societies were in a dispersed and unsystematic state. With the cultivation of the land, social systems began to form by moving to a settled order. This situation continued systematically by dividing societies into two as landed masters and slaves. Later, with mechanization, social classes began to form in the form of bosses and workers, who had the control of the means of production. In today's digitalization era, a new system has been created for people, those who exist in the digital space and those who cannot access the digital space.

In today's so-called digital age, new media is a widely used communication tool. Traditional media has started to share its duties and responsibilities with new media. In this context, new media, which is increasingly replacing traditional media, is included in the scope of press rights and freedoms. Therefore, the professional rights and freedoms of organizations and press workers operating in this field are included in this scope.

Those who deal with new media journalism need to be more careful than those who deal with traditional media journalism. Since there is rapid news gathering and delivery to the public in new media journalism, ethical violations are experienced in terms of basic values that limit the rights and freedoms of the press, such as the protection of personal rights, the protection of public order and the reputation and privacy of the state, and the protection of moral values.

The progress and development of press rights and freedoms is possible with the strengthening of democracy. Of course, it is essential for members of the press to fulfill their duties in a free environment and convey news to the society and the international community. However, while fulfilling the duty of journalism, ethical principles of journalism must be complied with. The restrictions on the rights and freedoms of the press determined by international legislation should also be complied with. If the stated limitations are not complied with, financial penalties and sanctions should be applied by the judiciary within the scope of legal regulations.

To draw attention to the ethical violations encountered in new media journalism, four digital newspapers, which were determined according to some principles, were handled within the scope of the study. Within the scope of the 2022 TRNC Early General Elections are the political news under the heading "TRNC" in the one-month period between December 22, 2021, and January 22, 2022, about the election, the Cyprus issue, and other political news. Within the scope of the study, the press was scanned by considering the political news about the election. Considering the limitations also stated in international legislation, the number and rates of ethical violations of Cyprus Post, Gıynık Newspaper, Hatta Newspaper, and Özgür Gazete were revealed by categorizing them according to ethical violations against personal rights, public order and the reputation and privacy of the state, and moral values.

2. Basic Concepts

2.1. Concepts of 'New Media'

The new media, which is also referred to as "social media" today, has radically changed the traditional communication system by revealing a completely new communication age. The new media order has a structure that is open to everyone, network-based, unlimited, interactive, and decentralized (Altunay, 2015, p. 412). New media is sometimes called multimedia because it has the feature of bringing together different and interactive environments. New media gathers the audio, video, and data contents, including the interaction element. In this respect, it is possible to distinguish new media from traditional media. More comprehensively, new media can be defined as "environments that cannot be created without the processing power of computers."

With the rapid spread of internet usage in the globalizing world, the use of new media technologies such as smartphones has also increased. In this way, it has become easier for people to receive news and information, and at the same time, a social media environment has emerged where the potential to establish mutual relations has emerged. In other words, it is not a one-way communication that only conveys

the news to people, as in the traditional media, but their reaction to the transmitted news has emerged.

With social media, its geographical and demographic coverage has expanded, and a great form of communication has emerged in which messages spread faster and cleaner to the masses. Today, people of all ages use social media effectively (Yengin, 2016, p. 107). Social media, which is a part of social life, enables individuals to contribute to the socialization process. Social media has been the focal point of our lives in following the globalizing world. In addition to getting information from social media, individuals who make it indispensable for their daily lives direct their lives in this way.

While the use of social media influences the entire world, it has become a propaganda tool used by politicians and political communicators. Social media is used in different ways by political parties, leaders and candidates in political communication practices (Çalışkan & Mencik, 2015, p. 257). It is possible for politicians to convey their views and ideologies to the masses through social media, which is used extensively in election campaigns, and to influence the voting behavior of the voters. The contribution of social media to democracy, which allows politicians and candidates to do politics in an equal way, is critical. However, some managers try to control social media by exploiting this (Çağlar & Köklü, 2017, p. 152).

Social media, which has emerged as a new public space, makes it possible for everyone to participate in politics and provides the emergence of a pluralistic structure (Çalışkan & Mencik, 2015, p. 260).

2.2. *Democracy and Freedom of Express*

The word *democracy* comes from the Greek words *demos* and *kratos*. *Demos* means "people," and *kratos* means "power." In other words, democracy simply means the power of the people (Council of Europe, n.d.a). The popularity of the concept of democracy is quite high today. Democracy, which is a concept that authoritarian governments and even those at the head of dictatorships do not let go of, is seen as a good thing on which many people agree. Democracy is relative and its boundaries are difficult to define. Generally, it is possible to state that the concept of democracy is a management system that protects the rights and interests of minorities by ensuring the power of the majority.

They express what they have created in their own world of ideas, under the control of the individual, by communicating with their external environment. Freedom of expression is the free expression of any emotion, thought, belief, or opinion to the outside world by an individual (Ünal, 2019, p. 140). Freedom of expression requires people not to be condemned or blamed for freely expressing their thoughts. Freedom of expression is valuable in the presence of any coercion, otherwise freedom has no meaning. Therefore, freedom of expression is the ability of everyone to have their own thoughts, beliefs, and convictions without being

subject to any restrictions and at the same time to express them as they wish.

In paragraph 1 of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, it is emphasized that freedom of expression is a right for everyone and states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes the freedom to hold opinions, to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authorities and regardless of national frontiers. This article does not prevent the state from licensing radio broadcasting, television, and cinema operations".

In paragraph 2 of Article 10 of the ECHR, it is stated that under which conditions the state will interfere with this right:

"Since it is necessary to act with duty and responsibility while using these freedoms, national security, territorial integrity or public security, prevention of crime or disorder, protection of public health and morals, protection of honor and rights of others, prevention of disclosure of confidential information, authority, and impartiality of the judiciary may be subjected to the formalities, conditions, prohibitions, and sanctions prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society".

Freedom of expression is a concept defended by some philosophical arguments. The first of these is self-actualization. Accordingly, every individual in society should have the freedom to express himself so that he can make sense of and maintain his life in his own way. Another argument is democracy (Bayram, 2013, p. 118). Accordingly, in a democratic administration, ensuring the political participation of individuals and protecting the pluralist structure, equality, etc. are related to freedom of expression. Finally, there is the argument for the discovery of reality. Accordingly, to reach the truth, it is necessary to create an environment of free discussion and reveal the facts so that everyone can express their opinions as they wish (Bayram, 2013, p. 119). In a stereotypical expression, the right to freedom of expression is one of the most fundamental principles of a democratic society. The main reason for defending the freedom of expression as a human right is claimed to be the positive-proportional relationship between this right and one's self-actualization. This is the subject of people becoming conscious of their own existence subjectively and objects objectively compared with the existence of others.

2.3. *Ethics of Journalism*

Ethics, which comes from the Greek word "ethos," is used in two different senses in Greek. One of these meanings is a person who is accustomed to regulating his behavior by education in accordance with a socially valid custom. The other meaning is the person who makes a habit of performing the requested good behavior by applying the transmitted tradition without questioning, but by grasping it immediately. Ethics has broad and difficult to define boundaries. The definition of the word ethics is what certain groups of people

adopt at certain times; it is a set of moral and ethical behavior rules that determine good and bad and regulate social relations (Dolunay, 2018, p. 27).

The basis of the duties and responsibilities of journalism is the right of access to information and ideas, as stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 (İnsan Hakları Derneği, 1999). Journalists, above all, have responsibilities to society. Journalism is a profession that needs time, research, and resources. In the context of journalism ethics, it is essential to comply with the ethical principles of journalism in terms of researching, compiling, transferring, publishing, interpreting, and presenting the news in any medium (Yeşil, 2014, p. 1669).

For special details of the ethical principles of journalism, see Medya Etik Kurulu (n.d.).

3. Rights and Freedoms of the Press and Limitations

3.1. Rights and Freedoms of the Press

Freedom of the press can be counted as a special type of freedom of thought. However, it is defined as a separate category of freedom and is protected by legal regulations. The press is accepted as a separate right besides very effective and wide-ranging freedom of expression in the expression and dissemination of ideas (Hazar, 2013, p. 1528).

In Turkey, freedom of expression and dissemination of thought are regulated in Article 26 of the 1982 Constitution, and freedom of the press in Article 28. According to the first two paragraphs of Article 28, “The press is free and cannot be censored. Establishing a printing house cannot be made conditional on obtaining permission and depositing financial guarantees. The state takes measures to ensure freedom of the press and information.”

The importance and functions of the press, which is also described as the fourth power, in a democratic state of law are quite high. However, as in other rights and freedoms, some limitations are stipulated in all legal systems and international human rights documents on freedom of the press.

In the second paragraph of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the limits of freedom of the press, which is a special type of freedom of expression, are expressed as follows:

“The exercise of these freedoms, which also entail duties and responsibilities, is to protect national security, territorial integrity or public safety in a democratic society, to maintain public order and to prevent crime, to protect health or morals, to protect the reputation and rights of others, to prevent the dissemination of confidential information or to It may be subject to certain formalities, conditions, restrictions, or sanctions necessary to ensure the authority and impartiality of its power” (Council of Europe, n.d.b).

3.1.1. Right of Access to Information

It is essential that fundamental rights and freedoms, which are the necessity of a rule of law, be protected against political powers. The right to information, which appears within the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms in national or international texts that recognize and regulate human rights, is narrowly understood as the right to access the records kept by the administration (İmren & Güven, 2007). In this context, the functions of the right to information; It is possible to classify the right of access to data held by the state about individuals, the right of individuals to access official data, and the right of individuals to be informed on matters related to the public interest (Zorlu-Sertkaya, 2021, p. 518).

The right of access to information is a fundamental element of transparency and provides the opportunity to monitor political activities against the public. Today, the importance of this right is increasing day by day. Accordingly, the right to access information has been regulated at the constitutional and legal levels in many European countries (Şengül, 2013, p. 211).

The right of access to information and documents may be permanently or temporarily restricted in the legislation of the states. This limitation arises in areas such as privacy, public interest, state security, interstate relations, monetary policy, and the fight against crime. Personal interest, privacy of private life, protection of commercial and industrial interests, information transferred by third parties on confidentiality are also within the scope of confidentiality. Information and document requests regarding the internal functioning of administrative units, preparatory procedures, and judicial processes are examples of areas where the right to access documents is not exercised.

The right of access to information is a situation related to the diversity and accessibility of news, thought and information sources. However, as stated in many sources, the most important news source of the press is the state and its institutions, which directly concern individuals and have a very comprehensive archive of political information and documents (Dolunay & Kasap, 2017 p. 526). Access to the archive in question is within the scope of the right to information. In this context, in 2003, when the Law No. 4982 on Access to Information entered into force; in the TRNC, the Access to Information Law No. 12/200y entered into force in 2006 (Dolunay & Kasap, 2017, p. 526).

3.1.2. Right to Evaluate Information

The right to evaluate information can also be expressed with the concept of critique, which has the meanings of interpretation and criticism. The right to evaluate information, which is an important element of freedom of the press, can only be implemented healthily in democratic governments and societies, like all fundamental freedoms (Dolunay & Kasap, 2017, p. 527).

Being able to criticize political powers constitutes a

fundamental point in a democratic administration. Of course, these criticisms should be within the framework of ethical and legal rules. In this context, all criticisms can be made against both political powers and all individuals within the scope of freedom of expression. However, the presumption of innocence and damaging the presumption of innocence, targeting, hateful and threatening expressions should not be used by complying with ethical and legal rules.

3.1.3. *Right to Publication*

The right to publish information requires that it be communicated in the media, subject to the condition of establishing a printing house, obtaining permission for periodic and non-periodical publications, and depositing a guarantee. In this context, two corrective and preventive elements are accepted in the regulation of fundamental rights and freedoms. In the first, the individual can act freely by taking all responsibility; in the second, freedoms cannot be used unlimitedly, permission or at least notification is required (Sayılğan, 2014, p. 271). In this context, there are sub-headings such as prohibitive, regulatory, and simple measures. Accordingly, if the use of freedom is completely at the discretion of the state, it is prohibitive; if certain predetermined conditions are met, it is regulatory; if permission is required for the use of freedom, there is simple prevention (Dolunay & Kasap, 2017, p. 528).

These issues, which are valid for the mainstream media, continue to be valid for the new media in different ways. Publishing news and information in the new media is a matter of accessing the internet and sharing information and news freely through the internet, rather than freely distributing printed publications as in newspapers (Yegen, 2018, p. 107). In this context, we see that political powers, from time to time, impose censorship or access barriers on some social media applications or the internet. This situation is sometimes used as a tool for the governments to protect their own interests.

3.2. *Limitations*

The limits of freedom of the press are shaped into three categories in the TRNC Constitution, the 1982 Constitution of Turkey, the European Convention on Human Rights, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the jurisprudence of international courts: protection of the state and society (protection of national security), protection of reputation and rights of others (protection of personal rights), and protection of morality (Hazar, 2013, p. 1532).

3.2.1. *Protection of National Security*

Limitations of fundamental rights and freedoms are inevitable in social life. Today, even in democratic societies, it is considered acceptable to limit fundamental rights and freedoms when necessary. It has become inevitable to limit some freedoms to protect the existence and sustainability of the state and society. In

this context, it is possible to state that there is no unlimited freedom in any society and that if there is unlimited freedom, anarchy will arise, and all freedoms will be destroyed. This situation emerges as one of the most important dilemmas in the context of human rights. Today, this problem is tried to be solved by establishing a balance between freedoms and political authorities (Özdemir, 2016, p. 85).

Freedom of expression and the other fundamental freedoms it constitutes are not the only values that must be protected in a society. Therefore, fundamental rights and freedoms should not threaten national security. Here, an agreement must be reached. This is regulated in international conventions and in the constitutions of states.

3.2.2. *Protection of Personal Rights*

Obtaining and sharing information about matters that concern people's private lives or families constitute violations of personal rights. Therefore, in case of obtaining and sharing information about one's private life without the consent of the person, personal rights are attacked. At this point, legal arrangements have been made based on personal rights for protecting private life. Whether it is recognized by the society or not, violating the privacy of each individual's private life is considered a crime before the law, as it will cause material and moral problems (Doğan, 2014, p. 482).

Press rights and freedoms, which are in the public interest, should not be ignored to protect personal rights. Therefore, if there is a dominant public interest, depending on whether the public interest is obtained with an appropriate purpose, the violation of the personal right may be exposed. However, today, members of the press, who are in the race to make sensational news, violate their personal rights in line with the news they make financed by someone, without even deigning to confirm the accuracy of the news, regardless of whether it is suitable for the public interest or not. It is obvious that the members of the press, especially in the TRNC, do not pay due attention to this issue while reporting.

3.2.3. *Protection of Morals*

Even though morality is a relative concept, it is not considered relative in terms of legal rules because some moral principles such as love, respect and honesty are universal and unchangeable. Thus, it is thought that a more objective, fairer, and more reliable legal order can be created. Contrary to the ECtHR in Turkey, the most debated issue in morality is the issue of whether pornography, eroticism, or obscenity will be considered within the scope of freedom of the press in the context of sexuality. Generally, obscenity is considered within the scope of freedom of the press (Tatar, 2013, p. 167).

4. **Research**

4.1. *Method*

In this study, a press survey was conducted using

quantitative and qualitative research methods.

4.2. Sample

Digital newspapers operating in the TRNC are impossible to determine the universe because digital newspapers cannot be determined officially. However, the sample was not determined randomly, and four digital newspapers were determined by setting some criteria. According to this, it has been determined according to the fact that it has been broadcasting for at least two years, that it has a tag according to legal regulations, that the management staff is clearly shown, that it produces original news content, and that it is based on their ideological approach or the political views they are periodically close to.

To reveal the ethical problems encountered in new media journalism in the TRNC, statistical information was given by identifying and analyzing the ethical violations in political news on four digital newspapers: Kıbrıs Postası, Gıynık Newspaper, Sorgun Newspaper, and Özgür Gazete. In this study, political news published by four digital newspapers under the heading "TRNC" between December 22, 2021, and January 22, 2022, based on the 2022 TRNC Early General Elections, were scanned.

In the study, political news was extracted from the total news under the title "TRNC." The news was scanned by dividing it into three categories: political news about the election, political news about the Cyprus issue, and other political news. Within the scope of this study, the news in the category of political news related to the elections, in which ethical violations were found, was selected. These were analyzed numerically and contextually in three categories: ethical violations of personal rights, ethical violations of public order and the reputation and privacy of the state, and ethical violations of moral values.

4.3. Analyses

4.3.1. Quantitative Analyses

During the period between December 22, 2021 and January 22, 2022, it was determined that four digital newspapers published 4009 (100%) news under the title "TRNC." Since this study focuses on the one-month period before the 2022 TRNC Early General Elections, attention has been paid mainly to the political news under the heading "TRNC." It was determined that 1296 (32%) political news was published under this title.

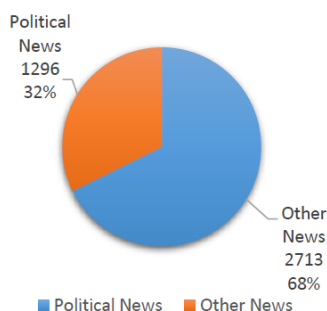


Figure 1. Total of other news – political news

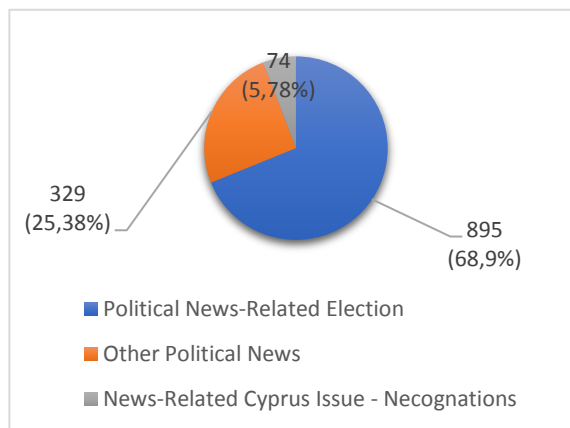


Figure 2. Distribution of political news types

A total of 1296 (100%) political news detected in digital news scanning were analyzed in three types. Accordingly, 895 (69%) political news about the election, 329 (25%) other political news and 74 (6%) news about the Cyprus issue were identified.

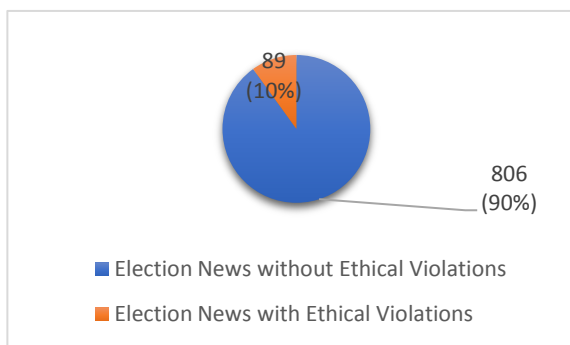


Figure 3. Distribution of ethical violations in election-related political news

Within the scope of this study, ethical violations in 895 (100%) news, which were determined by focusing on political news related to the election, were examined. In this context, while 89 (10%) ethical violations were detected in the political news about the election, it was determined that there were no ethical violations in 806 (90%) political news about the election.

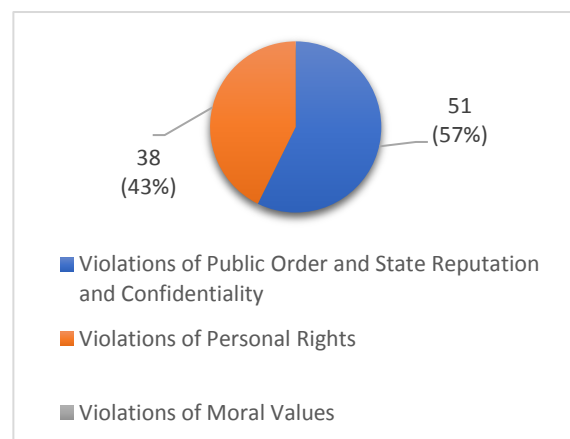


Figure 4. Distribution of election-related political news by types of ethical violations

Eighty-nine (100%) news items identified within the

scope of ethical violations in election-related political news were analyzed in three types. Accordingly, 38 (43%) news about violations of personal rights and 51 (57%) news about violations of public order and state's reputation and privacy were detected, while no news was found about violations of moral values.

4.3.2. Qualitative Analyses

Content analysis is a research method in which valid interpretations extracted from the data are revealed because of successive processes. In this study, ethical violations were analyzed under three categories: violations of personal rights, violations of public order and the reputation and privacy of the state, and violations of moral values, focusing on the electoral ones of political news.

4.4. Ethical Violations of Personal Rights

Article 1: "Oygar: The President of this country is not even a jester" (Oygar: The President of this country is not even a buffoon, 2022)

Analysis 1: The news included the statements of Tahsin Oygar, the Independence Road Nicosia Deputy Candidate.

In the news, insulting, humiliating, and damaging his reputation were included, targeting President Ersin Tatar. Personal rights have been violated by assassinating the President of the Republic.

Since there is no legal regulation regarding the "Offense of Insulting the President" in the TRNC, these statements are not considered a criminal element. Therefore, insulting statements against Ersin Tatar can only be penalized within the scope of the protection of his personal rights.

Article 2: "160 people who resigned from YDP joined UBP" 2022

Analysis 2: According to the statement made by the UBP in the news, it was stated that 160 people resigned from the YDP and joined the UBP, and it was stated that the party badges were worn by the UBP Chairman and Prime Minister Faiz Sucuoğlu.

Before it was claimed that this group, which is said to be 160 people, resigned from the YDP, it was necessary to confirm the accuracy of the news by the YDP and reveal it with its documents. Since the disclosure of the names of the 160 people in question was against journalistic ethics, news should have been published with a YDP-approved document.

In this news, the political propaganda of the UBP was made by targeting the YDP through the people in question. Therefore, this news is incompatible with journalism ethics. Even if the 160 people in question have given permission to publish the news, there is an ethical violation in this news.

4.5. Ethical Violations of Public Order and State Reputation and Confidentiality

Article 3: "Boycott Action Committee repeated, "We are boycotting the seeds of the new order"", 2022

Analysis 3: The news contains statements by Rasih

Keskiner on behalf of the Boycott Action Committee.

In the news, it is stated that the seeds of a new order will be sown by mentioning that the elections and political parties are for show. In this context, ethical violations have been committed against the public order by making derogatory statements toward the regularly held democratic elections, political parties and candidates.

Article 4: "YDP candidate Hüseyin Gürlek: If the parliament represented the nation, there would be no need for YDP," 2022

Analysis 4: The news included the statements of YDP Deputy Candidate Hüseyin Gürlek.

In the news, it was stated that immigrants of Turkish origin were ignored, and it was mentioned that the parliament did not represent the nation. Here, it is emphasized that the parliament does not represent a certain segment of the people (people of Turkish origin), while other segments are marginalized. Therefore, the Assembly of the Republic, which is the legislative body of the state, has been discredited.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. General Comparisons

In this study, it was determined that 89 (100%) ethical violations were committed by focusing on the political news about the election of four digital newspapers. Accordingly, ethical violations in 41 (46%) news published by Özgür Gazete, ethical violations in 27 (30%) news published by Gıynık Newspaper, ethical violations in 20 (23%) news published by Cyprus Post, and an ethical violation was detected in 1 (1%) news.

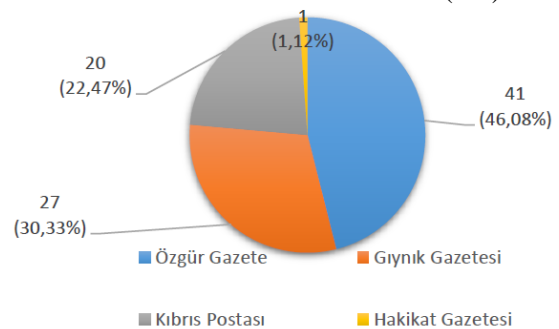


Figure 5. Digital newspapers – distribution of ethical violations in election-related political news

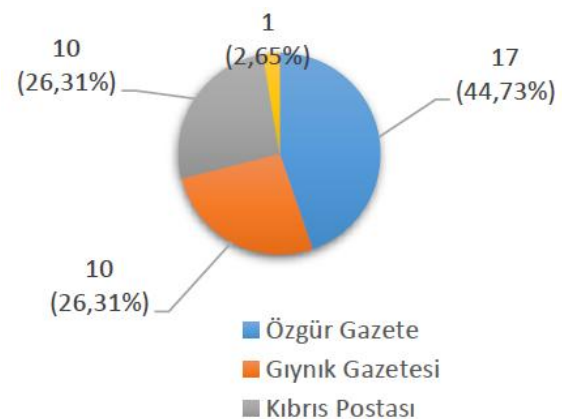


Figure 6. Digital newspapers – distribution of ethical violations of personal rights

Ethical violations were detected in 38 (100%) news reports regarding ethical violations of personal rights. Accordingly, 17 (45%) news from Özgür Newspaper, 10 (26%) for Gıynık Newspaper, 10 (26%) news for Cyprus Post, and 1 (3%) news for Adalet Newspaper have violated personal rights.

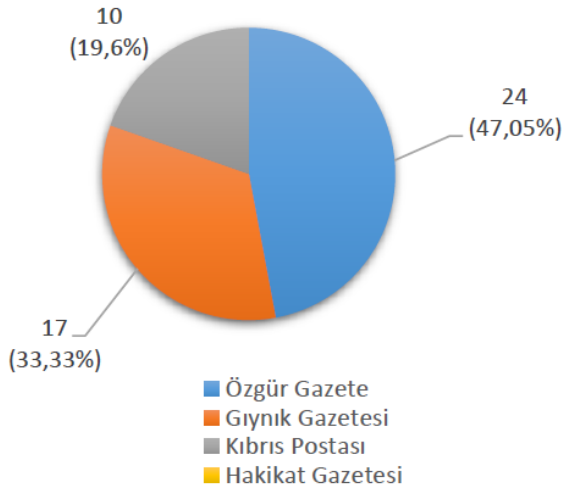


Figure 7. Digital newspapers – distribution of ethical violations of public order, state reputation, and confidentiality

Ethical violations were detected in 51 (100%) news reports regarding ethical violations of public order and the reputation and confidentiality of the state. According to this, it has been determined that Özgür Newspaper's 24 (47%), Gıynık Newspaper's 17 (33%), Cyprus Post's 10 (20%) and Çağrı Newspaper's 0 (0%) news reports have ethical violations of personal rights.

5.2. Evaluation of Ethical Violations in Digital Newspapers

5.2.1. Özgür Gazete

Of the 89 (100%) ethical violations identified in the digital newspapers included in the study, 41 (46%) are among the news published by Özgür Gazete within the scope of political news about the election. Here, the highest ethical violation rate in the study was found in Özgür Gazete.

Özgür Gazete maintains an oppositional journalism activity against the official authorities of Turkey and the TRNC, with radical views and approaches with an extreme left orientation. In this context, it has been determined that the newspaper makes news that violates the reputation of the politicians, bureaucrats, and businesspersons, violates the reputation of the people, violates the public order and the reputation of the state, and generally right-wing people or groups. At the same time, expressions such as “North of Cyprus,” “Turkish Cypriots,” “appointed President,” “puppets,” “regime” were frequently used in this news.

Özgür Gazete, in the 2022 TRNC Parliamentary Early General Election, included statements made by a group that describes themselves as 'boycotters' in the context of the candidates of the left and extreme left parties and their approaches to the election, with an oppositional attitude toward the UBP and other right-

wing parties.

5.2.2. Gıynık Gazetesi

Of the 89 (100%) ethical violations identified in the digital newspapers included in the study, 27 (30%) are among the news published by Gıynık Newspaper within the scope of political news about the election. Here, the second highest ethical violation rate in the study was found in the Gıynık Newspaper.

Gıynık Newspaper; It makes sensational news to increase its interactions on social media such as being read, viewed, liked and shared. In this context, it is a digital newspaper that produces significant original content. Additionally, periodic or regular digital newspapers such as Gıynık Political View, which includes politicians, Gıynık Tiken, which includes political humor, Gıynık Spor, which includes sports activities, Gıynık Turizm, which includes tourism activities, and Gıynık Property, which includes the real estate world, are also included in the Gıynık Newspaper.

Although the Gıynık Newspaper shows closeness to some politicians, political parties, views, and social groups from time to time, it tries to approach all segments equally. However, it emerges as a party in some political and social debates with its specific reporting.

5.2.3. Kıbrıs Postası

Of the 89 (100%) ethical violations identified in the digital newspapers included in the study, 20 (23%) are among the news published by the Cyprus Post within the scope of political news about the election. Here, the third highest ethical violation rate in the study was determined in the Cyprus Post.

The Cyprus Post is a digital newspaper that generally tries to keep politicians and political parties at an equal distance and does not take sides in political discussions. However, it can be close to some segments periodically. The Cyprus Post has writers who have different views and can appeal to many segments. These writers are also members of the public who make programs in the newspaper's digital publications or television channels and are well-known in society.

5.2.4. Hakikat Gazetesi

Of the 89 (100%) ethical violations detected in the digital newspapers included in the study, 1 (1%) is among the news published by the Truth Newspaper within the scope of political news about the election. Here, the lowest ethical violation rate in the study was found in the Journal of Truth.

Truth Newspaper is a digital newspaper that is generally close to right-leaning groups and political parties. It conducts its journalism without engaging in political discussions by being sensitive about the high-level authorities of Turkey and the TRNC and the Cyprus issue. In this context, no findings were found in the study in the type of ethical violation of public order and the reputation and confidentiality of the state. This

reveals the sensitive attitude of the Truth on this issue. In addition to the attitude of the newspaper on national issues, it reflects Güven Arıklı's ideological background along the nationalist line.

6. Conclusion

As the main finding of this study, the rates of ethical violations detected in Kıbrıs Postası, Gıynık Newspaper, Huzur Newspaper, and Özgür Gazete are relatively lower in the election period compared to the periods when routine publications are compared (Dolunay, 2018; Dolunay & Kasap, 2021; Dolunay et al., 2022). As a main other finding of the study, among the four news sites included in the sample; In the 2022 TRNC Early General Elections, in the context of political news regarding the election, Özgür Gazete had the highest ethical violation rate with 46% (n 41); Gıynık Newspaper had the second highest ethical violation rate with 30% (n 27); It is seen that the Cyprus Post had the third highest ethical violation rate with 23% (n 20), and the Hakikat has the lowest ethical violation rate with 1% (n 1). This situation reveals that Özgür Gazete, which has the highest rate of ethical violations, and the following Gıynık Newspaper and Cyprus Post, should publish with a more careful approach in accordance with ethical principles.

However, as mentioned above, the relatively lower rates of ethical violations compared to previous periods are probably related to the fact that digital newspapers establish close links with certain political and economic circles during election periods. Thus, criticism is not exceeded relatively much as stated, and there may even be journalism suitable for political propaganda. However, it is essential that ethical violations should not be encountered, even at a low rate, especially considering the harm they may cause to individuals and society.

Journalism ethics, especially digital journalism have many ethical paradoxes and/or problems in many ways. These issues have been addressed in various studies. Tong (2017), discussed the legitimacy of journalism and especially digital journalism and emphasized its importance. Waddell (2017), on the other hand, dealt with the ethical problems of digital journalism through the concept of robot journalism and revealed the ethical problems caused by robot journalism compared to the news prepared by humans.

While the positive aspects of the development of technology are accepted, it also brings ethical problems. In the field of journalism, ethical problems have reached even more different dimensions with technology. For example, all types of data can reach large populations within seconds within the new conditions. But, as Deuze (2005) remarks, speed can be seen both as an essentialized value and as a problematized side effect of news work. Therefore, it is necessary to publish news that is much more informed and ethical. However, Kellner (2007) notes that the more intense competition for attention is "leading the media to go to sensationalistic tabloidized stories in an

attempt to attract maximum audiences for as much time as possible." Unfortunately, owing to the speed (journalists' trying to be the first publishers of news), ethical values like an unacceptable "need for speed game in real life" are being overlooked (Juntunen, 2010; Dolunay et al., 2022).

While ethical issues in digital journalism are discussed around the world, the situation is the same in the TRNC, which is the focus of this study. In this context, especially the digital newspapers included to sample and have a higher rate of ethical violations, should review their ethical approaches.

To prevent ethical violations encountered in digital newspapers within the scope of the limitations on the rights and freedoms of the press specified in international legislation, suggestions are listed below, within the framework of the results obtained in the study:

6.1. Increasing Professional Awareness in Terms of Ethical Values

There are some ethical violations of the basic values in the context of limitations on the rights and freedoms of the press in the broadcasts made in new media journalism.

One of the most common ethical violations in new media reporting in the TRNC is the use of individuals' full names and photographs without their consent. Of course, politicians, in particular, are expected to be more understanding of criticism and the use of some issues related to personal rights in accordance with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. However, this situation does not grant unlimited rights; the boundaries of criticism must be drawn with precision. Again, one of the common ethical violations in digital newspapers is publishing against the presumption of innocence and the right not to be tainted by those who have not yet been convicted before the judiciary. This situation is embodied by the publication of discrediting publications directed toward well-known people and politicians.

Reasons for ethical violations encountered in new media journalism: It has also been revealed in previous studies that there is a lack of awareness of ethical values and a high expectation of gaining access (Dolunay, 2018). Again, it is seen that some media and new media organizations assign individuals without education in terms of communication and journalism (except exceptional names who have had many years of experience in the profession) as members of the press, so to speak, to benefit from the relatively cheap labor force.

Because of this study, it is recommended that individuals be employed as members of the press and continue their life-long education after vocational training, primarily by looking at their education in the field of communication or their work experience in the field of communication. Additionally, it is thought that various legal sanctions should be applied to the members of the press, who cause ethical violations by

making sensational news to reach high reach, and who act against professional values despite all warnings, against these approaches. Finally, it is seen that some media and new media organizations establish close relations with political and economic circles, and at the same time, some members of the press participate in political discussions and support the ideological views of a certain segment. This constitutes a violation of the principles of separation of news-comments and non-partisanship. For preventing this, the impartiality and objectivity of the press should be reviewed with higher sensitivity.

6.2. Increasing the Authority of the Media Ethics Committee or Establishing a Similar Authorized Structure

The Media Ethics Committee (MEK), which was established on a voluntary basis in 2013 by academics and representatives of press organizations in the TRNC, held its first meeting on June 13, 2013, and started its work to ensure control in the media. The Media Ethics Committee was put into practice with the signing of the Media Ethics Committee Declaration, which was created with the support of media organizations and many non-governmental organizations. The realization of these and similar organizations independently of the state is critical in terms of press rights and freedoms. However, at least equally important, media organizations are expected to comply with the decisions of the relevant board. Such formations make an important contribution in the context of personal rights, where the rights and freedoms of the press are restricted, the dignity and confidentiality of the state, and the protection of moral values. So much so that, despite some different opinions because of some decisions taken by the board, many media organizations have been provided to review their news within the scope of the relevant decisions.

Although the MEK has closed an important gap in new media reporting, it has no enforcement power. In case of ethical violations, moral sanctions such as condemnation and warning can be applied *ex officio* (regardless of the complaint - directly) upon the complaints received. However, the High Council of Broadcasting, which was established by the state in accordance with the legal legislation in 1997, has the authority to impose serious sanctions in case of ethical violations in broadcasts on radio and television. However, since the legal framework of the YYK is over traditional media tools, it cannot interfere with new media reporting. Therefore, because of the results of the study, it is recommended that the MEK be equipped with more comprehensive powers and can impose sanctions when necessary, or that a similar authorized structure should be established, which can monitor ethical violations encountered in new media journalism by the gathering of press organizations or by the state, and which can impose sanctions when necessary.

6.3. Revisions of the Laws

6.3.1. Revision of Media Law

There is no regulation on the basis of which the broadcasts of press members in the TRNC, both in the media and in new media journalism, will be limited. The fast and easy accessibility in new media journalism raises serious ethical problems.

As determined in this study, there are serious ethical problems encountered in digital newspapers. Ethical problems should be looked at from a legal perspective, although solutions are offered in this direction, so much so that the damaged reputation of the state and individuals in front of society brings with it individual and social psychological problems. Therefore, considering the results of this study, the Press Law should be revised and the press rights and freedoms should be regulated primarily in the context of rights and then their limits.

6.3.2. Regulation of Broadcasts on the Internet and Entry into Force of the Law on Combating Crimes Committed through These Broadcasts

The purpose and scope of such laws; obligations and responsibilities of content providers, hosting providers, access providers and mass usage providers, and regulating the principles and procedures for combating crimes committed on the internet through content, location and access providers.

In this context, considering the needs of the digital age we are in, the activities carried out in this environment should be subject to supervision by the relevant law. With the enactment of the said law, an important step will be taken to prevent moral and ethical violations encountered in new media journalism. As examined within the scope of this study, ethical violations against both personal rights and the reputation of the state can be legally combated within the scope of this law.

6.3.3. Revising the Law on the Protection of Private Life and Confidential Areas of Life: Bringing the Right to Be Forgotten

It is possible to easily access a photo that a person has shared in the past and content written about him in the digital environment. Therefore, it is the most natural right for a person to leave behind the experiences that he does not want to be known about his past and to shape his future independently of this information. However, this situation has become increasingly difficult. The need for the right to be forgotten has arisen as concerns on this issue have increased. In this context, it is defined as the elimination of all kinds of disturbing personal content belonging to individuals in the digital environment, again at the request of individuals, in a way that cannot be recovered.

Personal content within the scope of the right to be forgotten is in various formats such as text, images, or audio. In other words, this content must exist in a digital environment. Deletion processes, which fall

within the scope of the right to be forgotten, are carried out at the request of the individual. Since it is not considered possible due to the nature of the right to claim of a third party other than the individual himself, the issue of whether it is possible for the heirs of a deceased person to claim on behalf of a deceased person is still being debated. With the introduction of the right to be forgotten, it will be possible to remove the news and content published in the digital environment about individuals upon their request. As examined in the study, humiliating, reputation-damaging, etc. emerged about individuals and individuals in the digital newspapers. To prevent the further effects of the news that have an impact, it is recommended to make the relevant legal regulations.

For the future research, it is recommended to focus on effects of unethical digital news on individuals and society by both psychology and communication experts. In this context, the main importance of ethical digital journalism will be better understood.

7. Limitations and Further Study

This study focuses on journalism ethics in digital news and is limited to the TRNC.

Authors' Contributions

Ayhan Dolunay determined the subject and method, directed and organized the research, and revised the article. Mustafa Çaluda wrote the article, archived the news, and conducted the analysis.

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