Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719



https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3579-9825

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN JOURNALISM

**Nimra Akram**

Urdu Website Sub Editor

Times of Karachi

**Corresponding email:** nimraakram26@gmail.com

**Received**:01-7-2024 **Accepted**: ;10-9-2024 **Available online: Published:** 31-12-2024

***Cite this article:*** Akram N. (2024). *freedom of speech in journalism Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts*, (p.60-71).

***Abstract***

*The critical importance of research as a perspective in journalism exists to protect fundamental rights in democratic societies that implement their advanced security measures. Journalists experience multiple dangers which include harassment and violence and censorship when they perform their reporting duties. The study analyzes various obstacles which affect the authenticity and credibility of journalism through a combination of literature analysis and empirical research. The study investigates how professional organizations and advocacy groups protect journalists' rights and develop policy frameworks. The research examines how digital media dynamics which include misinformation and algorithmic biases affect the ability of journalists to deliver news and the level of trust that people have in them. Researchers use theoretical frameworks such as liberal and democratic theories to study how people balance their individual rights with their media rights and their responsibilities to society. The researchers used quantitative methods to investigate how journalists' freedom of reporting connects with their perception of news authenticity and how people view censorship. The findings demonstrate that strong legal protections and international conventions and supportive systems serve as essential elements for developing a strong journalistic system. The study provides detailed findings together with recommendations which will assist in developing policies and practices that protect press freedom while maintaining transparency and accountability in modern media systems.*

***Keywords****: Freedom of Journalism, Press Freedom, Democratic Societies, Media Integrity, Censorship*

## Introduction

Freedom of the press functions as a fundamental requirement for democracy because it enables people to understand government activities while holding public officials accountable and participating in informed discussions. The media faces increasing threats to its fundamental right because multiple organizations now work to restrict journalists from doing their work with complete freedom and fair reporting standards.

## Background Study

The Reporters Without Borders organization indicates that reporters who work in authoritarian countries face persistent dangers because those governments attempt to restrict their movements while using harassment and violent methods to maintain control over information dissemination. Organizations like the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) present alarming evidence about increasing violence against journalists which includes their abduction and torture and unlawful execution during armed conflicts and in areas controlled by oppressive governments. The digital age has introduced new dynamics, offering expanded opportunities for journalistic expression but also imposing new constraints. Jay Rosen and Ethan Zuckerman



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

show how the internet enables citizen journalism yet they warn about its negative effects which include misinformation dissemination and online abuse and algorithmic discrimination that damages journalistic trustworthiness (Wolfe, 2019). Tim Wu and Emily Bell conduct academic studies that show how media companies drive their business operations through advertising revenues which leads to decreased editorial freedom and restricted access to various viewpoints in news reports (Pavlik, 2013). Freedom House and UNESCO continue their work to establish international treaties and legal frameworks that will protect press freedom and ensure journalist protection despite the existing obstacles. The Global Investigative Journalism Network and the CPJ support and protect journalists who face threats throughout the world by providing essential resources and advocacy work. The need for empirical research exists because researchers must study how political factors and social dynamics and economic forces and technological advancements impact journalistic freedom in order to comprehend these complexities. This research identifies the fundamental reasons that lead to threats against journalistic freedom and it develops solutions to protect press freedom which will assist in creating policies that support democratic values and right to free speech (Encabo, 1995).

**Problem Statement**

Today, basic journalistic freedoms are under threat on multiple fronts, directly challenging the integrity and independence of journalism worldwide. The right to report without facing harassment, censorship, or other physical obstacles to reporting is increasingly at risk, even in those democracies where it has long been taken for granted. The extensive effects on information dissemination through free channels expose society to two types of censorship which combine to diminish public access through vital information. The transition to digital news through both digital platforms and social media creates new difficulties which already complicate the news distribution system. Misinformation together with online harassment and algorithmic bias drives news organizations to lose their journalistic credibility which creates greater mistrust between media outlets and their audiences (Wolfe, 2019). The absence of strong legal safeguards together with complete institutional backing exposes journalists to various forms of threats which include both intimidation and violence that hinder their essential function as power monitors in democratic societies. Professional organizations and groups fighting for journalists' rights and freedom of the press indeed fight for it tooth and nail, but this cannot be an ideal world with systemic issues so deeply entrenched. The study will demonstrate the complex relationship between political and social and economic and technological factors which limit and enable efforts to safeguard journalistic independence while journalists face difficult challenges to their work. The research uses a critical review of literature and empirical data analysis and qualitative interviews with journalists and media professionals and other relevant stakeholders to identify the main factors which endanger journalistic freedom while exploring ways to reduce these threats through different strategies and interventions. The research aims to improve our knowledge about how freedom functions in journalism which will help develop policies and practices and initiatives that create a strong and sustainable journalistic system which protects free expression and transparent operations and accountable practices (Pavlik, 2013).

**Objectives**

1. To explore the opinion of journalist about the freedom of speech without any consequence


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

2. To know about the stance of journalist related to the laws limiting autonomy by the publisher or writer enacted by the government
3. To estimate about the credibility authenticity of the reports public or broadcast in journalist appearance

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What is the opinion of journalist about the potential?

**RQ2:** What is the view point of journalist about the consequence?

**RQ3:** How's journalist believe about the credibility and authenticity of their published or broadcast report?

**Hypothesis**

**H1:** Journalists believe that there should be complete freedom of speech without any consequences.

**H2:** Journalists believe that laws limiting the autonomy by publishers and writers should not be enacted by the government.

**H3:** The reports published or broadcast by journalists are consistently credible and authentic.

## Literature Review

In this study, Wolfe (2019) present a study that elaborates on the legal and ethical challenges faced by journalists in maintaining open lines of discourse online. Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have been utilized with a sample size of twenty award-winning reporters, twenty new media industry recruits, and forty journalism undergraduates. Results suggest that while the sample needed an online presence, through social media to engage audiences, very little support was given for how to cope with online harassment and threats. A number of participants reported that hostile experiences curtailed their freedom to express themselves, among them journalism students who were starting out building their online profiles. This underlines the impact of online discourse on journalists' critical role as guardians of free speech in any democratic society. This study would thus desire added intervention and support from educators or the media industry toward the side of journalistic freedom (Wolfe, 2019; Quinn, 2018).

### Innovation as a Key to Viability in the Digital Age

Johnson, Thomas, and Kelling (2021) examine how American opinion journalism constructs and defines hate speech through both written and spoken discourse. Their study analyses editorials and opinion columns published between 1998 and 2019 and identifies recurring themes that show how hate speech is often framed within libertarian arguments about free expression in public debate. The findings highlight the tension journalists face between exercising their right to freedom of expression and fulfilling their ethical responsibility to protect democratic values. This tension reflects the broader challenges journalism encounters in adapting to digital platforms where boundaries of acceptable speech are increasingly contested (Johnson et al., 2021; Ward, 2020).

### The Relationship between Journalism and Democracy

Josephi (2013) explores the question of how much democracy journalism requires by shifting the focus from media systems to journalistic practice. Through historical and contemporary examples, the study demonstrates that credible and accurate journalism can exist in semi democratic and non democratic contexts. The author argues that journalism depends less on


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

formal democratic structures and more on freedom of expression and professional autonomy. Supporting this view, Encabo (1995) emphasises that ethical journalism and democratic accountability rely on independent news judgement and access to diverse viewpoints. Together, these perspectives underline the importance of safeguarding journalistic autonomy to maintain the integrity of journalism.

**Journalistic Response to Global Events: The Danish Cartoons Case Study**

Peterson (2007) provides insight into how U.S. journalism responds to sensitive global events through an examination of press coverage surrounding the Danish cartoons controversy. The analysis shows that American news organisations often rely on an objectivity based framework that avoids explicit positioning. However, the framing of Western values in contrast to Islamic values reveals the difficulties journalists face when attempting to balance neutrality with cultural sensitivity. This case highlights the structural and ethical challenges involved in reporting international conflicts while maintaining journalistic objectivity and credibility (Peterson, 2007).

**Media Accountability Systems and Democracy**

Sawant (2003) argues that media accountability systems are essential for protecting democratic institutions and maintaining public trust in journalism. Using examples of press regulation mechanisms, the study suggests that accountability structures help ensure ethical conduct without enabling excessive government control. Ward (2020) further supports this argument by emphasising the role of global media ethics in strengthening accountability while preserving press freedom. These studies demonstrate the need for independent oversight mechanisms that balance freedom of expression with professional responsibility across different media environments.

**Ethical and Legal Debates Surrounding Hate Speech in U.S. Journalism**

Johnson, Thomas, and Kelling (2021) analyse the ethical and legal debates surrounding hate speech in U.S. opinion journalism by examining editorial and opinion content published over two decades. Their findings reveal how journalists navigate competing obligations, including the protection of free speech and the need to uphold democratic values. The study illustrates how ethical decision making in journalism is increasingly complex in digital and polarised media environments, where journalists must carefully balance expressive freedom with social responsibility (Johnson et al., 2021; Klein & Johnson, 2022).

**Theoretical framework**

**Democratic Theory:** The fundamental principle of democratic governance states that political authority must be established through popular consent. The system requires citizens to participate in decision-making processes through their elected representatives. The democratic election system demonstrates this principle through its implementation of "one person, one vote" which gives every citizen equal ability to select their representatives. The basic democratic principle states that all citizens must have equal rights to participate in the political process.

**Instrumental Value Theory:** The theory of instrumental value states that freedom exists because it helps people reach their desired objectives yet freedom itself does not possess intrinsic value. The economic argument establishes that when markets operate freely and people have economic freedom, both innovation

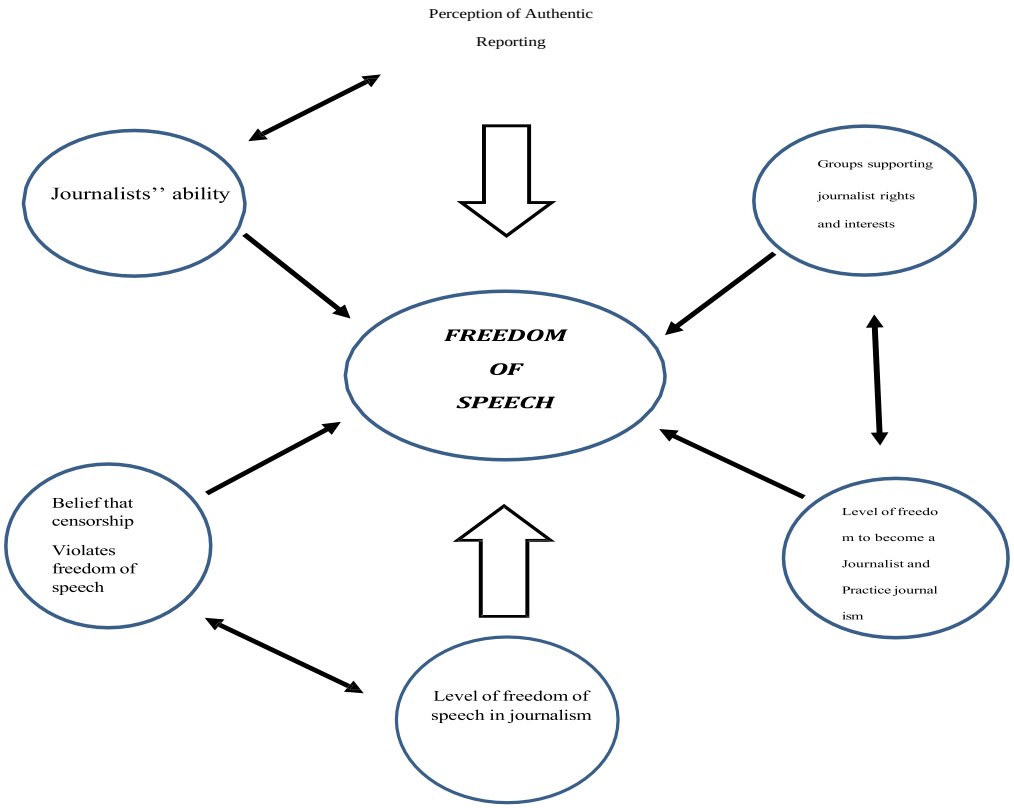

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719

and efficiency and total economic prosperity will increase. People use freedom as a tool to accomplish their business objectives in this situation.

**Conceptual framework:**




## Methodology

### Participants

The participants in this research study were youth from various cities and areas of Pakistan. Due to time constraints, approximately 108 respondents were able to take part in the study.

### Sampling Method

A convenience sampling method was employed to select participants for this study. This method was chosen due to time limitations and the need to quickly gather data from a diverse group of youth across Pakistan.

### Procedure

The research study focused on analyzing the participation of youth in the latest social media trends and assessing the ratio of positive and negative effects of social media on their lives. Data collection involved administering surveys and conducting interviews with the selected respondents.

### Limitations of the Study

This research is confined only to the youth of Pakistan because they have been identified as the largest segme using the tool of social media. Although attempts were made to collect data from different cities and areas, due to time constraints it remained a small sample size of approximately 80 respondents. Other limitations of this research were in terms of time, budget, geographical area, reluctance of respondents, and limitations which are inherent in convenience-based sampling. The focus of this study is specifically on the implications of social media in younger people and may therefore not


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

appropriately explore the more general effects of social media usage within society. Moreover, because it is a self-reported study, there may be response bias and thus subjectivity in the participants' answers.

## Results

### Statistics

**Case Processing Summary**

| | | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cases | Valid | 108 | 100.0 |
| | Excluded[a] | 0 | .0 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 |

### Demographics

| Age | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 16-21 | 44 | 40.7 | 40.7 | 40.7 |
| | 22-26 | 43 | 39.8 | 39.8 | 80.6 |
| | 27-31 | 14 | 13.0 | 13.0 | 93.5 |
| | above 31 | 7 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| Gender of the Participant | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | male | 70 | 64.8 | 64.8 | 64.8 |
| | female | 38 | 35.2 | 35.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| Education of the Participant | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Matric | 12 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 11.1 |
| | o level | 2 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 13.0 |
| | intermediate | 33 | 30.6 | 30.6 | 43.5 |
| | bachelors | 49 | 45.4 | 45.4 | 88.9 |
| | masters | 12 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

| Marital Status of the Participant | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | single | 81 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 |
| | married | 27 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 108 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719

| Statistics | | NAME | AGE | Gender of the Participant | Education of the Participant | Marital Status of the Participant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 108 | 108 | 108 | 108 | 108 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

**Hypothesis Result**

**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | No of Items |
|---|---|---|
| .628 | .632 | 6 |

| Item-Total Statistics | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Squared Multiple Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| There is freedom to become a journalist and to practice journalism, and professional groups freely support journalists' rights and interests | 7.86 | 4.924 | .303 | .104 | .608 |
| Freedom of speech in journalism means you can say anything. | 7.63 | 4.871 | .309 | .116 | .606 |
| Censorship violates freedom of speech. | 8.20 | 5.715 | .285 | .135 | .613 |
| Freedom of the press means that members of the public can criticize the government without fear of reprisals or censorship. | 7.91 | 4.103 | .569 | .430 | .489 |
| Freedom of speech is important every time and everywhere. | 7.94 | 5.108 | .246 | .065 | .631 |
| Freedom of the press is the right to circulate opinions in print without censorship by the government. | 8.06 | 4.688 | .487 | .375 | .537 |

**ASSUMPTIONS:**

With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.628 indicating improved internal consistency, let's outline the assumptions for each hypothesis,

**H1: Journalists believe that there should be complete freedom of speech without any consequences.**

**Assumption 1:** A relationship between the level of freedom journalists experience in covering news and the authenticity perceived in their reports have been associated with existence.

**Assumption 2:** More credible and authentic reports production can be observed in case of facing fewer barriers and no harassment in news coverage.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

**H2: Journalists believe that laws limiting the autonomy by publishers and writers should not be enacted by the government.**

**Assumption 1:** Professional organizations advocating for journalists' rights significantly influence the freedom individuals have to enter and engage in journalism.

**Assumption 2:** Journalists who receive backing from professional organizations are likely to enjoy more freedom in their journalistic endeavors compared to those who lack such support.

**H3: The reports published or broadcast by journalists are consistently credible and authentic.**

**Assumption 1:** There exists a connection between the degree of freedom of speech in journalism and individuals' perceptions of how censorship affects freedom of speech.

**Assumption 2:** People who experience greater freedom of speech in journalism are more likely to view censorship as a breach of the fundamental right to freedom of speech.

With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.628 indicating improved internal consistency, let's outline the assumptions for each hypothesis,

**H1: Journalists believe that there should be complete freedom of speech without any consequences.**

**Assumption 1:** A relationship between the level of freedom journalists experience in covering news and the authenticity perceived in their reports have been associated with existence.

**Assumption 2:** More credible and authentic reports production can be observed in case of facing fewer barriers and no harassment in news coverage.

**H2: Journalists believe that laws limiting the autonomy by publishers and writers should not be enacted by the government.**

**Assumption 1:** Professional organizations advocating for journalists' rights significantly influence the freedom individuals have to enter and engage in journalism.

**Assumption 2:** Journalists who receive backing from professional organizations are likely to enjoy more freedom in their journalistic endeavors compared to those who lack such support.

**H3: The reports published or broadcast by journalists are consistently credible and authentic.**

**Assumption 1:** There exists a connection between the degree of freedom of speech in journalism and individuals' perceptions of how censorship affects freedom of speech.

**Assumption 2:** People who experience greater freedom of speech in journalism are more likely to view censorship as a breach of the fundamental right to freedom of speech.

**Recommendations**

The research results indicate that journalists strongly believe in the importance of freedom of speech and autonomy from government restrictions. They also believe in the credibility and authenticity of their reports. The findings suggest a significant rejection of the null hypotheses, indicating a strong consensus among journalists. Journalists and media organizations should continue to advocate for unrestricted freedom of speech and press autonomy. Governments should refrain from enacting laws that limit press freedom and autonomy. Media outlets should prioritize fact-checking and verification processes to maintain credibility. Journalists should strive to provide accurate and unbiased information to the public. Media organizations should establish clear guidelines and training programs for ethical reporting practices. Future studies should explore the


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

impact of government restrictions on press freedom and the public's perception of journalistic credibility. The findings of this study can inform policy decisions and media practices that promote a free and responsible press. Media organizations should prioritize transparency and accountability in their reporting practices. Journalists should engage in ongoing professional development to maintain the highest standards of reporting. By promoting freedom of speech and press autonomy, we can foster a more informed and engaged citizenry.

References:

Wolfe, C. (2019). Online trolls, journalism and the freedom of speech: Are the bullies taking over? Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics, 16(1), 11-21. Retrieved from http://eprints.worc.ac.uk/7719/

Pavlik, J. V. (2013). Innovation and the future of journalism. *Digital Journalism, 1*(2), 181-193. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21670811.2012.756666

Pavlik, J. V. (2013). Innovation and the future of journalism. *Digital Journalism, 1*(2), 181-193. [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21670811.2012.756666](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21670811.2012.756666)

Fidalgo, J. (2009). Journalism: new media, new actors - new ethics? [Online]. Retrieved from http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29750

Peterson, M. A. (2007). Making global news: "Freedom of speech" and "Muslim rage" in U.S. journalism. *Contemporary Islam, 1*, 247-264. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11562-007-0021-z

Johnson, B. G., Thomas, R. J., & Kelling, K. (2021). Boundaries of hate: Ethical implications of the discursive construction of hate speech in U.S. opinion journalism. *Journal of Media Ethics, 36*(1), 20-35. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23736992.2020.1841643

Encabo, M. N. (1995). The ethics of journalism and democracy. *European Journal of Communication, 10*(4), 513-526. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0267323195010004006

Klein, L., & Johnson, B. G. (2022). A test of free speech: applying the ethics of care to coverage of Snyder v. Phelps. *Journal of Media Ethics, 37*(2), 128-142. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23736992.2022.2057995

Ibold, H. (2010). Walter Williams, country editor and global journalist: pastoral exceptionalism and global journalism ethics at the turn of the 20th century. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 25*(3), 207-225. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08900523.2010.497030

Pereira, S., & Pereira, L. (2015). Digital media in primary schools: Literacy or technology? Analyzing government and media discourses. *Educational Policy, 29*(2), 316-341. Retrieved from http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/44215

Ward, S. J. (2020). Global media ethics. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication. Retrieved from https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-921

Quinn, F. (2018). Failing to prepare? Journalism ethics education in the developing world: The case of Cambodia. *Journal of Media Ethics, 33*(2), 50-65. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23736992.2018.1441031

Klein, L., & Johnson, B. G. (2022). A test of free speech: Applying the ethics of care to coverage of Snyder v. Phelps. *Journal of Media Ethics, 37*(2), 128-142. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23736992.2022.2057995



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Journal of Journalism, Media Science and Creative Arts
ISSN (Print): 2790-9700 ISSN (Online): 2790-9719



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Ibold, H. (2010). Walter Williams, country editor and global journalist: Pastoral exceptionalism and global journalism ethics at the turn of the 20th century. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 25*(3), 207-225. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08900523.2010.497030

Johnson, B. G., Thomas, R. J., & Kelling, K. (2021). Boundaries of hate: Ethical implications of the discursive construction of hate speech in US opinion journalism. *Journal of Media Ethics, 36*(1), 20-35. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23736992.2020.1841643

Sawant, P. B. (2003). Accountability in journalism. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 18*(1), 16-28. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S15327728JMME1801_03

Encabo, M. N. (1995). The ethics of journalism and democracy. *European Journal of Communication, 10*(4), 513-526. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0267323195010004006

Peterson, M. A. (2007). Making global news: "Freedom of speech" and "Muslim rage" in U.S. journalism. *Contemporary Islam, 1*, 247-264. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11562-007-0021-z

Josephi, B. (2013). How much democracy does journalism need? *Journalism, 14*(4), 474-489. Retrieved from https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1464884912464172

Fidalgo, J. (2008). Journalists' professional identity: new challenges to an old quest. Retrieved from [http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29746](http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29746)

Fidalgo, J. (2009). Journalism: new media, new actors - new ethics? Retrieved from [http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29750](http://repositorium.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29750)



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License