

Review article

**EDUCATION OF JOURNALISM STUDENTS
AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS**

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Abstract. *One of the most important subjects in the education of journalists is Journalistic Ethics. Topics in this area have become especially important since the beginning of the 21st century, because with the development of new media technologies, there have been significant changes in journalism. All over the world, the focus has shifted from quality reporting to the fastest possible publication, sensationalism and earnings. Higher education institutions that educate journalists have an obligation to convey to students the importance of adhering to ethical postulates. The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes of third and fourth year journalism students of the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš regarding journalistic ethics related to their perceptions of this phenomenon. In accordance with the set goal, a special instrument was constructed - a questionnaire based on the five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed to students during March and April 2021, and was filled out by 42 respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive and comparative statistics and SPSS 25.0. The results of the research indicate that although the studies educate a high percentage of students who understand the importance of journalistic ethics, most respondents indicate the existence of objective circumstances in which they think they could not fully adhere to ethical principles.*

Key words: *journalistic ethics, student attitudes, journalism, journalism studies*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Journalistic ethics is a type of professional ethics and as such represents a relationship between moral obligations and special responsibilities that individuals assume when they practice a particular profession (Žaket, 2007, p. 31). In other words, it encompasses moral rules, principles and rights of people who practice journalism. Being familiar with journalistic ethics is one of the fundamental prerequisites for practicing journalism, though in practice, testing the knowledge of ethical codes for becoming a professional journalist is generally not required. It is quite understandable that journalism which does not rely on ethics does not deserve to be referred to as journalism (Nikšić & Davičo, 2004, p. 7). Such journalism derogates the basic postulates of the profession thus becoming tabloid and unprofessional media. And yet, even though there are different regulatory bodies and texts, one bears witness to daily violation of journalistic ethics in all types of media. Spreading untruths, political propaganda, speculations, spinning, publishing unsuitable content, using inappropriate language as well as leaving out important information is becoming conspicuous in the Serbian media and it represents the most blatant violation of journalistic ethics.

There are numerous professional codes, textbooks, recommendations and various organisations that offer instructions and guidelines related to ethical reporting. In Serbia, the Code of Journalists of Serbia was adopted in 2006, and the Code of the Association of Online Media was adopted in 2017, while the Press Council is in charge of supervising implementation of ethical codes and standards since 2009 (Milutinović, 2019, p. 1051). The Press Council is a self-regulatory organization that brings together publishers, print and internet media owners, news agencies, and media professionals, and it was formed to ensure that the Journalists' Code of Ethics was followed.¹ The Press Council annual report on monitoring compliance with the Code of Journalists of Serbia in daily newspapers in the period from July 1 to December 31, 2021 (Press Council, 2022, p. 1) states that a total of 5,715 texts were recorded in which at least one point of the Code was violated, although most cases violated several points. It also states that there is a significant increase in the number of observed violations compared to the same observed period in 2020 (4977² compared to 3724 violations in 2020) (Press Council, 2022, p. 1). The same report states that it is not possible to talk about a clear trend of growth or decline in the number of violations of the Code. In the monitoring from 2020, for example, for the first time, after a period of constant growth in the number of violations, there was a decline, and in 2021 there was an increase again. Given the increased number of violations in political reporting, mainly with clear reporting in the interest of the authorities, the current increase in the number of observed violations of the Code could be related to the approaching elections. However, it is evident that the number of violations of the Code that has occurred over the years is significant and violating the ethical code in Serbian media year in and year out seriously diminishes the quality of the media space and threatens to entirely destroy professional reporting and journalistic objectivity. Such a situation is not merely visible in our country. The degradation of journalistic ethics is taking place around the world, especially in the past ten years (Kumylganova, 2017, p. 186).

¹ <https://savetzastampu.rs/en/about-us/>

² The number of 5,715 texts in 2021 is reduced by violations registered in two dailies whose reporting was observed for the first time - Objektiv and Nova

On the other hand, journalistic ethics, as well as ethical and objective reporting, play an important role in journalism students' education. As many as three public universities in Serbia educate professional journalists. Based on an examination of their study programs of bachelor academic studies in journalism, it is possible to conclude that significant emphasis is placed on topics related to journalistic ethics³. Table 1 shows the names of the subjects related to ethics, their status and the number of classes in programs for the education of future journalists at public universities in Serbia. Based on the presented data, it is evident that at all three public universities in Serbia that educate future journalists, ethics is studied as a compulsory subject in the initial years of study. The fund of classes is the smallest at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, but there are two more elective courses in this study program that additionally deal with topics related to media ethics (Media and medical ethics and Bioethics and media).

Table 1 Subject of journalistic ethics at public universities in Serbia

Faculty/University	Subject name	Semester	Classes per week	Status
1. Faculty of Political Science/ University of Belgrade	Media ethics	2	3+0	compulsory
2. Faculty of Philosophy/ University of Novi Sad	Journalistic ethics	2	2+0	compulsory
3. Faculty of Philosophy/ University of Nis	Journalistic ethics	4	2+2	compulsory

The aim of this research is to inquire into attitudes of journalism students on the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš who are familiar with the rules of professional ethics with the aim of observing possible causes and reasons that can lead to the Code violation and drawing potential conclusions about possible solutions.

2. JOURNALISM AND UNETHICAL REPORTING – JUSTIFICATIONS, CAUSES AND EFFECTS

There are numerous causes for violating ethical postulates of the profession, and a number of studies can be found in the literature to support this claim. In a study by Fengler et al. (2015, p. 260) the results of a comparative survey of European journalists indicate that compliance with ethical norms cannot be expected in cases where there is insufficient financial stability both at the individual and at the organizational level. All journalists who participated in this research believe that economic pressure is the biggest threat to standards in journalism. In the region, specifically in Croatia, research has shown that there are a number of factors that affect the violation of ethical norms – lack of education, pressure from editors, politicians and advertisers (Ivanuš, 2021). In Serbia, it can be noticed that the ethical principles of the journalistic profession are being violated in favor of the race for profit and the sensationalist way of reporting (Malešević, 2018). Media workers need to bear in mind that every piece of information that reaches the public influences both the public and the persons that they directly or indirectly report about. Unethical reporting affects both groups. Moral responsibility of the media is

³ <https://www.fpn.bg.ac.rs/studije-novinarstva>,
http://www0.ff.uns.ac.rs/studije/osnovne/studije_osnovne_medijske_studije.html,
<https://www.filfak.ni.ac.rs/studije/osnovne/novinarstvo>

reflected in the fact that the media have an obligation to constantly review their actions. The public indeed has the right to know, but they have the right to become introduced to the information that is socially useful and fundamental for the functioning of the society. In order to secure that one needs the skills which result from the knowledge of professional ethics which is crucial for journalists and their ability to decide about what should be published and how. Journalists who are not familiar with ethical principles of the profession cannot understand the notion of moral responsibility and accountability.

Authors Nikšić and Davičo reflect upon the issue of ethical ignorance of journalists in Serbia in their book „Ethical codes“:

„...In spite of long, rich and turbulent history of journalism in Serbia, domestic professional journalists often lack specific knowledge and experiences necessary to act in a real democratic ambience. They lack awareness of the importance of professional organisation, the awareness of the real meaning and significance of basic values upon which one should base the journalistic profession, the awareness of the real meaning of ethically based journalism, of the necessity to establish real and valid ethical codes, and of the meaning and scope of self-regulation in this field “(Nikšić & Davičo, 2004, p. 10).

One of the main reasons for the lack of knowledge and experience can be traced in the fact that „journalism is an open profession that does not require special vocational education or specific diplomas“ (Korni, 1999, p. 17). Journalism can be practiced by virtually anyone, because vocational education is not a precondition to do so (Valić Nedeljković & Pralica, 2020). According to Matić and Milin Perković (2021, p. 13) research, the journalistic cadre in Serbia includes a smaller number of people with a university degree in journalism, with only 72 (28.8%) who have completed journalism studies on a sample of 250 professional journalists in Serbia. It is evident that journalism in Serbia has long been considered an open profession, but it started closing in the recent years (Pralica & Barović, 2012, p. 391).

Nevertheless, the need for media ethics is not an abstract philosophical request. The reasons can be traced in practical problems and the objective harm that unethical reporting can cause to people, institutions and companies (Eberholst, Hartley & Olsen, 2016, p. 3). As a result, ethics is a pragmatic discipline, a kind of a tool that facilitates the work, making it more accountable and professional.

On the other hand, although the lack of knowledge of theories and standards increases problems and pressures of real life, it is quite true that for practical reasons a newsroom is not a suitable place for philosophical discussions, reasoning and debates about every individual case because „the starting point for those issues needs to be the classroom“ (Dej, 2004, p. 15). By taking up this stance Day does not negate the importance of ethics but points to the necessity of studying before entering the real life of the newsroom. Thus, one can draw a conclusion that openness of the journalistic profession is the main enemy of professionalism and that only education can empower it, because education as a central part of the profession provides one with ideals and standards that define the profession (Nygren, Degtereva & Pavlikova, 2010).

2.1. 2.1. Journalism studies and ethics

Contradictory information can be found about the first official school for journalists. Some sources claim that it was the Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme in Paris, France, founded in 1899, which nevertheless issued its first diploma in journalism 11 years later

(Goulet, 2009). Other sources make it clear that the Missouri School of Journalism in the United States awarded her first degree in journalism in 1921 and her first doctorate in 1934 (Weinberg, 2008). In the period that followed the Second World War, the faculties that began to educate future journalists opened up all over the world and by the beginning of the 21st century they had flourished.

In Serbia, the first faculty for the education of journalists at the academic level began operating in 1968 – the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade, which for many years was the only higher education institution where future media professionals were educated. At the beginning of the 2000s, a large number of higher education institutions appeared, which began to educate future journalists. According to Valić Nedeljković (2010), until 2005, studies in the field of journalism could be enrolled at as many as 12 faculties in the Republic of Serbia, at 3 state universities - in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš, as well as at 9 private faculties. Following the year of 2005, when the process of accreditation of higher education institutions and programs officially entered into force, the situation in the field of academic education changed significantly. After the selection, according to the information from the website of the Ministry and the Accreditation Commission, in the first cycle only five higher education institutions received accreditation: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Science (160 students), University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy (70 students), University of Nis, Faculty of Philosophy (50 students), Megatrend University, Faculty of Culture and Media (100 students), Singidunum University, Faculty of Media and Communications (80 students) – means 3 state universities and two privately owned universities (Valić Nedeljković, 2010). However, despite the large number of available programs, a degree in journalism has never become a condition for employment in the field. The problem of uneducated staff in journalistic profession engenders numerous other problems in this profession, including the ethical ones.

It could be assumed that a good education of journalists would reduce ethical violations. An increase in the numbers of educated journalists and their learning about professional ethics could be one part of the solution to the previously stated issue relating unethical actions of media professionals. If future journalists become introduced to the moral principles of the profession early in their media education, it could influence their professional mind-set, which means that they would be aware of moral accountability before they enter newsrooms. However, solving these problems is much more complex. Although ethical education of journalists (and education in general) before they start working is certainly of great importance, many authors claim that students never become fully aware of the significance of professional ethics. Thus, Day as a professor of ethics states that „after thirty years of teaching I am convinced that most students finish their studies without really grasping the true significance of ethics in their profession, or ethics in general“ (Dej, 2004, p. 13). Likewise, courses are often focused on micro instead of macro problems, because every analysed problem is treated as specific while wider, social and ethical dimension is often neglected (Lamberth, Christians & Cole, 1994, p. 21).

Another interesting issue is the problem of the society and media practice which influences students before they even reach the studies. According to the research conducted by Karen Sanders and associates, ethical postulates of journalism students are largely influenced by the current practice in the media and historical conditions of the society in which they grew up (Sanders et al., 2008). This was also indicated by the research by Claudia Mellado and associates who inquired into attitudes of students of journalism and communicology in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Switzerland, Spain and the USA towards the professional

role of journalists. The total of 3880 students of public and private universities in seven countries answered researchers' questions in the period between 2010 and 2012. This research established that in all countries with the exception of the USA students believe that journalists are primarily accountable to citizens, and that the main role of journalists is to provide the public with complete and relevant information to be able to participate in the political life. In contrast, students in the USA put emphasis on the consumer, commercial and entertaining functions of journalism the aim of which is to create more profit (Melado et al., 2013).

Another possible issue is the fact that classroom activities can never replace the real experience of a moral dilemma in practice, i.e. students cannot bear witness to the real consequences of their decisions. At the same time, students are often compelled to solve hypothetical scenarios in a very short period of time. Thus, it is not possible to fully grasp and understand the discussed phenomenon (Campbell, 2020, p. 67). Attitudes and actions of students, regardless of adopted standards, can significantly differ in situations when consequences are real and negative for them. This is one of the main reasons why students as well as media professionals violate journalistic ethics – negative consequences for them or the absence of positive effects.

Therefore, neither education nor emphasis on the importance and validity of ethical norms do not necessarily mean that they will be accepted. An educated journalist does not have to value ethical principles simply because he has university degree in journalism. Students are merely required to understand the ethical principles because they are frequently treated as a means or a goal, and not as a referential form of thinking and acting (Martono, Tiyanto & Surwiti, 2018). Students as human beings have a choice, and moral norms do not have the same meaning to everyone. On the other hand, as prospective professionals they need to abide by them.

2.2. Permanent and changeable dimensions of journalistic ethics among students

Although there are slight differences in journalistic practice of different countries, ethical principles of the profession are virtually universal in every country of the world (Williams, Guglietti & Haney, 2018). These principles represent the basis of education of future journalists, but several research studies indicate that, though they are universal and generally accepted, there are different interpretations among students of journalism.

In Serbia this topic has not been seriously analysed up to this point. However, there are several examples in the region such as a research study by Marko Sapunar, an associate professor on the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb. The aim of this research was comprehending the perception of journalistic profession in enrolled students of journalism on the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb. It has been noted that the largest percentage of respondents had a pretty good understanding of the basic principles of journalistic ethics. However, between 10% and 15% of respondents believe that respect, understanding others and tolerance are not relevant elements of practicing journalism (Sapunar, 2000, p. 197). Ines Jokoš and Igor Kanižaj dealt with issues of differences in the perception of journalism with regard to the enrolled year of study. The data indicate that there are certain standards that all respondent deem valid. Thus, 90% of them agree that a journalist is obliged to criticise irregularities in the society and inform citizens about their rights, 60% of respondents believe that a journalist is obliged to be a link between citizens and politicians, and an interesting piece of information is that as many as 20% of respondents

believe that journalists should be messengers of the Government's demands. One third of students believe that a journalist should also be an entertainer (Jokoš & Kanižai, 2012).

Thus, the perception of journalistic ethics, its dimensions and significance are not the same in all students of journalism. There are differences caused by different factors. This is precisely the reason why it is necessary to investigate into students' attitudes in Serbia regarding this important dimension of journalism and observe the manner in which they interpret ethics, its importance and levels to which they would unconditionally abide by it.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The subject of research is to examine the attitudes of students of journalism on the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš towards the principles of journalistic ethics. The aim of this paper is to establish whether students are familiar with the principles of journalistic ethics, the manner in which they observe journalistic ethics, as well as in which cases they would not abide by it. In accordance with the goals, three research hypotheses were defined:

1. Journalism students are familiar with the principles of journalistic ethics,
2. Students of journalism believe that journalistic ethics is important to be able to practice this profession,
3. There are instances in which, even though they are familiar with the principles of journalistic ethics and its significance, students of journalism would violate the principles of ethics.

The research resorted to a descriptive statistical method of analysis, whereby information was collected by resorting to specially constructed questionnaire. Respondents answered by expressing the degree of agreement with the assertions constructed by means of Likert's scaling technique with five degrees of assessment, from the lowest termed „I totally disagree“ to the highest termed „I totally agree“. Questions/assertions in the questionnaire were divided into three segments. Within the first segment respondents answered to assertions relating to understanding the principles of journalistic ethics, the second segment related to their attitudes towards journalistic ethics, and the third segment inquired into special conditions under which students would allow themselves to violate ethical principles of the profession. The questionnaire was distributed among third- and fourth-year students of undergraduate academic studies in the study programme of Journalism on the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, bearing in mind that those students completed the course Journalistic ethics. The results were analysed by means of the SPSS software.

4. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total number of third- and fourth-year journalism students on the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš who completed the questionnaire was 42, including 64.2% of respondents in the fourth year of studies and 33.8% of respondents in the third year of studies. The largest percentage of obtained answers indicates that the majority of respondents agree with attitudes relating to journalistic ethics.

Thus, as much as 85.7% of respondents believe that they are partly or totally acquainted with the principles of journalistic ethics, while only 4.8% do not have an attitude towards this assertion and 9.6% totally disagree with the stated assertion. All respondents who disagree with this assertion are fourth-year students. Similar statistics was noted in

questions relating to individual principles of journalistic ethics in the work of journalists (Fig. 1). That students have significantly been introduced to the basic principles of journalistic ethics was indicated by the fact that the largest number of respondents (73.8%) totally agree with the assertion *Truthfulness in reporting is one of the main principles of journalistic ethics*, while 16.7% partly agree with this assertion. As with the previous assertion, 9.6% do not agree, and they are fourth-year students. When it comes to journalist accountability, as much as 90.4% of respondents partly agree that journalists are primarily accountable to the public, and only 9.6% partly disagree (4.8%) and totally disagree (4.8%) with this assertion. On the other hand, 90.4% of respondents disagree with the assertion that a journalist is not obliged to abide by the request relating to the anonymity of their source, while 9.6% partly agree with that.

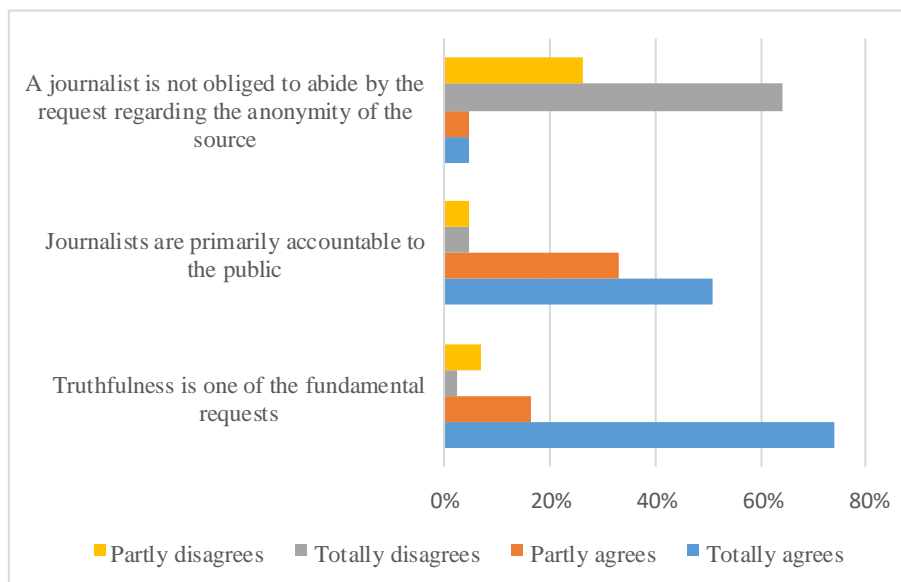


Fig. 1 Students' attitudes towards the principles of journalistic ethics

A significant percentage of agreement among students with respect to every particular question, as well as the high consistency of total or partial agreement with the principles of journalistic ethics indicate that students who listened to the course *Journalistic ethics* acquired the knowledge and standards emphasised by it. Simultaneously, respondents are largely aware of their professional ethics which can be deduced on the basis of a high level of agreement with the assertion relating to this issue. From rather homogeneous answers in this part of research one can draw the conclusion that the first hypothesis which states that *Students of journalism are acquainted with the basics of journalistic ethics* has been confirmed.

These results are significant because they indicate that a potential violation of ethical principles of the profession by students of journalism does not have roots in their ignorance of ethics because a large percentage of respondents understands some of its

main principles. However, it is equally important to pay attention to what extent students believe that journalistic ethics is important when one practices this profession.

The results of this part of research also point to a certain compatibility in the largest percentage of responses. Thus, they indicate that as much as 83.3% of responses do not totally agree with the assertion *Being acquainted with journalistic ethics is not a necessary precondition to practice journalism*, and 11.9% partly agree. Only 4.8% partly disagree with this assertion. However, a larger variety of responses has been noted in the assertion that the course Journalism ethics imposes stricter principles than practice requires. Only 4.8% fully agree that ethical principles taught during the course are more rigorous than needed in practice, while as much as 21.4% partly agree, and 19% do not have an opinion. Here one can also observe that the largest percentage of respondents either partly or totally accept the requests of ethics (54.5%) but one can observe certain differences among students (Fig. 2). Comparative analysis has not provided significant differences in terms of the year of study in this set of questions.

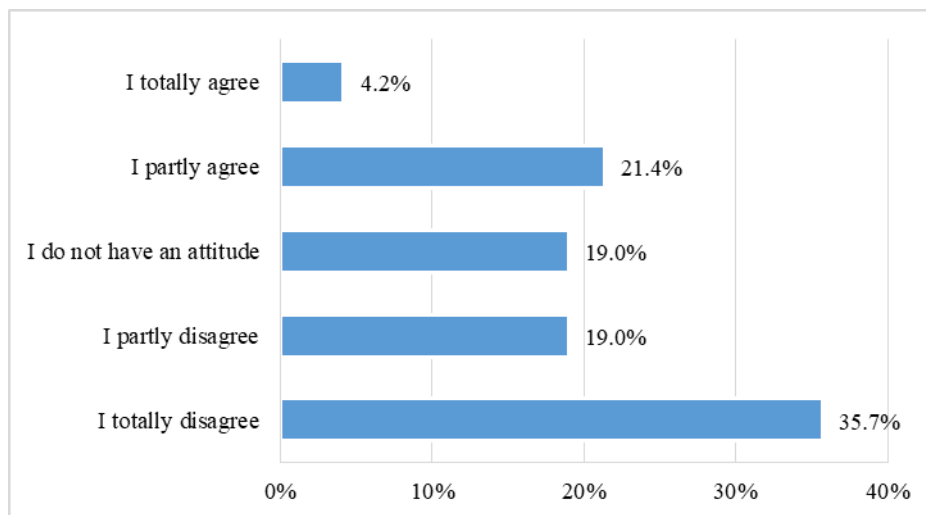


Fig. 2 Students' responses to the assertion *I believe that the course Journalism ethics imposes stricter principles than required in practice*

In fact, a certain percentage of respondents is aware and understands the requests of ethical journalism, but they do not believe that they need to necessarily abide by it in practice. As previously emphasised by various authors, students need to understand the rules of ethics to be able to successfully pass the exam, but during the course they are not required to internalise these principles (Martono, Tiyanto & Surwiti, 2018). This is indicated by the fact that 19.1% of respondents partly or totally believe that the speed and exclusivity in reporting have the advantage over journalistic ethics.

Therefore, although it has been established that more than 90% of respondents understand journalistic ethics, there is a certain percentage of those among them who do not believe that journalistic ethics is important to the extent they should or they believe that there are certain aspects, such as quick reporting and being the first to report, which allow for ethics to be neglected when it becomes an impediment. As a result, one can

conclude that the second hypothesis *Students of journalism believe that journalistic ethics is important for the profession* has been partly confirmed. The largest percentage of students observe that abiding by journalistic ethics is important, but there is a number of respondents who believe that there are professional requests which are more relevant as well as cases when ethics stops being the most significant guideline.

This is particularly conspicuous in responses to the third part of the questionnaire, where respondents answered in which situations they would be ready to violate professional ethics. The first thing to be observed is that those answers are less homogenous, which indicates that there are different perspectives of the importance of journalistic ethics, as well as readiness of students who attended the same course to abide by it.

The assertion *I would abide by journalistic ethics even though I would be criticised by superiors in the newsroom* was fully supported (45.2%) or partly supported (47.6%) by 92.8% respondents. It should be emphasised that all those who do not have an attitude or disagree with this assertion (7.2% in total) are fourth-year students. The percentage of those who would criticise a colleague if they knew that he/she resorted to unethical means when collecting data is somewhat lower than in the previous assertion, but still rather high – 80.9%. However, it has been noted that there is a wider variety of responses and a lower degree of agreement when it comes to the assertion *I would violate ethical principles of the profession to obtain exclusive information and make progress in my line of work*. Some 16.7% of respondents partly agree with this assertion, while the same percentage has no attitude. Therefore, more than one fourth of students was not explicit in stating that they would abide by ethics if they had an opportunity to advance by violating it. There is even larger percentage of those who would be ready to violate journalistic ethics if that was the only way to keep their job. As much as 28.6% partly agree that in this case they would violate moral principles, while 4.8% totally agree with this. It is significant that 11.9% do not have an opinion, while 31% of respondents partly disagree and 26.2% of respondents would abide by ethics even at the cost of missing the opportunity to advance. Negative financial consequences or the lack of good effects in certain number of respondents is an impediment to abiding by journalistic ethics. It is confirmed by the assertion *As an editor I would allow publishing socially relevant texts which negatively represent the main advertiser in that medium* with which 7.1% of respondents totally disagree, and 26.2% partly agree. Many respondents do not have an attitude (31%), while 35.7% would publish a socially relevant text even at the expense of a potential loss of the largest source of income.

In every response there is a certain percentage of respondents who would abide by professional ethics even at the cost of potential negative effects, but it is observable that the bigger the effects the smaller percentage of respondents, i.e. the larger percentage of those who would not abide by ethical principles of the profession (Fig. 3). This is the most conspicuous in responses to the assertion *I would violate ethical rules if my life was threatened*. As much as 81% of respondents agree with this assertion, half of them partly and half of them totally. There are 9.5% of respondents who do not have attitudes, while only 4.8% of respondents do not partly agree or totally agree.

What is especially interesting is that the group which would abide by professional ethics even at the cost of their own lives were exclusively fourth-year students. This may come as a surprise bearing in mind that in previous answers differences were noted in terms of the year of study and they indicated that fourth-year students were not as attached to journalistic ethics as third-year students. One possible conclusion states that

more time has passed since the moment they listened to the course Journalism ethics, and the principles they mastered lost their significance in time, which is the case with a certain percentage of students. However, the fact that this group comprises those who would be ready to risk their lives for ethical norms points to a wide variety in attitudes among the students of the same generation, ranging from those who believe that journalistic ethics is not necessary to practice journalism to those who would risk their lives for it. Such differences in attitudes are not present in third-year students precisely because they listened to the course about professional ethics more recently, which resulted in more uniform answers. This conclusion does not negate the importance of studying ethics, but points to two things. The first one is that there are huge individual differences in future journalists who attended the same course, and the second is that in time those differences could increase and that it is necessary to constantly reconsider and discuss ethical principles of the profession. This partly refutes the argument that the newsroom is not the place where one should discuss ethics (Dej, 2004, p. 15), because only by constantly discussing this issue one can ensure respect for it and the awareness of its importance.

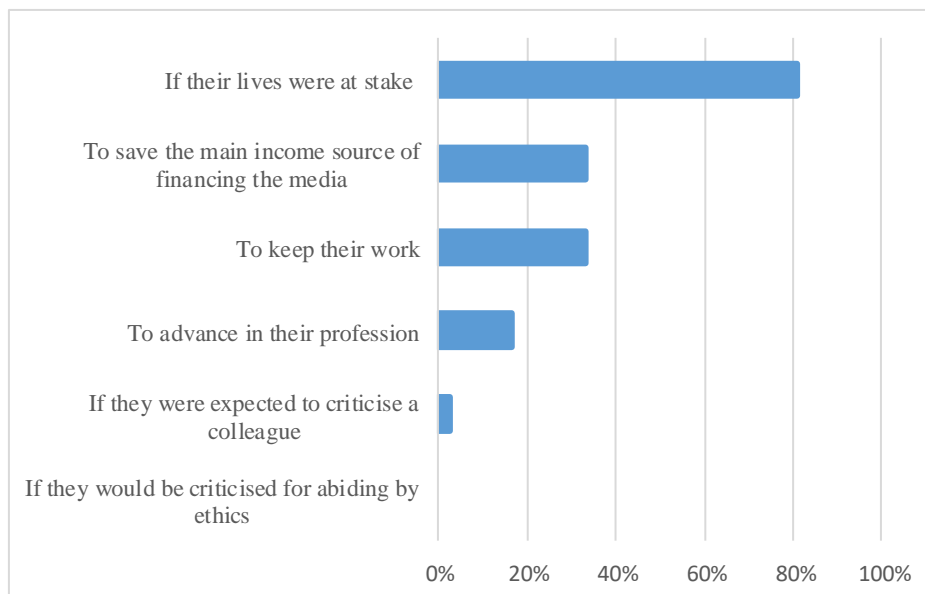


Fig 3. Percentage of students who would not abide by professional ethics in certain situations

One should emphasise that among students who believe that being acquainted with professional ethics is a necessary precondition for practicing the profession there are 15% of those who would violate ethics to advance, 30% of those who would do that to keep their job, and as much as 82.5% of those who would do that to avoid a life-threatening situation. It is even more indicative that among the respondents who believe that ethics they had mastered did not impose stricter principles than necessary in practice, there are

22.7% of those who would violate it to advance, 18% of those who would do it to keep their job, and 86.4% of those who would do it to keep their lives.

All presented results lead to the conclusion that the third hypothesis which asserts. *There are cases in which students of journalism would violate journalistic ethics even though they are acquainted with it and understand its importance* has been confirmed. Although they understand the importance of principles imposed by ethics, those principles are not always the priority. Their priority decreases when the consequence of abiding by them is largely negative, as well as when there is no positive effect which could ensue if the rules of ethics are disregarded.

5. CONCLUSION

Students who attended the course Journalistic ethics are largely acquainted with the principles of journalism ethics and understand its significance. It is best indicated by the fact that 94.2% of respondents totally or partly believe that being acquainted with ethics is a necessary precondition for practicing journalism. However, a quarter (26.2%) of respondents believe that ethics has posed stricter principles than necessary, and almost 20% give precedence to the speed and exclusivity over respecting the rules of ethics. In these results one can notice the problem of priorities of modern tabloid and sensationalist journalism in Serbia, and one can say that they reflect the situation in the society. As to the conditions under which students would stop abiding by journalistic ethics, an interesting regularity can be noticed. With the increase of risk or consequences fewer students opt for honouring journalistic ethics. Thus, ethics would be violated to the least extent if requested by the public (16.7%), somewhat to a larger extent if they could advance in their career (19.1%), and to an even larger extent if they could lose their job (33.4%). If their lives were at stake as much as 81% of respondents would violate ethical rules of the profession.

From the research one can single out the main causes of violating journalistic ethics from the perspective of future journalists which largely reflect the current causes in the society. The lack of (continuous) education in this case has been taken as the main *zero* cause without which one cannot reflect the following:

1. Social and professional environment and the existing practice
2. Fear of criticism
3. Financial stability of individuals and the media they work for
4. Advancement in work and fear of losing job
5. Security and life-threatening situations

From the above stated one can conclude that potential solutions of the problem of violating professional ethics in Serbia lies in creating professional and ethically correct environment in newsrooms in which journalists would not be afraid to state their opinion, securing financial stability and job security of individuals, and the media in which one could not advance by unethical means, and providing a more quality protection of journalists who would not feel threatened due to the manner in which they work. Naturally, the list of causes is not exhausted, nor are the offered solutions final, because it has been stated that understanding ethical principles is individual and changeable. Nevertheless, it is certain that by removing or mitigating the main causes the rate of violating ethical principles in the media reporting would significantly decrease, even with the issue of *openness* of the profession.

The deficiency of this research is a small sample as well as the fact that respondents could not be placed in real situation in order to ascertain the manner in which they react to the researched topic. Likewise, it would be extremely useful if some future research studies included media workers in order to observe differences in attitudes between those two groups.

This research is important because it pointed that the problem of violating journalistic ethics in Serbia does not have roots in universities where journalists are educated. Likewise, attitudes of future media workers point to potential causes, reasons and solutions to violating journalistic ethics in Serbia. They are largely reflected in the problems of finances and existential stability.

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OBRAZOVANJE STUDENATA NOVINARSTVA I NJIHOVE PERCEPCIJE O NOVINARSKOJ ETICI

Jedan od najvažnijih predmeta u obrazovanju novinara je Novinarska etika. Teme iz ove oblasti posebno dobijaju na važnosti od početka 21 veka, jer je sa razvojem novih medijskih tehnologija došlo do značajnih promena u novinarstvu. U celom svetu je fokus pomeren sa kvalitetnog izveštavanja na što bržu objavu, senzacionalizam i zaradu. Visokoobrazovne institucije koje školuju novinare imaju obavezu da studentima prenesu važnost pridržavanja etičkih postulata. Cilj ovog istraživanja je utvrditi stavove studenata treće i četvrte godine novinarstva Departmana za komunikologiju i novinarstvo Filozofskog fakulteta u Nišu po pitanju novinarske etike koji se odnose na njihove percepcije ovog fenomena. U skladu sa postavljenim ciljem konstruisan je poseban instrument – upitnik zasnovan na petostepenoj Likertovoj skali. Upitnik je distribuiran studentima tokom marta i aprila 2021. godine, a popunilo ga je 42 ispitanika. Podaci su analizirani metodom deskriptivne i uporedne statistike i programom SPSS 25.0. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju da iako studije obrazuju visok procenat studenata koji razumeju značaj novinarske etike, većina ispitanika ukazuje na postojanje objektivnih okolnosti u kojima misle da ne bi mogli u potpunosti da se pridržavaju etičkih principa.

Ključne reči: *novinarska etika, stavovi studenata, novinarstvo, studije novinarstva.*