**Accountability of Media**

**Introduction**

The media is considered to be the fourth pillar in a democratic country. It acts as an effective control mechanism to check the other branches of the government. But this is only consequential when the media functions in an independent and transparent fashion with trained and neutral professionals who are aware of the accountability and consequences of their work.

Accountability implies being accountable, accountable to whom? To the public, obviously. The media should be accountable to the public. Journalists can only achieve that if they enjoy independence from financial and political pressures. It is not often enough underlined that they cannot enjoy that independence without the support of the public, the masses of voters and consumers. There is no way the profession can obtain public support unless it listens to readers/listeners/viewers—unless it is accountable to them.

**Importance of Mass Media Accountability**

Mass media is a platform to exercise free expression and is a sensitive medium. Through mass media, information is disseminated in real time to the mass audience. Failure to impart true and factual information can create chaos in the society. This makes mass media sensitive and the importance of accountability emerges from this sensitivity. Media must have a sense of accountability and this is related to the ethical standards one follows.

**Benchmarks of accountability for professional journalists**

Accountability is one of the most frequently cited ethical standards in Journalism. It is a phrase that can be understood as a belief where mass media is expected to accountable in the public interest. They are anticipated to behave in certain ways that contribute to the public good. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) has developed some benchmarks of accountability for professional journalists that include

1. Encourage the public to express its grievances against the news media
2. Admitt mistakes and correcting them promptly
3. Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media
4. Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others

In addition to them, journalistic accountability can be justified by a range of activities, including publishing letters to the editor, being accessible to concerned audience members for discussion, archiving past news stories for future reference and informing the public about the correction of news

Conclusion

Media accountability is an important ethical framework that increases professionalism in Media. By following the code of ethics, one can perform responsibly in their profession as well as maintain their professional standard while fulfilling duty towards the society, self, and audience. The ethical standards vary from place to place but all aims to create a credible and accountable media/journalism practice. As mass media is a sensitive platform, one must be accountable towards the news collected and disseminated, thus, to maintain professionalism.

**References**

1. **Ashuman Gautham. Media Accountability and Ethical standards, 2017 Retrieved from https://ashmagautam.wordpress.com**
2. Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). The elements of journalism. New York: Three Rivers Press.

All these factors together would further the country as a democratic institution. Traditionally, it was legacy media responsible for a one-to-many communication process. Their goal was to provide information to the citizens. But this changed with development in technology and the use of social media in daily life. The internet brought with it new media formats which are easily accessible but also unstructured. These lowered barriers of entry in the media enabled citizens to become active participants in the communication process. As a result, these citizens developed a different relationship with the already existing media wherein they were not only the receivers to information but also co-producers. Real-time information allows users to communicate with each other and in turn widely generate public opinion on internet platforms. A many-to-many communication style emerged. While on the one hand, this type of discourse could be an opportunity for citizens to exercise their fundamental freedom of speech and expression, it is on the other hand, proving to have a detrimental effect in two parts: Lack of neutrality, polarized views and pre-existing misconceptions on the part of citizens as well as algorithms and formation of echo-chambers on the part of technology.