

## **The Effect of Media Censorship on Freedom**

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### **Abstract**

Traditionally, one of the most serious obstacles faced by mass media is censorship. It destroys the transformation of accurate information from Mass media to its consumers. Day argues that censorship reduces the honesty of mass media, intimidates journalists and endangers journalistic freedom. Censorship can be used to control the information communities receive from all channels of mass media (2001). Similarly, Steele believes that censorship is any effort to stop or control the exchange of knowledge and the nature of communication between Media and society (1999). This essay will explain four dimensions of negative and positive aspects of censorship.

### **Introduction:**

Censorship must be understood within the context of nations. Each civilization has special political, social and religious traditions. These traditions influence the culturally specific impact the four kinds of censorship have on societies and help understand the positive and negative aspects of censorship experienced by these societies.

### **Types of Censorships:**

The first kind of censorship is “moral censorship”. Moral censorship is applied to what societies consider “good conduct” or “conventional virtues”. Afiaghor claims that moral or ethical censorship has great impact on non-democratic countries because talking about moral values is not allowed. In democratic countries it is used to define what is “obscene” or “pornographic”. It also helps control behaviour that is illegal such as “child pornography” (2011). The second kind is “government or military censorship”. This can be a hazardous kind of media censorship. Foley believes that government censorship is allowed in many countries in the world because it has been used during wars to keep military information and tactics safe. Sometimes it used to control a country during periods of anarchy as has recently been the case in some countries in Middle East (1993). The third kind of censorship is “political censorship”. Petley describes that political censorship usually happens in countries when they want to hide secret information from the public to maintain social control. However, democracy depends on the free exchange of information. Information kept secret during difficult times is often needed for saving the country. This kind of censorship is very bad for some states especially in the dictator countries because it tries to eradicate the freedom of expression and Media (2009). The forth kind of censorship is “religious censorship” Religious censorship happens in many countries, especially in Islamic states. Hari declares that until now, religious censorship has worked in some states, but it’s a big wall in front of human rights modern Media. As a result, in states that control Media by religion, people can’t obtain correct information about corruption and the political issues in their countries (2009). Besides the four kinds of censorship I have described, here, there are other kinds of censorship such as self – censorship and pornographic censorship, but they don’t have the same level of impact on the Media.

### **Positive impacts of Censorship:**

Considering the positive impacts of censorship, some people consider that censorship has an important effect on media in many countries, because it helps the states to be stable. According to the BBC, censorship can have a positive impact on media because it can help ensure good, accurate and sufficient reports that can protect democracy. To achieve this benefit, lots of pressure is put on journalism carriers. Hence, applying censorship policies on media in certain countries is a modern and scientific procedure for delivering the right information to the public. Moreover, censorship

creates barriers between privacy and Media because some time journalists break all social and personal limits (2011). Similarly, Gunter and McAleer argue that censorship is essential as it decreases the total vehemence on Media in the world. That is why people do not want their children to be affected by scenes of murder and violence on TV's programs. As a result, media should control the quantity and level of violence, at least for the children (1997). Besides, Kulkarni illustrates that sex is an additional aspect of censorship that can help control how sex ought to be shown in the media. This is especially true of sexual violence that can have a negative influence on children. That's why TV should control showing this type of sex (2010). Moreover, Giles believes that censorship is a good way to influence the advertisement of harmful products like alcohol and tobacco. Many countries agree that smoking and drinking alcohol have drawbacks on individuals, so it must be restricted (2003).

### **Negative impacts of Censorship:**

On the other hand, censorship can have a lot of negative effects on media. Censorship and modern media are often not compatible.

Moloney claims that censorship has been used by governments to control elections, especially in none democratic countries. Dictators are afraid of democratic power obtained by the people because it may affect how long they stay in power (2011). Likewise, Buckingham and Bragg note that some countries use censorship to control their nations because they don't want their nations to obtain public knowledge about important things such as politics, democracy and information about forbidden topics such as sexual behaviour. This includes information published about sex education and knowledge about AIDS. People all over the world need to know the facts about sexually transmitted diseases and how to stop spreading them. Consequently, censorship is often in conflict with democracy. If people do not have the freedom to speak and right to know then there is little divergence between democratic and autocratic systems (2003). Likewise, Flahery argues that censorship has destroyed human life since it creates obstacles in their daily lives. If censorship is unrestricted and communication is restricted societies will die (2006). Furthermore, according to Aljazeera it is certain that military censorship has a negative impact on journalist's lives. Many journalists are endangered during wars and international threats. When regimes are not concerned about these threats and disasters it shows they have no respect for democratic systems and freedoms. For instance; the fighting in Iraq has caused the death of 18 journalists. The International Federation of Journalists has conducted sovereign explorations into seven of these deaths (2003).

### **Conclusions:**

To summarize, censorship has affected and will continue to affect the media. It is important to recognise the positive and negative aspects of censorship on the media. It is also important to recognise the huge menace censorship places on journalists and the work they do.

In the areas discussed in this essay, the negative aspects of media censorship pose an enormous threat to the free and open exchange of information that is needed to develop and sustain democracies. There are some positive aspects of media censorship, but there is little or no justification for using censorship in democratic countries. Contemporary Media cannot live with censorship.

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