

## VIOLENCE AND JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

### Analysis of the journalistic coverage of the “Sorriso massacre”

VIOLÊNCIA E ÉTICA JORNALÍSTICA: análise da cobertura jornalística sobre a “chacina de Sorriso”  
VIOLENCIA Y ÉTICA PERIODÍSTICA: análisis de la cobertura periodista de la “masacre de Sorriso”

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Recebido em: 07.22.2025.

Aceito em 30.03.2026.

Publicado em: 29.06.2026.

**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this article is to analyze the coverage of the massacre that occurred in Sorriso, Mato Grosso, in 2023, carried out by the websites Midianews and FolhaMax, based on the rights of children and adolescents and the principles of journalistic ethics. The method used in the study is content analysis, with manual data collection and the definition of analytical categories, taking as a time frame the first seven days after the first content was published. The results reveal sensationalist patterns, frequent ethical violations, and disrespect for the rights of victims. In addition, it is pointed out that the pressure for digital engagement contributes to superficiality in the investigation and exploration of sensitive content.

**KEYWORDS:** Ethics; Online journalism; Sensationalism; Sorriso massacre; Children and adolescents' rights.

## Introduction

Journalism plays a fundamental role in social responsibility, contributing to the formation of public opinion and promoting citizenship. Based on the fundamental right of citizens to information, journalism assumes the responsibility of disseminating accurate information of public interest, while preserving the integrity of sources and professionals and respecting privacy and honor.

Canela (2007) highlights that both the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and Brazilian legislation establish that children and adolescents should be treated as an absolute priority. He emphasizes that, since the State (government and society) institutionally agrees to this priority, it is the task of the media, as an agent of social control, to verify whether the necessary means to guarantee the rights of this population are prioritized and implemented. In this sense, the journalist assumes the responsibility of being a defender of citizens' rights and actively contributes to the promotion and guarantee of the rights of children and adolescents among the victims.

As established by the Code of Ethics for Brazilian Journalists (2007), it is the professional's duty to "defend the rights of citizens, contributing to the promotion of individual and collective guarantees, especially those of children, adolescents, women, the elderly, black people, and minorities." Furthermore, it prohibits the dissemination of morbid, sensationalist information or information contrary to human values, especially in the coverage of crimes and accidents, as is the case of the Sorriso Massacre, which involves a crime with children and adolescents.

According to the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security (2025), 2,356 children and adolescents (aged 0 to 17) were victims of intentional violent deaths in 2024. The state of Mato Grosso recorded 69 deaths, a decrease of 3.3% compared to the 2023 rate.

The municipality of Sorriso, the location of the crime, ranked second in the national ranking of rapes and rapes of vulnerable individuals in 2024, with 139.1 rapes

per 100,000 inhabitants, after having led the index the previous year (Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security, 2025).

The crime we are referring to, whose journalistic coverage is the subject of this study, concerns the crimes committed in the early morning of November 25, 2023, in the city of Sorriso, in northern Mato Grosso, located 398km from the capital Cuiabá. On that occasion, Gilberto Rodrigues dos Anjos, 34 years old, committed rape, rape of a vulnerable person, and femicide, involving a mother and three daughters (two of them minors), for which reason he was sentenced by the jury to 225 years in prison on August 7, 2025 (Silva, 2025).

Given this context, the following question arises: how did the Mato Grosso news outlets cover the Sorriso massacre, considering the rights of children and adolescents and the ethical values of the profession?

Thus, the objective of this study is to reveal the data on the coverage of the massacre, highlighting the approach to the rights of children and adolescents and the ethical principles involved, contributing to future analyses and debates on journalistic ethics and the protection of their rights in the press.

The research methodology consisted of bibliographic research and content analysis to analyze the journalistic coverage of the massacre in Sorriso by the websites FolhaMax and MidiaNews during the period from November 27 to December 3, 2023. 57 news items related to the case were manually collected through a search on the websites. The decision to use a one-week time frame is strategic, as it allows for a more detailed analysis of how the tragedy was reported. This choice also takes into account the speed of online journalism, which often ends up neglecting ethical principles in the urgency of disseminating news firsthand, even more so in cases that generate shock and outrage, as they generate more engagement.

This article is structured as follows: first, we present a conceptual discussion of the main theoretical axes of the study. Next, we intend to detail the methodology, both in its conceptual aspect and in the procedures for data collection and analysis. Following this, we will present the results and discussions based on the research findings, before concluding the text with some considerations and projections.

### **Journalistic ethics and online journalism**

It is essential that ethics be a priority for journalists, especially when dealing with sensitive topics. As Eugênio Bucci (2000, p. 11) points out, "journalism is conflict, and when there is no conflict in journalism, an alarm should sound. In fact, ethics only exists

because social communication is a place of conflict." This view highlights the importance of ethics in journalistic decisions, being approached rigorously and consciously, even more so in the challenging environment in which journalists work.

In journalism, this conflict is not limited to the topics covered in news or reports, but also extends to competition for audience, pressure for tight deadlines, and the pursuit of impartiality, even though this is not an absolute value. Thus, ethics is important to ensure that information is disseminated responsibly and accurately, without compromising the veracity of the facts or the integrity of those involved.

According to Ferreira Fernandes (2018), the history of journalism includes many news stories of hasty deaths, some of which have become legendary and, over time, even bring a smile to our faces. But when the reason for the error is rooted in a practice that reveals the weaknesses of current journalism – its limited resources, its precarious newsrooms, and the pressure for immediacy – it is best to take the gravity of the situation seriously. Speed is important, but people are more important. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the weaknesses of current journalism and seek solutions that prioritize the quality of information over the pressure for immediacy. The commitment to truth must be prioritized at all stages of the journalistic process to guarantee the integrity and credibility of the information disseminated.

According to Bourdieu (1997), daily newspapers seek the "extraordinary ordinary," such as fires, floods, and murders, and compete for scoops. These everyday events have political and ethical implications and can arouse negative feelings. The reporter, in reporting these events, contributes to the social construction of reality, with effects of mobilization or demobilization. In this sense, newspapers shape the public perception of what is relevant, with social and political impacts.

Bucci (2000) points out that when journalism prioritizes emotion, one of the central elements of sensationalism, to the detriment of information, a serious ethical problem arises, manifested in the denial of its primary function of promoting information and, consequently, fostering the debate of ideas in society.

Ana Lucia Enne (2007) highlights the importance of understanding the processes of cultural mediation present in media sensationalism. Among the characteristics identified in studies on sensationalist newspapers, the following stand out: the emphasis on criminal and/or extraordinary themes, focusing on the scatological and sexual dimensions of the body; the presence of oral markers in the construction of the text to connect with the reader; the use of sensory resources, such as verbs and body expressions, and personification to give life to the described objects; the adoption of

editorial strategies to increase sensational appeal, such as highlighted headlines, impactful subtitles, and frequent use of detailed illustrations; the frequent use of a simplistic and Manichean narrative structure; and the relationship between sensationalist newspapers and their consumption by lower-income segments of the population.

These identified characteristics show how sensationalism is not limited to simply reporting events, but also transforms them into spectacles to attract public attention. This simplified and often distorted approach to reality can influence people's perception of certain issues, especially when it comes to sensitive and complex matters. Therefore, it is necessary to critically analyze the role and impact of sensationalism in society and in the construction of social reality.

Journalism acts as a mediator between world events and public understanding. In the current scenario of rapidly evolving media and communication technologies, in which misinformation and fake news spread ever faster, the search for truth, the plurality of views, and social responsibility are important for building a reliable and relevant press for society.

It is important to reflect on the impact of media on the construction of society, since the media not only inform but also shape perceptions and beliefs. In doing so, they directly influence social actions and interactions. The way media outlets and journalists select and present information can significantly alter the understanding of events and society's view. Therefore, it is essential that they assume this responsibility consciously and ethically.

As pointed out by Alsina and Silva (2018), in contemporary journalism there are two aspects that have influenced how professionals approach their work. The first is the replacement of the comprehensibility of real meaning with the pursuit of immediate impact. Journalists seek visually impactful news, using clichés, catchy phrases, titles, and headlines with the aim of attracting and engaging the public, even if they may be partially or totally misleading. The pursuit of this impact can, however, lead to the ethical compromise of journalism and result in a "pseudo-audience" for news that, although not completely false, presents elements of simulation, created for the purpose of generating views and shares.

Furthermore, the authors emphasize that this manipulation of truth can generate an emotional impact, to the detriment of the facts, which shows that it is a worrying practice that is becoming increasingly common in contemporary journalism. The other form of influence is even more worrying, as it contributes to the emergence of so-called

"post-truth" (Dunker, 2017). They highlight that this is a lie that focuses on the strength of the emotional effects of the message, to the detriment of the content and the facts.

Current online journalism is far from fulfilling its initial promises of democratizing information. The pressures for immediacy in journalistic production result in the emergence of questionable practices that threaten the quality and credibility of the news disseminated. "The downsizing of newsrooms, the entry of unprepared journalists into the journalistic process, and the prioritization of immediacy over fact-checking are factors that contribute to the dissemination of 'post-truth' in cyberjournalism" (Zamith, 2015, p. 53).

According to Pollyana Ferrari (2010), news websites produce, transmit, and store information, bombarding internet users 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with data that includes text, audio, video, and image files. In this sense, the big difference in the new digital process is that the production tasks have become the full responsibility of the journalist. In general, many journalists are comfortable with software, but have little experience in handling information effectively.

Mike Ward (2007), in the book "Online Journalism", highlights that the digital age transforms all aspects of journalism. Now, both journalists and readers can perform activities that were previously done, such as accessing information, in a more comprehensive and faster way. In addition, new possibilities arise, such as reader collaboration in the narrative of reports by sharing their own experiences. Online publishing also opens up new ways to disseminate information and establish a dynamic relationship with the reader.

The author points out that online journalism challenges the traditional idea of news, the relationship between reporter and reader, and the skills needed to be a journalist. Journalists now become architects of information, although many still do not fully understand the meaning of this. Online journalism encompasses a wide range of practices, from investigative journalism to the production of multimedia and interactive content, and reflects the diversity and complexity of the online environment.

Having made the conceptual discussions of the two hegemonic theoretical axes of the work - journalistic ethics and online journalism -, we move on to detailing the research methodology, in its epistemological and procedural aspects.

## Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted, based on bibliographic research and content analysis. The bibliographic research provided the necessary theoretical basis to

understand the concepts involving journalistic ethics, online journalism, and the rights of children and adolescents, in order to contextualize the object of study.

In order to carry out an in-depth investigation, the methodology chosen for this work is content analysis. According to Chizzotti (2000), this method aims at the critical understanding of the meaning of communications. It encompasses both its manifest and latent content, as well as explicit or hidden meanings.

The research corpus consists of 57 journalistic articles, published between November 27 and December 3, 2023: 32 from the MidiaNews website and 25 from the FolhaMax website. The data collection was carried out by searching for keywords such as "massacre", "Sorriso" and "Sorriso massacre" in the news databases of the websites themselves. For organizational purposes, the articles were organized into tables with date, time, title and authorship.

MidiaNews was founded in 1999 and presents itself as the first journalistic website in Mato Grosso. The organizational chart of the vehicle consists of a director, three editors, nine reporters (one of whom is a photographer), an administrative manager, a sales representative and a legal advisor (Midianews, n.d.).

FolhaMax, the other subject of this study, does not have a recorded founding date and operates, on its own terms, around the events in Cuiabá and Mato Grosso. Its structure consists of a newsroom director, a general editor, four reporters, and a commercial director (Folhamax, n.d.).

The analysis was carried out in a hybrid manner, combining technological tools and manual critical reading. The WordArt platform was used for an initial visualization of the most recurrent terms in the texts. Subsequently, the analysis was deepened based on categories that allowed us to observe patterns and identify how the media outlets addressed the case in terms of journalistic ethics and respect for the rights of victims.

The analysis procedure was conducted based on the following coded categories:

**Table 1**  
*Coded categories of analysis*

Categories	Codification
Signature	The person listed as responsible for the story is a journalist, who could be a reporter, a reproduction from another source, or the generic term "from the newsroom".
Sources	Verification of the sources selected and those that could have been selected within the scope of the investigation and writing of the news, such as documentary, personal, and institutional sources.
Images	Identifying the content of the images used, whether they preserve or violate the privacy and/or physical and moral integrity of the victims.
Text	The respectful or derogatory way in which the reporter approaches the subject.
Online	The act of "rehashing" previously published information.

Source: Duarte (2024).

Having presented the methodological parameters of the research, we now move on to presenting and discussing the findings of the investigation.

## Results and Analysis

### Signature

According to the data collected from both publications, in the "signature" category, the results reveal that 40% of FolhaMax articles are signed by journalists, while in MidiaNews this percentage is 75%. This data allows for an in-depth critical analysis, as it is expected that journalists who sign articles know and respect the profession's code of ethics. The signature on articles should be an indication of responsibility and commitment to factual truth and the quality of the information provided. The low proportion of signed articles in FolhaMax raises concerns about the lack of individual accountability, while the high rate in MidiaNews indicates a greater commitment to authorship.

In the case of FolhaMax, the low proportion of signed articles raises concerns about individual accountability and may compromise the trust and transparency of the information disseminated. Despite the percentage differences, both outlets presented seven articles signed as "from the newsroom." This practice may indicate a dilution of individual responsibility, which allows for anonymity. Frequently, this type of signature is used for articles that replicate press releases or bulletins, often prepared by interns, without proper investigation. On the other hand, it can also be a way to protect journalists from possible reprisals when signing critical or investigative articles.





"Bruno" and "France." This visualization complements the textual analysis by showing which sources had a greater presence, reinforcing the observation that, even with a greater variety of sources compared to the other media outlet, the coverage still focuses predominantly on official versions of the facts.

When comparing the sources used in the coverage of the massacre in Sorriso by the media outlets, a preference for official sources can be identified. However, this approach may restrict the scope of coverage, which may not fully capture the nuances of the case and the perspectives of sources close to the victims and the local community.

The use of sources was very little explored. The media frequently resort to statements and do not explore other perspectives, which prevents a broader understanding of the impact of the tragedy, both for the affected families and for the city as a whole and can result in dehumanized coverage. This limitation in the use of sources can be seen as a flaw in the reporting process, as it prevents a narrative from being fully explored.

### Images

Within the third category of analysis, "images," their use in journalistic reports can enrich the narrative and provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the facts. However, it is important that these images are used respectfully and ethically, especially in cases of crimes, such as the Sorriso Massacre, to avoid the undue exposure of the victims, especially the two children.

According to Sousa (1998), in the strict sense, photojournalism goes beyond informing. It also contextualizes, shapes opinions, and clarifies events of journalistic interest through images. In this sense, the use of photographs in journalistic articles requires ethical reflection on the impact and consequences of the images used, especially in cases of crimes and tragedies. Even if the photos do not show explicit violence, the fact that they are associated with tragic events, such as murders, demands care in their publication to avoid revictimization of both the victims, even if deceased, and their families, who have to deal with constant public exposure.

Article 17 of the Brazilian Statute of Children and Adolescents (SCA) (1990) protects the right to privacy and integrity of children and adolescents, which includes the preservation of image and identity. Therefore, the publication of images of underage victims in contexts of violence may violate these rights and increase the suffering of families.

In the articles collected from FolhaMax, it was possible to observe that the predominant images were of the victims of the crime: Cleci Calvi Cardoso, 47 years old,

her daughters Miliane Calvi Cardoso, 19 years old, and two minors aged 13 and 10, in addition to the confessed perpetrator, Gilberto Rodrigues dos Anjos, 32 years old.

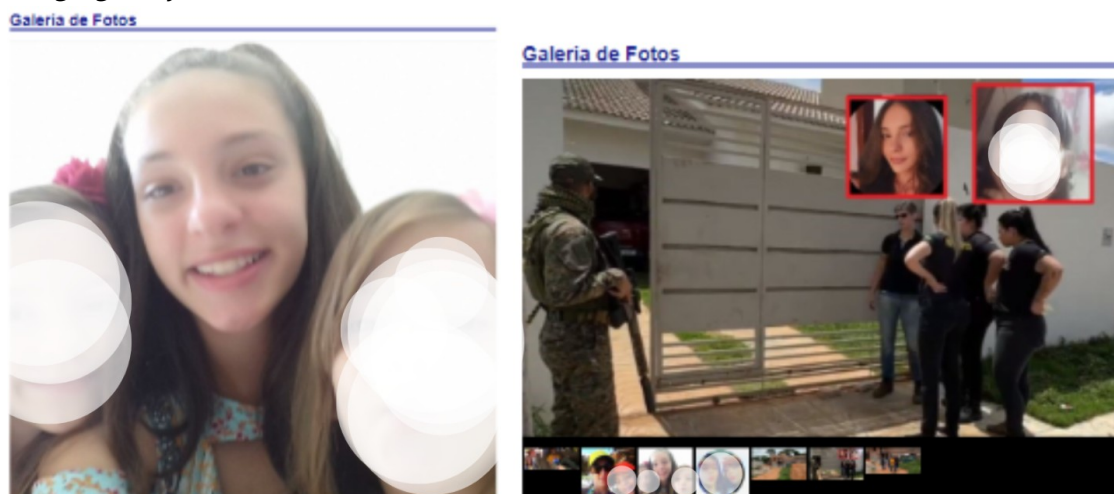
Although Article 17 of the Brazilian SCA does not specify the need to blur the faces of children in journalistic publications, this is a recommended practice to protect the privacy and safety of children. The discussion about the exposure of images of victims, especially children, is very complex. Carvalho and Ferreira (2009) argue that the use of these images may be motivated by the intention to generate a sense of urgency in the conviction of those responsible for the crime. In addition, they highlight that, frequently, for journalists, this need to promote a quick response from society may override the victims' right to privacy.

In this sense, it can be understood that the use of images of victims can be exploited to pressure for the conviction of the guilty, often to the detriment of respect for the dignity of the victims and their families. This media exploitation violates both legal norms, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Brazilian SCA (Statute of Children and Adolescents), and the ethical principles of journalism, and compromises the respect and privacy of the victims. Furthermore, Article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights the importance of protecting children against exploitation and abuse, and this includes the exploitation that is carried out in the media.

In articles involving politicians or institutions, the photo of those involved in the case is usually not published directly. Instead, images of the person responsible, such as the politician, or the facade of the institution usually appear. However, sometimes photos of the victims are included at the end of the article, in the image gallery.

### Figure 3

*Image gallery of the victims in one of the FolhaMax articles*



Source: Ventresqui (2023).

In MidiaNews, the visual coverage predominantly highlighted the confessed perpetrator of the crime, rather than the victims. The outlet focuses on images of the perpetrator, whether in headshots, moments when he is arrested, or collages that highlight his face. There is no humanization of the victims, nor context about who they were. The focus is on the confessed perpetrator, which erases the suffering of the victims. This approach follows the logic of 'True Crime' series narratives, which frequently place the criminal as the central figure. This makes him the protagonist, while the victims remain in the background, without a dignified or more in-depth representation.

MidiaNews was careful when publishing images of the victims. In the first photo released, the identities of the underage victims were preserved, and the image caption reinforced that the children are not included in the collage, which shows an initial concern for protecting the privacy of the underage victims.

In all 32 articles analyzed, the children's photos appear censored, demonstrating a consistent commitment to protecting the identities of minors. Even the censored images of the children were used only a few times, as were the faces of the two adult victims. In general, MidiaNews preferred to repeat the same cover several times, avoiding showing the victims' faces.

The covers of the articles tend to show the perpetrator in different situations, such as at the moment of arrest, in a headshot, or in collages that combine these images. The repetitive use of the same images suggests a conservative and careful approach to avoid compromising the protection of victims, especially minors.

#### Figure 4

*Image of the killer's arrest on MidiaNews*

Divulgação



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Source: Tres (2023); Brunetto (2023a).

Among the images published by the publication, one of the most impactful is a crime scene showing a white floor with several bloody footprints, which creates a strong visual impact and highlights the brutality. Although this image can be justified as an attempt to portray the gravity of what happened, it can also be interpreted as a sensationalist strategy that exploits shock and emotional impact.

According to Forin Junior and Boni (2005), sensationalist photography is used to provoke attraction and astonishment, becoming a key element in the press's market strategy. Alves (2022) observes that the media frequently resort to this to attract public attention, whether positive or negative, and justify this practice by claiming that it is necessary to show the reality of the facts to the public.

An analysis of the image choices made by FolhaMax and MidiaNews in their coverage of the case reveals significant differences in how each approaches the exposure of the victims and the perpetrator of the crime. While FolhaMax opted for an approach that repeatedly contains collages of photos of the victims, sometimes without proper censorship of the faces of minors, raising questions about the commitment to protecting privacy and children's rights, MidiaNews demonstrated a more cautious and ethical stance. The outlet mostly avoided directly exposing the victims, especially minors, and focused on images that reinforce the progress of the investigations and the actions of the authorities.

However, despite being more cautious, MidiaNews resorted to the use of graphic images to create an emotional impact, which can be interpreted as a shock strategy. This approach, although less direct in its exposure of the victims, can still raise questions about the exploitation of suffering to attract public attention.

## Text

From a textual point of view, the penultimate category of analysis, in FolhaMax, the headlines frequently adopt a sensationalist approach, with the intention of provoking intense emotional reactions and attracting clicks. This pattern is visible in the treatment of victims, evidenced by descriptions that exacerbate pain and suffering in a shocking way. MidiaNews headlines also demonstrate a sensationalist pattern, exploiting the shock and pain of victims to maximize attention and engagement.

The construction of headlines about violent crimes requires special care to avoid sensationalism. But this care also needs to be present in the content of the articles, as

the use of shocking elements can increase fear and outrage, instead of offering an informative approach. In the texts analyzed, the FolhaMax and MidiaNews media outlets use terms that dehumanize the victims, treating them in a sensationalist way.

The choice of words can stir the emotions of readers, but it does not help to better understand the crimes. Furthermore, by revealing intimate and painful details of the victims' lives, the articles can be invasive and disrespectful, treating the victims more as shock troops than as people with dignity.

Linguistic sensationalism is characterized by the use of expressive and impactful words that aim to provoke intense sensations in readers. This is evident in the graphic and shocking descriptions used by the media outlets analyzed. In addition, thematic sensationalism, which relates to the visual and emotional appeal of the articles, seeks to maximize commercial engagement by exploiting the suffering and pain of the victims.

The vehicles analyzed, FolhaMax and MidiaNews, not only frequently use terms that highlight the suffering of the victims in an explicit and disturbing way in the titles and text, but also repeat information in several articles, and create a cycle of sensationalism, whose sole objective is the number of hits. According to Angrimani Sobrinho (1995), this choice of language draws the reader's attention in an emotional way, resorts to an exaggerated and informal style and may even make use of slang and swear words.

It is possible to observe that FolhaMax and MidiaNews describe scenes in an extremely explicit way, as in cases in which they detail the murders and rapes of the victims. These descriptions, in addition to being unethical, disrespect the memory of the victims and the pain of their families. The presentation of such graphic details does not contribute to the understanding of the crime; on the contrary, it only serves to shock and attract readers. This approach reflects a lack of sensitivity and disrespect for the principles of ethical and responsible journalism.

Alves (2022) brings to light the discussion of how the media frequently exploit social tragedies to maximize audience and profitability, resorting to repetition and sensationalist exploitation of suffering. The practice of recycling content to maintain engagement, instead of offering substantial updates, prioritizes impact over the quality and integrity of information, deceives the reader and compromises journalistic ethics.

Below, we present repeated excerpts from FolhaMax:

### Figure 5

#### *Print Screen of the 4th, 7th and 13th articles from FolhaMax*

According to the Civil Police, the criminal confessed to attacking the four victims from Friday to Saturday. After stabbing three victims, while they were still dying, he sexually abused the mother and two daughters. The youngest, aged 10, died of asphyxiation. An intimate item belonging to one of the victims was found with the detained criminal and will be sent to the Official Forensic and Technical Identification Service of Mato Grosso.

The criminal confessed to attacking the four victims between Friday and Saturday. After stabbing three victims, and while they were still dying, he sexually assaulted the mother and two daughters. The youngest, aged 10, died of asphyxiation. The victims were identified as Cleci Calvi Cardoso, 46 years old, Miliane Calvi Cardoso, 19 years old, and two minors aged 10 and 12.

In his confession, the criminal recounted that he attacked the four victims from Friday to Saturday. After stabbing three victims, and while they were still dying, he sexually abused the mother and two daughters. The youngest, aged 10, died of asphyxiation.

Source: Lopes e Closs (2023), Da Redação (2023), Ventresqui (2023).

The following are the excerpts repeated in MidiaNews:

### Figure 6

#### *Print Screen of the 1st and 13th articles from MidiaNews*

The mother and her eldest daughter were found in the hallway of the house. The bodies of the other girls were each in their own room. It is suspected that the victims were also sexually abused.

The mother and her eldest daughter were found in the hallway of the house. The bodies of the other girls were each in their own room. It is suspected that the victims were also raped.

Source: Callejas (2023), Brunetto (2023b).

Although not written identically to the two previous examples, repeated information appears again, but now with a slight alteration in the order of the sentences. This suggests a lack of interest in updating or deepening the narrative and maintains the focus on sensationalist impact.

Again, the same information is presented as if it were new, but it does not bring any different data. This is a clear example of "rehashing" news, in which previously published content is recycled to create a false sense of novelty, which can deceive the reader, leading them to think they are seeing new information when, in fact, it is a repetition.

## Figure 7

*Print Screen of the 14th, 16th and 20th articles from MidiaNews:*

The first three victims had their throats cut, a type of throat-slitting. The youngest girl was the only one to be asphyxiated.

The mother and her two older daughters had their throats cut; the wounds were deep. The youngest daughter was suffocated to death with the help of a pillow.

The mother and her two older daughters had their throats cut; the wounds were deep. The youngest daughter was suffocated to death with the help of a pillow.

Source: Brunetto (2023c), Brunetto (2023d), Brunetto (2023e).

From these examples, it is possible to see that both media outlets "rehashed" the news, in which the articles repeat information from previous texts without bringing new data, sometimes changing a word, the order of the information, or nothing at all. This practice gives the impression that there is something new, but in reality, it is just a repetition of what has already been published, which can generate a false sense of new content. The focus on reproducing what has already generated access previously contributes to the sensationalization of the case, which does not add informative value to the reader and can be considered unethical.

In addition, when analyzing the articles, there is a lack of a deeper critical analysis of the complexity of public safety data. Although one specific article highlights the reduction in crime rates, the coverage disregards essential issues, such as femicides and sexual assaults, which are fundamental to understanding the context of violence. This omission not only limits the discussion but also reinforces a sensationalist narrative that simplifies reality, focusing only on one aspect of crime.

Despite the differences, both outlets show a sensationalist approach. FolhaMax, by repeating information about the victims, exploits people's suffering in a superficial way.

From the outset, FolhaMax and MidiaNews violate Article 11 of the Journalists' Code of Ethics (2007), which prohibits the dissemination of morbid and sensationalist information. Furthermore, both fail to protect individual and collective guarantees, especially in the case of children, adolescents, and women, who are also present in the Code of Ethics by exploiting the image of victims inappropriately.

## Online

In the last category of analysis, "online," we analyzed multimedia in the productions of FolhaMax and MidiaNews. According to Salaverría (2014), multimedia involves a combination of various media, such as texts, photos, videos, and audios, in a single production, with the aim of enriching the reader's experience.

However, when analyzing the 25 articles from FolhaMax and the 32 articles from MidiaNews, it is possible to see that both media outlets do not make full use of this concept. Of the 25 articles analyzed from FolhaMax, only one fully encompasses the concept of multimedia and integrates text, photos, videos and audio.

It was observed that FolhaMax uses a significant number of photos and generally provides a gallery with several images at the end of the articles, although these photos tend to be repeated throughout the content. Among the articles analyzed, 12 pieces of content were exclusively image and text, while 12 combined text, image, and video. This suggests an attempt to provide more detailed coverage, although still limited in terms of multimedia.

On the other hand, when analyzing the 32 articles from MidiaNews, it is possible to observe that none of the articles are considered multimedia, and 30 of them followed the same traditional format of text and photo. The publication rarely uses videos or audios, which indicates not only a limitation in the approach, but may also suggest a greater sensitivity to the seriousness of the reported cases.

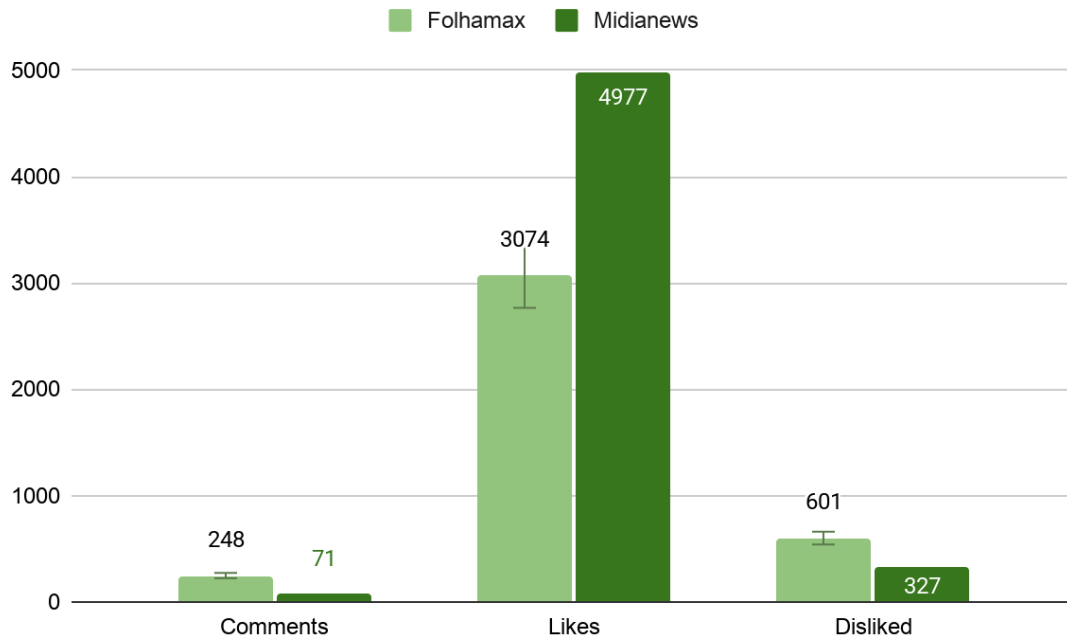
As Salaverría (2014) mentions, multimedia is more than a simple combination of text, sound and images, and often the lack of exploration of these resources by the media can limit the depth and interactivity of the content offered.

In the digital environment, interactivity with the reader is much easier to achieve than in print newspapers. Online media outlets can open spaces for comments, reactions and discussions, as well as use social networks to foster engagement. FolhaMax, for example, offers, both at the beginning and at the end of its news pages, options for sharing content on social networks such as WhatsApp, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). On MidiaNews, news articles have share buttons at the bottom of the page, but only for Facebook and X.

In addition to sharing options, both portals offer dedicated spaces for comments, allowing readers to express their opinions on the content of the articles. In the comments, other users can interact through likes and dislikes, creating a network of interaction among readers. This type of dynamic can foster an active community where the public not only consumes information but also participates in discussions about the published news.

Chart 1

*Interaction in articles on the websites "FolhaMax" and "MidiaNews"*



Source: authors themselves.

This involvement demonstrates the potential for reader engagement and the central role that interactivity plays in digital journalism. Although interaction occurs exclusively between readers, media outlets monitor these reactions and, based on them, adjust their content strategies to maximize audience participation. Such engagement helps to understand what types of content attract more attention and generate more reactions.

News involving brutal crimes generates great outrage among the public. This type of content, charged with intense emotions, tends to provoke more interactions, such as comments and reactions. There is a direct relationship between the emotional impact of news and the level of reader engagement. In addition, these interactions show how the form of presentation and the sensationalist content of certain articles can influence audience participation.

A growing dynamic of likes, dislikes, and comments can also influence how content is produced and disseminated. However, this pursuit of engagement can often compromise journalistic ethics, as the focus may shift from informative quality to prioritizing emotional impact and the number of interactions.

In the first three days after the discovery of the massacre, the FolhaMax and MidiaNews outlets presented a virtually continuous flow of publications. This strategy of constantly updating information reflects the pursuit of immediacy and rapid delivery of news, which are a characteristic of digital journalism.

At FolhaMax, the most intense flow occurred on 11/27/2023, with updates at similar times, such as 10:31 AM, 2:15 PM, 4:35 PM, 5:03 PM, 7:12 PM, 7:34 PM, and 9:30 PM. At MidiaNews, the day with the highest number of publications was 11/28/2023, with updates at times such as 8:17 AM, 8:23 AM, 8:49 AM, 9:15 AM, 9:20 AM, 10:12 AM, 11:02 AM, 2:08 PM, 4:05 PM, and 6:00 PM.

According to Bradshaw (2014), speed is an essential characteristic of journalism, as news represents something new for the public, and this means that it is important to be the first to report on events. According to the author, although speed has always been fundamental, today it is seen in a different context, in which the pressure for immediate updates is much greater. The pressure to offer immediate updates has increased, possibly due to digitization and the use of social media, but this pressure can impact the quality of content and fact-checking.

This distribution of news throughout the day also suggests a commitment to following the developments of the case and keeps the audience informed as new information emerges. While this practice meets the expectations of the digital audience for real-time updates, it can reveal a sensationalist bias when new publications bring an excessive repetition of information.

### Final considerations

This article presented the main results of the analysis of the journalistic coverage of the massacre in Sorriso by the websites FolhaMax and MidiaNews, focusing on the ethical aspects of the profession and the Statute of the Child and Adolescent. From the study, it was observed that both coverages presented worrying practices, such as the inadequate exposure of the victims, the repetition of information, the scarcity of diverse sources, and the use of sensationalist language.

These elements reinforce the need to critically reflect on the limits of journalistic practice in delicate situations. The pressure for engagement on digital platforms and the logic of speed have often overshadowed ethical care and commitment to human rights, especially the rights of children and adolescents as stipulated in the Brazilian SCA (Statute for Children and Adolescents).

More than denouncing flaws, this work sought to contribute to the debate on a more empathetic, responsible journalistic practice committed to the dignity of victims. Thus, the importance of respecting the principles of the Code of Ethics and the Federal Constitution is reaffirmed, promoting journalism that informs without violating rights; that questions without exploiting; and that fulfills its social role with sensitivity and awareness.

Furthermore, the results indicate that practices such as bylines, diversification of sources, and responsible use of images can be viable paths to more ethical coverage. Encouraging deeper investigation, going beyond official statements, is also essential to broaden the journalistic perspective and avoid dehumanizing victims.

Therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to future discussions on journalistic ethics, especially in coverage of violence, and inspire professionals and media outlets to rethink their production routines. Journalism can and should report responsibly, even in the face of pressures from the digital environment.

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**RESUMO**

O objetivo deste artigo é analisar a cobertura do massacre ocorrido em Sorriso, Mato Grosso, em 2023, realizada pelos sites Midianews e FolhaMax, com base nos direitos de crianças e adolescentes e nos princípios da ética jornalística. O método utilizado no estudo é a análise de conteúdo, com coleta manual de dados e definição de categorias analíticas, considerando como período de referência os primeiros sete dias após a publicação do primeiro conteúdo. Os resultados revelam padrões sensacionalistas, frequentes violações éticas e desrespeito aos direitos das vítimas. Além disso, aponta-se que a pressão por engajamento digital contribui para a superficialidade na apuração e exploração de conteúdos sensíveis.

**KEYWORDS:** Ética; Jornalismo online; Sensacionalismo; Chacina de Sorriso; Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente.

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo busca analizar la cobertura de la masacre ocurrida en Sorriso, Mato Grosso do Sul, en 2023, por los sitios web Midianews y FolhaMax, con base en los derechos de la infancia y la adolescencia y los principios de la ética periodística. El método rector del estudio es el análisis de contenido, con recopilación manual de datos y definición de categorías analíticas, centrándose en los primeros siete días posteriores a la publicación del primer contenido. Los resultados revelan patrones sensacionalistas, frecuentes violaciones éticas y falta de respeto a los derechos de las víctimas. Además, señala que la presión por la participación digital contribuye a la superficialidad en la investigación y exploración de contenido sensible.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Ética; Periodismo digital; Sensacionalismo; Masacre de Sorriso; Derechos de niños, niñas y adolescentes.