

YEAR 2023

THE ENYOBENI SAGA

ANALYSING MEDIA COVERAGE AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

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According to Aware.org, a significant concern arises from their findings, indicating that **50%** of teenagers in South Africa consume alcohol. Their studies further reveal a troubling statistic - individuals who initiate alcohol consumption before the legal age of 18 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence compared to those who commence drinking after the age of 20.

South Africa faces a significant and concerning issue of underage drinking among its youth population.

32%

Studies in South Africa have estimated youth drinking at 32%, especially between the ages of 11-20 years,

12%

while 12% of teenagers are reported to initiate alcohol use before 13 years of age.

This complex problem has far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and society as a whole. Underage drinking inflicts various adverse consequences, including detrimental effects on academic performance, leading to higher rates of academic issues compared to non-drinking peers. The repercussions also extend to grave incidents such as severe injuries and fatalities, evident from 2009 statistics linking underage drinking to **1,844** homicides, **949,400** nonfatal violent crimes, and **1,811,300** property crimes. Additionally, young individuals involved in underage drinking are more prone to engage in early and frequent risky sexual behaviour without adequate protection.

The impairing effects of substances lower inhibitions, fostering poor decision-making and increasing the likelihood of regrettable actions.

1. <https://www.lawforall.co.za/family-relationships/underage-drinking-south-africa/>

2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9498139/#:~:text=Studies%20in%20South%20Africa%20have,14%2C15%2C16%5D>

3. <https://www.samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you/parent-resources/consequences-underage-drinking>

4. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-06-26-kuzofiwa-a-party-invitation-that-foreshadowed-deaths-of-21-at-eastern-cape-nightspot/>

Furthermore, underage drinking contributes to prevalent health problems, including mental disorders like depression and anxiety, exacerbating the overall negative impact of substance abuse on their well-being. These multifaceted consequences underscore the urgent need for prevention and education efforts to mitigate the harm caused by underage drinking.

Despite legal regulations stipulating a minimum legal drinking age of 18, the prevalence of underage drinking remains a persistent challenge.



The tragic events that unfolded on June 26, 2022, at Enyobeni Tavern in East London, Eastern Cape, South Africa, helped paint the picture of the problem that is underage drinking in the country. On that fateful day, 21 young lives were abruptly cut short, and four individuals left injured during a party dubbed the “pens down” held at this local shebeen.

Till now, the public remains in the dark regarding the official cause of death, leaving many questions unanswered and families grieving.

The media bears a solemn responsibility when it comes to covering tragic events, as it serves as a vital conduit for disseminating information, fostering understanding, and promoting transparency and accountability within society. To fulfil this duty effectively, media outlets must go beyond mere reporting - they must delve deep into the intricate details surrounding these incidents. This comprehensive approach entails unpacking the issue being reported and embracing a multitude of voices and perspectives, ensuring that the community, parents, and officials all have an opportunity to contribute their viewpoints.

In times of tragedy, the media's role becomes particularly crucial. By giving voice to the community affected, the media not only reflects the sentiments and concerns of the people but also acts as a catalyst for healing and unity. Hearing from parents who have experienced loss can shed light on the human aspect of these events, fostering empathy and solidarity among viewers and readers.

Additionally, the media, especially as an advocate for truth must ensure that the coverage holds power to account. The inclusion of public officials' perspectives to coverage is significant. What is even more significant is journalists asking these public officials the right questions. Public officials play a pivotal role in managing crises, implementing policies, and ensuring the safety and well-being of citizens. Providing them a platform to communicate their strategies, actions, and responses allows the public to better understand the measures in place and encourages transparency and accountability. It also ensures the officials and all others with power are interrogated about implementation of said strategies to address whatever ill is faced by a society.

In essence, the media's duty transcends the mere act of reporting especially in a tragedy such as the Enyobeni tavern tragedy where minors were involved - it encompasses the responsibility to provide a comprehensive, well-rounded narrative that incorporates diverse voices. By doing so, the media contributes to a more informed, compassionate, and engaged society, one better equipped to navigate and learn from the tragedies that inevitably unfold in our world.

For three decades, Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) has diligently monitored and analysed media reporting of different issues, events and marginalised groups.

**FOR 20 YEARS,
MMA HAS PAID
A PARTICULAR
FOCUS ON
MATTERS
CONCERNING
CHILDREN.**

20 YEARS

With an unwavering commitment to its mission, MMA has played its instrumental role in critically examining the ways in which the media portrays and discusses issues related to the younger generation.

Over this extensive period, MMA has evolved into a respected authority in the field of media analysis and advocacy, championing the cause of responsible and ethical journalism, especially in matters involving children. Through its rigorous monitoring and research initiatives, MMA has sought to highlight both exemplary reporting that serves the best interests of children and areas where improvements are urgently needed.

This analysis comes after the realisation that a deeper understanding was needed of media's coverage of the Enyobeni saga in terms of the issues being highlighted and whether coverage was holding power to account. These elements are important to analyse especially that and as alluded to above, South Africa grapples with the challenge of underage drinking and general underage substance abuse.



Above all, this report aims to address two key questions.

- 1 Did the coverage of the Enyobeni incident sufficiently highlight the issue of teenage drinking?
- 2 Did the media hold or seek to hold those responsible and those in power accountable?

How was the research conducted (methodology)?

540 ARTICLES

To collect and analyse the data, MMA employed a powerful in-house media monitoring tool known as Dexter which **meticulously gathered a comprehensive dataset comprising 540 articles dating from the inception of the incident, June 26, 2022 up to June 26, 2023.**



The articles were collected from *SABC Online News*, *Weekend Argus*, *The Citizen*, *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Dispatch*, *Eyewitness News*, *eNCA Online*, *The Herald*, *IOL*, *News24*, *Moneyweb*, *Eyewitness News*, *Pretoria News*, *Daily Sun*, *Daily Maverick*, *Daily News*, among others. Dexter uses machine learning to collect certain aspects of articles relating to the Enyobeni tavern tragedy such as media name, date and journalist, etc. As an added quality element, MMA employed manual human monitoring to collect aspects such as topic, sources and quality of information, among others. Our primary focus during this meticulous review was to identify how and whether the media coverage explored the above two questions in terms of the issue of underage drinking and accountability holding of those responsible and the powerful.

MMA's utilisation of Dexter as a data collection and analysis tool underscores our dedication to employing cutting-edge technology and methodologies to advance our mission of promoting responsible and ethical media reporting. Through this meticulous examination, we seek to contribute to a more informed and accountable media landscape, ultimately benefiting the broader public discourse on issues as vital as underage drinking.

This also underscores MMA's commitment to thoroughness and precision in our media analysis endeavours. This comprehensive approach allows us to provide a nuanced and evidence-based assessment of the media's treatment of this critical concern. But, like all research, this was not without limitations. The biggest limitation to this research is that broadcast and community media were excluded as Dexter's limitation is that it only scrapes from print and online media.



FINDINGS

1. DID THE COVERAGE OF ENYOBENI INCIDENT SUFFICIENTLY HIGHLIGHT THE ISSUE OF TEENAGE DRINKING?

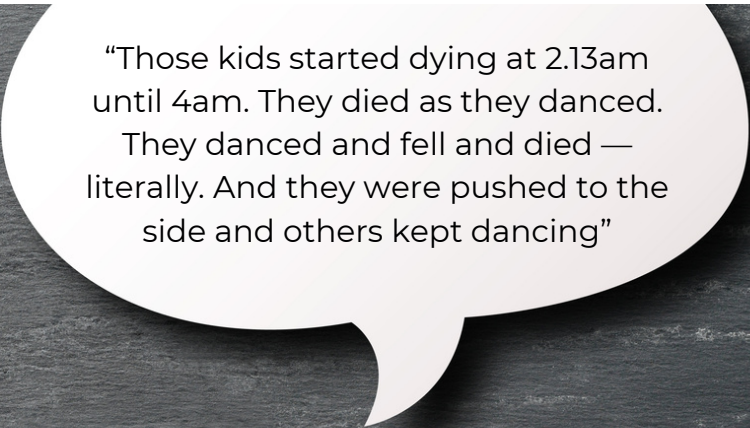
In the process of analysis, we meticulously reviewed each article, evaluating the extent to which the media attempted to tackle the issue of underage drinking. This involved a manual examination of whether the topic was addressed in the articles or if it was entirely overlooked. Our approach included scrutinising the content of each article to ascertain the depth and relevance of the discussion concerning underage drinking. We paid close attention to the strategies, interventions, and policies highlighted within the articles to mitigate this problem and, critically analysed the different voices in coverage and what was being said. Here, we focused on the voice of children, their parents and especially the voice of experts versus government officials.

Additionally, we assessed the clarity and coherence of the information presented, considering the comprehensiveness of the research methods employed. By systematically examining these aspects, we aimed to measure the level of effort made by the media in addressing the critical issue of underage drinking. This method ensured a thorough evaluation of each article's content and its contribution to the discourse surrounding underage alcohol consumption, enabling a nuanced understanding of the media's engagement with this pressing societal concern.

Understanding and addressing underage drinking is essential not only in the context of this specific tragedy but also in the broader scope of public health and safety. It is a complex issue with far-reaching consequences, including health risks, accidents, and social disruption. Therefore, a more thorough examination by the media would not only serve to inform the public but also stimulate discussions, drive awareness, and potentially contribute to preventive measures.

OUT OF THE 540 ARTICLES ANALYSED, IT IS STRIKING TO NOTE THAT ONLY 87 OF THEM MADE ANY CONCERTED EFFORT TO ADDRESS THE CRITICAL ISSUE OF UNDERAGE DRINKING IN THE ENYOBENI TRAGEDY.

This means it is only those 87 stories that delved into the issue beyond basic reporting that often follows coverage of such issues. This statistic underscores a significant gap in media coverage and reporting on a matter of profound societal concern. Most media outlets focused on Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, as he made remarks on parenting as well as declaring war on liquor outlets that do not comply with the law. He was quoted numerous times often calling on parents to take responsibility for their children's whereabouts to prevent such tragedies from happening. One example of a quote that got featured in a number of articles is,



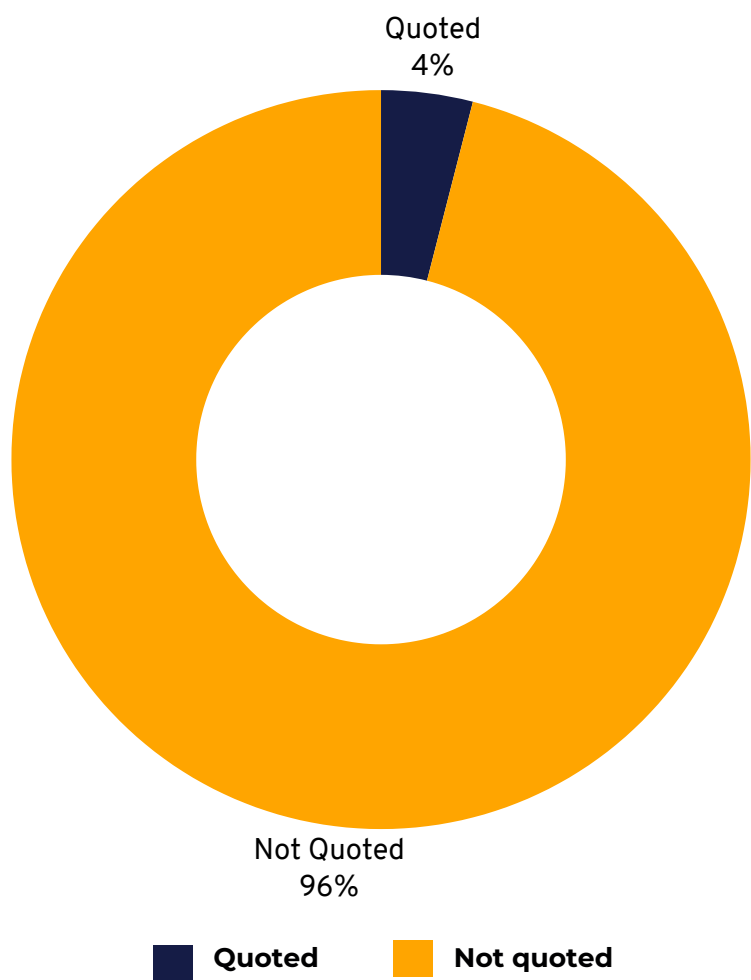
“Those kids started dying at 2.13am until 4am. They died as they danced. They danced and fell and died — literally. And they were pushed to the side and others kept dancing”

This quote and indeed many other elements especially the inclusion of explicit content in many articles analysed shows that the media's handling of this matter was sensationalized and most often event-based. Certain graphic details, often unnecessary, were incorporated into the coverage. These elements, while intended to capture attention, had the adverse effect of potentially traumatising both readers and the victims involved. The excessive focus on explicit and distressing information not only sensationalised the story but also raised ethical concerns about the emotional impact on the audience. By choosing to emphasise sensational aspects rather than focusing on responsible reporting, the media risked desensitising readers to the gravity of the situation.

The Enyobeni tragedy, which resulted in the loss of numerous lives and left several others injured, should have prompted extensive discussions and reflections on the factors contributing to such incidents, particularly the role of underage drinking. However, the limited number of articles that delved into this issue suggests a missed opportunity for comprehensive reporting.

To further understand whether an article critically and adequately addressed the issue of underage drinking, MMA looked at the voices in coverage and what they were speaking about. The voices of children, experts versus officials and parents were critical to analyse. The inclusion of these voices and extent to which they were quoted showed whether coverage of the Enyobeni tragedy respectively ensured child participation (when in the best interests of children), showed whether there was proper unpacking of the issue through experts or accountability holding through government officials and, whether there was an effort to show a human dimension through the parents.

VOICE OF CHILDREN



4%

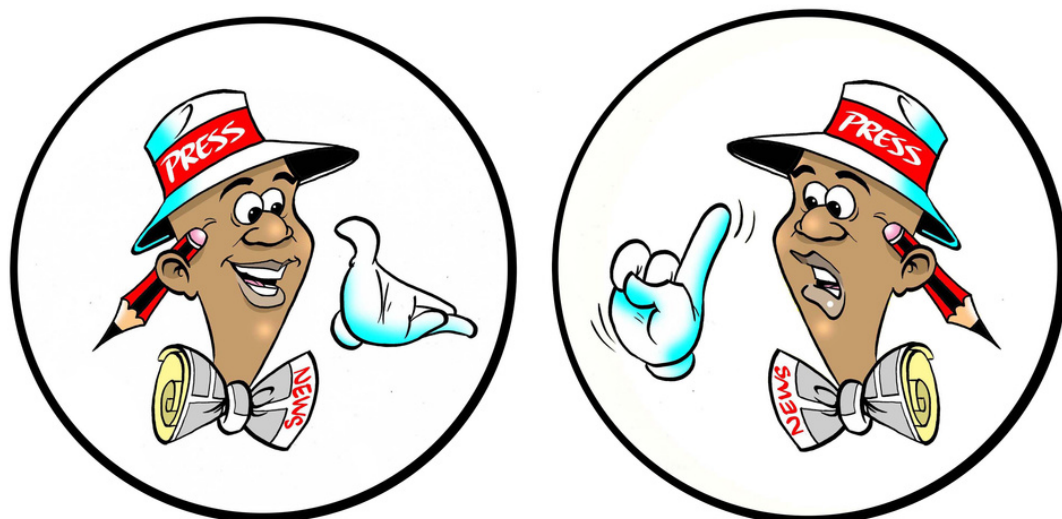
As illustrated by the figure above, only 4% percent of stories on the Enyobeni tragedy included children as sources.

Numerous young people experienced the impact as their peers or they themselves were directly involved, yet the media failed them by not providing an opportunity to express their concerns and share how profoundly they were affected. This oversight silenced the experiences of many young individuals who were deeply connected to the event. The absence of their narratives in the media not only hindered the understanding of the broader emotional toll within the community but also robbed the children an opportunity to share with those with the power of how the children would want the issue addressed. Allowing these children to share their views on how they envisioned policy makers and duty bearers would address the issue would have potentially enabled an environment where institutional responses to the issue of underage drinking are formulated with the children in mind and with their contributions taken into account.

Including children's voices in media coverage of issues affecting them is a critical aspect of responsible journalism and storytelling. It involves giving children a platform to express their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives on various issues that affect them. This requires a sensitive and responsible approach that prioritises the best interests of children while promoting their participation and empowerment in discussions and narratives that affect their lives.

According to MMA's editorial guidelines and principles for reporting on children in the media, “Even where you are trying to tell people about harm to children or another children's issue or promote children's rights, you always need to respect the best interests of the individual child.”

MMA always encourages the media to speak to children. However, we discourage the media from speaking to children who are still traumatised or have undergone a traumatic ordeal before those children have undergone thorough counselling and have healed enough to relive their trauma. This principle ensures the children are protected from harm including potential harm that might come as a result of being made to relive their traumatic ordeal without properly healing first.



In the case of the Enyobeni tragedy, alternative ways of getting views from children should have been explored and one of these ways is speaking to those not directly affected by the tragedy to share their perspective. When getting comment from those directly affected, the media could have spoken to only those children who had undergone thorough counselling to ensure sensitivity, and utmost consideration for the children's best interests and privacy.

Further to protection from retraumatisation there is also the protection from other harm such as the harm that potentially comes as a result of compromised safety. In such instances, this protection includes employing creative ways to get views of children without potentially subjecting them to further harm, including potential harm such as retribution and/or victimisation. This includes speaking to the children but withholding their identity or any information that might lead to their identification, just as is provided for by the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act.

The Enyobeni tragedy presents potentially criminal matters, notably involving underage drinking. In these intertwined scenarios, children find themselves in roles as witnesses, suspects, or victims, creating a challenging situation that demands utmost sensitivity. Some of these minors might be culpable of underage drinking, a legal offense, or could be crucial elements in the case against the tavern owners. As these young individuals are potentially both implicated and vulnerable, it is paramount to shield them from unnecessary exposure and protect their identities. Safeguarding their rights and well-being becomes imperative, especially given their dual status as potential offenders and witnesses. Responsible media coverage in such cases is essential, ensuring not only the accurate portrayal of events but also the preservation of the privacy and dignity of these underage individuals. Balancing the need for public information with the protection of the involved children requires a delicate approach, emphasising the ethical responsibility of the media to handle this multifaceted legal situation with care and empathy.

5. [Act No. 16 of 2021 Criminal Procedure Amendment Act 2021.pdf \(pmg.org.za\)](#).

6. Image from IOL : <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/eastern-cape/rewind-2022-death-of-21-teenagers-at-enyobeni-tavern-tragic-3b8aeda5-0570-4d93-bc36-82479c619ff3>

VOICE OF EXPERTS VERSUS OFFICIALS

Media outlets quoted a range of prominent figures including government officials and experts in South Africa. Dominating voices in the coverage included Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, President Cyril Ramaphosa, former president, Thabo Mbeki, Dr. Eileen Carter, Head of Human Rights Commission in the Eastern Cape, Dr. Nombuyiselo Makala from Eastern Cape Liquor Board, representatives from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Eastern Cape government spokesperson, Khuselwa Rantjie, The South African Council of Churches (SACC) and The SA Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu), among others. These individuals provided insights and opinions regarding the unfortunate incident.

COVERAGE OF THE ENYOBENI TRAGEDY, WHILE DOMINATED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS' VOICES, DID INCLUDE A SMALL VOICE SHARE BELONGING TO EXPERTS.

Majority of MMA's monitoring and analysis has over the years revealed that the voice of experts is often overlooked. It is therefore encouraging that this critical voice was included, albeit minimally, in coverage of Enyobeneni.

The inclusion of experts in media coverage during times of tragedy plays a pivotal role in serving the public interest and promoting informed decision-making. These experts provide essential insights and analysis that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the situation. Experts offer a source of accurate and reliable information, which is of paramount importance during crises. Their expertise lends credibility to the information being disseminated, countering the spread of misinformation that often accompanies tragic events.



Furthermore, these experts provide context and analysis, helping the public grasp the broader implications of the tragedy. They shed light on the underlying causes, historical parallels, and potential long-term consequences, enabling individuals and communities to make more informed choices. Equally crucial is their role in ensuring public safety. By imparting knowledge about safety measures, evacuation procedures, and risk mitigation strategies, experts empower individuals to protect themselves and their loved ones.

VOICE OF PARENTS

Within the corpus of the 540 articles scrutinised, it is disconcerting to find that parents affected by the tragic incident were featured as sources in the coverage on only 62 occasions.

This stark revelation underscores the paramount importance of ensuring that the voices, thoughts, and perspectives of parents are given ample space in media coverage following such traumatic events.

When a tragedy like the one in question unfolds, parents are not only grieving but often grappling with a myriad of emotions, questions, and concerns. They are intimately connected to the incident, experiencing profound loss and devastation. In this context, providing parents with the opportunity to share their experiences and insights is not only a matter of journalistic integrity but also a fundamental ethical imperative.

Parents' perspectives offer a deeply human dimension to the reporting of such incidents. Their voices convey the raw emotion, resilience, and strength that can emerge in the face of unimaginable loss. Moreover, their insights can shed light on aspects of the tragedy that might otherwise remain obscured. Their stories can serve as powerful testimonials, prompting empathy and understanding within the broader community.



By contacting parents and allowing them to express their views, the media can not only contribute to a more compassionate and comprehensive narrative but also one where those affected are given a platform to interrogate and demand answers and/or redress. It is a step toward acknowledging the profound impact of such events on families and recognising their unique position as both stakeholders and sources of valuable information.

However, and importantly so, this should be done in a respectful and ethical manner. It can be a violation of grieving parents' rights to privacy and dignity if the media goes about getting their perspectives without the adherence to journalistic principles around reporting especially on grieving people. Oftentimes, MMA has noted with concern the interviewing and showing of pictures and videos of grieving people and so we urge the media to be more respectful and ethical and, find creative ways of getting the grieving parents' views without violating their rights and/or flouting ethical principles.

The limited access of parents by the media in the coverage of tragic incidents is a missed opportunity for responsible reporting and empathy-building within society. It is incumbent upon the media to prioritise the inclusion of parents' voices, recognising that their perspectives not only enhance the quality of reporting but also honour the human experience at the heart of such tragedies. Further, by not adequately featuring parents as sources in this coverage, the media robbed the parents of an opportunity to hold the power to account by demanding answers and redress.

This discrepancy in coverage also highlights the need for media outlets to prioritise responsible reporting and consider the wider implications of such incidents. Given the role of the media in shaping public perception and policy discussions, it is crucial that they dedicate more attention to issues like underage drinking, which can have a profound impact on the well-being of communities and society as a whole. This observation should serve as a call to action for media organisations to engage more deeply with pressing societal concerns and contribute to informed public discourse.

SO, DID THE COVERAGE OF THE ENYOBENI INCIDENT SUFFICIENTLY HIGHLIGHT THE ISSUE OF TEENAGE DRINKING? NO.



The coverage of the Enyobeni incident fell short in sufficiently highlighting the critical issue of teenage drinking. Among the 540 articles analysed, only 87 made a concerted effort to address the underage drinking problem, revealing a significant gap in media reporting on this societal concern. The media's focus on sensational aspects and explicit content, along with limited inclusion of voices such as parents and children, underscored missed opportunities for responsible reporting and empathy-building. The limited voice share belonging to experts is also of great concern as the experts would have contributed to unpacking the issue and suggesting solutions for redress by the government. The tragic incident should have prompted extensive discussions on the broader implications of underage drinking, emphasising the need for media outlets to prioritise responsible reporting and contribute to informed public discourse on pressing societal concerns.

2. DID THE COVERAGE HOLD OR SEEK TO HOLD THOSE RESPONSIBLE AND THOSE WITH THE POWER ACCOUNTABLE?

In evaluating whether coverage held individuals accountable, several key elements needed to be present in an article. Firstly, we looked to see whether the article clearly identified the individuals or entities responsible for the events or issues discussed. Specific names, positions, or affiliations provide clarity regarding accountability. Secondly, the article should present credible evidence, such as official statements, witness accounts, or documented facts, supporting the allegations or claims made against the accountable parties. Thirdly, the article should analyse and critique the actions or decisions of those in power, holding them responsible for their roles in the situation. This analysis could include discussions of policies, ethics, legality, or public sentiment. Additionally, the article should explore the consequences or potential repercussions faced by the accountable parties due to their actions, highlighting any legal, social, or professional outcomes. Lastly, a balanced perspective is essential; if there are counterarguments or responses from the accused parties, these should be presented to ensure fair and unbiased reporting. Articles that successfully integrated these elements were considered to effectively hold individuals or those in power accountable for their actions or decisions.



The importance of the media holding people accountable cannot be overstated in a democratic society. The media should ensure transparency, integrity, and accountability among individuals, organisations, and institutions, especially those in positions of power. Media scrutiny acts as a deterrent against corruption, abuse of power, and unethical behaviour.

According to Free Press Unlimited, media accountability fosters public trust. By revealing the truth, exposing wrongdoing, and questioning those in authority, the media ensures that citizens are well-informed. Informed citizens are essential for a functioning democracy as they can make educated decisions, hold leaders accountable, and actively participate in civic life. Media also promotes justice as investigative journalism can shed light on issues such as human rights violations, environmental concerns, and social injustices. By exposing these issues, the media can spark public outrage, leading to legal actions, policy changes, and social reforms. Moreover, media accountability encourages transparency in government and corporate practices. It demands openness, honesty, and responsiveness from institutions, ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest rather than for personal gain or hidden agendas.

In the coverage of the Enyobeni tragedy, the exact events of that fatal night are still unconfirmed, leading to varied and conflicting reports. Despite over a year passing, there remains uncertainty surrounding the demise of the 21 young individuals at the Enyobeni tavern in the Eastern Cape. This is the first element that can reveal whether there was an aspect of accountability in media coverage.

Various reports have highlighted different aspects of the incident, contributing to the lack of clarity. Notably, preliminary toxicology reports have suggested methanol poisoning as a potential cause of the deaths. However, these findings have not been officially confirmed, adding to the ongoing concern and mystery surrounding this tragic event. The absence of a definitive explanation raises questions about the thoroughness of the investigation and the need for accurate information to provide closure to the families affected by this devastating incident. This is the second element that can reveal whether media coverage included an aspect of accountability.

The third element that would indicate whether media coverage held or sought to hold those with the power or those responsible to account is the significant accessing as sources of the children, the experts, government officials and parents. As has been alluded to, these voices would have held those with power to account by interrogating efforts to address this and demanding answers especially that there is uncertainty around what happened and what the cause of death was or, what would happen to the tavern owners, etc.

6. <https://kq.freepressunlimited.org/themes/accountability/>

7. <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/themes/journalism-and-accountability>

8. <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/cause-of-enyobeni-tavern-deaths-methanol-poisoning-3c553a4d-6d81-4ed8-bb74-ba32dc1fbcf9#:~:text=On%20Tuesday%2C%20and%20after%20three,who%20died%20following%20a%20opens>

According to reports, South African Police Service (SAPS) spokesperson, Brigadier Thembinkosi Kinana confirmed the arrest of the Enyobeni tavern owners and two employees by detectives assigned to the case. As of now, the legal proceedings surrounding the case are ongoing, with the matter still pending trial within the court system.

SO, DID THE COVERAGE OF THE ENYOBENI INCIDENT SUFFICIENTLY HIGHLIGHT THE ISSUE OF TEENAGE DRINKING? NO.

Even though coverage highlights that the tavern owners were arrested and were in court for the tragedy, the coverage did not sufficiently interrogate government officials as to what would be done to avoid future incidences. Further, policies or legislation regarding underage drinking were not sufficiently delved into or unpacked.

It is key for the media to hold those accountable in the Enyobeni tragedy for several compelling reasons. Firstly, media accountability ensures justice for the victims and their families. By shedding light on the responsible parties, the media can help in demanding legal action and holding the perpetrators accountable for their actions, providing a sense of closure and retribution to the affected families. Secondly, media scrutiny acts as a deterrent against similar incidents. When the media highlights the accountability of individuals or entities involved, it sends a powerful message to society, discouraging others from engaging in similar negligent or criminal behaviour, thus preventing future tragedies. Additionally, media accountability plays a vital role in exposing systemic issues. By investigating the root causes and holding responsible parties accountable, the media can bring attention to systemic failures, regulatory gaps, or social issues that contributed to the tragedy. This exposure can lead to policy changes, reforms, and improved oversight, addressing the underlying problems and preventing similar incidents in the future. Furthermore, media accountability promotes transparency and trust in institutions. When the media holds those accountable, it demonstrates the importance of transparency, ensuring that individuals and organisations are answerable for their actions. This transparency fosters public trust in the media, law enforcement, and other institutions involved, reinforcing the integrity of the overall justice system. Ultimately, media accountability in the Enyobeni tragedy serves not only the victims and their families but also the broader society by demanding justice, preventing future incidents, exposing systemic issues, and upholding the principles of transparency and trust in the justice system.

9. <https://www.news24.com/news24/community-newspaper/mthathaexpress/state-closes-its-case-in-the-enyobeni-tavern-owners-trial-20230829>

CONCLUSION

Media coverage often failed to prioritise the issue of alcohol use in the incident, particularly concerning considering that minors were involved. It is important to emphasise the dangers associated with alcohol consumption, especially in cases involving young individuals. The responsible portrayal of such incidents can act as a powerful deterrent, raising awareness about the risks and consequences of underage drinking. By highlighting the role of alcohol and its potential impact on minors, media outlets can play a vital role in educating the public and parents about the importance of supervision, prevention, and awareness regarding alcohol-related risks among youth. Comprehensive coverage that underscores the legal implications, health hazards, and societal consequences of underage drinking can contribute significantly to informed decision-making within families and communities. By prioritising such coverage, media can effectively contribute to the prevention of similar tragedies.

Accountability in the Enyobeni tragedy is crucial for multiple reasons. Firstly, media accountability ensures justice for the victims and their families by shedding light on the responsible parties, demanding legal action, and providing a sense of closure. Secondly, media scrutiny acts as a deterrent against similar incidents, sending a powerful message to society and preventing future tragedies. Additionally, media accountability exposes systemic issues, leading to policy changes, reforms, and improved oversight. Furthermore, it promotes transparency and trust in institutions, reinforcing the integrity of the overall justice system. In essence, media accountability in the Enyobeni tragedy serves not only the victims and their families but also the broader society by demanding justice, preventing future incidents, exposing systemic issues, and upholding principles of transparency and trust in the justice system.

ABOUT MMA

Media Monitoring Africa's vision is a responsible, quality media that enables an engaged and informed citizenry in Africa and across the world. MMA aims to promote the development of a free, fair, ethical and critical media culture in South Africa and the rest of the continent. To achieve MMA's vision, the three key areas that MMA seeks to address through a human rights-based approach are: media ethics, media quality and media freedom.

For more information about MMA, visit www.mediamonitoringafrica.org.za

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