

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fundraising through poverty porn: Ethical concerns

Mahmoud Abdulai Mahmoud  | Daniel Yennube Nang

Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, University of Ghana Business School, College of Humanities, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana

Correspondence

Mahmoud Abdulai Mahmoud, Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, University of Ghana Business School, College of Humanities, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.
Email: mamahmoud@ug.edu.gh

Abstract

This study aimed to assess the ethical dilemma in using poverty porn as a means of fundraising by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Ghana. The paper focuses on the ethical concerns from NGOs' perspective as they engage in charitable work to help reduce poverty in society. The study sought to answer the research questions using a qualitative approach by studying some selected NGOs in Ghana, West Africa. In-depth interviews were used to solicit responses from management members in charge of fundraising in 22 NGOs. The data were analyzed using thematic textual analysis (TTA). From the findings, it became evident that NGOs in their use of poverty porn believed the practice is a better alternative to raise more donations. They feel that the good side of the practice, which is supporting the needy, is more important and outweighs any counterarguments. They believed the end justifies the means. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this is one of few studies that attempt to focus on the ethical concerns of poverty porn by NGOs.

KEYWORDS

ethics, fundraising, marketing, NGO, philanthropy, welfare

Practitioner Points

- We argued that poverty porn ethical dilemma.
- We argued that NGOs in their use of poverty porn believe the practice is a better alternative to raise more donations.
- We argued that the good side of the poverty porn, which is supporting the needy, is more important and outweighs any counterarguments.

1 | INTRODUCTION

For a long period, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international development agencies have been concerned about poverty reduction, especially in less developed countries like Ghana (Ascher et al., 2016), since it is a critical component of sustaining global political and economic stability. To achieve this, a number of NGOs have been established to help poor people in developing countries. NGOs rose to popularity in the 1980s and 1990s when donors began to see them as a more effective channel to alleviate poverty in low-income countries than state governments (Mercer, 2002). NGOs continue to be a significant channel for donor funding and, undoubtedly, one of the most important sources of

knowledge and expertise on poverty and poverty alleviation. NGOs depend on charitable donations to stay afloat (Porter, 2003). NGOs are primarily interested in providing assistance to the poor, some of whom may have been impacted by adverse circumstances, such as starvation, displacement, and devastated homes and communities, as a result of both natural and human-caused disasters (Porter, 2003). In Ghana, there is a wide range of NGOs, with the majority of their efforts focused on Northern Ghana, where poverty is considered to be the worst (Amofah, 2021).

The financial support that NGOs need to operate comes from a number of sources, including donors and, very rarely, the client (Fowler, 1991). One significant explanation for the contrasts in NGOs' administrative and management styles is that the client to be

supported is not the source of the funds required for an NGO to function and survive (Fowler, 1991). Whereas a few have great administration style, others resort to 'poverty porn' to draw in sponsors in running their NGOs. This tactic, on the other hand, can also rely on stereotypical or dehumanizing representations of people from developing countries (Habiba, 2017; Wasserman, 2013). Pictures of starving children with bloated stomachs, probably from Africa or Asia are common in the fundraising campaign of these NGOs. To what degree do these stories portray a grossly exaggerated version of the problems that poor people face? To explain these kinds of shock-based images that reduce people to their insecurity and helplessness, the word 'poverty porn' was coined (Fowler, 1991). It is a method that does absolutely little to solve the root cause of poverty, which is a systemic issue (Egbuiwe, 2008).

Poverty is the product of both human and structural issues, encompassing not only personal experiences but also the social and justice structures in place, which either motivate or reinforce the vulnerable (Habiba, 2017). Poverty can be described as the visible deprivation caused by a shortage of material capital. Poverty porn is characterised by advertisements and marketing materials depicting the plight of the poor, used in soliciting financial support, which may unwittingly convey to subjects that they are helpless recipients, reliant on the generosity of the wealthy for long-term change (Bell & Coicaud, 2006).

There is an explanation for why humanitarian relief groups mostly adopt a poverty porn strategy in soliciting funds. The key explanation for this is that it often acts in their favour, at least in the short term (MacQuillin et al., 2023). The attention of donors are often drawn to shocking graphics, which leads to more donations (Bell & Coicaud, 2006). This raises the question: is the economic potential of poverty porn worth perpetuating distorted ideologies and stereotypes? Because of the widespread use of poverty porn, some classes of people have come to be characterised by their misery. Ignorance and indifference develop as stereotypes are formed and strengthened (Bell & Coicaud, 2006). Africa equals bad, a common stereotype in the Western world that NGOs have extensively formed and implanted in people's minds. Africans are also depicted as helpless, destitute, and pointed to as the 'other' (Kirk, 2012). Without question, this kind of framing leads to the development of perceptions of the developed world as uneducated, miserable, and incapable of self-sufficiency (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). NGOs also create commercials in which a starving African boy with a swollen stomach stares gauntly at the camera, hoping to be rescued. Whether these pictures are exaggerated or not, the truth remains that suffering is profoundly real in Africa (Egbuiwe, 2008) and as a result, it must be addressed.

The way we portray the vulnerable in our media, manipulating their situation and even their misery for financial gain, is a major source of concern (De Benedictis et al., 2017; Feltwell et al., 2017), and portraying the poor in this manner has far-reaching moral consequences (Ong, 2015; Selinger & Outterson, 2010). We need to pause and ask ourselves if it is ethical or unethical to portray the graphic attributes of a human being to donors, especially Western viewers, for the sole purpose of eliciting an emotional experience and,

eventually money, as we often do with the objectification of women. Trust is a critical component of donors' commitment to charity organizations and high ethical standards are a key yardstick for building trust and getting continuous support from donors (Rosen, 2005). Despite the importance of ethics in the subject of fundraising, the same has received little attention in scholarly literature which presents a research gap to be explored (MacQuillin et al., 2023; MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019). First, what are the ethical issues surrounding the use of poverty porn as a tool for fundraising? Second, if the intended purpose of using poverty porn is being achieved, and the 'needy' receive the needed support, should the charity organizations care about other ethical concerns, such as othering and saviourism? And finally, since what may be unethical in setting A may be considered ethical in setting B, who defines what is ethical or not? These are key questions for which answers will contribute to the knowledge of ethical literature in fundraising.

In terms of structure, the paper continues with an extant literature review on the role of NGOs in poverty reduction in Ghana; explaining poverty porn; NGOs as development partners in Ghana; and ethics in fundraising. The methodology and data collection instruments are explained next. Then the research findings and discussions followed. The last part of the study deals with conclusions, implications and future research directions.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | The role of NGOs in poverty reduction

Various stakeholders have made attempts to reduce or eliminate poverty including the UN in its General Assembly in September 2015 where they adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which was to end poverty and hunger by 2030 (Arhin, 2016). While various stakeholders' hands are on deck to contribute to the success of the SDGs, NGOs have been called to participate keenly towards this agenda (Salamon & Haddock, 2015). Within the past four decades, Sub-Saharan Africa alone has received a colossal aid amounting to \$48.634 billion from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other donors combined (Chanase, 2021).

Kennedy and Dornan (2009) describe an NGO as a not-for-profit entity that is established by a body either than the government and whose orientation can be local, national, sub-regional, regional or international. NGOs are deemed to have a positive impact to an extent on the communities where they operate in terms of poverty reduction (Bawole, 2013; Hassan & Forhad, 2013; Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). Banks and Hulme (2012) posited that NGOs have played significant roles in the development and poverty reduction agenda in the developing world, especially in terms of grassroots and people-centeredness approaches and filling the gaps that governments have left as a result of corruption and resource limitation. Most NGOs' work centres around poverty alleviation, social welfare improvement and society development (Alhassan & Sulemana, 2014;

Ebenezer et al., 2020; Fiador, 2013). Nilsson (2012) describes poverty as a situation where there is a lack of resources to meet the basic necessities of life. NGOs work hard to reduce or eliminate poverty, especially the empowerment of vulnerable women (Devi & Govt, 2013). Adjei and Buor (2012) noted that NGOs can help reduce poverty and improve livelihoods if the local governments within their operational areas provide the enabling environment for their smooth operations.

Despite the vital work that NGOs do, there is a community of people who are critical of their efforts. Edwards and Hulme (1996) questioned whether NGOs should provide social and economic services and whether this is diverting them from their original mission of structural growth and activism. Bebbington (2004) also points out that, while NGOs' capacity as development alternatives has been uncritically lauded, a rising body of scholars are skeptical of their work, particularly in terms of their efficiency, accountability, openness, and the politics that underpin their operations. Some studies have confirmed that NGO operations have some unforeseen negative effects (Chanase, 2021; Clohesy, 2003; Pfeiffer, 2003). In his case study of central Mozambique, Pfeiffer (2003) finds that the influx of NGOs and their expatriate workforce over the last decade has fractured the local health sector, weakened local regulation of health services, and contributed to rising local social inequalities. In his call for a power shift in favour of the beneficiaries or inclusiveness of local communities and actors, Chanase (2021) posited that NGOs have failed in terms of the effectiveness and efficiencies of their development interventions as a result of power asymmetry between the donors, the beneficiaries and the NGOs. He proposes the localization of aid if intervention effectiveness and efficiency are to be achieved.

Clohesy (2003) noted that fundraising being part of the core activities of NGOs provides a fertile ground for unethical conduct, cautioning that, NGOs should have respect for beneficiaries and donors alike, trust donors, and ensure that beneficiaries actually receive the needed impact. He added that fundraisers should always emphasize the needs of recipients or society and that donors should only come in as collaborators in this agenda. Some even argue that the development aid to Africa has rather made the poor poorer instead of getting them out of poverty (Chanase, 2021).

Some scholars have reservations about NGOs' ability to carry out scalable sustainable development work. NGOs have been active in undertaking major relief operations, but Ati (1993) claims that they have not yet and will not yield any tangible growth outcomes. He claims that the key explanation for this is NGOs' apparent perception of growth as a discrete, localised operation that they can carry out. Furthermore, NGOs' failure to understand the differences in the strategies, means, and prerequisites needed for relief and progress; and, most significantly, NGOs' failure to equip local institutions to absorb and/or maintain any growth accomplished, given that most NGOs work in complete isolation from governmental and conventional institutions.

According to researchers such as Mercer (2002), turning over social security activities to NGOs can be very detrimental to state authority and endanger state integrity when funds are diverted from

the state to NGOs. She goes on to say that NGOs hinder the government's capacity to provide social services. Furthermore, Manji and O'Coill (2002) provide a critical assessment of the position of NGOs in Africa. They characterize their work as a continuation of the work of their forefathers, the missionaries and NGOs that assisted Europe in colonizing and controlling Africa. They contend that their contribution to alleviating suffering or poverty in Africa is insignificant, if not non-existent. They argue further that the NGO's commitment to alleviating poverty in Africa is insignificant, and that, more importantly, they discredit the African people's fight to emancipate themselves from physical, social, and political injustice.

2.2 | Historical evolution of poverty porn

The concept of poverty porn, characterized by the sensationalized portrayal of poverty for entertainment or fundraising purposes, has a complex and deeply rooted history. Scholars have traced its origins back to the colonial era, where Western powers constructed narratives of the colonized 'other' as primitive, backward, and in need of salvation through Western intervention (Bhatia & Priya, 2021). These colonial narratives often depicted indigenous peoples as passive recipients of aid, reinforcing racialized hierarchies of power and perpetuating stereotypes of poverty and development. The colonial roots of poverty porn are closely intertwined with the history of racialized imagery in the media and development discourse. Colonial powers, through their control of media and representation, crafted narratives that positioned white colonizers as superior and non-white indigenous peoples as inferior (Freire, 1970). This legacy of racialized imagery persists in contemporary representations of poverty, with Western donors and development agencies often portrayed as benevolent saviors intervening in the lives of marginalized communities (Mosse, 2018). The use of racialized imagery in poverty porn raises profound ethical questions about representation, agency, and power in development communication. Critics argue that poverty porn perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces unequal power dynamics between the Global North and Global South (Escobar, 2013; Ferguson, 2006). Moreover, the instrumentalization of poverty for fundraising purposes raises concerns about the dignity and agency of marginalized communities (Lindemann & Saar 2014). A rights-based approach to development communication is essential, one that prioritizes the voices and agency of those most affected by poverty and inequality (Sen & Himanshu, 2004). Debates surrounding poverty porn intersect with broader discussions about development paradigms and worldviews. Post-colonial perspectives from countries like Ghana challenge the dominant narratives of poverty and development promoted by Western institutions (Fanon, 1963; Nkrumah, 1965). These perspectives emphasize the importance of decolonizing development discourse and centering the experiences and aspirations of marginalized communities (Quijano, 2000). By contrast, neo-colonial and neoliberal approaches prioritize economic growth and market-driven solutions, often at the expense of social justice and human rights (Harvey, 2005; Sachs & Schonfeldt, 2018).

2.3 | What is poverty porn?

The term 'pornographic' in reference to images in development advertising was first used by Lissner (1981, p. 23). Fowler (1991) describes poverty porn as the act of portraying pictures of starving children with bloated stomachs, probably from Africa or Asia in a fundraising campaign of NGOs. He explained that these kinds of shock-based images reduce people to their insecurities and helplessness. Poverty porn is posited by Brooker et al. (2015) as a portrayal of the poor in such a manner as to attract sympathy or rage by sections of the public and this tends to make the poor feel 'victimized, stigmatized, and objectified'. Donations to charity have unquestionably been a critical funding conduit for the advancement of underdeveloped societies. According to Kirk (2012), NGOs mostly focus on the following fields of marketing: customer marketing and retail activities, public policy, and conventional activism. As a result, marketing has become an important area for NGOs, as they must attract people's interest in order to encourage some kind of voluntary action. Researchers like Woodside and Singer (1994) believe that the way content is labelled, or presented, has a significant impact on consumers' decisions.

According to Hilary (2013), NGOs use negative appeals in customer ads to convey social issues and address the need for social change instead of positive appeals, which is an alternative. Each of the appeals has a distinct goal in mind: to influence customers' perceptual frames. Negative appeal was found to be more eye-catching and convincing than positive appeal in consumer testing experiments according to Ditto and Lopez (1992), and Homer and Yoon (1992). As a result, it is no wonder that NGOs have used pessimistic appeals, or 'melodramatic styles', as Wells (2013) describes them, to raise funds. Diana George (2001) understands this approach, questioning whether 'In a culture saturated by the image, how else do we convince people that—despite the prosperity they see all around them—there is a real need out there?' but does not support it, claiming that depicting African children helpless and staring out at the camera, which could be referred to as poverty porn, creates a problem of representation. Given the latter, is social marketing (poverty porn) a socially neutral mechanism for promoting behavioural reform across the world, or is it a tool that has been taken to its logical conclusion to stimulate funding while ignoring the fundamental values of what social marketing is?

These kinds of portrayals do not happen by chance. The reasoning goes something like this: Happy pictures do not draw capital (Kirk, 2012). Complex theories of why people are hurting do not help much. And when it comes to help organisations, it is all about the money. What matters is that people are personally connected and see simple solutions. 'It is possible to raise consciousness later' (Coulter, 1989, p. 2).

At the same time, Kirk (2012) discusses the topic of confidence in NGOs' ethical actions, as NGOs are always seen as exploitative, and therefore their motives are questioned. As a result, the development of support and interaction between customers, politicians, NGOs, and corporations, as well as customer roles, are affected. MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019) are of the view that undue pressure is prohibited by the UK's code of practice, and that therefore this implies that some

pressure is permissible, and the role of fundraising ethics is to identify how much and in what contexts. Professional and ethically oriented practices can enhance fundraisers' chances of getting more funding from donors (Rosen, 2005). The bigger picture here is if the ethical concerns around NGOs using poverty porn are justified.

2.4 | NGOs as development partners in Ghana

NGOs have received recognition for being support pillars in developing countries where governments cannot satisfy the needs of all their citizens due to the limitation of resources (Amarteifio et al., 2019; Islam, 2014; Banks & Hulme, 2012). According to the Department of Social Welfare, there are 6520 registered NGOs in Ghana of which 6370 are foreign and 150 are local, while the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations (GAPVOD) claims a total membership of 450, both local and foreign combined (Chanase, 2021). NGOs in Ghana rely heavily on foreign funding for their poverty reduction agenda (Porter, 2003). Various forms of development initiatives have been implemented by NGOs in Ghana (Alhassan & Sulemana, 2014), and almost invariably, governments alone cannot satisfy the needs of the various communities within its borders and charitable organisations like NGOs step in to support (Ibrahim & Alagidede, 2020; Wondirad et al., 2020).

A lot of NGOs have complemented the government's efforts in providing development to various communities and the nation at large (Amenorhu, 2015; Arhin, 2016; Bawole, 2013; Offei, 2011) because the limitation of government and private sector in providing all the needs of the people in our communities creates a gap known as 'development vacuum' (Makoba, 2002, p. 57) for which NGOs step in to fill. By playing an intermediary role between donors and beneficiaries, NGOs are required to be prudent and efficient in their utilization of resources while being accountable to both stakeholders (Awuah-Werekoh, 2015). He added that due to a lack of commitment by donors, NGOs hardly render account to the beneficiaries. The impact of NGOs' activities in Ghana in terms of poverty reduction and improving the living conditions of the poor are crucial for economic prosperity (Musah et al., 2018).

Notwithstanding the obvious contributions of NGOs to the economic development of Ghana, Musah et al. (2018) posited that the threat of financial malpractice is a serious challenge in the activities of these NGOs. The study by Okorley and Nkrumah (2012) corroborates this when they noted that NGOs in Ghana find it difficult to achieve the needed impact because of a lack of transparency and accountability in their activities. Ebenezer et al. (2020) found that the major challenge of NGOs in Ghana are financial sustainability but Arhin et al. (2018) noted in their study that the new face of challenges for NGOs emanates from the changing aid landscape. Most of the NGOs in Ghana who can be referred to as 'briefcase NGOs' are simply corrupt while others actually help their clients (Townsend et al., 2004). Another major challenge of NGOs in Ghana is the lack of specialization in a particular thematic area as most of them operate as the jack of all trades (Chanase, 2021; Kumi & Copestake, 2022). Chanase

further calls for local actors and community inclusiveness in designing local programmes, local resource mobilization, and a firm belief in local methods. Many people still live in abject poverty in Ghana despite the proliferation of NGOs in the country over the past decades. The northern part of Ghana is estimated to be the poorest in the country and therefore, the majority of the NGOs are located within the five regions of the north (Amofah, 2021) even though many have their headquarters stationed in Accra the capital city.

2.5 | Ethics in fundraising

In terms of ethics, perhaps one major problem in the fundraising agenda is that there has not been any effort to integrate ethical duties for NGOs to imbibe while dealing with beneficiaries who are critical stakeholders in the equation (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019). In their conceptual paper on 'Fundraising Ethics', MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019) posited that the code of fundraising practice prohibits fundraisers from commissioned based payments, exaggerating facts about beneficiaries, pressuring a donor to switch their donation from one charity to another, and not trapping donors with gifts that can alter their consciences.

The dilemma of how NGOs ought to frame images of beneficiaries in fundraising has been a long-standing ethical conflict in the fundraising sector for decades (MacQuillin et al., 2023), and the Fundraising Frame which is the use of negative images to solicit funds is the preferred option by NGOs as it catches the attention of donors and is much more effective at raising funds than positive images. The authors noted that this ethical conflict emanates from differing perspectives in terms of what role fundraising plays within NGOs, and so arriving at a common understanding of the right way to frame beneficiaries is difficult. To properly understand the source of this ethical conflict requires that one also understands the roles that charities/NGOs play. One key role is to render services to beneficiaries who also deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and the other role is to raise funding from donor agencies for those activities. It is in the midst of playing these two roles that the ethical conflict arises, and that is, how to frame images that are able to catch the attention of donors to donate and at the same time maintain the respect and dignity of beneficiaries (MacQuillin et al., 2023; Sargeant, 2008). Avoiding the use of a Fundraising Frame by NGOs will mean fewer funds because using positive images will dwindle donations (Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 103; MacQuillin et al., 2023). Some also argue that using the Fundraising Frame undermines the dignity of those whose images are being used (Clohesy, 2003) but those in favour of the Fundraising Frame argue that NGOs/fundraisers are not duty-bound to consider the counterarguments (MacQuillin et al., 2023).

The new ethical approach is to ensure the right balance in fundraising ethics. It means that 'Fundraising is ethical when it balances the duty of fundraisers to ask for support (on behalf of their beneficiaries), with the relevant rights of donors, such that a mutually beneficial outcome is achieved and neither stakeholder is significantly harmed'. (MacQuillin et al., 2023, p. 10). MacQuillin et al., 2023 concluded in

their study on ethical framing and fundraising that the ethical dilemma in the framing of beneficiaries in charity fundraising materials is whether the ends justify the means, especially if these means, even if they provide short-term solutions, cause wider, long-term harm. They further stated that previous discourse on the framing dilemma has been polarised between the Fundraising Frame and the Values Frame, contributing to causing the tensions between fundraising and other departments at NGOs. But these frames address the problem at different ethical 'levels'. The Fundraising Frame operates at the level of organisational values, attempting to solve the problem of providing sufficient resources to fund services for beneficiaries, which is often framed with short-term objectives; whereas the Values Frame attempts to solve problems beyond fundraising at the level of the public good, providing long-term solutions to the causes of the situations in which beneficiaries find themselves, problems that cannot be solved by fundraising alone.

MacQuillin et al. (2023) stated that these two poles address different ethical dilemmas—money raised balanced against the dignity of beneficiaries. They further indicated in their conclusion that their study has attempted to provide a solution at the level of organisational values by removing the poles of the Fundraising and Values Frames from the equation. Ethical framing in the context of fundraising is no longer an attempt to play off the money raised against whether beneficiaries' dignity has been protected, but whether service beneficiaries exercise voice and agency in contributing to their own framing and telling their own stories (MacQuillin et al., 2023). All things being equal, fundraising frames are ethical when contributors have a choice in what stories are told, and get to tell their own stories, and unethical when they do not (MacQuillin et al., 2023). This conclusion by MacQuillin et al. (2023) can be likened to concern/confirmation/validation by the beneficiaries/service users before their pictures are being used for poverty porn/fundraising frames.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study of poverty porn used by NGOs for fundraising purposes and its ethical concerns is an area that is less explored in the Ghanaian context. The focus of the paper is on the ethical concerns from NGOs' perspective as they engage in charitable work to help reduce poverty in society. The study was guided by a qualitative design, with interviews as the main data collection instrument. In this study, the CEOs and assigned senior management members of the selected NGOs were interviewed. The leaders of these NGOs were selected not only because they make key decisions within the organization, but also because they keep important organizational information and have a better understanding of pertinent issues regarding fundraising activities within the organization. The appropriate research method used was the qualitative method because the intention was to get the views and experiences of the selected NGOs (Creswell, 2012). In order to provide proper interaction between the literature and what is evident, the qualitative research approach becomes the recommended option (Ciao, 2011).

A convenience sampling technique was used in selecting NGOs for the study. By this, NGOs that were willing to answer the questions were included in the study. In all, 22 NGOs from various sectors in Ghana were selected for the study. Some of the questions asked by the researchers were: NGOs use pictures of beneficiaries for their services as evidence to solicit funds from donors, what is your view about this phenomenon? Does the use of these pictures help in generating funds for your activities? What are some of the ethical issues surrounding the use of those pictures by NGOs for fundraising? When pictures and videos of the vulnerable are taken, do you inform them of the purpose of taking such shots? Depending on the responses from the various respondents, follow-up questions were asked to delve deeper for more information. Using an interview guide (see Appendix 1), different respondents were interviewed at different locations and at different times.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of our respondents, pseudonyms are used in place of their actual names. Consent forms were given to respondents spelling out the purpose of the research. Each respondent signed the consent forms before being interviewed. The researcher did an electronic recording of all interviews to ensure that every response got captured verbatim with nothing missing from the participants' responses leading to logical findings (Bryman & Becker, 2012).

Data transcription was done verbatim, after which checks were carefully made to ensure that what was transcribed matched with the recording before coding. The import of coding helps bring out significant key points from the data (Boeije, 2005) while questioning the real meaning of certain words or phrases (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). In the process of coding, the researcher maintained an open mind and allowed the data to speak. An effort was also made to ensure that codes similar in terms of underlying ideas were grouped together. Eventually, 12 main themes became dominant with 39 sub-themes.

4 | DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Thematic Textual Analysis (TTA) was used in analyzing the data. Thematic textual analysis is a qualitative analytic method for 'identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic'. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The bulky transcribed data was read over and over again until the dominant themes emerged.

Twelve dominant themes and 37 sub-themes emerged. All these main themes, the sub-themes and other illustrative extracts are displayed in Table 2 below. Before discussing the main issues of the study, it is important to present the profile of the respondents to provide some clarity and reliability.

4.1 | Profile of respondents

A total of 22 individuals were interviewed for the study. The key profile areas were age, gender, level of education, number of years on the job and the status of the NGO, that is, whether it was a foreign or local NGO. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents (54%) were within the ages of 40 and 49 years and the rest (41%) were below 40 years. Only 5% were aged 50 years and above. The respondents were dominated by the male gender with 82% and the female only 18%. All respondents have completed various levels of tertiary education. Tertiary education in Ghana refers to the level of education beyond secondary school such as the polytechnics and the universities. In terms of experience on the job, the majority of the respondents (68%) have been on the job between 6 and 20 years, and the remaining 32% have worked below 6 years with their respective NGOs. This means that respondents had the requisite knowledge and enough experience on the job to be able to answer the questions posed to them. 64% of the NGOs were local and the remaining 36% were foreign ones. Table 1 below provides the profile characteristics of the respondents to the study.

4.2 | Emerging themes and other illustrative excerpts

As indicated earlier, the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in Table 2 below. Twelve thematic areas with several sub-themes were deduced from the data collected and analysed.

TABLE 1 Respondents profile.

Variable	Unit	Number	Percentage (%)
Age	25–29	1	5
	30–34	4	18
	35–39	4	18
	40–44	8	36
	45–49	4	18
	50–above	1	5
Gender	Male	18	82
	Female	4	18
Level of Education	Tertiary	22	100
Experience	1–5	7	32
	6–10	10	45
	11–15	3	14
	16–20	2	9
Status	Foreign	8	36
	Local	14	64

Source: Developed by Authors (2023).

TABLE 2 Emerging themes.

No.	Main theme	Sub-theme	Excerpts
1.	Ethics and poverty porn	<p>Guidelines and principles</p> <p>No code of fundraising practice</p> <p>Subjectivity of ethics</p> <p>Societal needs and ethics weighed</p> <p>Poverty porn -ethics dilemma</p>	<p>'My organisation will always follow guidelines of other international organisations. They don't want to do something that goes beyond the boundaries of other organisations are doing' —Hamidu</p> <p>'In Ghana, there are no legal and ethical barriers in taking pictures and videos of poor and vulnerable people to support same. But in my opinion, the practice is unethical. I think we need a code to regulate our operations' —Eben</p> <p>'I will say it is unethical if the intention is to exploit the poor. And that is what it is in actual sense. But for us, we have always sacrificed for the needy in the society and sometimes through so much personal sacrifices'. ~James</p> <p>'Poverty porn cannot be said to be bad as long as the pictures can help get donor attention to support the poor in the society. It may be unethical, but society welfare comes first' —Kwabena</p> <p>'...so, in some way is not, I don't want to say is not fully unethical, I don't want to say its unethical, because once you say maybe I'm wrong once I say its unethical it makes it completely wrong, it's either ethical or maybe wrong or right'. —Seidu</p>
2.	Justifying poverty porn and ethics	<p>The end justifies the means</p> <p>Proof to donors</p> <p>Reality</p>	<p>'As long as those funds would be used for the benefit of these very vulnerable people, it is fine. The important thing is what the money is used for and not how it was raised'—Abraham</p> <p>'The funders wouldn't have better understanding of the NGO's case being presented for funds support if there are no pictures or videos as proof'. —Akolgo</p> <p>'We as an NGO or let me say my understanding—of taking of pictures is to continue or to portray the true picture or the reality of the essence of soliciting that particular fund'.—Abubakari</p>
3.	Awareness, consent, poverty porn, and ethics	<p>The need for permission</p> <p>The need to explain purpose when taking pictures of others</p> <p>Documentation</p> <p>Principles</p> <p>Anonymity/confidentiality is guaranteed</p>	<p>'Ideally, informed consent ought to be obtained from these vulnerable people before using their pictures in any endeavour including fundraising, but some of us do not inform them which is actually unethical'. —Joseph</p> <p>'We normally seek permission from vulnerable people before taking pictures of them. What we hardly do is explain the purpose to them'. Judith</p> <p>'Of course, —even when we go on health campaigns. We tell the people why we are taking the pictures. Just for documentation purposes.you have to tell the people that this is the rationale behind taking the pictures. Because you can't bring people together and then you come and start taking pictures of them or videos. That will be unethical'. —Hamidu.</p> <p>'Indeed so, without a doubt, there must be guiding principles, like the example I gave you. If you are taking pictures of somebody like you are distributing food, you don't need to let the people identify people. it must be guided by certain principles. So, if you take your pictures, you can take your pictures without letting people see them or identify the people'. —Hamidu</p> <p>'So, you've taken those pictures, you know even seeking their consent is part of ethics because you are telling the person that'.—Abubakari</p>
4.	Mode of Sourcing for funds, poverty porn and ethics	<p>Solicited</p> <p>Unsolicited</p>	<p>'... with the first one mostly, you take pictures and send them but the other one too mostly is the donors themselves who will ask that' ... Abubakari</p>
5.	Publicity, Poverty Porn, and Ethics	<p>Information</p> <p>Existence of the organisation</p>	<p>'...so such projects we do take mass pictures for publicity, you understand, and this is done to at least in a way portray the essence of the organization in the environment you are actually operating., so with such projects, if we take mass pictures we do actually inform, that this kind of pictures will be published on the media, by this media group or thisso with such ones of u see it most people do see their pictures and they are okay with that but those that are very confidential, we actually assured guarantee'. —Seidu</p>
6.	Kinds of pictures, poverty porn and ethics	<p>Individual</p> <p>Mass</p>	<p>'Okay, so as I said there are pictures, we take in mass and there are some we take individually, mostly the mass pictures are what we publish'. —Seidu</p>

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

No.	Main theme	Sub-theme	Excerpts
7.	Reliability issues, poverty porn and ethics	Trust Dignity Compassion of donors	'Honestly, you see it has come to an age where it is quite difficult to believe or trust people and technology has made it quite easier for us to prove some of the things though unless it is achieved before you can prove or confirm or prove a person right or wrong, so to me I will say that picturing, taking a picture or poverty porn you call it, it has come to stay, that even though there are unethical or a lot of unethical elements in it but I can say that the PROS of such of them outweighs the CONS'. —Seidu 'I think on one side, you might say maybe the dignity aspect it's not the best but on the other side, it's one of the easiest ways to get directly into the compassion of the donors because sometimes'. —Seidu
8.	Relevance, poverty porn and ethics	Attracting donors The easiest way to solicit funding NGOs are vehicles to access for support Sensitive issues are not shown Donors speaking directly with beneficiaries	'...I even have a video on my phone. This is what we are sending back to the head office. The head office is going to flag this thing on their website. And a lot of people will see what is going on. Like the way the excitement of the people's faces, the relief it has brought to people. These people are vulnerable. They don't have, they can't even get access to these donors.But through an organization, most of all we do such projects. ...it's successful, we have a success story to write to them. We are likely to get double this next year or maybe in the coming months. So, it's one of the easiest ways to solicit funds'. —Seidu 'I think the pictures are very important because most of the support comes from the donors. It comes from specific donors and they just want to see something that really what they are giving out is being executed'. —Abubakari 'As much as I want to take pictures, there are some things you don't take. Sensitive issues, like maybe when you are performing surgery for a woman, ... We capture the exciting moments on their faces. Just to let the donor, even with some of the sponsorships, the donors would even request to speak directly to their beneficiaries'. —Seidu
9.	The big picture and ethics	Long-term benefits Personal benefit is not the agenda	'I think people would have to understand the fact that these things are not done for doing sake and we also have to look at the long-run benefits'. —Fauzan
10.	Opportunisms	Profiteering from the pictures Dishonesty	'The bad side is when people use one project like, maybe two donors give you a project, you do one and then you use the same picture of the same project and give it to "Mr. A and B" and tell them is the same project, meanwhile, you have done only one and you are taking money for two, that's not good. But to use one project to appeal to different donors to get more projects and give it to more members of the community. I think it's worthwhile'. —Fauzan
11.	Credibility, Poverty porn and ethics	Truthfulness Evidence Soliciting for funds Confirmation	'Yes, no deceit. Just be truthful and you should be able to defend whatever you are using the pictures for. Just for evidence's sake, to at least, one, you want to use it to solicit funds, two, we want to confirm to the people, assure them that yes, this is what we have used your money to do. Three, we want to use the same means. The good news is to get more funds from different donors. That way we have a lot of projects coming in'. —Fauzan
12.	Evaluation, poverty porn and ethics	Monitoring Auditing Regulation	'People take advantage of vulnerable people, they don't tell them the truth, using one project to get funding from multiple sources and not using them for the same purposes. Not here, but before—came here, we had partners who were doing execution on our behalf. They had a lot of issues. And on a regular basis, they have to do this themselves, coming down together to check and be sure of everything that has happened'. —Fauzan 'We just have to take the picture for auditing purposes'. —Abubakari 'We have some projects, let's say like this Ramadan, how do you call it? Iftar, actually we are not supposed to take pictures for that one. Our regulations here are not permissible'. —Abubakari

Source: Developed by Authors (2023).

4.3 | Ethics and poverty porn

The respondents had varying opinions with respect to the issues of poverty porn and ethics. The excerpts below and in Table 2 above depict these variations among the sample interviews.

To be honest with you, for example, somebody might not want to be seen by people. Maybe somebody would say that I don't want my pictures to be sent to somebody and indeed, they are actually right. Yes, there are challenges. The challenges are for a good course. ..., because of what happened in the past. People gave money but eventually, there was no impact. So, for them to be satisfied that actually the money is going to people, and it is for a good course. People must see evidence and one of the pieces of evidence is the pictures.

~Hamidu.

Happy pictures do not draw capital, as posited by Kirk (2012). Evidence is important to convince donors of the real need out there.

The respondent above acknowledges the ethical implications of poverty porn; however, the respondent had a strong conviction that the benefits in it outweigh the negative consequences.

In Ghana, there are no legal and ethical barriers in taking pictures and videos of poor and vulnerable people to support same. But in my opinion, the practice is unethical. I think we need a code to regulate our operations

~ Eben. From the comments above, the respondent considers poverty porn to be unethical.

NGOs practice poverty porn for them to be able to satisfy their donors in terms of evidence. Based on the data gathered you cannot be seeking or soliciting support without some form of proof. Similarly, from the data, there is no shame in using pictures. They also indicated that the pictures are used with guidelines, and they are also particular about the dignity of the beneficiaries.

Yes, they used it for a good course because you cannot send the pictures of ghosts to the donor and say these are human beings, support them.

~Hamidu. The respondent feels ethical about poverty porn as shown in the data above.

4.4 | Justifying poverty porn

The respondents were unanimous in justifying the use of poverty porn to solicit funding. As shown in Table 2 above all the excerpts were in favour of the use of poverty porn. Three sub-themes emerged. These were issues of the end justify the means, proof to

donors and the issue of reality in terms of evidence. Poverty porn is real among NGOs for the purposes of fundraising.

One major challenge of NGOs is financial sustainability (Ebenezer et al., 2020). A senior officer of an NGO called Jonathan said, 'Financial sustainability is an issue with our kind of business and once our core mandate is to support the needy, whatever we will do to raise funds legitimately to finance our operations is what we do, no matter the ethical implications. Some churches have joined us in this regard where they also claim to be doing charity work by using poverty porn to raise funds'.

The response below is an indication of how respondents feel about the role of poverty porn in mobilizing revenue for their operations. We can deduct from the response that this particular individual sees poverty porn as a good course to pursue in order to help the needy in society.

...so they had to take pictures in order to convince the donors that these people actually need prompt support and actually when they sent it, the people actually got support.

~ Hamidu.

I can't talk to other NGOs, for my NGO, we use it for a good course.

~ Hamidu.

4.5 | Awareness and consent

The study found it necessary to understand how NGOs take pictures/videos of the vulnerable for their fundraising purposes. The key issues of interest were: (1) whether or not the purpose of taking such shots was explained to the vulnerable, and (2) whether or not permission was granted before the pictures were taken. Five sub-themes emerged here: The need for permission, the need to explain the purpose when taking pictures of others, documentation, principles, and anonymity. Taking pictures of the vulnerable in this manner is considered exploitative and reduces people to their insecurities (Kirk, 2012). The ideal thing is to inform and explain to them the purpose of taking their pictures and to obtain permission from them. Adwoa posits, 'It is ideal to seek permission but not too convenient because they will start asking plenty of questions'. Adwoa is of the opinion that seeking permission from the vulnerable will stir up questions. When probed further what is wrong if they ask questions she added, 'It is just not convenient because you would then need to reveal everything and that can lead to heightened expectations from them'.

4.6 | Mode of sourcing funds, poverty porn and ethics

The mode of using poverty porn to source funding could either be solicited or unsolicited based on the data collected. The excerpts in Table 2 corroborate this position. The solicited ones are those the

NGO takes pictures and seeks potential donors. While the unsolicited type arises when the donors contact the NGO to implement a project. Both forms require taking pictures as evidence to persuade the donors.

With the first one mostly, you take pictures and send them mostly then those ones, it is quite easier for you to get the fund because after you implement the project you will actually take the picture to send it back again to confirm that, yes, what we sought for and what you listen to has been successfully accomplished, but the other one too mostly is the donors themselves who will ask that, you know what we have this particular idea, we don't know if your environment, locality or area you have people who will benefit or who can benefit from such.

Abubakari.

4.7 | Publicity, poverty porn, and ethics

Respondents were of the view that they embark on the use of pictures to donors for publicity's sake. Information provision to donors and the existence of the organization have emerged as sub-themes for this thematic area. Excerpts are found in Table 2 and below explain these emerging thematic areas.

...I even have a video on my phone. This is what we are sending back to the head office. The head office is going to flag this thing on their website. We are likely to get double this next year or maybe in the coming months. So, it's one of the easiest ways to solicit funds.

Seidu.

As noted by Bell and Coicaud (2006), people's attention is drawn to shocking graphics, which leads to more donations.

4.8 | Kinds of pictures and poverty porn

Another key theme emerging from the data is the kind of pictures being taken. Issues of taking mass and individual pictures. Mass pictures in this sense refer to taking group pictures whereas individual pictures are those taken by an individual. The respondents were of the view that mass pictures can be used for poverty porn activities with less ethical concern as opposed to individual pictures.

Okay, so as I said there are pictures, we take in mass and there are some we take individually, mostly the mass pictures are what we publish, ...it will be very difficult to say you cannot publish because of the covenant you have with the person.

Seidu.

4.9 | Reliability, poverty porn, and ethics

Reliability also emerged as a key thematic area of this study's sub-themes such as trust (Rosen, 2005), dignity and compassion for beneficiaries. This is in line with Okorley and Nkrumah (2012) who noted that NGOs in Ghana find it difficult to achieve the needed impact because of a lack of transparency and accountability in their activities. The excerpts below throw more light on some of the dominant issues regarding the use of pictures for soliciting funding by NGOs.

Honestly you see it has come to an age where it is quite difficult to believe or trust people and technology has made it quite easier for us to prove some of the things ... sector.

Seidu.

The bad side is when people use one project like, ... give it to 'Mr. A and B and tell them is the same project, meanwhile, you have done only one and you are taking money for two, that's not good'. This narrative is in line with (MacQuillin & Sargeant, 2019) observation about NGOs exaggerating facts to solicit funding. '...but using one project to appeal to different donors to get more projects and give it to more members of the community. I think it's worthwhile.

Fauzan.

4.10 | Relevance, poverty porn and ethics

Emerging from the data is the issue of NGOs finding it relevant to use pictures of vulnerable people to realize their objectives of raising money for their operations. In line with this, some authors claim that avoiding the use of a Fundraising Frame by NGOs will mean fewer funds because using positive images will rather dwindle donations (MacQuillin et al., 2023; Darnton & Kirk, 2011, p. 103). Reasons for giving are as follows: it attracts donors, is the easiest way to solicit funding, and serves as an NGO's vehicle to access support. In terms of ethical concerns, there is the view that sensitive issues are not shown. Sometimes donors request to speak directly with beneficiaries. See excerpts in Table 2.

4.11 | The big picture and poverty porn

Another theme that emerged from the data collected is the fact that NGOs are interested in the bigger picture. They are considering the collective benefit that comes from the use of poverty porn, versus the inconvenience this will cause to beneficiaries. *This corroborates what MacQuillin et al. (2023) posited, that Fundraising Frame which is the use of negative images to solicit funds is the preferred option by NGOs as it catches the attention of donors and is much more effective at raising funds than positive images. And also, Hilary (2013) that NGOs*

use negative appeals in customer ads to convey social issues and address the need for social change instead of positive appeals, which is an alternative. The excerpt below depicts some of these arguments.

I think people would have to understand the fact that these things are not done for doing sake and we also have to look at the long-run benefits. We are doing this to get more, not for us to, not like a personal benefit. So, like the example with this, when we do 10 projects. That one is directly from, so let's look at the long-run benefit of this than the short-run.

Fauzan.

4.12 | Credibility, poverty porn, and ethics

Another key thematic area from the data is the issue of credibility, poverty porn and ethics. Sub-themes emerging are truthfulness, evidence, soliciting funds and confirmation. The excerpts below and in Table 2 provide evidence of these thematic areas.

As much as I want to take pictures, there are some things you don't take. Sensitive issues, like maybe when you are performing surgery for a woman, ... sensitive parts you don't have to show. ...cover the dignity of the person. ... we capture the exciting moments on their faces. request to speak directly to their beneficiaries'.

Seidu.

4.13 | Evaluation, poverty porn and ethics

Last, but not the least of the key theme deduced from the data is evaluation. Sub-themes emerging are monitoring, auditing, and regulation. The excerpts in Table 2 depict some of the evidence supporting these thematic areas. This finding gives credence to Bebbington (2004) arguments that, a rising body of scholars are skeptical of NGOs work, particularly in terms of their efficiency, accountability and openness that underpin their operations. Therefore, their activities must not be left unchecked, but rather critical evaluation are important for poverty porn to achieve its intended purpose.

5 | DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from the analysis revealed that NGOs in Ghana do fundraising using poverty porn. Regarding whether using images of vulnerable people for fundraising raises ethical dilemmas, the results of this study revealed a diverse view about the rhetoric of poverty porn. The intention of this paper is to listen and document the viewpoints of managers of NGOs with regards to poverty porn and ethics. The results revealed varied understanding of the ethics of poverty porn. The key

themes emerging from this poverty porn and ethical concerns are issues of awareness, consent, and justifications; mode of fund sourcing, publicity, and kind of pictures; reliability, relevance, and credibility; opportunism, the big picture, and evaluation.

With respect to awareness, consent, and justifications, the result of this study buttresses the view that some NGOs do seek permission before taking pictures of vulnerable people, and they do explain the purpose of taking those shots. While some insist that there is no code of fundraising practice to guide their activities, the majority are of the view that the positive impact of their work in society overshadows any ethical implications. This viewpoint supports the big picture frame. Thus, this is attributed to positive framing of the ethical dilemma (MacQuillin et al., 2023).

The findings also revealed how NGOs claim confidence in their use of poverty porn indicating that the most important thing is to help the poor. This brings to bare the issues of relevance, reliability, and credibility. When NGOs justify the use of poverty porn as a means to fulfill the needs and desires of beneficiaries, it underlines the necessity for a thorough evaluation of the ethical implications and effectiveness of these approaches. Ensuring their images will not be used for personal gains and other gainful activities that is in line with the intended purpose. The question then arises whether NGOs do recognize any ethical responsibility in their practice of poverty porn. As intimated by some respondents, most of the NGOs think they owe ethical responsibility when they practice poverty porn. The findings contradict that of MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019) who posit that, it appears there are no ethical responsibilities fundraisers owe to the vulnerable people—their beneficiaries who are their critical stakeholders. It also contradicts the findings of Fowler (1991) who opines that the shock-based images of poverty porn reduce people to their insecurities and helplessness.

Our findings also highlighted opportunism, and evaluation as major critical domain when it comes to poverty porn and ethics. We posit that the tendency of NGOs managers to take advantage of the vulnerable people are real. This supports the assumption of MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019, p. 244), 'fundraising is ethical when it promotes, sustains, protects or maintains public trust, and unethical when it damages these things'. However, putting mechanisms in place such as evaluation measures may assist to curb this menace of poverty porn and ethical dilemmas.

6 | CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Mankind has always made an attempt to help their fellows who are less privileged in society. In recent times, there has been a proliferation of NGOs that have carved a niche for themselves in this direction, engaging in what is termed as poverty porn by using pictures of vulnerable people to catch the attention and sympathy of donors to donate to charity. Despite the importance of the subject and its possible ethical concerns on the beneficiaries, studies on its ethical dilemmas are scant, requiring this study. The study focused on the

ethical concerns of NGOs' fundraising through poverty porn, following the assertion by MacQuillin and Sargeant (2019), that the major problem in the fundraising agenda is that there has not been an effort to integrate ethical duties for NGOs relating to dealing with critical stakeholders. This research contributes new knowledge to the phenomenon of responsible and ethical fundraising practices by NGOs.

The study has some policy implications. It is a wake-up call to the relevant stakeholders in Ghana to adopt practices which will guide the NGOs soliciting donations in the industry. If there are no codes on fundraising as suggested by some respondents, then, they must be developed, and if there is a code already, there should be enough information to create awareness of the code, especially for NGOs in Ghana. This will ensure that NGOs soliciting donations from charities understand and adhere to professional, responsible, and ethical fundraising practices.

Studying, however, has some limitations. By virtue of its methodological approach, generalizing the findings to other developing world is not too realistic, due to the unique characteristics of Ghana as a country. Future research can use a method that allows such generalization. The study, therefore, recommends future research using quantitative or mixed-method approaches. Another important limitation of the study is that it did not make room to differentiate which respondents are local NGOs and which ones are foreign. Providing room for that could bring out interesting insight from the data. Future research can consider dividing the respondents into local and foreign and see how the data will come out. Also, the study focused on ethical concerns of poverty porn from the perspective of NGOs. Future research can consider the ethical concerns of poverty porn from the perspective of donors or beneficiaries/service users (Crombie, 2020; MacQuillin et al., 2023). Apart from ethics, the legalities/constitutionality of such representations in relation to human rights can also be studied in the future guided by the rights-based approaches (RBAs).

The study's findings suggest a concerning possibility that NGOs in Ghana may face undue pressure to compromise the dignity of beneficiaries due to the structures of post-colonial development. The legacy of colonialism, with its historical power imbalances and Western dominance in aid and development paradigms, may exert subtle but significant influence on fundraising strategies and priorities. In this context, the use of poverty porn imagery could inadvertently perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reinforce unequal power dynamics, leading to compromises in the dignity and agency of beneficiaries.

Additionally, examining foreign versus local NGO samples will be important to understand how organizational contexts shape fundraising practices and ethical considerations. This is also uncovering potential disparities in approaches to poverty porn fundraising and their underlying reasons. Clarifying the rationale behind this differentiation is essential to deepen understanding of the study's findings and their implications. It may reveal insights into how external pressures, historical legacies, and organizational structures intersect to shape fundraising practices, particularly concerning the ethical treatment of beneficiaries.

Given the potential ethical challenges identified in the study, there is a pressing need for stakeholders to adopt guidelines that steer the ethical course of NGOs soliciting donations. If codes of fundraising conduct are absent, their development becomes imperative. Moreover, if such codes already exist, efforts should ensure sufficient dissemination and awareness among NGOs in Ghana. This proactive approach will safeguard that fundraising endeavors align with professional, responsible, and ethical standards, prioritizing the dignity and rights of beneficiaries. While the study makes valuable contributions, its methodological approach limits the generalizability of findings beyond the unique context of Ghana. To address this, future research should adopt quantitative or mixed-method approaches conducive to broader generalization. Additionally, the failure to differentiate between local and foreign NGOs represents a notable limitation. By delving into this distinction, future studies may uncover nuanced insights into how organizational contexts shape fundraising practices and ethical considerations.

Furthermore, the study solely examines ethical concerns from the perspective of NGOs, suggesting avenues for future research to explore the viewpoints of donors or beneficiaries/service users. This expanded scope would provide a holistic understanding of the ethical dimensions of poverty porn fundraising. Additionally, future research could delve into the legal and constitutional aspects of such representations, guided by rights-based approaches, to ensure alignment with human rights principles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their objective and constructive criticisms of the manuscript at its initial stages. We are most grateful for their time and effort in shaping the final product.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The interview transcripts are available upon request.

ORCID

Mahmoud Abdulai Mahmoud  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4866-0898>

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How to cite this article: Mahmoud, M. A., & Nang, D. Y. (2024). Fundraising through poverty porn: Ethical concerns. *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*, 29(3), e1869. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1869>

APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide.

Fundraising Through Poverty Porn: Ethical Concerns

1. NGOs use pictures of beneficiaries of their services as evidence to solicit for funds from donors, what is your view about this phenomenon?
2. Does the use of these pictures help in generating a lot of funds for your activities?
3. What are some of the ethical issues surrounding the use of those pictures by NGOs for fundraising?
4. When pictures and videos of the vulnerable are taken, do you inform them of the purpose of taking such shots?
5. Does the practice of taking those pictures/videos of vulnerable people achieve its purpose in fundraising?
6. What are some of the justifications for the use beneficiaries' pictures/videos by NGOs for fundraising?
7. Should NGOs pay attention to ethical issues in the use of poor people's pictures for fundraising?