

JOURNALISTS' POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRESSURE: UNDERSTANDING THE REALITY OF PANAMA LEAKS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates about the political affiliations of journalists and the pressure they faced from their concerned organization during the coverage of Panama leaks issues. In order to know the views of the journalists connected with Panama leaks issues, data were collected from them through in-depth interviews as part of qualitative method. The results describe that the reporting of the case was highly influenced by the political affiliation and there was a lot of indirect and direct pressure on those s from the organization during the coverage of Panama leaks issues. The journalists supported their favourable parties in the reports of the Panama leaks in lines of their affiliated political agenda and outlines. On the other hand, organizations also put pressure on the journalists to do reporting according to suit the political interest of the organization and increase the financial benefits. Advertiser had strong influence on the content of the news and the advertiser exercised its pressure on the owner of organization to exert pressure on the journalists. In this study, researcher focused on Hierarchy of influences model to analyze and study all those factors within or outside organization which are affecting news.

Keywords: Journalist, Political Affiliation, Organizational Pressure, Panama Leaks

INTRODUCTION

Media is playing its vital role in our society, and a common man in a society is directly influenced by the media that is why different organizations use media as a medium of communication between the public and the organization. Different political parties want to use media for their benefits and the promotion of their political agendas

(Brewer, 2017). Today, media is called the fourth pillar of the state as it is the only way for the public to get primary information. Media is playing an essential role in building the opinion of the public on any issue. People eagerly listen to all journalists and analysts on media and build their opinions according to their reviews (Niven, 2003). The findings of this study will be beneficial for the viewers of media because public will come to know about the key factors that shape news. This study shows how the political affiliation of journalists and pressure from organizations affect the reality of news. For this research, 13 leading reporters of (Pakistan) have been interviewed on the issue of Panama leaks. A Panama leak is one of the most significant issues in history of Pakistan so this study will also tell the working style of journalists on the issue of Panama leaks regarding to their political affiliations and organizational pressures.

Vos (2014) opined that modern politics is very dependent on media because people want to be informed about their elected representatives on which they can make a perception about their leadership. For political success, it is essential for a political party to be in media. For this, all politicians and political parties make good relations with the journalist to gain favourable reporting. All political parties are fighting their propaganda war on media and trying to get favor from journalists and media as much as they can (Willnat et.al., 2014). Politicians use media to convey their message to public. The news selection can judge biasness of a journalist. Journalist selects news according to their own choice which reflects their political affiliation and their ideological background, but it does not mean that every time we should judge a journalist based on news selection (Aalberg, 2013).

Brewer (2017) argued that in any democratic society, the role of a journalist is to provide accurate and authentic information to public and the role of the politician is to represent their people on any forum and do work for the betterment of society but when a journalist is linked with any politician or with any political party, the credibility of journalistic is question marked.

Furthermore, his study argued that Journalists having affiliation with any political party starts favoring it and gives beneficial coverage to his affiliated party (Brewer, 2017). And these journalists are like unpaid member of that party.

According to Shoemaker synthesis of theories, media promote the agenda of those who finance media. After the thirty-year of her work on news content, she closely observed the ideology of a financier in the news. Newsrooms and news organizations are directly affected by the ideology of a financier and organizations spread the ideology of a financier to the public through news and reporting (Reese, 2007).

Those who finance the media organizations such as advertisers have a strong influence on the organizations and the way they use the organizations according to their own agendas and then organizations put pressure on their employees (Arnoldo & Macias, 2011).

Pressure from an employer is the biggest hurdle for journalists which prevents them from doing actual work. Employer of the journalist has heavy influence on him as owner pays the journalist so he dictates a journalist in many ways and gives instruction and journalist have to follow the instruction because owner is paying the journalist so he wants the work in his own way; therefore, in this situation it is challenging to work in a better way (Tejkalová et.al., 2015).

This makes very difficult for a journalist to point out the wrong deeds in society, and second thing which put pressure on a journalist is the advertiser's pressure (Hosbeg, 2016). Basically media is a business and all media groups are earning profit from advertisers. Advertisement is playing the backbone role for a media group; so without advertisement existence of a media group is impossible so that is why the main focus of organization's owner is to protect the benefits of advertiser so it is difficult for a journalist to report against the advertiser and journalist do compromise on it (Davis, 2007). If a journalist reports something against the advertiser, then it would become a big loss for the media organization. Politician often offer bribes and gifts to journalist and try to gain their favors for political agendas.

According to Hosbeg (2016) a journalist from developing countries have very low salaries so they accept bribes and start favoring different parties and once journalist accepts bribes, politician uses them in his own way. Once a politician won the loyalty of a journalist, then the journalist will write and speak in favor of the political party.

Panama Leaks

Panama paper wound up a noticeably political clash in Pakistan and the contention was activated by the releases that named around 200 Pakistanis who had seaward records, holding properties in abroad and have monetary illicit relationships in the remote (Hasan Askari, 2016). In spite of the fact that the executive of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif (Prime Minister of Pakistan) is not specifically included or said in Panama specifically included or said in Panama records but rather his name shows up with reference of his youngsters who were occupied with these money-related undertakings and have resources in the remote. Notwithstanding, the reality the head administrator Nawaz Sharif tended to the country twice on the issue of Panama breaks and he brought it into the discussion including his relatives. Prior to his deliver to country, barely anybody was focusing on different names of the rundown yet after the disputable discourse of head administrator Nawaz Sharif the entire country gave careful consideration to this issue which later wind up plainly political clash in Pakistan. The procedure was joined by the PML-N top authority's choice to bounce into the shred to shield prime minster and his relatives and the initiative propelled a counter hostile by accusing and reprimanding a few restriction pioneers including Imran Khan of defilement and pointing the finger at them over various issues incorporating execution in their regions. The procedure the principle administration of PML-N gave extra fuel to the debate was the logical inconsistency in interviews given by the executive's youngsters and spouse at various circumstances to media. The Pakistani media likewise assumed a vital part in Panama papers and directed several projects on this issue; it featured all angles and faulted similarly to all gatherings. Imran Khan declared lockdown challenge to national government which made disharmony and frenzy among individuals. Government utilized all its apparatus against PTI's dissent and halted them while Imran Khan had been house captured at his home. Incomparable Court of Pakistan made stride once again on Panama case and now hearings have proceeded on regular routine yet the case has lost its significance before individuals (Hasan Askari, 2016).

Therefore, this research is focusing on the political affiliations of journalists and pressure of organization on journalists during the reporting on Panama leaks issue. Researcher wants to understand that how journalists do reporting on Panama leaks issue when they have

affiliation with different parties and what techniques are used by reporter to do reporting on Panama leaks regarding their political affiliations. Second part of this study is about the pressure from organization on journalist during Panama leaks issue because many media organizations have their political and financial interest; so what kind of pressure journalists faced from their organization during Panama leaks issue and how they worked under such circumstances?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the New York Times' article in 2006, President George Bush paid to 10 journalists in Cuba to gain favorable coverage but when this news came on the scene and was investigated, the then journalists admitted that they took money from Bush and they had promoted the agenda of Bush's government (Abby Goodnough, 2006). According to the article of MSNBC, round about 140 journalists have supported different political parties, movements or individually any candidate but when asked from them about the effects of their affiliation with political parties on their journalistic career; according to them, relation with politicians is not wrong and they also don't consider that it may raise question mark on their credibility but the fact is that political affiliation or a personal relationship with any political party badly ruins the credibility of a journalist (Danielle Gallo, 2015).

Van den Berg et.al. (2016) concluded that journalists have their political affiliations with different political parties and they play their special role in supporting political parties during elections. Due to their affiliation, it is observed that some politicians assign different assignments to journalists during elections to propagate their agendas. At the time of elections, journalists provide detailed analysis of manifesto, show the work of parties which they have done for public and try their best to convince the viewers to vote for their affiliated party. During elections, a journalist who is attached with any political party is totally biased and he arranges special talk shows and do plants program with the representative of the political party to whom he is affiliated and try to gain favor of public (Van den Berg et.al., 2016). We can say that a political affiliated journalist organizes campaign programs to support his favorable party.

The perception about American journalist that they are politically not involved in any activity and they have nothing to do with politics was totally proved wrong. It is seen that journalists have their political

affiliations and they do support their ideologies. Their point of view mostly differs from the public point of view, but they ignore it to keep continuing their campaigns for their favorable group and try to be influential. They describe themselves as democrats and republicans and percentage of democrats and republicans change time to time like the percentage of journalists who described themselves as democrats was increased from 1971 to 1993 (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). So, the argument that Americans journalists have nothing to do with politics is wrong and their affiliations with parties have strong effects on news.

According to a study, it is impossible for a journalist to work in a free environment because there are many external and internal factors which influence the journalists and due to which the worth of news is question marked (Melissa, 2015). Now, journalists are aware that without biasness it is impossible to do their duty as a journalist due to lot of external and internal pressure so now they compromise on different issues and continue their work. Garcia argued that (Melissa, 2015) External pressure includes political pressure, personal relations, political affiliation while internal pressure includes pressure from owner, pressure from editorial board and pressure from advertiser.

According to Reese study (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) opines that media organizations give guidelines to journalists and instruct them to follow guidelines because media organizations have some interests and if anyone violates the guidelines, they considered it as conflict of their interest. So, they pressurize the journalist to follow the organizational policy and not to cross the limits due to which the freedom of journalist is lost, and he has to work under such pressurized environment. "Sandy Nelson" was a reporter of Morning News Tribune in Washington. During elections, she was a part of organizing referendum to ban discrimination in housing based on sexual orientation. Due to which she was removed from her job and made copy editor and after election, his owner told her that she can join her beat if she leaves all political activities but Sandy refused to join it and sued her owner (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). After some time, the newspaper was fighting back and the owner of newspaper said that when a journalist is taking part in high level political activities then the credibility of newspaper is lost.

A research was conducted on relation between journalist and politician in south Eastern Europe in which depth interviews were taken of sixty journalists from Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro (Bieber & Kmezic, 2015). According to results, journalist-politician relations are

evolved day to day and now relation between journalists and politician are like two-way communication. Journalists serve as a tool for politicians and try to protect their scandals and corruption. Sometime journalist takes benefit from politicians and in return journalist favors them through media and some time they have only personal link or political sympathies with any political parties. Due to which journalists favors his party on media and uses different tactics to promote the agenda of his affiliated party. Nowadays in western countries, journalists and politicians are called as interdependent actors in which politicians and journalists are dependent on each other and they together set public agenda (Directorate-General for External Policies, 2014).

On the other side apart from journalist politician relation, there are also direct relations between politicians and media owners due to which media owners put pressure on their journalists. Media owner is sometimes pressurized by politicians and advertisers because politicians have their political interest and advertisers have their business interest and majority of revenue of any media group is coming from advertisement so any media channel cannot afford any news against his advertiser because it will result in loss (Directorate-General for External Policies, 2014). That is why they pressurize the reporters and anchors to not to go beyond the lines.

Parmelee (Parmelee, 2014) argued that in modern era, agenda building technique is used by politicians in which they examine that what kind of issues a journalist should cover. Politicians make strong and good relations with journalists and use agenda building technique to gain public support. So, for this first of all they observe the public views on any issue and then they use journalist to disseminate the public opinion. During 2012 campaign in America, in depth interviews of American journalists were taken which shows that journalist shape their news according to politicians' tweets and tweets work as agenda setting technique for journalist. In other words, the choice by a journalist to cover some issue or events in interest of public is hijacked by the politicians. There are many individuals who try to influence media such as political leaders, political think tanks, political bloggers, they all try to guide journalists that what issues they should cover and they have a strong influence on journalists so basically media agenda setting is built by all these. In agenda setting, they decide which issue will be highlighted and which issue will be ignored.

According to Shoemaker and Rees, (Reese 1993) journalist is not present on every event and he is dependent on some other sources and it is found that the news coming from some other source is dominated by some people and his personal opinion is also included in news.

According to Shoemaker and Rees's study of influence on mass media content, it is observed that there are many influencing powers who influences news which include organizational influences, outside influences, influence of media routines and individual media workers. The personal values, attitudes and beliefs of a journalist have indirect effect on news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Organizational influences include pressure of editorial board and owner of organization and outside influences include pressure from pressure groups, political pressure and pressure from advertiser which is coming through owner of organization.

In East Africa, media is full with advertisement and media is enjoying revenue and solid circulation but on the other side, advertisement is destroying news credibility and it is promoting self-censorship in news. According to Kenyan Journalists Veteran and John Gatchie, advertiser is the king of media industry and he can do whatever he wants, he has strong influence on news and have a power to mold, reshape and censor any news. As advertiser is a main source of revenue for channel, so owner cannot withstand advertiser so he influences and put pressure on editors and journalists to facilitate the advertiser and they do so. If advertiser see something critical about him on media, then he give advertisement just to change the mood of the media (Pew Research Center, 2016).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, researcher used Shoemaker and Rees hierarchy of influences model to tell and explain the factors which affects news and shape the media content (2016). In this study, researcher focused on Hierarchy of influences model to analyze and study all those factors within or outside organization which are affecting news. According to this model, there are five factors which shape content and influence news and those factors are individuals, routines, organizational, social institutions, social system and this model explained all these factors in detail.

Individual: In individual level, personal affiliations and personal ideologies of news worker is considered. Journalists make decision on

the basis of attributes and affiliation with society because in this level journalist is affected by the surrounding and environment so he makes news according to it. Journalist's education, professional background and affiliation of a journalist affect the news whereas journalists' professional background has direct impacts on the content of news and journalists' beliefs, values, ideology personal attitudes and political affiliation has indirect effects on the mass media content (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

Routines: Routines are those practices which media workers daily use in their jobs and by which they make news. In this level work flow, pressure of deadline and space availability are main factors which influence the news. Sometimes, availability of space and pressure from organization become main factors to influence news. We can say that this level is like gate keeping theory (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

Organizational: Organizational level includes the role, tasks and policies of an organization. This level explains the structure of organization and tells how the structure of an organization is constructed and what are the goals and policy of any organization. Every organization has its own goals and he want to achieve those goals and for achieving goals owner implements policy which is shifted to lower level which then affects the content of news (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

Social Institutions: This level explain the influence coming from larger organizations and how media organizations combine with other larger organizations and how they become dependent on each other and act as a strong social institution (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

Social System: This level is the external most ring of the model that speaks to the impacts from social frameworks in general. This level concentrate on how ideologies shape and affects the media content. This system is used for cross national studies in which media serve the interests of elite class at international level and these forces influence the media content globally (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researchers have used qualitative inquiry. Interviews of leading journalists were taken who have more than five years of experience in the field. The researcher has interviewed journalist on the issue of Panama leaks, the researchers want to know

how political affiliation of journalist affects the news while doing reporting on Panama issue and how they did reporting on Panama issue when they have affiliation with any political party. The researcher wants to know which factors affect the news reality while covering Panama issues regarding political affiliation. On the other hand, what kind of pressure they faced from their organization during reporting the issue of Panama leaks.

Conducting interview is the best data collection method in which we can explore things. Especially in case of Panama leaks, conducting an interview is the best technique to know political affiliation, personal ideologies and pressure which journalist faced from several forces. The researchers have taken the interviews of thirteen leading journalists of major news channels who are working on Panama issue.

FINDINGS

The researcher had inquired detailed queries to the reporters of the Supreme Court. All the potential questions had been answered and explained properly. In order to respect the privacy of others, the identities of the reporters were kept confidential and unrevealed.

The researcher had conducted face to face interview. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with the idea of Shoemaker and Rees hierarchy of influences model to tell and explain the factor which affects news and shape the media content. And their answers were analyzed according to the basic concepts of this model.

“Yes, we have directions from owner to follow specific lines because there is also high pressure on owner from Ministry, Government and PEMRA. When organization is taking advertisement from government, then government put pressure on organization from Ministry, PEMRA and sometimes government put direct pressure from PM house to do coverage in favor of government; so owner pressurizes us. During coverage of Panama leaks, our organization order us to not go against government so we follow the policy of our channel and this pressure and instructions are directly from our owner” (Reporter of the Supreme Court, GEO News, Islamabad).

“Advertiser doesn’t put direct influence on us but through organization. During Panama case, government give billion rupees’ advertisement to media, so our organization order us to change the angle of report and do soft reporting in the favor of government. I am also the marketing officer of my channel and my work is to earn profit

through advertisement, so it is impossible for me to report against government and this thing put influence on my reporting” (Reporter of the Supreme Court, Din news, Rawalpindi).

“Journalist play the role of input for organization and output role is played by the owner and policy makers. During the issue of Panama organization order us to follow the organization policy and due to this pressure from organization we have to follow the policy of organization. If we don’t follow the policy of organization, they implement their own policy in their own but they cannot change their policy for journalist and this thing put influence on journalist work “(Reporter of the Supreme Court, correspondent Dunya TV, Islamabad).

“Choice of people matters a lot while do reporting on any issue. I think we are affected by the environment of our organization but on the other side, we also feel some personal things. On the issue of Panama, I think majority of people are with government I did reporting according to majority and that is also the policy of our organization”. (Reporter of the Supreme Court, Aaj TV, Islamabad).

Express responded over the issue of organizational pressure which is as follow: “He said that today media is different from the media of ten years ago now if any journalist changes his news with the pressure of organization then people will understand because now people have so many choices so they come to know real news and I didn’t face any kind of pressure from my organization and I did my work independently” (Reporter of the Supreme Court, Express News, Islamabad).

Any person in society is not surviving without political affiliation and journalists are also part of society and they also have political affiliations and they involve them in their professional and affiliation matters. I am also a part of this society and definitely I have political affiliation due to which I have a soft corner for specific party. But I think journalists should not involve their political affiliations in their professions and do journalism neutrally. Journalists have a tool of angling so they use it whenever they want. Same in the case of Panama, journalists do a lot of angling especially when they are invited in prime hours’ talk shows (Reporter of the Supreme Court, correspondent Dunya TV Islamabad).

They do angling and play the game of words while reporting. Sometimes, they use hard words and sometimes they use soft words

like during Panama case if judges said something against their party they use such type of words which cannot harm the reputation of their political party. The views of the senior court reporter of Samma TV about the political affiliations supported other interviewers. He mentioned that during reporting he has always faced organizational pressure.

Policy of organization is shifted to us. Sometime organization directly give instruction to us and sometime indirectly. In Panama case we observe the policy of organization when our news is ignored which reflect the policy of organization so we change our angle of reporting. But during 36 Panama leaks issue my organization do not order me to follow specific guidelines and they don't put pressure on me during my reporting (Reporter of the Supreme Court, Abbtak News, Islamabad).

Any media organization shape his content according to demand of public. Media organization show only those content which they think public want to see but here also media organizations have their own thinking because now media organizations are also become political wings of political parties. Political parties use media for their own benefits and interest' no doubt every media organization has its' own policy and interests but they try to publish and show only those things which they think public want to see. When we talked with the reporter of different channel on this issue they said that our channel show only such type of content during Panama case which public want to see and we also do reporting keep in view the public choice. Journalists said that they are affected by the social environment' as a journalist we read the mind of viewers and then do reporting according to the choice of audience and this factor influence so much on our reporting.

There is different point of views about this' like 92 News reporter said that according to him public want to see antigovernment news during Panama so he did reporting according to public demand but on the other side senior reporter of Aaj TV said that he does reporting mostly in favor of government because he thinks majority of people want to see news in favor of government.

Personally I feel that people have so much anger on government and they want to see anti government coverage and I feel all this when I meet with different people or when I go anywhere to take sort of

public on Panama case issue. So I did my reporting according to views of public (Reporter of the Supreme Court, 92 News, Islamabad).

I am working in electronic media from last ten years and I faced a lot of ups and down in my career. We have to do our work in limited resources and instead of limited resources organization want quick work from us and on the side we are facing a lot of pressure from many factors like owner, advertisers and from government officials. I have relations with different political parties and during Panama case whenever I did reporting and if I say anything about government' they suddenly contacted me and requested me to not report like this on the other side if I say anything which is favoring the stance of government' PTI members contacted me and requested me to not take side of government. Whereas reality is that I am not taking side of any party but all parties considered me as opposition. So, it is quite difficult to do reporting in such type of environment (Reporter of the Supreme Court, Roze TV, Islamabad).

Thus, based on overall discussion, it has cleared that all journalists have their political affiliations and these affiliations influence the news. On the other hand, journalists are also pressurized by their editorial board and owners. Pressure from editorial board and owner is not based on ethical standard. It is only based on the interest of organization and organization has financial and political interest. That is why owner use his power to influence journalist.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate that how journalists have done reporting on Panama leaks issue when they have affiliations with different political parties and what kind of pressure, they faced from organization during Panama leaks issue. Because media organizations have their own political and financial interest; so in this research, the researcher has find what kind of pressure they faced from owner and organization during the reporting of Panama leaks issue.

Qualitative technique was used in this study in which researcher interviewed leading journalists who are reporting and working on Panama leaks issue. For this, 13 leading journalists of major news channels (Pakistan) were selected for interviews. Qualitative technique for in depth interview is used to get rich amount of data so that researcher knows the working style under which journalist did their

reporting under their political affiliations and what kind of pressure they faced from organization regarding Panama leaks issue.

From data, the researcher came to know that every journalist has political affiliation and during the Panama issue except one journalist; every journalist tried to favor his party by different techniques. Journalists used angling to support the stance of their political parties. Journalists used game of words to support their affiliated party. If they think situation is against their party, they use such supportive arguments during reporting to favor their party.

On the other, side journalists also faced a lot of pressure from their organizations regarding Panama leaks issue. Sometime, they faced direct pressure from owner and sometime they faced indirect pressure. This pressure from organization is due to several factors. Sometimes organization owner has some personal links of affiliation with any political party so he implements this policy to whole organization. Sometimes, owner of organization has some business interest; so he put pressure on low level to protect his business interests. Advertisers put pressure on a journalist through organization and politicians also put pressure on journalists through editorial board which influence so much on news.

This study has revealed that multinational companies, private corporate and advertisers, elite class and government have strong influence on the content of news. During Panama leaks issue, these all groups put pressure on journalists through organizations. Thus, it is concluded from the data that political affiliations of journalists and pressure of organizations have very strong influence on news reporting and these factors can change the news sense.

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