

CONSTRAINTS IN THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF JOURNALISM IN SINDH PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

Abstract

Media is known as an important part of democracy. Therefore, any sort of influence upon news content is a matter of concern in the news media. Particularly in Pakistan it is sometimes difficult to work as an independent journalist. In such perspective, this paper analyses the factors that affect and hinder to the news-workers in Sindh province, Pakistan from pursuing the objectivity norm in the profession of journalism. For this purpose, a cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect preliminary data with a close-ended questionnaire. The total number of purposively sampled respondents stood 576 working journalists employed in various print, broadcast and wire-service media organizations, both private and state-owned. The key findings mentioned that the Sindh journalists in Pakistan were influenced 'a lot', descending order, first by the policies of their employing media organizations, second media laws and then third their own personal values.

Keywords: objectivity, print journalists, broadcast journalists, influencing factors

Introduction

Media freedom, democracy and objectivity

An independent, trusted and respected media system serves as a major indicator for the development of democracy and civil society in any country (Freedman, 2009). Accordingly, Sawant adds that 'freedom of speech and expression' is a mother of all civil rights and foundation of the democratic system (Sawant, 2003).

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Hence, 'society has an obligation to monitor media systems, so they remain free' (Sawant, 2003). Because it is so sensitive that among all media just take the example of one medium newspaper for which Jaehnig and Onyebadi (2011) cites that it 'influences the life of a whole community'. In this way, then according to Stromback and Karlsson (2011) if the news media are powerful and influencing, then the question of who has influence over the media and changes in that respect stands significant for journalism. Moreover, for the understanding of press freedom in a broad way it is concluded that

'It is unrealistic and constrictive to view the freedom of the press as freedom only from government. Such a narrow definition of "free" media is sometimes formulated deliberately to misguide and divert attention from other forces that are far more real and effective in practice to restrict the freedom of the media' (Sawant, 2003, p. 19)

Thus, the potential groups other than the government that influence media work and curtail press freedom are, as enumerated by Stromback and Karlsson (2011, p. 644), journalists themselves, media organization owners, politicians, interest groups, advertisers, and audiences. Particularly, about journalists Seo (2011) cites that journalists' subjective beliefs have an influence upon their news decisions. Further, Steiner and Okrusch (2006) also add that despite the rhetoric of objectivity, neutrality, and impartiality journalists have never completely left the practice of caring. Because, as per some empirical evidence 'the characteristics of individual journalists affect their coverage of certain issues' (Seo, 2011, p. 469). Finally, in the regard of journalists' influence in the news production process Stromback and Karlsson (2011) add while referring to the work of other scholars that overall 'journalism has become more interpretive and less descriptive across time, which may have increased the influence of journalists over media content'.

Media owners and the professionalization of journalism

Regarding media owners first, it needs to be clarified that privatization of the media is not a guarantee of journalistic freedom, particularly from political pressures (Volcic & Erjavec, 2012). Rather it is said that 'the group that is perceived to have increased their influence the most is media owners' (Stromback & Karlsson, 2011). They (media owners) interfere with the work of journalists and explain how journalists can report to politics as concludes Volcic and Erjavec (2012). The media owners also

'Decide budgets, set editorial guidelines and policies, and appoint editors and staff, and thus influence the news production processes albeit not necessarily individual news stories' (Stromback & Karlsson, 2011).

Therefore, the influence of media owners on content is an essential concern in the news media. And it is rather supposed as an ominous one when the media ownership is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands (Jung & Kim, 2011). One such negative consequence of media ownership's concentration in fewer hands is exemplified by Tyree, Byerly, and Hamilton (2011) while citing to Campbell (2005) as follows:

'American's media system is primarily owned controlled by Whites, and media representations of African Americans, especially men, often come under criticism for being stereotypical or uncharacteristic' (Campbell, 2005).

Further political organizations, interest groups, corporations and other source organizations have also increased their efforts to manage news, particularly by pressurizing weak organizations to accept news subsidies as cites Stromback and Karlsson (2011).

Becoming journalist in Pakistan

In Pakistan, threats, violence and economic pressures are common to face for the press (Syed, 2009). Further Syed (2009) states citing to Green Press (2006) that working as an independent journalist in Pakistan is demanding and dangerous.

Hence, in Pakistan media very little performs as a watchdog role (Syed, 2009). Though, apparently, there is no straightforward press censorship in Pakistan. However, journalists have indirectly been forced to curtail their reporting. And self-censorship, therefore, is a major issue preventing the Pakistani print media (Nadadur, 2007).

In the perspective of such prevalent situation for journalists in Pakistan, this paper attempts to assess the common affecting factors and the magnitude of their influence which hinders to the journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan in their pursuit of objectivity. For this purpose, a six-itemized scale, used by Ramaprasad (2001) in a post-independence Tanzanian study of journalists, was applied in the survey questionnaire. However, one item 'management guidelines' was dropped from the original scale; because it seemed to the researcher irrelevant to the culture of journalism in Sindh.

The remaining five items in the scale were provided with five responses-options in decreasing order from 5 = a lot to 1 = none. The data generated through the scale and the response rate rendered by the journalists regarding five common influencing factors is presented and discussed in the following text.

1 Data collection method

The data collection was undertaken with a self-completed questionnaire that was administered to all accessible media organizations in the Sindh province, Pakistan and in all district-level press clubs. The sampling technique was purposive and opportunistic, which enabled it to include as many journalists as possible.

Moreover, the survey took account only of those journalists who worked regularly for newspapers, magazines, news agencies, television channels and radio stations as reporters, sub-editors or editors.

The data collection instrument was administered by the field researchers who were available to answer queries over questions and that to collect the securely filled questionnaires. The questionnaire had a variety of topics related to journalists' careers, training and work experience, the organizations they worked for, their political affiliation, their attitudes to and use of technologies, their press club membership, their education level and their salary and working conditions.

In this way, a total of 576 working journalists filled questionnaires. The majority (59.0%) of the sampled journalists were accessed at press clubs; whereas the remaining at workplaces (38.0%) and their homes 3.0%.

Findings

Demographic profile

TABLE1 Composition of the journalists by demographic variables

	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	565	(98.1)
Female	11	(1.9)
Ethnicity/Mother language		
Sindhi	405	(70.9)
Urdu	104	(18.2)
Siraiki	24	(4.2)
Other	38	(6.7)
Religion		
Muslim	551	(96.7)
Hindu	14	(2.5)
Other	5	(.9)
Level of education		
School	44	(7.7)
College	163	(28.5)
University	365	(63.8)
Mode of education		
As a private student	197	(36.3)
As a regular student	346	(63.7)
Name of academic institute		

University of Sindh, Jamshoro	198	(54.4)
Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur	99	(27.2)
University of Karachi, Karachi	48	(13.2)
Other	19	(5.2)
Age		
0-30 years (Young)	239	(42.1)
31-40 years (Mature)	213	(37.5)
Over 40 years (Old)	116	(20.4)
Monthly Income		
Less than 10,000 PK Rs.	217	(37.7)
Above 10,000 PK Rs.	168	(29.2)
No answer	76	(13.2)
Put (X) cross symbol	5	(.9)
Commented instead of revealing Income	110	(19.1)

The table 1 shows that the typical Sindh journalist is male (98.1%), speaks the Sindhi language (70.9%) and is Muslim by faith (96.7%).

Academically, the majority (63.8%) of them are a university graduate, and the remaining earned their final degree from colleges (28.5%) and schools (7.7%). About their education, additionally it was observed that the majority (63.7%) had sought education as a regular student and the remaining proportion (36.3%) as a private student. In the regard of names of their academic institutes, the sampled Sindh journalists who had sought their final degree from university (365), among them the majority (54.4%) studied from University of Sindh, Jamshoro and the remaining from Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur (27.2%), University of Karachi (13.2%) and other various universities (5.2%).

Moreover, in age context the first highest proportion (42.1%) of the surveyed journalists was up to 30 years old, and the second highest proportion (37.5%) between 31 to 40 years old.

In the terms of monthly income, the highest proportion (37.7%) earned monthly less than 10,000 (ten thousand) PK rupees, and the second highest proportion (33.3%) either made no answer (13.2%), and put a cross symbol (X) (0.9%), or wrote horrific comments in the questionnaire regarding their monthly remuneration (19.1%); that showed to their weak financial position

Influencing factors

According to the table 2 it was observed that news-workers in Sindh mentioned 'media organization's policy' (measured by one item) as the highest influencing factor ($Mdn = 5.00$) upon their journalistic work. As the proportion of over than three fifths (60.5%) said that their 'organization's media policy' has "a lot" of influence. The influence of organization's media policy at such level upon journalists indicates that the media owners are key controllers of the entire news production process - from gathering to publishing and broadcast news.

Such a situation also underpins the idea that journalistic autonomy in Sindh is limited, in particular, by the policies of media organizations; as mentioned earlier, the great majority (60.5%) of the journalists reported that they were influenced 'a lot' by organizational policy. In other words, the survey indicates that journalists gather and edit news remaining within the boundaries set by organizational policies. However, that violates the spirit of ethical journalism; as McManus says (1997, p. 14) 'ethical journalism gathers information without fear or favor'. This all supports the viewpoint of Nadadur (2007) that in Pakistan ownership structure has two problems; first, owners and editors are the same people, and second newspapers have left professional quality to pander to the owners' interest.

Additionally, the second highest influencing factor the journalists reported was 'government media laws' ($Mdn = 4.00$), (measured by one item). As regarding this proportion of more than one third (35.5%) of the sampled journalists said that it influences them "a lot". As far as the 'personal values' factor (measured by three items) is concerned, that had the lowest influence ($Mdn = 2.66$) upon the journalistic work. Because about 'personal values' the proportion of only 16.9% of journalists said that they are influenced 'a lot' by 'personal values'.

The above mentioned findings coincide exactly with the findings of Post-Independence Tanzanian study of journalists in which Ramaprasad (2001) found that like 'Journalists in the USA (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), journalists in Tanzania too considered personal values (measured by three items) as having the smallest influence in their reportingrespondents rated organization policy (measured by two items) as the highest influence on their reporting, government position (measured by one item) as second.

TABLE 2 **Composition of the journalists by influencing factors**

<i>Influencing factors</i>	N	Median	S²	(%) saying influencing “ A lot ”
Media organization's policy	506	5.00	1.194	(60.5)
Government media laws	453	4.00	1.859	(35.5)
Personal values		2.66	2.039	(16.9)
Personal values and opinions	471	4.00	1.949	(28.5)
Political orientation	448	2.00	1.971	(10.0)
Ethnic affiliation	425	2.00	2.197	(12.2)

Note: Higher median scores equal greater influence. The scale ranges from 5 = 'A lot' to 1 = 'None'.

Moreover, under the factor 'personal values' out of the total of three the highest influencing item was 'personal values and opinions' ($Mdn = 4.00$) which influenced "a lot" to the proportion of more than a quarter (28.5%) of the journalists.

And the lowest influencing item under the 'personal values' factor was 'political orientation' ($Mdn = 2.00$, $S^2 = 1.97$) which influenced a "a lot" just to the proportion of one tenth (10.0%) journalists. In summary, the factor which the journalists considered most influential ($Mdn = 5.00$) was the 'policy of media organization' and that was followed by 'government media laws' ($Mdn = 4.00$) and 'personal values' ($Mdn = 2.66$).

In the table's breakdown of "personal values", the item 'political orientation' (10.0%) was at the bottom underneath the item 'ethnic affiliation' (12.2%) of the journalists. In other words, it seemed that the grip of media organizations or owners was tighter than government media laws upon the Sindh journalists in Pakistan.

Thus, this finding was consistent with the notion of McManus that the autonomy of journalists is bounded by 'three universal commands' and one of them is the owners' interest' McManus (1997, p. 5).

Additionally, it was also evident that, to an extent, all five items influenced to the Sindh journalists while they reported, wrote and edited the news content, thereby underpinning the idea of Reese and Daniel (1997, p. 424) that 'journalists have found it increasingly hard to maintain that they are wholly "objective"'.

Moreover, for deeper analysis to assess the impact of two variables that is journalist type and geographic affiliation upon the influencing factors in journalistic work a Mann-Whitney *U* test was run which resulted following statistically significant differences.

See table 3, it was found first, in the perspective of journalist type that the newsroom journalists ($M = 4.53$) compared with news-reporting journalists ($M = 4.08$) were more influenced by 'media organisation's policy' ($U = 24280.500$, $z = -2.972$, $p = .003$). In a similar vein by the 'government media laws' as well the newsroom journalists ($M = 3.95$) compared with news-reporting journalists ($M = 3.50$) were influenced more ($U = 20562.000$, $z = -2.200$, $p = .028$).

However, in contrast under the factor 'personal values' the influence of the item 'personal values and opinions' was higher upon news-reporting journalists ($M = 3.54$) compared with newsroom ($M = 3.03$) journalists ($U = 20404.500$, $z = -3.442$, $p = .001$). And similarly, the item 'political orientation' was also more influencing upon the news-reporting journalists ($M = 2.46$) compared with newsroom journalists ($M = 2.06$); ($U = 19562.500$, $z = -2.576$, $p = .010$).

TABLE 3 Distribution of the respondents by journalist type and influencing factors

Influencing factors	Journalist type				
	Newsroom	News-reporting			
	Mean	Mean	Mann-Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>P</i> Value
Media organization's policy	4.53	4.08	24280.500	- 2.972	*.003
Government media laws	3.95	3.50	20562.000	- 2.200	*.028
Personal values					
Personal values and opinions	3.03	3.54	20404.500	- 3.442	*.001
Political orientation	2.06	2.46	19562.500	- 2.576	*.010
Ethnic affiliation	2.17	2.39	19015.000	- 1.508	.131

Note: Higher mean scores equal greater influence. The scale ranges from 5 = 'A lot' to 1 = 'None'. *. The mean differences are significant at the $< .05$ levels.

Second, in the context of geographic affiliation (See table 4) the influences of 'media organization's policy' and 'government media laws' compared with rural journalists ($M = 4.01$ and $M = 3.44$ respectively) were higher upon the urban journalists ($M = 4.49$ and $M = 3.92$ respectively), ($U = 26786.500$, $z = -3.389$, $p = .001$ and $U = 21998.000$, $z = -2.683$, $p = .007$ respectively).

However, in contrast it was observed that the rural journalists ($M = 3.52$, $M = 2.51$ and $M = 2.47$ respectively) compared with the urban journalists ($M = 3.17$, $M = 2.09$ and $M = 2.13$ respectively) were more influenced by the three items 'personal values and opinions' ($U = 23436.000$, $z = -2.871$, $p = .004$), 'political orientation' ($U = 20825.000$, $z = -3.130$, $p = .002$) and 'ethnic affiliation' ($U = 19871.000$, $z = -2.187$, $p = .029$) under the factor 'personal values'.

TABLE 4 **Distribution of the journalists by geographic affiliation and influencing factors**

<i>Influencing factors</i>	Rural journal ists	Geographic affiliation			
		Urban journalis ts			
	Mean	Mean	Mann- Whitney U	Z	P Value
Media organization's policy	4.01	4.49	26786.500	-3.389	*.001
Government media laws	3.44	3.92	21998.000	-2.683	*.007
Personal values					
Personal values and opinions	3.52	3.17	23436.000	-2.871	*.004
Political orientation	2.51	2.09	20825.000	-3.130	*.002
Ethnic affiliation	2.47	2.13	19871.000	-2.187	*.029

Note: Higher mean scores equal greater influence. The scale ranges from 5 = 'A lot' to 1 = 'None'. *. The mean differences are significant at the $< .05$ levels.

Further to assess the impact of organization type, a Kurskal-Wallis Test was run that resulted following statistically significant differences in the influencing factors.

See table 5 that shows that the influence of 'media organization's policy' was bit higher upon the wire-service journalists ($M = 277.76$) compared with the broadcast ($M = 275.25$) and print journalists ($M = 239.30$) was higher $\chi^2(2, n = 506) = 9.69, p = .008$. Similarly, the factor of 'government media laws' as well had more influence upon the wire-service journalists ($M = 294.50$) compared with the print ($M = 205.36$) and broadcast journalists ($M = 254.67$), $\chi^2(2, n = 453) = 23.20, p = .000$.

However, conversely, it was observed that under the factor 'personal values' the print journalists ($M = 248.46$ and $M = 241.46$ respectively) compared with the broadcast ($M = 220.16$ and $M = 190.97$ respectively) and wire-service journalists ($M = 192.52$ and $M = 232.38$ respectively) were influenced more by the items 'personal values and opinions' $\chi^2(2, n = 471) = 7.61, p = .022$ and 'political orientation' $\chi^2(2, n = 448) = 16.04, p = .000$.

TABLE 5 **Distribution of the journalists by organization type and influencing factors**

<i>Influencing factors</i>	N	Organization type			Chi-Square	<i>p</i> Value
		Print media	Broadcast media	Wire-service		
		Mean rank	Mean rank	Mean rank		
Media organization's policy	506	239.30	275.25	277.76	9.69	*.008
Government media laws	453	205.36	254.67	294.50	23.20	*.000
Personal values						
Personal values and opinions	471	248.46	220.16	192.52	7.61	*.022
Political orientation	448	241.46	190.97	232.38	16.04	*.000
Ethnic affiliation	425	220.19	203.99	188.68	2.92	.231

Note: Higher mean scores equal greater influence. The scale ranges from 5 = 'A lot' to 1 = 'None'. *. The mean differences are significant at the $< .05$ levels. $df = 2$.

Conclusion and discussion

The paper in the beginning introduces literature about a need to monitor the media performance and the working of journalists in any society. Further, as it is said that the media have a potential to influence the

society, therefore, to have a positive influence of media upon any society the objectivity characteristic in the media profession has been highlighted.

However, against the objectivity norm the practice of journalism is found to permeate with the influence of subjective beliefs of the news-workers. Moreover, related literature cited here mentions to the interference of various other societal factors in the working of news media. The noteworthy among them, pointed out, are media organization owners, governments, politicians, various interest groups, advertisers and audiences as well. Hence, it proved that the norms of objectivity, neutrality, and impartiality have not been followed until the absolute extent.

Moreover, how it is to become a journalist in Pakistan has been pictured. It is as if to walk on a rough terrain; because it is strewn with threats, violence and economic pressures. Therefore in such a situation, it is very hard for the media to perform as a true watchdog of the society. Particularly, it was observed on the basis of analysed data that the journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan were influenced 'a lot' by the policies of their employing media organisations (60.5%). Thus, it shows that how powerful media owners are against the professionalism of journalism in Pakistan. In other ways, this finding supports the view of Nadadur (2007) that journalists in Pakistan curtail their reporting to favor the owners' interests; mainly because media owners have control over the journalists' wages and their job security.

Even in most cases the owners and the editors are the same persons, see (Nadadur, 2007, p. 50). In descending order the second factor that influences 'a lot' to the Sindh journalists is 'government media laws' (35.5%). That is why it is reported that the legal framework in Pakistan hinders news-workers from reporting and induces self-censorship (Nadadur, 2007).

Finally, it was found that the factor that influences the least to the Sindh journalists is 'personal values' (16.9%).

Conclusively, the above findings regarding the Sindh journalists have similarity with the findings of Post-Independence Tanzanian study of journalists in which Ramaprasad (2001) found that journalists in Tanzania too considered personal values (measured by three items) as having the smallest influence in their reporting.....respondents rated organization policy (measured by two items) as having the highest influence on their reporting, and government position (measured by one item) as second influencing.

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