



The Influence of Editorial Policy, Government Policies in Affecting Quality Reporting

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Abstract: This study examines the respondents' perceptions about the influence of editorial policy, government policies affecting quality reporting. Further, this study inquires role of the media in conflict in building credibility and trust. A well-structured questionnaire is designed in order to collect the data from the registered journalists affiliated with different Press clubs at Swat. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed in four selected press clubs of district Swat. The results of the study show that editorial policy, government policies, pressure from military, societal attitudes in Pakistan towards militants, pressure from taliban, reporting professionally and objectively affecting quality reporting. The results further show that media has built its credibility and trust. Most of the respondents were of the view that through awareness media can further improve its trust and credibility. The results show that most of the respondents argue that awareness is the ultimate priority of their media group. The values of Chi-square for majority of the statements are greater than the critical values, which mean that there is a significant difference between the actual data and the expected.

Keywords: Editorial policy, Government policies, Quality reporting

1. Introduction

According to Media experts "conflict reporting emerged and developed after the Second World War" (Valdés & Lorite, 2006, p. 133). However, conflict reporting has become harder with the advent of new and electronic technology. Today Journalists even in the conflict areas try to break the news and footage, and in this run sometimes loss their life. Journalist and writer John Pilger has stated that journalists are facing numbers of hurdles and restrictions in the line of their duty which affects their professional work. Constitution and law provides safety to the journalist across the globe but in conflict areas there is rule of weapon instead of law. It is clear that journalist is always at threat in conflict areas, but unfortunately journalists don't have legal protection in these areas. Journalists in these areas remain sandwiched between military and militants, as both sides don't tolerate any report or voice against themselves. Those who have taken weapon in their hands are in different shapes in various parts of the country; they may be in different shapes in Karachi, Baluchistan, FATA and Swat. Salim Safi divides the forces into two categories; that there are the one who have challenged writ of the state and the second who want to establish writ of the state; but both of the forces can't tolerate independent and objective reporting. Therefore; both of these forces either want to get favorable reporting or silence the voice of the reporters. Besides these challenges, journalists face other problems in war hit areas. Usually, they don't have access to the spot, lack of resources and communication equipment affect them. Similarly, sometimes in a blame game either you are blamed as an agent of

Taliban, an agent of USA or agent of Spy Agencies . Most of the journalists working in conflict areas are not properly equipped to protect themselves, However, with the power of words, videos and images that journalist use will make them easier targets in future as well (Düsterhöft, 2013).

Security, low salaries, lack of resource are the major issues that a reporter always faced in covering the conflict. These are directly related to the management. There are other issues too which includes lack of professionalism and capacity of both reporters and the people responsible in editorial judgments.” After the incident of 09/11 in USA, the war started by USA and its allies has increased political, economic, religious and security problems. Pakistan also became part of the alliance. In this alliance Pakistan has suffered a lot. According to Government statistics the country has lost more than 60,000 people including civilians, security forces besides economic, social and political loss. So far Pakistani security forces have conducted operations in Swat and all agencies of FATA including Khyber Agency, Momand Agency, Kurram Agency, Bajaur Agency, North and South Waziristan. Even today the “OPERATION ZARB-E-AZB” is going on against the militants in North Waziristan. This war at one hand has helped in elimination of militancy but on the other hand has also increased threats to journalists working in these areas. Before 09/11 Pakistan and the people had no idea of suicide attack, however after given the role of front-line state in the war on terror, suicide attacks unfortunately have become order of the day in various parts of Pakistan. Apart from the loss of precious live in this war, Pakistan’s economy has also been shattered. According to economic experts the country loss has crossed the figure of \$70 billion. Cultural activities can’t be seen in the war-stricken Pakistan after 9/11.

Most important thing in journalism is to have credibility. It should not be like this that you write something, you say something, you come on the television screen or you write a column or an article and people, viewers, listeners or readers immediately know about your views. They know that you are supporting whom and opposing whom, that destroys your credibility. This is happening in Pakistan. So, it is important for a journalist to maintain his/her independence, objectivity and credibility. Unfortunately, many of our journalists or media organizations or TV channels have lost this credibility. If you stay neutral, if you remain objective then you will have credibility. If you take sides, if you try to oppose somebody on the basis of region, language, sect, ethnic or political affiliation, then you become a party. Most important thing for journalist is to remain independent and objective and then he/she will be credible. Journalism is suffering because of lack of credibility and then the power of journalism or media organizations are weakened. We should make every effort to become credible.”

Unfortunately, Pakistan is among those countries, where journalists and journalism is considered to be unsecured. In 2014 almost 14 journalists were killed and in 2015, 04 journalists were killed in Pakistan in the line of their duties. Since 2001 almost 71 journalists and media workers have lost their lives. The worst fact is that out of 71 cases, so far only four culprits have been arrested who attacked journalists. “Committee to Protect Journalists”, the organization that works for the rights and safety of journalists, declared that since 1981 almost 71 journalists have been killed in the line of duty, however according to local organizations of journalists, the number is very high. Only in the FATA, 14 journalists have been killed since 2001. In the recent past, on November 04, 2015, a local journalist Zaman Mehsood was killed by unknown assailants in Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A group of Taliban later on accepted the responsibility and stated that they have killed Zaman Mehsood as he used to write against Taliban; therefore, he was targeted adding that there are other journalists who are also in the target list. The government has imposed ban on the coverage of militants; however, militants and other ban organizations targets journalists for not getting coverage in the media.

It is the primary duty of a journalist to provide information with freedom and objectivity to the people; however, in Pakistan it is very hard to do it with freedom and neutrality. There are more than 18000 journalists working with different media groups, however it is not possible to provide security to all of them. Instead of providing security to journalists it is important to eliminate all those forces that create hurdles in the freedom of journalism. Apart from these problems journalists in Pakistan also have economic problems. Besides some media houses, most of them don’t provide salaries in time and even some of these organizations don’t bother to pay salaries to their employees. Safety and security of journalists have been decreased over the years; therefore, Pakistan is considered to the most dangerous country for journalists were working in secure atmosphere is still a dream only. As Pakistan has a long border with Afghanistan, therefore PATA, FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and some parts of Baluchistan are the dangerous areas for journalists. Pakistani journalists feel threatened not only from militants but also from political parties, religious parties, pressure groups and security agencies as well.

Geo News senior journalist and anchor person Hamid Mir was attacked in Karachi in April, 2014. The government set up a judicial commission and this commission was supposed to submit the report within 21 days. However, eighteen months have been passed but the commission is yet to submit the report. Many journalists are tortured, harassed and threatened by these groups over the years. Attackers and murderers of journalists enjoy impunity, which undermines the freedom of expression in the country. Keeping in mind these threats many journalists gave up this profession, many left their home stations, and some of them have imposed self-censorship, in conflict areas. Those who are still connected with this profession in conflict hit areas, are usually rely on press releases and do not take risk to access the war place, which is against the norms and ethics of journalism. For a stronger and democratic Pakistan, we must have credible, professional and independent media. Details of violence against media since 2001 are given below.

2. Methods

This study examines the respondents' perceptions about the influence of editorial policy, government policies affecting quality reporting. Further, this study inquires role of the media in conflict in building credibility and trust. A well-structured questionnaire is designed in order to collect the data from the registered journalists affiliated with different Press clubs at Swat. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed in four selected press clubs of district Swat. These areas are Mingora, Barikot, Matta and Khwazakhela.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 1 shows the perceptions of the sample respondents about Editorial Policy affecting quality reporting. Assessing the respondents' perception on the editorial policies of media organizations compromise on the quality reporting of conflicts, the analysis showed that most of the respondents i.e. 91 out of 100 agreed with the notion that editorial policies of media organization compromise on the quality reporting of conflicts. Most of the respondents 60 out of the total respondents agreed that media group follows a strict editorial policy. 82 out of 100 sample respondents agreed with the notion that their media owner enforces the editorial guidelines on them. Most of the respondents 54 out of the 100 disagreed with the notion that media group follows principle of objectivity. Most of the respondents i.e. 92 out of 100 were agreed with the notion that journalist have no liberty for getting information while reporting.

Table 1: Sample Respondents' Perceptions about Editorial Policy affecting quality reporting

	Agree	Disagree	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Editorial policies of media organizations compromise on the quality reporting of conflicts	91	09	106.580 ^a	0.00
Your media group follows a strict editorial policy	60	40	5.760 ^b	0.016
Your media owner enforce the policies/ editorial guidelines on you	82	18	40.960 ^b	0.00
Your media group follows principles of objectivity?	46	54	0.640 ^b	0.424
Journalists have no liberty for getting information while reporting	92	18	40.960 ^b	0.00

a. The minimum expected cell frequency is 33.3.0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. b. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0

Table 2 shows the perceptions of the sample respondents about Government Policies affecting quality reporting. Majority of the respondents i.e. 92 out of the 100 agreed with the notion that the policies of government towards militants affect the quality reporting. 92 out of the 100 sample respondents agreed with the notion that financial pressures & Government aid affect quality reporting of current conflict. Majority of the respondents 93 out of the total respondents that were interviewed agreed with the notion that Government's political pressure and threats affect quality reporting of the conflict. 56 out of the 100 sample respondents were agreed with the statement that government policies are satisfactory in

promoting quality of the conflict.

Table 2: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about Government Policies affecting quality reporting

	Agree	Disagree	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Government policies towards militants affect the quality reporting of this conflict	92	08	70.560 ^a	0.00
Financial pressures/Government Aids affect quality reporting of this conflict	92	08	70.560 ^a	0.00
Government’s/political pressures/threats affect quality reporting of this conflict	93	07	73.960 ^a	0.00
Government policies are satisfactory in promoting quality reporting of this conflict	56	44	1.440 ^a	0.23

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0

Table 3 shows the perceptions of the sample respondents about Reporting professionally and objectively affecting quality reporting. Most of the respondents 59 out of the total 100 agreed with the notion that the war against national enemy can be reported professionally and objectively. Majority of the respondents 71 out of the total 100 disagreed with the notion that as a journalist they need to report objectively even if it is against the state. Most of the respondents 57 out of the total 100 agreed with the notion that Taliban perspective is important even if they are fighting against the Pakistan, while 43 respondents disagreed with the notion that Taliban perspective is important even if they are fighting against the state of Pakistan. Most of the respondents i.e. 62 out of the 100 disagreed with the notion that journalist working in Swat report objectively while filing stories on conflict.

Table 3: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about Reporting professionally and objectively affecting quality reporting

	Agree	Disagree	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Can the war against a group called ‘as the national enemy’ be reported professionally and objectively?	59	41	3.240 ^a	0.072
As a journalist you need to report objectively even if it is against the state	29	71	17.640 ^a	0.000
Taliban perspective is important even if they are fighting against the state of Pakistan	57	43	1.960 ^a	0.162
Journalist working in Swat report objectively while filing stories on conflict	38	62	5.760 ^a	0.016

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0

Table 4 shows the journalists perception on Media’s role in covering conflict reporting. The results show that most of the respondents 58 out of the total 100 were agreed with the notion that media’s role is satisfactory in covering conflict reporting of this area. It is evident that majority of the respondents 85 were agreed with the notion that their media organization gives weight to the audience preferences. 86 out of 100 sample respondents were agreed with the notion that their media organization works for its economic gain. 100% of the sample respondents were agreed with the notion that media can play a role in elimination of militancy. 89 out of 100 respondents were agreed with the notion that media can play role effectively in disseminating the information among the general public.

Table 4: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions on Media’s Role in Covering Conflict Reporting

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Media’s role is satisfactory in covering conflict reporting	58	42	2.560	0.11

of this area				
Media organization gives weight to the audience preferences	85	15	49.000	0.00
Your media organization works for its economic gain?	86	14	51.840	0.00
Media can play a role in elimination of militancy/Extremism	100	00	NA*	NA
Media plays its role effectively in disseminating the information among the general public	89	11	60.840	0.00

* The variable is constant. Chi-Square Test cannot be performed.

Table 5 shows to compare the trust and credibility of media this year with three years ago. The results show that most of the respondents i.e. 52 out of the total 100 were of the view that the trust and credibility of Media has improved as compared to 3 years ago, 25 respondents were of the view that the situation is not improved, while 27 respondents were of the view that trust and credibility of Media has worst as compared to 3 years ago

Table 5: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about comparison of the Trust and credibility of Media this year with 3 years ago

Statements	Improved	Same	Worse
How do you compare the Trust and credibility of Media this year with 3 years ago?	52	25	27

Table 5.16 shows that the perception of the sample respondents about the trust and credibility of media. The results show that most of the sample respondents i.e. 74 out of the 100 were agreed with the notion that media has built its credibility and trust.

The value of Chi-square for the statements in table 5.16 is greater than the critical values, which means that there is a significant difference between the actual data and the expected. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis that Variable A and Variable B are independent.

Table 6: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about Trust and credibility of Media

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Media (today) has built its credibility and Trust	74	26	23.040 ^a	0.00

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0

When the respondents were asked about the question that how media can improve its trust and credibility of media, most of the respondents i.e. 38 out of 100 respondents were of the view that through awareness media can improve its trust and credibility. 28 out of 100 respondents argue that through impartiality media can improve its trust and credibility.

Table 7: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about How Media can improve its trust and Credibility?

How Media can improve its trust and Credibility?	Percentage
By Awareness	38
Impartiality	28
Keeping in Mind the National Interest	20
Highlighting Real Issues	14

Table 8 shows the perceptions of the sample respondents about the ultimate priority of your media group. The results show that most of the respondents i.e. 44 out of 100 respondents argue that awareness is the ultimate priority of their media group. 34 out of 100 respondents argue that profit is the ultimate priority of their media group. A small number of sample respondents considered power, propaganda, national interest and elimination of militancy

is ultimate priority of their media group.

Table 8: Sample Respondents’ Perceptions about the ultimate priority of your Media group

How Media can improve its trust and Credibility?	Percentage
Business (Profit)	34
Awareness	44
Power	03
Propaganda	04
National Interest	14
Elimination of Militancy	01

4. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This study examines the respondents’ perceptions about the influence of editorial policy, government policies affecting quality reporting. Further, this study inquires role of the media in conflict in building credibility and trust. A well-structured questionnaire is designed in order to collect the data from the registered journalists affiliated with different Press clubs at Swat. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed in four selected press clubs of district Swat. The results of the study show that Editorial Policy, Government Policies, Pressure from Military, Societal attitudes in Pakistan towards Militants, Pressure from Taliban, reporting professionally and objectively affecting quality reporting. The results of the study show that editorial policies of media organizations compromise on the quality reporting of conflicts. Most of the respondents argue that media group follows a strict editorial policy. Moreover, the respondents agree that media owner enforce the editorial guidelines on them. Most of the respondents disagreed with the notion that media group follows principle of objectivity. Most of the respondents were agreed with the notion that journalist have no liberty for getting information while reporting. The results regarding the perceptions of the sample respondents regarding the Government Policies affecting quality reporting show that majority of the respondents agreed that the policies of government towards militants, financial pressures & Government aid and Government’s political pressure and threats affect the quality reporting. Moreover, they agree that financial pressures & Government aid affect quality reporting of current conflict. Majority of the sample respondents agree with the statement that government policies are satisfactory in promoting quality of the conflict. The results regarding the perceptions of the sample respondents about reporting professionally and objectively affecting quality reporting show that most of the respondents agreed with the notion that the war against national enemy can be reported professionally and objectively. Majority of the respondents disagreed with the notion that as a journalist they need to report objectively even if it is against the state. Most of the respondents agreed with the notion that Taliban perspective is more important even if they are fighting against the Pakistan. Most of the respondents disagreed with the notion journalist working in Swat report objectively while filing stories on conflict. The results regarding the journalists’ perception on Media’s role in covering conflict reporting. The results show that most of the respondents were agreed with the notion that media’s role is satisfactory in covering conflict reporting of this area. It is evident that majority of the respondents were agreed with the notion that their media organization gives weight to the audience preferences. Most of the sample respondents were agreed with the notion that their media organization works for its economic gain. 100% of the sample respondents were agreed with the notion that media can play a role in elimination of militancy. Majority of the respondents were agreed with the notion that media can play role effectively in disseminating the information among the general public. The results regarding the comparison of the trust and credibility of media this year with three years ago show that most of the respondents were of the view that the trust and credibility of Media has improved as compared to 3 years ago. The results regarding the perceptions of the sample respondents about the trust and credibility of media show that most of the sample respondents were agreed with the notion that media has built its credibility and trust. When, the respondents were asked about the question that how media can improve its trust and credibility of media, most of the respondents were of the view that through awareness media can improve its trust and credibility. The results show that most of the respondents argue that creating awareness among public is the ultimate priority of their media group.

4.2 Recommendations

- Pakistan is passing through a fragile and sensitive era, therefore, mutual respect among media houses and security agencies is need of the hour. On one hand media houses should take into account the national interest and integrity, while, on the other hand security agencies should not stress media houses to get favorable coverage.
- Media organizations should run a campaign to create awareness among the general masses regarding militancy and national interest.
- The war against national enemy can be reported professionally and objectively. Journalists working in the conflict zone should play a neutral role and should not become a party of either side.
- Media organizations should take care of audience preferences and should not compromise on trust and credibility.

4.3 Opportunities for Future Research

There are some opportunities for future research:

- This study has been conducted in district Swat only. A thorough study is needed, which can focus the journalists in other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA, Baluchistan, Karachi and some parts of Punjab.
- The female representation in the sample size is very low (only 8 percent). In the future studies, the ratio of female sample size should be increased.
- As a policy, press clubs in district Swat do not provide membership to journalists working with State's run media and also to those journalists working with international news agencies. This problem should be addressed in in the future studies.

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