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Perception About Media Freedom; An Analysis of the Working Journalists in Pakistan

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Abstract

Media freedom is an important aspect of media studies and globally media freedom and freedom of expression has become very important in providing relevant and pertinent information to the public. However, media freedom is always on stake owing to multiple issues and multiple factors. The current study is an attempt to find out perception of media persons with regard to media freedom in Pakistan. The study is based on quantitative research technique alongside descriptive research design. Survey method is employed for getting information from key stakeholders and on multiple areas. A sample size of 385 respondents selected through multistage sampling technique was used in the current study. The data was collected from news-reporters, sub-editors, producers and anchors to determine the media freedom. Pre-coded questionnaire was used for the current study. One way ANOVA and cross tabulation were used for data analysis. The findings of the study show with respect of media freedom the mean difference of ANOVA show that news-reporters perception was at highest level and anchors were at the lowest level regarding media freedom.

Keywords: *Media, Freedom of Media, ANOVA, Perception.*

Introduction

According to Ahmed (2012), freedom for expressions is supervised and controlled in Pakistan. Opinion of individuals has no importance and media in Pakistan is regulated to some extent. H. Uddin and Tarin (2013) pointed out that role of laws to govern freedom of expression is very important. This creates space for liberty for powerful violators and punishment for speakers with non-violence. He further says that actions related to religious bigotry result in situation of anarchy and chaos in a country.

Sohail (2015) in his study elaborated that “Before elections government wanted to enforce whole prohibition on television channels.” Talat Hussain’s AAJ television, A program `Live with Talat' sealed down on the commands of the government, supposed that “a scare between the media persons is creating by management through PEMRA so that they recourse to self-censorship.” GEO television's Executive Editor and a senior journalist, Hamid Mir his program `Capital Talk' was by force closed said “Against black laws it was an effort to damage the struggle and association of the media. Hamid Mir says there is no any solid evidence that a journalist reported any new stuff against a State. However, the People Party’s new

government of our country has assured for full media freedom and decreasing the solid grip of PEMRA on the private TVs and cable set-ups.

In Pakistan, there are nearly 4 million spreads of newspapers. Jang is measured the largest newspaper amongst the Urdu media followed by Nawa-e-Waqt. In addition, the English famous newspapers are The News, Dawn and Business Recorder (Pakistan Press foundation, 2006).

In Pakistan with diverse racial groups and languages, there are around 160 million inhabitants. This multiplicity is also mirrored in the Pakistan's press. English-language paper have narrower reach than the Urdu newspaper (Official Pakistan Government). The English papers are spread between the top classes who are considered as the opinion leaders and between the common people, he Urdu press is distributed. Urdu newspapers generally consist of scandals, policymaking, entertaining things, spiritual items, etc. Meanwhile in Pakistan there is lack of the local press, people anxious of the countryside areas are indicated generally (Pakistan Press foundation, 2006).

Hence, the state of media freedom is not encouraging in Pakistan, there are multiple ways, and mechanism by which media contents are controlled and freedom of expression is at stake in Pakistan. News reporters, anchors and even media houses as whole suffer from certain restrictions regarding shows and broadcasting the contents (Haque, 2002).

Media Regulation in Pakistan

Regulatory bodies are entrusted with ensuring proper management of the media contents and ensuring smooth functioning of the media as social institutions. Media regulation in Pakistan was not well framed until the promulgation of PEMRA ordinance, which was promulgated in March 2002. The primary objective of PEMRA was to regulate and transmit the media contents of the private channels (Iqbal, 2012). The primary rationale of creating this organization was very much in line with the purpose of media as an academic discipline i.e. PEMRA will look into the media contents, its quality and standards with regard to education and entertainment. Hence, PEMRA's mandate was what the basis purpose of media as an organization have explained by most of the media experts across the globe (PEMRA, 2002, p, 5). In addition to the regulatory functions of PEMRA, it also served as the licenses issuance agency for the new channels and according to estimates until 2012 PEMRA had issues around 83 licenses and most of them were related to the news channels. A few channels were related to entertainment, sports and religious channels but majority of the channels were regarding news (Iqbal, 2012).

PEMRA ordinance is the basic document that states the purpose of formulating this organization in Pakistan. According to the ordinance of the aforementioned organization, there are three major roles, responsibilities and objectives of PEMRA.

- The first and foremost role of establishment of PEMRA is the regulating the operations and management of the media broadcaster in the Pakistan. New broadcasters serving the international, national or regional needs of entertainment and news.
- The second objective pertains to the regulating the distribution of foreign and local TV and NEWS channels
- Formulating the regulations by notifying it in the official gazette of the country for regulating and managing the media contents in Pakistan.

After discussing the functions and objectives of the PEMRA as the regulatory body it is important to mention and explain the theoretical background behind the establishment of PEMRA. The literature has explained three major theories regarding the media regulation i.e. instrumental perspective, public choice theory and cultural ideals. These theories primarily explain the objectives behind the establishment of any

regulatory body in the society for a smooth function and better performance of the organization and related stakeholders.

Keeping in view the objectives of each paradigm and theory it can be concluded that PEMRA has been formulated with a stance of cultural ideal of instrumental reasons. According to Christensen et al, 2007 any organization formulated to control and manage certain tasks must instrumental in achieving certain set goals and targets. According to this perspective, employees of the organization are entrusted with choosing the right option between different alternative options to promote and meet the targets of the organization. Similarly, Bishop (2007) states that actors engaging in means-ends relationship deliberate the means independently from the social context, cultural values, history.

Hence, the rationale and objective of PEMRA is also in line with these stance i.e. cultural ideal and instrumental reasons. In the first place the objective and function of PEMRA is the see the contents of the media broader casters in the cultural context of the country, which is the exact essence of cultural ideals perspective of regulatory bodies. On the other hand, PEMRA is also designed to address and meet certain objectives such monitoring and establishment of new TV channels. Which is again in line with the instrumental perspective of the regulation (Flouri, 2007).

Global Perspective on Media Freedom and Ranking

Media freedom is not an issue of developing countries rather many developed countries also face this issue. Media freedom is often on stake whenever popular stance is challenged (Leonard & David, 1986). According the report of CPJ in 2015 North Korea is regarded as the least independent county in the world when it comes to media freedom. North Korea does not have independent and free to work journalists. In addition to that, Burman is also considered as the least independent media related country.

It has been observed that all the media is control by certain groups including newspapers and TV channels (Beetham, 2008). In 2015, according a report people in Burma does not like to even listen and read any news owing its large scale influence of certain group which shows that media content in Burma are not independent and express a great concern regarding media freedom. Even the privately owned TV channels must submit their contents to the central board for approval before transmission (Skaaning, 2018).

Similarly, Turkmenistan is also considered as the lowest in media freedom. The president of Turkmenistan has provided certain sanctions regarding the functioning of the media. Most of the media contents are for the praising of their president and ticker continue to work at the bottom of state owned TV channel. Similarly, countries such as Cuba, Uzbekistan and Belarus also very low ranked in media freedom and have very serious issues regarding media freedom. On the other side, many countries have very good performance regarding the media freedom. Norway and Finland have been ranked at the top level regarding the media freedom (Freedom House, 2017).

It is important to mention and explain media freedom ranking that show the media freedom across the globe. RSF has developed an index to present the global ranking regarding the media freedom. This ranking index is based on a questionnaire based on 87 questions and asked from relevant person across globe.

This ranking is the combination of both qualitative and quantitative findings. The major areas and criteria's are pluralism in media, independence of media, environment of media and legislative framework available. In addition to that self-censorship, transparency and quality of infrastructure and support production are also important criteria's for measuring the media freedom.

Table No 1: world ranking for media freedom			
Sr. No	**Name of the country**	**Situational Score**	**Global Score**
1	Norway	6.72	6.72
2	Finland	6.99	6.99
3	Sweden	7.24	7.24
4	Denmark	8.57	8.57
5	Costa-rica	8.21	8.76
6	Netherlands	8.74	9.67
7	Jamaica	9.96	9.96
8	New Zealand	10.04	10.04
9	Portugal	10.11	10.11
10	Switzerland	10.55	10.55
145	Pakistan	44.16	46.86

The above table shows the ranking of different countries regarding media freedom. The table presents top ten countries and the ranking of Pakistan, which is 145 now.

Literature Review

Hatchen (1997) elaborated that the freedom of media is directly associated with the democratic values and freedom of state. It enables the democratic values, which mean the truthfulness and freedom of speech, which is given to the civil society. The freedom of press is based on the representing the news according to its natural setting. It strongly negates the pressure over the journalists and media houses through any means. According to the findings of the author, the freedom of media is the demand of the day so that an ethical journalism may be practiced which represents the realities based on facts.

Ali (2012) wrote a book on the topic of "Press, Pressmen and Governments in Pakistan: Misbehaving Powers and Positions" in which the author explained the media freedom in detail according to the perspective of Pakistan. The author explained the practices and difficulties of the journalists where the freedom of their practices was also underlined. According to the findings of the author, the freedom of the press is only granted when the governing bodies of the media work in an ethical framework and motivate the media houses to work accordingly. However, unfortunately, in the countries like Pakistan such practices are rare because neither the governing bodies of media pay attention to this dimension nor the media houses keenly observe the same. In the end, the practicing journalists are forced in play in between of these circumstances (UNESCO, 2007).

Kumar (2000) elucidated that the media freedom directly needs the strong measures of the government. The state has to perform their role in granting the freedom of media and journalists where the rules and regulations are prescribed which provide a road map for the journalists and their head offices. The author further explained that the freedom of media does not mean to diminish the professional autonomy of the media otherwise; the basic duties of media will be affected. The media freedom is is a platform where a free environment is granted to the professional journalists who work under the professional guidelines. These professional guidelines are only fulfilled when the parties from both sides collaborate with each other.

Jakobowich (1985) pointed out that media freedom is only granted in a state where democratic values are followed. The democratic values are created through the free and fair democratic election. Such governments that are based on true democratic values further encourage developing a free and impartial media. Later on, this impartial media plays a significant role in motivating the governments for the betterment of society as it represents all even and odds of the government and points out the flaws, which

are undertaken. Hence, according to the author, the democracy and media freedom are closely interlinked with each and which have primary aim of social development.

Methods and Materials

Keeping in view the objectives of the current study quantitative research technique was applied for the current study. In addition to that, the study applied descriptive research design to describe the nature and pattern of perception regarding media freedom in Pakistan.

The topic of the study revolves around finding out the media freedom perception and legal framework available and its implementation. Hence, researcher was in need of finding out relevant persons as the population of the current study

Hence, it was decided to include media persons working in media houses as the population of the current study. Therefore following key stakeholders or segment of media houses population was selected as the target population for the current study.

- In the first place news reporters of the media houses were included in the population.
- Secondly, news producers were also included as they were in close contact of latest legal developments.
- Thirdly, sub editors were also included as the population of the current study.
- Fourthly, Anchors officers from selected media houses were also included as the population for the current study.

Sampling Technique

For the identification of the respondents for the current study researcher adopted multiple stage sampling technique.

- In the first step the researcher identified key media houses to be included in the current study.
- In the second stage of the sampling technique, key stakeholders of the media organization were selected. These include news reporters, news producers, sub editors and Anchors.
- In the third and last stage of the sampling technique researcher applied convenient sampling technique. As there was no sampling frame available for the selected stakeholders in the current study i.e. reporters, producers, sub editors and Anchors hence researcher applied convenient sampling technique.

Sample Size

In social science research, it has been suggested that a sample size of 400 respondents is enough to remove the sampling error and measuring the perception (Roscoe, 1975). However, the actual sample size was 385 as there was an issue of response rate. In addition to that statistical experts also suggest that sample size should 10 times the number of items asked in the scale (Hair et al. 2010). Hence, in the current study researcher used a middle approach of both the above-mentioned suggestion and determined a sample size of 400 participants for the current study.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the analysis of the perception regarding media freedom of the stakeholders of the current study.

Table No 2: Descriptive of perception about media freedom				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
News-reporter	3.2647	.44579	3.1949	3.3346
Sub-editor	1.0293	.67404	.8821	1.1764
Anchor	.9714	.66678	.8124	1.1304
Producer	1.0176	.75778	.8408	1.1944
Total	1.9398	1.26690	1.8128	2.0667

An important aspect of the current study was to measure the perception of the working journalists or stakeholders of the study regarding media freedom. In the first place, the above table shows the mean difference regarding media freedom. The above table shows that news-reporter are having higher level of media freedom with a means score of 3.2664 followed by sub-editors and producers with more or less same level of mean score. However, the mean score of Anchors is at the lowest level showing the lowest level of media freedom perception by them.

Table No 3: ANOVA Median Freedom					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	475.652	3	158.551	429.407	.000
Within Groups	140.677	381	.369		
Total	616.329	384			

In the above table test of significance is applied and significant is less than .05 and it is concluded that null hypothesis of equal average intensity of perception about media freedom for News reporter, Sub Editor, Anchor, Producer. Hence, the null hypothesis in this regard is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted thus asserting that regarding perception of media freedom there is significant difference among stakeholders of the current study.

Now to see of the categories means are statistically significant from each other we further performed multiple comparison test called Least Significance Difference (LSD) test.

Table No 4: Multiple Comparisons (LSD)				
(I) Area of Filed	(J) Area of Filed	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
News-reporter	Sub-editor	2.23547*	.08228	.000
	Anchor	2.29330*	.08716	.000
	Producer	2.24712*	.08591	.000
Sub-editor	News-reporter	-2.23547*	.08228	.000
	Anchor	.05783	.09861	.558
	Producer	.01165	.09750	.905
Anchor	News-reporter	-2.29330*	.08716	.000
	Sub-editor	-.05783	.09861	.558
	Producer	-.04618	.10165	.650
Producer	News-reporter	-2.24712*	.08591	.000
	Sub-editor	-.01165	.09750	.905
	Anchor	.04618	.10165	.650
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.				

As per findings of the above table it is evident that there is statistical significant difference between mean values as per pairwise statistical comparison of (News Reporters v/s Sub Editor), (News Reporters v/s Anchor), (Sub-Editor v/s Anchor), (Sub-Editor v/s Producer) and (Producer v/s Anchor) regarding perception about media freedom. There is no statistical difference found in pairwise analysis of (News Reporters v/s Producer). This shows that perception about media freedom of the producers and sub-editors is at the same level and showing an insignificant value. However, all others categories are significant showing the significant level of perception about media freedom.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that there is a significant difference regarding the perception about media freedom from the point of view of the stakeholders of the current study. Perception of news-reporter regarding media freedom is at the highest level followed by sub-editors and producers (with very little difference). However, perception of media freedom of the anchors is at the lowest level.

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