

## Media Ethics for Educating Masses and Mediatization of Society

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### Abstract

Education is one of the three main functions of media. This function assumes utmost importance when media comes to play the role of watchdog in a mediatized society so that quality of democracy is achieved through protection of human liberties. In 2002, President Pervez Musharraf unlocked the potential of electronic media by allowing private entrepreneurs to operate TV and Radio channels, which led to acceleration of the process of mediatization of politics. For the purpose of the study two main leading newspaper Daily Jang and The News have been selected. The researcher has critically evaluated these two newspapers from March, 2015 to July 2015. This research is critical descriptive in nature leading to an understanding of the value of professional ethics for media to perform function of educating the masses in recognizing their rights. It has found that private media ignore the function of educating the masses and has been engaged in proliferating distorted information in the society so much that masses find themselves in confusion about reality.

**Key Words:** Education, Media, Ethics, Mediatization, Society

### Introduction

In 21<sup>st</sup> century, media is playing an outstanding role in promoting education through educating masses by influencing on the daily activities of children (Zafar, 2018). At the same time, the social mediums (ICT's) also playing an astonishing role among higher level students especially in universities by helping in research Tess related assignments. Students get benefits in research related activities by using these social mediums by directly connecting with national and international research forums (Tess, 2013). Media plays the critical role in educating the society about the real happenings. In this important profession, professionals gather the information about happenings, have an editorial eye on it and then finally publicize it to the entire society. Professional codes of conduct always play an important role in leading doctrine for media professionals to uphold the reliability of news item. The ongoing debates has resulted that the procedure of news dissemination to the society carries vested interests which plays important role in angling the content. These interests carry personal gain of journalists, concerns of news sources, interests of media conglomerates, character of political leaders, interests of pressure groups, government regulations, interests of advertisers, size of target audience and their preferences (Schudson, 2003). These interests damage the trust of media professionals to publicize the news content on time without any biasness. Many other scholars work also found that although professional code of ethics exist and media community is aware but sometimes professionals are guided by personality persona whenever they are trapped in ethical problems.

Pasti (2005) stated that experienced and inexperienced journalists take the decisions differently whenever they face ethical issues, so significance of demographic features highlights

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taking of decisions in ethical problems. In this regard media experts have highlighted other features like experience, trainings, education, and commitment towards media profession. By keeping in view all these factors, the duty to update society with truthfulness and without biasness is a basic duty of media professionals. Strömbäck (2011) found that the role of media professionals about news item was decreased in earlier 21<sup>st</sup> century following updated ownership revolution and technological advancement in media sector however the maximum role still lies on the shoulders of journalists regarding news content while they also provided detailed review of their study over the personal grudges and affiliations of the print media coverage in the various situations where political interests are desired to be gained particularly in the South Asian society where the business tycoon and powerful politician easily exploit the print media to serve their interest. The Media and press has the self-imposed responsibility to be neutral, forsake personal basis of journalists and reports and represent the events accurately in civilized manners.

The history of Pakistan is abundant with such bitter patterns when the misconduct of power and the misuse of resources overlooked and the personal grudges of the journalists targeted the personal lives of the people merely for appeasing the opponents. Such a journalism of appeasement through the represented and repeated trails through the media severely mainly accompanied with the tools of lack of governance structure and loose check undermines the ethics of news coverage (Tapsall, 2001). Pakistani media outlets and media professionals sometimes resist to the model of Press Council because they fear it will make government intervention in regulating the media at all unavoidable. The media communities have made the current Press Council nullify by not assigning their councils to the monitoring committees.

The relationship of ethics and media have been continuously apart of debate since the start of media in the world. Although violation of media ethics have become center stage issue as various responsible bodies of media have developed code of conduct while others are trying to develop a conduct which may overcome the dilemma as the societies cannot afford media without ethics.

Ethics of media has a unique and a long history but the debate in modern era started after the invention of printing press by John Gutenberg in Europe. Initially, the press was under the strict control of governing system of state and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage media was freed to work as the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of the state but it was not an easy process to gain independence. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage it assumed power to serve as the protector of public freedom and then finally it gained the role to perform as socially responsible element in the society (Ward, 2008). Ethics are vital and essential for the fields of life and profession including media industry to ensure harmony and peace in society. Ethics must not be considered about the strict laws and regulations but it should be taken as part of moral values of society which are followed by a social pressure as compare to state pressure. Ethics are violated in media and in other professions following the lack of professionalism, awareness, commercial interests and new challenges. Various code of ethics in media outlets around the world exist and being implemented but still we witness the violation and absence of code of ethics and there is a debate going on that media professionals, journalists may be persuaded to follow the media ethics in full spirit. It has become the normal routine of media industry to depend on airing breaking news and live coverage just to grab the attention of maximum viewers and to stay number one in ranking as far as the ratings are concerned.

Ward (2008) states that the history code of ethics may be divided in five stages. Each stage is derived by press theories regarding principles of journalism. The first stage emerged in Europe in the era of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries after the invention of Gutenberg's press. Following

the creed for growing newspaper printing press of Enlightenment people sphere, the second stage was emerged. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the evolution of idea about 4<sup>th</sup> Estate in the liberal theory regarding the press caused the emergence of third stage of media ethics (Siebert & Peterson, 1956). Fourth stage was about simultaneous developments and criticism of liberal democratic views in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mass media entered into its 5<sup>th</sup> stage of “mixed media” when public started to receive information from new and traditional media sources. Online media re-defined the over all character of journalism from gatekeeping to facilitator of social networking and conversation. The US based society of professional journalists (SPJ) has stated in its code of ethics which were adopted in September 1996 that “seek truth and report it. It says that journalists must be fair, honest, confident and bold in reporting, gathering and disseminating facts so that media performs its function of education of society properly. The SPJ viewed at another point ‘Act independently’. Journalists must be free from obligations to any vested interests as compare to public rights to know and journalists should stand accountable to the listeners, viewers and readers. Clarifying the coverage by inviting the dialogue with public over professional media conduct is the ways which can be performed (Ward, 2009). However, after exhaustive review of available literature, it can be established that the process of dissemination of information in the society involves various interests including but not limited to personal interest of journalists, media owners and organizations, vested interest groups etc. These interests lead to compromising media’s function of educating the masses. Above all, populism is the worst threat to media in performing its function of education (Arshad, 2014).

The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the role of media in education and mediatization of society.
- To explore the professionalism and ethical considerations that lead newspapers towards educating the masses through news and editorials.
- To explore causes of unethical behavior and lack of responsibility by journalists in carrying out their function of education of society.

## **Literature Review**

Gupta (1996) emphasizes the self-imposed code of conduct during the broadcast of news and circulation of newspapers. The newspaper editors hold general responsibility to follow the ethics while printing and covering event rather than propagating their ill-will against anyone. The reality of spacious assortment of the newspaper influence, if the ethic not followed will bring-up serious repercussions for state and its inhabitants. People suppose the news that reaches them is the actual record of expert sources and genuine information, and glimpse what the newspaper want them to see. Fortner expresses his views that the newspapers educate the masses and guide them towards the objectives of vital national interests and their published illustration of the issues and events affect the lives of common people. The newspapers must be free of personal affiliation, human emotions and appeasement of a specific group of people moreover, before the publication of news in their papers, there should be a proper mechanism followed to research and have thorough glance on their accuracy (Fortner, 2011). Gupta proclaims that the endorsement of biased attitude rather than accuracy creates ethical situation, the liability for the actual news disposition is essential for reputation of the print media coverage in the future. Predominantly, the unethical ways of print media coverage proliferate the news that base upon the notion of creating suspense and thrill yet the people being informed inadequately and inaccurately, the purpose here is deliberately served to jot down the lies that merely serve the causes of financial

gains by appeasing certain beneficiaries (Gupta, 2004). The authenticity of the news coverage has always been a source of constructive purpose in building national coherence and regulation whereas, the endeavors to denouncing the transgression conversely transmit into the support of indiscretion however, such are the instantly recognizable symbols that the news coverage snuffles away of misconduct have supplementary grown to be evident and legitimate in Pakistan (Miller, 2007). Despite the fact, Pakistan bestowed with abundant endowment of extraordinary professional journalists yet unable to fabricate elevated features of print media coverage. The study tries to find the reasons whether structural in system or the monopoly of the newspaper by few people is the actual feature of this setback (Hussain, 2014).

The history of Pakistani media goes back to the years of pre partition when Muslim press was working as mouth piece of community focusing on the agenda of freedom. This media was inclined towards Muslim community in British India and they were covering much of the Muslims perspective (Raza, 2013). Muslim press was very clear for pursuing the specific agenda of freedom and the partition of sub-continent. Later on some of the critics termed it as the biasness of Muslim Media. After the partition mostly Muslim press was inherited to Pakistan and they were having the new agenda (Riaz, 2017). This agenda was focused on the development of newly developed country and to strengthen the newly developed system. Media in Pakistan faced severe hardships. In early days, media worked freely but soon they started facing hardships by media. With the passage of the time, the media professionals also started taking sides of political parties and the sitting governments. Historically Nawa-i-Waqt group is considered to be the newspaper of Muslim League so critics believed that they always took sides of Muslim league of the era. They gave much space to Muslim league coverage as compare to other political parties. In the same way, Daily Masawat and other leftist newspapers favored Pakistan People's Party. In this regard critics also believed that this was the biased attitude of Pakistani media. With the passage of the time as the media got independence, we are observing that different media groups have taken sides. Their transmissions are clear examples and speaking loudly that to which political party and agenda they support. The language, content and expression of the different news outlets is obvious that biasness have made space in Pakistani media and the viewers are forced to watch these transmissions. Obviously People always believed on the content what they watch on TV. In Pakistani most of the viewers also believe on one side of the story and they are least interested in watching other side of the story on other news channel. It is observed that most of the Pakistani media is promoting conservative agendas called as right wing while some of the news outlets promote liberal agendas.

The research follows the communication theory under the ethical procedures of the print media, paradigm of research explore the extensive records of this source of the knowledgeable. The one sided projection of the opinion along with minimal observation of the research techniques without verification before publication gives a worthless outlook of the news and views (McQuail, 2000). The assembled information helps understand the news and require the newspaper owners must consider the implications of the events and issue are just or destructive for the whole society. Realizing the power of the printed or spoken material or protuberance of the illustration, principally in a less educated society is only the outcome of eagerness for exercising power and moulding the public opinion only for their personal choices and individual favours.

## Methodology

The research has adopted qualitative method of descriptive analysis reviewing available sources of literature on responsibility of media to educate the masses.

**Descriptive Analysis:** This method is principally based on observations to know ethical issues in print media and it essentially concentrates on the meticulous point of the right and wrong views. The kind of method perfectly matches the extensive accounts of yellow and professional journalism in Pakistan. In addition the procedure will follow:

- a) Identification: The ethical issues of the print media will be identified by having a glance at the reasons, differences and the similarities between accurate or immoral news.
- b) Confirmation: The study will be based over the confirmations of societal experiences and historical records of the biased and accurate news and the ramification they fetch for common people.
- c) Observation: The study will be based on observation of researcher to find out media lack of professional responsibilities during coverage.

The method of reasoning trace the consistent and coherent rational behind the effectiveness of the print media code of conduct and reconstructs the authentic narration of the potentially conflicting interests of newspaper owners, political leader and the so-called elite class of the nation. To be more specific, the current scenario of the print media in Pakistan involves a great deal of unreal propagation of the information detouring the ethics and morality. The analyses are drawn by critically analyzing the news stories, Articles, blogs and editorials. Through which it is seen that either the media imitate biasness by framing different events and political parties differently. In Pakistan, most of the media work as the spokes person of the elites where the moral and ethics are highly distorted by both the media. So, the researches critically analyze the contents by following the media ethics approaches. After analyzing the contents, the analyses are discoursed by following the descriptive analysis approach. This research critically analyzes the news stories regarding different political parties and politicians that how politicians and their political parties are structured in different newspapers. Through which it is observed that how media ethics are violated by the media for getting their own interests.

The population for this study was all of the Pakistani newspapers which are publishing on daily basis including articles, editorials and features etc. The researcher has selected period from March 01, 2015 to July 01, 2015 to know grey areas in print media coverage of political conflict. It is the subset of population. The researcher planned to examine all of the daily newspapers but it was not possible to go through all of these. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has selected two newspapers of one media group. So it was decided to study the content of Daily Jang and the News for examining the biasness in Pakistani newspapers. The aim of one group newspaper was also to find out that one particular media group soft corner for a political party during a political conflict. Convenient sampling technique is a method used in selection for the newspapers for the study. Two newspapers Daily Jang Urdu language and Daily the News of English language was selected for study. The researcher held several meeting with the supervisor to select sampling method. After several meetings with the supervisor and scholars at the faculty, it has been decided to study content of the editorial, articles, features and news stories to know nature of coverage of print media in Pakistan.

## **Critical Analysis**

The Jang group is considered a political organ in the history of Pakistani politics. It is believed that the coverage of this media group has the power to ruin or create positive image in the society about any issue and political party. The self-motivated and unchecked nature of the newspaper and their news coverage about particular political parties shows general attitude of prejudice and the disreputable practices beyond the ethical restrictions of professionalism. The news coverage of Imran Khan and the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf by the Daily Jang and the News was often based on the negative projection of news during by-election campaign coverage. The usual pattern of their news and views depicts that as the Jang and The News have the newspaper has a 'Goebbels vendetta' against Imran Khan. The Imran Khan led-Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) has frequently been alleging the clandestine nexus between the Jang media group and the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (N), he proclaims the Jang media group was being used against his party and they were being heavily bribed to further carry on the propaganda against the him and the PTI. The regime-sponsored negative propaganda launching has been a historic practice since the very early days of the inception of Pakistan.

The News used to include personal commentary of the news even on the headings and the front page of their newspaper, such behavior of The Daily News remained a subjective of continuous debate and raised the issues of ethics of print media coverage and the news reliability. It was observed that the language of Jang group used in the news coverage regarding PTI is based on enmity and rivalry as these two parties have been involved in severe kind of conflict in the past. So this group uses such language which is enough to damage the credibility of PTI. The news contents in the by-election coverage were clear depiction as the statements of PTI were being presented as the "tall claims of PTI" and the repeated claims of Imran Khan. In 2011, Express Tribune reported that Imran Khan also complained about media coverage that media was frequently being used against his party which is damaging the reputation. This media group also published baseless news regarding differences in party over the defeat in by-elections. These news proved to be wrong as the party always refuted the news content. With the passage of time it was observed that this news 'was not having any accuracy. Other newspapers were also silent on such news items and they did not report the differences in PTI as Jang group always presented. When the results of by elections were announced, language of Jang group news about PTI defeat was very biased and this again depicted a clear side and slant in the coverage. The biasness of Jang group regarding PTI coverage was on peak during by election days as compare to other political parties. The Jang group always manipulated the defeat of PTI as party's biggest defeat and stated long claims have been destroyed. The Jang group included commentary in the news items regarding PTI. The Jang group also received advertisement worth of millions of rupees in by elections time which forced them print negative news against PTI and favored PMLN. This media group also used attractive language to grab the attention of readers by tentative argument regarding PTI.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Media industry is operated by Pakistanis who have their natural interests, tilt and biasness towards different issues. Furthermore, it is being observed that the media entities have divided into different groups following different agendas which force them to be biased. These agendas have made these newspapers as mouth piece of various political parties. News is being disseminated to the viewers by these newspapers following their vested interests and biased attitude. It is observed that newspapers are in the business of molding and tilting the news item

for the parties to whom they support. Now a day it is not difficult to guess that which Pakistani newspaper is supporting any specific party. Due to this situation it depends on Pakistani viewers what they understood from media. It is for the readers that they prefer to read other newspapers for getting other side of the story or they blindly believe on this one angle. It is observed as Pakistani media has divided into different groups. This situation has also distrusted the image of media industry in the society. People are clear that which of the newspaper is biased toward any political party. Majority of the newspapers are presenting one sided view of political parties so it is observed that only one sided point of view is being disseminated to the readers. The news are being twisted and slanted for turning the desires into the news items. These factors prove that Pakistani media is biased at large but the blame cannot be put only on Jang group as others are also doing same kind of business. Every other newspaper is attached to any of the party or carries a soft corner which is clear from their coverage. Media in Pakistan at large is serving its vested interest. Media professionals are unaware of professional code of ethics and morality which is the reason of biasness. Instead of publicizing the neutral content for spreading social harmony, it is observed that one sided view is being promoted for grabbing the maximum readership.

Curiosity is an innate element of the human nature, most of the youth students and the people working in rural and urban setups in Pakistan possess exceptional desire for knowledge about current local, national, regional and international issues. The critics accuse general apprehension when a handful of non-professional and unethical means by including personal biases and favors contaminate the very healthy nature of knowledge and the news. The lack of professional education and the absence of states imposed strict regulations are the only viable sources of the failure of preventing the flow of unethical and inaccurate news publication amidst the print media coverage. The time and again the journalists of leading daily newspapers of Pakistan, often tend to know very modest smidgen about a lot of things as essential parts of their professional career and the responsibilities bestowed to them by the whole nation. The greater responsibilities to serve the public interest; the print media particularly the newspaper must follow the self-imposed code of conduct, binding with state laws especially respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the political leaders, celebrities and even common people. The media in Pakistan has passed through a revolutionary boom in a very short course of time. The historical role of print media since the pre-independence era has been the reformer of the Pakistani society yet the facts of larger reach to the people in every nook and corner of the country significantly increasing the newspaper's role in the everyday life of the people hence, colossal newspaper publication cover a broad spectrum of every taste and interests. The effectiveness of the newspaper is also because it includes the segments having particular consideration about every age, gender, class and society in Pakistan.

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