

Journalism Ethics: Evidence from Media Industry of Pakistan

Sidra Arshad and Badar Nadeem Ashraf

Abstract

Freedom of media is considered important for democratic societies due to its roles of information provider and watchdog. However, more freedom stresses to act more responsibly. In this regard, media ethics acts as important guidelines for journalists to self-regulate their behavior. After the implementation of more liberalized media policy in 2002, media in Pakistan has got more freedom and voice, recently. In this paper, we analyze the journalism principles, such as coverage, biasness and objectivity, practiced by the print and private television media in Pakistan after liberalization. We find that many gaps exist in actual media practices as compared to ethical behavior. Our findings suggest that the immature private TV news channels and competitive print media sectors lack many basic professional ethics of journalism and needs to improve them to justify their liberalization.

Keywords: *Media ethics; Pakistan; media freedom; coverage; biasness; objectivity*

Introduction

Media plays an important role in informing the people about the truths. In this regard, journalists collect the information, edit it and finally disseminate it to the general public. Professional ethics, such as what kinds of topics to cover (balance), accuracy, truthfulness, impartiality, fairness and the respect of individual's privacy, act as important guiding principles for journalists to maintain the integrity of the news content. However, extant literature has found that the whole process of information dissemination to the general public involves different interests such as personal interests of information source or journalist, ownership interests of media organizations, reputation of politicians, agenda of interest groups, policy implications for governments, fame of advertisers' products, size of the target market and preferences of the audience. And, all these interests impair the capability of journalists to disseminate the news content timely, unbiased and in accurate form to the general public. Similarly, some other studies state that, despite the existence of professional ethics in written forms, journalists are often driven by different personality traits to reach a decision when they caught in situations like ethical dilemmas. For example, Pasti (2005) argues that younger and older journalists make decisions differently when they caught in ethical dilemmas and, thus, emphasizes the importance of demographic factors in decision making in ethical dilemmas. In this sphere, other scholars have emphasized the importance of factors such as journalists' education, experience and attitude towards profession, among others.

Regardless of all this involvedness, the responsibility to inform people with accurate information stays with the journalists. In this direction, Strömbäck and Karlsson (2011) find that, although, role of journalists in news content has decreased in first decade of twenty-first century due to

latest technological and ownership transformations in the media industry, however, still the most prominent role in news content is of the journalists. Moreover, research suggests that journalism has become more interpretive and less descriptive across time, which may have increased the influence of journalists over media content in recent years .

In this paper, we review and collect empirical evidence on the current situation of media ethics in Pakistani media industry. Over the last decade, Pakistani media has experienced dramatic changes due to the factors such as liberalized media policy introduced by the government in 2002, technological advancements in media industry, and increased awareness among young individuals due to the increase in literacy rate and university education. As a result of liberalized media policy, many private TV news channels have been licensed. These channels are in head-to-head competition in newly established immature electronic media industry. In addition, broadcast media, by reducing the popularity of print media, has brought main newspapers in intense competition among each other. In this scenario, the immature electronic and competitive print media industry in Pakistan is more vulnerable to unethical professional practices. Further, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) is planning to adopt a new code of ethics for the media industry. In this situation, it is timely to analyze the current status of ethical practices in Pakistani media industry.

We use an indirect method to study ethical practices in Pakistani media industry. We compare ethical principles, such as coverage, biasness and objectivity, with actual empirical evidence provided by different studies on Pakistani news papers and private television channels.

For this purpose, we selected all those studies which examined the news content of main newspapers and private television news channels published in different journals over the period from 2002 to May, 2014. Viewers can best judge the practices and news quality of television news channels, therefore, we also include those studies which surveyed viewers to assess and compare news quality of television channels. We found that most of the studies on Pakistani print media have focused on three English newspapers, the Dawn, the News and the Express Tribune, and three Urdu newspapers, the Jang, the Khabrain and the Nawa-i-Waqt. Studies focusing on television news channels normally included six or less main private news channels named as AAJ, ARY, Dunya, Express, Geo and Samaa news channels.

Use of published studies to examine that ‘what kind of journalistic principles the Pakistani media is following’ has many advantages. For instance, using evidence on journalistic practices, examined and studied by different scholars, reduces the chance of personal biases in research by one or a group of few individuals. Further, this method provides us the opportunity to get evidence on many different issues perceived and analyzed by different scholars, which otherwise were difficult to study in one particular paper. Finally, it helps us to study the overall picture perceived by the academia and the audience.

Findings of our study support that although some particular newspapers or television news channels are comparatively better than the others in professional ethics, but overall there exists many gaps. We find that English newspapers are better than their Urdu counterparts with respect to biasness and objectivity. However, these gaps are highest with respect to private TV news channels.

The rest of the paper proceeds as: In section 2, we review the literature mainly focusing on the media ethics and the factors which can influence ethical decisions of journalists. Section 3 presents the current state of print and private television media in Pakistan. In section 4, we collect evidence from different published papers on some basic ethical principles of journalism. Final section concludes the study with some important suggestions.

Literature Review

Media ethics

A discussion is about ethics if it entails questions such as “what is good, what is right, or what is virtues” . According to [Ward \(2011\)](#), ethical discussions may be about philosophical or applied ethics. Theorizing in philosophical ethics is concerned about purpose, history, theory or nature of ethical concepts and ethical statements. While in applied ethics, it is more concerned about the criteria of right or wrong, and the specific principles about a domain of the society or a profession.

Media ethics is a type of applied ethics. In media ethics discussion, main focus is the analysis and application of relevant ethical principles to the practice of news media. More specifically, media ethics studies the principles that guide the journalists to keep responsible conduct among each other and with the society . Media ethics is concerned about both freedom and independence of media, on one hand, and using this freedom and independence responsibly, on the other hand. In this sense, media ethics stress journalists to use their freedom responsibly and make them accountable for the consequences of their actions on others.

Despite long research on media ethics¹, there is no consensus among media scholars on widely accepted set of media ethics. However, some researchers have endeavored to understand the basic ethical principles that can be considered inherent to journalism . Common subject-matters of these discussions are truthfulness and objectivity of information, neutrality of journalists, privacy of the news source and the public, and a commitment to avoid unjustifiable harm to others, among others. For example, [Meyers \(1993\)](#) suggests that journalists regularly cause harm to others such as invading privacy or airing offensive material, by arguing that it fulfills a greater moral purpose—satisfaction of the public's right to know. But journalists often cause harm by reporting those things which the public has an interest in, rather than the things which the public has a right to know. He names it an unethical behavior. [Bertrand \(2000\)](#) summarizes that code of journalism ethics normally includes prohibition clauses such as not to lie, not to hurt anyone needlessly and not to appropriate someone else's property; and journalistic principle clauses such as to be competent, to be independent from economic, political and intellectual forces, to give a full, accurate, fair, understandable report of the news, to have a wide and deep definition of news (not just the obvious, the interesting, the superficial), to serve all groups (young/old, rich/poor, conservative/ liberal etc.), to defend and promote human rights and democracy, to work towards an improvement of society and to do nothing that may decrease the public's trust in media.

Several comparative studies have found a mixture of common factors present in most of the code of ethics in one form or the other. For instance, [Bruun \(1979\)](#) investigated 59 codes of ethics and concluded that the three most common issues were professional discretion, truth and the objectives of mass communication. In another similar study, [Jones and Unesco \(1980\)](#) examined 50 codes and found that the most common issues were objectivity, integrity and truth.

Some theoretical media scholars have also tried to create some consensus on above factors. For example, [Christians \(2005\)](#) argue that ethical principles such as truth-telling, human dignity, and non-maleficence are citizen ethics rather than professional ethics; and provide a frame of reference internationally for assessing local news media practices and formulating codes of ethics. [Ross and Cormier \(2010\)](#) have mentioned detachment from personal bias, objective reporting and a commitment to the truth as basic principles of journalism, which apply to all

¹ [Joseph and Boczkowski \(2012\)](#) review the literature regarding discussion of media ethics based on different theories.

journalists and are more needed in today's digital world. Similarly, Detenber and Rosenthal (2014) have used truth telling, independence, accountability and minimizing harm as basic principles of journalism for their study.

Factors influencing journalist's ethical practices

Media scholars have explored a number of factors that influence ethical decision making of the journalists while performing editorial work in newsrooms. These factors can be grouped into four distinct but related categories: those relating to journalists themselves, those relating to non-journalists who influence journalists, those tied to the media organization and industry structures and those that are connected to broader societal considerations.

First type of studies emphasizes that the factors which influence the ethical decisions of journalists relates to journalists themselves. Journalists work at the core of the news production processes, and clearly have an influence over media content. In sum, this strand of literature suggests that factors such as personal values, education, role at work, work experience, professional confidence, personal interests, and age of a journalist can influence the ethical decisions made by him in a newsrooms .

Second type of studies argues that non-journalists strive to influence the decision-making of journalists . These studies argue that news is produced by journalists within media organizations having complex relationships with both, internal and external, actors. The important groups which can influence news content are owners of media organizations, interest groups, politicians, advertisers and the audience. For owners of media organizations, McManus (1997) argues that owner's authority surpasses that of journalist's role and the journalist becomes decision-taker rather than his natural role of the decision-maker. Similarly, to form favorable public opinion on various matters, interest groups and politicians both, through different agenda building strategies, make consistent efforts to manage and influence the news content . Likewise, advertisers influence the news content by demanding the time segments with most audiences or the time segments which they see more attractive for their ads . Finally, the audience is the key group for all media companies. Success in getting the audience attention is a requirement for success in other aspects such as informing the people, getting the advertising revenue, recruiting the talented staff, shaping the public opinion and attracting the investments.

Third type of studies finds the ethical decisions of the journalists can differ depending upon the size of the media outlet; journalists working in small news organization make ethical decisions differently than those working in big organizations . For example, Reader (2006) finds that at large newspapers, journalists approach ethics with more concern for their newspapers' professional reputations, whereas journalists at small newspapers are more concerned about their newspapers' relationships with their communities.

Fourth type of studies mentions that large societal factors and pressures influence the choices and decision-making process of journalists. Researchers have studied these factors in both historical and contemporary contexts . For example, Fedler (1997) and Thornton (2000) both concluded that strong external pressures have existed on the journalism from start of the twentieth century. Moreover, Fedler (1997) found that some journalism practices of the early twentieth century may be deemed unethical today, but that were completely accepted societal practices in that days.

Within the contemporary context, the social factors such as national cultural values and laws have been found relevant to the decision-making of journalists in ethical dilemmas . Specifically, Sylvie and Huang (2008) found that society values, in addition to personal and organizational values, are important predictors of ethical decisions. Similarly, in a recent cross-country study Roberts (2012) have found that same national cultural values appear in the journalism code of

ethics of different countries almost similarly. In his study, Voakes (1997) found that legal constraints with other factors significantly influenced the journalists' ethical decision making.

Media Landscape in Pakistan

The current Pakistani media landscape reflects a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and class-divided society. There is a clear divide between Urdu, national language, and English, official language, media. The Urdu media, particularly the TV channels and newspapers, are widely viewed and read by the masses—both in urban and rural areas. However, the English media is urban and elite-centric. English print, television and radio channels have far smaller audiences than their Urdu counterparts, but have greater leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community and the upper strata of society.

Before 2002, the Pakistan's electronic media was under heavy control of the government. And new developments in electronic media in Pakistan started in 2002 with promulgation of the Freedom of Information Ordinance of 2002 and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) ordinance of 2002. The freedom of information ordinance contains positive features acknowledging citizens' right to know.

To bring its vision of liberalized media in the country, the military government of Pervez Musharraf, promulgated PEMRA Ordinance in 2002 to establish Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority. Mandate of PEMRA is to improve the standards of information, education and entertainment, and to enlarge the choice available to the people of Pakistan Including news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art and culture as well as science and technology (PEMRA website). To meet this mandate the ordinance provided to open up broadcasting media for private sector. In addition, it contains provisions to regulate the operations of all the broadcasters and cable television stations established under this ordinance.

After promulgation of above ordinances, a number of private TV channels have got licenses to operate in Pakistan. According to the PEMRA statistics, more than 80 satellite TV channels were working in the industry at the end of year 2013. Licenses are granted in categories of education and news and/or entertainment specific channels.

This progress has led to a new era of information age in the country with many TV news channels both in English and Urdu languages. These channels immensely compete among themselves for market share. This competition is, further, toughened by the landing rights given to foreign channels such as CNN, BBC world, Sky news etc., to operate in Pakistan. Although, English channels have their place, however, cut-throat competition is observed among major Urdu news channels such as AAJ, ARY, Dunya, Express, Geo and Samaa news channels . Media landscape is quite vibrant and the channels enjoy independence to a large extent. This fierce competitive environment has both its pros and cons.

Journalism ethics in Pakistan

Although, there are several aspects of media ethics, however, in this study we choose three very basic, but very important aspects to analyze media ethics as practiced by media industry of Pakistan. These are coverage, biasness and objectivity of news information.

Coverage

Media should be representative of the overall society. Media ethics requires a balanced coverage to all important aspects of the society. In this respect, some studies have appreciated the role of Pakistani media, while others have mentioned important, but, ignored areas.

Media has an important role in institution building by informing and educating the masses. Over the decades, Pakistan has been caught in political instability due to consistent efforts by army coups to override democratic governments. Getting voice after the liberalized media policy, media has contributed to strengthen democratic institutions. Several studies have appreciated the media's role in Pakistan. For example, Hassan (2012) analyzed the newspapers' coverage of civil society during 2002 and find that the newspapers gave the supportive coverage to civil society during the study period, proving its movement towards pluralism and social responsibility, even under the authoritarian regime of General Pervaz Musharraf. Similarly, Mcdowell et al. (2012) acknowledge the Pakistani media's role in framing the legitimacy of parliament and judiciary, and illegitimacy of extra-constitutional step of dismissing the chief justice of the Supreme Court by the then military government in 2007. To examine the impact of TV news channels on public opinion, Yousaf (2012) surveyed more than hundred citizens, both male and female, and found that private media in Pakistan is rendering marvelous services to Pakistani society in its political socialization and producing political awareness in the masses. Sabir (2011) summarize that Pakistani media has played an important role in promoting nationalism by responding to the matters of national security and the propaganda of military.

Despite these appreciations, some studies have highlighted the important domains, such as entrepreneurship development , cultural diversity , corruption , and social problems of religious minorities , largely ignored by media, but important to a developing and multicultural country like Pakistan. For instance, Syed (2008) examines ethnicity, race and religion as represented by two popular newspapers in Pakistan with an aim to understand the development of attitudes towards diversity and to outline the prospects for multicultural policies in Pakistan. Their findings suggest that print media overwhelmingly emphasized on Pakistan's Islamic identity, whereas other forms of identity such as race, ethnicity and religious denominations remain invisible.

We found three papers which have examined religious minority's portrayal on print and TV media . Together findings of these studies suggested that newspapers reported controversial issues regarding minorities in positive way, but largely ignored social problems of minorities. And popular news channel Geo gave very little space to minority issues.

Abid and Shah (2011) analyze a large number of news articles on corruption published in leading news papers. Their findings suggest that newspapers have largely focused on public-sector corruption related to financial resources, and have almost completely ignored private-sector and intellectual corruption.

On the other hand, numerous studies have raised objections concerning media coverage of trivial events in more details, and airing/publishing homogenous news content. For example, Raza et al. (2012) states examples of one prominent TV news channel which gave breaking news that Mr. Nawaz Sharif gets his boarding pass and he is going towards plane. And live coverage given to Mr. Chief Justice of Pakistan while he was attending a marriage ceremony. Rasul and Proffitt (2013) argue that the proliferation of TV channels, radio stations and newspapers owned by same media groups have failed to promote content diversity, and media companies are producing homogenous content that appears across multiple media outlets owned by those companies. In a recent study, Mursaleen et al. (2014) surveyed more than three hundred individuals for assessing

the quality of service provided by main TV news channels. They found several gaps between expected and perceived service quality. They observe comparatively large gaps on items such as corruption in news channels, representation of all cultures and number of commercials aired.

Biasness

Media should inform people about issues in neutral way. In this respect, a number of studies have investigated the news content of newspapers and TV channels for assessing the biasness in news content.

Jan et al. (2013) examined the coverage given to the activities of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, famous political party, in two leading English dailies, the Dawn and the News. They found that two leading papers covered the political activities of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf differently. Daily News gave more coverage to PTI as compare to the Dawn. The Dawn deals with the same issue in a neutral and objective way, but the approach of the News remained subjective.

Raza and Akbar (2012) investigated that how did the print media discourses presented the image of the then Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari. They examined one hundred and eighty editorials published by the two main English newspapers, the Dawn and the News, from Nov, 2009 to Jan 2010. They concluded that the News constructed a biased and negative image of President Zardari by its speculative language, tone and representation, while the Dawn presented the same issue in its editorials in neutral and balanced way.

Recently, Hassan and Sabir (2011) found that main newspapers had portrayed NGOs in a biased manner. By analyzing main newspapers of Pakistan for their portrayal of NGOs, Hassan and Sabir (2011) found that the National press negatively framed NGOs in the period under research, instead of their positive contributions to social development. Media largely portrayed them as the agents of the West, endorsing the allegations leveled against NGOs by those who opposed their establishment.

Sadiq and Qureshi (2010) also felt that newspapers missed the fair and equal representation of all sides while examining the news content related to the nuclear proliferation case. They analyzed the editorials of two English newspapers, the Dawn and the News, and two Urdu newspapers, the Khabrain and the Nawa-i-Waqt, reported on the issue of proliferation of nuclear technology. Government put the blame on nuclear scientist Dr. Abdul-ul-Qadeer Khan of nuclear technology proliferation for personal gains and called him for trial in the court. Issue was reported in newspapers. The editorial analysis of Sadiq and Qureshi (2010) revealed that the Dawn newspaper remained neutral and used 50.23% favorable judgment sentences and 49.77% unfavorable judgment sentences towards government. On the other hand, the News used 60.27% favorable and 39.73% unfavorable judgments and showed leaning of the newspaper towards the government. For Urdu newspapers, the Khabrain also showed neutrality with 47.27% favorable and 52.73% unfavorable judgment sentences, while the daily Nawa-i-Waqt showed a strong bias against the government by using 18.61% favorable and 81.39% unfavorable judgments.

For TV news channels, Eijaz et al. (2012) argue that television news content mostly depicts those who are already prominent people and ignores the activities of those who are less prominent. Further, they argue that the television media has proved a mouthpiece of ruling class in Pakistan. In another study, Raza et al. (2012) conducted a survey of viewers about sensationalism, bias and credibility of main private TV news channels. Results indicate that fifty-six percent of the respondents reply that Geo news channel has a bias in terms of tone, language and presentations. The second most biased channel is Express news with a high difference of 25%.

Objectivity

Juan Ramón (2012) argue that the most widely shared idea about the definitions of objectivity is the idea of value-free facticity, which must rule journalistic reporting. As Hackett (1984) put it as ‘The ideal of objectivity suggests that facts can be separated from opinion or value judgments and that journalists can stand apart from the real-world events whose truth or meaning they transfer to the news audience by means of neutral language and competent reporting techniques.’ (1984, p. 232)

As mentioned above also, Sadiq and Qureshi (2010) examines the objectivity-level in reporting of nuclear proliferation case in main English and Urdu newspapers. They analyzed news items, editorials, articles and pictures, and observed that more inferences and judgments were used in editorials and articles. Their findings suggest that inclination towards judgment sentences contributed to a low level of objectivity and declined the reliance of the coverage. They suggest that although Pakistani media is considered more outspoken and objective in South Asia, but it lacks the awareness in the use of judgments and inferences in news content, the factors which contribute to the level of objectivity.

Similarly, for media reporting about NGOs, Hassan and Sabir (2011) found that media represented NGOs negatively. They found that investigative reporting was not done to frame the image of NGOs, nor did the press make an effort to follow the principles of objective and unbiased reporting.

Same is the case with religious minority’s reporting on print and television media. Findings of the Papers, which have examined religious minority’s portrayal on print and TV media, suggest that media covers minority’s issues positively according to the agenda of the government and usually lack the investigative behavior required to inform people about all issues related to minorities such as their social problems.

For private television news channels, Raza et al. (2012) found the practice of news content reporting as not fair. They surveyed viewers and found that respondents believe that the private television news channels are sensitizing the issues frequently regarding politics, crime, terrorism, and celebrity etc. Their results showed that these channels present routine news events as breaking news to create hype. In another study, Paracha et al. (2013) found that news channels report the news related to terrorism exaggeratedly, and sometimes without confirmation, to make it exclusive and breaking news. They cited the example as

‘if a cylinder blasts in a market or in a house, breaking news comes at that time without any confirmation says that a bomb went off somewhere in the area but we have no further information and when we get new information we will update you. After some time breaking news is broadcast that it was not bomb blast but actually a cylinder blast in a house.’ (2013, p. 63)

Similarly, number of persons died or injured reported by media often do not match with actual numbers.

These findings suggest that newspapers’ writers lack the skills to use judgments and inferences, and television news channels have not used competent reporting techniques. Given long history of print media in the country, irresponsible behavior of some of the newspapers in language using is surprising.

Responsible factors

In this section, we try to find out the factors which have more prominent role in causing deviations from media best practices in media industry of Pakistan. Our above discussion

suggests that both kind of factors, media organization-level and journalist-level, are in play in this domain. For media organization-level factors, analyses done by different researchers, as summarized in section 4 above, show that the English newspaper, the News, Urdu news newspaper, the Jang, and TV news channel, the Geo, always appear more defiant of media ethics as compared to other newspapers and TV channels. And both of the newspapers, the News and the Jang, and news channel, Geo TV, belong to the same media group, ‘Jang group’ which is the leading media group in Pakistan. On the other hand, the Dawn newspaper always appeared as neutral and more professional newspaper. Other newspapers and TV channels appeared in between these two extremes. Here, we complement to Pintak and Nazir (2013) who surveyed a large number of Pakistani journalists and found that the practicing journalists consider media organization ownership as one of the most influential factors on journalistic practices in Pakistan. Other factors such as government and corporate pressure, and severe competition among main media organizations are also expected to have strong influence at this level. For example, government as owner operates six terrestrial channels under the name PTV . Dickinson and Memon (2012) further argue that government and military influence is strong on Pakistani media and is secured not only through ownership of media outlets but also through the exclusive supply of news via official information and public relations bureaus. They further argue that the Pakistani government also exercises its power to a significant degree through its dominance as an advertiser. Government advertising revenue accounted for an estimated 30 per cent of all advertising revenue for print media in 2007 (Press Reference, 2007). The threat from the Government to withhold advertising can thus readily curb press criticism.

For journalist-level factors, findings of our above analysis suggest that Pakistani journalists lack expertise for basic journalism practices such as preparation of news content and use of inferences and statements. In this regard, Pintak and Nazir (2013) surveyed 395 journalists during 2010 and find that Pakistan journalists are mostly young, inexperienced and untrained for basic journalism practices. For example, their survey finds that almost 80% of surveyed journalists were under the age of 40 years. And, although an impressive 95% of journalists had completed an undergraduate degree, but just under half took journalism courses in college, and about the same percentage had no journalism experience before being hired. Further, analysis of Pintak and Nazir (2013) suggests that Pakistani journalists themselves recognize that journalists’ lack of professionalism is one of the important challenges faced by the media industry in Pakistan. Khan (2011) adds to this fact further and argues that ‘Professionalism in the Pakistani media is more of a self-concept than a reality.’ Highlighting lack of training of Pakistani journalists, Pervez Khan, a journalism professor at Kohat University of Technology, said that ‘One of the challenges faced by the Pakistani media is that we are lacking in trained journalists,’ (personal communication, 2011). Corruption of individual journalists also has impacted news content, for example, Sumbal (2011) argue that the corruption at individual journalist-level is widespread particularly in the non-metropolitan press and has done a great deal to discredit journalism and weaken public confidence in the press in general.

Conclusion

We analyze the journalism ethics as practiced by Pakistan main English and Urdu newspapers and private television news channels. Our findings support that there are gaps as to coverage, biasness, and objectivity. The Dawn newspaper appears best in professional ethics among print media. Overall, English newspapers are more professional than Urdu newspapers. These gaps are highest among private television news channels. Specifically, as to coverage, we found that

private television channels have missed many important aspects of the society, while covering many non-important trivial items at the same time. At times, television channels appear biased on important issues rather than be neutral reporters. Big gap prevails regarding objectivity; television channels often practice non-investigative behavior and report matters in more general way that appears misleading sometime. Unconfirmed news is aired to be exclusive that proved wrong later on. Newspapers and TV new channels both have lacked fair representation of all viewpoints. The findings of this study have important implication for media industry of Pakistan. As, our findings support that Pakistani media lacks in many media ethics that are important for overall society and to justify freedom of media, we suggest to media regulatory authority to implement an explicit code of ethics for media organizations. This code should include clear guidelines as to coverage, biasness, and objectivity of news content, as well as, quality of news reporting.

Further, media regulatory authority should ease restrictions on entry of new media organizations in the industry to foster healthy competition and to end monopolistic competition between few large media houses. Moreover, the authority should take steps to stop mergers and acquisitions, and to disintegrate ownership of media organizations. New entrants will also help curb governmental and corporate pressures by providing more options for broadcasting and advertising.

The need to improve professionalism in the industry underlines the huge need for capacity-building in the journalism sector in terms of professional skills. In this regard, universities can include specific courses on media ethics in undergraduate and graduate studies, on one hand, and media organizations can conduct training programs/professional courses for journalists to make them aware with their responsibilities and media ethics, on the other hand.

About the Author

Sidra Arshad is PhD scholar in School of Public Administration, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan 430074, Hubei, China.

Badar Nadeem Ashraf is PhD scholar in School of Management, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan 430074, Hubei, China.

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