

## **Journalism Crisis: Proposing Public-Service Model of Press**

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### ***Abstract***

*Almost consensus has been developed that journalism is passing through the hardest time of its history worldwide. It is in a freefall collapse to varying degrees in different parts of the world. Its quality and quantity, both are in decline. However, there is a disagreement among media scholars and intellectuals about the nature of this decline and about the solutions to resolve the crisis. This author provides an overview of the journalism crisis worldwide and then contextualizes this crisis within a number of political, structural and technological processes all over the world that can guide us to know about the nature of the crisis and also some remedies to strengthen journalism in the democratic societies of the world, especially Pakistan. The study is based on the in-depth analysis of the debates of media critics and scholars. The author concludes some normative implications about the future of journalism. He also provides some policy proposals aiming provision of necessary resources for a stable, free and autonomous print media. The article presents a model of public-service journalism that may take over the position of present-day commercial media system.*

**Key Words:** Public-service journalism, public media, new media technology, e-paper, online edition, community role, press subsidy, democracy.

Journalism is shriveling in the cold. Almost all of the prominent signals lead towards a continued deterioration of journalism in the whole world. The quality and the quantity, both are in danger. With the overwhelming boost of electronic media especially television, journalism has been passing through a genuine crisis worldwide. The television's power to show moving images was a significant disability for the print media that emerged as a challenge and threat for the survival of print media especially newspapers and magazines. We are living in an era of television dominance depending heavily on television for information as well as entertainment. Our dependence on television pushed newspapers and magazines towards a crisis. Many newspapers and magazines have been closed in the past one and half decade in the world. Many others cut down the size of their employees to manage their financial expenditure. Almost 16000 journalists had to lose their job in 2008 and nearly 15000 journalists lost their jobs in 2009 only in the USA (Pickard, 2011). Because of the financial crisis many newspaper organizations had to close their bureau offices in different countries of the world. Pickard (2011) found that "several newspapers disappeared or severely shrunk: for instance, the 150 year-old *Rocky Mountain News* shut down, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* went online only, cutting all but a handful of employees." The number of foreign media correspondents and foreign bureaus has been reduced drastically (Waldman and the Working group on information needs of communities, 2011). These factors predict journalism crisis of a greatest possible magnitude that might result into a discontinuation of credible democratic governance (McChesney, 2012).

The dawn of new media especially Facebook and Twitter enhanced this crisis many times. New media, also known as social media, is taking the place of old print media. To tackle the new challenges of the digital media the traditional newspapers and magazines had to launch their electronic editions in the first decade of the new millennium. Now, almost each and every prominent newspaper and magazine of the world has its own website where the soft copies of their outlets are made available for readers who can't or don't want to read paper copies of the newspapers. Most of the newspapers have launched their e-papers exactly in the same design of their paper copies. Normally, these e-papers are made available free of cost for readers hence generating no revenue of subscription. Some of the leading newspapers of the world launched subscription of their newspapers with a significant amount but eventually, they had to reduce their subscription charges to the lowest possible level to maintain their considerable readership. For instance, The New York Times requires subscription from the readers but it also offers some packages and deals to attract more readers.

Although the launching of electronic copies of the newspapers opened a new door to earn more money from the advertisements of commercial companies but it drastically reduced the readership and the buying of the hard copies of newspapers. These are only a few possible factors for the decline of newspaper readership but there might be many other factors for the journalism crisis in different parts of the world depending on the socio-cultural and socio-economic situations in different societies of the world which resulted into shift of audience media-use habits. Although journalism crisis is not limited to newspapers only but this article will emphasize on the crisis of newspaper industry because newspapers are the primary carriers of journalism in the world. However, other news media will also be included in the discussion.

Journalism is a basic need and requirement for democratic societies of the world. Journalism and democracy, both are indispensable to each other. Journalism is vital for people because it provides information, education and guidance to them. It is important because it provides a rigorous account of people who are in power. One of its duties is to produce a wide range of informed opinions about different issues of the world around us. Journalism must provide the nation's early warning system, so that problems can be anticipated, studied, discussed and addressed before they grow to crisis (McChesney, 2012). Journalism plays the role of watchdog in democratic societies but this role is also at risk because of the crisis of the profession. Watchdog is no more on the beat. Because of financial limitations, newspaper organizations do not attract investigative reporters for investigative journalism. This means the next generation of corrupt politicians will enjoy their corruption activities because there will be no one to point it out.

On the other hand, great journalism needs great media institutions, free of pressures and political and commercial belongings. Great journalism needs intuitional strength to criticize the wrong doings of people in power. This strength needs financial resources. Dunlop (2010) says that unless some system of financing the production of content is developed, it is difficult to say journalism will not continue to shrink.

No doubt, journalism is in crisis in the whole world, in developing as well as developed countries but the nature of this crisis varies from society to society and country to country. The possible reasons of the crisis also do vary in different nations. Furthermore, there is no universal agreement about the solution of the journalism crisis. It is pertinent here to have an overlook on the possible factors for the journalism crisis over the globe.

### **Factors for Journalism Crisis**

To investigate the origin of the journalism crisis is not an easy job. There might be different factors for the crisis in different parts of the world but a number of factors are still of universal nature. These are the following.

1. Revolution of Television and Internet
2. Advertisers' Farewell to Journalism
3. Change in the Habits of Media audience
4. Manipulation of events and issues in News
5. Shift of Power from Media to audience
6. Shift of Business Model to Professional Model
7. Media Consolidation and Cross-media ownership
8. Advent of Social media and new technologies

Journalism has been affected by the tremendous growth of electronic media, especially television. Before television the newspapers were the largest source of information and awareness for people but television got a huge boost in the 1980s and 1990s in the whole world. This revolution of electronic media badly affected the circulation of newspapers in the developed as well as the developing societies of the world. The power of television to depict moving images left print media in doldrums. The invention and worldwide spread of the internet multiplied this depression of the newspaper industry manifold. The news of the world became available to audience on websites and search engines free of cost. This situation led newspapers to launch and maintain their online editions and e-papers. It can be seen a tremendous shift of newspaper readers from reading paper copies to soft copies of the

same newspapers available on internet. This shift of patterns of readership behavior resulted in the drastic decline in newspaper sale and purchase decreasing the overall circulation of national and regional newspapers.

With the passage of time, the habits of media audience also changed in the whole world. Now, in the modern age, people have become habitual to have a look on the news on their personal computers, lap tops, I-pads, tablets, smart phones and other portable devices. The Wi-Fi technology enhanced the popularity and adoption of the latest communication devices. The generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century does not like to read paper copies of the newspapers and prefer to have a look on the soft copies of newspapers on their electronic devices. This change of habits among media audience resulted decline in the newspapers' circulation.

One of the possible reasons for the decline in newspaper readership globally might be the commercial interests of the newspaper owners that are reflected by the content they produce and publish in their papers. Most of the newspapers are published by commercial companies who have to prefer their commercial interests while publishing news and other journalistic content in their newspapers. Most of the times, newspaper content is necessarily manipulated when events and issues are relocated into news (Shoemaker and Reese, 1994). These manipulations can be seen and felt on the pages of different newspapers and magazines. The newspaper owners argue that they spend enormously huge money to protect their businesses and commercial interests and not to serve audience because the words of public service do not exist in the dictionary of stock exchange. This situation led newspaper readers to look for some alternate media for news and views to have a balanced and unbiased picture of the world free of manipulations.

The advent of new media technologies is also a factor on the change in the attitudes and behaviors of media users including newspaper readers. The new media technologies empowered media users instead of media owners. They have given a huge choice to media users to select some specific channel of information for them. This is a shift from the media power to power of audience that eventually resulted in the decline of newspaper readership.

Furthermore, the young generation wishing to join journalism as a profession prefers to join television instead of newspapers and magazines. They feel it more charming and glamorous world than the newspapers. They believe that working in a television channel gives more popularity to media personnel as compared to newspapers. Hence, many talented young boys and girls do not join print media that might have resulted in the production of poor and unattractive content in the newspapers.

In addition to all of these factors, the shift of advertisers from print to electronic media also put a significant economic pressure on newspapers and magazines. Advertising is considered as a back bone of the newspaper industry because it provides financial support to media organizations. Perhaps, no media can survive without advertisements in the present day world. Now, advertisers spend much more money on their commercials on television than newspapers because television has become a popular medium for publicity and advertising of the commercial products. It has been found that television and digital media has become effective media of advertising and the new generation is inclined towards this kind of media (Krishna, 2014). Corporations no longer consider journalism a profitable business. Therefore, flow of the advertising income changed its direction from print to electronic media putting print media in financial doldrums. The newspapers started to publish

commercial advertisements on their web editions but they could not attract much advertising revenue because there are several local websites like craigslist who publish many online advertisements for free.

Journalism is in global crisis. One of the widely accepted causes of the crisis is the decline in advertising revenue for newspapers. Newspapers still employ most journalists, even if most people get their news from TV or increasingly, online sources. The root cause of the crisis is that the number of paid journalists is declining rapidly because advertisers are no longer paying to keep them employed. The advertisers' relationship to media is of highly opportunistic nature which can be broken anytime. It has already been broken with the print media because they find TV and digital media more useful for the publicity of their products. In other words, advertisers have said a farewell to journalism that resulted into financial crisis for newspapers.

The increasing phenomenon of cross media ownership also pushed journalism into crisis. Most of the newspaper owners launched their television channels during the last two decades all over the world and their concentration shifted towards their television channels. Because of being glamorous and attractive media for advertisers, television became more beneficent for media owners than their newspapers. Hence, the world-wide spread of cross media ownership played its role to push newspapers into crisis.

Here the question arises why it is important to think about the journalism crisis? Why it is significant to investigate the possible factors of this crisis and to find its solution? Yes, it is important because journalism is necessary for free and democratic societies in the world. Journalism and democracy are indispensable to each other; no one can exist without other.



Riaz (2010) stated that newspapers are an important component of a democratic society. As the debate goes forward on the issue, some scholars argue that the crisis is a result of business problem (Mutter, 2009) while some others state that this is a result of technology progress (Jarvis 2009). Benkler (2009) concludes that the crisis was a result of market and technology and the solution lies in the same factors. Some media scholars use metaphors such as “perfect storms” depicting news organizations as history’s innocent victims—both because of the Internet, which “steals” readers and revenue (Simon, 2011), and from being blindsided by the economic downturn (Robinson, 2008) while some others argue that to some extent, business and commercial organizations are responsible for journalism crisis who do not invest their financial resources in media organizations to save journalism from crisis (Pickard, Josh & Craig, 2009). They argue that possible reasons of the journalism crisis might be found in the gradual disinvestment of media owners in the process of newsgathering and dissemination.

The revolution of social media can also be figured out as one of the possible factors for the crisis of traditional journalism outlets. Newspapers did not ignore the latest media technologies rather they have been grappling to go with the latest media technologies to cut their financial expenditure and to reduce their work force. The newspapers did not leave their efforts to adopt latest inventions to support their operations during the 1980s and 1990s (Boczkowski, 2004; McChensey& Nichols, 2010).The fact is that the adoption of digital technologies alone could not be a good alternate to gradually decreasing advertising revenues. On the other hand, new media or social media attracted the whole world rapidly and the websites like face book and twitter have become extremely popular all over the

globe. These social media have become a new source of spreading news and views all over the world. Traditional media had to lose their audience but they cannot be blamed for this loss of audience because this is a gradual shift of media audience from traditional to new media.

### **Nature of Journalism Crisis**

There is still a disagreement on the nature of journalism crisis. Media scholars have different views on the issue of journalism crisis. They are not agreed about what is at stake and what needs to be done. Some studies (Baker, 2007; Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Schudson, 2008) have raised question about the role of journalism in democratic societies in the present day situation. Their viewpoint is that the role of journalism in today's world is highly murky. There is no doubt that in the modern age, press is driven by the market forces. Media owners do not prefer anything over money. Their ultimate goal is to earn money and maximize their profit (Shoemaker and Reese, 1994). Eventually, democratic societies need to transform from commercial model to public service model. If the market economy fails to support journalism then there is no way other to think about the public service model of media. A framework of this possible model will be the focus of this article.

The findings of the research of Shoemaker and Reese (1994) about theories of influences on media content provide some significant base to state that media content is heavily influenced by internal and external factors of media organizations. External factors especially include influences from advertisers. No newspaper can publish a news story against the interests of advertisers negating the theory of media as a mirror. The newspapers have to

obey the desires of their advertisers and the manufacturers who pay money to media organizations in shape of advertising revenue. If we need to free media especially newspapers from this kind of influences, there is no way other to support media organizations and their outlets by the governments. This approach can be called as the public service model of media (press in case of newspapers only). This article is focusing on newspapers because they are the primary carriers of journalism in the world. Some worldwide narratives will also be discussed about the possible solution of the problem. At the end I will suggest recontextualization of journalism crisis with some structural alternatives leading towards free and independent journalism in the world. Hence, a public service model of the press will be proposed at the end to take place the existing commercial and business model of media.

Broadly speaking, the crisis is not about the future of dying newspapers but it is about the survival of journalism. Journalism is responsible to produce “public goods” (Hamilton, 2006, pp. 8-9). The concept of public goods is highly unique in its nature. Newspapers are considered as commercial organization aiming to earn money and maximize their profit (Shoemaker & Reese, 1994) but the product they produce is not like a car or bicycle to be sold in market to earn profit. Its product is news which is not like a commodity to sell in the grocery stores. It is a public service with tremendous social benefits for masses. In addition to money generation, it acts like a bridge between public and their governments. It works like a watchdog who keeps an eye over the wrong doings of the people in power corridors. A vigilant press is a key to good governance (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). It provides forum to public to express different view points over different issues and events. All of these

functions of journalism are critical in democracy keeping aside its business model. Keeping in view these facts, simple money transactions are not at all a solution to the crisis of journalism. It has always been supported by subsidies from different corners including the governments and philanthropists. Advertising revenue has been a subsidy for newspapers for almost the last 150 years in the world's history. Normally, advertisers have been least concerned with the content of the newspapers but the revenue of their commercial ads has been considered as the back bone of the newspaper industry. The advertising support model for newspapers has been heavily damaged because of the changing patterns in media industries during the last two decades. But we still need journalism to protect and support democracy in the world. The democratic societies of the world still require journalism to act as their watchdog. Millions of people in the world still need newspapers to read having no access to modern digital media. Investigative journalism still needs money to meet the expenditure of investigation. Media owners are least concerned with the fall of their newspapers because they have shifted their concentration and money towards their television channels. This is the requirement of the democratic societies to protect journalism after the collapse of advertising-support model of print media.

### **Possible solutions of the crisis**

There are different schools of thoughts about the possible potential solutions of the journalism crisis. One school of thought advocates that if we want to preserve traditional journalism, we will have to monetize online media content. It is argued that web-based journalism will take place of traditional journalism in coming decades. But in this situation the only threat is free online content. Traditional newspapers cannot offer their content free

of cost. They introduced the system of online payments and ‘pay walls’ to attract subscribers for their online newspaper editions. Many newspaper owners and journalists raised their hopes on these online payment schemes for the survival of journalism (Berger, Eng, Lafontaine, & Siegel, 2009; Rutten, 2009; Simon, 2011). This business model could not be very useful to support the newspaper industry so far. It has several in-built problems. Many bloggers started to copy their online content and putting those contents on their free websites. Although it is illegal because of the copy right laws and it is possible to take action against these bloggers in the developed countries of the world like the United States, but it is impossible to chase them in the whole world. In addition to this, most of the internet users wish to access free of cost news content. The search engines like Yahoo and Google offer news free of cost round the clock. Although many well-reputed international newspapers launched their online payment schemes and they started to earn some amount but this amount was just meager and insufficient to support expenditure of newsgathering from the whole world. The world’s top newspapers like The New York Times, USA Today and The Washington Post launched their online payment schemes successfully but they could not sustain those subscribers for a long time. Eventually, they had to offer huge discounts and sometimes, only symbolic payments (like one or two dollars for the first month) to attract more and more subscribers. The subscription amount could not play some considerable role to meet the financial liabilities of the newspaper organizations. Furthermore, many old age, less educated and computer illiterate people are still unable to read online newspapers even in the today’s modern world. During my travel from Indiana to Washington DC in 2013, I found an old couple in a small town in the Pennsylvania state asking for a free wifi from a

restaurant staff who displayed a sign board offering free wifi to their customers. The couple did not know what the wifi was and perhaps they considered it as something to eat since it was offered free of cost by a restaurant in the US. How could this American couple read an online newspaper who even did not know about the wireless technology available in the whole world? There are billions of people on the globe who do not have any access to internet; even many of them do not know what the internet is. The online payment system of newspapers could not succeed because of these limitations and genuine hurdles. Even then, newspapers are running their online editions regularly because this is a matter of their survival and existence. They have to show their existence in media landscape.

Yet there is another proposed model of future journalism that combines the efforts and contributions of the professional and amateur journalists in producing news content for media. Benkler (2009) supports this model and calls it as a new model for online journalism. Several web-based journalism models have emerged in the last decade but their role in democratic societies has been a question mark among intellectuals. Curran (2010) concludes that these web-based models have failed to attract large audiences throughout the globe. A great majority of people living in the world is still deprived to have an access to internet because of a variety of reasons and hurdles. Furthermore, these web-based newspapers can hardly employ a skeleton of journalists for their news gathering operations because of their less revenue generation. Many of them are working only with a dozen to one and half dozen journalists. On the basis of these ground realities it is totally wrong to predict that these online newspapers would be able to replace the traditional print media. It has its own importance and uniqueness but it is not at all a substitute of print newspapers.

Keeping in view the overview of the journalism crisis, the situation leads us towards two possible solutions of the crisis: foundation supported journalism and government-subsidized media. The foundation supported model could not be fruitful in many countries of the world including the US where \$ 128 million were funded to American newspapers from 2005 to 2009 (Pickard, 2011). Non- government and non-profit organizations could not extend a significant support to meet the financial expenditure of news gathering. Many of these organizations have been passing through their internal financial crises and unable to play any considerable role in salvaging newspapers. Some of the commercial media do not accept philanthropy as they belong to big media groups and conglomerates. Some of the Non-profit organizations hesitate to support traditional media being a commercial and profit earning setup. These circumstances robustly lead towards a government-support media model for the survival of traditional journalism.

Very often it is argued that the governments should not involve in media matters but the fact is that the governments have always fully involved in media matters all over the world. In addition to this, press has already been enjoying several benefits and high discounts on the postal delivery charges of newspapers in many countries of the world including the United States and Pakistan. This is a considerable financial support for print media including newspapers, magazines and books. In some countries, the postal charges have been waived off while in many other countries these have been heavily subsidized. Furthermore, the worldwide spread of internet could only be made possible by the heavy support of the governments in their respective countries. So, it becomes clear that the government support for media organizations has not been a totally forbidden thing. The 1945 decision of the US

Supreme Court also legitimated the interventionist role of government to protect press system in the US. According to this historic decision governments should formulate policy to support media organizations to strengthen democratic values of freedom of expression in the society.

Governments have long provided subsidy to newspapers in the form of government advertising, low postal rates, etc. They have provided far larger subsidies to radio and television. But there are many countries where media are owned and operated by the state (communist, sure, but also many African and Asian countries), the subsidy from governments has been quite small compared to that of advertisers. However, the important issue is to ensure media content free of governmental influences. Democratic societies can have some arrangements for media to act independently.

### **European Subsidy Model**

The track record of the democratic nations shows that countries like Germany, Norway, Canada, Japan, Britain, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden France and Finland pay huge press subsidies to support and strengthen their media systems. . There are certain international models that provide some significant information in favor of the government-media relationship. Several governments have been engaged in formulating and implementing policies to ensure diverse and free media. American paradigm encourages a libertarian media based on capitalist model. Benson and Powers (2011) state that many international media policies encourage government engagement to ensure diverse media. One specific example is from Sweden where journalism faced a terrible crisis almost 35 years ago. Many newspapers were on the edge of bankruptcies because of the financial crisis. The Swedish government



established a special fund to support the drowning journalism industry. The fund was administered under an independent agency to keep the government away to influence media content. Press subsidies were introduced by the then government, especially to support smaller newspapers. Nordenson (2007) confirms that the Press Subsidies Council of Sweden allocates a significant amount to support newspapers on the basis of their circulation. These subsidies played a pivotal role in preventing smaller newspapers to vanish. Swedish newspapers are also financially supported by a system of reduced taxes and direct distribution subsidies (Hadenius & Weibell, 1999). Initially, this phenomenon created a controversy in the society but with the passage of time people realized that plurality of voices and opinions is indispensable for a healthier democratic society.

On the other hand, France is considered as the champion of press subsidies. It has a different kind of supporting system for newspapers. Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy launched a wonderful plan to financially support the newspapers. Instead of giving money to newspapers he introduced newspaper subscription schemes for newspaper readers to buy newspaper of their own choice. He announced a one-year subscription of a newspaper of choice to every 18-year old boy or girl. He further announced a free subscription of newspaper to high school students. The purpose of this subsidy scheme was multi-dimensional. On one hand, it played a significant role in increasing newspaper reading habit among youth of France while on the other hand, it was a source of financial support for the newspapers of the country that were facing problems of heavy reduction in their subscription. It was a great plan to support the newspaper industry. Sarkozy stated that “it is indeed the state’s responsibility to make sure an independent, free and pluralistic press exists” (Pirot,

2009). In addition to these measures, the French government almost doubled its revenue expenditures for governmental advertisements to support the newspaper industry. Sarkozy further announced that the government will enhance its budget for the deliveries of newspapers and magazines from \$ 10.5 million to \$ 90 million (Pirot, 2009). Because of supporting its press system, France is included in the world's top countries on the ranking order of Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014).

Other European countries are facing more or less the same situation of newspaper crisis. Their subscriptions have been drastically downed and the advertising revenue has mainly been shifted towards electronic and digital media in the past two decades. Researchers found that the British government proposed some non-profit model to support the newspapers in crisis (Greenslade, 2009, McDonnel, 2009, Toynebee, 2009).

However, the situation is quite different in the United States of America where the newspaper industry has been under control of big conglomerates and other business and trade companies. Pfanner (2010) found that American newspapers made reckless cuts in editorial and production quality hastening the flight of readers and advertisers to the Web.

Journalism crisis is significantly less in European countries as compared to America because of several factors. Perhaps one of the most important factors is lower expectations of profitability and lesser commercial pressure in the countries of Europe. Benson (2009) observes press systems in Scandinavia, France, Germany and The Netherlands have been less likely than in the United States to be traded in the stock market, to be overly debt-burdened from mergers and acquisitions, and to be almost entirely dependent on advertising. The other possible reason might be a huge difference between profit expectations of the American news

media companies and their European counterparts. Many American newspaper companies expected 25% profit as compared to 5% in their European counterpart newspapers (Benson, 2009).

### **Public Service Model of Journalism in USA**

However, it does not mean at all that the public service model of journalism does not exist in the United States but the fact is that the model works in a different way in the US than in the European countries. American media's obligations to the public and government could have emerged differently (Pickard, 2010). Several experiments of the public service model of newspapers have been practiced successfully in the US. The municipal owned newspapers emerged as an attempt to introduce public service newspapers in the different states of America in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet another era of public service newspapers can be seen in 1930s when Congress considered a strong role of public broadcasting (McChensey, 1993). This was a period when newspaper guilds in America grabbed more control of the newspaper industry from the publishers (Scott, 2009). The Hutchins Commission was formed in the US in 1940 to deal with the then journalism crisis prevailing in the states. The Commission submitted its comprehensive report on the responsibilities of media in a democratic society. The Commission emphasized a stronger role of the government in providing diverse media and proposed more press freedom in the society. The Commission realized that the distribution of news should not be left solely in the hands of the private commercial companies (Pickard, 2010). The press was considered as a public utility that guaranteed universal access to necessary information. Meanwhile Federal Communications Commission was set up in the US to regulate newspaper content. The

Hutchins Commission also recommended formation of citizen councils to monitor local newspapers on the basis of cooperative relationships. It was also proposed by the Commission that the government should provide loans, subsidies and reduced postal charges to new newspapers to enable them to compete with the already existing newspapers. Furthermore, a self-regulation was recommended for the commercial press with an open possibility of future governmental interventions (Pickard, 2010). The press was strongly advised to become less dependent on commercial imperatives and economic pressures to face the market-driven crises. Ironically, most of the recommendations of the Hutchins Commission were either ignored or watered down by the business elite who used to dominate American media.

However, this was not the end of the story. Efforts continued for decades to establish a system of public service media in the US. Some prominent media scholars suggested a more affirmative role for media regulations by the government (Amar, 1998; Bollinger, 1991; Nerone, 2009). They felt that the government should resume its historic role of public service to guarantee the interests of public at large. In the aftermath of the World War II certain social movements emerged in the United States which resulted in the emergence of alternative media systems including the emergence of local and municipality owned newspapers. The phenomenon of an ad-free subscriber-supported newspaper also emerged although it could not survive for a longer time. Daily “*The Day Book*” of Chicago was such a newspaper that could not maintain its publication without advertisements (Milkman, 1997). Nevertheless, the model attracted a huge number of audiences for its unique quality of being ad-free newspaper. The other model was municipal owned newspaper that was followed by

*The Los Angeles Municipal News* published in 1912 by the then Municipal government of Los Angeles. Three citizen volunteers were appointed by the mayor of the city as a commission to run the matters of the newspaper for a period of four years. The mission of the newspaper was stated as “created by the people, for the people, and built for them under their control. It is in this sense unique” (Maynard, 1911). Usher (2008) found that the “Municipal news was truly hyper-local focusing on city level issues instead of national or international issues”. One of the senior journalists at the Los Angeles Times stated that municipal ownership might be a better option than letting the paper fall into the hands of a profit squeezing new owner (Chandler, 2006). Although not flourished too much, yet the Municipal model exists in many parts of the world with its unique characteristics. The model provides a solid base for the establishment of public service model journalism.

### **Strategies to save Journalism**

Several efforts have been taken out to strengthen media organizations in different parts of the world. Different scholars, media experts and researchers have proposed different models to overcome the problems and challenges of media in the contemporary world. An overall view of these suggestions and proposals can be categorized into two major categories; short term and long term reforms. Although these solutions may not be very perfect but these are workable and possible solutions.

### **Short Term Strategies**

A number of short term measures can be taken to save journalism and especially the dying newspapers and magazines in different parts of the world. Several short term policies can be helpful in rescuing the sinking newspaper industry. These measures highly depend on the

socio-cultural and economic setups in the relevant countries. The creation of a new ownership structure with a non-profit or low-profit model can be one of the best short-term solutions to save the salvaging newspaper industry. In this model, the newspaper organizations might be allowed to accept philanthropist tax-free donations to meet the expenses of the newspaper publishing. They could possibly be owned by some local foundation or some community organization whose basic purpose might not be to earn money or maximize their profit. Instead, their aim should be to provide news, from local to national and international with a purpose to serve community. The idea of low-profit or non-profit newspaper organization is getting popular in some parts of the world including the US where congress has been approached to pass some necessary legislation to grant legal protection to this kind of tax-free media organizations.

The idea of a program-related investment also strengthens this kind of media industry. Thousands of organizations are working to spread education all over the world. They can be motivated to launch their tax-free newspapers to strengthen their motive of spreading education. These newspapers can be welcomed at local or community level. This kind of local journalism can also be a better substitute of the big national newspapers owned by conglomerates and media moguls and giant businessmen and industrialists who always serve their commercial interests instead of serving the communities by providing them an accurate picture of the world. The local schools, hospitals, libraries and public offices could be provided free subscription of these newspapers as a return of the financial benefits and grants given to these newspapers. Charity organizations can also play their role in this regard by

purchasing a discounted subscription of these newspapers for the poor and needy people who could not afford to buy a newspaper to read.

Giving financial benefits and tax exemptions to small newspaper owners will definitely need some kind of legislation according to the prevailing financial infrastructure of the initiating countries. It might need legislation from the parliament houses. It might need a strict system of check and balance to avoid misuse of this model by the big conglomerates and media moguls. The beneficiaries of the subsidy model journalism should be restrained from selling their newspaper's assets and shares to other companies. They may also be forbidden to extend their support for any political party or pressure group. They must be refrained from supporting any religious or sectarian group. The newspapers that fulfill these commitments may be given a status of tax exemption and receiving donations etc. These short term measures can play a significant role in salvaging newspaper industry in the developing countries as well as in the developed countries.

### **Long Term Strategies (Proposing Public Service Model of Journalism)**

Democracy and media are indispensable for each other. Democratic societies of the world need strong media to serve public and society. A strengthened public media system is a basic requirement to sustain journalism. Market driven journalism is not a solution to support democracy. Commercial media always protect their commercial interests. They cannot safeguard the public interests. There is a need to develop and support public media system free from the influences of market economy. Only governments can support a diverse interest-free media without intervening media content. Governmental funding for public media might be the last resort to save journalism. Therefore, many long term reforms are

required to develop a public service model of journalism. Governments should provide sufficient funds to establish and maintain public media operations. The public service model has got tremendous support from different corners all around the world, especially in the developed countries. Earlier the idea of press subsidies was discouraged but now it is getting space in the communities all around the world. In 2010, the president of the Columbia University of New York wrote a letter to editor that was published on the opinion page of the Wall Street Journal under a title “Journalism needs Government’s help” which supports the idea of the governmental support for salvaging newspapers. The world-wide popularity of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) is the best evidence in the favor of public service model of media that disseminates international news in the whole world without any commercial interventions.

Supporting media organizations by the governments is not a rare or unique idea, it has already been existing in some shape in different parts of the world. However, some developed nations spend a significant amount on public media to provide information and education to their public. For instance, Canada spends 27\$, England 87\$ and Denmark 100\$ per person every year to support public media that work without financial interests of the market. In Denmark, much of the funding for public media is collected through television license fee and a tax on electronic devices (Silver, Candance, Aarone& Turner, 2010). Nichols (2010) found that the investments in public media in some of the advanced countries resulted in excellent reporting standards and programs that serve people from different walks of life including women, children and minorities. They also covered groups and regions that were ignored by commercial media because of their financial priorities. The United States



also funded its public media for almost four decades. Currently, there are several bills under discussion at several forums including the US senate and the Congress.

One of the world's most popular, credible and authentic magazines "The Economist" publishes Democracy Index every year which ranks all the countries of the world on the basis of how democratic they are. According to the latest available report of 2014, the top four nations on the list are Norway, Iceland, New Zealand and Sweden. These nations are included in the world's top six nations who subsidize their press systems (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). It shows that the world's top democratic nations consider press freedom as a crucial indicator of democracy. The annual report of the Freedom House also confirms the results of "The Economist" which states that the nations with freest and best press systems are the most democratic nations (Freedom House, 2014).

### **Challenges to Public Service Model of Journalism in Pakistan**

However, the situation is altogether different in developing part of the world. In these countries two parallel systems are going side by side, state owned media as well as privately owned media. In most of the countries like Pakistan, the private commercial media model is relatively a recent phenomenon while state-owned media have a long history in these countries. There have been a series of problems with the state owned media in countries like Pakistan. The ruling parties have been using state owned public media for their personal and political agendas. Before the regularization of private TV channels in 2002, Pakistan Television was the only TV channel in Pakistan which is still owned and controlled by the Government of Pakistan. Same is the case with Radio Pakistan. It is the only nation-wide radio service in the country that is owned and controlled by the Government of Pakistan.

History tells that both of these state-run media organizations have served the serving governments. With the adoption of public service model of media, the biggest challenge will be to save journalism from the governmental influences and hidden pressures. Strict policies will be required to refrain governmental institutions to control media content. For this purpose the establishment of some independent media council may be the solution of the problem to make necessary arrangements to ensure media free from governmental and political pressures. This council may consist of some retired members of judiciary, prominent journalists, intellectuals and media professors.

Yet another challenge in countries like Pakistan is that most of the prominent newspapers are owned by big media moguls and industrialists. Their purpose has been to protect the commercial interests of their owners and companies. They do not deserve any kind of governmental support. Only those newspapers should be included which are run by individuals or non-profit organizations. However, newspaper subscription of some reputed national English newspapers to talented students of universities and colleges as a prize will be a great job in increasing their knowledge and supporting newspapers' subscription. Journalists should be supported to make their investigative news projects possible.

Furthermore, there are hundreds of local and regional newspapers being published from cities like Multan, Bahawalpur, Hyderabad and Abottabad that really need governmental support for their survival. These newspapers are doing great job in highlighting local issues and problems and giving voice to voiceless people living in far flung areas of the country. The incentives like financial support or free subscription for college and universities' students can play a pivotal role in strengthening these newspapers that are otherwise going to

die in the coming decade of electronic media and internet. The subscription charges should be paid by the government. It will help increase the regional newspapers' circulation. There should be some fixed portion (quota) of governmental advertisements for the regional and local newspapers.

Municipal model journalism can also be adopted in some areas of the country. After a long delay local governments have been established in the recent local government elections held in different parts of the country in different phases in 2015. Municipalities can allocate some minor budget for the support of local and regional newspapers in their respective areas. They should arrange subscription of newspapers for the students of local colleges. This practice will be helpful for developing newspaper readership in the young generation. However, the content of the newspapers should be monitored to avoid any unexpected results. These newspapers should be directed to publish content for the use of students and youth. This way, municipal supported journalism will be useful for the society. Furthermore, the idea of community supported newspapers is also practicable in some parts of the country where philanthropists can support publication of community based newspapers to serve the communities. Will of the people should be given importance in this phenomenon for the smooth operations of these newspapers. This kind of community based newspapers can bring people closer and can create atmosphere of mutual understanding, love, peace and harmony among different ethnic, sectarian, religious and political groups.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the paper leads us towards some significant findings. First of all, the newspapers' content is a public good that is mandatory for a democratic society. Democracy

needs journalism for its survival. There is no substitute of journalism. The future of democracy is at stake because of the journalism crisis. Secondly, the advertising support model of journalism (business model) does not exist after its diversion from print to electronic and digital media. Thirdly, the commercial and business model of newspapers does not fulfill the expectations of a civilized society since newspapers only serve the commercial interests of their owners in this model. This model does not allow journalism to play its role of surveillance and watchdog. Keeping in view this situation, governmental intervention is required to establish a public service model of journalism. Now-a-days, journalism is passing through one of the worst crises of its history worldwide that needs some radical changes in its structure to save its existence. The international models working in the democratic countries including the US suggest a governmental role in supporting the newspapers and magazines. These measures are vital to make the press free from the commercial interests of the market. Journalism crisis needs funding of an alternative media that should be free from vested interests and commercial benefits. The commercial system of newspaper organization heavily dependent on advertisements cannot fulfill the requirements of a democratic society. It cannot guarantee the plurality of voices and viewpoints that is a basic component of democracy. These inbuilt limitations of the commercial media pave path for the establishment of a public service model of journalism. The market-driven media cannot fulfill all of the requirements of a democratic society because of its motives of free economy and profit maximization. Private capital alone is almost unable to protect and flourish professional journalism. Therefore, public subsidy is one of the most important solutions to save journalism. The current crisis of journalism is alarming since it is the matter of the

future of journalism. We have to save journalism in its real idealistic shape with its duties and functions in a democratic society. Only the state intervention can save the democratic imperatives of journalism. There is a need for the democratic governments to legitimize the establishment of a public service model of journalism. This way, the current crisis of journalism may find some new way of survival and prosperity free from the market fluctuations.

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