

NAVIGATING PERIL: THE IMPACT OF THREATS ON JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES AMONG CONFLICT REPORTERS IN DI KHAN

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ABSTRACT

Conflict reporters face challenges, threats, and risks in the line of duty. These hazards are not ordinary in their impact. Threats, fears, and insecurities are the reasons for a journalist to compromise his work ethic. This study explores the difficulties faced by conflict reporters and their effect on professional ethics. Through a survey 50 journalists from conflict-prone region D. I. Khan were investigated about what kind of threats they face during conflict reporting and how it hampers their professional ethics. The results reveal that primary danger the conflict journalist faces in this region is threat to life. This peril, to some extent, hinders them to practice journalistic ethics while reporting conflict.

Key Words: Compromise on Ethics, Journalistic Ethics, Threats to Journalists, Compromise on Objectivity, Dera Ismail Khan

INTRODUCTION

Reporters covering conflicts have distinct, and serious challenges that distinguish them from their counterparts covering less unstable areas. Norris (2007) says that, Freedom to express feelings and freedom of the press is essential for the growth of democracy, development and dialogue. For that media should be given the free access to the information that can be disseminated for the purpose of society building. But Puddephatt (2006) emphasize that at the same time journalists need to remember their ethical and professional standers and have to keep their promise of being objective and reliable. We see that in times of conflict this job becomes more critical for the journalists, as they have to report conflict while keeping the sensitivity of the situation in mind. To report a Conflict with the sensitive approach inspires the role of journalism to contribution in a resolution of a conflict says Howard (2004). Media not only act as a channel of communication but also by presenting the views of every concerned party it helps to harmonize the society. With the passage of time traditional conflicts have been changed from warfare between nations to the conflict between People, Communities,

Ethnicities and Religions. So to find their solution is not an easy task.

Media can also be very effective in providing early warning of potential outbreaks of conflict (Howard, 2002). Pakistani media has not only experienced a mushroom growth in numbers, but has also gained considerable independence during this time. Realizing the effectiveness of the media, the parties involved in conflict have been engaged in influencing the media. The journalists and reporters operating in conflict hit areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; find themselves caught between the Law enforcement agencies and militants, which have also resulted in journalists themselves becoming a target of violence. According to Reporter without Borders (2012), Pakistan is among the 5 deadliest countries for journalists in the world and again according to Reporters without Borders (2015) Pakistan is ranked as 158TH in list regarding dangerous countries for journalists and since 2002 till 2015 more than 75journalists and media workers have been murdered or killed in Pakistan in the name of "War on Terror". News Organization along with shortage of resources and equipment they all are

hiring new blood from the market with no experience on hand to fill the job situations in their channels and these untrained news reporters and cameraman are at the highest risk of being manipulated or get killed during conflict times. Their desire to be the “first on spot,” leads them to the dangers of conflict and exposes them to the warmongers. Total Population of Dera Ismail Khan is 852,995 people according to 1998 census. Population of Dera consists on Baloch and Pashto ethnicities a big segment of Urdu speaking also lives in Dera Ismail Khan and Saraiki is the native language. Dera is connected to Bannu through highway which further connects it to Peshawar the capital of the province through Kohat and Dara Adam Khail. Millanwali is connected to D.I.Khan through Chashma. Third road is connected to Bakharr in Punjab on the west bank of Indus River. Fourth road connects Dera Ismail Khan to Zob in Baluchistan while Gomal Pass connects it to the Afghanistan.

Reporters in DI Khan, riven by prolonged turmoil, face challenges beyond the standard hazards of their jobs. Their professional conduct is significantly impacted by the atmosphere of dread and uncertainty created by these threats, especially those pertaining to their lives. The purpose of this study is to investigate the particular risks that these journalists encounter and how those risks affect their capacity to uphold journalistic ethics. Through a survey of fifty combat reporters from DI Khan, the study illuminates the degree to which reporting ethics are compromised when life-threatening threats arise. The results highlight the main risk to conflict journalists in this area and show how it affects their professional activities.

Objectives and Problem statement of the study

Objectives of the study are to analyse that how often journalists working in D.I. Khan have to compromise journalistic ethics because of threats of violence.

The aim of the research is to find out if the journalists have to compromise on journalistic ethics while covering stories in a violence ridden region by taking a case study of Dera Ismail Khan which is one of the most conflict prone areas in the country.

Research Question:

RQ2: How often do the journalists have to forgo ethical considerations because of threats of violence?

Hypothesis:

H1: Journalists who feel more threatened have to compromise on ethics more

Often

The main limitation of the research is violence and conflict prevailing in the region due to which journalists were afraid to provide information to the researcher. Although there have been many researches looking at the professional integrity of working journalists in Pakistan yet there have not been many researches analyzing the role of violence in influencing the professionalism of journalists. Further this study will help Media Students, Academician and Policy Makers to understand the problems faced by journalists who report conflict and help them to reduce the chances of being threatened or get killed only for the sake of story. It's not only the journalists who have to survive the day but it's the impact of the conflict coverage on the journalist which needs to be investigated too. This research will help Local and National Media Organizations to take confirm steps for the safety of their journalists working in D.I. Khan.

Peace Journalism Model

In '60's the idea of “Peace Journalism” was introduced by Professor Johan Galtung, but later Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick groomed it into a complete field. This model presents the notions that to bring positive change in the world is in our hands, and that the violence can't be the only solution, and that to understand the sufferings of others leads to a better mankind to live in, and that all humans on earth are equal and there is no such difference that can inferior one from the other. This model suggests that human needs indulge into cooperation and dialogue in order to bring peace in the world. While talking about the role of journalists this model suggests that journalists must use their sense of analysis while covering conflict. In the same way as journalists who cover health have the knowledge of terms and issues related to health so as conflict reporters covering conflicts need to have the knowledge of how to analyze a conflict properly. According to him it's not only the conflict that needs to be reported but it's the solution of the problem which needs to be reported as well.

Lee & Maslog (2005) examined that out of four Asian regional conflicts which one is framed as war journalism or peace journalism. Study was based on four conflicts which involved Indonesia, Sri Lanka,

Pakistan, India and the Philippines. During analysis of the content of 1,338 stories of 10 newspapers it was found that mostly war journalism frame was used in the reporting. And Indian and Pakistani reporting of the Kashmir dispute identifies strongest war journalism frame whereas Tamil Tiger movement and Mindanao conflict involving Sri Lanka and Philippines indicated peace journalism frame. Study suggests that those newspapers reporting under the peace journalism frame were following the pattern of avoiding bad words, and were using impartial approach to the issue. And newspapers using war journalism frame were following the dichotomy of good and bad. Peace journalism is considered to participate into conflict resolution and is titled as responsible journalism. Hanitzsch (2004) argues that process of peace journalism is supported by the human nature of knowledge seeking. And mass communication theory suggests that peace journalism has powerful effects on masses. He reiterates that if the role of media is only to provide social co-orientation and if the media is not engaged in the peace-making process actively than, we must realize that to make peace within the society is the task of military and politicians. But we must not forget that journalism can become an essential part of peace-making process but yes, the ability of media or journalists to influence this process is limited. Yakubu (2014) states that analogous patterns of war journalism are reproduced in the alternative perspective by using tone of hatred and a doubt related to terrorist's identities. In Aljazeera TV&Press and BBC&CNN TV, Peace journalism content is produced by events of the peace process and peace propaganda than by the much-ideated peacemaking media. Katherine, et al. (2012). emphasize on the proximity to a conflict and argue that, immediacy to a conflict urge you to report less pessimistic view on the conflict and demands to use the peace journalism model rather an eye of distance, which showcases only the complexity of the conflict.

Conceptual Framework

Perceived Threats by Journalists

According to Price (2002) "The end of the 20th century witnessed dramatic changes in the structure, scope and depth of media across the globe". With the growing number of media outlets across the globe news shift in the handling of the press has also been witnessed especially in under developed or newly

developed countries. New laws and less political interference have allowed media of those countries to talk about the sensitive issue prevailing in their societies. Technology has enabled the people to communicate and disseminate local happenings, at the same time receiving News and information from the other end.

Castells (1999) states that during conflict and especially in international conflicts media's role has brought new challenges to the ground. He argues that technologies play important role in conflicts; now-a-days when we are living in a network society these roles of media technologies have changed the meanings of the conflict. And most of the media organizations are using these smart technologies for the purpose of information dissemination in conflict times and also to understand the communication from far areas. War Journalism is the style of the todays conflict reporting and media are prone to present a conflict in more sensationalized way. (Kempf, 2002: 227). Shinar (2003) states that media's presentation of a conflict is inspired by war journalism frame rather than peace journalism frame because journalists like to put drama and sensationalism in their stories of conflicts.

Compromise on Ethics

As White (2008) says "In the 2000s the dominant voice in international politics "you are with us or you are against us" has corrupted journalism and weakened its democratic role in society". It tells us that Public has faith in news media for holding on to the truth and for revealing untold facts, and that makes media reliable. As said by Howard (2013) "the significance of media is obvious; a reliable news media enables well-informed citizen decision-making that, when freely exercised in turn contributes to democratization. Reliability here refers to journalism, that is, accurate, impartial and socially responsible". So being part of the big picture, a journalist must not compromise on ethics of journalism. As pointed by Mwesige (2004) that the attitude of Ugandan journalists towards ethics was different from the traditional conceptions in the west. Most believe that using questionable means to obtain important information is not unethical. Therefore, using government documents without authorization, employing hidden microphones and cameras were considered to be the norm. Another common practice is that of being paid by the news source to publish, kill or change a story or breaking confidentiality

agreements with sources. However, Mwesige (2004) suggested that some of these practices appear justifiable because the journalists have to work under the circumstances where bureaucracies does not provide favor and journalists face lack of access to information and lack of journalistic trainings regarding journalistic ethics.

According to Pasti (2005), journalists in Russia work under the umbrella of norms already prevailing in the profession and culture. The most significant results of the study relate to the relationship of the journalists' attitude and society at large. Pasti (2005) observed in his research that mostly journalists of post-Soviet era do appreciate objectivity and honesty in their work, to their contemporaries and themselves, to maintain high quality work.

Herscovitz (2004) also analyzed the ethical perceptions of Brazilian journalists by conducting a survey using questions concerning dubious journalistic practices. His results have shown that Brazilians were more likely to explanatory or justifying some of these unethical or controversial practices than journalists in America and France. Gender also played a crucial role as the research showed that the as compared to female journalist's, male journalists were okay with using all unacceptable practices during their reporting. Another difference that was observed concerning about the medium journalists were working with. Television journalists endorsed different practices from print journalists. Age also proved to be an interesting indicator as seasoned journalists with longer work experience holding authoritative positions like editors and managers, in different organizations does not consider wrong about using unacceptable journalistic practices. Journalists enjoying freedom to work consider their freedom and authority a permit to use questionable practices.

Tehrani (2002) worked on Global Media Ethics under the frame of Peace Journalism and analyzed terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, Tehrani demonstrated that we live in dependent, susceptible, and breakable global village. Tehrani (2012) claims that using ethics during reporting is responsible journalism and it is an absolute need for peace journalism.

Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature, involving survey from journalists who have been reporting from D. I. Khan. Population of the study was journalists working in D.I. Khan. According to the data of Two main organizations Press Club Dera Ismail Khan and Union of Journalists in D.I. Khan list was created comprising of 86 names. After removing overlapping the number was reduced to 62 journalists working for 22 Local and 28 National organizations. Questionnaires were distributed among all 62 journalists and after wait of 7 months researcher received 50 complete questionnaires, number left were the journalists who had been out of town or were busy in their routine projects, and as researcher had to complete thesis within the period of one year study leave so researcher decided to not to wait further and started working on the data received by 50 journalists. Sample of this study was 50 journalists from local and national electronic, print media and news agencies who have been reporting for more than 5 years from D. I. Khan. As sample of the study were journalists of D.I.Khan and research was a case study so the sample was purposive or non-parametric sampling. For the purpose of survey, a questionnaire was constructed keeping in mind the objectives, research questions and hypothesis of the study to better facilitate the process.

Results

In total, 50 journalists were surveyed for this research and all of the journalists were male. 22 among the working journalists of D.I.Khan were working for Local Newspapers, 11 journalists were working for National Newspapers, 14 were working for National Electronic Media and 3 were working for National News Agencies. Among those 50 journalists, 46 were married and 4 were unmarried. 21 of the journalists were of the age 41+, 14 were among the age group of 36 to 40, 12 were among the age group 31 to 35, 2 journalists belong to the age group 26 to 30 and 1 respondent fall in the age group of 20 to 25. With reference to education, it was found that 18 journalists had a Master's degree, 24 had the Bachelor degree, 5 journalists had any other/diploma, and 2 had completed their intermediate while 1 had completed only matriculation. Most of the respondents' i.e. 28 had work experience of 5 to 10 years. 14 had the experience of 11 to 15 years, 9 had the experience of 16+ years. Monthly income of journalists varies as

25 journalists were earning 21 to 30 rupees, 12 were earning 31 to 40 thousand, 6 were earning 11 to 20 thousand, 5 were earning up to 10,000 and only 2 were the journalist earning more than 41 thousand rupees.

In response to the question that, mostly what type of news you report for your organization? 48 of the journalists had replied that they cover all type of news in the area for their organization and 2 reported of covering only social news of the area. When question related to having any journalism/mass communication degree was asked 29 journalists respond in NO while 21 respond in yes means 21 out of 50 respondents had the degree of journalism/mass communication either in master or bachelor. When journalists were asked, that, if they had taken any course or workshop related to journalistic Ethics, 42 of the respondents respond in yes and 8 responded to No.

Table 4.1: Length of experience

Experience	No. of Years
5-10 years	28
11-15 years	14
more than 15 years	9
Total	50

Computed variables

During statistical measurement researcher combined different aspects within research to compute new variables. And new variables were computed through the help of SPSS so that they can be measured in impartial way.

Computed variable 1: Threats

By using SPSS a new variable entitled threat was computed which included all the 8 statements pertaining to the threats being faced by the journalists including, Life threats associated with violent acts/terrorism-related events make it difficult to report the actual situation, At times the law enforcement agencies pose a threat to life or physical well-being of journalists, At times the Taliban pose a threat to life or physical well-being of journalists, I often consider relocating to someplace safe, Sometime I avoid going myself for reporting to the place / area where some terrorism-related act happens and request other colleagues for the story, I often avoid reporting terrorism-related events because of life threats, Sometimes my family members get threats calls when I report some terror-related act, I often think about quitting reporting profession due to life threats because of conflict reporting, My family is not happy with my conflict reporting. Later descriptive analysis was conducted through which it was found the minimum response fell at 14 and the maximum response fell at 38, Mean was 22.78 and Mod of the data is 23.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of new variable Threats

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Threat	50	14	38	22.78	4.377

Compromise on Ethics

Compromise on ethics was the fourth variable which was computed with the help of SPSS. All of the 3 statements of questionnaire were computed under the title Compromise on Ethics; it's difficult to perform journalistic activities in your area without compromising professional ethics, Due to external pressure, most of the time I have to compromise

objectivity while reporting some violence related story in my area, The element of accessibility also affects the accuracy of news stories. Statistics have shown that minimum response was 5 and maximum response was 15 whereas std. Deviation was 2.40756. Mean of this variable was 9.8600 and Mod was 11.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of computed variable Ethical consideration

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethics	50	5.00	15.00	9.8600	2.40756

Hypothesis testing

H1: Journalists who feel more threatened have to compromise on ethics more often.

When journalists were asked if they have to compromise on journalistic ethics during conflict reporting because of the threats of violence, most of the journalists agreed that they do compromise on journalistic ethics because of threats of violence. In Table 4.8 it is shown that journalists agreed on that life threats associated with conflict reporting demand them to compromise on their journalistic ethics. Then researcher tried to find a relationship between variables perceived threats and compromise on ethics and H1 was tested through Pearson’s correlation through SPSS. Results of Pearson’s correlation

indicated a strong relationship between perceived threats and compromise on ethics and this relationship is a liner relationship according to statistics.

According to table 4.9, Mean of the Perceive Threat is 3.28 and St. Deviation of the Perceived Threat is .573. While Mean of compromise on ethics is 9.86 and St. Deviation of compromise on ethics is 2.408. As shown in Table4.10, Pearson correlation is .517**which is highly significant relationship between Perceived Threat and Compromise on Ethics. Through scatterplot a liner relationship was found between Perceived Threats and Compromise on Ethics. A *line of best fit* was found in scatterplot.

Table 4.8 compromise on objectivity due to life threats

	SD	D	N	A	SA
Due to external pressure, most of the time I have to compromise objectivity while reporting some violence related story in my area.	18%	28%	6%	44%	4%
Life threats associated with violent acts/ terrorism-related events make it difficult to report the actual situation.	0	24%	6%	54%	16%

Table: 4.9 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perceived Threat	3.28	.573	50
Compromise on Ethics	9.86	2.408	50

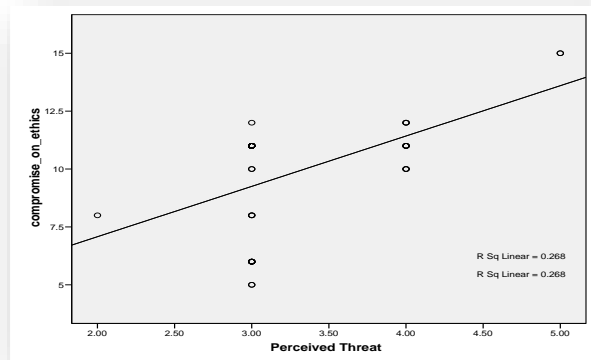


Table 4.10: correlation matrix of perceived threat and compromise on ethics

		Perceived Threat	Compromise on Ethics
Perceived Threat	Pearson Correlation	1	.517(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Compromise on Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.517(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 N=50, p>0.000

Figure 4.1: Strong Positive Relationship



Computed variable perceived threat an independent variable is on the X-Axis and computed variable Compromise on ethics a dependent variable is on the Y-Axis of the scatterplot. Responses of Journalists are in dot form in the scatterplot showing a straight line strong positive relationship between Perceived threats and compromise on ethics. So, on the bases of statistical results it is stated that Hypothesis#1 of the study is proved.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestion

This study examines the problems faced by journalists during conflict reporting, working in a violence ridden region Dera Ismail Khan. A Journalist witnesses, the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, the noble and the evil, defeat and the victory, the life and the death. So, in this journey of journalist, he is alone to suffer the sufferings of other. His job of reporting, demands 24/7 duty, in times of peace and during times of conflict.

During conflict main concern of the researchers is journalist's loyalty to his profession. Being vulnerable to be manipulated, a journalist's reporting from conflicted area is suspicious. Life threats associated with their work continuously keep them worried and restless. Still, they provide truth sometimes half sometimes whole. To report conflict, is full of dangers, danger of not representing the truth, danger of misleading the masses, danger of missing the big picture, danger of out breaking the hatred, danger of provoking the mob, danger of hurting other or one's self, danger of becoming the reason of someone's death or costing own life. It has to be realized by the journalists that they are operating at a considerable risk, not only to themselves, but also to their family and counterparts. So, any mistake can lead to serious consequences and

potential threat to their lives and to the lives of others. As stated by Udomisor, et, al. (2015), that media does play its role in conflict. Sometimes it intensifies the situation and in other times it hides the facts because they don't want to become a reason to increase tension and in both ways media compromises on its Objectivity. Udomisor recommends to media, to uphold and apply objectivity in its reporting to manage and to resolve conflict. If analyzed under the light of Udomisor words it can be said that, Journalists of Dera Ismail khan compromise on ethic of objectivity, because they don't want to intensify the situation or because they are afraid of any or both of the pressure groups. When journalists of Dera Ismail khan have revealed that those journalists who enjoy support from their parent organization feel less threaten but study has also revealed that only organizational support is not enough for journalists to stop compromising on journalistic ethics. Here researcher suggests that other factors like monthly income, education, and training of journalists, may also be considered which may have effect on journalist's loyalty to his profession in conflict prone region. When investigated regarding journalistic training from journalists of Dera Ismail Khan their response was positive that they do consider training important and when provided with chance they do train themselves. When asked if journalistic training enables journalists of Dera Ismail khan to maintain their journalistic ethics during conflict reporting it was found that yes it does. Journalists having journalistic training carry their norm of objectivity with great care in their conflict reporting but number of such journalists is very low. This study also suggests that conflict reporting is an art and can be learned by practice and training. So, Media

organizations working in Dera Ismail Khan need to train their journalists regarding journalistic ethics.

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