



Job insecurity and self-censorship in Pakistani media

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ABSTRACT

This research study aims to understand how job insecurity leads to self-censorship in Pakistani media and how different gatekeepers influence journalists' decisions when they report the news content. Media in Pakistan has been going through a critical phase. Scores of journalists have been sacked by their respective organizations because of depleting financial revenue. Some organizations have drastically reduced the salaries of their journalists, and many others do not pay salaries in time. Data for this research was collected from 366 journalists across Pakistan through questionnaire, which was analyzed via the statistical tool SPSS. This study has found a majority of journalists are not even provided equal to a minimum wage of labourers, and the 8th wage board award is yet to be implemented. Most of them are working on an ad hoc and contractual basis. The owners of their media organizations fire them anytime without any reason as there is no legal cover to their jobs. The government, media



owners, and other state and non-state actors force journalists to follow their instructions instead of practicing quality and objective journalism. Thus, job insecurity has a significant effect on the performance of journalists, and it is one of the major factors in the practice of self-censorship.

Keywords: *Self-censorship, Pakistani media, wage board award, job insecurity, manipulation of content, legal cover, threats*

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the role of job insecurity in self-censorship and the process of selection of news among journalists in Pakistani media. Journalism in Pakistan is going through a difficult time, and many journalists have been sacked by their respective media organizations. The majority of media outlets have decreased salaries and are not providing even minimum wages to journalists in time. Job insecurity is a great threat to the future of journalism and freedom of expression in Pakistan. The history of the Pakistani media is witnessed that different pressure groups often compel journalists and media organizations to follow their guidelines. This compulsion leads to self-censorship and restriction on the freedom of expression. Lack of job security and organizational support ultimately destroy the employees' performance.



Financial restraints sometimes force a devoted and honest journalist to compromise and practice self-censorship. This situation demands research to understand how journalists are forced to self-censor. Journalists remain cautious in selecting news due to internal and external gatekeepers to secure their job. The gatekeeping theory explains that news events or issues have ‘forces’ that either assist or restrict the channel through the gatekeeping process. This study investigates how job insecurity promotes self-censorship among journalists in Pakistani media.

The alarming situation of uncertainty and insecurity of jobs in media organizations is better reflected by the fact that the Jang Group shut down three of its journals; consequently, more than 900 journalists were laid off in a single day. Dunya Media and *Express* groups also sacked more than 200 journalists. The severity of the crisis can be gauged from the sad fact that several journalists committed suicide. Moreover, a health reporter also suffered a brain haemorrhage due to severe mental stress after he was sacked (Tayyib et al., 2020). The government-owners nexus has forced journalists to follow their instructions by practicing self-censorship. The media owners and the government serve each other’s interests at the cost of journalists and fair journalism. The non-implementation of the wage board award for journalists in Pakistan is a classic example. The owners influence the



content of print and broadcast media to increase their profit. Consequently, journalists cannot report and write news stories independently, and they have to work according to the owners' demands. In many instances, journalists have been physically thrashed because of their reporting (Memon, 2015).

Journalists have to pay full price for writing against corruption, organized crimes, and highlighting local issues. The military forces and the authoritarian governments are persistent in silencing the voices of journalists at any cost. Journalists, freelance journalists, and even bloggers are also targeted for expressing their views. Journalists face violence such as killing, physical attack, rape, arrests, detentions, convictions, and psychological stress. Senior journalists Matiullah Jan and Ahmad Noorani, an investigative reporter, were kidnapped from federal capital Islamabad and later released. Journalist Absar Alam was shot injured in the federal capital, and journalist Asad Toor was beaten inside his house, but the perpetrators of violence against them have not been traced so far (Orgeret & Tayeebwa, 2020).

History shows that successive governments particularly dictatorial regimes have always tried to bring the media under control, and for this purpose, governments legislate laws and regulations to keep the journalists



in control. The government and establishment misuse the national security laws against the journalists in the name of national security. Likewise, the Official Secret Act has granted the state sufficient powers to curb freedom of expression. Journalists have shown their reservations against the ‘The Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA) 2016’, but the government has not paid any heed to the reservations of the journalists. Contempt laws are also used against journalists. Journalists are forced to practice self-censorship due to these laws (Aleem et al., 2021; Liaquat et al., 2016; Ricchiardi, 2012).

Some media outlets appoint journalists without any salary package, and journalists are asked to make money through exploitation and blackmailing. Fear of job loss, downsizing trends, and increased competition increases job insecurity. Most journalists work in private sectors, and the private media organizations have their own terms and conditions. Job is usually contractual or on an ad hoc basis; therefore, all the time, job insecurity prevails in the minds of journalists, which strengthens the culture of the practice of self-censorship. In the present circumstance, it is quite hard to cope with the challenges posed by job insecurity and financial constraints. The owners of media organizations are more interested in their businesses than the development of real journalism in the country



(Eijaz et al., 2014). The owners force the journalists to manipulate the content of news stories to secure their interests. Journalists face forced termination if they defy the dictations of the owners of the media outlets. They don't get salaries from their employers on time. They face massive pressure from the owners of their media outlets to break the news and manipulate information for their business and political interests. International organizations monitor the safety of journalists in Pakistan but have no idea that journalists face how much psychological pressure to bear (Jamil, 2019).

Research needs to be conducted in the prevailing scenario to explore journalists' work in Pakistan. This study aims to know the impacts of job insecurity on the practice of self-censorship in Pakistani media and to explore how the journalists select the news to disseminate to the social system in light of the process of gatekeeping theory. The study will help understand the process of gatekeeping in selecting news in Pakistan.



LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is related to the existing studies conducted by different researchers on self-censorship due to job insecurity. In the contemporary landscape of Pakistan, self-censorship has become very noticeable in the Pakistani media. The media industry is going through a crisis. Several newspapers and a television channel have shut down their operations over financial restraints due to the current government's measures. Many journalists have become unemployed, and several media organizations have laid off the services of reliable journalists on the excuse of downsizing. Many media outlets have cut down the salaries of the affiliated journalists, and the surviving media workers are facing problems in getting in-time salaries. The research study of (Tayyib et al., 2020) found that several media outlets workplaces are stressful for journalists. They are underpaid, and their salaries are also not in time. A major news channel of Nawa-e-Waqt group has closed its operation, and Jang group three journals are shut down due to financial problems. The government has reduced the volume of advertisements to media organizations. Resultantly, 900 journalists were rendered to termination in one day. *Express* and *Dunya* media group also terminated the services of more than 200 journalists. Job insecurity forces them to practice self-censorship. The research study of (Siddiqua et al., 2020) further informed that Job insecurity affects the



performance of journalists, and they prefer to practice self-censorship to save their jobs. Journalists in Pakistan practice self-censorship due to job insecurity.

The majority of journalists in Pakistan are not paid even the lowest labour wages. They can be terminated at any time by the media organizations. The research study of (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018) found that the tax record of the media organizations of Pakistan shows that 95 percent of their staff remained unpaid. They are not on a regular payroll. They have no job security and do not have job descriptions. Journalists do not have even the lowest rates of salaries. Such people will not uphold the standard of objective and authentic information and would practice self-censorship. The research study of (Mezzera & Sial, 2010) further informed that most Pakistani journalists get low salaries and work on contracts besides a few famous anchor persons. Their jobs are not permanent. About 85 percent of journalists even do not have any contract, and they could be fired any time by the owners of the media organizations. Correspondents are working without any salaries, and even press cards are not provided to them by their respective media organizations. Journalists are not paid salaries as per the eighth-wage board award by the media organizations. Small wages do not create opportunities for investigative journalism as there



are no separate funds available for research and investigation. This adverse situation leads to the practice of self-censorship to save their jobs. The research study of (Riaz, 2021) noted that inside and outside forces of media outlets impact the content of media in Pakistan. These forces include job insecurity, pressure groups, organizational sources, personal biases, and economic constraints. Pakistan can realize its true objective only by minimizing the factors affecting investigative journalism in Pakistan. Journalists are forced to practice self-censorship, which affects the freedom of expression, credibility, and media neutrality. The research study of (Ullah & Jan, 2021) found that media owners, government, and institutions in Pakistan decide what to report and how to report. In the entire process of news production, journalists have no say. The journalists will lose their jobs if they refuse to report these events. So, job insecurity is a major factor faced by the journalists with psychological and physical threats.

Security threats to journalists put them in an awkward position by forcing them to observe self-censorship. The research study of (Nisar et al., 2019) informed that journalists are kidnapped and even killed. After 9/11 in Balochistan, 21 journalists were killed, 19 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 9 in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas, 4 in Punjab, 3 in Islamabad, and 15 in Sindh. Crime against journalists and journalism in Pakistan has



greatly affected press freedom. The research study of (Rawan & Hussain, 2017) found that journalists have impartial assessments of the real causes of violence in Karachi but remain silent to practice self-censorship due to fear of insecurity. In Balochistan, the situation is very difficult for journalists. Self-censorship remained in their minds. The research study of (Shirazi, 2017) found that when journalists report news stories, they have self-censorship in their minds not to cross the red lines.

The Pakistani journalists take the role of gatekeepers due to the factors of job insecurity, threats, low salaries, security issues, and long office workings. There seems to be a relationship between gatekeeping and self-censorship in Pakistani media organizations. The practice of self-censorship among Pakistani journalists is due to some observable factors which also serve as gatekeepers. The pressures of these factors influence shaping media content and independent editorial decisions of media houses (Shabir et al., 2019).

Job insecurity is the core issue for journalists. Other issues like low salaries, security issues, and the long working schedule of the journalists also affect their work. The research study of (Ahmed, 2019) found that journalists are dissatisfied with their jobs due to job insecurity, low salaries, threats and security issues, and long working hours. Journalists have to



practice self-censorship for these reasons and other reasons like religious intolerance, political pressure, military involvement, and the feudal system in Pakistan. The overall working environment for journalists in Pakistan is not good. They face job insecurity and other basic problems, which force them to practice self-censorship. Researchers (Hanan et al., 2020) concluded that the working conditions of journalists in Pakistan as a whole seem unfair. There is no job security for journalists, their wages are very low, and they face violence and risk. This situation forces them to practice self-censorship, and they cannot properly work. The government also uses different tactics to control popular journalists, and in this way, it wants to control the media content. Journalists prefer to practice self-censorship to avoid government and media owners' pressures. According to (Ashraf & Shabbir, 2020) journalists come under pressure from the government and the owners, and they prefer to practice self-censorship to avoid pressure.

In Pakistan, economic pressure restricts media from performing the role of watchdog. The research study of (Memon, 2014) revealed that it is common for media in Pakistan to face economic pressure, threats, and violence. The Pakistani media performs a small role as a watchdog. There is direct pressure of censorship in Pakistan, but journalists have been indirectly compelled to practice self-censorship for external reasons;



therefore, self-censorship is a major issue in Pakistani print media. In Pakistan, journalists curtail their news stories to favour the interests of the owners of their respective media organizations. Mainly they are doing so because the owners of media outlets have control over their job security and wages. The research study of (Riaz, 2011) concluded that job insecurity, low salaries, and lack of other facilities had compelled journalists to play in the hands of the vested interests elements and to make compromises that lead to the practice of self-censorship.

In other parts of the world, like in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), job insecurity is also a major factor in the practice of self-censorship. The research study of (ZEYBEK, 2020) informed that while sharing the content of political and social issues on Facebook, the participants experience self-censorship for various reasons. There are fears of losing jobs, fears of isolation in the workplace due to their political views, and stopping the expected consequences of holding dissimilarities in political opinions with their bosses. They expressed concerns that their managers and the government monitor their Facebook accounts to know about their political views. They also restrained themselves from sharing their political and social issues on their Facebook accounts. They believe



that the government and its institutions are using Facebook to monitor the citizens' activities on social media.

The issue to be investigated in this study is the non-coherent relationship between the performance of journalists and their job insecurity. The observable outcome of this nonconformity leads to self-censorship. The literature overview depicts a gap of non-regularization of services of journalists and non-presence of legal cover for their services in media organizations.

Theoretical Framework

The gatekeeping theory developed by Kurt Lewin has been used in this study. Gatekeeping explains the process of selection and construction of news and its dissemination to the social system.

Kurt Lewin's Gatekeeping Theory suggests how 'Items' are selected or rejected while passing through channels and could be applied to news flow. Gatekeeping is a process in mass communication through which the possible news messages transmitted by the media are examined, shaped, and produced. A number of decisions are taken from the source to reporters and a series of editors regarding the news items to continue or stop it from passing through the news channel. The social reality communicated by the media is constructed. It is not just an in and out decision. There is a concept that issues or news items have forces that either help or restrain the channel



through the process of gatekeeping. The forces may be different in strength and polarity informed by (Shoemaker et al., 2001).

The gatekeeping theory has been employed as a theoretical framework for this research study to explain how internal and external gatekeepers influence the journalists' decision of selection, shaping, and crafting news to be disseminated to the masses. According to this theory, gatekeeping is the entire process of selecting, constructing, and disseminating news to the social system.

Relation between Gatekeeping and self-censorship

On the organizational and personal level of journalists, there are filters that serve as gatekeepers. These gatekeepers have a check on the work of journalists. The policies of media organizations, government, pressure groups, job insecurity, and other large numbers of forces work as gatekeepers. These gatekeepers influence journalists' decisions about what to disseminate and what not to the masses. There is a relationship between self-censorship and gatekeeping theory; therefore, this theory best serves this research study as a theoretical framework.



Research question of the study

RQ1: Do job insecurity force journalists to practice self-censorship?

Research Methodology

The research question raised in this research study can be best answered among the other different research methodologies through the Survey method. The researcher used a quantitative method for the collection of data. In this connection, a quantitative survey method was employed to collect data. Survey method help in getting the most reliable data from the relevant population. Opinions of the journalists were ascertained through well-written questionnaires. The survey approach is popular and considered effective for getting data in social sciences. Similarly, Likert-type scales are commonly used in survey questionnaires to measure attitude and observations (Rahi, 2017).

For this research study, the data were directly collected from journalists by visiting the five press clubs of Pakistan. These visits were paid to Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, and Quetta press clubs and offices of the media houses in the five cities of the country for the collection of data. The research questionnaires were distributed among the journalists and collected data directly from them as primary source data. The media houses have sacked many journalists in the name of downsizing. Due to limited staff in the offices of the media outlets, the researcher faced hardships in



collecting data from the relevant population. However, the researcher managed reliable data from the representative respondents to generalize the study's results.

Sampling and Sample Size

Journalists associated with the press club of the federal capital of Pakistan Islamabad and four provincial capitals, including Lahore of Punjab, Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Karachi of Sindh, and Quetta of Balochistan province, were the population for the survey method of this research study. The total number of journalists attached with the Islamabad press club was 3182, Lahore, 3030, Peshawar 430, Karachi 1861, and Quetta press club was 140. So, the total population of the research study was 8643 journalists. Journalists of all ages and gender were included in the population of the survey.

For the survey of this research study, the sample size was conducted according to Sloven's formula. According to the election results of the press clubs, the total strength of the journalists in five press clubs was 8643.

The researcher has kept the marginal error 5 percent to select a representative sample and get accurate results. As per Bryman and Bell (as cited by (Taherdoost, 2017)) margin error is 5 percent acceptable in social



sciences research. So, the sample size of 382 was selected for this research study as per the Slovin's formula.

Each press club sample size was calculated as per the proportional allocation method. As per (COCHRAN & BOBAK, 1977) in the proportional allocation method, the sample size is distributed in a proportional way among all strata according to the size. The sample size distribution only depends on the stratum size and neglects the difference and stratum cost.

According to the proportional allocation method the sample size of the five cities is given below. Islamabad = 141, Lahore = 134, Karachi = 82, Peshawar = 19 and Quetta = 6

From Islamabad, 136 journalists out of 141 responded, Lahore 126 out of 134 respondents, Karachi 79 respondents out of 82, Peshawar 19 respondents out of 19, and Quetta 6 respondents out of 6 participated in this research study by filling the questionnaires.



Sampling Technique of Survey

For data collection in the survey method, simple random sampling of probability sampling method was used. The researcher selected simple random sampling as the data collection from journalists was not possible through other sampling methods. Quantitative methods of data collection largely depend on random sampling, and the result attained through such methods is easily summarized, compared, and generalized (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and entered in SPSS software for its analysis. The formula recommended by (Chaudhry & Kamal, 1985) was used at the univariate level.

$$\text{Percentage of data class} = \frac{f}{N} * 100$$

Do job insecurity force journalists to practice self-censorship?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
|-----------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Islamabad | 1 0.7% | 15 11.0% | 17 12.5% | 80 58.8% | 23 16.9% | 136 100% |
| Peshawar | 1 5.3% | 5 26.3% | 4 21.1% | 8 42.1% | 1 5.3% | 19 100% |
| Lahore | 10 7.9% | 22 17.5% | 23 18.3% | 57 45.2% | 14 11.1% | 126 100% |



| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Karachi | 0 0.0% | 31 39.2% | 12 15.2% | 34 43.0% | 2 2.5% | 79 100% |
| Quetta | 0 0.0% | 1 16.7% | 0 0.0% | 00 0% | 05 83.3% | 06 100% |
| Pearson Chi-Square | Value 78.22 | Df 16 | P-value 0.000 | 179 48.9% | P<0.05 | |

The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the collected data to obtain descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics show that 12 (3.2%) respondents strongly disagree, 74 (20.2%) disagree, 56 (15.3%) neutral, 179 (48.9%) agreed and 45 (12.2%) strongly agreed.

Inferential statistics chi-square was used to examine the association between job insecurity and self-censorship among journalists of five different cities. It was found that Job insecurity and self-censorship are highly associated as the p-value obtained was less than 0.05. The research data supported the research question that job insecurity and self-censorship are highly associated.

Limitations

In this research study, the researcher faced the following limitations.



1. Lack of cooperation on the part of journalists in getting data.

It was made possible through the help of friends' journalists who used personal contacts in Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, and Quetta. In our country, the research environment is not yet strong enough; therefore, journalists are not much sensitized regarding the importance of academic research for journalism's future.

2. Due to the financial crisis in the media industry, the strength of journalists has decreased considerably as the media outlets have terminated a large number of journalists. The collection of data from the respondents was difficult because there was a skeleton staff in the media offices due to Covid-19 pandemic.



RESULTS

RQ1. Do job insecurity force journalists to practice self-censorship?

This section tells the reader that job security is essential for journalists to avoid the practice of self-censorship. An independent environment is required for journalists to practice their profession. For practicing freedom of the press, job security protects journalists because owners of media organizations pressure them for removal from service if they do not follow their guidelines. This can be seen in the following table.

Do job insecurity force journalists to practice self-censorship?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Islamabad | 04 2.9% | 21 15.4% | 19 13.9% | 81 59.5% | 11 8.0% | 136 100% |
| Peshawar | 01 5.2% | 05 26.3% | 04 21.0% | 08 42.1% | 01 5.2% | 19 100% |
| Lahore | 05 3.9% | 34 26.9% | 19 15.0% | 47 37.3% | 21 16.6% | 126 100% |
| Karachi | 02 2.5% | 13 16.4% | 14 17.7% | 43 54.4% | 07 8.8% | 79 100% |
| Quetta | 00 | 01 | 00 | 00 | 05 | 06 |



| | | | | | | |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 0% | 16.6% | 0% | 0% | 83.3% | 100% |
| Total | 12 | 74 | 56 | 179 | 45 | 366 |
| | 3.2% | 20.2% | 15.3% | 48.9% | 12.2% | 100% |

The majority of surveyed journalists agreed in all five cities that one of the factors of the practice of self-censorship is the insecurity of jobs. Several media organizations in Pakistan have been closed down due to the financial crisis in the media industry. Many journalists have lost their jobs during the ongoing economic crisis in the media industry.

Job insecurity has created a sense of insecurity among journalists. Media outlets are not providing salaries to the journalists according to the prevailing price hike in the market. There are many cases in which the media organizations have not even signed any written contracts with the affiliated journalists regarding their appointment. Resultantly, they are liable to lay off any time. Insecurity of jobs has severe effects on the performance of journalists. In the ongoing financial crisis in the media, many journalists have been laid off by their respective media outlets. In many media organizations, the journalists are not paid their salaries for months. Media outlets also reduced journalists' salaries, and several organizations provide their salaries in installments. Self-censorship negatively impacts freedom of



expression, credibility, and media neutrality. Job insecurity works as a gatekeeper on the professional work of journalists. The report of (*International Media Support*, 2017) informed that job insecurity is a potential threat to the profession of journalism. Media outlets often do not take notice of the low wages and the standard for working conditions of the journalists. The financial constraints compel media workers to adopt some other jobs along the side of their profession that are often contradictory with the profession of journalism.

Job insecurity has adverse effects on the performance of journalists. The research study of (Qamar et al., 2020) found that in the presence of job insecurity, the performance of journalists is not up to the mark in their professional careers. It forces journalists to practice self-censorship for the sake of saving their jobs. The findings of this study correlate with the findings of (Qamar et al., 2020). Other researchers (Tayyib et al., 2020) concluded that there are stressful working conditions for journalists in several media outlets. They are paid low wages and salaries paid to them very late. These results conform with the results of this study. Several print and broadcast media outlets, including Daily News, *Herald of Century* Publications, Waqt News and News Line have closed their operation in Pakistan. A sizeable number of over 5000 journalists have lost their jobs by



sacking them from their respective media organizations. Salaries of thousands of media workers have also been reduced from 15 to 35 percent (Ashar, 2020). Insecurity of jobs has negative impacts on the performance of journalists, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. Journalists prefer to practice self-censorship to save their jobs. Another researcher (Memon, 2015) found that journalists are paid low or unpaid. In many cases, journalists do not even sign written employment contracts with their respective media organizations. The findings of this study endorse this result.

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists considers the government a hurdle in the non-implementation of the eighth Wage Board Award. Due to the lack of its implementation, journalists are not getting wages according to market demand. Low wages divert journalists towards unfair means of earning. Journalists are forced to practice self-censorship due to job insecurity and low wages. The research study of (Yusuf & Schoemaker, 2013) found that, as a whole, the media industry suffers from ongoing job insecurity. Many owners of media organizations pay late to journalists. Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) held the government responsible for failing to implement the eighth Wage Board Award. Organizations of Broadcast media in Pakistan have no legislation regarding



the compensation of journalists adequately and consistently. As a result of low wages and persistent job insecurity make journalists inclined towards bribes in return for favourable coverage in the media. This practice discredits the reputation of Pakistani media and undermines its ability to play an independent role. Such a situation forces journalists to practice self-censorship. Another research scholar (Shahzadi, 2021) informed that the financial crisis in the media industry affected the labour rights of journalists and particularly the balance of work-life. Presently, journalists have greater concerns regarding the insecurity of their jobs than the work-life balance or psychological wellbeing.

The research study of (Ayoub et al., 2021) found that most journalists in Pakistan cannot present information without practicing self-censorship. Generally, in Pakistan, four factors give rise to the phenomenon of self-censorship among the journalists, i.e., job insecurity, the pressure of owners of media organizations, or policies of media organizations, the military, and the judiciary. Self-censorship affects the neutrality of media, the credibility of media, free journalism or freedom of expression, objective and factual reporting in Pakistan. It also affects the role of the media as a watchdog. Self-censorship also has a negative impact on the performance of journalists. Other researchers (Nizamani et al., 2020) informed that the



field work had been restricted during the Coronavirus pandemic. The majority of newspapers have reduced their pages, and the advertisers have limited advertisements. The media organizations have downsized their staff and also curtailed their salaries. A respondent said that he was also among those journalists whose salaries had been reduced. When he raised his voice against this injustice of reducing the salaries, the owner of his media organization terminated his services at that crucial stage of the pandemic instead of helping him. He said that job insecurity has made the journalists insecure, and they were forced to practice self-censorship to save their jobs. The findings of this research study endorse the result.

Journalists are insecure in terms of job loss as the media owners try to secure their interests at the cost of the free press, and they are least bothered about the interests of the journalists. Job insecurity has psychological stress on the journalists, and they were forced to practice self-censorship to save their jobs. Journalists are also compelled to follow every directive of the owners of the media organizations to compromise on the freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Thus, self-censorship is a challenge for the future of journalism and the freedom of expression in Pakistan.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to investigate and examine the practice of self-censorship in Pakistani media due to job insecurity. The results of this study infer that job insecurity plays an important role in self-censorship as journalists could not afford joblessness. It becomes difficult for journalists to earn two times livelihood for their families in the existing circumstances.

The study further explains that there are different reasons for self-censorship in Pakistani media, but job insecurity is one of the burning reasons. The majority of media outlets in Pakistan do not even sign job contracts with their respective journalists. The owners of the media organizations have the power to terminate the services of any journalist anytime as the owners face no legal repercussions of such terminations. There is no legal cover for the services of journalists in the country; therefore, they are vulnerable to termination anytime. The majority of media organizations provide minimum wages to journalists, and they are not qualifying even the minimum wages of labourers. Maximum of journalists are not getting good packages in salaries. Low financial incentives force journalists to incline other unfair means of income. The owners of media organizations have terminated many media workers due to the recent financial crisis in Pakistan's media industry on account of current government measures to curtail the advertisements volume. Several media



organizations like Waqt News Channel of Nawa-e-Waqt group and others have also been shut down, rendering hundreds of journalists jobless. The findings of this study revealed that such a situation compels journalists to adopt some other jobs alongside journalism. These side jobs are often contradictory to the profession of journalism, which have negative effects on journalistic profession. There are also media outlets in the country which do not even provide salaries to journalists on time, and they have to wait for months.

This research finds that 8th Wage Board Award has not been implemented so far. There is a nexus of the government and the owners of media organizations on the issue of not implementing the wage board award in letter and spirit. Governments are reluctant to implement the wage board award because they can't annoy the owners of the media outlets to carry forward the legacy of vested self-censorship in Pakistani media.

Another finding of the study is the presence of different kinds of pressures on journalists, including threats from various quarters. They are forced to practice self-censorship by powerful actors, including the government, owners of media organizations, and other forces. There is no mechanism in place in the country for the security of journalists on the part of respective media organizations and the government. Journalists are



abducted, tortured, and even killed. The government and its institutions have so far failed to trace the perpetrators of crimes against journalists. The practice of self-censorship has also decreased the role of media as a watchdog. The government wants to minimize the role of media as a watchdog, not to highlight the government's wrongdoings in the media. For this purpose, the government puts pressure on the owners of the media organizations, who further force the journalists to toe the government's policy.

The research study ascertains that insecurity of job affects the performance of journalists. They cannot focus on their primary job as job insecurity is a hinging sword on their heads that work as a gatekeeper on journalists. The gatekeeping is causing the practice of self-censorship. The weak financial position of the journalists has left a narrow space for investigative journalism to bring forth in-depth information regarding corruption and other scandals to the public to make the government accountable for it. The practice of self-censorship is not good for the future of journalism in the country as journalists could not raise their voices against the injustices being meted out to them; otherwise, they would lose their jobs. Journalists would struggle for their rights at the cost of their jobs which they could not afford. A press, free of self-censorship, is mandatory for



democracy, freedom of expression, and the following fundamental rights of the people in the country.

Practical Contributions

This study shows that there are several reasons for the practice of self-censorship in Pakistani media, but job security is very significant for journalists. Without job security, journalists face many financial problems. There is a need to give legal cover to journalists' jobs, and a procedure for recruiting journalists should be incorporated into the Country's law. There should also be a mechanism in the Law for removing journalists from their services. An increase in journalists' salaries through Wage Board Award should be made part of the annual budget to ensure the provision of competitive salaries to the journalists in the light of prevailing price hikes in the market.

Theoretical Contribution:

The main value of a gatekeeping theory is to review the different forces that play a role in decisions making about selecting content to be disseminated to their audiences. It grants a framework to researchers (Roberts, 2005). While looking at the phenomenon of self-censorship in the light of gatekeeping theory, which is related to this study as it examined self-censorship in the media of Pakistan. The study's findings are significant as the journalists of Pakistan practice self-censorship and select the news to



be disseminated to the social system under the influence of the internal and external forces (gates).

Future Research

The researcher collected data from senior journalists and Bureau Chief/Resident Editors in this research study. In the future, the study should be expanded to owners of media organizations to look into self-censorship from another angle in the Pakistani media.

Recommendations

There is no legal cover for the security of jobs of journalists; therefore, the research study recommends that law should be enacted to provide security for the jobs of journalists in the future to ensure freedom of the press. Under the law, there should be a mechanism for the recruitment of journalists and their removal from jobs so that the owners of the media organizations could not remove them easily. Salaries of journalists should be made strictly according to the Wage Board Award. The board should be part of the budget to increase journalists' salaries like government servants and others to discourage the culture of self-censorship. Such measures would create an environment where journalists could carry out objective journalism.



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