

Role and ethics of pakistani media media essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Media has become double-edged sword for a society while it has the power to shape and reshape public opinions. Media has been playing very effective role since its inception, with the passage of time gained extraordinary power. It can influence and change the beliefs, norms and the structure of a society. Latest technologies have exceptionally amplified the power and utility of the mass media and at the same time have put huge pressure on media scholars to rethink and redefine the guidelines of ethics for media practitioners. Media can form the public opinion from one point to another. Media has vital compulsion towards the society as it has “ to inform” “ to educate” and “ to entertain” but it has been working as ‘ opinion maker’ more than else. It can change a hero to villain and a villain to hero. There are some ethics that media has to follow according to the society’s norms. These ethics are not the written rules that state promulgates but the sense of responsibility make media to follow them. Every society has its own norms that cannot be implemented on others so media has to follow different norms in different societies.

Research work of Kai Hafez, *Journalism Ethics Revisited: A Comparison of Ethics Codes in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia* (2002), discussed about the ethics of media in Muslim and European states that what ethical codes those states have. Muslim rulers did not allow media to be free. They imposed strict policies on freedom of expression and freedom to information. The study revealed that political frame for a free media was established in a country and free expression is the inevitable consequence. Media, in Muslim states, cannot criticise and negatively depict their rulers.

The study also argued regarding the ethics of media as western media demands for a common global ethics, which should be noticed as western media programmes that are available in Muslim states like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan etc, creating ethical problems regarding the social norms as it promotes pornography taken as ‘ cultural invasion’ into Eastern societies that are not much open like West.

Journalism ethics in Europe and in Islamic world have evidently diverse corridors. While talking about Islamic world, the state authorities promulgate ethics, which make difficult to cover the important issues of the society. While in West, media ethics protect the individual rights to express almost everything. These diversities established that Western codes promote individualism and the codes followed in Islamic states are based on collectivism.

The codes of ethics for ‘ good journalism’ seem more complicated. Both sides, West and Islamic states, try to protect personal privacy or even try create balance in news coverage according to the norms of their society. Islamic codes are stricter as compare to Western codes that provide much protection of privacy and sensationalism. However, it came with lower freedom of expression in news coverage regarding the state, the society and religion.

Arab states stand first in strictness as Saudia Arabia does not allow publishing or broadcasting any thing even against their sect and other Arab states as well as other oriental states follow these traditions. Islamic Mass

Media Charter of Jakarta 1980 demands journalists to be more loyal with religion that is impossible in West.

Although rights of freedom of expression are inbuilt parts but only in documents and most Islamic codes, restrict the freedom of expression. Some Islamic states have misused the traditions and norms of their societies for their own interests of remain in power as long as they want or at least as they can.

In western states, individuals have been enjoying freedom of speech and have talked about every issue openly what they want to discuss. Comparison between these two codes is much easy to distinguish them as both are going on opposite direction.

Role and Ethics in Pakistani Media

Media Ethics in Pakistan, a research report of Gilani Research Foundation (GRF) was selected to review its results and findings as well as its effect on developing code of conduct for Pakistani media. The organization is working to enhance and support scientific methods in the field of social and political research. The aim of the organization is to train and support the Pakistani social scientists, market researchers, media planners about the nuances and challenges of research in Pakistani environment. The report was developed after a survey back in 2002 in Pakistan.

In its introduction, report presents a comprehensive analysis of the role of Pakistani media as it says the role of media has significantly been increased in Pakistani society. Media is affecting people personally, socially and politically. In 2007, Pakistani people were watching talk shows more than <https://assignbuster.com/role-and-ethics-of-pakistani-media-media-essay/>

entertainment programmes. Two reasons were behind that increase in talk shows' viewership, one was that those kinds of programmes were new to Pakistani society and the other was that Pakistani people take interest in political issues and current affairs that attracted people.

The report also examine the scope of the media that has been stepped-up however, before 2001 country had only PTV, a state-run television channel, which had provided news, entertainment etc., People did not have any other choice of watching TV channels. However, after the start of independent private TV channels era, they attracted the Pakistani people with great power. Lots of news channels begun telecasting the talk shows and 'breaking news' that no doubt start spreading information among the masses but it also put an important responsibility on media that while enjoying the freedom and power to reshape the opinion, media has to be more responsible and consider society norms during broadcasting. Unfortunately, Pakistani young media has made so many mistakes. Every TV channel wants to be 'The first' in breaking the news and maximum viewership of their talk shows so they put ethics aside.

GRF's report also discussed the growth of mass media in Pakistan, which was very much helpful to understand the nature of Pakistani media. It is all necessary to develop an effective code of conduct that media should be examined carefully and comprehensively. This portion of the report covered the growth of Pakistani media in last 50 years when 80per cent of the population were living in rural areas. They people did not have access to information due to lack of literacy, improper road conditions that constrained the speed of delivering newspapers and cost of the newspapers had

somehow been played a role in distribution of information. Having all these problems, media did enjoy a significant role at that time. Nevertheless, media boosted up the area of its reach day-by-day and start participating to shape the civil society.

In a part of ' print media', the report explained the role of newspapers and magazines, which have increased its circulation by 10 times, as it had 50 years back. Readership of newspapers were divided in regulars and casuals including English and Urdu readers. Price of the newspapers had also affected its circulation that why half of the readers borrowed newspapers. The report suggested that how newspapers survived while passing through hard times of restrictions by the authorities, especially by the dictators. During Zia's regime newspapers had to get their copy approved from PID[1]on repeatedly every day. They were not allowed to publish news stories that criticising the government. PID instructed them what to be published and what not to be. Once a mainstream English newspaper ordered by PID to remove a news story from the paper, it left the space blank to give people a message that here was a news story but government did not allow us to publish (Zamir Niazi 1986).

About electronic media, report revealed that TV has become an important part of Pakistani society as more than 80per cent of urban and almost 50per cent of rural population own TV sets, watched regularly but the high effect of its content has been exaggerated. The number of campaigns against the political parties was remained unable to make people to change their loyalty. The report marked the relationship between reach, awareness, attitude

formation and behaviour change as very much complex to understand. Less than 50per cent of people having radio sets, listen it regularly.

It is far more essential to be aware of the role of electronic media along with its influence and boundaries while developing the code of ethics.

The report further lay a hand on the parameters of media ethics that what should be codes for media, which has to cover political, commercial and social issues. However, discussed little more that a code of conduct should linked with global norms to ensure the programmes and advertisements discourage violence, ethnicity, religious discrimination and hatred. Media should respect the sovereignty and culture of the state that are declared in the constitution.

The report talked about Pakistani authorities those were working to establish a regulatory body and official code of conduct for media. At that time, a bill draft proposing codes of ethics that media should:

Be accurate

Promote truth

Be fair

Respect the right of privacy

Repress any kind of discrimination

Decrease harm in society

Report in decent way

<https://assignbuster.com/role-and-ethics-of-pakistani-media-media-essay/>

Droop violence

Discourage sensationalism

Avoid to be slander and libel

Media supposed to provide accurate information. Unconfirmed and incorrect information could create huge problems in society as well as among countries.

However, Pakistani media is in race of ratings that makes it as fast as it can be.

With the aim to defeating others, media practitioners, most of the time spread wrong information, which sometimes made them sorry and urged them to publish contradictions. Regarding TV programmes, PEMRA[2]rules say, ' No programme shall be aired which contains material which may be detrimental to relations of Pakistan with other countries' (Section A, Clause 1/O). However, few months back, a Pakistani English news channel broadcasted an unconfirmed Wikileaks cable accusing India that Hindu extremist lobby could attack Pakistan. The report also suggested that Indian government supported by genocidal army that propagated against Pakistan. The report created problems between the two countries. Wikileaks pointed it out a wrong cable so that Pakistani media had to publish contradiction.

In recent news, while reporting on President's health issue, media seemed clueless about the facts that why actually Mr. Zardari went to Dubai, every news channels and newspaper reported different information that were proved wrong. Media should avoid speculation-based reporting.

<https://assignbuster.com/role-and-ethics-of-pakistani-media-media-essay/>

Media personnel must be fair and have to be objective rather subjective.

Media have to put both sides of a picture in front of its viewers or readers and let them to develop their own point of view regarding any issue.

However, Pakistani media either print or electronic, in its content, looks like biased that favor one party and trying to prove the others wrong. Talk shows are at their best to doing this where some anchor persons taking side of their 'beloved party'. They specially criticized the government, reason of doing this is that Pakistani people were always complaining against the government policies and somehow they were right but it is not an anchor's job to do so. Media ethics demand them to be fair and unbiased. Geo's self-proclaimed most watched talk show "Aaj Kamran Khan Kay Sath" is a best example of this because the programme always trying to establish that government has failed to deliver and it has to go home very soon.

Opponents of the government are invited in the talk show. Print media also doing the same while publishing news reports. Another talk show entitled "Hasb-e-Hal" of Dunya News has also been doing the same as it always portrayed negative picture of national institutions, politicians and Pakistani society but in humorous way. Now in current issue of Haqqani's Memo scandal, almost every anchorperson of TV channels and news stories of newspapers seem to prove Hussain Haqqani guilty while the case is in court. Media ethics demand them to inform not to pass the verdict that he is guilty or not.

Pakistan is an Islamic state and Islam asks to reduce harm and promote harmony in society. According to the PEMRA rules, 'Programmes must not be directed against the sanctity of home, family and marital harmony'

(Section A, Clause 3). Pakistani media supposed to play its part according to this rule but a one can easily see contrary reality of its performance. Like many broader ethical systems, journalism ethics include the principle of limitation of harm. This often involves the withholding of certain details from reports such as the names of minor children, crime victims' names or information not materially related to particular news reports release of which might, for example, harm someone's reputation. Reporting of accident or rape case, reporters along with camera operator reach victim's house and start report in dramatic way that would hurt the feelings of affected family.

Another PEMRA rule tried to decrease harm by saying that, ' contains an abusive comment that, when taken in context, tends to or is likely to expose an individual or a group or class of individuals to hatred or contempt on the basis of race or caste, national, ethnic or linguistic origin, colour or religion or sect, sex, sexual orientation, age or mental or physical disability' (Section A, Clause 1/c). Nevertheless, TV programmes of disabled persons can often be seen on Pakistani media those will hurt the feelings of disabled people. So many sex-orienting dramas, religious, ethnic and sex-based documentaries have also been part of TV programmes.

For some offensive material is acknowledged as important to the story.

Indecent words, videos and pictures are often seen in Pakistani media.

Vulgar stories, immodest dialogues and indecent dressing of actors in TV

dramas, are unsuitable for Pakistani society. Shouted-anchors sometimes

used harsh language. Indecent content should be moved from front to inside

page of newspaper and in TV programmes from prime time to late night,

when children are not watching and the PEMRA rules say that ' No

<https://assignbuster.com/role-and-ethics-of-pakistani-media-media-essay/>

programme shall be aired which is against basic cultural values, morality and good manners' (Section A, Clause 1/i) and ' Particular care should be taken to ensure that programmes meant for children do not contain objectionable language or are disrespectful to their parents or elders' (Section A, Clause 2).

During floods in 2010, in name of ' information' media, especially electronic media put affected families on show with their broken houses, crying and appealing for help. Media could easily inform masses regarding the devastation and the most flood-hit areas without exposing the harsh reality of the condition of flood victims by showing the destruction through charts and maps.

While reporting a scuffle between she-males in unfitted way as they physically had beaten each other, media had ignored the PEMRA rule which says ' denigrates men or women through the depiction in any manner of the figure, in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or derogatory' (Section A, Clause 1/L). As few of them were shirtless and used, abusing language but camera operator did not take of the camera and the telecasting authorities did not stop that vulgar piece of video.

To regulate TV advertisements, the PEMRA rules said, ' No advertisement shall be permitted which glorifies adultery, lustful passions or alcoholic drinks or the non-Islamic values' (Section A, Clause 2/d), but advertisements of facial and hair removing creams, body lotions, beauty soaps etc, promote adultery and lustful passion among young generation. All these activities are absolutely against the Islamic values.

It is violation of privacy rights to publish private information about someone who has a logical expectation of privacy. No one has the right to interfere others personal matters. Investigative reporting demands some extraordinary efforts to get hidden truth of any important event but sometimes journalist's efforts violate the right of a person's privacy.

The report also talked about the ' media actors' that includes media personnel, audience and the judges who are the third party to examine the role of media and its effects on the behaviours. Nowadays, media industry has become a huge commercial industry, which has a complete hierarchy of professionals as owners, managers and other professionals. The report argued that the role of media owners should be limited in the organization as their focus would be only on maximum profit and they could violate the code of ethics that demands something beyond the financial benefits. There should be a board of professionals, which run the organization according the codes.

Conclusion

All fields of lifework ought to have set of rules to follow to ensure the safety of the society as well as themselves. Those rules also ensure restrictions on who could take personal benefits of his/her position in immoral way.

This research is a well effort by GRF to discuss the ethics in Pakistani media. However, there are so many areas that were remained untouched, as it talked about the journalism ethics that are already existed but did not recommend anything new for ethical codes.

A comprehensive history of print and electronic media in Pakistan was thrash out in the research, which is, somehow, looks irrelevant when it revealed the result of a survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan, which provided information regarding the number of people in Pakistan who are watching TV, listening radio and reading newspaper regularly.

GRF's report should spoke about the criteria for ethical codes, freedom and limitations of media organizations according to norms of Pakistani society rather to discuss how many people buy newspapers, and how many borrow it from other. It should reveal the actual performance of the media that is it working efficiently and obeying the ethical codes or just focusing on financial benefits. If media working against the journalism ethics than how much it is affecting the society negatively and how it could be put on the right way.

Norms of Pakistani society should also be discussed, which will be very much helpful to judge the existing ethical codes. This kind of judgment, which was missing in the report, could make someone able to develop new lines for media to follow.

This country paper of GRF conferred the parameters of media ethics that it should caters the need of public according the norms but the paper did not speak how media could build up a proper code of ethics that is acceptable for every one. This is not reasonable, in a paper on media ethics, to present information about scuffles between governments and media regarding the content, which was published in newspapers over the years, purely based on personal conflicts. If the conflicts were based on code of ethics related to society's problems, in that case, it would be better for both the government

and media organisation, it would help government to promulgate official code of ethics as well as would help media to put and maintain pressure on government's erroneous policies.