The impact of ideological Level of Influences on Conflict Reporting in War Zones

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Abstract: This study examines the linkage between ideological level of influences and conflict reporting. We conclude that journalists are influenced by the political, ethnic and religious ideas. Hence, the ideological level of influences has significant influence on the journalists' performance in conflict reporting. According to the findings of this study the ideological level is the most powerful in influencing journalists' reportage in war zones. This study has implications for journalists and journalism. Such studies can be very supportive for validation of diverse theoretical preposition of the influences of various level of hierarchy model with relevance to conflict area media coverage and reporting by adding more valuable insights into exiting literature. Journalist working in conflict zones must have some of the necessary qualities, might be inherent parts of a journalist's personality; others, gained through experience and discipline.

Keywords: Ideological level of influences, Conflict reporting, Journalist, Conflict Zones

1. Introduction

The conflict, itself is very hard thing to cover but in case of conflict reporting, it is harder to report conflicting issues in media, either in print media or in electronic or online media. While reporting any conflict for media, it seems awkward to narrate whole story as it is. Journalist affects the news content along other social institutions and forces. So, conflict journalism needs to be evaluated within variable analytic framework where dependent variable (news content) always gets affected by multiple independent variables. The news reporting itself, is a complex thing, it is not as simple as it looks. Every piece of news reflects any particular frame of mind uncovers the editorial policy. Many research studies found that communication and information dissemination by news describe various features of events happening around us but they lack, mostly of time consistent theoretical framework. Field reporters mainly try to connect happening by giving a limited coverage of bottom line. They cover any event by measuring the "number of" and "image of" any happening. However, Warren Breed and David Manning White are pioneers to associate research-based mode with news content and journalist's input and factors associated with field reporting. They tried to explain the phenomenon of social control of the newsroom by introducing news process as gate-keeping process. The unproblematic view of journalism then opens to research by catering news as form of knowledge and socially constructed reality (Ashraf, 2020).

Manning White's theory of the gatekeeper role of journalists in shaping news content has faced significant criticism from scholars who argue that it is overly reliant on the individual journalist's own preferences and biases. Critics argue that this approach fails to take into account the larger structural factors that influence the news production process and shape what is considered newsworthy. Scholars have pointed out that the gatekeeper role is not just limited to individual journalists but is instead the result of complex interactions between journalists, editors, news organizations, and the larger media environment. For instance, the profit-driven nature of the media industry often

results in news outlets prioritizing sensational and profitable stories over more substantive and important issues. This means that news organizations are more likely to prioritize coverage of celebrity gossip and sports over more critical issues such as climate change or social justice. In addition to these structural factors, scholars have also pointed out that journalists are not always free to choose what they cover and how they present it. News organizations often have clear agendas and biases, which can shape the content and framing of news stories. Furthermore, journalists may also face pressure from advertisers and other stakeholders, who can influence the type of content that is produced and the way it is presented. Another important factor that has been highlighted by scholars is the influence of political and ideological considerations on the gatekeeper role of journalists. In many cases, journalists may be more likely to prioritize stories that align with their own political views and beliefs, rather than providing a balanced and impartial representation of events. In light of these criticisms, it is clear that Manning White's theory of the gatekeeper role of journalists is too narrowly focused on the individual journalist and fails to take into account the larger structural and institutional factors that shape the news production process. In order to fully understand the gatekeeper role, it is important to consider the complex interplay between individual journalists, news organizations, the larger media environment, and political and ideological considerations.

Conflict journalism demands more analytic outlook involving risking ground field reporting. However, it also caters evident portion of happening which is quite violent. During data gathering and news coverage, journalist have to face messy are not clearly defined like a container. The routine tasks get reversed and stricter policy of language under the umbrella of multiple surrounding influences drive a field reporter towards clarification, definitions, assumptions and empirical indicators. Here every journalist must analyze the field situation fully by understanding all involving effects of their planned activities. He must be aware of consequence of his actions before, while and after the task completion and mutual relationships that are the hallmark of useful investigation and conflict reporting (Grim, 2017). The ideological level can be considered as ultimate level of hierarchy of influence model but it can be very first as well. Everything starts from ideological perspective. It is mind-set of a journalist although diverse approaches and schools of thought in media studies argue that there is not much impact of "ideological" phase as every person has his/her own ideological perspective so while creating news/media content, the ideological perspective can be a source of biasness so it is very odd to adopt ideological perspective. Some studies found that the ideological perspective is difficult to summarize with respect to media studies. However, on the broader ideological perspective, this ideological phase is social ideological foundations. So here, media content and content creator (journalist) get linkages with symbolic phase of national ideology in terms of larger social interests. The social perspective always molds the constructed expression of media. This necessarily leads to the consideration of how each of the other levels functions in order to add up to a coherent ideological result.

The classic work by Baloch and Andresen (2020) about media marginalization argued that the social ideological perspective is "*systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order."* At this level, there must be a clear mechanism which ensures that how a system of meanings and commonsense understandings is made to appear natural through the structured relationships of the media to society, content to content creator, and journalist to society. There must be clear line where social ideological perspective works closely with institutions for democracy and freedom of expression by support of good practices in journalist education, independent media practices in vulnerable countries, protection of journalists working in conflict zones and journalists' access to information (Journalism and Media International Center (JMIC), 2017). According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), this ideological perspective can be observed while evaluating working norms of journalists, their attitudes, the routines they follow, their organizational policy and the 'positions they hold in any media organizations. All features are inter-connected and part of a larger social structure, work mutually together in order to support the prevailing status quo. The media/news content generated while considering this phase can depict multiple range of social discourse under check of editorial policy of organization. Here individual ideological perspective of journalist can adhere to social ideological perspective and can be different from it but in each case, it gets sub-ordinate under social interest and social perspective. Individual ideological perspective of journalist always serves media agencies under of social control. However, critical review likes to be concerned with how power (social ideological perspective) can exert a journalist to work naturally under the media system, for creating a process of hegemony of social ideological perspective. The present study is aimed to examine the variation in journalists' perceptions with respect to the influences on reporting from the conflict zones across

different provinces.

2. Literature Review

This section explores the perceived influences which affect journalists' reporting from the conflict zones. It further reviews the links between different levels of influences that determines the outcome of the conflict reporting. It also highlights the association among various influences and conflict reporting. The conflict reporting has also been shown to have various impacts on journalists' well-being. These among others, include psychological and emotional impacts. Tumber (2006) studied the experiences, life and motives of reporters, and the fear and danger that the journalists face during conflict reporting. The study further showed that these factors in turn have impact on the truth reporting against war reporting, the dynamics of gender and its impact to journalist lives, work and their understanding to conflict coverage. Similarly, a study by Feinstein, *et. al* (2015) explored the violence during conflict and its impact on journalist psychological health. These include emotional and psychological threats (Ashraf & Lisa, 2017; Jamil, 2017). The foregoing literature show that journalists reporting in the conflict zones is influenced by a variety of factors and influences, however there is also increasing evidence that reporting in war and conflict times, the psychological health of the journalist is also under risk. This study assumes that this impact is likely to be perceived by the journalists to have a close association with news reporting from a conflict zone. There has been a growing literature which show the links between journalists reporting and globalization (Cottle,2009; Barbieri, & Reuveny, 2005; Allan, & Zelizer, 2004; Hanan et al., 2020). The advent of internet technology and satellite system has influenced every aspect of human life and journalism is no exception. Bahador & Tng (2010) suggested that technology have important role to citizen journalism, which have capacities to change the role of conflict reporting from consumer to victims, and witnesses to analysts. For the realization of this potential, the implementation of this new version of journalism is important, it challenges the bi-directional way like interpreter of conflict and the dominancy of government traditional role. The study examined the degree of variation occur in the citizen role to conflict reporting through a reasonable analysis of 2008 attack of Mumbai, in *Times of India, New York Times*, *London Times and New Zealand Herald*. The finding of this article showed that rise of news event report has limited sources for non-governmental organization, particularly at the conflict beginning to media coverage influences. Anderson (2009) investigated the impact of technology on conflict reporting of Australia using the insights and understanding of different practitioners. A principal belief that foreign journalists and war are freer, and the audience can easily inform through communication from frontline. The article showed challenges faced by previous correspondents in case of war and conflict situation, so the study uses to analyzed the impact of technology of reporting, military management and newsgathering. The article argued that the technological progress has considerable positive impact, while in a few cases of technology diminished competition, censorship, resources and syndication. At the same time, the journalists are faced with new difficulties including: immediate deadline, increased consortium, editorial anticipation and 24-hours news are compounded through technological advancement. Obijiofor (2009) explored the role of media reporters in case of conflict reporting including the extent of using new technologies as well as the practices of ethical implications in a war zone. The methodological analysis of framing technique, the author confirmed that how the Nigerian media manage the conflict in the context of law-and-order frame. Al-Ashry *et. al* (2019) indicated that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is important for the protection of journalists in the conflict zone. The study further indicated the greater role of cooperation between different international agencies during conflict to protect journalists, target killing and torture. There has been a growing surge in the spread of information technology and technology such as smart phones and its role in citizen journalism. Mills *et. al* (2012) explored use of mobile phone in conflict reporting. The findings of the study revealed that social media has a greater influence on the media landscape. The technology according to the study has the power to collect and publish the new contents. The study further highlighted the role of the smart phone technology and transmission of news and information and news content to the news room and how this technology can be used to collaborate among students, community and professional reporters. In addition to the smart phone and social media forum, studies such as (Corcoran, 2014) have signified the role of drone technology in news collection from the conflict zones. The findings of the study further show that this technology has considerable advantage in news collection in situation of high risks such as wars, civil unrest and natural disasters. Although personal contact of the journalist is an essential element of the news story, however, in situations, where it is too dangerous the drone is a useful tool to the safety of the

journalists. As concluding remarks from the findings of the studies mentioned in the section, the author assumed that in addition to other level of influences on news reporting from the conflict zones, the emerging technologies also influence the outcome of the news content from the conflict zones. Archetti (2008) argued that the news reporting of the *9/11* was reported by each country differently and each country showed the news on their own dimension. The study further highlighted that the news heterogeneity on single event makes a horrible environment nationally and globally. This heterogeneity is attributed to the weak sources of information. Globalization and internet have been the subject of studies. Garces & Blitvich (2018) indicated that Internet and global identity is crucially related to globalization. Sun (2010) indicated in a study that despite the technical innovation and scale of technical and infrastructure terms, the China Media Globalization and China Media organizations are faced with credibility crisis. This is attributed to the fact the international media and globalization has an influence at the international level and the local realties cannot reported in isolation. The literature on the links between the conflict reporting and globalization in this section indicate that the landscape of the news reporting has changed due to the advancement of technology. The emerging technologies have also influenced the conflict reporting. News contents and photos are received by journalists sitting in distant news rooms across continents and there likely to be greater transparency and factual reporting than the traditional framing of conflict of news. The literature in this section shows that the news reporting in the context of conflict zones is influenced by the emerging technologies such as World Wide Web, the internet and satellite communication. We assume that the perceived responses of the journalists are likely to support the changing role of the technology in case of conflict reporting. We also theorize that emerging technologies have influenced the news reporting positively by facilitating the journalists using smart phone and other types gadgets to frame the news during conflicts.

This is a growing concern, particularly in the current political climate where the use of social media to attack and discredit journalists is becoming more widespread. For example, President Trump has been known to use social media to attack and undermine journalists who report critically on his administration. By using Twitter and other platforms to spread false information and attack journalists, sources are able to mobilize supporters and create an environment of distrust and hostility towards the media. This undermines the public's trust in journalism and can have serious consequences for the media's ability to report critically and hold those in power accountable. Studies that examine this issue could help to shed light on the strategies used by sources to undermine journalists and the impact that these strategies have on the media and its ability to report freely and accurately. Such studies could also inform the development of strategies and initiatives aimed at protecting journalists and promoting media literacy, particularly in the context of social media.

3. Methodology

To ensure a representative sample, a multi-stage sampling approach was used. In the first stage, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select five press clubs from different regions in Pakistan, such as Karachi, Gilgit, Quetta, Swat and Peshawar. This study selects 358 journalists from different parts of Pakistan. The final sample of 358 journalists was a combination of participants selected using both stratified random and convenient sampling techniques, which ensured a representative sample of the population of journalists in Pakistan.

4. Results and Discussion

The next section presents the sample respondents' response to different ideological level of influences that affect conflict reporting. The respondents were asked on a scale of 1 to 5 whereas, 1 means they are strongly agreed with the particular notion, 2 means agreed, 3 means neutral, 4 means disagreed, and 5 means strongly disagreed (means not influential at all).

Table 1: Sample Respondents' Perceptions about the Ideological Level of Influences in conflict Reporting

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agreement Index
The ethnic ideology of the journalist	142	129	23	35	29	0.45
The political ideology of the journalist	105	138	28	49	38	0.31
The religious ideology of the journalist.	116	120	24	58	30	0.33
The economic ideology of the journalist	101	140	25	62	30	0.31

Source: Authors own Calculation

The data analysis reveals that the ideological level has a considerable effect on news reporting from war zones, according to the sampled journalists (table 12). It is evident that majority of the sampled journalist are strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that "*The ethnic ideology of the journalist influence conflict reporting*" (271 out of 358). Most of the journalists are either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "*The political ideology of the journalist have influence on reporting from the conflict zone*" (243 out of 358 sample journalists). Majority of the sampled journalist are strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that "*The religious ideology of the journalist have influence on reporting from the conflict zone*" (236 out of 358). Most of the journalists are either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "The economic ideology of the journalist have influence on reporting from the conflict zone" (241 out of 358). Based on the results, it is inferred that ideological level has a considerable effect on news reporting from war zones. These results support the findings of Shoemaker and Reese (1996), who argued that the ideological perspective can be observed while evaluating working norms of journalists, their attitudes, the routines they follow, their organizational policy and the 'positions they hold in any media organizations. All features are inter-connected and part of a larger social structure, work mutually together in order to support the prevailing status quo. The media/news content generated while considering this phase can depict multiple range of social discourse under check of editorial policy of organization. Table 2 present the values of Chi-square for all statements of Table 4.16. The Chi-Square statistics (rounded to two decimal places) with asymptotic significant p values are reported. For all items, the percentage of respondents who agreed differ from the respondents who do not agree. For example, for item 1 $X2(1, N = 358) = 93.91$, p $<.0.05$. A similar pattern is observed for all other items of ideological level of influence. Hence, we observe significant differences in respondents' perception about various items of ideological level of influences.

Table 2: Results of Chi-Square test

Questions/Items	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
The ethnic ideology of the journalist	93.91[a]	0.00
The political ideology of the journalist	72.84[a]	0.00
The religious ideology of the journalist.	74.32[a]	0.317
The economic ideology of the journalist	72.84	0.00

Source: Authors own Calculation. a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.0.

5. Conclusion

Apart from all the identified problems, journalism is considered as an important field that contributes its role in restoration of peace, calling it scholarly 'Peace Journalism'. In this context most of the participants of the study argued that journalists are not peace advocators. However, if they could play their professional role efficiently then they can contribute their due input in eradication of terrorism. However, expressing a different perspective, some of the participants argued that Pakistan is not a safe country for journalists, journalists are unable to play a role in restoration of peace. In another words, journalists are not capable to play their role in eliminating terrorism. The moderate opinion that came during discussion is that media may have its influence to change the minds of people and turn them from negative to positive through balanced, objective and responsible reporting and hence the media may play its role, indirectly, in peace building through its ethical coverage. It is further concluded that conflict reporting is influenced by a multitude of factors and it is a challenging task for the conflict reporters. Future studies should focus to identify the remedies to minimize the multitude of influences and enhance a balanced and transparent conflict reporting from the conflict zones. This study hypothesizes that "ideological level of influences have significant impact on conflict reporting. Based on the findings, it is concluded that journalists' reporting in war zones are influenced by their ideology, which may be political, ethnic or religious. The ideological level is powerful in influencing journalists' reporting in war zones. The data collected through questionnaires. The respondents evaluated the problems of untrained journalists, covering the most sensitive news regarding conflict, arguing that severe pressure of both the militants and state machinery that is, more likely, making the journalists sandwich between two forces/ parties of the conflict. Besides, getting news first while ignoring the danger to lives of journalists is a common phenomenon of the conflict reporting, where journalists do not take any safety measure,

even, when they are covering bomb blast and other terrorist incident. This trend of journalism causes life threat, most of the time, to working journalists, whereas the lives of journalists are more vulnerable when the nature of conflict is local. Covering conflict in their hometown, when journalist give a dominant coverage to one group of the conflict, simply, means creating enemies for their rest of life . The study on journalists' perceptions of the importance of the different levels of hierarchy of influence model in reporting from conflict zones has produced valuable insights into the factors that influence journalists' decision-making in these complex and challenging environments. However, there is still much room for further research in this area. This section outlines several areas for future research that would build on the findings of this study and contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the hierarchy of influence model in conflict zone reporting.

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