

Political Influence upon the Journalists in Sindh Province, Pakistan

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Abstract

Professional autonomy claims to play a central role in maintaining quality journalism. However, in third-world countries presuming the production of news without any influence upon the news-workers is hard to perceive. Thus the purpose of this study was to investigate the existence and level of political influence upon the journalists while doing the service of news production. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect the required data from the working journalists who belonged to the Hyderabad division, Sindh province, Pakistan. A sample of available respondents was selected purposively from the population. A close-ended questionnaire was adapted for data collection that encompassed the construct of “perceived political influence”. The questionnaire was administered in person among the sampled journalists. Added to ensure the reliability of the research design and field procedure a pilot study was conducted on a sub-sample. In this way, the results showed that political parties or politicians put the highest level of influence upon the surveyed journalists followed by censorship and government officials respectively. In summary, this study found that all three factors that is political parties or politicians, censorship, and government officials exerted varying levels of influence upon the journalists.

Keywords: Political influence, journalists, censorship, government officials

INTRODUCTION

Influence, Political Influence and Influencers

About influence simply Bause H. (2021) put that it can be summarized as the ability to drive others' thinking and action, through symbolic interaction and communication. However, political influence is defined as “In government, influence denotes one's ability to get others to act, think, or feel as one intends” (Banfield, E. 2017).

Whereas, those who put influence upon others called as influencers according to Bause H. (2021) are those who, in both as individuals and groups, involved in advocating, lobbying and governance advising actors, engaged in policy, law making issues and

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governance; involved in inter-group and inter-agent deliberating and decision making, agreement and compromise negotiation, intermediation and representation between interest groups (ibid).

Journalists and their Professional Role

The question of who are journalists has never been definitively answered, in part because journalists themselves often don't want to be licensed, certified or classified by any official authority ... and in part because there is no specific body of knowledge that journalists must master to practice their craft, Weaver, D. (2005). Nevertheless, someone who first collects or receives information in various forms like photo, text, audio and video then turns out that information into a news form and reveals it to the public is called a journalist (see Wikipedia). Added Collins dictionary defines comprehensively the word journalist as someone whose profession is to write and edit news for a television, radio, magazine or newspaper. Whereas, the word journalist's formal synonyms are reporter, newsman or newswoman, correspondent, commentator, broadcaster, and stringer. Apart from the informal synonyms of this term are newshound, scribe. And finally the derogatory synonyms for journalist are hack, hackette (See Collins dictionary).

Journalists in Hyderabad division Sindh Province, Pakistan

As a whole this research study had an aim to examine the level of influence of various political factors i.e. government officials, political actors, and censorship upon the journalists of Hyderabad Division Sindh province Pakistan through quantitative cross-sectional survey. The Hyderabad division in Sindh province, at the time of study was administratively divided into nine following districts: Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Dadu, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allahyar, and Matiari. In this way, in this survey just those journalists were sampled who worked in district headquarter cities.

PREVIOUS LITERATURE

The word influence in government means one's capacity to make others to act, think, or feel as one proposes. However, political influence is noteworthy for its deepness and sophistication adds Banfield, E. (2017). The study conducted by Örebro, L. L. (2002) attempts to deepen our knowledge regarding relationship between journalists and local politicians/officials. Its conclusion suggests that there is a large degree of interplay between these groups.

Added the study of Casero-Ripollés, A., & López-Rabadán, P. (2019) to analyses the role of personal affinity between the media and politicians in Spain found that informal relationships between journalists and politicians have a strategic task in the course of news-making. Mellado, C., & Rafter, K. (2014) studied that politicians generate bulk of political news stories. Added low levels of interventionism in covering political news show such practice of journalism where politicians have a strong influence on news content.

A study in Bulgaria by Voltmer, K., & Dobрева, A. (2009, April) mentions that journalists and politicians enjoy rather hostile and apparently very close relationship that at times put threat to the integrity of journalistic independence. The most upsetting aspect of such interdependence is paid news coverage that is inclusive of both politicians exerting pressure through bribe and journalists expecting favors for such services, that is positive coverage of politicians or damaging attacks on their opponents.

Ekman, M., & Widholm, A. (2014) adds that the development of social media puts new questions about the relationship between journalists and politicians and between news media and politics. The power relations between journalism and politics can be fruitfully explored from the perspective that journalists and politicians have become both actors and sources through reciprocal communication in online spaces.

Whereas, generally of politics and journalism Reinemann, C. & Baugut, P. (2014) put that there certainly is confirmation that political attitudes and issue positions have impact upon news decisions. Maurer, P. (2019) measured French political journalists' views were measured for assessing the political influence. The results showed that French journalists noticed larger political influence on news content than their German counterparts. According to Davis, A. (2007) Mostly, news content and journalists perform a substantial part in setting agendas for the reason that journalists are used by politicians, in a diversity of ways, to promote or negotiate agendas and policy options among themselves.

OBJECTIVE

- Assessing the level of perceived political influence (Censorship, government officials, political parties or politicians) upon journalists in Sindh province.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is the level of perceived political influence (Censorship, government officials, political parties or politicians) upon journalists in Sindh province?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of perceived political influence upon the journalists in Sindh Province, Pakistan. Thus encompassing in mind the related literature and considering the research objective, the researchers of this study opted to conduct a cross-sectional survey for data collection. As surveys have greatly and successfully been applied in media and communication studies. Added Wimmer and Dominick (2013) shared their opinion that surveys have various advantages, like inquiring the problem in actual settings, being cost-effective, gathering a great volume of data with ease, and being unconstrained by geographic boundaries. Gunter (2000) as well put emphasis that survey is a suitable strategy to quantify and measure phenomena numerically.

POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This study includes just those journalists as population who were members of the district press clubs in their respective districts. Moreover, considering the vast area of the study only the journalists who worked in the various districts of Hyderabad division were sampled for data collection. The Hyderabad division at the time of data collection had following districts: Thatta, Sujawal, Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, and Dadu. Survey questionnaire was administered only among those journalists who were reporting from district headquarters. Reason as district headquarters cities are comparatively more developed than the other sub-districts. In the situation of absence of a complete database of journalists in Hyderabad division the researchers sampled for survey only those who were available at the district press clubs while visiting for data collection. The other characteristic of the respondents was that they worked with different positions like correspondent, reporter, sub-editors.

DATA COLLECTION

A closed-ended questionnaire was adapted encompassing the construct of perceived political influence. It was distributed among the respondents in person by the researchers. However, for ensuring reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was also conducted on a sub-sample.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic and Professional Profile of the surveyed Journalists

Demographic profile:

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the journalists

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	248	(99.2)
Female	2	(0.8)
<i>Age category</i>		
Up to 30 years	76	(30.4)
31 to 40 years	97	(38.8)
Above 40 years	77	(30.8)
<i>Education</i>		
Intermediate and less	64	(25.6)
Bachelor	111	(44.4)
Masters	75	(30.0)
<i>Monthly income</i>		
Nil/Voluntary	111	(44.4)
Up to 20000/= PKR	104	(41.6)
Above 20000/= PKR	35	(14.0)

According to data in table 1 almost all journalists were male. Age-wise the majority (69.6%) of them were up to 40 years old. Added despite the highest proportion was having bachelor's degree, however, they worked voluntary and un-paid.

Professional profile:

Table 2: Profession-related characteristics of the journalists

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Organization Type</i>		
Electronic Media	50	(20.0)
Print Media	133	(53.2)
Multiple Media	67	(26.8)
<i>Organization Language</i>		
Sindhi	153	(61.2)
Urdu	58	(23.2)
English	12	(4.8)
Multiple	27	(10.8)
<i>Journalistic experience</i>		
Up to 10 years	122	(48.8)
11 to 20 years	76	(30.4)
Above 20	52	(20.8)

Regarding the professional characteristics in table 2 it was found that the simple majority of the journalists were employed in print media. Added the majority of them

worked for Sindhi media organization. About journalistic experience it was found that the highest, almost fifty percent, of them had up to 10 years work experience.

Perceived Political Influence (PPI)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the perceived political influence (N = 250)

Perceived Political Influence						
No.	Perceived political influence items	Minimum	Maximum	Mode	Mean	SD
01	Censorship	1	6	3	3.44	1.61
02	Government officials	1	6	4	3.23	1.39
03	Political parties/politicians	1	6	4	3.68	1.56

Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one's work to 6 = greatly influential.

Concerning to construct “perceived political influence” three statements were put in the questionnaire to measure with an ordinal scale ranging from 1 = irrelevant to one's work to 6 = greatly influential. The statements follow as: (a) Censorship, (b) Government officials, (c) Political parties/politicians. The reliability of the construct was tested by using a reliability test of Cronbach's coefficient alpha that balanced (.82). Whereas, the inter-item correlation among the three statements of the construct ranged from .75 to .46. Moreover, see table 3 showing descriptively analyzed statistics for the construct “perceived political influence” that scored a mean value of 3.45 for all the 3 items. As the mean value of all the three items is greater than the average of the 6-point ordinal scale that indicates the construct “perceived political influence” has some effect upon the surveyed journalists. Addition, the mean value and the standard deviation of each item are also presented in the table. Thus, according to table 3 the mean values of the three items ranged from 3.68 to 3.23. Moreover, it was observed that the highest mean score stood for the influence of item “Political parties/politicians”, and the lowest mean score was stroke for the influence of item “Government officials”; whereas, the mean score for the influence of the item “Censorship” stood in the mid. Hence, overall it was observed that among all the three items related to the construct “perceived political influence” the highest source of political influence upon the journalists was from “political parties/politicians” and the lowest source of influence was from “Government officials”. Whereas, in the matter of fact all three political parties/politicians, censorship, and government officials put political influence upon the journalists at varying scale.

Demographic Groups and the Perceived Political Influence Differences

Education level differences

Table 4: Perceived political influence and education

No.	Perceived political influence items	Education level		MW-U	P-value
		Till bachelor	Above bachelor		
01	Censorship	126.38	123.45	6408.50	.76
02	Government officials	127.31	121.28	6226.00	.53
03	Political parties/politicians	123.44	130.31	6202.00	.48

(N = 250) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one's work to 6 = greatly influential.

See table 4 regarding the perceived political influence and the education level differences, it was found that the journalists who were educated up to bachelor level (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 126.38) on average got more influence of “Censorship” than those journalists who had education above than bachelor level (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 123.45). Regarding second item it mentioned that the journalists having education at bachelor level also on average got more influence of “government officials” (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 127.31) than those journalists whose education level was higher than bachelor level (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 121.28). Finally, it in the context of third item it was further observed that the influence of “political parties/politicians” was on average got more by those journalists whose education level was above than bachelor (M = 4.00; Mean rank = 130.31) than those who showed themselves educated just up to bachelor level (M = 4.00; Mean rank = 123.44). Overall, the analyses showed that journalists with education level of bachelors or below got more influence of “censorship” and “government officials” as compared to those respondents who claimed to have a degree of higher than bachelors. On the other hand, journalists with degree higher than bachelor got more influence by “political parties/politicians”.

Age differences

Table 5: Perceived political influence and age

No.	Perceived political influence items	Age cohorts		MW-U	P-value
		Till 30 year	Above 30 year		
01	Censorship	130.28	123.41	6248.50	.48
02	Government officials	129.62	123.70	6299.00	.54
03	Political parties/politicians	127.76	124.51	6440.50	.74

(N = 250) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one's work to 6 = greatly influential.

In table 5 it was observed that the journalists who were till 30 years old ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 130.28) on average got more influence of “censorship” than those journalists who mentioned themselves above 30 years old ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 123.41). Regarding second item the journalists having age up to 30 years also on average got more influence of “government officers” ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 129.62) than those whose age was higher than 30 years ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 123.70). Finally, about third item it was observed that the influence of “political parties/politicians” was also on average got more by those who belonged to age category of up to 30-year-old ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 127.76) than those who showed themselves as higher than 30-year-old ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 124.51). In this way, it was known that the journalists till 30 years old received more influence of “censorship”, “government officials” and “political parties/politicians” as compared to those respondents who mentioned themselves aged above thirty years.

Monthly income differences

Table 6: Perceived political influence and monthly income

No.	Perceived political influence items	Monthly income cohorts		MW-U	P-value
		Till 20000 PK Rupees	Above 20000 PK Rupees		
01	Censorship	67.47	77.51	1557.00	.19
02	Government officials	68.68	73.91	1683.00	.49
03	Political parties/politicians	69.17	72.46	1734.00	.67

(N = 139) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one’s work to 6 = greatly influential.

See table 6 it was seen that the journalists who had monthly income above than 20000 PK Rs. ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 77.51) on average got more influence of “censorship” than those who had monthly income just up to 20000 PK Rs. ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 67.47). Similarly regarding second item it showed that the journalists who earned monthly higher than 20000 PK Rs. on average accepted more influence of “government officials” ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 73.91) than those who showed themselves earning monthly just up to 20000 PK Rs. ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 68.68). About third item it was found that the influence of “political parties/politicians” on average was accepted more by those whose monthly income was above than 20000 PK Rs. ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 72.46) than those who had monthly income just up to 20000 PK Rs. ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 69.17). Summarily, it was analyzed in connection with respondents’ monthly income. The analysis indicated that journalists who claimed to receive monthly salary more than 20,000 seemed to accept more

influence of “censorship”, “government officials” and “political parties/politicians” than those who were paid less than 20000 per month.

Profession Related Groups and the Perceived Political Influence Differences

Journalistic experience differences

Table 7: Perceived political influence and journalistic experience

No.	Perceived political influence items	Journalistic experience cohorts			
		Till 10 year	Above 10 year	MW-U	P-value
01	Censorship	126.08	124.95	7737.50	.90
02	Government officials	128.78	122.38	7408.00	.47
03	Political parties/politicians	126.74	124.32	7656.50	.79

(N = 250) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one’s work to 6 = greatly influential.

See table 7 about first item it was observed that the journalists having up to 10 year experience (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 126.08) on average got more influence of “censorship” than those who higher than 10 year (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 124.95). Regarding second item the journalists having journalistic experience up to 10 years also on average got more influence of “government officials” (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 128.78) than those whose journalistic experience was higher than 10 years (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 122.38). In context of third item the influence of “political parties/politicians” on average was got more by those who had journalistic experience up to 10 year (M = 4.00; Mean rank = 126.74) than those who were experienced for higher than 10 year (M = 4.00; Mean rank = 124.32). Over all, all the three items of political influence were found to have more influence upon those journalists having ten or less than ten year professional experience than those with more than ten year.

Media type differences

Table 8: Distribution of the journalists by the perceived political influence and media type

No.	Perceived political influence items	Media type			P-value
		Electronic	Print	MW-U	
01	Censorship	88.55	93.30	3152.50	.58
02	Government officials	86.87	93.93	3068.50	.41
03	Political parties/politicians	83.29	95.27	2889.50	.16

(N = 183) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one’s work to 6 = greatly influential.

See table 8 regarding first item it was seen that the journalists who showed worked for print media (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 93.30) on average got more influence of “censorship” than those who worked for electronic media (M = 3.00; Mean rank = 88.55). Similarly the journalists who were worked for print media also got on average

more influence of “government officials” ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 93.93) than those who worked for electronic media ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 86.87). Finally, the influence of “political parties” was on average accepted more by print media journalists ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 95.27) than electronic media journalists ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 83.29). Summarily, it indicated that print media journalists tended to accept more influence of “censorship”, “government officials’ and “political parties/politicians” as compared to electronic media journalists.

Media organization language differences

Table 9: Perceived political influence and media organization language

No.	Perceived political influence items	Media organization language			
		Sindhi	Urdu	MW-U	P-value
01	Censorship	109.24	97.46	3941.50	.20
02	Government officials	106.35	105.09	4384.00	.89
03	Political parties/politicians	108.72	98.83	4021.00	.28

($N = 211$) Scale ranges from 1 = irrelevant to one’s work to 6 = greatly influential.

See table 9 the journalists who worked for Sindhi language media ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 109.24) on average got more influence of “censorship” than those journalists who worked for Urdu language media ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 97.46). In the same vein, regarding second item the journalists who were working for Sindhi language media also got on average more influence of “government officials” ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 106.35) than those who worked for Urdu language media ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 105.09). In the context of third item the influence of “political parties/politicians” was on average accepted more by those journalists who belonged to Sindhi language media ($M = 4.00$; Mean rank = 108.72) than those who worked for Urdu language media ($M = 3.00$; Mean rank = 98.83). Summarily, the journalists who worked for Sindh-language media got more influence of “censorship”, “government officials” and “political parties/politicians” than those worked for Urdu language media.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUION

The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of perceived political influence upon the Sindh journalist. For that purpose a cross-sectional quantitative survey was conducted with 250 sampled journalists out of the total population of 545 who worked and was members of 09 various districts of Hyderabad Division in Sindh province, Pakistan. The research instrument was adapted from the study of Lee et al’s (2015).

However, this paper is based just upon one construct that is perceived political influence consisted of three items (1) censorship; (2) government officials and; (3) political parties/politicians; and it was measured on a six-point scale that ranged from 1=irrelevant to one's work to 6=greatly influential.

Thus overall it was observed that the mean of all the three sources of influence stood at 3.45 which show that all the three items were of somewhat influence on journalists' professional work. The data also showed that political parties or politicians had highest influence on journalists followed by censorship and government officials respectively.

In this way, context to demographic characteristics the journalists with bachelor and below bachelor level education got more influence of "censorship" and "government officials" compared to those who claimed higher than bachelor degree. On the other hand, journalists with degree higher than bachelor got more influence by "political parties/politicians". It was also known that the journalists till 30 years old received more influence of "censorship", "government officials" and "political parties/politicians" compared to those who were above thirty years. Finally, it surfaced that those who earned monthly more than 20,000 PK rupees accepted more political influence than those who earned monthly less than 20,000 PK rupees. In terms of professional characteristics the findings showed that all the three items related to "political influence" had impact upon the journalists at varying levels. The highest source of political influence upon the journalists was put by "political parties or politicians" and the lowest influence was put by "government officials". Further analysis showed that the journalists having less professional experience received more political influence; vice versa the journalists having more experience comparatively received less political influence. Moreover, print media journalists comparatively tended to accept more political influence than electronic media journalists. It was also surprising that Sindhi-language media journalists got more political influence than Urdu-language media journalists. Despite the sample of this study is selected from nine districts of Hyderabad division. However, it contributes significant insights about political influence upon the journalists. Thus about this topic such other studies could be conducted in various other geographic segments of Pakistan to assess the similarities and differences between the journalists about political influence.

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