

Judicial Movement and Civil Society: A Sociological Perspective on Media's Role as Watchdog in Pakistan



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Abstract: Pakistan has a vibrant media landscape. In spite of political pressure and direct bans, the media is sometimes subject to the state. Media is independent to a large extent. After having been liberalized in 2002, the television sector experienced a media boom. In the fiercely competitive environment that followed commercial interests became paramount and quality journalism gave way to sensationalism. The Pakistani media landscape reflects a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and class-divided society. Media gives the public a platform for discussion and analyzing matters of interest. This research analyzed the role of media through qualitative content analysis. This study includes electronic journalists from Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Concerning the qualitative content, it also includes five senior print and electronic journalists' interviews. This research had taken social responsibility theory back to this study. Media executed judicial movements and further media played its role in the erosion of military involvement in political institutions, Educating masses and endowment of human rights.

Key Words: Media, Watchdog, Judicial Movement, Civil Society

Introduction

It is a symbiotic relationship between the role of mass media and the amelioration of political culture with special reference to the judicial movement in Pakistan. A freehand democratic society is not possible without independent media. According to David (2014), "Without a free and responsible media, we cannot organize a strong and free democratic society". Media or free press is playing the role of watchdog and the role of information source. So their effects on democracy are very strong. Media is giving information about all over the world related to every field such as education and information. The public wants to keep itself aware according to the needs of the modern age. Media is playing its role or not is a comparative debate under democratic and military regimes with the aim of evaluating the financial performance under both types of regimes throughout history. Media's role as

watchdog, reform and power makes a triangle and are key subjects of the political system. Sometimes media is strong and sometimes powers execute media. This research highlighted all the variables which are involved in the execution of the media system, the political system and the role of free media.

People always influence by media and media also has an impact on democratic values. People try to find out that democracies are influenced by media and that media has its influence over politics. Democracy is the most common and best system all over the world so people want to know about the factors that are involved in influencing public opinion. Media also is a tool for making opinions of the people and also a source of information. Media inform people about democracy, politics and about the rights of the people. In public-driven governments, people have the right to vote for the person whom they want (Pavlik, J., 2004).

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Media is the force which persuades people of using their right to vote. Media has a strong influence on politics.

News channels, Media conglomerates, and news agencies originated at the global level, Government, semi-government and private media industries opened, and policies were designed for its usage, leaders, politicians, dictators, powerful members of countries, and nations used media as a weapon; a powerful weapon, propaganda tool and for agenda setting technique. During different eras, different rulers designed different policies for media operations under a specific political system, using it for different purposes. Furthermore, world tensions arose due to media advancements. World politics is affected through media and societies are affected, changed, developed or dominated by it. The research followed by social responsibility theory which states that the press is for the betterment of society and people. The objective of this approach is to define ethics and follow it. Further, to develop standards of information flow, proper use of media, idealize journalism and save journalists from the opposition of society. This research has availed social responsibility theory as a base for evaluating the media's role in the judicial movement in Pakistan (Pike, D., [2014](#)).

Background

Multiple studies have been consulted here as back to this research in order to dig out the media's role as a watchdog into judicial movement. Media had participated in its right favour to the suitable situation. Malik, S. (2007) explained that Pakistan has never seen true democracy from its beginning because the media of Pakistan is not free and strong enough. It faces the many restrictions and threats from different political and non-political groups since its inception. The study uses qualitative in-depth interviews and quantitative survey techniques.

Media is supportive of the public for making a free society that gives freedom of expression, awareness about human rights and makes sense to live without fear in Pakistan. Media is becoming a tool for the development of the country. Media is an agenda-setter that influences the people in particular places where media want to stand with society and explains to the people what they are doing, and what they should do. Media is working in human development. It refers to creating an environment in which human can develop their progressive lives. This research

article was based on the role of media in democracy. Scholars did work on information, education, watchdog, agenda setter and also on other factors where media exist. Thus media is a very active platform and can make a democratic state. There are many differences in thinking and research styles among senior and junior journalists. Media is not playing a role to make democracy strength strong in Pakistan. Media is free and liberal in Pakistan but still, media is not doing work to a strong democratic state. Definitely, the media is doing good work as a source of information and watchdog that is appreciated. On the other hand, the media has a responsibility to make a democratic state (Stefaan, V., 2000).

The roles of media in democratic, pragmatic and democratic regimes are different by nature. All sorts of media are been played with different psychological gaps. Media is quite free in democratic periods but there are variable differences in the cultural systems of different countries. Such sort of changes in the political system derives the meaning and application of public power differently (Ellan, J., 2009).

Parliament is the most relevant aspect of the political system from where democracy is executed in a society. Media and parliament relationships are necessary to be discussed in aeroplane mode. Media has played a certain constant role in the 21st century to support and destroy our parliament. Media has proved to be a necessary force for changing not only politics but political processes and coverage of certain issues as well (Curren, J., [2011](#)).

Objectives of this research are;

- i. To evaluate the role of media as a watchdog.
- ii. To understand the rift between journalists and civil society.
- iii. To understand the role of citizens in a democratic process.

Research Questions

- 1) Does media have the potential to maximize the process of social change?
- 2) What role media is playing in political system reformation and judicial movement?

This research is a very important addition to proving knowledge about media's social and political interval. There is a great debate for years to know whether the media plays a role in change or not. It is the need of today's world to trigger the idea clearly of how media

is playing its role as a watchdog and playing its role in the civil movement.

Methodology

Most of the authors overlooked public participation and social economic and political engagement of civil society through comparative studies. This research points out the relationships between media and the role of journalists in strengthening civil society in Pakistan. The whole situation indicates that the Pakistani state is very unfair in terms of social violence and freedom risks which are the core of any society. This situation forces anti-state forces to highlight and enforce their interests which could eventually lead toward the anti-civil movement's state. This study also illustrates the relations between media and civil movements. This study not only defines media and civil values in a vivid way but digs out the role of media in the promotion of the relationship between media and civil society. This study will address the need base issue with a diverse approach.

Five senior journalists are interviewed. The main cause of this research is to know the opinion of different journalists about the role of media as a watchdog. Research contained certain independent and dependent variables. Media was an independent variable which is affecting civil society. Media is free but still, media is forced to serve elite culture and class whatever they want. Whereas the media is yet playing the role of watchdog and information. Journalists' working environment and restrictions or freedom are investigated. This study is an effort to contribute to the field of diverse variables and describes phenomena which are channelled in previous brief research. This is qualitative research to visualize the topic.

Findings and Discussions

Media could have played its role properly if the working condition of journalists is free and fair. Media corporations decide and set the agenda for the media persons, and the public and promote human development. Media also plays its role as a source of information in creating awareness among citizens regarding their rights. Talat Hussain said that Media had done a superb job in this regard. Media also play a watchdog role. Its role in promoting the rule of law and ensuring free and fair elections is acknowledged. Media has been thought to be a positive and sophisticated tool to talk about image building when something comes to national interests; it is the

responsibility of the media to handle the situations and prosperity of the country. Media is considered to be a watchdog in a democratic country. No doubt media is doing fine work with a positive approach towards the people and society. It's the requirement of today's world that our media should work for the positive and real soft image of Pakistan. The responsible press can ensure the freedom of citizens; an independent judiciary and a transparent bureaucracy by promoting the right to information that makes the institutions of governance transparent and accountable.

There are stories of some lawyers adopting threatening attitudes towards judges up and down the country. Still, lawyers have established a movement against the authoritative regime of governance and the media paid their services for civil movement. 2007 lawyers' movement, the independence of the judiciary was earned in a country with the help of civil society and the media played a pivotal role in collecting public together. During a judicial crisis, the media has steadfastly and courageously reported movement and supported a pro-democratic movement. Media has reported actions against lawyers by policemen and challenges Musharraf's government and dictatorship. General Musharraf was pinpointed during the lawyer's movement. This highlights that the general was not the point of significance but public opinion was made through it. Media played a dynamic role in highlighting the shared belief which later helps the public to unite against Musharraf. Media played the role of cognitive liberation and resource mobilization in fulfilling its duties as a socially responsible institute of Pakistani society.

A few of the senior press writers are of the opinion that this campaign by the media put pressure on Musharraf and led him to withdraw emergency and announce elections. Musharraf's sacking of Iftikhar Chaudhry was the main cause which put Pakistani institutions into action for democracy, they said. It caused a highly successful movement which was led by lawyers. This movement was supported by civil society and the media as well. Musharraf declare an emergency during this movement which not only failed to curb protesters but also caused anger among the public.

The role of media has so far changed over time and over various democracies. When Iftikhar Chaudhary was labelled as illegal judicial personal and was dismissed by Musharraf, lawyers started a movement against Musharraf with the name of Adliya

Bachao Tehreek (Save the Judiciary Movement). Media has supported this campaign with its complete support to the lawyers. Media persons feel the need for time to fulfil their duties as a socially responsible institution. Prior to the lawyer's movement, media was curbed by General Musharraf in many ways. General not only influenced constitutional matters but also curbed media and used it for agenda-setting. Later, the media realized its responsibility to get up for their rights and to democratize the process. One of the captions which caught public attention was when police were dragging Iftikhar Chaudhary by holding him by his collar when he was appearing before Supreme Court. This incident was broadcasted live through all the media channels including newspapers have published a photograph of the scene. This image resonated with many people toward protest and was explained by a resource person of a current show host. He further explained that Chaudhry started a campaign to visit all bar associations of Pakistan which was broadcasted through media and began people thing to stop the dictator of the General. The most interesting part of the lawyer's movement was the involvement of the media in organizing civil society and students against Chaudhry's demoralization.

Pakistani media played a very pivotal role in the movement for the restoration of the judiciary in the country. The media stood side by side with the whole nation on this issue. The results of the study provide some important and interesting realities about the Pakistani media. Usually, the media are blamed to act as the mouthpiece of the government in countries like Pakistan. The concept of government control over media was negated throughout the judicial movement. While giving coverage to the issue of the judiciary crisis, electronic media of the country did not accept any governmental pressure to minimize the coverage. The channels not only gave tremendous coverage to the issue of the judiciary crisis but most of the slant and the frames of the coverage were found as anti-government. The media represented the voice of the people and the society. Usually, the newspapers in third-world countries follow the official line of the government because of a number of reasons which were found wrong, said to Toqeer Hussain (Journalist). The Daily Jang, the largest Urdu newspaper in the country published almost three times greater number of news stories about the issue than the Daily Dawn which is the largest widely circulated English newspaper in the country. It was also found that the newspapers mostly relied on unofficial

and private sources for the news stories about relevant issues. It also was found that both newspapers published most of the news about the issue on the upper half position of the front page which is the most important and prominent space in a newspaper placement.

A few of the media persons are of the view that many news channels were taken offline during this movement, journalists were caught, and student and civil society efforts were caught under control but still, media continue to represent the miseries of a dictator government. Later, this movement resonate public and took them to the streets against Musharraf and the release of Supreme Court judges. Media has a great presence in the life of modern generations. The generation of the early 21st century is probably the first one to experience such a face of media.

Some of the journalists in the sample identified the factors which undermined the role of media in strengthening public powers. Human interest stories have been a part of journalism for a long time but they are used more and more instrumentally these days; to draw readers or viewers into a larger tale. Media tells us not just about an investigation or unusual incident but shows us how that person's experience links up with larger issues. The intent of newspapers was not to create an informed citizen but a loyal citizen. The movement's intent was not to reveal government scandal but to reveal government scandal. Media should work for the realization of the will of the people by facilitating the free exchange of ideas.

Shehbaz Naseem stated that realizing the will and the role of people with the arrival of the web and the growth of the blogosphere, the public forum and mobilizing functions of journalism have grown relative to the informing, investigative and social empathy function. Citizen Journalism has also helped in making civil moments successful. But now citizens can simply go online and publish the tip or the letter on their own. There is a new self of organizational journalism. It is recognised that the unruliness of a decentralized and multi-voiced informational system may be among the judiciary's greatest assets during the civil movement. All this is done by media with a sense of responsibility thus proving media as a social institution for change; according to the betterment of society and opinion building rather projection.

Media as a watchdog is regarded as a critical factor in strengthening civil society in Pakistan. It should take non-government organizations as the case study and

analyses the coverage given to them in the regime of former president Pervez Musharraf. From 2002, under General Musharraf, the media faced a decision development that would lead to a boom in Pakistan's electronic media. TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to private media outlets. The justification was as much a desire to counter India's media power wish to set the media it strayed from what the regime believed in the national interest and in accordance with the government's own political agenda. In fact, the media turned into an important actor in the process that led to the fall of Musharraf and his regime. Coverage of the 2007 lawyers' movement struggle chief justice reinstated, the media played a significant role in mobilizing civil society, said Muhammad Atif (senior reporter).

One of the reporters stated that 12 journalists were killed making Pakistan the most deadly country in the world for journalists to work in 2008. In January and February 2009, the same report undertook a mission to Pakistan focused on the safety to protect the journalist. Since Pakistan's creation in 1947, the Pakistan Republic has experienced multiple regimes and multiple military rules. State institutions such as the judiciary remain weak and a democratic force has not emerged. In recent years, civil society to be strong and more committed than ever. This was underlined in March 2007. The lawyer's movement led a series of protest rallies in support of the disposed chief justice. President Musharraf gathered millions of people in street rallies but Pakistani media, especially the electronic media supported the chief justice. From the emergence of media, a free institution in the era of Pervez Musharraf till the era of Asif Ali Zardari and all the movements which has been initiated and run during this period are assisted by the media. Media has recalled its responsibility to support public voices and to bring changes in the system democratically. This has been seen in the early wave of media freedom which was initiated during the Musharraf era. Media is a socially responsible institute for information and opinion building of the audience in Pakistan during emerging years.

Conclusion

This research explores the media's relationship with civil society and the role of media as a watchdog in

Pakistan. It analyses the media coverage during General Pervez Musharraf's regime. This study is focusing on the year from 1999 to 2008. This research uses the in-depth interviews technique from senior and junior journalists of the media industry to approach and examines the direction of coverage given to civil society. This study explains the role and importance of media in our society. It concluded that the media is a vital element in building a state. It is considered to be the fourth pillar of a state. This esteemed position is linked with great responsibility. The media's role should not be restricted to providing entertainment; it should also provide a platform to all sections of society so that they can openly discuss their issues, problems and put forth their demand. The study concludes that the media should provide a voice to those whose voice is not heard. According to this study, the media's role as a watchdog should be that of a platform where people can have their say. It is said that democracy is a government of the people and by the people, if it should be essential in a democratic environment. Some of the media persons say if the media is working against the will of the people, it should be replaced, but only through the vote of the people. A few media persons are of the opinion that it is a matter of critical debate whether the media in Pakistan has been fulfilling its responsibilities as a watchdog or not. Media is exceedingly commercialized, so it is generally understood to be controlled either by the government or by those who are influential and wield financial power. Media can play its positive role depending on democracy only if it is provided by a supportive and feasible environment; if there is a proper system organized by the state to have a check and balance; keeping media free from all pressure imposed by the state; its owners and most impotently to ensure clarity and honesty while reporting. All these elements are fundamental steps for enabling the media's role in deepening its role as a watchdog. Media can promote social movements by educating voters, protecting human rights, promoting tolerance among various social groups and ensuring the government, transparency and accountability. The media, however, can play anti-democratic roles as well. This study states that democracy is a system of accountability and representative governments.

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