

Conglomerates in Pakistani Media Industry: Exploring the Effects of Non-Journalistic Ownership of Media Companies

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Abstract

This study examines what role non-journalistic business conglomerates play in the Pakistani journalism industry. 56 experienced journalists were interviewed, and the data is analyzed by using Qualitative method of Grounded Theory (GT) methodology to generate codes/themes. The use of grounded theory is not very common in mass communication research. Results of this research show that non-journalistic business entities critically influenced journalism in Pakistan by investing a huge amount of money. They own media organizations and develop editorial policies that protect their business interests. They adopted a ridiculous approach by promoting several persons as journalists who have no journalism experience. Such “journalists” have been playing a crucial role in changing the landscape of the Pakistani media.

Key Words: Media Landscape, Conglomerates, Grounded Theory, Media Ownership, Qualitative Research

Introduction

The role of business conglomerates has been read all-inclusive for a considerable length of time (Howard, 2006). In Pakistan, ex-president Pervez Musharraf permitted privately owned businesses to enter the electronic media industry. This progression gave a chance to conglomerates to prosper their business. Private media bunches have been working in the print media industry. In 2002, they got an opportunity to go to Broadcast business (Yusuf, 2009). The issue was that businessmen with no news-casting foundation entered the media advertising. They entered with a business mind, they had no understanding of media and news coverage. From that point forward, they have been running their media organizations with the key motivation behind income age. The media business is a costly business, it needs enough funding to cover costs. For this, Television station needs commercials, which is very legitimate (Howard, 2006). There must be a line between business interests and news coverage rehearses because, for all intents and purposes, they are two opposing ideas.

Non-journalistic business substances entered the news-casting industry in Pakistan with a gigantic measure of cash and impact (Rehmat, 2008). All the media organizations run papers just as Television slots, yet non-journalistic business elements likewise have different businesses. This examination was an endeavor to investigate the job of business elements in the Pakistani media industry. Business organizations have rivalry and competition, which is justifiable, however, it would make issues when contention transforms into a battle. If this battle is between media gatherings, everybody can observe it on television, it very well may be disposed of by rules, guideline, and implicit rules; notwithstanding, no such guidelines and set of accepted rules exists in Pakistan. Some establishments should direct the activities of media associations (Rehmat, 2008). By law, PEMRA has the authority of licensing and regulating the electronic media like Stations, FM radio associations, and link administrators yet up until this point, its presentation recounts to the story that it has done nothing to direct Television stations. Each medium association is the individual from the Pakistan Broadcasters Association that has a set of accepted rules with the coordinated effort of PEMRA (Akhtar and Pratt, 2016). Although, PEMRA

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developed ethical codes for news stories, utilization of language in talk shows, however, it hasn't developed any ethical codes to stop battle visible on Television channels. Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) developed 17-point of ethical codes for journalistic practices in print media however nothing to maintain a strategic distance from the battle. This examination would assist with understanding the job of business moguls in the Pakistani media industry.

Literature Review

Grounded Theory in Media Studies

Communication and media personals are trying to cope up and this characteristic by utilizing the grounded theory hypothesis. It will give an in-depth insight into the work done by the researchers. Natural issues are one of the key features covered by journalists. For a journalist covering nature-related issues, climate change becomes a very fascinating issue to write about. [Gibson, et al \(2015\)](#) investigated the presentation of media relationships in suppressing the problems related to Climate change in the current time frame where it is acknowledged that corporate insatiability has a tremendous impact on news incorporation. Meeting of 10 ecological writers was held and they all broke down to the consequences ([Gibson, Craig, Harpe, & Alpert, 2015](#)). Their center of interest was business in the broadcasting business. The possessions of corporate eagerness, writers give brilliant content regarding the issue. Newscasting and media businesses have been defying nature in light of focusing on advantage making as opposed to fulfilling social commitments. Outcomes of data gatherings highlighted that normal reporters have been standing up to issues recording their records as broadcast affiliations that are not concerned by the same kind of issues. The answers and responses of the reporters were deeply studied that by what means they depict the problems related to natural disasters especially to climate change, incites associated to the focus of the study; by what method they may witness destiny of the uncovering of an issue ([Gibson, Craig, Harper, and Alpert, 2015](#)). Each affiliation which is managing Climate change issues foresee mostly frantic outcomes of climate change, afterward once more, the care level of individuals taking necessary measures is low. Specialists have been battling about fitting the dynamic occupation of news media to Natural columnists who portray the issue of climate change as unusual and disheartening. Moreover, this had been a worldwide matter of interest which is under consideration, a multifaceted problem to manage. A couple of segments related to overseeing the issue. Separating the examples of news incorporation results exhibited that point of convergence of columnists which moved from worldwide to local effects of the issue ([Krumsvik, 2015](#)). Moreover, the reporters and writers are progressively enthused about highlighting the issues on the neighborhood and private level as opposed to looking at continuously complex worldwide issues ([Gibson, Craig, Harpe, & Alpert, 2015](#)). Online journalists share data on various social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, etc. ([Gibson, et al. 2015](#)).

Grounded theory methodology has not been very common in media research. Johnason and Sallot (2006) state that more attention should be paid by media students towards the significance and the job as a gatekeeper in various media organizations ([Johnson & Sallot, 2006](#)). [Herfroy-Mischler \(2015\)](#) examined considerable data to study media performance by using grounded theory methodology ([Herfroy-Mischler, 2015](#)). After the holocaust process, various job regarding Swiss media was deeply analyzed. In a similar investigation, involving both numerical and idiosyncratic investigation of the gathered data was done. At the time of investigating Swiss media, 1013 news things were separated, and the focal point of examination highlighted on the newscasting exercise was done. Various marked topics included the division of Holocaust impartiality. It opposed the idea of opposition of the Swiss National News Office and the attitude of the general public made it worse for writers to do their job in WW-II. The succeeding topic which was featured the non-availability of the open stages by the press was to talk about the simplicity and straightforwardness of the process. Moreover, another subject under discussion was the resetting of the infrastructure of the organization while highlighting details of the common subject matters ([Herfroy-Mischler, 2015](#)).

[Martin \(2008\)](#) examined gender roles and race. Grounded theory hypothesis was set up for the building up of the hypothesis that how individuals take notice and talk about news reports in their everyday schedule. The study was depended on the 86 members, the data collected includes a perception of a book conversation, old data from news conversation, letters to the editor in papers and reports ([Martin, 2008](#)). This study was based on two zones, giving rise to a more elaborated hypothesis: the openness in perusing or paying attention to the bulletin

on regular schedule moreover, the social viewpoints including race and gender are meant to expand openness and hence a person gets more vulnerable to that. News persuasion is a daily practice and a customary public activity (Martin, 2008). Various results of the study demonstrated that knowledge regarding the themes and people, they relate this as an essential job daily with news interactions. "Who comprehends what and when, who says to whom, can increment or confine the feeling of importance" (Strauss and Glaser, 1964, 1965). Gender and race are the viewpoints that impact everyday bulletin interactions (Martin 2008).

Media and Conglomerates

The corporate elements in the broadcasting business have been analyzed over a significant period. The important focus was on the editorial quality of papers due to the ownership of non-journalistic elements (Wagner & Collins, 2014). When it comes to the performance of media organization, Rupert Murdoch's News-Enterprise secured two papers that didn't change ownership on various social occasions over a comparable time (New York Times and Washington Times). They displayed that Murdoch's Money Road Diary is far less helpful of administration support in the prudence. Non-journalistic ownership also has political implications as conglomerates have interests attached to different politicians and political parties (Wagner & Collins, 2014).

Despite the moving results, the standard of examination on ownership's effect on newspaper content recommends negligible efficient contrast among bundle guaranteed and self-supervising paper (Silky & Riffe, 1994). Before, logical examinations of paper assemblies have begun a little influence on the subject matter (for example inclusion of Gary Hart's capers). Exploration of television proprietorship in a similar manner meant to have a little or zero effect on local news broadcasted on TV (Ottosen, 2004). Most pre-1984 assessment concerning paper rivalry found out minor effect on content, with some prominent misunderstandings (Frilly and Riffe, 1994). Despite the way that by the mid-1980s, two nations considered and recognized that usual new customary fight achieved a preferable guarantee of fundamental resources over the news studio which constitutes of tremendous news, workplaces, and more journalists for a normal measure of bulletin opening. Wagner and Collins (2014) called them the "budgetary responsibility hypothesis." The enormous examination since the mid-1980s has strengthened the financial promise hypothesis. Training is connected with intercity usual rivalry and variety of factors to consider, several wire workplaces supported by papers, worldwide incorporation by Canadian newspapers, and using illustrations in the broad casting of stories and editorial content. Regardless, a couple of examinations have failed to show a dispute inciting an expanded resource game plan. The contrast between these two plans can be clarified by irregularities in various factors, models, and starters of competition (Elegant and Riffe, 1994). Most of the papers consider having kept away from the direct fight between dailies. In any case, it was stated with intercity on regular newspaper competition that was related with unmatched news fleabags, moved pieces hence consolidated feature writer's word limit, which in this manner was related with extended equivalence in reports. Local TV news examination has furthermore shown a relationship among rivalry and a promise of monetary compensation as an unmatched expense on resident news channels, additional time spending on resident programming and local news, even more, full-time staff and greater news studio contentment of satellite, newsgathering vans, and additional sources are used to gather information on neighborhood news programs (Fancy and Riffe, 1994).

Methodology

This study focuses on developing themes based on facts, which can be used in future researches. Semi-structured in-depth interviews of experienced journalists were conducted. One of the important aspects of grounded theory is that data collection and analysis of that data run parallel after transcribing it. This study is based on 56 interviews and analysis of those interviews was conducted side by side. The analysis was started with the very first interview, then conducted the second interview and then analysis of that interview and so on. Open coding or line by line coding was done initially of every interview. In the next stage, axial coding was done then the final five themes emerged. Grounded theory is a flexible methodology that allows researchers to stop data collection when data is saturated.

Grounded theory is used in this study because of several reasons such as developing themes that can be used for future examination (Duchscher & Morgan, 2005). The qualitative methodology approach of Grounded

Theory methodology can help to develop such themes and concepts (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). This practice made by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to formulate a methodology that can also be used developing theory. The current implemented methodology anticipates that the researcher can stay focused on several kinds of data and examination to have themes to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The approach of Grounded Theory methodology makes the methodology flexible and replicable. The core idea of this methodology is to find the relationship between concepts and facts. The qualitative approach of grounded theory is inductive (Glaser, 1998). This approach includes conceptualization and grouping of similar concepts. Grounded theory methodology lets the researcher make progress from the data towards building up of themes and concepts. The overall jest of the theory can be concluded that provides proof in the form of a theme (Charmaz, 2006).

Glaser argues that this methodology is not restricted to a qualitative approach. This type of examination can be a step in the exploration of themes (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Denzin & Lincoln (2003) included this insightful condition in correspondence due to which the concept of grounded theory framework has created and moved ahead in making the progress while examining the data. Sailor (2008) argues that Strauss and Corbin (1998) altered their methodology from Glaser's methodology in the finding of the concept of theory.

Sample

This study focuses on media experts, for instance, journalists or reporters working in broad communication either print, online media, or working in electronic media. A total of 56 working scholars have unwaveringly participated in the study. Interviewees working in various media relationships of Pakistan were approached; in any case, media specialists have always been exceptionally problematic as they viewed as "occupied" specialists" all the time. Not many out of each odd media capable fit right now in understanding and introduction to the media errands. The assortment of interviewees was advanced with their understanding of the phenomena and similarly with the notions of their respective occupations. Fake names of the impressive number of individuals are used because of the security issues of the interviewees.

Results and Findings

The main aim of the study was the examine the role of these business tycoons and conglomerates due to which they are making a difference in the media industry of Pakistan. Six open codes have developed from the collected data at the first step of the coding process, shown in Table 1.

Themes

Table 1. Themes

Themes	Properties
High investment	Throwing money, high salaries, facilities for journalists
Ridiculous approach	Commercialism replaced Ideology, an ethical violation, considering themselves above the law, business minds controlling journalistic minds.
Changing media landscape	Electronic media influence print media, glamour, trendsetter, reshaping journalistic culture, Promoting non-journalistic culture.
Promoting fake journalists	Doctors/physicians as anchors, property dealers as journalists
Journalists as puppets	Limitations for journalists, dictating journalists, Misuse of media freedom

High Investment

The first theme that meagered out of the information collected from the interview states that these businessmen and conglomerates have entered media business with their wide proportion of cash. People are hired on huge monetary compensations. People who were the subject matter of the study stated that these tycoons may have changed compensations to a few extra thousands along with additional workplaces. Also, referenced previously, Television space tends to be an exclusive occupation. These tycoons are spending money and abusing their power

beyond limits. By putting enormous compensations in the media industry and placed themselves in a win-win situation. Hence, with their initial salary that came from the media business and made sure about their distinctive business are secured. There is a common practice which is done in Pakistan, being in the media business, people get in touch with each other as per their needs especially when the need is based on monetary compensations.

Ridiculous Approach

The subsequent subject created an open coding is that those tycoons might be responsible for changing the methodology of the field of journalism. By suppressing the theory involving the interests of the businessman. The ideological conflict changed into the commercial competition. News coverage morals and values are no longer practiced, priorities are given to stakeholders, monetary compensations are everything. Interviewees stated that these business big enchiladas saw themselves as forgiven from the laws that apply to every other person. They need to do whatever they consider accommodating for them paying little for ignoring regulations and moral values of the profession. Looking at the background, Pakistani news inclusion proposes that keeping aside the fact of media rivalries among various media organizations, they still tend to abide by some laws and ethics of journalism, editorial policies of the organizations are still valued by the journalists and media people associated with them but today this practice is all lost, no media organization is in the favor of abiding by these moral values.

Changing Media Landscape

Conglomerates are responsible for changing the electronic media landscape in Pakistan, this is what the third theme suggests, that emerged from the data. Electronic media sway print media since TV is a noteworthy medium. Directly such ramifications for papers as they have also been using amazing techniques, for instance, propelling characters, covering an enormous segment of the television proceedings, and dramatizing practically on each matter which can be witnessed by the public. Due to the changing culture in the Pakistani media industry, journalistic culture has also been changed because of the working methodology of the stations. According to the interviewees of the study, this is due to the non-journalistic affiliations with journalism as a profession. The television stays that people view themselves as television characters. Such standpoint grounds the dangerous influence on news inclusion beliefs and values.

Promoting Fake Journalists

The fourth topic rose out of the information is likewise upsetting as the respondents surfaced this issue themselves, combinations and big businessmen used to advance non-editorial personals as reporters to accomplish their non-editorial targets. Such sort of characters can be viewed as hosts, experts, and makers of content which is being broadcasted on television. Interviewees rebuked them and struggled that such captivating journalists have nothing to do with news incorporation and its qualities as they are unaware of the true essence of the field. They have no clue about what publication and editorial attributes are, how is it conceivable to anticipate genuine and quality substance being reported from them. Every media pack has such fake feature writers available on the TV screens.

Journalists as Puppet

False journalists may be elevated to accomplish the supervisor's objectives; also, such individuals have established a philosophy that is non-journalistic, the power which genuine reporters need to resemble non-professional journalists. Reporters or media persons are having no control over what the publication strategy and editorial policies are. Conglomerates and business head honchos state the article arrangement and journalists need to comply with their requests. Hierarchical culture drives them to accept that in any event, they need to be reporting, they need to follow the publication arrangement set by their managers, at some point. Respondents contended that media proprietors direct their writers about what subject matters to give attention to and how to go about it by providing them a set of guidelines. Journalists are being told what to report and what they have to do.

Table 2. Axial Codes**Axial Codes**

Ideological Conflicts
Financial Conflicts
Lack of Journalistic Understandings

Discussion and Conclusion

The main agenda behind the study was to examine the influence of these big tycoons who are involved in the Pakistani media industry. These businessmen are responsible for bringing gigantic cash in the industry. By paying the journalists a significant monetary compensation, they are making them work as per their own will. Initially, in the Pakistani media industry, there were no tremendous pay scales, with the privatization of the electronic media, these compensations have increased from several thousand. Journalists, who are paid high are also accepting different workplaces too. The role of these business tycoons and conglomerates in the media industry are discussed by a columnist of English newspapers as:

“TV channel is an expensive business to run. It needs billions of rupees and businessmen have that kind of money, so they invested it in the media industry. Now they are in a win-win position. They are earning not only from their media outlets but also have the protection of their other businesses. In Pakistan, the ground reality is that if you are in the media business, you are not answerable to anyone.”

Businesses men including tycoons and conglomerates are responsible for making this business so costly as far as to pay rates, different advantages and benefits are concerned. Paying significant compensations to representatives is certifiably not a terrible thing, generally speaking, however tragically it has a few disadvantages, for example, journalists’ reliability will be at stake for this expense. There is no individual belief system at the time of reporting and their moral values and ethics will be missing from the content the journalist is practicing. While reporting journalists tend to abide to fulfill the requirements that their managers are asking for and getting those significant compensations for the work they are told to do so. An anchorperson stated that:

“There is no real journalism but power game. Whoever puts a large amount of money on the table, will get the loyalty of journalists. Everyone (journalist) is for sale in Pakistan and everyone has his/her price tag. This practice has destroyed real journalism in Pakistan. I’m unable to see ‘news’ in news stories but misinformation, opinion, and agenda-setting. We as journalists have lost our way. Although we have fought hard battles against different governments at different times for journalism in the past huge money have distracted us, especially the newcomers with a lack of journalistic training and most importantly they don’t know the importance of journalism. They just want to earn maximum and conglomerates exploit them.”

The most horrible damage which these business tycoons have caused to the profession of journalism is the changing of the methodology of reporting. By replacing the belief system with premiums and by capitalizing enough cash into the media business they have taken over the profession. The ideological disagreement from history has transformed into business competition in the present times, moreover, is all stored in the accounts, kept in the future if vital advances aren’t made by specialists. Massive cash payments have compromised genuine news coverage. Going back to the background of the media industry of Pakistan it states few principles and morals that had been practiced by media associations regardless of how profound the competition was. Conglomerates viewed themselves as distant incredible, and hence they can damage morals, beliefs, and rules of reporting. According to these businessmen, they have a notion that they are not answerable and liable to anyone. This issue was discussed by a TV reporter as:

“Media organization had a rivalry in the past but that was a positive ideological rivalry. That rivalry has been converted into the fight for revenue and business protection. Conglomerates entered the media business with huge cash in their pockets and they have changed everything in the media industry. In the past, media organizations fight for their ideology but now they fight for money. Journalism has been affected so badly by the conglomerates. The most alarming thing is that conglomerates think they can do anything, no matter how unlawful it is. No one can have held them accountable.”

In Pakistan, conglomerates are responsible for changing the media by utilizing electronic media.

The other medium of media which is affected by electronic media is print media, as far as promotions and income are concerned, they are much less paid. Print media used to distribute full-page ad on the first page,

especially in exceptionally renowned papers, which never occurred previously. Televisions and other electronic mediums likewise idealized print media. Print media are additionally utilizing marvelous methods, concentrating on showbiz characters, advancing showbiz occasions. The general culture with regards to journalism has now changed in Pakistan and as a result, electronic media has also changed. The interviewees of the study gave it the name of the non-journalistic culture of journalistic associations. A senior journalist suggested this:

“Print media seem to be influenced by the electronic media, which indicated how TV channels have changed the landscape of Pakistani media. Print media have been following the footsteps of electronic media in terms of advertisements, revenue generations. Advertisements are essential for the media and print media used to publish ads in the past but there were some rules about it like how much space to be given to ads on a page. Now we can say that there are no rules regarding place and space of advertisements as newspapers have started publishing full-page ads and put all the important news material from the front page to other pages.”

According to the practices of conglomerates, one of the most hazardous exercises was featured is non-columnist proprietors of the reporting associations that have been advancing in non-reporters as journalists. Non-columnist faces on television screens assuming their roles as journalists is big damage to the profession, a journalist from Jang groups states that:

“Electronic media brought non-journalist personalities into the journalism business. Almost no journalist in the Pakistani media industry has any proper qualification of journalism, however, many of them have journalistic experience. Hamid Mir is a journalist, who spent decades in the field while on the other hand, Mubashir Luqman has no journalistic background. He (Luqman) was planted by the ‘big hands’ of our country and by ‘big hands’ I meant business entities and conglomerates.”

Due to this non-journalistic approach by the conglomerates, these people are highly paid. Below mentioned review clearly, states the advancements and acquiring significant compensations? Their appropriate responses which were given by the people under study states that these kinds of individuals may be utilized for individual determinations and personal benefits of these conglomerates, a senior correspondent communicated his interests over this issue as:

“Non-journalistic people have been launched as a journalist to serve the interests of their bosses. The phrase, we mostly use for such a situation is like money is being thrown by the conglomerates to protect their interests. Conglomerates have played this card smartly so far as we have no proper mechanism to held journalists accountable.”

Non-journalistic faces, hosts, investigators, and makers of media can be found in the Pakistani media industry. Such individuals had been firmly disparaged from the people of the study that these so-called pseudo-journalists will just defame the profession as they don't know about reporting and its qualities. Great quality news coverage can never be predictable from persons who don't have the slightest idea about the truth of the newsgathering. Every big media bunch has this pseudo reporter available on their television and in an organization.

This particular notion of pseudo and false journalists has been sated in previous paragraphs. The respondents of the study have claimed and given the name of “false journalists” and stated that these kinds of journalists are more towards serving these big business tycoons, not the general public. Proprietors of the so-called media business are utilizing false reporters as manikins. Pseudo reporters are establishing a philosophy that makes a journalist a manikin. In the Pakistani media industry, this pseudo-culture is entering and hence practiced everywhere. This just doesn't generalize the fact that all journalists and reporters are doing fake journalism or reporting, there are real journalist too, who are abiding by the laws and regulations of the profession and accepting their duty as a journalist in media business and as a service to the public. A senior columnist stated:

“We have a small number of real journalists in our media industry. The number of fake journalists has been grown rapidly in recent past. The real journalists are weak in power, they do not have any say in editorial policies, while on the other hand, fake journalists are not only large in numbers but also have an important role in policymaking. Fake journalists can't develop a real journalistic culture within an organization. They don't even care about journalism. Their prime focus is to obey orders given to them by their owners. This situation creates problems for real journalists. They need to work hard for their survival.”

False journalist norm has made it hard for real reporters and journalists to survive, endure, and practice the profession. In the Pakistani media industry, genuine journalists have been working for quite a long time but the transition in the media industry after 2002, has expanded and brought a lot of challenges for them. The working environment has changed from the past, conglomerates and contracted administrators are setting the article

approach and journalists must comply with their requests. Requests venture from start to finish; makes them accept that every chance that they need to be in reporting, at every point they need to abide by the requests. Proprietors direct their writers at every about what to report, how to report, and bring it to the public in whatever way they want.

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