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Abstract

Currently, Pakistan's media industry is facing a severe crisis, some employees have been fired, the remaining staff are asked to work for half their initial pay and many media houses have shut down. Therefore, this qualitative study proposes to explore the origin of this deepening recession crisis by conducting an interview analysis of the documentary titled "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq" which presents the professional journalists grappling with these issues directly. The research shows that recession, fallout with governments, and technological advancement are the main causes of the present media chaos. All these factors have not only led to insecurity for the media organizations but also have significantly affected media workers' source of income as well as their motivation. Thus, in tackling the above-mentioned factors, the study aims to offer feasible solutions for the stabilization of the media industry within Pakistan to help the media fraternity survive.

Key Words: Media Crisis; Pakistani Media; Layoffs; Salary Cuts; Media Closures; Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq

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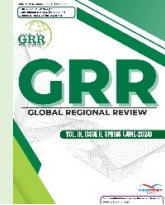
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Abstract

Currently, Pakistan's media industry is facing a severe crisis, some employees have been fired, the remaining staff are asked to work for half their initial pay and many media houses have shut down. Therefore, this qualitative study proposes to explore the origin of this deepening recession crisis by conducting an interview analysis of the documentary titled "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq" which presents the professional journalists grappling with these issues directly. The research shows that recession, fallout with governments, and technological advancement are the main causes of the present media chaos. All these factors have not only led to insecurity for the media organizations but also have significantly affected media workers' source of income as well as their motivation. Thus, in tackling the above-mentioned factors, the study aims to offer feasible solutions for the stabilization of the media industry within Pakistan to help the media fraternity survive.

Keywords: [Media Crisis](#), [Pakistani Media](#), [Layoffs](#), [Salary Cuts](#), [Media Closures](#), [Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq](#)

Introduction

The evolution of media in Pakistan has shown many changes in the light of economic, political, and technical revolutions in the past couple of decades. But recent years have seen a dangerous shift with

huge sacks, redundancies, cuts in salaries, and a shutdown of media houses in the nation. This crisis has not only impacted the media organizations but the journalists and the media workers who through



this experience are faced with job insecurity and instabilities of a financial nature.

This has made economic factors to be among the main causes of this crisis. Reduced advertising revenue compounded by the world's recession and the policies that affected the local economy threatened the business sustainability of the media outlets (Rust & Oliver, [1994](#)). The financial situation is still critical and many media organizations are experiencing significant problems in terms of profitability, and thus, attempts to reduce costs, which include staff cuts and salary freezes. These economic pressures are blended with financial un-shape and no visionary business models in the media sector.

The Ministry, so far has slashed the rates and Pakistan's multibillion media industry is in the midst of a major shakeout after a long period of rapid double-digit growth for the past two decades. Hundreds of journalists and other staff have been sacked in the name of cost-cutting while a TV channel of a leading Television, Waqt News was shut down by a leading media group, Nawa-i-Waqt while several other media outlets' policy is evident to make employees redundant.

Political pressure has taken the matter to the worse as well. Hacks enforced by the government, political intrusions, and threats to press freedom lower the morale of journalists and demand self-censorship. This has brought bad practices in journalism, more so in the wake of what has been deemed fake news and fake reporters eradicating the public trust in the media (Khan, [2024](#)). Political forces have in one way or the other impacted media ownership and control hence restricting the freedom of media and empowering those few people with major influence in the dispensing of media activities.

Interruption of traditional media business models has emerged due to technological changes that have favored the use of digital media. New technologies particularly, Web 2.0 and social networks have altered audiences' habits and turned away from conventional media as well as advertisement viewership. Those media organizations that have not been keen on adopting these changes experience a lot of hardship in operation within this new environment (Zubairi et al., [2022](#)).

Thus, this research article tries to expand the given problems by examining the attitudes of the journalists depicted in the 'Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq. 'Clarifying the causes of the media crisis in Pakistan, this study aims to offer efficient ways to help media-related workers and stabilize the industry.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Digital media like the Internet and Android cell phones and applications related to YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc have been working very successfully since the last decade. Almost 35 million people are using social media in Pakistan and most of them are Youth. It has been observed worldwide that youth are exceptionally linked with new media technologies and spend most of their time with social media activity. I have been working in mainstream media for the last 15 years. Media professionals have faced the situation of financial crisis in corporate media groups nowadays. So far, leading media outlets have shut down their programs, projects, newspapers, and magazines; 'SAIRBEEN' BBC Urdu Service's flagship program, Waqt News, and Dawn's 'HERALD. Many channels have been relying on repeat telecasts. Many channels are reluctant to pay salaries to their employees even after 6th month which has resulted in severe mental stress, traumas, and psychological issues so there is an urgent need to conduct the study whose findings surely brought some policy reforms.

Literature Review

The Pakistani media industry has been in the litigation of many challenges in the past due to the impacts of economic, political, and technological environments. To postulate the current media crisis, it is necessary to review the literature concerning these influences and their analysis of the media environment.

Economic Challenges

It is known that the financial sustainability of media organizations in Pakistan has always been a problem. The loss of advertising income is perhaps the most serious financial problem experienced by the sector. The following are the reasons the growth rate has decreased: The world financial crisis, which has caused most companies to cut down on their

advertisement budgets and local financial policies that affect the incomes of the various businesses (Rinallo & Basuroy, 2009).

This means that depending on the revenue obtained from advertisements, media organizations are put in a position where they can easily be affected by various economic factors. Furthermore, internal issues such as poor working capital management have compounded these problems within media outlets resulting in poor resource utilization and financial myopia (Lischka et al., 2016). Because of the extreme conditions of the economy, companies made several unethical decisions that affected customers negatively (Carraher, Buchanan, & Puia, 2010).

Based on the research done, different media outlets have been striving to find ways of reducing their costs of operation to the extent of making dramatic cutbacks. Some of these measures include; Retrenchment/layoffs, slash in wages, and shutdown of social business operations with low returns. Such actions have not only impacted media workers' income but have also contributed to the deterioration of journalism standards as organizations can achieve less with less (Hussain & Khan, 2018).

Political Pressures

Corruption is another major aspect that has led to the current crisis; it is evident in the interference of political parties in the media. Media regulation and political influences relating to its freedom of operations have been a hallmark of Pakistani media. Some of the problems that are societal then become the journalists' dilemma, thus: Political influence results in threat and or intimidation of the journalists hence damaging impacts on their ability to report as per best practice. This culture of fear and oppression is inimical to the principles of journalism and wears away the people's confidence in the press.

Politics also plays a part in media ownership and control. Media ownership is particularly discovered to be concentrated in a few hands that have a close relationship with the country's political leadership in the case of Pakistan. This concentration reduces the plurality and diversity of media because content serves the political agenda of the owners (Yusuf & Schoemaker, 2013). There is no fair and independent media ownership due to the lack of

proper regulation measures in most of the countries of the region.

Technological Disruption

Digital media has now played a huge role in reinventing the media business models that were experienced in traditional media. Indeed, with the use of the internet, social media, and digital platforms to access news, the way audiences take news has transformed. Newspapers, and television, have been less popular even in reading and watching because of the increased use of digital media as sources of information (Zubairi et al., 2022).

This change has caused the conventional media to lose out in advertising income since the advertisers channel their adverts to the new and efficient digital media which can also be monitory for the advert returns. Also, the greatest challenges for many media organizations in Pakistan are evidenced that they are relatively less responsive to the changes that the digital revolution has made. This reluctance or inability to innovate has placed them in a weaker spot than faster, leaner, and meaner digital-first rivals (Schmidt & Cohen, 2010). The funds have not been made available to build up and upgrade the new technologies, nor have the journalists been trained to handle the digital shift.

Impact on Journalists

These four challenges pose economic, political, and technological impacts on journalists and media workers in Pakistan. The following subcategories of challenges explain how the four challenges have created their impacts on the journalists and media workers of Pakistan. Resorting to threats, intimidation, or acts of violence, some employees took their lives, and lack of job security, and monetary compensation is an acute problem of today's journalists. Self-censorship and adherence to the political preference of the media owners inhibit their freedom in the discharge of their functions.

This is also evident from the literature where the psychological effect of the working conditions on these journalists is also documented. Stress and Financial Anxiety have decreased media employees' job satisfaction and morale (Basyouni & Keshky 2021). This environment is not just unhealthy for journalists themselves, but also significantly

hampers the quality of journalism as well as the public's right to receive true and uncolored news.

In this brief literature review, the research mused that the media crisis in Pakistan can be caused by economic complications, political influences, and technological innovations. Solving these problems presupposes a multi-level program of economic changes, preservation of journalists' freedom, and perspectives for implementing them in the sphere of digital media. Therefore, the neutral stakeholder intends the analysis of these underlying factors so that stakeholders the build a stronger and sustainable media industry in Pakistan.

Objective: The main objective of this study is to analyze the causes of the media crisis in Pakistan with special reference to layoffs, redundancies, salary cuts, and shutdown of media. Lastly, the study seeks to recommend possible measures to encourage and restore the media business.

Research Questions

1. What are the main factors contributing to enormous layoffs and terminations in the Pakistani media industry?
2. How have economic turbulences as well as decreased sources of advertisement revenue impacted media organizations?
3. In what ways have politicians and their influences relevant to Media operations and stability?
4. Whether technological disruption has been largely seen to play a role in the current media crisis?
5. What are the options as measures to healing the affected media fraternity and bringing back the energy of the business?

Methodology

This particular research work uses the qualitative research paradigm to analyze the causes of the media crisis in Pakistan. Through interviews included in the 'Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq' documentary, the distributors of primary information for this research are journalists who face the contemporary media crisis daily. The rest of this paper presents the study research design, data collection, and data analysis methods.

Research Design

The method of the study is chosen as qualitative, for

it can effectively aim at social objective submissions and examine individual experiences and impressions more profoundly. Such an interpretation enables investigations focusing on the causes of the media crisis in Pakistan by considering the personal accounts of the people.

Data Collection:

Source of Data

The main qualitative data for this study are drawn from the video documentary called "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq." This video documentary comprised interviews with a journalist of mainstream media, former journalists, owners of corporate media, leaders of journalists' bodies, emerging media experts, and new media practitioners (Entrepreneurs). It can be seen that these interviews offer first-hand qualitative data that describe the hardships of Media workers in Pakistan.

Sampling Method

Since the study influences a purposive sampling method, the documentary "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq" became the main source of data. The selection of this type of sampling is ideal for this study since it is designed for the choice of a data source that is most closely related to the research questions and objectives of the study. This documentary was selected since it focuses on the themes of the media crisis and also has the testimonies of journalism professionals.

Data Collection Process

In the process of analysis, the interviews taken from the documentary were transcribed in detail in order to form a text-based data set. Transcription makes it possible to elaborate the thematic analysis based on a more precise reproduction of all the shades of the spoken language.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as a method of data analysis after the interviews were transcribed (Terry et al., 2017). This method involves sorting through the data collected in order to search for, analyze, and present mobilities with the aim of showing patterns/themes. The steps involved in thematic

analysis are as follows: The steps involved in thematic analysis are as follows:

Familiarization with Data

The first one was the process of making primary exploration through the re-reading of interviews' scripts and getting totally immersed in the texts. Some preliminary identified notes and observations were done during this process.

Generating Initial Codes

Coding was done systematically to note down major features in relation to various research questions. Encoding involves describing parts of the text by using shortened phrases which would summarize the meaning of the text.

Searching for Themes

Potential themes were generated out of the codes according to the similarities and connections of each code. Subthemes are derived from themes and are broader trends in the data that are made up of related codes.

Reviewing Themes

The initial set of themes that were identified was discussed and revised in order to match the data. This included ensuring that themes COH were logical to each other and TAM was relevant to the whole set of data.

Defining and Naming Themes

To ensure that the themes are properly understood, clear descriptions and names were given to each of them in a way that defines the basic meaning of each. This step entailed producing descriptive texts to outline the work's topics and sections in terms of the subjects addressed.

Producing the Report

The last process was associated with crafting the themes and placing them within the context of the research questions and objectives. Thus, this narrative serves as a foundation for the results and discussion parts of the research article.

Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis,

the following measures were taken: To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, the following measures were taken

Triangulation: The findings of the interviews and themes that emerged in the interviews were looked into in more detail after they were compared with related work done on the Pakistani media crisis.

Peer Review: Concerning coding and formation of themes, these processes were checked with the help of another researcher who is aware of qualitative research approaches and techniques.

Member Checking: In the event, an attempt was made to get input from most of the journalists captured in the documentary for the purpose of confirming the conclusions arrived at.

Ethical Considerations

Attention to ethical issues was paid in the process of the study, while making the matter public, it was considered that the producers received informed consent while filming the participants and using the documentary as the source of information for the present academic work is consistent with its public domain and educational purpose.

It is therefore evident that the method used in this study affords a good foundation through which the causes of the media crisis in Pakistan can effectively be described. Therefore, through narrativity and thematic analysis of interviews captured in the documentary entitled "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq", the study seeks to establish the causes of the crisis rooted in the media's economic, political, and technological domains and recommend the most plausible remedial measures that would enhance the rescue of the distressed media fraternity.

Results and Discussion

Results

The thematic analysis of the interviews from the documentary "Sahafat Kay Nae Aofuq" revealed three major themes that contribute to the media crisis in Pakistan: The thrust therefore embraces three major competency themes, namely Economic Challenges, Political pressures, and Technological Disruption. All of these factors summed in each theme represent the different concerns that have

inevitable effects on the stability and sustainability of the media industry.

Theme 1: Economic Challenges

The problems faced due to the economic issues in media organizations in Pakistan surfaced as the most prominent theme. Key factors identified include:

Decline in Advertising Revenue

The majority of the interviewees mentioned a major decline in advertising money, which is very important for funding media organizations. This decline has been a result of a decrease in business activity and companies cut their expenses where they can, and advertisement is one such expense. Fahad Hussain Founder of Breaking News and Sensationalization in Pakistani Media pointed out:

“Pakistani media industry is directly connected with advertising industry when economic crises occurred in advertising industry automatically other media industry affected”.

Rising Operational Costs

The various expenses for operating media operations, which include employees' salaries, devices, and maintenance of structures have squeezed the cash flow of media organizations. Journalists noted the prospect of many organizations staring at these costs regrettably against decreasing revenues. Renowned journalist Sohail Warraich highlighted that:

"Pakistani media Industry facing a financial crisis but in begging the industry cannot manage the situation regarding employment. Now with the passage of time industry is far warding for maturity so shrinking the size of employment means the media industry going for original and real size".

Financial Mismanagement

Some of the respondents noted that the management of funds in different media organizations has been poor, which has worsened some economic-related problems. Nonsustainable resource allocation, bare-faced bribery and corruption as well as organizational inefficiency have resulted in poor financial management.

Theme 2: Political Pressures

Interference and political pressure were regarded as

major causes of the media crisis according to interviews with the participants. Key factors include:

Government Censorship

Newspaper reporters shared times when they noticed government intervention or change to the content of something to fit their reporting. Because of this censorship, real journalistic work and independent thinking are hampered.

Political Interference

It was established through interviews that political structures interfere with the running of media houses either by determining editorial policies or content. This interference violates media freedom and encourages journalists and other media personnel to practice self-censorship.

Threats and Intimidation

Numerous respondents said that they were threatened and intimidated by politicians and political organizations. These threats put the journalists in a state of fear, which kills critical and independent thinking and analysis.

Theme 3: Technological Disruption

New technologies and the conversion to digital media have affected traditional business models of media outlets. Key factors identified include:

Shift to Digital Platforms

Modern people, thus, tend to get their news almost exclusively online, and traditional media audiences continue to shrink. Media personnel highlighted that media houses have not been responsive to this change hence, leading to a loss of audience and accordingly advertising revenues. Fahad Hussain commented "There is a space for people in new media and new media has opened new horizons for journalists. They can build their future in the new media field in this way conventional media may be settled its condition in a better way". Another respondent Mr. Usman Mujeeb Shami CEO of, the Daily Pakistan Website and digital media practitioner pointed out that

"I learned from my father Mr. Mujeeb Ur Rehman Shami (veteran journalist) that journalism will be relevant in every age but its medium will be

changed. Now journalism is on the way to the digital age of new media".

Inadequate Adaptation Strategies

A number of respondents stated that there was a lack of proper implementations of some effective digital strategies in the media organizations. Many do not invest in the digital environment or provide training to their staff, thus limiting their performance in the digital market. Professor Dr. Mehdi Hassan emphasized about:

"diffusion of innovation regarding the notion teachers are not ready to adopt new technology and train themselves accordingly, so students also do not care about the innovation. Despite the situation, people are adopting new media as a profession rapidly in Pakistan".

Competition from Social Media

Due to the existence of social networks, people get news from other sources excluding mainstream media outlets. Journalists also spoke of the issues related to the credibility and reliability of information shared in social networks, which complicates the traditional media even more.

Discussion

The analysis of this research shows a complex state of distress facing the Pakistani media market that is influenced by economic problems, entailing political agendas, and such innovations as digitalization. The information suggests that these factors are interrelated and combined together, lead to the instability of the media organizations.

Economic Challenges

Ad revenues are regarded as one of the most sensitive areas related to media sustainability where the problem is expressed literally in the decrease in sales amounts. For most media organizations, advertising revenue is channeled as their mainstream of income hence any changes in the economy fully affect their financial books. Another related problem is the increasing operational expenses, through which media companies experience challenges in achieving solvency. These vices are worsened by inept financial management in the organizations involved resulting in poor

organizational and financial practices and accountability.

Political Pressures

Such methods by political entities stand as considerable threats to endangering the independence of media organizations. Lack of freedom inhibits the media houses from offering professional journalism since governments in these countries practice censorship and harass political reporters. This culture of a police state and oppression means that journalists practicing under such conditions are likely to avoid sensitive or controversial issues just to avoid saving themselves. The threats and Intimidation faced by Journalists also affect the safety of the lives involved in journalism and also affect the trust of the public in the media.

Technological Disruption

This change in perspective has both Strengths and Weaknesses for the media industry as it changes to digital media. Existing media needs to adapt to the new shift through proper implementation of the respective media digital techniques. This constant change in delay or slow transition to the new digital platforms has led to the loss of audiences and hence revenues hence the need to invest in the digital platforms and possibly training of the staff. Furthermore, social media platforms also threaten the authenticity of traditional media since the audience runs to other options for content consumption.

Proposed Remedies

Addressing the media crisis in Pakistan requires a multifaceted approach:

Financial Reforms

Communication management and practicing openness in financial concerns along with experimenting with different potential sources of income can also aid in the market stability of media. One of the ways of minimizing the overdependence on advertisements as the main source of income is by getting into other sources of income such as subscriptions and online advertisements.

Protection of Journalistic Independence

The legal guarantees for journalists and attempts to minimize political influence can be considered critical for creating conditions of free and independent media. The measures for creating regulatory authorities and approval mechanisms of media ownership for pluralism avoidance can improve diversity and sincerity.

Digital Adaptation

Embedding itself more on the digital front and training the journalists is crucial in managing the transition to new media. The key issues contributing to competitive advantage include the establishment

of sound digital strategies such as the usage of social media for audience interaction.

Conclusion

The problematic situation in the media of Pakistan stems from economic, political, and technological environments. Solving these problems demands a multifaceted solution that implies financial changes, regulation of journalists' freedom, and changing the media strategy for digital media. In this way, the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders can be focused on and address the causes of the crisis towards the building of a superior Pakistani media industry.

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