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Freedom of expression and threats to journalists' safety: an analysis of conflict reporting in journalism education in Pakistan

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Introduction

The threat of violence against journalists in Pakistan is very real. Pakistan is a front line state in the war on terror and media workers and news reporters reporting from the front line therefore face huge risks.

According to a United Nation's estimate, at least 71 journalists and media workers have lost their lives since 2001 while pursuing their duties in Pakistan. Consequently, the country has been named as one of the deadliest places for working journalists in the world, suggesting the necessity of regular evaluation of threats to journalists' safety in the country (www.IFJ.org).

Ironically, it is not just journalists' lives that are at risk in Pakistan. The country's educational institutions are also the target of terrorist attacks. In spite of increasing threats to journalists' safety and educational institutions, the role of academia in promoting journalists' safety education is not well-investigated and distinct in Pakistan. Therefore, drawing on the new institutionalism theory, this study explores the diverse

threats that affect journalists' routine work and their freedom of expression focussing on Pakistan. The study aims to investigate whether Pakistani journalists receive safety training and education to carry out their routine work.

Background of the study

The issue of journalists' safety appears to be growing worse with an increasing number of journalists' killings, kidnapping and imprisonment worldwide. The situation of Pakistan is noteworthy in terms of freedom of expression and threats to journalists' safety. The country has a reputation for having a fearless and vocal media. Despite this, or possibly because of it, it is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists, assessed by the extent and severity of threats and other abuse they face (See Amnesty International, IFJ, RSF etc). Statistics gathered by international organisations monitoring press freedom and violence against journalists in Pakistan reveal that threats to their lives and abuses by military, intelligence agencies and militant organisations have "remained high" in the recent years (Freedom House 2015, 2016; Committee to Protect Journalists 2016) In this scenario, I believe that working journalists and journalism students in the country need to be made well aware of the nature of the threats that they may confront, and how to protect themselves in conflict and non-conflict situations. However, it is not known to what extent working journalists in Pakistan are receiving regular safety training, whether journalists' safety education is being given to journalism students at university level, and whether there is an awareness of awareness of the nature and type of safety threats that can affect journalists' routine work amongst the journalism academics and journalists' safety trainers.

Literature review and theory

New Institutionalism theory

Drawing on the new institutionalism theory, this study investigates the diverse threats that affect journalists' work (agency/or action) and their right to freedom of expression, and the role (agency/action) of Pakistan's universities in promoting conflict reporting and peace journalism education in the country. The new institutionalism theory has been used in many domains such as sociology, political science, organisational studies, journalism and economics with certain distinctions (Powell, 2007). This study uses 'sociological institutionalism' because the theory recognises the influence of the institutional environment on actors' agencies - either individuals or organisations (Scott, 1995). Thus, this study considers 'journalists' and 'Pakistan's universities' as 'actors' that are embedded in a specific cultural setting and can be influenced by the institutional environment within which they operate.

Journalism safety groups and measures of journalists' safety

It is widely accepted that journalism serves as a political, social and economic institution (Cook, 2006; Sparrow, 1999, 2006). This implies that the media and individual journalists need to be free and safe to perform their diversified roles in any society. However, there are incidents and threats that affect journalists' abilities to perform their routine work and to exercise their right to freedom of expression (UNESCO, 2013b). At present, over a dozen international organisations are working to end impunity for crimes against journalists, among them the United Nations, which is actively engaged in the problem. Some of international organisations (such as the Committee to Protect Journalists¹, Reporters Without Borders², Freedom

1 Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is a New York based organisation that started to compile data of journalists' deaths in 1992. CPJ's methodology focuses on impunity and journalists' killings rather than any other kinds of threats to their safety. The organisation has developed a set of terminologies to classify the abuses and attacks on journalists such as murders, threats and physical torture. It compiles a file every year that indicates the number of physical attacks, cases of censorship, harassments, intimidations, imprisonment, missing or kidnapping relating to journalists. The most important aspect of CPJ's assessment is whether the journalist's death was work-related. For this purpose, the organisation uses themes of 'motive confirmed' and 'motive un-confirmed' to classify the death. Journalists' deaths are not all work-related, and it is imperative to assess whether it was a 'personal dispute' that killed them, or if it was a journalist's political affiliation which caused his or her death. In countries like Pakistan, it is difficult to evaluate the motives of journalists' killings clearly because of their political and sectarian affiliations (Jamil, 2014). Therefore, CPJ's criteria of assessing the nature and motive of a journalist's death appear as highly important.

2 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is a non-profit and Paris-based organisation. The organisation evaluates press freedom in all five continents of the world. The organisation measures the level of violence and abuses against journalists working for both traditional (print and broadcast) and new (online) media.

House³ and UNESCO⁴) have well-developed indicators to assess the level of journalists' safety in different regions of the world. The review of journalists' safety indicators suggest that the international organisations focus on indicators relating to the psychological, legal, digital and financial protections of journalists. This study seeks to identify threats to journalists' safety, more broadly exploring the diverse types of threats to them such as physical, psychological, legal, financial, social, emotional, gender-specific, digital, topic-specific and public risks within the context of Pakistan. In addition to the investigation of diverse safety risks to journalists, this study analyses whether Pakistan's universities are providing the required education and training to produce 'well-aware and well-trained' journalism professionals who can practise peace journalism with the objective of fostering societal peace.

Conflict reporting and peace journalism education in Pakistan

In journalism studies, several scholars have investigated and theorized conflict and war reporting (Hallin, 1989; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Knightley 2002; Lasswell, 1927; Lynch 2014; Taylor 1992; Thussu and Freedman 2003). Most of the literature on conflict reporting has identified a variety of issues such as national security and interest; professional, individual and gender-based constraints; social, political and economic factors influencing the news content and war reporting. The growing interest of scholars for analysing war and conflict journalism is probably because journalism is predominantly conflict-oriented in many countries of the world – especially in the countries suffering from war or internal conflicts such as Pakistan (Rehman and Eijaz, 2015). Galtung (1998) has put forward a very explicit model describing four key orientations of war journalism: war and violence, propaganda, and Lynch (2014). elites' efforts for peace-making and victory. He argues that "today's media report on conflict that is war-oriented" and he encourages on an alternative style to report which is "peace-oriented rather than war-oriented" (Galtung 2007, p.8).

In the past two decades or so, 'peace journalism' has emerged as an alternative approach to conflict reporting and that is usually oriented towards truth-seeking, peace and conflict resolution. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p.6) define peace journalism as "a set of choices of what to report and how to report it – which creates and opportunities for readers and audiences to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict." Shinar (2007, p.200) identifies five aspects of peace journalism: It "explores backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation; gives voice to the views of all rival parties; airs creative ideas from any sources for conflict resolution; exposes lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides; pays attention to peace stories and post-war developments".

The scope of peace journalism widens in conflict-ridden countries such as Pakistan. The country has been confronting the challenges of internal and external conflicts since its inception: the India-Pakistan conflict, the Taliban conflict, the Baluchistan conflict, Karachi's ethnic conflict, and sectarian and political conflicts

³ Freedom House is a US based non-profit organisation that has been evaluating press freedom since 1980. Initially, in 1978, the organisation began with publishing a global survey of freedom known as 'Freedom in the World'. Freedom House's press freedom indicators evaluates broader threats to journalists' safety such as killing, kidnapping, harassment, physical violence, financial risks, political and legal pressures. Thus, the organisation attempts to assess the financial, legal, physical and psychological protections of journalists (see Freedom House's methodology, 2015).

⁴ The UN's 'Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists' has been endorsed by the UN's Chief Executive Board in 2012, which aims to promote safe journalism through mobilizing different stakeholders including UN agencies, governments, governmental bodies, NGOs, media organisations and workers, civil society members and academics. The national level indicators that evaluate the state of safety issues and collaboration among all stakeholders within a country have been developed from some general indicators of UN's Media Development Indicators (MDI), which are: "Journalists and associated media personnel are not subject to threats, harassment or surveillance; journalists and associated media personnel are not physically attacked, unlawfully detained or killed as a result of pursuing their legitimate activities; media organisations are not forced to close down as a result of pursuing their legitimate activities, or threatened with closure; crimes against journalists are prosecuted and there is no climate of impunity; media organisations have policies for protecting the health and safety of their staff and free lancers; measures of social protection are available to all staff, including temporary and freelance employees; journalists do not routinely self-censor because of fear of punishment, harassment or attack; and confidentiality of sources is protected in law and respected in practice" (UNESCO 2013a: 5-6).

At a national level, UN's indicators assess the actions of four groups of actors whose actions can impact on the level of journalists' safety including (i) UN and other intergovernmental bodies functioning directly in a country; (ii) state and political actors; (iii) civil society and academia; (iv) the media and intermediaries. In each category, indicators covers a variety of actions such as: "monitoring safety issues (information collection), promoting norms on safety (which includes the publishing of information, amongst other steps), co-ordination with other actors, training and capacity building programmes, as well as other activities" (UNESCO 2013a: 7).

At an international level, the United Nations has devised three major indicators, including: (i) "United Nations organisations promote journalists' safety issues at the international level, (ii) international and regional intergovernmental organisations promote journalists' safety issues at the international level, and (iii) international non-governmental organisations promote journalists' safety issues at the international level." As with the indicators for journalists' safety at the national level, the emphasis in these international level indicators is on the physical and psychological safety of journalists, and the related issue of impunity that protects those who commit crimes against journalists from being punished (UNESCO 2013b: 1).

(Jamil, 2014). Therefore, the role of Pakistan's media is crucial in representing these conflicts and in fostering social cohesion and peace in the country. According to a recent study on 'peace journalism and conflict reporting in Pakistan', journalists believe that media foster peace.

Results show that 70.07% respondents were found agreed while 63.58% strongly agree with the notion that journalism can build peace in the country and peace journalism was considered to conceal the conflict.Media plays a central role in the promotion of peace, therefore it is the prime duty of reporters and editors to adopt a balanced stance during conflict and take on board all stakeholders. Peace journalism helps bridge the gap between enemies, so peace building practitioners require understanding of the process of advocacy (Jan and Khan, 2011, pp. 311-324).

Pakistan is a conflict-ridden country where journalists need to play their role in peace-making and conflict resolution despite challenges of war, internal conflict and the high level of violence against them. Interestingly, Pakistani journalists and media professionals do seem to agree about the significance of peace journalism (Jan and Khan, 2011). Nevertheless, the question is whether Pakistan's universities are giving quality education and training about conflict reporting and peace journalism to its journalism students who understand the process of advocacy and who can contribute their journalistic skills in peacemaking attempts. Therefore, this study explores these aspects of journalism education within Pakistan.

Methodology

This study has used the quantitative method of survey and the qualitative method of interviews in order to investigate three research questions, namely: (i) What are the threats that most affect journalists' routine work and freedom of expression in Pakistan? (ii) Do Pakistani journalists receive regular safety training to carry out their routine work? (iii) What is the role of Pakistan's universities in promoting conflict reporting and peace journalism education in the country? A total of 75 male and female journalists⁵ from five ethnicities (Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashtu, Baluchi and Urdu-speaking) and of religious sects (Shia and Sunni) has taken part in the survey. While the selected journalists in this study are from the most well-known newspapers and television news channels in Karachi (a total of 22 media organisations), they do have work experience in more than one city of Pakistan and 17 of them have worked in the country's conflict areas, including Khyber Pakhtunistan Province, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North Waziristan and Baluchistan Province. To ensure the diversity of feedback, journalists of diverse beats (such as politics, crime, judiciary, defence, sports, business, social and religious affairs, health and education) have been selected for the survey.

The survey questionnaire is based on nine types of safety risks, namely: (i) physical risks,⁶ (ii) psychological risks⁷, (iii) financial risks⁸, (iv) legal risks⁹, (v) social and emotional risks¹⁰, (vi) gender-specific risks¹¹, (vii) digital risks¹², (viii) topic-specific risks and (ix) public risks.¹³ In each risk category, journalists were surveyed about whether they have faced safety threats from or because of sources, including government, military, local intelligence agencies, political parties, religious or militant organisations, pressure groups, public and their media organisations.

Moreover, twelve public and private sector universities have been selected in order to review the curricula

5 The concept of the 'journalist' in this study: 'Journalists' as the subject of this study were considered to be individuals who were employed by Pakistan's mainstream newspapers and television news channels; and who were engaged in the jobs of reporting, news gathering, news monitoring, news anchoring, editing, news and current affairs programmes' production and administrative jobs (such as director and controller of news).

6 Physical risks here refer to the risks of killing, kidnapping, detention, imprisonment, physical or sexual assault, rape, injury and any sort of physical attack that may lead to physical disability and harm.

7 Psychological risks here refer to stress and pressure that may affect a journalist's ability to perform his/her job freely and safely.

8 Financial risks mean the threats of job insecurity, pay-scale disparity and forced job terminations.

9 Legal risks include the existence of impunity for crimes against journalists; unfair trial against journalists; manipulation and abuse of laws against journalists and the existence of stringent media laws.

10 Social and emotional risks include the risks of anxiety, fear, depression, and lower self-esteem that mainly arise from the country's social context or a journalist's surrounding environment (for example, the workplace environment and the socio-political environment).

11 Gender-specific risks refer to those threats that a journalist may encounter by virtue of his/or her gender such as sexual assault, rape, gender harassment, discrimination and black-mailing.

12 Digital risks refer to online threats that are caused because of hacking, abusive or threatening e-mails or mobile messages and abusive comments on social media.

13 Public risks refer to the threats that are caused because of violent, unethical and abusive attitudes of the local public towards journalists, such as verbal abuse and physical harm or attack.

of conflict reporting and peace journalism. They are the University of Karachi, Sindh University of Jamshoro, the University of Peshawar, the University of Baluchistan, Punjab University, Bahahuddin Zakiria University in Multan, the Federal Urdu University, Jinnah University for Women (private), the Institute of Business Administration (private), IQRA University (private), ZABIST University (private) and the International Islamic University in Islamabad.

Ten journalism and media academics have also been interviewed to address the role of Pakistan’s universities in promoting conflict reporting and peace journalism education. The names of interviewees have been replaced with numbers (1-10) in order to ensure their confidentiality. The collected data has been analysed thematically using the research question themes, namely: *threats affecting journalists’ work and their freedom of expression; the level of journalists’ safety training; and the role of academia in promoting conflict reporting and peace journalism education*

Findings and analysis

Threats affecting journalists’ work and their freedom of expression

The thematic analysis of collected data suggests that the Pakistani journalists face physical, psychological, financial, topic-specific, emotional and social risks most while performing their routine jobs, whereby almost **97%** (73 out of 75) male and female journalists have confronted **financial threats** of job insecurity, forced job termination and low pay-scale; **92%** (69 out of 75) male and female journalists have faced **physical threats** of killing, physical torture, injury and attack; almost **87%** (65 out of 75) male and female journalists have experienced the **psychological risks** of organisational pressure, government pressure to censor news content and imprisonment, political threats, government/or military surveillance and threatening phone calls; nearly **85%** (64 out of 75) of male and female journalists have faced **social and emotional risks** (such as depression, offence, fear, anxiety and lower self-esteem) due to the fearful environment of Pakistan, their financial constraints, the insulting behaviour of media owners (within organisations) and the local public (during rallies), and **84%** (63 out of 75) journalists have sustained **topic-specific risks**, mostly while working on religious, political, ethnic, some social issues (such as honour killing) and defence issues.

Moreover, **68%** (51 out of 75) journalists have experienced **public risks** because of abusive language and physical attacks by the public during rallies, political events and in general. Not so many journalists have faced **legal and digital risks** while at work and only 28 % (21 out of 75) of them have experienced such threats. Noticeably, all female journalists (13 out of 75) and three male journalists (out of 75) have confronted **gender-specific risks** of harassment, discrimination and blackmail. The table below sums up the various types of threats that affect journalists’ work and their freedom of expression in Pakistan.

Threats to journalists’ safety in Pakistan.

Physical risks	Psychological risks	Financial risks	Legal risks	Social and emotional risks	Gender-specific risks	Digital risks	Topic-specific risks	Public risks
92%	87%	97%	28%	85%	21%	28%	84%	68%
69 out of 75 journalists	65 out of 75 journalists	73 out of 75 journalists	21 out of 75 journalists	64 out of 75 journalists	16 out of 75 journalists	21 out of 75 journalists	63 out of 75 journalists	51 out of 75 journalists

The Pakistani journalists working in the conflict areas of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are no doubt performing a very risky job. The most obvious physical risk in the conflict areas is that they are in danger of being killed in the crossfire of two opposing forces or terrorists groups. Journalists also face other physical risks, such as assault, detention, rape and sexual harassment in areas where law and order has broken down. However, physical risks are not merely a challenge for the Pakistani journalists, but also for international journalists working in the country. It is worthwhile mentioning here the murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl who was kidnapped and later assassinated in 2002 in the Southern port city of Karachi. In the same year, four local people were sentenced for the assassination of Daniel Pearl, when Pakistan’s government came under immense international pressure. A report by Amnesty International (2014) highlights the level of journalists’ safety working for foreign media in Pakistan. The report reveals:

In recent years, all foreigners based in Pakistan, including journalists, have had their travel through the country drastically curtailed by the authorities' often ad hoc application of travel and visa restrictions. Some journalists are restricted to one or more cities and all are excluded from carrying out unauthorised travel to dangerous and politically sensitive areas like Baluchistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (henceforth 'the Tribal Areas') and interior Sindh. The authorities have increasingly required foreign journalists to apply for No Objection Certificates (NOCs) before visiting these areas. (Ibid. 23)

The issue is not just confined to threats to journalists' physical safety. However, this physical threat is aggravated because of the climate of impunity for crime against them. Daniel Pearl's or Wali Khan Baber's (GEO News' correspondent) murder cases are just two prominent examples of solved cases. At present, there are still a number of unresolved cases of violence against journalists that call upon Pakistan's government and judiciary both to perform their respective roles to ensure a safe environment for journalists and media workers (ibid.)

In addition, feedback from surveyed journalists in this study also reveal that they do face physical risks (of kidnapping, killing, imprisonment, detention and attack) and psychological threats (of pressure and stress) by government and intelligence agency sources themselves. The study suggests that government's and intelligence agencies' surveillance not only affect information gathering process but also compel journalists to restrict their on-duty activities, which ultimately affect the quality of news content. Not surprisingly, this study confirms other sources of *physical and psychological risks* to journalists, including from political parties, religious organisations, ethnic and sectarian groups, criminals, terrorists and the public.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that Pakistani female journalists face further physical threats and they are targeted just for being a journalist, as well as for being female, and they experience gender harassment, physical injury and the public's verbal abuse while at work. Responses from female journalists reveal that they receive threatening messages and calls by political elements, religious fanatics, criminals and the public. Some of the surveyed female journalists view the mind-set of the public and Pakistan's culture as the main reasons for the psychological pressure on them. Hence, Pakistani journalists are victim of *physical and psychological risks* in either conflict or *non-conflict* situations, and this is for a range of diverse reasons, including the country's growing religious extremism, conservatism, terrorism, gender disparity and volatile political situation.

When responding about other types of threats, journalists have shared some striking facts. For example, as aforementioned, almost all of the surveyed journalists (97%) have highlighted *financial risks* (of low or unequal pay-scales and forced job terminations) imposed on them by their owners. International organisations (such as Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders and UNESCO) do assess the financial protection of journalists but these organisations must consider the role of media owners in posing threats to journalists' financial well-being, which is actually imperative to discourage corruption and to enhance the quality of journalism in the country.

Pakistani journalists do experience *social and emotional risks* (of anxiety, fear, depression, and lower self-esteem). The survey results suggests a number of reasons that cause *social and emotional risks* to journalists, namely: media owners' insulting behaviour and constant pressure; the public's attitude, conservatism and religious extremism (that cause fear while working on social and religious issues), political parties' pressure and terrorism. Surprisingly, none of the international organisations assessing journalists' safety level worldwide consider the ways any country's culture and socio-political structure pose threats to journalists, and the sources and reasons of *emotional risks* to them. I think the evaluation of *social and emotional risks* is as equally essential in assessing risk because a journalist with good emotional health (without fear, anxiety, pressure and depression) is in a better position to investigate and report reality and truth.

Many of the surveyed journalists in this study (84%), reveal that they experience *topic-specific risks*, especially while working on defence, political, religious, ethnic and some social (such as honour killing) issues. Journalists suggest that they mostly receive *topic-specific threats* from intelligence agencies, political parties, religious organisations, ethnic groups and the public. Interestingly, this study reveals the public as a higher source of risk to journalists' safety compared to *legal and digital risks*.

Drawing on sociological institutionalism, this study validates the impact of Pakistan's unsafe environment on journalists' work and their right to freedom of expression. Sociological institutionalism recognises the influence of the environment on actors' actions through coercive (political/or institutional pressures), regulative (laws and regulations) and mimetic forces (Scott, 1995). However, in the case of Pakistan, many threats to journalists' safety arise because of other factors that foster conflict situations and violence against them including: corruption, terrorism, religious extremism, conservatism, government's and intelligence agencies' autocratic attitude, impunity, organised crimes, gender harassment, poverty, the public's attitude

The level of journalists' safety training

Unfortunately, despite severe safety threats, the majority of the journalists surveyed in this study (78% – 57 out of 75) have not received safety training either by any governmental body, local university, their media organisation or the journalist's union. Journalists' feedback suggests that Pakistan's government, universities, media organisations and journalists' unions have a very limited role in establishing journalists' conflict reporting guidelines and in providing them with regular safety trainings and instruments (such as bullet-proof jackets). However, some surveyed journalists have received safety trainings (18% - 13 out of 75) and they appreciate big media groups' (such as Geo Television Network, Lakson Group, SAAMA Television News Channel and ARY Digital Network) initiatives to enhance journalists' awareness about the risks of conflict reporting and the ways they can protect themselves while at work. The majority of journalists (67 out of 75) have urged their media organisations, journalists' unions and the government to allocate funds for safety training and protection (including the provision of bullet-proof jackets and life insurance).

The role of academia in promoting conflict reporting and peace journalism education

However, journalists' safety training is not merely the responsibility of media organizations and local journalists unions. The role of academia is crucial in fostering safe journalism and producing well-aware journalism professionals who can work effectively in conflict and non-conflict circumstances in Pakistan. According to a journalism academic from a public-sector university in Pakistan, "universities are the first training place for journalism professionals; however, journalism education is not up to international standard here because of a lack of resources and unrevised curriculum" (Interviewee Number Seven). Pakistan's education system is in such a bad state that it is totally ill-equipped to fulfil its essential functions of broadening intellectual spheres and social development. Eventually, this builds a situation where instead of serving as a counterbalance to extremism, Pakistan's universities become part of the problem by failing to prepare the journalism students to become productive members of civil society.

Interviewees' feedback suggests that most journalism departments in Pakistan's universities tend to focus on teaching techniques and ethical standards of reporting that are used in normal socio-political and economic conditions. According to Interviewee Number Six:

We teach our students 'who says what' type of journalism. Most of the news in the Pakistani media is not based on facts [but] rather on statements by politicians, government and military officials. Is this journalism? No! A three-hour written examination on the theory and ethics of journalism is not enough to teach reporting on conflict. Students must understand the practical challenges that they may confront due to Pakistan's socio-political context while working as a journalist, and cultural hindrances and safety risks.

Journalism becomes more challenging when peace is disrupted by conflict, violence and catastrophe. There is no doubt that many young journalists are venturing out into the field without a proper understanding of conflict reporting and risks to their safety in Pakistan. In conflict or crises situation, the journalist is required to go beyond routine journalism, to work as a crucial information link for the public and to act as a peace-maker through producing conflict resolving content. In Pakistan, conflict (either political or ethnic or religious) places enormous pressure on local journalists, who are not adequately equipped, both in terms of technology and expertise, to handle such difficult situations. Regardless of the increasing frequency of conflict or war coverage, there is a scarcity of instructional material in journalism curricula about how to report a conflict or crises. Another journalism academic at a local public-sector university in Pakistan suggests:

In Pakistan, in the majority of cases, there is a disconnection between the market and academia. There are many reasons for it, one being the lack of communication between the two. There is no platform or mechanism for frequent interaction between universities and industry to create a synergy in what is taught and what is being practised — or what needs to be practised. Second, the universities with the traditional annual system of examination have put in place a cumbersome system for designing new courses. More importantly, teachers have a very little say in the design and evaluation of the courses they teach. In short, there is a gap between the theory and practice of journalism. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has designed courses that can address many of the questions, but it has no power (as far as I know) to make them compulsory for universities. It is left to the universities to adopt (or reject) these courses. I would suggest that Pakistan's HEC should have a 'board' for every discipline that critically evaluates courses offered by universities (Interviewee Number Four).

Apart from the weak role of the Higher Education Commission, interviewees' response demonstrates the

many loop-holes in the tertiary-level education of journalism in the country including: ill-equipped public-sector universities (in terms of technology and expertise); a lack of communication between the media industry and universities; the apathetic attitude of journalism schools towards curriculum revision, a similar attitude towards introducing innovative pedagogical models and teaching techniques or towards including peace journalism and conflict reporting education, and an unwillingness to promote local-context research within this field. And while Pakistan's private universities are better resourced, they do not seem to be embracing peace journalism education.

Recommendations

Given the fact that Pakistan is a part of the war on terror and the country has been prone to various sorts of conflicts, there is a need for some essential new initiatives by academia in the country. Namely, journalists' safety and peace journalism education should be a compulsory part of the curriculum at tertiary level; awareness of 'contextual journalists' safety education' should be promoted amongst journalism academics; the ethics of conflict and war reporting should be taught to journalism students; internship should be a mandatory part of all journalism degree programmes; quality research should be done within this field; and collaboration with international universities should be encouraged to introduce effective instructive techniques. Ultimately, these initiatives will help to buttress the role of academia in encountering the problem of journalists' safety through producing well - aware journalism professionals who can report on conflict objectively and ethically, while simultaneously safeguarding themselves from possible foreseen risks.

Conclusion

This article has addressed the level of journalists' safety in Pakistan, revealing the diverse threats to journalists' safety and their right to freedom of expression in the country. Freedom of expression is an individual right, for which no one should be attacked or killed. However, in this study, journalists' feedback reveals that not only their lives but their right to freedom of expression is at risk because of the prevailing unsafe environment in Pakistan. The study suggests journalism is a dangerous profession in Pakistan because of *physical, psychological, financial, social, emotional and topic-specific risks*, which constrain journalists' right to freedom of expression and affect them most while doing their routine jobs. Despite the unsafe environment and constant threats, this study indicates that only 18% of surveyed journalists have received safety training to protect themselves in conflict and non-conflict situations. The following questions need to be addressed when analysing issues around journalists' safety training in Pakistan, namely: who are the trainers? Are trainers themselves trained for journalists' safety training, bearing in mind the local safety circumstances? What is the role of local and international NGO's in promoting journalists' safety education either at university or media organisational level? Further research on these aspects is crucial for the better training of journalists.

This study reveals that the education of conflict reporting and peace journalism is not the major part of journalism curricula in Pakistan's public and private sector universities. The curriculum in most of the universities do not reflect distinctively the local aspects of journalism teaching and approaches, which is important for enabling journalists to understand the context within which they perform their work. As highlighted by Abit and Kenneth in their article, the case of Kosovo is quite similar to Pakistan – where journalism education lacks local teaching approaches. Therefore, in this article, I emphasize certain initiatives such as: the inclusion of journalists' safety and peace journalism modules in curriculum; collaboration with international universities for innovative pedagogical models; regular curriculum revision and local-context teaching and research within this field. Others have underlined the need for a few more significant initiatives that I think are crucial as far as journalists' safety education is concerned, such as: enhancing journalists' awareness of their rights and physical and psychological safety; protection of their equipment, and legal protection while covering war or conflict.

Thus, universities' initiatives for the promotion of safe journalism in Pakistan should not merely be an effort to end impunity for crimes against journalists. It must be recognised as a big step towards a progressive Pakistan where journalists can practise their right of freedom of expression freely and can protect themselves from possible foreseen risks; so that the broader objectives of informed citizenry, women's empowerment, gender equality, economic development, justice, rule of law and democratic governance can

be achieved through a vocal media.

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