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## MEDIA ETHICS IN PAKISTANI PERSPECTIVE

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## ЭТИКА СМИ В ПАКИСТАНСКОЙ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ

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*Abstract.* Without any shadow of a doubt, media is playing its top-notch role in imparting information among masses but in what manner is a hanging matter. Thus, the choice for media in presenting something in a good or bad manner stays open at best. This paper, however, elaborates the ethics for media with regard to Pakistani perspective. The paper focuses its attention on Press Ethics. Press ethics imitates the society and the regulations that inclusively form the press system. The ethical standards and the code of conduct media practitioners should actually abide by are the ongoing debates. The role media must play has been given emphasis. At the final stage of this study, meagre discussion of the councils concerning media has also been inserted.

*Аннотация.* Несомненно, СМИ играют свою первостепенную роль в распространении информации среди масс, но в каком-то смысле это и спорный вопрос. Таким образом, выбор СМИ остается открытым. Тем не менее, эта работа посвящена изучению этики для средств массовой информации. Представлены перспективы развития в отношении пакистанских СМИ. Основное внимание уделяется этике прессы. «Этика прессы» имитирует общество и правила, которые включают в себя систему взаимоотношений. Этические нормы и кодексы поведения, которые практикующие СМИ должны соблюдать, — хотя по этому вопросу и продолжаются дебаты. Роль средств массовой информации в настоящее время очень значительна. На заключительном этапе этого исследования было также включено ограниченное обсуждение советов в отношении средств массовой информации.

*Keywords:* media, media ethics, freedom of the press, Constitution of Pakistan, Press Council of Pakistan.

*Ключевые слова:* СМИ, этика СМИ, свобода печати, Конституция Пакистана, Совет по делам печати Пакистана.

### *Introduction*

It is a hard nut to crack to practice the civilized life sans media on the earth. It has been playing a crucial role in one's life. It works like a conveyor of information from government to

public and vice versa and also a bridge of communication between government and the people. Its role in the policy process is something praiseworthy. It educates people by proffering them with the bulk of information with regard to society's politico-economic and socio-cultural segments. In a democracy, it has been handed over with the task of educating the masses about their guarded rights and creating awareness to tackle the numerous serious pitfalls and snags related to the society. It supports in carrying the society's unimportant portions in way of the mainstream.

As Brian Mc Nair (Richard Keeble's, *The Newspaper Handbook*) explains news is not only the answer to something happens throughout the globe but it also entails top-notch notions and beliefs. The role of media in public bubble in giving the public debate a proper structure, shaping public opinion and making the government liable to the people is praiseworthy. It places a communication linkage amid individuals and groups.

The innovations (new things) in media technology have turned the globe into a global village. Historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–59) opined that the media works as government's 'Fourth Estate'. It works as a look at power exploitations being practised both by professionals and government. Media does its job as a bulwark for people by barring people from public officials' edges.

From the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> century, media of press type has got the hold of different functions, from working being a state's servant, being the liberty bulwark adjacent to the government, being one of controlling community's organization (fourth estate) to a responsible press of social type.

Media Ethics: Ethics has been defined as variedly. The term 'Ethics' comes from the Greek word 'ethos' meaning 'custom' or 'usage' or 'character'. It is a systematic study of general principles of right or wrong behaviour. It implies the application of the moral principles to the issues concerning the society.

The word 'ethics' bears the philosophical concerns. Aristotle – the Greek philosopher – placed his idea of ethics on the 'Golden Mean' which, as per to him, is the borderline between extremes i.e., their professional calls for and those of the society. The word "ethics" as per Machiavelli is a "way of two related but distinct means, notions and ends. He argues that ends justify means, for suppose, if the end is to guard the state, then the means utilized to defend it like war and other concerned instruments set ethical.

In 1700s Immanuel Kant — a German philosopher — evolved the thought of categorical imperative. Here 'categorical' means unreserved. As per his suggestion, one should evolve such principles that will grasp good both for society and himself at the mass level. Kant's ideas have been applied to the development of media ethics. The public's right to know and Press freedom can be labelled as universal principles. J. S. Mill — an English philosopher of 1800s – said it "Greatest Happiness Principle". Ethical behaviour, he says, is that which is operable to the society in a great deal. For utilitarian's, Aristotle's golden mean and Machiavelli's end justifies means sets right only if those principles prop up the greatest good of the highest number of people. The utilitarian principle grasps well in the light of gladness and bad in the light of its sadness.

Rawl's — a modern American philosopher — views that all and sundry must be treated in the same way sans any regard for socio-economic status. He wants to treat the rich in the same way as the poor get treated, the famous person in the same manner as the layman on the street.

These philosophy types of concerns would support us to demystify the concept of 'media ethics'. Media while conveying information to the masses is anticipated to uphold ethical standards as their way of reporting, in direct and indirect manner, leaves effects on the lives of masses. On the flip side, Kasoma says in the African context, "Media ethics refers to making a sound moral decision in journalistic work which finds its place in societal morality" (Quoted in *Journalism* by Goretta Nassanga, Linda).

George Rodman, in his book *Making Sense of Media — An Introduction to Mass Communication*, says that Media ethics, more than being a kind of technology, it deals with the nature of human beings. Around the globe, the press systems of the countries differ with one another, and also the ethical standards do in a similar manner. Press ethics' reflects the regulations and society that form the press system. The code of conduct and ethical standards the media practitioners should abide by in an actual manner is an unending debate. The onus which the press is fixed on has altered along with the modifications in the government's role and its affiliation with the public. Earlier the press proffered the basic information looked-for by the public. But like the works of government are on the rise, the onus of the press has transferred from mere proffering information to seeking out information and highlighting an equal report. The purpose of the press is to bring the facts, construe it and play a catalyst role in tackling the issues of society.

There are a few fundamental ethical standards which most people agree like accuracy, fairness, balance, truth and objectivity. Certain standards can be imposed through agreements among professionals to behave in a certain way, punish certain behaviours and by educating them in moral reasoning that helps them and organization to make a decision about how to handle specific situations. In fact, many media organizations set forth a certain code of ethics to standardize their employee's behaviour and to safeguard themselves against increased government regulation. The guidelines will remind the employees that the ethical standards are important to maintain credibility and profit. Freebies and junkets, sensationalism and indecency are considered as some of the unethical standards.

Whether print or electronic media the content varies from conservatism to extra-sensationalism. (Yellow Journalism). Media Ethicist, as per Clifford Christians, "Moral thinking is a systematic process: a judgment is made and action is taken. Moral decisions projected by journalists look-for being crystal clear".

Before World War II, the journalism schools had added the professional courses in the syllabi which uplifted ethical behaviour. The public requirement for media ethics also led to a range of guidelines and codes for media. It is argued as well that journalists during reporting are not cognizant of ethics until an outer scene happens, that asks the question about the ethical thoughtfulness. Public ideas own media's credibility, which in turn can wield its influence over public backup for press freedom. An indulgent between the people and media makes its mind as; whether the communication can go on at all. In other words, feedback from audiences to communicators impacts on the freedom at a greater level. A better understanding of people's first choice by journalists would give a wide birth to public indignation over ethical issues concerned with media. Discrepant groups had different anticipations from journalists, as the communitarians liked the press to fortify communal values and the feminist hoped for a kind of journalism that represented women dignifiedly.

There are formal cum informal controls through which media (collective) is operated. Formal controls include rules and regulations, what should do and what should not as well as industry norms and informal controls entail civil society organizations, advertisers and buyers. Code of ethics as per some quarters is necessary and the others argue that it is unable to be enforced as it hinders the constitutional rights.

The ethical code is seen as a sign between journalists and the public as well. Through this code, both groups can assess the journalist's work style. The journalists play a many-sided role, first as citizens first and as professionals then who produce reality in front of the public. The principles mirror the ways journalists are trained in their profession. Ethical standards back the journalists to be true with their profession.

It asks for what the journalists are hoped to do in the present situation and the type of information they are supposed to disperse towards the public. The journalists possess a double role task to accomplish, first is their pledge to equality and liberty and the second is their help to the energetic and creative individual seeking for the just social arrangement. This double task gives the meaning to the phrase, “a free and a responsible press”.

#### *Media Ethics: Pakistani perspective*

As per article 19 of UHRD, all and sundry have right to freedom to opine and express and access to information via media. Whereas, its article 29 unites freedom with onus and boundaries. That declares, “In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, all and sundry shall depend only on such limitations as are placed by law solely for the purpose of securing due respect and recognition for the freedoms and rights of others and of meeting the just morality requirements, general welfare and the public order in a democratic society (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).”

In a similar manner, as per Constitution of Pakistan, the article 19 depicts the role of press that states that citizens should exercise the right of freedom and expression and press shall be free in the first part of the article as well, and in second part, it mingles freedom with reasonable check which supports the glory of Islam, security, state and welcoming relations with other states and morality concerning the contempt of court or an offence (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973).

Hence, the press has the freedom to exercise in democratic states but with responsibility fixed and ethics developed, that is appreciated and recognized at all fora. As a repercussion, it is important to have a standpoint of all the stakeholders so that they can understand the media industry, their rules and regulation and violations of ethical codes.

#### *Press Council of Pakistan*

Press Council of Pakistan is a self-governing arm of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and National Heritage which observes the issues and standards of media operations. The Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) has two major aims to serve. Firstly, it takes delivery of complaints of any violation of Code of conduct concerned with journalists and media organizations. On the other hand, it revises, implements, updates the ethical code of practice for, journalists, media organizations and publishers.

“The first constitution of Pakistan (1956) brought the right of freedom of expression under article 8; however, it did not carry freedom of the press. The constitution was based on Government of India Act of 1935 and Field Marshal Ayub Khan abrogated it. While the second constitution of 1962 makes sure the right to freedom of expression as well as excludes the freedom of the press. Then, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced the constitution of 1973 which is deemed as “constitution with the consensus” because all the political and religious parties welcomed it.

This was the only constitution in the string of constitutions developed first that added freedom of press along with freedom of expression and speech. But the freedom that was declared for the press was not complete because it could be mishandled by certain elements and may cause harm to the national interest and security of the state as well as defamation. So the press was given freedom but certainly with some check.

In Pakistan, Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) have evolved a code of ethics to practice. In a similar manner, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has also developed rules to follow but compliance in this regard is a susceptible link. Media in Pakistan is not fully mature yet. (JWT).

### *Literature Review*

Ethics are the general rules of conduct that defines principles of morality and give a line of action in certain situations. Philosophers have given guidelines of ethics for analyzing the behaviour over the period of time but they do not give magic answers in every situation for there is no perfect answer to every problem as the problems vary society to society. While moral values come between two extremes. Aristotle quotes “too much and too little food spoils the health”.

Why there is the need for ethics in case of media and why media entities should adhere to ethical values, we see that (Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2011). identifies two models of mass media i.e. Market Model and Public Sphere Model. The Market Model observes media just as any other market-oriented product that seeks profits, organizations have competitions and demand, supply according to the requirement of consumers. Whereas Public Sphere Model has a macro level approach that observes media’s role effective that spread the ideas to promote informal education in society, which affects the behaviours and caters the interest of public through substantive and diversified content.

Two identifications journalism has to be known. One is: Journalism is a market-driven industry while on the flip side, it is journalism — a professional discourse that has primarily hard rock layer of values, ethics and morals; and these ethical values make a journalist a public servant, Belsey, A. (1998) declares. The first purpose of ethics and law are alike but they are discrepant to each other in their understanding. Ethics give emphasis on the components of good and bad whereas law focuses attention on deeds of right or wrong types.

The teaching of ethics as “are they being taught or not” is a topic that needs the debate to be arranged over. For instance, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, S. (1923/1961) discussed that teaching ethics will not invariably cultivate moral behaviour, for moral build-up, it ends when a person is six years old. Whereas Flexner, A. (1930) uttered that ethics is also a subject like social cum natural sciences the teaching can be imparted about<sup>33</sup>. Shoemaker & Reese, 1994, indicates the necessity of a source of information that ultimately affects media content. Haunter, M. L. n.d (2016) suggests that traditional news reporting style mainly subjects to press releases and press notes as well. On one hand, journalists have to presume that their sources are trustworthy and, on the flip side, sources as usual limit their objectives and reporters go by their accounts without probing into and evaluating the facts.

### *Objectivity and Advocacy in Journalism*

Media Ethics argued that journalists hugely rely on official sources. Thus, power gains advantages in mainstream media. The author stated that it will bring diversity and credibility to news if the official and non-official sources added. Article 18 of the “Government Servants Rules and Conduct 1964” permits none of the personnel to confer in an unofficial manner directly or indirectly unless it is authorized or directed (Civil Services Academy).

In this regard, article 19 of section “A” of (The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973) comes in a move that makes sure; every citizen would have right to know and he/she would have access to information concerning the theme of public interest. The part “Right to Know” was inserted after Article 19 in the chapter of Fundamental Rights, after the eighteenth amendment was brought in Constitution of Pakistan, (18<sup>th</sup> Amendment 2010). In reality, people do not exercise their right to information in a direct manner and get the help of media which proffer them information and it is important to media to avail these laws (Article 19 Training Manual).

This responsibility is also fixed on journalists that they bring investigative journalism in their practice by getting the help of the laws for access to information (Abdullah & Reshmi n.d.). The

heads of media schools while peaking on the forum of “Academia and Civil Society Round Table Conference”, held here in Pakistan said that citizens are unaware and not sensitized of their guarded right to know and media professionals do not have an interest in exercising this tool to get information (Pakistan Needs Citizens — Centric Information Policy).

### *Methodology*

By nature, philosophical and analytical is the methodology used in this study. Both print and online types of stuff like books, journals and newspaper articles have been used as secondary sources in this piece of work. The paper pays its eyelid upon discrepant standpoints of media ethics at local cum international stages and simultaneously it pays its eyelid upon the links amid media and the public by which it assesses the show and freedom highlighted and taken pleasure in by media in a respective manner.

### *Conclusion*

The media has its social responsibility to comply with. It has a diverse role to play. It holds the information out to the masses at large in the bargain. Code of Ethics is the policy developed which is to be coped up by inclusive media. The manifold bodies of media in Pakistan are playing their individual role in general. The numerous issues such as the problem of unemployment, terrorism, poverty, spreading awareness among the masses on the issues of concern and others improving international relations, and panaceas for all these problems could be meet as media could do marvels. However, media in Pakistan in the shape of manifold bodies is playing its role but does not abide by the ethics formed by the media organizations like PCP, CPNE, PEMRA, APNS and so forth.

As a consequence, the other studies must be given shape and be executed over this top-notch matter to make the media abide by what the principles, rules, regulations and laws they are asked about to comply with.

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