

The Academic Profile of Sindh Journalists in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article presents original research findings about the education of journalists in Sindh province Pakistan and mentions how education is one of the significant variables influencing the journalists' conditions and their profession. Citing different scholars and researchers the article emphasizes upon a higher level of education for journalists as they may not be manipulated professionally and exploited financially. Moreover the empirical data gathered by a surveying 576 journalists show that highly/university educated journalists emerge with different professional patterns; like on average working more in newsrooms than as news reporters, hired by broadcast and wire-service media organizations than newspapers or being more paid compared with those journalists who were less educated. In this way, this is a reminder that education of journalists is a significant key to improve the conditions of journalists and quality of journalism particularly in third world or developing countries.

Keywords: *Sindh Journalists, University Educated, School/College Educated, Newsroom Journalists.*

Introduction

Media today is understood as an inevitable part of life in contemporary civilization, and central to it has journalists as the key producers of information (Malovic, 1998: 221-232) disseminated for audiences. This article reports original research results about the education of working journalists in Pakistan. In today's media saturated and dependent culture Reese & Cohen (2000) note that the education of media workers particularly journalists attracts greater attention (Stephen & Jeremy, 2000: 213), and simultaneously the education of journalists has been called a bone of contention as well (Malovic, 1998: 223). One of the professional characteristic related difference found among journalists due to education is according to Malovic Stjepan (1998) that the educated journalists stand as most effective hurdle to manipulations (Malovic, 1998: 221). Whereas, on the contrary the uneducated journalists happen an easier prey to those who wish to have control upon media, like power-brokers, politicians, parties, ideologies, advertisers, corporations, managers, show-business stars and sport clubs etc. (Malovic, 1998: 228).

Moreover, Deuze (2006) has been cited pointing that "the education and training of journalists is a subject much debated – but only rarely researched" (Melita & Laban, 2009: 93). Further quoting to Pulitzer it is said that journalism requires widest and deepest knowledge (Adam, 2001: 319), and it has become central to democratic life; and its health is intertwined with the health of public life (ibid: 316). The field of journalism studies, as a research field, orientates that journalism, as a practice, since 1970s (in UK and Ireland) has become a graduate occupation (Harcup, 2011: 34-50). Therefore since many decades it has become the basis of debate that what a newsman is and should be (John & William, 1973: 147,151). Hence, journalists and their profession are saying requires strong identity. However, that identity is possible through a rigorous and comprehensive education (Adam G., 2001: 316). Apart it, regarding the importance of education for journalists Pulitzer is

quoted arguing that “a formal education is as necessary for the preparation of an editor as the study of military battles is for a soldier studying for command” (Adam G., 2001: 319). Because journalism is seen as a democratic art, and its quality would determine the quality of democratic life (Adam G., 2001). About education of journalists one editor participating in a journalism education study expressed that “However, experience is undoubtedly important ... but university education is obligatory – a journalistic education is very welcome” (Melita & Laban, 2009: 97). Finally, about education a Thomson’s recruiting executive said the better educated a man is more depth and breadth he will have, and the more effective a newspaperman he will make (Frith & Meech, 2007: 138).

Research design and method

To collect data a self-completion questionnaire was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan and all district-level press clubs. However, to select a sample purposive and opportunistic technique was employed, with the aim to include as many working journalists as possible. Moreover the survey was inclusive of only those journalists who were regularly employed to work for newspapers, magazines, news agencies, public and private television and radio stations mainly with the professional role status as reporters, sub-editors or editors. The survey was conducted by field researchers who were to make sure that queries by respondents about questions could be answered properly and that completed questionnaires could be collected securely and timely. The questionnaire of the study ranged widely over various topics about journalists’ careers, their, training and experience, the media organizations they worked for, their political affiliations, their attitudes to and use of new technologies their membership of press clubs and other organizations, their educational backgrounds, and their financial and working conditions. In this way a total of 576 journalists filled questionnaires; and at the time of the survey, the total population of journalists in Sindh was estimated almost 2500. However, this number of journalists is inclusive of both those who were members of press clubs, and non-members of press clubs, working mainly at district level and to some extent at sub-district level. Further, almost three fifths (59 percent) of the sampled journalists were surveyed at press clubs, and remaining 38 percent at workplaces and 3 percent in their homes.

Findings and Analysis

The complete results of data gathered for this study have been the subject of detailed description elsewhere (Memon Bashir, 2011). Therefore in this paper we will limit ourselves to the insights the data provide in relation to the education level of the journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan. The researchers were aware in advance of the fact that in Pakistan like many other countries still journalism or mass communication degree has not become a compulsory qualification for becoming a media practitioner or a journalist. However, now at least while employing to journalists and all sorts of media practitioners the trend of preferring mass communication and journalism graduates has grown. And the veracity of such trend is verifiable that the number of mass communication, media or journalism departments has also increased in Pakistan compared with the past, not only in the public sector but also in some private sector universities as well in Pakistan.

Demographics

See table 1 the typical Sindh journalist is male (98.1%), speaks the Sindhi language (70.9%) and follows to Islam as a religion (96.7%). Moreover, the first highest proportion (42.1%) of the surveyed Sindh journalists is up to 30 years old, and the second highest proportion (37.5%) is between 31 to 40 years old. Finally, the highest proportion (37.7%) of the Sindh journalists earns monthly less than 10,000 (ten thousand) PK rupees.

TABLE 1
Composition of Journalists by Demographic Variables

	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	565	(98.1)
Female	11	(1.9)
Ethnicity/Mother language		
Sindhi	405	(70.9)
Urdu	104	(18.2)
Siraiki	24	(4.2)
Other	38	(6.7)
Religion		
Muslim	551	(96.7)
Hindu	14	(2.5)
Other	5	(.9)
Age		
0-30 years	239	(42.1)
31-40 years	213	(37.5)
Over 40 years	116	(20.4)
Monthly Income		
Less than 10,000 Rs.	217	(37.7)
Above 10,000 Rs.	168	(29.2)
No answer	76	(13.2)
Put (X) cross symbol	5	(.9)
Commented instead of revealing Income	110	(19.1)

Source: A self-completion questionnaire was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan.

Educational profile

According to the table 2 the majority (63.8%) of the Sindh journalists had their final degree from university and the second highest proportion (28.5%) from colleges and the remaining proportion (7.7%) had studied at school level. Moreover, the majority (63.7%) had sought education as a regular student and the remaining proportion of over than one third (36.3%) as a private student. In the context of academic institute the journalists who had sought their final degree from university (365), among them the simple majority (54.4%) had studied from University of Sindh, Jamshoro and the second highest proportion (27.2%) from Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur; whereas the remaining proportion (18.4%) had got their final education from University of Karachi, Karachi (13.2%) and other various universities

(5.2%). In this way, the data mentions that the typical journalist (63.8%) in Sindh is a university educated. And he studied as a regular student (63.7%) from the University of Sindh, Jamshoro (54.4%), which is one of the main public sector universities in Sindh and caters for students from across Sindh province and other areas of Pakistan.

TABLE 2
Composition of Journalists by Education- Related Variables

	Number	Percentage %
Education Level		
School	44	(7.7)
College	163	(28.5)
University	365	(63.8)
Mode of Education		
As a private student	197	(36.3)
As a regular student	346	(63.7)
Name of academic institute		
University of Sindh, Jamshoro	198	(54.4)
Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur	99	(27.2)
University of Karachi, Karachi	48	(13.2)
Other	19	(5.2)

Source: A self-completion questionnaire was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan.

Further, according to the table 3 in the regard of education level, it was found in cross-tabulations that among the newsroom workers on average the proportion of university educated journalists (37.5%) was higher than school/college educated (21.3%). Conversely among those who were involved in news reporting, the proportion of school/college educated journalists (78.7%) was higher than university educated (62.5%). In the context of organization type it was observed that among the print media workers on average the proportion of school/college educated journalists (76.3%) was higher than university educated journalists (52.9%). Whereas, in broadcast and wire-service media organizations on average the proportions of university educated journalists (39.5% and 7.7% respectively) were bigger than school/college educated journalists (20.3% and 3.4% respectively).

TABLE 3**Distribution of Journalists by Education Level and Selected Variables (N and %)**

	School/College	Education Level	
		University	Total
Journalist type*			
Newsroom-based	44 (21.3)	137 (37.5)	181 (31.6)
News-reporter	163 (78.7)	228 (62.5)	391 (68.4)
Total	207	365	572 (100)
Organization type†			
Print	158 (76.3)	193 (52.9)	351 (61.4)
Broadcast	42 (20.3)	144 (39.5)	186 (32.5)
Wire-service	7 (3.4)	28 (7.7)	35 (6.1)
Total	207	365	572 (100)
Media language‡			
English	8 (3.9)	50 (13.7)	58 (10.2)
Sindhi/Urdu	198 (96.1)	314 (86.3)	512 (89.8)
Total	206	364	570 (100)
Political affiliation§			
Yes	86 (42.0)	115 (31.7)	201 (35.4)
No	119 (58.0)	248 (68.3)	367 (64.6)
Total	205	363	568 (100)
Age**			
0-30 years	88 (42.9)	151 (41.7)	239 (42.2)
31-40 years	62 (30.2)	150 (41.4)	212 (37.4)
Over 40 years	55 (26.8)	61 (16.9)	116 (20.5)
Total	205	362	567 (100)
Monthly income 			
Unpaid	63 (30.4)	52 (14.2)	115 (20.1)
Underpaid	98 (47.3)	185 (50.7)	283 (49.5)
Better-paid	5 (2.4)	55 (15.1)	60 (10.5)
Lucratively paid	6 (2.9)	36 (9.9)	42 (7.3)
No answer	35 (16.9)	37 (10.1)	72 (12.6)
Total	207	365	572 (100)
Location ĩ			
Rural	158 (76.3)	171 (46.8)	329 (57.5)
Urban	49 (23.7)	194 (53.2)	243 (42.5)
Total	207	365	572 (100)

* $\chi^2 = 15.43, p0.000, df = 1$; † $\chi^2 = 30.72, p0.000, df = 2$; ‡ $\chi^2 = 12.91, p0.000, df = 1$;

§ $\chi^2 = 5.60, p0.018, df = 1$; ** $\chi^2 = 10.80, p0.005, df = 2$; || $\chi^2 = 51.21, p0.000, df = 4$; ĩ $\chi^2 = 45.77, p0.000, df = 1$.

Source: A self-completion questionnaire was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan.

About the language of media organization the data show that in the English language media organizations on average the proportion of university educated journalists (13.7%) was

bigger than school/college educated journalists (3.9%). However, in contrast in the Sindhi/Urdu language media organizations on average the proportion of school/college educated journalists (96.1%) was higher than university educated (86.3%). As far as the political affiliation of the Sindh journalists is concerned, it was found that on average school/college educated journalists (42.0%) were more politically affiliated than university educated journalists (31.7%). However, among the politically-not-affiliated journalists the proportion of university educated journalists (68.3%) was higher than school/college educated journalists (58.0%).

Additionally, according to the data those journalists who were up to 30 years old among their proportions there was almost no difference in the context of school/college educated (42.9%) and university educated (41.7%) journalists. Whereas among those who were 31 to 40 years old the university educated (41.4%) were more than school/college educated (30.2%) ones. However, in contrast between those who were above 40 years old the proportion of school/college educated journalists (26.8%) was higher than university educated journalists (16.9%). Moreover, the journalists who were unpaid, and those who did not answer to the monthly income question among them the proportions of school/college educated journalists (30.4% and 16.9% respectively) were bigger than university educated (14.2% and 10.1% respectively). In contrast however, the journalists who were underpaid, better-paid and lucratively paid, among them the proportions of university educated were higher (50.7%, 15.1% and 9.9% respectively) than school/college educated journalists (47.3%, (2.4% and 2.9% respectively). Finally, it was found that the journalists who belonged to rural parts of Sindh, among them on average the proportion of those who were school/college educated (76.3%) was bigger than those who were university educated (46.8%). However, on the contrary the journalists who belonged to urban areas, among them the proportion of university educated (53.2%) was higher than school/college educated (23.7%).

In summary it was observed that on average the university educated journalist is more newsroom worker. And he is employed in broadcast and wire-service media organizations of the English language. In addition, he is found less politically affiliated and up to 40 years old. Financially, the university educated journalist is more paid and mostly belongs to the urban area of Sindh. However on the contrary, on average the school/college educated journalist is more news reporting and worker of print media of Sindhi/Urdu language media organizations. Further, the school/college educated journalist on average is observed more political affiliated and is above 40 years old. Financially, he is more unpaid and belongs to rural area of Sindh.

TABLE 4**Distribution of Journalists by Mode of Study and Selected Variables (N %)**

	Mode of Study		
	Private Student	Regular Student	Total
Journalist type*			
Newsroom-based	53 (26.9)	123 (35.5)	176 (32.4)
News-reporter	144 (73.1)	223 (64.5)	367 (67.6)
Total	197	346	543 (100)
Age[†]			
0-30 years	70 (35.7)	158 (46.2)	228 (42.4)
31-40 years	86 (43.9)	116 (33.9)	202 (37.5)
Over 40 years	40 (20.4)	68 (19.9)	108 (20.1)
Total	196	342	538 (100)

* $\chi^2 = 3.89, p < 0.038, df = 1$; $\chi^2 = 6.54, p < 0.038, df = 2$.

Source: A self-completion questionnaire was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan.

As indicated in the table 4, first in the perspective of journalist type it was found that among the newsroom journalists the proportion of those who studied as a regular student (35.5%) was higher than those who studied as a private student (26.9%). Whereas, in contrast among those who worked as news reporters it was observed that the proportion of those journalists who studied as a private student (73.1%) was higher than those who studied as a regular student (64.5%). In the context of age the findings reported that among those who were up to 30 years old the proportion of those who studied as a regular student (46.2%) was bigger than the proportion of those who studied as a private student (35.7%). However, on the contrary among those who were 31 to 40 years and over 40 years old the proportions of the privately studied journalists (43.9% and 20.4% respectively) were higher than those who studied as regular (33.9% and 19.9% respectively). In summary, it was found that on average the typical journalist in Sindh who has studied as a regular student works, for the most part, in newsrooms and is up to 30 years old. However, in contrast on average the typical journalist who studied as a private student works mostly as a news reporter and is over 30 years old.

Discussion

The findings presented here orientate about the education level of the journalists in Sindh; as the researchers were aware in advance of the fact that in Pakistan like other various countries across the world still the degree in journalism and mass communication has not become a necessary requirement to be fulfilled for becoming a journalist. However, despite this situation both the trend to hire journalism or mass communication degree holders and the number of journalism or mass communication graduates are increasing.

As a general the education profile of the Sindh journalists emerged from the findings reports that the majority (63.8%) of the surveyed journalists had sought their final degree from university. That in fact is a significant characteristic of the Sindh journalists that the majority have had its final degree from a highest academic institute i.e. is university. Because the educated journalists are saying stand as most effective barrier against the manipulations

(Malovic, 1998). One editor even has expressed “Experience is undoubtedly important ... but university education is obligatory”(Melita & Laban, 2009). The majority (63.7%) had studied their final degree as a regular student. And that mode of study is generally supposed in Sindh more appropriate to seek formal education.

Further, the findings indicated that on average the university educated journalists are found more as newsroom workers and hired by broadcast and wire-service media organizations. The university educated journalists are not only politically less affiliated but also up to 40 years old and are more paid than school/college educated journalists. Such findings in this way report that education has great impact upon journalism, journalists and their conditions and quality. Because it seems according to the above findings that on average well educated journalists are hired more in the newsroom and by broadcast and wire-service media organizations. Particularly, the impact of education seems more clear when the private broadcast media in Pakistan have newly been established and it prefers to employ a highly educated journalists; and most significant when the university educated journalists on average seem less affiliated with political parties and comparatively work for more pay than non-university educated. In other words it is higher/university education that keeps those journalists away from getting politicized in the context of their journalistic work and not becoming financially exploited at the hands of media owners.

Conclusion

In this article findings regarding the education of Sindh journalists have been presented and discussed in the context of the importance of education for journalists and journalism profession and its impact upon them. Further it has been put on the basis of the findings that how the highly/university educated journalists have different standings than school/college educated journalists. This evidence simply indicates that education has significant positive impact upon journalists, their conditions, performance and profession. In this way these results help to support more to higher education of journalists. Finally the evidence presented shows that the tendency to have higher education is found more particularly in newly established broadcast media and young journalists. And such tendency may improve the quality of journalism as well in Sindh, Pakistan.

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