Terrorism and the Performance of Journalists in Balochistan

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Freedom of speech and freedom of the press is generally attributed to an independent society where the basic rights of citizens are ensured. Balochistan, the western and resources rich province of Pakistan with its huge geopolitical importance has been under a strong wave of terrorism for the last two decades. This menace of terrorism has severely affected citizens of the province including media workers.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This research endeavor is an attempt to explore the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan. The study is based on the Hierarchy of Influence model which provides ground to explore the influence of terrorism. In this quantitative study, the researchers employing the systematic sampling technique have selected 50 media professionals out of 194 registered journalists of five press clubs; Quetta, Chaman, Noshki, Mastung, and Loralai.

Findings: The survey findings show that terrorism has badly affected the quality of their reporting. The study also reveals that objective journalism is hard to follow in the province by journalists as they are always threatened not only by terrorists but also by the law enforcement agencies to mold the reports in their favor.

Implications/Originality/Value The findings also indicate that terrorism has also affected journalists’ personal lives.

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Introduction

The existence of an open, free and independent society is always based on freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and free and self-regulating media and vice versa. In this regard, the
Constitution of Pakistan has ensured the basic human rights of Freedom of Speech and the right to Information through Articles 19 and 19A respectively. Moreover, freedom of media, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression are considered true litmus tests to measure how much society is independent. But when the freedom of speech and right to information are threatened for whatever reasons, society’s overall development is impeded.

Pakistan generally has suffered the menace of terrorism since the 9/11 attacks and sacrificed thousands of precious lives from all walks of life including academicians, media professionals, security forces, political and tribal elites, intellectuals, and even school children. Balochistan, a western province of Pakistan, and a future economic hub for Pakistan has been specified under the clouds of terrorism for the last two decades.

According to Bazai (2020), Balochistan has experienced the worst form of nationalist and religious terrorism. Due to its strategically important location and natural resources, many actors which include foreign intruders, different religious terrorist groups, separatist movements, and ethnic militant groups, tribal and local pressure groups are trying to de-stabilize this mineral-rich part of Pakistan. Similarly, the presence of TTP, Afghan Taliban, and other violent religious groups in the northern vicinity of Quetta has also been deteriorating the security situation for media organizations and their workers (International Media Support, 2009).

This unrest in the province has not only affected the economy, but also the general situation of law and order. Consequently, thousands of dwellers of the province have lost their lives and loved ones. In this whole war-like situation, the media professionals have also been threatened, kidnapped, harassed, attacked, targeted, and even killed while performing their respective jobs. Journalists in Balochistan do not have the freedom to objectively and fairly report issues concerning law and order situations such as local insurgency, involvement of international forces in Balochistan conflict, sectarian and extremist groups, separatists, and militants (Shirazi, 2017). Due to severe threats to reporters and their loved ones, the media workers often resign their job or try to find work in a safer place (Mezzera & Sial, 2010).

Balochistan had experienced a strong and huge layer of terrorism mainly from 2007 to the April 2019 suicide blast on the Hazara community. However, this period has been selected by the researcher due to its more relevance to the topic. During this time, many huge terrorist incidents have occurred. On 16 February 2013, in a suicide blast, 84 people of the Hazara community were killed and wounded more than 200 (DAWN, 2013). Similarly, according to DAWN (2016), in another suicide blast on the top lawyers of Balochistan on 08th of August, 2016 in which more than 70 Lawyers were martyred. Similarly, on 24th October 2016, the police training center at Quetta was attacked by terrorists in which 71 cadets were martyred and 165 were injured (DAWN, 2016).

Similarly, according to BBC Urdu (16 July 2018), on 13 July a huge blast killed more than 149 people in Mastung in which more than 180 people were injured. However, according to Rehman (2019), states that recent reports show that since 2000, more than 133 media professionals have been murdered in the country (Rehman, 2019). In this regard, Balochistan is one of the unsafe areas for reporters as from 2007 to 2016, 29 reporters have been murdered (IFJ, 2016). According to Rehman (2019), the militants and killers of the media professionals have been enjoying almost full impunity.

As a global phenomenon, Terrorism is considered the unlawful use of force or violence against an individual, group, or society intended to achieve political or social goals (Silverman & La Greca, 2002). (Pearl, 1997) is of the view that terrorists always want publicity and therefore they choose to attack media professionals and media institutions to become the content of media headlines. Threatening media professionals and media organizations to not write against them but in favor is one of the prime objectives of the Taliban (Ricchiardi, 2012). Similarly, military and terrorist organizations always mold information in their favor, however, both of them termed
Journalists as agents when they highlight the opinions of any one of them (Hussain & Rehman, 2015 Masood, 2017). Media professionals in Balochistan have been murdered and threatened for both covering and not covering the conflicts (Tahir & Niaz, 2016). However, the media professionals covering these terrorist attacks and violence and the victims of the events on daily basis are more susceptible to the direct impacts of terrorism (IRADA, 2014).

The dilemma for media workers is that they are constantly being pressurized, targeted, abducted, harassed, and even killed by different pressure groups, separatists groups, sectarian groups, political and tribal elites, and also by state organizations to report according to their view and opinion, and give them more space (Amnesty International, 2014 and Tahir & Niaz, 2016). According to Hussain (2020), not only conflicts groups but the owners of media organizations are also targeting reporters and their loved ones. Because of life-threatening harm journalists in the province do not publish their work under intimidation and fear which badly affected objective journalism (Hussain & Rehman, 2015 Mezzera & Sial, 2010).

According to IRADA (2014) however, Journalists are not satisfied with the role of civil society and NGOs as they only pretend to support media workers for publicity and getting media attention. The media organizations in the country ensure the protection of their technical resources and equipment through insurance policy but they do not insure protection of their human resource (Amnesty International, 2014). They have no written safety guidelines enlisting precautions for reporting in a war zone or covering terrorist events. However, the journalist’s unions have formed an editorial board to jointly draft sensitive news which put the lives of media professionals at risk but the policy differentiation among media organizations is a hindrance in this respect (IRADA, 2014).

The media professionals perform their duties in this difficult and war-like situation and are more exposed to terrorism incidents because of the nature of their job. Similarly, the role of media professionals in countering the narratives of terrorists is inevitable. In this regard, the study has much significance because Balochistan has been under a strong layer of terrorism. Therefore the objective of this study is to explore the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan with the objectives to determine the nature of impacts and to explore to what extent terrorism does affect the professional and personal lives of media workers.

However, the findings of the study would highlight the problems and impacts the journalists are facing due to the war and conflict-like situation. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan?
2. How and to what extent does terrorism affect the professional lives of media professionals?
3. How and to what extent does terrorism affect the personal lives of media professionals?

**Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical underpinnings have been provided to this study from the Hierarchy of Influence Model.
Hierarchy of Influence Model

The hierarchy of Influence Model is a theoretical framework developed by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D Reese. This model discusses five levels of influences on media content. That ranges from the macro level to the micro level which includes the Social system level, Social Institution level, Organizational level, Routines level, and Individual level. In the field of media sociology and media psychology, this model is being applied for studying media contents and media effects. This framework not only describes how various influences simultaneously impose on media and its content but also determines the interaction between those influences at different levels.

Overall the hierarchy of influence model helps in knowing media, its content, and their interaction with different organizations, institutions, and society. And therefore, the hierarchy model of influence is the most relevant model and best ground that guide exploring the impacts of the terrorism phenomenon, on the performance of media professionals at different levels.

In this regard, keeping the relevance of the hierarchy model, the researchers intended to determine the nature of impacts and to explore to what extent terrorism does affect the professional and personal lives of media workers.

Research Design & Methodology

Data Collection and Sampling

For this study, the researchers have opted survey method as part of the quantitative method for data collection and achieving objectives by applying the hierarchy of influence model through a well-designed questionnaire.

According to Dominic & Wimmer (2013), a population is a set of subjects having similar characteristics. Balochistan-based media professionals who are also registered members of the press clubs of Quetta, Chaman, Loralai, Noshki, and Mastung are a population of this study. The researchers have selected five press clubs of Balochistan which include two from north Balochistan and Pashtun populated area and two from west Balochistan which is a Baloch populated area and lastly the Quetta Press Club which is in the capital city of Balochistan. These areas of Balochistan experienced the menace of terrorism the more. Chaman and Noshki are also situated on the border with Afghanistan and the media workers associated with these two press clubs are facing threats and being targeted on regular basis. The population of the study includes all registered members (194) of the selected Press Clubs as the respondents.
Data Analysis
According to Sarantakos (2012), the systematic sampling method as a part of probability sampling gives the equal opportunity of selection to the entire population, where the subjects from a selected population are chosen on random bases initially, and select other subjects after a fixed sampling interval. Therefore, a systematic sampling technique has been used by the researchers in this study. The researcher can’t inquire from all members of press clubs of Balochistan, due to time, security, and availability issues.

In this regard, there are 194 registered members/media professionals in five selected press clubs of Balochistan. Researchers have applied systematic sampling within the premises of probability sampling to get a controllable and researchable sample size. Fifty (50) media professionals from five press clubs of Balochistan as a whole are the sample size for this research. The researchers have listed the names of all sample units of the population alphabetically and assigned them numbers accordingly. By applying the nth number formula from the systematic sampling technique, \( N = \) is the number of units in the selected population which is 194, and \( n = \) is the number of units of the sample which the researcher has chosen 50. The formula will be as \( (N = 194 \text{ divided by } n = 50 = 3.88) \), which means every 4th registered member as 1st, 5th, 09th, etc. Every selected journalist within the sample size of 50 journalists is the unit of analysis in this study.

Similarly, in this study, “Terrorism” (means an act of violence aimed at harming innocent unarmed civilians to achieve religious and/or political goals) is an independent variable, and “Performance of journalists” is the dependent variable in the study. Here performance means changing the work pattern of media professionals.

In this study, a comprehensive questionnaire based on closed-ended questions will be used as a research instrument. The researchers have created 47 questions in total in light of 03 main research questions. Similarly, the questionnaire has been divided into two parts in which part 01 is about the demographic questions and part 02 is about the main research questions and variables under study. However, the researchers have used the Nominal Scale and Ratio Scale in Part 01 and the Likert Scale in Part 02 of the questionnaire to inquire from media professionals.

A comprehensive questionnaire has been used for data collection from the media professionals. Upon completion of the survey, the data has been analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Findings and Analysis
In this research study, the researchers intended to explore the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan. Moreover, the researchers have designed a questionnaire and collected data in the view of the main research questions of the study which are; 1) to know the nature of the impact of terrorism on media professionals in Balochistan, 2) to explore the impact of terrorism on professional lives of media professionals and 3) to explore the impact of terrorism on personal lives of media professionals in Balochistan.

The researchers have chosen 50 samples from the population of the study (194) which include all registered members of five press clubs (Quetta, Chaman, Noshki, Mastung, and Loralai) from Balochistan. However, the researchers distributed a questionnaire among the respondents and collected data from all 50 respondents with the majority 48% and 36% of reporters having 6-10 years of experience respectively.

Similarly, the data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), with the help of its tools “Frequency” and “Percentage”. After analyzing data collected through the survey, the main findings are as follows;

- The findings show that the majority 22 (44%) of the media professionals strongly agreed to the statement and strongly believed that they feel insecure while covering terrorism.
While 17 (34%) respondents were agreeing with the statement. On the other hand, 6 (12%) of the respondents were neutral about this statement. Besides, 4 (8%) respondents disagreed and the minority only 1 (2%) of media workers strongly disagreed with to statement respectively and felt fully secure.

- Majority 28 (56%) of media workers strongly agreed with the statement and strongly believed that they often receive threats while covering terrorism. Similarly, 20 (40%) respondents agreed with the statement. While the minority, only 2 (4%) respondents were neutral to the statement, as they never experienced any threat while covering terrorism so far.

- According to the findings, the majority of 25 (50%) respondents agreed with the statement that they have seen media professionals killed by terrorists. While 10 (20%) media professionals were disagreeing and 8 (16%) respondents were strongly disagreeing to the states respectively. However, 4 (8%) media workers strongly agreed. Whereas, the minority 3 (6%) respondents were neutral to the statement.

- Majority, 15 (30%) of media professionals surprisingly, disagreed with the statement about leaving or resigning their respective jobs after being threatened. However, 12 (24%) respondents were neutral. Whereas, 11 (22%) media workers were strongly disagreeing with the statement. Moreover, 9 (18%) respondents were agreeing and the minority 3 (6%) strongly agree with the statement respectively.

- In response to the statement that media professionals can not follow journalistic codes of ethics while covering terrorism, the above-mentioned table shows that the majority 21 (42%) media workers strongly agreed with the statement. Similarly, 12 (24%) media professionals agreed with the statement. However, 9 (18%) respondents were neutral to the statement. Whereas, the minority 4 (8%) media workers disagreed and 4 (8%) strongly disagreed with the statement respectively and believed that journalistic codes of ethics could be followed while covering terrorism.

- Majority, 25 (50%) respondents agreed with the statement terrorism affects their professional lives. Similarly, 20 (40%) media workers strongly agreed with the statement. However, 3 (6%) media workers disagreed with the statement and were of the view that terrorism has no effects on their professional lives. Whereas 1 (2%) respondents were neutral and 1 (2%) strongly disagreed with the statement respectively.

- In response to the statement whether terrorism affects the quality of your reporting, the above table indicates that the majority 22 (44%) media professionals strongly agreed with the statement. Similarly, 19 (38%) respondents agreed with the statement. However, 6 (12%) respondents disagreed with the above-mentioned statement and believed that terrorism does not affect the quality of their reporting. Moreover, in the minority, only 3 (6%) of media workers were neutral in this regard.

- In response to the statement that terrorism affects the personal life of media professionals; the table indicates that the majority of 22 (44%) journalists strongly agreed with the statement. Similarly, 19 (38%) media workers also believed that terrorism affects the personal life of journalists. However, 7 (14%) respondents disagreed with the statement. While only 2 (4%) media professionals were neutral to the statement.

Discussion & Conclusion
In this study the researchers intended to explore the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan, researcher has created three main research questions. Accordingly, to evaluate the main research questions of the study, a detailed questionnaire was created. The selected media professionals were interviewed through a questionnaire.

In response to the first research question of the study “to know the nature of the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals”, it is found that terrorism has badly impacted the performance of the media professionals working in the conflict-sensitive zone of
Balochistan. As media workers are always on the front to cover terrorism or incidents in conflict areas, therefore they are more susceptible to being affected by terrorism. Accordingly, the study also found that journalists working outside Quetta are more under threat than those working in Quetta. Similarly, the majority of the media professionals were of the view that media workers are always threatened and targeted not only by terrorist groups and militants but also by law enforcement agencies and government officials to favor their opinion while covering the event.

According to the findings of the study, the majority of the media professionals working in Balochistan feel themselves insecure while covering terrorism incidents. In response to a statement inquired about whether journalists are following safety precautions while covering terrorism, the majority said they are not following safety precautions. Ironically, some of them were not even aware of the standard safety measure. However, the study found that the media workers working in conflict zones are not even trained for conflict-sensitive reporting. They said that they learn conflict-sensitive reporting after experiencing many threats and violent attacks. Which many journalists have lost their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Similarly, they were of the view, that the media organizations do not provide training regarding conflict-sensitive reporting. According to the finding of the study, the majority of the media workers were of the view that media organizations do not value the safety of their professionals, but only give importance to the content or story.

Similarly, the study shows, that media organization does not have any life insurance policy for their employees, which also support the statement that media organizations only value the content, not the employees. Media workers were of the view that their organization insured the technical equipment but do not have any insurance policy for their workers who risk their lives to collect stories in conflict zones. However, the study reveals that media professionals do not want to change or leave organizations after being threatened. The media workers were of the view that some of the journalists are working in the field as their passion but the majority of them have no alternative options in terms of job security and work on very low salaries.

Similarly, in response to the second research question of the study “to explore how and to what extent terrorism does affect the professional lives of media professionals” the study indicates that the majority of media professionals were of the view that terrorism does affect professional lives of media workers.

As mentioned above, objective reporting in conflict zones leads to high risk including death, the study reveals that the majority of the media professionals working in Balochistan were having the opinion that terrorism affects the quality of reporting by affecting fairness, accuracy, and timeliness in reporting. However, the majority of the respondents were of the view that they cannot follow journalistic codes of ethics while covering terrorism. Some media professionals thought, that it is impossible to follow journalistic codes of ethics in a situation where every powerful group threatens the journalists and no one support or protects them.

The study also shows, that almost all of the media professionals agreed with the statement that terrorism does affect “fairness” in reporting. Similarly, the study indicates that “accuracy” in the reporting is also affected by terrorism incidents. The journalists were of the view that they could not report facts because they are targeted, harassed, pressurized, and even killed by all pressure groups.

However, in response to the third research question of the study, the findings show that terrorism does affect the personal lives of media professionals in Balochistan. The journalist community in Balochistan was of the view that journalists have been severely targeted, harassed, injured, abducted, and even killed in the line of their respected duties. Similarly, the study indicated that the majority of the respondents were of the view that state actors and non-state actors, and terrorists not only regularly threaten and targeted media professionals but also monitor their movements due to which they are unable to join different social gatherings. As a result, it badly
affected our social contacts. They are always inquired about by different authorities after meeting and contacting people. The study also shows that majority of the media professionals agreed to the statement that terrorism has affected their time with their loved ones and family members.

**Conclusion**

Freedom of speech and freedom of expression is considered the indicators of a free and independent society with free and independent media and its professionals. Unfortunately, Balochistan, due to its strategic location and rich sources of minerals, has remained under a strong wave of terrorism, international interference, and internal conflicts. Consequently, thousands of dwellers of the province have lost their lives including media professionals as frontline victims. Media has a significant role in building and countering a narrative that attracts both state actors and terrorists and militants, according to available scholarly work, many journalists have been killed, threatened, and harassed not only by terrorists but also by security agencies in Balochistan. Therefore, it was highly significant to explore the impact of terrorism on the performance of the journalists and media professionals in Balochistan. In this regard, the researchers selected 50 media professionals from the population of the study which include all the registered members (194) of five press clubs from Balochistan such as (Quetta, Chaman, Mastung, Noshki, and Loralai). The above-mentioned areas and the media workers working there have been strongly affected by terrorism. Chaman and Noshki are situated on the Pak-Afghan border and are considered the hub of sleeper cells of different militant groups, sectarian groups, and the Taliban.

This research study explored the impact of terrorism on the performance of media professionals in Balochistan, with the help of three research questions and a detailed questionnaire. Similarly, the findings of this research explored all three research questions and supported the scholarly works mentioned in this study. As Balochistan has been under a strong wave of terrorism for the last two decades, in which thousands of people have been killed including teachers, lawyers, doctors, security personnel, and almost people from every aspect of life. Besides, due to its economic and geopolitical importance, different terrorist groups, sectarian militants, kidnappers, ethnic groups, separatist movements, and foreign intruders are trying to destabilize the province.

Similarly, according to the available scholarly studies, several journalists have been killed in the province. As the media professionals, due to their job nature, like security forces are always present on the front lines to cover the terrorism incident and report from conflict zones, they are more exposed and vulnerable to the effects of terrorism. In this regard, the problem of the study was to know the impact of terrorism on their performance while covering terrorism or conflict zones. Resultantly, the findings of this study have evidenced that terrorism has badly impacted the performance of media professionals by affecting their personal and professional lives. The data shows the views and perceptions of media professionals working in the province, in which the majority is linking their performance with terrorism. They were of the view that due to terrorism; they could not follow basic journalistic codes and ethics including objective journalism, accuracy, fairness, and timeliness in their reports which ultimately affect their professional performance.

This study supports the scholarly work of Hussain and Rehman (2015) that both state and non-state actors threaten journalists to mold the story in their favor. Therefore, the importance of this study is to explore and understand the impacts of terrorism on the performance of media professionals, so that the media workers could easily follow their journalistic codes of ethics and objective journalism in conflict zones. The study explains and supports the available scholarly works, that media workers are not only threatened by terrorists and pressure groups but also by law enforcement agencies. Similarly, this study also supports the scholarly work of Tahir and Niaz (2016) which stated that due to a lack of security and support by government agencies, media workers are in a state of insecurity.
In this research study, the researchers have applied the Hierarchy of influence model to explore how terrorism has influenced the performance of media professionals. As this model discusses five levels of influence that range from the macro level to the micro level which include the Social system level, Social Institution level, Organizational level, Routines level, and Individual level. In this respect, the findings of the study explored that terrorism has badly influenced and affected the performance of media professionals in Balochistan.

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