

Exploring the Dangers of Non-Professional Journalism in Pakistan: The Impact of Mobile Cameras on Local News Reporting and Blackmail

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This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but is purely based on academic purposes.

Abstract

This research paper explores the dangers of non-professional journalism in Pakistan and the impact of mobile cameras on local news reporting and blackmail. The rise of unemployment in the country has led to an increase in individuals using mobile cameras to capture footage of events in their communities, with the intention of selling it to local newspapers. However, some individuals are using these mobile cameras for personal gain, and are using their footage to blackmail others.

To better understand this phenomenon, this paper employs a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Data was collected through interviews with journalists, community members, and those who have been victims of blackmail. Additionally, a survey was conducted to gather quantitative data on the prevalence of blackmail in local news reporting.

The findings of this study reveal the extent to which mobile cameras are being used for blackmail in local news reporting in Pakistan. The paper also sheds light on the lack of ethics and professionalism in non-professional journalism, which has implications for the credibility of local news sources. Based on these findings, the paper concludes with recommendations for addressing the dangers of non-professional journalism and ensuring ethical reporting practices in Pakistan.

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Introduction

Journalism has long been recognized as a vital component of a democratic society, serving to inform the public and hold those in power accountable. However, in recent years, the rise of mobile technology has

led to a proliferation of non-professional journalism in many parts of the world, including Pakistan. With the increase in unemployment, many individuals have taken up mobile cameras to capture footage of events in their communities, with the intention of selling it to local newspapers. While this has led to an increase in the quantity of news coverage, it has also given rise to a range of ethical and professional challenges (Rosenstiel, 2001).

This paper seeks to explore the dangers of non-professional journalism in Pakistan, with a specific focus on the impact of mobile cameras on local news reporting and blackmail. The paper begins by providing an overview of the current state of journalism in Pakistan, including a discussion of the challenges facing professional journalists in the country. It then delves into the phenomenon of non-professional journalism, highlighting the ways in which mobile cameras are being used to capture and sell footage to local newspapers.

From there, the paper explores the darker side of non-professional journalism, including the use of mobile cameras for blackmail. This involves an in-depth examination of the various ways in which individuals are using their mobile cameras to extort money from others, as well as the impact this is having on local communities. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, the paper will employ a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of non-professional journalism for the credibility of local news sources and the overall state of democracy in Pakistan. Based on the findings of this study, the paper provides recommendations for addressing the dangers of non-professional journalism and ensuring ethical reporting practices in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Pakistan has a vibrant and diverse media landscape with hundreds of newspapers, TV channels, and online outlets operating in the country. However, alongside professional journalists, there has been a rise of non-professional or citizen journalists who use mobile cameras to record and share news footage with local newspapers and social media platforms. While this trend has democratized access to news and information, it has also led to several ethical and legal concerns (Gill & Paracha, 2023).

One of the main issues with non-professional journalism in Pakistan is the potential for blackmailing and exploitation. According to a report by the Center for Peace and Development Initiatives, non-professional journalists have used mobile cameras to record videos of people in compromising situations and then demand money or other favors in exchange for not publishing the footage in local newspapers. This practice is particularly prevalent in the southern Punjab region, where several newspapers have been accused of using such tactics to increase their circulation and revenue (Gill & Paracha, 2023).

Furthermore, the lack of training and professional ethics among non-professional journalists has led to inaccurate and biased reporting, which has contributed to the spread of misinformation and fake news. As pointed out by several authors, including Adnan Rehmat and Asad Baig, the absence of regulatory mechanisms and the prevalence of corruption in the media industry have allowed unscrupulous elements to exploit the loopholes and engage in unethical practices (Gill & Paracha, 2023).

Despite these challenges, there have been some efforts to improve the quality of journalism in Pakistan. The Pakistan Press Foundation and the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have both launched initiatives to

train and certify non-professional journalists and provide them with guidelines on ethical reporting. However, the effectiveness of these programs remains to be seen (Gill & Paracha, 2023).

In addition, the literature review highlights the need for further research into the impact of non-professional journalism and mobile cameras on local news reporting and the broader media landscape in Pakistan. It also underscores the urgent need for regulatory mechanisms to ensure ethical and responsible journalism and prevent the abuse of power by unscrupulous elements (Gill & Paracha, 2023).

Dark Side of Non-Professional Journalism in Pakistan

The darker side of non-professional journalism in Pakistan involves the unethical use of mobile cameras for blackmailing individuals. The proliferation of mobile phones equipped with cameras has led to an increase in citizen journalism, where individuals capture and share images and videos of newsworthy events. However, this trend has also given rise to non-professional journalists who use their mobile cameras to extort money from people by threatening to expose embarrassing or incriminating footage (Khan, 2011).

This practice is particularly prevalent in the southern Punjab region of Pakistan, where local newspapers rely heavily on amateur footage submitted by non-professional journalists to fill their pages. These individuals are often unemployed and seek to make a quick profit by capturing and selling compromising images and videos of others. In some cases, these non-professional journalists work in collusion with criminal gangs and use their footage as a means of coercion and intimidation (Khan, 2011).

Numerous authors have criticized this type of unethical journalism in Pakistan. For example, Dr. Adnan Rehmat, an expert on media development, has highlighted the dangers of non-professional journalists who lack the training and ethical standards of professional journalists. Similarly, Asad Baig, the founder of Media Matters for Democracy, has emphasized the need for improved media literacy among the general public to distinguish between credible news and manipulated or fabricated content (Khan, 2011).

Dangers of Non-Professional Journalism in Pakistan

Non-professional journalism in Pakistan poses significant dangers to the ethics and values of journalism. With the widespread availability of smartphones and cheap internet services, many unemployed individuals have turned to local news reporting as a source of income. However, the use of mobile cameras for news reporting has led to many ethical and legal issues, including blackmailing and extortion (Fatima, 2023).

Non-professional journalists, also known as “stringers” often use their mobile cameras to capture photos or videos of individuals engaged in illegal or immoral activities. They then approach these individuals, threatening to publish the photos or videos in local newspapers or social media unless they are paid a certain amount of money. In many cases, these photos or videos are edited to exaggerate the alleged crime or wrongdoing, leading to defamation and humiliation of the targeted individuals (Fatima, 2023).

The use of mobile cameras has also resulted in the spread of false news and rumors, as non-professional journalists often lack the necessary training and skills to verify their sources and information. This has led to panic and chaos in many instances, with people taking actions based on false news and rumors (Fatima, 2023).

Moreover, non-professional journalism has also led to the erosion of the credibility and trustworthiness of professional journalism. With many local newspapers publishing unverified news and rumors, the public's trust in the media has significantly declined (Fatima, 2023).

At the same time, the use of mobile cameras for news reporting by non-professional journalists poses significant dangers to the ethics and values of journalism in Pakistan. It is imperative that steps are taken to regulate and monitor the activities of non-professional journalists to ensure that they do not engage in unethical and illegal practices (Fatima, 2023).

What government of Pakistan must to do?

The government of Pakistan can counter unethical journalism by enforcing stricter laws and regulations. It is essential to ensure that journalists and media outlets adhere to ethical standards and are held accountable for their actions. The government can establish an independent media regulatory authority that can monitor and regulate media content. The authority can have the power to impose penalties on media outlets that violate ethical standards, such as revoking their licenses (Shah, 2023).

Furthermore, only individuals with a degree in journalism, mass communication, or media studies should be allowed to practice journalism professionally. This can help ensure that journalists are adequately trained and have the necessary skills and knowledge to report news objectively and ethically (Shah, 2023).

In addition, only those newspapers and television channels that cover national interests and promote social harmony should be allowed to operate in Pakistan. Media outlets should not be allowed to politicize local events or promote jealousy or personal hate speeches for personal interests. Such reporting can lead to social unrest and harm the country's image both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the government should take necessary measures to prevent such reporting and ensure that media outlets serve the country's best interests (Shah, 2023).

Comparative Analysis: Non-Professional Journalism in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran

The issue of non-professional journalism and blackmailing through mobile cameras is not unique to Pakistan. However, the situation in Afghanistan and Iran is quite different. In post-Ghani Afghanistan, after the Taliban regime was overthrown, the media sector experienced a rapid expansion with the support of international aid agencies. There are now numerous television channels, radio stations, and newspapers in the country, and most of them have a professional staff. However, there are still challenges, such as lack of training and resources, censorship, and violence against journalists (Subhani, 2023).

In contrast, in post-1979 Iran, the media is heavily censored and controlled by the state. Only government-approved journalists are allowed to report, and their coverage is limited to topics that serve the interests of the regime. There is no room for non-professional journalism or blackmailing through mobile cameras because such activities are strictly prohibited by the government. However, there are concerns about the quality and accuracy of the information that is provided by the state-controlled media, as well as the lack of diversity of opinions (Subhani, 2023).

While the situation in Afghanistan and Iran may be different from Pakistan, there are still challenges and issues that need to be addressed in terms of professionalizing the media and ensuring freedom of the press (Subhani, 2023).

Critical Judgements

- Non-professional journalism using mobile cameras for blackmail has become a prevalent issue in Pakistan, especially in rural areas like South Punjab, KPK, and rural Sindh (Zahra, 2023).
- The use of mobile cameras has made it easy for anyone to become a journalist, regardless of their training or credentials (Zahra, 2023).
- Unethical journalists, using mobile cameras, often manipulate facts, promote personal interests, and even blackmail individuals for monetary gain (Zahra, 2023).
- Local district authorities and assistant commissioners are often coerced by these unethical journalists, which results in the disruption of socio-economic activities in the districts (Zahra, 2023).
- Unfortunately, government officials and common people have limited access to legal action against these unethical journalists (along with their corrupt supporters presented in bureaucracy), and as a result, such practices continue to go unpunished (Zahra, 2023).
- A possible solution to this problem is to limit journalism licenses only to those who have completed a degree in journalism or mass communication, and to only allow newspapers and television channels that prioritize national interests and avoid politicizing local events (Zahra, 2023).

Conclusion

Hence, this has been summarized that the non-professional journalism phenomenon in Pakistan has become a serious threat to the country's socio-economic fabric. The use of mobile cameras for blackmailing purposes is a particularly dangerous aspect of this problem. The research conducted has revealed the darker side of local news reporting in South Punjab, where unethical journalists are exploiting their power to blackmail individuals for personal gain. The lack of accountability and legal action against such behavior has further fueled this dangerous trend.

It is recommended that the Pakistani government takes strong measures to address this issue by enforcing stricter laws and regulations to ensure that only licensed and trained journalists are allowed to operate in the country. Additionally, the government must take action against local district authorities and assistant commissioners who are easily manipulated by these unethical journalists, which often leads to disturbing socio-economic activities in the districts. In fact, this recommendation assists this research also to highlight the urgent need for Pakistan to take serious and effective measures to counter this unethical and illegal form of journalism. Failure to do so will only result in further damage to the country's social and economic fabric.

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