

## PAKISTANI MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND ACADEMIC RELEVANCY: EXPLORING EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF JOURNALISTS

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### Abstract

This paper explores the academic relevancy and disciplinary qualification of working journalists in Pakistan. Being the watch-dogs and agenda-builders, the profession urges journalists to be properly equipped with high level of academic qualification and reckoned with relevant skills and rich in contemporary knowledge. The study is aimed to depict the need for academic relevancy and professional heights in the conventional media industry of Pakistan. For the purpose, 1.26 percent of working journalists are engaged in a survey under Guttman Scale, throughout the country, to determine their educational competencies and disciplinary qualification. In this regards, the study provides exclusive data to make understandable, the educational level of Pakistani media landscape for linkage with policymaking and channelization of professional competency.

**Keywords:** Pakistani Media Landscape, Academic Relevancy, Journalists, Professionalism

### INTRODUCTION

Working as journalist in a highly divergent, less developed, ethnically diverse society is really a job requiring a competent level of tolerance, comprehensive knowledge of social behaviors, top-ranking professional skills and preeminent academic relevancy (Hafeez & Nauman, 2020).

In an environment of fear, playing the professional role as a watch dog, to become a voice for voiceless and to keep those in power accountable, while having no proper training, no security redressal mechanism, Pakistani journalists are performing their due duties witnessed loss of 61 lives since 1992 (CPJ, 2020),

This scenario becomes more depreciated when we go through the history of conventional Media Education starts from 1955 when the University of Karachi after establishing the journalism department limited to Diploma Courses and even today, the discipline is taught in the names of Mass-Communication, Media Sciences and Media studies with different course outlines having no proper linkage with the industry (Nauman,2017),.

More important is the relevancy of academic discipline with the industry whereas in Pakistan such a linkage is missing. According to Pavlik (2013), when journalism is confronting challenges, the educators are urged to prepare future professionals in radical transformation ready to face the situation.

This study is aimed to peep into the media environment and explore the educational level of working journalist in the field. The conventional media in Pakistan is run by 2000 thousand journalists in diverse position including reporting, editing and publishing news, entertainment and infotainment contents using digital, electronic and print mediums (Ricchiardi, 2012).

The training and educational background is not properly managed and no security risks redressal mechanism is there to support professionalism in media(Hussain,2019).Also the research level is low as there are a few studies in the field to gage the skills and academics of working journalists(Ashraf &Chaudhri, 2013).

Although, some non-governmental organizations work on the training and education of working journalists but still on the government level as well as from the journalist's association platforms, there is no such moves are witnessed(Tahir et al,2012).

It would be highly significant to allocate the academic level and disciplinary relevancy of journalists working in Pakistan. This study will provide applicable data, analyzing the media landscape of the country.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Journalism, mass communication and media studies are the major academic disciplines that cover the educational and training domain of the media industries in Pakistan. The basics of media operation are diverse and multiple skills and knowledge expertise are needed to cover different aspects and fields of the industry but basic education and training are essential tools to run the profession properly.

The prerequisite for quality media production is professionalism that comes into effect after appropriate study focused on the industry parameter. According to Hume (2007), in Africa and Asia, the rate of enrollments in media discipline is raising constantly but there is no common model that should be followed in the universities and training institutions. This situations was further explored by Hafeez & Nauman (2020) and concluded that despite the positive improvements in the media education and media industry linkage, the educators couldn't successful to impart quality education in the field of media studies in Pakistan.

Although, exact relevancy in the academics and industry is not possible as depicted in a study by Personal et al. (2007) on educational and training centers in Eastern and Central Europe, the real concern is the bridging mechanism in the outlines of studies and the requirements of the industries and here in Pakistan, the level and intensity of such pledge is almost missing.

Similarly, the media industry in Pakistan is not governed by any rule that define educational qualification for entrance in the field. Most of the journalists are conventionally practicing journalism and term their rule and conditions on the basis of the market demands (Hafeez &Fasih, 2018).

At the same scope, the divergent social fabric of the society and the market demand are also great concerns in the relevancy criterion of media education and the industry pattern and operational needs. Ethnically, Pakistani society is divided into Punjabis, Pashtun, Sindhi, Balochi and many other minor lingual and ethnical groups (PBS 2017) and all the groups has a worst history of differences. The industry is also divided into lingual press identities and each section pertains its own perorates (Hussain, 2018). In such a situation the need for proper and relevant professional education is the prerequisite of the media industry.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study is aimed to explore the educational level of working journalists in the conventional media landscape of Pakistan. The study is also focused on the disciplinary relevancy of academic qualification with the media industry in the country. As it is very important to channelize the professional level and educational relevancy for effective communication especially for the media men and industry. The main objective of the study is to provide summarized and authentic data for policy making in the field of journalism and mass communication.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study applies quantitative method of research because it is the most relevant and easy understandable method to reach an explicit conclusion in a situation where the sample is directly contactable (Zubair, 2013). The study has conducted a survey with a close ended questionnaire focused on the educational qualification and disciplinary specification under Guttman Scale.

The universe of the study is all the working journalists in the media landscape of Pakistan which is twenty thousands (Racchidii, 2012). And so the country was divided into five clusters i-e Islamabad Rawalpindi, Punjab, KPK, Sindh and Baluchistan.

Five hundred questionnaires were distributed among working journalists and three hundred and twenty questionnaire were collected which were complete from research point of view. The data was statistically treated. Results were drawn on the basis of frequency and illustrated by pie charts. The sample makes more than 1 percent of the

population so that is acceptable for generalization of the results.

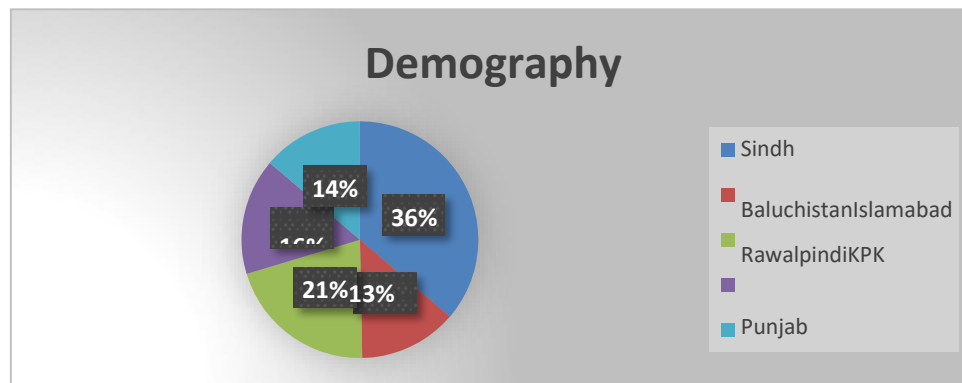
## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### Demographics

The study-collected data from all over Pakistan, the sample was divided into five clusters to get more relevant and exact analysis and to make the research more easily understandable. The following table frequencies of the respondents' categories in males and females while the pie chart illustrates the percentage distribution of the data.

**Table and figure1: demographic representation of sample**

Cluster	Males	Females	Names Not Provided	Total
Sindh	96	11	9	116
Baluchistan	41	2	0	43
Isl+Rawalpindi	60	4	2	66
Paeshawar	49	2	0	51
Punjab	36	8	0	44
Total	282	27	11	320



Interpretations: table and figure 1, summarizes the demographic distribution of samples journalists. The statistics shows that more responses were received from the Sindh province of Pakistan followed by Islamabad/Rawalpindi, KPK, Punjab and Baluchistan respectively.

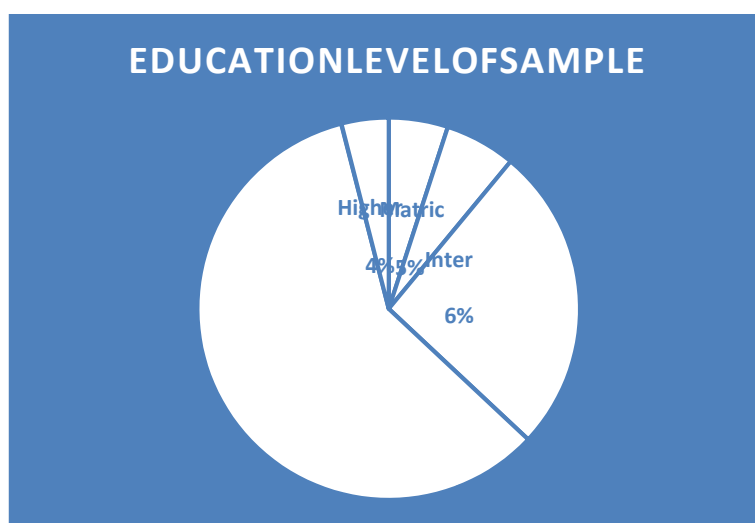
It proves that journalists from all the geographical regions of Pakistan participated in the survey and responded to the questionnaire. In this way the data scientifically represent the whole journalist community and that is able to be generalized for the media landscape of the country.

### Education qualification of working journalists

The following table and pie chart illustrate the educational level of working journalists in the media industry of Pakistan.

**Table and Figure2: Education qualification of sampled journalists**

Educational level	Frequency	Percentile
Matric	15	5
Inter	18	6
Graduation	84	26
Master	190	59
Higher	13	4
Total	320	100



Interpretations: Table and Figure 2, indicate that majority of the working journalists are post graduated having Master degrees in different disciplines of studies followed by Graduates, intermediates, matriculation and higher respectively.

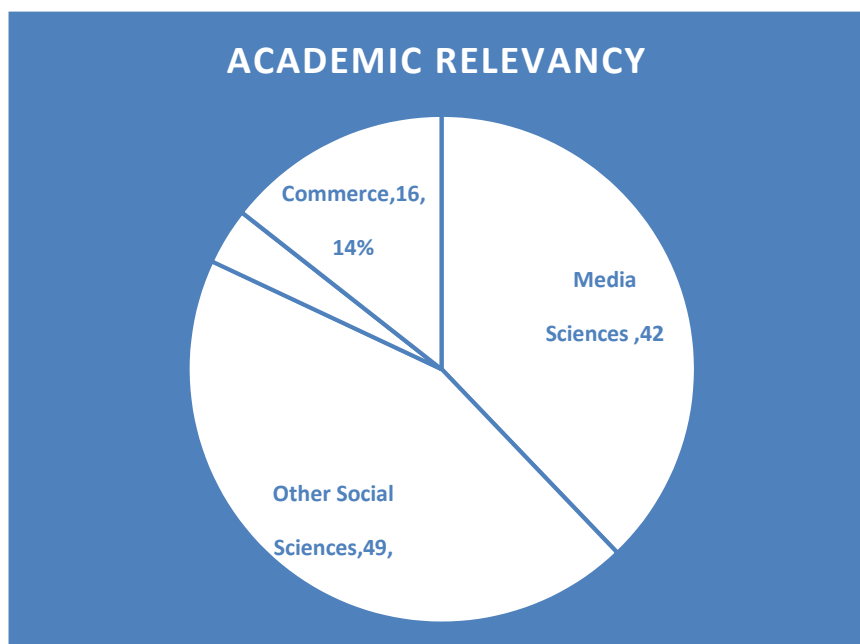
It is very important to note that the media profession is highly sophisticated and challenging in its nature and so needs high level of education and relevant training for the best requisite results. But the data reveals that an incredible number of journalists have under graduate level of education which is alarming for the industry to meet the professional criterion.

### **Academic Relevancy of sample**

The most important aspect of the survey is to indicate the academic relevancy of working journalist in the media domain of Pakistan. The following table and pie charts denote the frequency distribution of academic relevancy of sampled Journalists.

**Table and Figure 3: Frequency distribution of the academic relevancy of sample.**

Academic Discipline	Frequency	Percentile
Media Sciences	113	42
Other Social Sciences	159	49
Natural Sciences	12	4
Commerce	16	16
Total	320	100



Interpretations: Table and Figure show that a remarkable number of journalists are relevantly educated in media science under Mass Communication, Journalism and Media Studies but most of the journalists have studied other social sciences whereas some of them are educated in natural sciences and commerce.

The data reveals that journalists are diversely educated and no single model is followed. It is evident that there is now a unified discipline to be mandatory for journalistic profession.

## DISCUSSION

The data analysis and exploration of the relevant literature suggest that there is no proper arrangement for the educational relevancy with media industry in Pakistan (Pintak, 2017). It is proved that all the stakeholders' i.e the Government, the Media industry, the

educators and the media organizations are equally responsible for this havoc. Media plays pivotal role to provide a high check on different aspects of public and social life (Bharthur, 2017). Also the press is proved as the watch dog and agenda building entity in the position of fourth estate of the government (Milton, 1904). Therefore, guided and uniform skill providing academics are essential to compete the communication games in the global village (MacLuhan & Powers, 1989).

Most of the journalists join the media industry by favoritism as there is no specified qualification to be a journalist. A person that can speak fluently and have some a little knowhow about the society and press content, can enter the media domain and be classified as journalist, that is basic reason that academic relevancy is not deemed checked. Moreover, university education in the region is mostly based on theoretical studies and not focused to prepare working journalists for the industry (Pintak, 2017).

The survey indicates that most of the journalists in Pakistan are educated in social sciences and even, they are under graduate. It is very clear that journalists are not relevantly educated nor they have any training mechanism in the media industry. The study reveals that 5 percent of the journalist are only matriculate and 6 percent are intermediate, which reflect a very discouraging situation about the education level of the fourth estate of government and the agenda builder. Similarly, the lack of highly educated scholars in the media industry of Pakistan also represents a hollow situation about the maturity of the press.

## CONCLUSION

Although conventional media in Pakistan is in crises but still there is gradual emergence of new channels of mass communication like web channels and digital medias that gives birth to citizen journalism in the country but the fact remains unchanged that there is a lack of academic relevancy check in the media industry and also there is mechanism to describe the minimum qualification for a person to be journalist.

The level of education in conventional media is not only very low but that is also irrelevant to the needs and requirements of the profession. It is also proved that there is no common model in the universities for the academic discipline with reference to media studies. The lack of industry linked education and no career oriented training platform are the major concerns of the media professionalism in Pakistan.

Highly skilled, in differently educated and well trained journalists are the indispensable prerequisite for the challenging profession of journalism, in an ethnically diverse society like Pakistan. All the stakeholders including government, educators, media ownership line and journalist's organizations like PFU and district UJs are responsible for the incompatible academic and professional linkage and uniformity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the finding of this research, the following measures are suggested to be included in any instrument and policy making regarding the media industry and relevant

educations in Pakistan.

1. Single model of media studies should be followed in universities and other vocational educational and training institutions.
2. Study outlines should be focused on the relevant requirements of the media industry
3. Courses plan should be centered on the career orientation and practical participations and research.
4. Government should frame official criteria for entering the media industry as journalist
5. Ownership line should follow uniform and mandatory qualification for working journalist
6. Journalist's organization should organize training sessions for working journalists

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