



Impact of Social Constraints on the Psychological Well-being of Journalists in the Non-Metro Cities

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Abstract

This study was aimed to highlight the social challenges impacting the psychological well-being of journalists working in the non-metropolitan cities of Pakistan. The journalists in Pakistan face various social constraints in their daily work. The journalists working in these cities are continuously going through these constraints and no media house is keen to make ideal working place for them. Journalists there are unpaid for months. Majority of journalists are working on commission basis. Many of them even not have the membership of press club located in their cities or district. This study was concerned with how these social constraints impact their psychological well-being. The psychological well-being of journalist working in the non-metropolitan cities are ignored, their work is not appreciated like those working in metro cities. It is important to know how the journalists are managing their well-being in such scenarios. For this purpose, we used in-depth interviews of 45 journalists working in non-metropolitan cities of Pakistan. A series of questions had been asked to them about the social challenges like threats, suits, racism and violence. After that researcher had analyzed how these constraints by the society or within organization is impacting their psychological well-being. The results revealed how they face these challenges and how they maintain their well-being in hostile working conditions. It was also revealed that only two journalists full-filled the criteria of good psychological well-being. These were concerning figures for the journalist community.

1. Introduction

Journalism is regarded as one of the deadliest professions across the world (Carlsson & Poyhatri, 2017). Violence continues to target journalists in different forms which include murder, rape, assault, online harassment, imprisonment, detentions and digital threats (Reporters without borders, 2019). A free, fair and responsible press is a vital component in a democratic state. The flow of information without any hurdle not only makes people aware of their rights and duties but also made authorities responsible for all the actions do in the name of public interests. That is why Press is regarded as the fourth pillar of the state. A press should contribute in just and fair manner to highlight the positive as well as negative actions of the governmental authorities (Schultz, 1998).

According to Committee to protect journalists (2019), around 1872 journalists have been killed between 1992 and 2018. In majority of cases, the killers remained free particularly in non-democratic countries. The countries like Turkey, Egypt, China and Brazil where freedom of media is declined due to killings and violence against journalists as well as due to climate of impunity (“Reporters without borders”, 2019). The Asia-Pacific region is third worst region in the world for the journalists. 2 out 10 most dangerous countries for the journalists in the last 25 years namely Pakistan and India locate in this region. For instance, the committee to protect journalists stated that 61 journalists in Pakistan and 50 journalists in India lost their lives while performing their duty (Committee to protect journalists, 2019).

According to Foster and Regina (2008), there are several forces which have potential to make conditions for working journalists insecure. Journalists are the easy victims of the violent actions, threats, harassments and assassination attempts by the government and state authorities including judiciary. The journalists working in the developing countries facing challenges but different organizations are working for the safety and other issues of journalists.

The conditions of journalists in the small cities are worse because they are paid less and their rights got more exploited. In the small cities of Pakistan, there are some serious challenges for the working of the journalists. Journalists throughout the world forced to do self-censorship because of the influential personalities including politicians, advertisers and other pressure groups

including their own publishers. Journalists practice self-censorship because of fear of losing their jobs (Yesil, 2014). There are many reports about freedom of safety and safety of journalists in Pakistan by the related international organizations. These organizations stated that biggest issue for the journalists in Pakistan is Climate of impunity despite multiple threats they receive (“Committee to Protect Journalists”, 2017).

According to Warr (1978), the concept of psychological well-being is affective part of our daily experiences. It has broad range of concepts. The description of the concept is easier than the operationalization or engagement of this concept. There are pessimistic and bivalent components of well-being i.e. Anxiety, satisfaction for the job or personal admiration can be easily assess through the reports but there is need of exploration when it comes to the structure of feelings.

By keeping in view the above structure of feelings, the war journalists face many dangers in their life even by risking their mental health. They take periodic leaves by leaving conflict zone for their home safety but this thing is not available for the local journalists who cover the conflicted situations. The instance to this is Mexican journalists reporting at drug cartels are always under threat. There are high chances of psychological distress in the absence of temporary leaves among the journalists (Feinstein, 2013).

2. Purpose of the Study

The prime purpose of this study was to highlight the conditions in which local journalist are working and how social constraints impacting their professional life and psychological well-being. Our main goal was to find the answers how or what degree the journalists find these social controls is affecting their psychological well-being of the journalists living in smaller cities where they are neglected financially as well as emotionally.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the social constraints which cause an impact on the psychological well-being of the journalists in non-metropolitan cities
- To assess the impact of these social constraints, have on the psychological well-being of the journalists.
- To analyze the degree of the impact these constraints have on the psychological well-being of the journalists.

4. Research Methodology

Following are the segments of research design for this study:

4.1 In-depth Interview Method

It is qualitative method which was used to collect data in large amount about the behavior, attitude and perception of the respondents. In this method, researcher conducted interview face to face or via phone. Our study involved variables like social constraints and psychological well-being of journalists, so in-depth interviews was the best option to dig out the experiences of the journalists. In-depth interviews were semi-structured as it allows the respondents to be on track as well as open with diversity. Psychological well-being was concerned our questions fallen in six categories according to Ryff's model.

4.2 Sampling Technique

Stratified sampling was used in this research. As our prime focus was journalists of non-metropolitan cities of Pakistan. So, we completely excluded top ten major metro cities of Pakistan like Islamabad-Rawalpindi, Karachi and Lahore. For our study, a metro region was basically densely populated areas which shares industries, commercial areas, housing and transport connectivity. Our focus cities were like Mianwali, Kot Addu, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Sukker, Mirpur, Jehlum, Gujrat, Bhawalpur, Hnagu and Bannu etc.

4.3 Sample Size

The sample was taken from 40-45 journalists working in different metropolitan cities of Pakistan. Journalists of such areas were selected where scope of journalism was limited and cultural constraints were dominant. The data was collected from the journalists of electronic as well as print media. Journalists had age above 18 will be interviewed. Journalists which had prior experience of 2 or more years were included.

4.4 Themes in Psychological Well-being

There were already determined six themes of psychological well-being which were in accordance with Ryff's scale of psychological well-being

- **Self-Acceptance:** It includes accepting your strength and weakness in life

- **Positive Relations with others:** Enjoying positive personal and professional relations
- **Autonomy:** It means having control in making decisions or living life according to own will.
- **Environmental Mastery:** It is related to having a sense of controlling things surrounds you.
- **Purpose in life:** It includes having an aim in life which help you defining your goals.
- **Personal Growth:** It means continuous growth towards betterment.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Psychological Well-being of Journalists

The study involves a series of questions presented to journalists related to their psychological well-being. The psychological well-being of journalists is being analyzed according to six aspects of Ryff's scale of psychological well-being. The six aspects are self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

5.1.1 Self-acceptance

Self-acceptance is the acceptance of qualities and demerits a person holds without any regret. Nearly half of journalists involved in this study accepted themselves the way they are. Whereas others lack self-acceptance and a very few somehow have that acceptance. Journalist J1 said, "I have a lot of weaknesses in life and I also try to overcome them but I am not satisfied with it. You can't satisfy with your strengths or weaknesses in life because there is a constant need of improvement. Somehow I'm trying to satisfy with my strengths." Journalist J7 added, "With the passage of time, I realized my weaknesses as a journalist. Professionally, we lack in training and my background was not journalism. I am a poet basically and belongs to literature. I started work as a sub-editor. Thus, I am not satisfied with myself professionally." Self-acceptance among journalists varies from region to region. A list of journalists accepted themselves the way they are but numbers are still behind.

5.1.2 Positive Relations

The majority of journalists said that they have meaningful personal and professional relations with others. While more than a quarter of journalists found these relations temporary or mean. Few of them said somehow they believe their relations are meaningful.

A journalist J36 said, “We are working in such a field where we have to make good connections or relations. If you have good relations, you will become a good journalist. When it comes to personal relations, they are mostly meaningful.” Journalist J31 added, “Relations are meaningful. For instance, during elections if we need some sensitive data from department, you must have good relations with them otherwise your professional growth will be limited”. Journalist J8 said, “Not every relation is meaningful. I have very good people in my profession and also found great cheaters too who deceived me various times. Life is like that. You can’t maintain good ties with everyone”. These statements showed mixed responses of journalists. Few was enjoying good relations whereas some had semi-good relations. Many believed their relations were temporary.

5.1.3 Autonomy

The majority journalists involved in this study believed that consensus is needed for them while taking decisions in life and they have to compromise on their values because of societal or family pressure. A quarter of them rejected their independence when it comes to decision making while half of quarter journalist enjoys full autonomy in their life.

Journalist J7 added, “Some decisions in life need deep cross checks. So, I take consultation from my family in this regard like my wife. I work according to her suggestions. We are not that much big journalists to live according to our beliefs in our social life”. Another journalist J24 added, “I have a compromising attitude because it helps you in life. Strictness in your beliefs don’t help you at all.”

Autonomy was the most compromised factor. The journalists believed that they were not free to work according to their will. Many said they were dependent on others in making decisions for them like family.

5.1.4 Environmental Mastery

The journalists participated in this study said they don't have any sense of control to their surroundings environment. Only few journalists said that they are master in controlling things. They believed no one can achieve mastery completely. It is impossible for most of them.

Journalist J25 added, "I think things are 50% under my control because with the passage of time or advancements you don't enjoy the same sense of control what you had ten years back". Journalist J20 added, "I used to be great in controlling scenarios around me but with passing age I think I am losing it with each passing day. It is concerning but world is changing every day. The new things or environment is not adaptable to everyone". Journalist J32 said, "I have not a single purpose in life I have many purposes. You seek for different purposes in life when one is completed. The word achievements are more satisfying than word achievement same goes for the purposes". Many journalists believed mastery was hard to achieve particularly in our country. They were still in passive phase. The concept of controlling things or had a control on their abilities still a far dream for many of them.

5.1.5 Purpose in Life

Nearly all the journalists said that they have purpose in life. Mostly said that they want to serve their society. They believed humanity is higher and should be respected. Few believed that the purpose in life is to achieve personal achievements. Many believed that religion has a role in defining their purpose of life. Journalist J24 said, "It is very tough question because I have faced many crises in past few years. I lost my wife, father and young son. All because of this I don't find a reason to live life. We have to live despite all of this. We have to struggle. We have to fight and achieve our goals". Journalist J43 said, "the sole purpose of my life is to serve humanity through my work or generally. People need us. They have high expectations from us. We have to write such things which can bring a social change in society". Journalists were very positive on this factors. Almost every of them believed that there is a purpose of life. Many of them made social work their aim in life. A few wanted to achieve personal goals too.

5.1.6 Personal Growth

Nearly all the journalists said that they grow constantly both personally and professionally. They emphasized on their professional growth that how they started from nothing to making them adaptable with latest trends or technology. A few of them said that they don't grow constantly.

Journalist J19 said, "Yes, I grow with my time. I work hard by sitting in this countryside. I am only journalist in this region who is on payroll. I work only because of learning. I never missed any opportunity. I went on live three time a day even. My channel owner Mir Shakeel-ur-rehman appreciated me and hired me on permanent basis after watching my beeper on a TV program during Lodhran elections." Journalist J33 added, "I don't think people grow with time particularly in our professional field. I am working in this field for 16 years. I learn new things but I think they don't have any impact on the growth of my personality". Many of the journalists said that were growing continuously. They think had come a long way in their journey to be better. Only a couple believed that they had no growth at all.

6. Data Analysis

This research was aim to analyze the psychological well-being of the journalists in the non-metro areas across Pakistan. Ryff's scale of psychological well-being was used to analyze the psychological well-being of journalists. This scale consists of six factors which is necessary for positive functioning of a human. It involves self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Nearly twenty journalists answered positively in less than three factors of the scale. Twenty-five journalists answered positively in more than three factors of the scale and only two of them fulfilled the criteria which is needed for good psychological well-being. Autonomy and environmental mastery were most compromised factors among journalists. Almost half of journalists answered negatively related to self-acceptance and less than half believed that they have good relations with others. The most favoring factors among journalists were purpose in life and personal growth. Except two, all believed that there is a purpose in life mainly due to sense of their belief in social ethics or responsibility towards society. Almost every journalist think that they grow personally with time or still in growing process. The journalists who lack purpose was mainly due to their personal loss in life.



The north zone is found worst for the psychological well-being of journalists. Not a single journalist there meets the full criteria of positive functioning or good psychological well-being. Only five journalists out of fifteen answered positively to more than three factors of the scale. The most compromising factors in this zone were positive relations with others, autonomy and environmental mastery. The most positive answers came in the factors of purpose in life and personal growth. There were mixed responses to self-acceptance. Journalists in this area faced many issues from the tribal customs to Taliban invasion and the war on terror. Most of the journalists there are practicing journalism without salaries. The economic factor contributes very much in psychological well-being of human. The financial in-dependency brings the power to make decisions in life.

The journalists in the central zone answered more positively than journalists in the North Zone. Only five out of fifteen journalists answered negatively to more than three factors the scale. A reverse to north zone. The most compromising factors were autonomy and environmental mastery. Positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance received mixed responses. The most positive responses came in the factor of personal growth. The journalists in this zone somehow making money from the journalism but their autonomy is compromised here via various pressure groups. The lack of public support and internal competition contributes to bad relations with others. Such scenarios make it difficult to achieve environmental mastery because things are not in their control.

The south zone which is considered to be most backward areas of Pakistan performed slightly better than central zone when psychological well-being of journalists is concerned. The two journalists who meet the criteria of having good psychological well-being belongs to this region. Only five out of fifteen journalists answered negatively to three factors. The most compromising factors there were environmental mastery and autonomy. Purpose in life received most positive responses. Self-acceptance, positive relations with others and personal growth received mixed responses. The journalists in this zone accepted the existence of wadera-shahi system (local landlord system). The instance of resistance by journalists is very rare in this area. Those who did, were harmed or killed. The journalists in this zone faced insurgency and political influence. Psychological well-being is related with self-adjustment of a person. The journalists in

this zone self-adjusted themselves more with their local constraints. This is the reason both of their autonomy and environmental mastery is compromised but their self-adjustment definitely makes their psychological well-being better than the other two zones.

7. Conclusion

Journalists involved in this study gave a wide range of opinions and experiences related to the social constraints and psychological well-being. From the responses, it was obvious that journalism was not an easy profession for the journalists working in non-metropolitan cities of Pakistan. They had to face extreme and more social challenges. Demography, geography and ethnography had a huge role in defining these social constraints. Journalists in every zone as mentioned above had their specified social issues like Baradari-ism in south zone and tribal customs in north zone.

The results also exposed the administrative discrimination exists between metro and non-metro cities. The psychological well-being of journalists in the whole country was concerning. Only 4.4% journalists answered to all indicators positively which were needed for good psychological well-being. 51.1% journalists answered positively to more than three indicators while 44.4% of journalists answered positively to less than three indicators. These figures were concerning but it varies from region to region. The journalists in North zone had the poorest psychological well-being. The financial challenges and their hidden resistance against the tribal customs were the prime reasons to that. The idea of working without any salaries and not able to practices things according to your beliefs were injurious to psychological well-being. There was a linkage between financial independence and achieving autonomy in life. The journalists in central zone answered better than North zone. It was because either they were receiving salaries or had better side opportunities or their family supporting them financially. Despite financially being better than other zones, not a single journalist in the central zone meets the criteria or answered positively which was needed for good psychological well-being. The reasons to that was lack of public support, pressure from different groups and sense of having non-supportive colleagues. For good psychological well-being, there was a need of having meaningful relations with others and you were living according to your values. The journalists in the south zone performed slightly better than central zone. The journalists which met the criteria of good psychological well-being

belongs to this region. Most of the journalists answered positively to at-least three factors. It seems very surprising because statistically this region was considered to be most hostile zone in the country. The main reason of this outcome was self-adjustment phenomena of psychological well-being. According to this phenomenon, if a person self-adjusts his values or ideas or thinking with the people around him/her without showing any resistance or for his/her survival. It helped them in achieving good psychological well-being. The journalists in this zone mostly accepted the power of wadera-nawab (local landlords). Most of the journalists had self-adjusted their values and sense of autonomy with the accordance of their local landlords. This made them very clear and sound.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, Non-metropolitan cities, Journalists, Self-adjustment, Social constraints.

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