

## Journal of Peace, Development and Communication



Volume 06, Issue 02, June 2022  
 pISSN: 2663-7898, eISSN: 2663-7901  
 Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I02-14>  
 Homepage: <https://pdfpk.net/pdf/>  
 Email: [se.jpdc@pdfpk.net](mailto:se.jpdc@pdfpk.net)

<b>Article:</b>	<b>Relationship among the Financial Problems of Journalists and their Ethical Practices: A Case Study of Faisalabad</b>
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<b>Published:</b>	31 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
<b>Publisher Information:</b>	Journal of Peace, Development and Communication (JPDC)
<b>To Cite this Article:</b>	Hussain, Sajid., Saeed, Usman, M., Aslam, J, Mian., & Hina. (2022). "Relationship among the Financial Problems of Journalists and their Ethical Practices: A Case Study of Faisalabad" <i>Journal of Peace, Development and Communication</i> , vol. 06, no. 02, 2022, pp. 189–203, <a href="https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I02-14">https://doi.org/10.36968/JPDC-V06-I02-14</a>
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## **ABSTRACT**

The fourth pillar of the state is journalism and a responsible press. Journalists must be truthful, accountable, objective, and ethical in their reporting practices and professional duties. However, it is suggested by political economy of media that economic and political elites use media for their interests and benefits. Working journalists are mostly exploited by politicians and owners. Journalists are not well paid and they are enforced to do unethical practices. The objective of present study was to explore the journalist's economic issues at Faisalabad, and their relationship with ethical practices of journalists. Data was collected through in-depth interviews of 13 working journalists of Faisalabad city. Findings revealed that journalists are facing serious economic issues and these issues are leading them towards unethical practices. Findings imply that government, judiciary and journalistic bodies should play an effective role for overcoming this alarming situation.

**Keywords:** Local journalism, journalist's issues, economic pressures, ethical journalism, Faisalabad journalism, political-economy of media

## **INTRODUCTION**

Journalism is considered as the profession of dedicated people and missionary occupation. However, in third world countries the people are associated with this profession they face serious problems (Pratt and Akhtar 2013). Powerful actors like politicians, publishers, advertiser and other pressure groups often force the community of journalists into self-censorship around the world. Journalists around the world, particularly those in emerging economies and markets, are concerned about media autonomy and professionalism (Pratt and Akhtar 2017).

One explanation for these concerns, according to Pratt and Akhtar (2013), is that they can ensure governmental accountability and enhance national well-being. On the one hand, journalists are the voice of society and must be shielded from the government's repressive actions and policies. On the other hand, they may occasionally work together to help the government accomplish policies that are in the national interest. Journalism is disappearing day by day because of a lack of social responsibility among journalists. It is a dilemma in third world countries and emerging economies that journalists are feeling insecurity regarding the safety of their jobs and are turning toward self-censorship practices (Yesil, 2014). Same problems and issues are also existed in the field of journalism in Pakistan. In Pakistan, local journalists are facing severe problems (Saeed, Hussain, & Marwan, 2018).

The condition and circumstances for working female journalists are also not suitable in Pakistan. Serious threats and pressures are faced by female journalists in KPK. They often fail to do honour and justice to their jobs and accurately portray the issues they deal with (Shabir, 2012). Women in Pakistan are now entering the journalistic profession without trepidation and hesitation, according to the Women Media Center (2009). Their families are assisting them as well. However, in order to fulfil the aims of productive and responsible media, women journalists must receive sufficient training.

Journalistic landscape of Pakistan is plagued with many challenges. It is the reason that Pakistan was the world's third most dangerous country for journalists, as well as the most dangerous democratic country ("Top 10 Most Dangerous Places" 2015). In the World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders (2016) placed Pakistan at 147th out of 180 countries. Similarly, Hofstede (2011) ranked Pakistan as the world's strictest country in terms of lenient restrictions, implying that its residents and citizens have few options for free speech and little hope for the future. They cannot express their feelings and expressions freely.

Media industry has been impacted badly by the economic crises in Pakistan. Massive lay-offs and pay-cuts joggled journalistic community. Many media workers were forced to leave media houses and they were sacked without any reason from their jobs. Some of them embraced death from heart attacks (Waleed, n.d.).

The journalistic community and media workers in Pakistan face many ethical problems. These different forms of ethical problems and issues to address include precision, faithfulness, candour, neutrality, fair-mindedness, and esteem for specific confidentiality (Raza & Akbar, 2013). According to Waqar (2002), Pakistani media frequently dabble in sensational, controversial, and unfavourable material due to the ratings competition and race. Participatory journalism practice has a major motive of profit orientation behind itself (Vujnovic et al., 2010).

Up to the ground reality and official facts print media especially newspapers and magazines are losing their grip in market day by day (Eijaz, Rahman, Ahmad, & Butt, 2014). Journalists face economic and financial pressures due to this factor. Furthermore, according to Riaz (2015), journalists and correspondents in small cities, towns, and rural areas are neither aided nor supported by their media organizations or the government.

As for the problems of journalists, the role of the journalistic bodies and committees is also not very impressive and affective. Pracha and Tahir (2012) investigated the institutional role of All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS). The institutional role of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) was investigated by Paracha and Tahir (2012). It was found by them the organization has been founded to safeguard the rights of journalistic community. But it is simply playing its role against the government taxes. Unfortunately, the members of this organization, large and well-established media firms, are also complicit in the financial exploitation of their active journalists and employees.

Memon (2015) noted that many means of discouraging local reporters and correspondents from working freely in rural areas and small cities. These various means are threats, fake cases, arrests, torture, job insecurity, feudal and industrial influence etc. Economic and financial problems of local journalists are accelerated by these factors. So that, the purpose and objective of this research was to dig out and highlight the economic and ethical problems of journalists of Faisalabad.

To keep their readership and income alive, local journalists rely heavily on government and industry PR sources (Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008). All of these elements have an impact on journalist's and media worker's ethical standards. Pakistan Press Foundation (2015) counseled journalists to follow ethical practices. Journalists should follow these ethical norms and practices. It demonstrates that there are major concerns in Pakistan regarding ethical journalism. As a result, the goal of this study is to see how economic pressures affect ethical journalism in Faisalabad.

Faisalabad is the third largest and metropolitan city of Pakistan. All national newspapers and TV channels have their bureau offices there (Khalid, Wang, Shakeel, & Nan, 2015). That's why it was so important to conduct an empirical study to explore ethical problems and economic pressures on journalistic community of Faisalabad. To best of researcher's knowledge, it is the

first study of its nature in Pakistan which has empirically explored the economic pressures on journalists of Faisalabad and examined their ethical problems. This study can contribute to the existing literature on issues related to economic pressures on journalists and their ethical problems. Findings can divert the attentions of policy makers towards problems of journalistic community. Despite above mention strengths, this study also has a limitation because it covered only journalists of Faisalabad due to some budget and time constraints.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Major objectives of the study are given below.

- To reveal the financial pressures on working journalists of district Faisalabad.
- To understand the ethical practices of the working journalists in Faisalabad.
- To highlight the linking between economic pressures and ethical practices among the working journalists of Faisalabad.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions of the study are under below

**RQ1)** What are the core problems of working journalists in district Faisalabad?

**RQ2)** What are the major ethical issues in local journalism of Faisalabad?

**RQ3)** Is there any linking between the financial problems of journalists and their ethical practices of Journalism?

### **Methodology**

The current study is purely exploratory in nature. As a result, to meet the research objectives, a qualitative research design was adopted. A method of in-depth interviewing was used. Data was gathered from 13 professional journalists in the city of Faisalabad. Respondents were contacted on a one-on-one basis. Before beginning the interview, proper permission was obtained. They were briefed on the subject, and they were given the option to leave the interview at any time. The confidentiality of the information was also assured to the respondents. The average interview time was 25 to 30 minutes. Thematic analysis was carried out after data collection.

### **Interview Protocol**

A protocol for conducting interviews was devised. Firstly, questions concerning the respondent's demographic information were asked. Secondly, a total of 13 questions were created. The interest in journalism, the perception of Faisalabad journalism, the problems of local journalism, the economic problems of local journalistic community, the ethical problems of journalism, the

relationship between economic problems and ethical problems and suggestions for improvement were some of the topics covered in the questionnaire.

## Results

### Demography of Respondents

Only two female journalists were found working in Faisalabad, hence all 13 journalists were men. Their Bureau Chief, on the other hand, refused to let researcher to see female journalists. The journalists were mostly in their forties ( $M=40.69$ ,  $SD=13.02$ ). All of the journalists were seasoned professionals with years of experience ( $Min=5$ ,  $Max=40$ ,  $M=18.92$ ,  $SD=9.08$ ). Five print media journalists and eight electronic media journalists were questioned. The journalists included a bureau chief, reporter, editors, cameraman, column writer, sub-editor, and non-linear editors. The vast majority of journalists were found to be well-educated. Some journalists were also found to be working on their degree of M.Phil in communication studies or mass communication (Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Qualification and Experience of Journalists*

	Frequency	Percent
16 Above	3	23.1
16 Year	4	30.8
14 Year	3	23.1
12 Year	1	7.7
10 Year	2	15.4
Total	13	100.0

Later gathering the required data, the themes categories were created inductively (Table 2). The majority of journalists discuss their low wages and financial difficulties. These difficulties were also linked to yellow journalism, unethical journalism, and blackmailing. As shown in Figure 1, low pays are linked to owner's demands and pressures, bribery, and blackmailing. It reveals how journalists are exploited by their owner's ideological motivations, prompting them to engage in unethical journalistic practices and activities. Second, as seen in Figure 1, non-professionalism is essentially synonymous with yellow journalism. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that non-professional journalists are the primary cause of yellow journalism. Finally, the figure reveals that feudal dominance and a lack of government backing are the primary causes of financial troubles.

Table 2

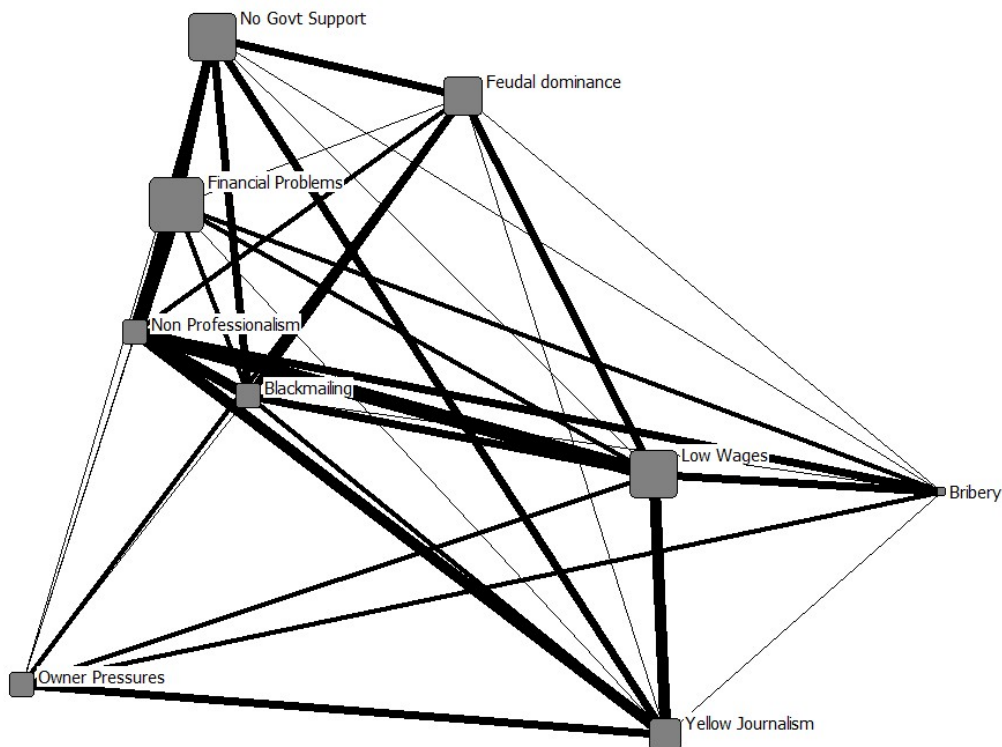
*Inductively developed Thematic Categories*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Thematic Category</b>	<b>Key Terms</b>
<b>Economic Pressures</b>	Lack of Government Support	No pension, No registration, No license, No residence, No facilities, No criteria for journalism, Judiciary role
	Financial Problems	difficult to manage expenditures, no handsome earnings
	Feudal dominance	Bureau Chief Hegemony, family Journalism, Industrialists Owner, Political Influences
	Low Wages	No Salary, or Minimal Salary, no TA/DA, No overtime payment.
	Owner Pressures	Advertisements demands, Marketing pressures, breaking pressures, rating pressures.
<b>Ethical Issues</b>	Yellow Journalism	Distorting facts, Conceal truth, sensationalism, invade privacy
	Non Professionalism	No proper education, No experience, no previous background of journalism, blackmailers. Burglars, political elites, industrialists
	Blackmailing	Threatening gentle persons, the poor, demanding money, “dehari baz” “toutism”
	Bribery	Selling news, deal of money for personal projections, “lifafa journalism”



Figure 1

*Thematic linking among the financial problems and ethical practices of journalists.*



*Note:* box size indicates the frequency of category, thickness of lines show the strength of link, and nearness of elements show inter-connectedness of categories.

"80 percent of working journalists are unpaid journalists," according to one journalist. "In Faisalabad, there are roughly 2000 journalists, but only 250 are affiliated with the Press Club as member," stated another journalist. Journalists also revealed that media organizations mostly sell the position of the bureau chief ship. Every bureau chief also hires unpaid employees, who are then pushed to participate in unethical journalism due to their financial issues and difficulties.

A young journalist having a degree of MPhil in Mass Communication stated, he is getting only 10,000 rupees per month, which is insufficient to support his family. How can he manage his wife, his children, and his monthly expenditures on such a low salary, he asked media owners and government organizations? Another journalist who worked for a well-known national newspaper for the period of 20 years, he claimed that journalists are engaged in

"lifafa journalism" for financial motives. He further added, journalists are also exploited by Bureau offices, local politicians, and industrialists.

Another finding stated that the journalism in Faisalabad is heavily influenced by politics and "bradarism." According to a working journalist, the bureau chiefs of five major news organizations belong to the "Araien" caste. Furthermore, despite the fact that one well-known media organization's bureau chief is a matriculated student and not a professional journalist, he was nominated as bureau chief due to a relationship with a government official. "Industrialists and businessmen are publishing their newspapers for the purpose of power and money," a cameraperson said. He also added, these owners selling press cards of their newspapers without any check and balance.

"There are requirements for every profession, but there are none for politics and journalism," a senior journalist observed. Everyone is performing journalism without registering, obtaining a licence, or obtaining permission." Journalistic bodies were also targeted to criticize for their poor effectiveness in resolving journalistic issues. The judiciary, according to one journalist, is too responsible for yellow journalism. "There are over 400 petitions in session court against a "newspaper" about blackmailing, defamation, and corruption," he stated. However, not a single petition has yet been decided." The judiciary should also play a role in promoting ethical journalism. Faisalabad is Punjab's third-largest division;

however, its press club was founded in 1967. According to a journalist, so-called journalist's unions, are responsible for the spread of yellow journalism. He claimed that the majority of Press Club members are industrialists, which is one of the main reasons for exploiting their working journalists.

## **Discussion**

Journalism used to be thought of as a mission and occupation of clearheaded people. Its importance in the Pakistan movement cannot be overstated. However, the situation has suddenly shifted in the opposite direction. This mission has been turned into a profession and a business. Lack of government backing, financial troubles, poor wages, feudal rule, and owner's pressures for marketing and profit making are all present at the local level in Faisalabad and these are the major journalist's key concerns (Table 2). Journalists emphasized low wages, short salaries, other financial difficulties, lack of a governmental backing and support (Figure 1). Journalists and local reporters are mostly underpaid, and overtime is not compensated as well. As stated by Riaz (2015) in rural areas and small cities, these are the key economic concerns of local correspondents and journalists. This phenomenon is explored in the second largest city of Punjab, Faisalabad. Local journalists and media persons also face issues such as bureau chief hegemony, pressure of corporate and industrialist owners, and political elite's influence. As previously stated, Pakistani journalism continues to be subjected to significant political and economic constraints (Memon, 2015).

RQ1 was satisfactorily answered by these findings. As a result, the study concludes that journalism and the press are not growing at the grass-roots level. It is causing havoc in the profession of journalism. At the most fundamental level, freedom of the press becomes a nightmare, particularly in Faisalabad.

According to the study, ethical journalism is not widely practiced in Faisalabad. Yellow journalism has become synonymous with blackmailing, bribery, "dehari bazi" "lifafa journalism," non-professionalism, and profit making. These things have become the central of journalistic practices (Table 2). Journalists and reporters get money in the form of envelopes from government and business entities in exchange for not publishing their corruption and negative features in newspapers. For the sake of power and money, the majority of non-professionals, such as industrialists, burglars, and political workers, have become journalists. Beat reporters have become the puppets of their respective departments or organizations. For example, a crime reporter can make money by acting as a mediator between the police and criminals. As a result, the study confirms existing conclusions concerning unethical journalism in Pakistan (Pakistan Press Foundation, 2015; Raza & Akbar, 2013). All these findings provide a satisfactory answer to RQ2. At specific and large level, these are very alarming circumstances regarding the development of professional journalism. Policymakers must work hard to address these issues in journalism as quickly as possible. Furthermore, at the local level, female's participation in journalism is extremely low. At the grass-roots level of journalism, efforts should be taken to promote gender equality. The study's main goal was to explore the links between journalist's financial concerns and ethical journalism. The concept of political economy suggests that media has been shifted into an industry. Whereas, political and economic elites have utilized media to further strengthen their economy, for seeking their goals and interests (Baran & Davis, 2010; Boyd-Barrett, 1995; McQuail, 2010). The study's findings show that a lack of government backing, feudal dominance, and financial concerns are all closely linked (Figure 1). It is suggested that political and economic elites are the primary cause of journalist's financial difficulties. At the micro-level, the political economy of the media is also in existence. Faisalabad's local journalism gives proof for the media's political economy. Non-professionalism is spreading in the journalism of Faisalabad as a result of political-economic elite's influences and business motive. This approach leads to yellow journalism (figure 1).

Although the majority of journalists claim that yellow journalism is prevalent in Faisalabad, some professional journalists who practise ethical journalism are also existing in market. Non-professional journalism was usually linked with yellow journalism. The formation of political-economic elites is non-professionalism. Furthermore, the study found strong links between low wages, bribery, blackmailing, and owner's influences (Figure 1). Findings of the study provide enough support to answer RQ3 that there is a strong link between economic constraints on journalists and their ethical practices.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

At the grass-roots level, Pakistani journalism is going through a number of critical phases. Using a purely qualitative approach of in-depth interviews, this study empirically explored the economic pressures on journalists and examined the ethical problems of media workers in Faisalabad. Findings of the study also highlighted the relationship of economic pressures and ethical practices in Faisalabad. Findings reveals that journalists of Faisalabad are suffering major financial difficulties and issues. These difficulties include no or low pay, no TA/DA, no overtime pay, no pension, no registration system, no licence system, no residence, no facilities, no criteria for journalism, bureau chief hegemony, family journalism, industrialists as owners, political pressures, marketing pressures, and rating pressures are few of the issues. Yellow journalism, distorting facts, concealing truth, sensationalism, invading privacy, non-professionalism, 'lifafa journalism,' 'dehari journalism,' 'toutism,' blackmailing, and bribery are all products of these difficulties. The government, judiciary, journalistic bodies and groups all should play a proactive and effective part in resolving this alarming situation.

### **Key Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, following key recommendations are proposed.

- In Pakistan, the situation is not favourable for the development of the media. Not only the government, but also journalistic groups and bodies, should work to alleviate these financial restraints. In this way, a good shift in journalism at the grass-roots level can be achieved.
- Economic problems and non-professional journalists should be limited by government or journalistic bodies' thorough appropriate monitoring, scrutiny, and proper registration of journalists.
- It is the inevitable to mention here that the judiciary should also play a vital role in holding "yellow journalists" accountable.
- Government should make efforts for the professional training and workshops of journalists.
- Government and policy makers must concentrate on the aspect of low wages of journalists and inconsistencies in salaries.

### **Suggested Future Research**

Due to time and budget constraints, this study only conducted the in-depth interviews of journalists of Faisalabad. It can only be considered an empirical evidence from selected city. In simpler words, findings of the study can be generalized for the journalistic community of Faisalabad only. However, there is need to produce more evidences from other cities to validate the findings of this study.

### **Funding**

There was no formal funding received for this study.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors appreciate the contributions of anonymous reviewers as well as the handling editor. They are also grateful to all of the responding journalists for their excellent cooperation during the data collection procedure. Mr. Khurram Khurshid, Lecturer at Minhaj International University Lahore, was instrumental in the data collection process. The writers' opinions and interpretations in this publication are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of their institution.

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