

THE MEDIA CREDIBILITY PERCEPTIONS OF SINDH JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper presents data about how Sindh journalists in Pakistan regard to the credibility of news media. Specifically, it focuses upon the credibility comparison between print versus electronic media, and English-language versus Sindhi-language/Urdu-language media. For data collection a cross-sectional survey of the purposively sampled 576 working Sindh journalists was conducted across all the district level press clubs in Sindh province. In results, it was found that the typical Sindh journalist considers that print media have higher credibility than electronic media. Moreover, generally the journalists viewed that compared with English the credibility level of Sindhi/Urdu media are less. However, in the regard of multi-lingual media the findings indicated that the journalists working for English media organizations perceived that English media are more credible than Sindhi/Urdu media. In contrast, the journalists working for Urdu media deemed that English media have less credibility than Urdu media. Whereas, the journalists working in Sindhi media organizations thought other way; that is English, Sindhi and Urdu media have credibility at about the same level.

Keywords: *Sindh Journalists, Credibility, Print Media, Electronic Media, English Media, Sindhi/Urdu Media.*

Introduction

According to Cassidy (2007) it is since the mid-1980s that the believability of several major news organizations has declined (Cassidy, 2007). In this way, this study is about that how journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan view to the credibility of news media. Regarding the credibility of news media there are many definitions in the literatures (Thorson, Vraga, & Ekdale, 2010). As the great quantity of credibility research on news has focused on the credibility of mainstream news sources and the texts they produce (Johnson & Kaye, 2004). Moreover, credibility in the field of news media is said has been assessed from three various aspects, first, source credibility, second, news credibility, and then third, message credibility (See Armstrong & Collins, 2009). In addition, the credibility is measured as a multidimensional construct (Johnson & Kaye, 2002). So some such common dimensions to assess credibility are believability, fairness, accuracy and comprehensiveness (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2002; Meyer, 1988; Newhagen & Mass, 1989).

Additionally related to credibility, it is found that half of the journalists in one study admitted that their profession was going in the wrong direction, and there were many factual errors in news reports (Pew, Research Center, 2004). Therefore, it is reported that for the last two decades, the public's trust in the press has declined (Project, for Excellence in Journalism, 2006). And even, according to (Pew, Research Center, 2004) one third local and national print journalists of the study rated credibility as the leading problem facing the journalism profession (ibid, 2004). Thorson et al. (2010) also argued that credibility, particularly newspaper credibility, is under attack (Thorson et al., 2010). And researchers in

prevailing media environment have also paid their attention on medium or channel differences in perceptions of news credibility (Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kiouisis, 2001) in Thorson et al. (2010).

Hence, to the best knowledge of researcher this is a first study of its kind in Sindh province Pakistan that assesses how journalists view the credibility of news media. The particularly, focus of this study is first, comparison between medium credibility i.e. print media versus electronic media; and then comparison between English-language media versus Sindhi-language/Urdu-language media. In this way, to assess the credibility of print versus electronic media and English versus Sindhi/Urdu media two questions both having nominal scales were put in the questionnaires. The question one was related to the credibility-comparison between print and electronic media had two values. While the other question related to the credibility-comparison of English versus Sindhi/Urdu media had total four values.

Research methodology

The data was collected with a self-completed questionnaire that was distributed to all the accessible media organizations in Karachi and Hyderabad the two main media cities in Sindh province, Pakistan and in all district-level press clubs of the province. For sample selection, purposive and an opportunistic sampling technique was used which made it possible to include as many journalists as possible. Moreover, the survey included only those journalists who worked regularly for newspapers, magazines, news agencies, TV channels and radio stations mostly as reporters, sub-editors or editors. The questionnaire was distributed by the field researchers who were available to answer queries if developed over any question and that to collect the filled questionnaires. The questionnaire had a range of topics related to journalists' careers, training and work experience, the organizations they worked for, their political affiliation, their attitudes to and use of technologies, their press club membership, education level, salary and working conditions. In this way a total of 576 working journalists filled questionnaires. The majority (59.0%) of them were accessed at press clubs; whereas the remaining number was accessed at their workplaces (38.0%) and homes 3.0%.

Findings

Demographic profile of the respondents

TABLE1

Composition of journalists by demographic variables

	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	565	(98.1)
Female	11	(1.9)
Ethnicity/Mother language		
Sindhi	405	(70.9)
Urdu	104	(18.2)

Siraiki	24	(4.2)
Other	38	(6.7)
Religion		
Muslim	551	(96.7)
Hindu	14	(2.5)
Other	5	(.9)
Level of education		
School	44	(7.7)
College	163	(28.5)
University	365	(63.8)
Mode of education		
As a private student	197	(36.3)
As a regular student	346	(63.7)
Name of academic institute		
University of Sindh, Jamshoro	198	(54.4)
Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur	99	(27.2)
University of Karachi, Karachi	48	(13.2)
Other	19	(5.2)
Age		
0-30 years (Young)	239	(42.1)
31-40 years (Mature)	213	(37.5)
Over 40 years (Old)	116	(20.4)
Monthly Income		
Less than 10,000 Rs.	217	(37.7)
Above 10,000 Rs.	168	(29.2)
No answer	76	(13.2)
Put (X) cross symbol	5	(.9)
Commented instead of revealing Income	110	(19.1)

As mentioned in table 1 the typical Sindh journalist was male (98.1%), spoke the Sindhi language (70.9%) and believed in Islam as a religion (96.7%). Moreover, academically the majority (63.8%) of the Sindh journalists was a university graduate; whereas, the remaining proportion got their final degree from colleges (28.5%) and schools (7.7%). In the perspective of education it was found that the majority (63.7%) had got education as a regular student and the remaining proportion (36.3%) as a private student. In the context of the academic institute, the Sindh journalists who had sought their final degree from university (365), among them the majority (54.4%) had studied from University of Sindh, Jamshoro, and the remaining number from Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur (27.2%), University of Karachi (13.2%) and other various universities (5.2%). Moreover, in age the first highest proportion (42.1%) of the sampled journalists was young - up to 30 years old - and the second highest proportion (37.5%) was between 31 to 40 years old. Finally, in the salary context the highest proportion (37.7%) of the journalists earned monthly less than 10,000 (ten thousand) PK rupees.

The Perceptions of the Sindh Journalists about Credibility of News Media

To know the perceptions of the Sindh journalists about the credibility of both print and electronic media, it was simply asked from them which media have more credibility among the audiences. In addition, due to the existence of various ethnicities in Pakistan the media are multi-lingual. Particularly in Sindh province the main stream media organizations, both print and electronic are in three languages. The languages of those media organizations are Sindhi, Urdu and English. Therefore, the opinions of the Sindh journalists were also sought about the credibility of English versus Sindhi and Urdu language media.

The Credibility of Electronic Versus Print Media

TABLE 2

Composition of the Journalists by Media Credibility and Consumption Related Variables

<i>Media credibility and consumption related variables</i>	Number	Percent (%)
Print versus broadcast media		
Print	320	61.0
Electronic	205	39.0
Total	525	100.0
English versus Sindhi/Urdu media		
More credible	242	42.9
About the same	140	24.8
Less credible	143	25.4
Not sure	39	6.9
Total	564	100.0

Regarding credibility-comparison between print and electronic media, as shown in the table 2 out of the total of 525 journalists, the proportion of more than three fifths (61.0%) said that 'print media' were more credible than electronic media; whereas against it the remaining proportion of almost two fifths (39.0%) reported that 'electronic media' had more credibility. Thus, the findings indicated that the majority of the Sindh journalists perceived that compared with electronic the print media had higher credibility. And this is similar to Kiouis (2001) who found that compared with other news outlets, newspapers were rated more credible than TV or online news.

Further, (See table 3) first, in the regard of organization type it was found that on average the print journalists rated higher to the credibility of print media (74.7%) than the electronic media (42.4%). However, the broadcast and the wire-service journalists considered to the electronic media more credible (49.8% and 7.8% respectively), than the print media (20.0% and 5.3% respectively). Second, in the perspective of multi-lingual media it was observed that those journalists who worked in English language media organizations considered to both the print (10.6%) and electronic media (10.8%) equally credible. However, in contrast the Sindhi language media journalists rated higher to the credibility of print media (65.6%) compared with the electronic media (53.8%). And the journalists who worked in Urdu language media organizations perceived to electronic media (35.8%) more credible than the print media (23.8%). Third, in the terms of job seniority the cub journalists (27.8%) chose to the electronic media as more credible than the print media (16.6%). However, the junior and

the senior cadre journalists (12.5% and 70.9% respectively) deemed that the print media had more credibility than the electronic media (10.7% and 61.5% respectively). Fourth, in the terms of media ownership type it was found that on average the private media journalists (96.9%) considered to the print media more credible than the electronic media (89.3%); whereas, the state-run media journalists (10.7%) rated to the electronic media more credible than the print media (3.1%). Finally, in the context of education it was found that in the opinion of school/college educated journalists the credibility of print media was higher (39.1%) than the electronic media (30.5%). Whereas, according to the view of university educated journalists electronic media enjoyed more credibility (69.5%) than the print media (60.9%).

TABLE 3

Distribution of the journalists by credibility of print versus electronic media

<i>Selected variables</i>	Which media is more credible?		
	Print (%)	Electronic (%)	Total (%)
Organization type*			
Print	239(74.7)	87(42.4)	326(62.1)
Broadcast	64(20.0)	102(49.8)	166(31.6)
Wire-service	17(5.3)	16(7.8)	33(6.3)
Total	320(100)	205(100)	525(100)
Media language**			
English	34(10.6)	22(10.8)	56(10.7)
Sindhi	210(65.6)	109(53.4)	319(60.9)
Urdu	76(23.8)	73(35.8)	149(28.4)
Total	320(100)	204(100)	524(100)
Job seniority†			
About 3 years (cubs)	53(16.6)	57(27.8)	110(21.0)
About 5 years (juniors)	40(12.5)	22(10.7)	62(11.8)
Above 5 years (seniors)	227(70.9)	126(61.5)	353(67.2)
Total	320(100)	205(100)	525(100)
Ownership††			
Private	310(96.9)	183(89.3)	493(93.9)
Government	10(3.1)	22(10.7)	32(6.1)
Total	320(100)	205(100)	525(100)
Education§			
School/college	125(39.1)	62(30.5)	187(35.8)
University	195(60.9)	141(69.5)	336(64.2)
Total	320(100)	203(100)	523(100)

* $\chi^2 = 57.15, p.000, df = 2$; ** $\chi^2 = 9.39, p.009, df = 2$; † $\chi^2 = 9.53, p.008, df = 2$;

†† $\chi^2 = 11.33, p.001, df = 1$; § $\chi^2 = 3.56, p0.059, df = 1$;

Thus, overall it was found that the print journalists ascribed more credibility to the print media; whereas the broadcast and the wire-service journalists gave more credibility to the electronic media. Moreover, the English media journalists, both print and electronic, counted to the print and electronic media equally credible. However, the journalists of Sindhi

language media organizations voted that the print media was more credible, and the journalists of Urdu language media organizations were of the view that the electronic media was more credible. Additionally, cub journalists, who were younger in age than the journalists of junior and senior cadre journalists, perceived that the electronic media were more credible, but against it both the junior and the senior cadre journalists rated higher to the credibility of the print media. Surprisingly, Bucy (2003) found similar that undergraduate college students compared with older adults across all media credibility measures, the students rated TV news more credible than adults. And further related in one other study the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that young adult readers ascribed greater credibility ratings to TV than newspaper (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985) cited in (Armstrong & Collins, 2009, pp. 97-114). Whereas, in the perception of private media journalists the print media were found more credible; and on the contrary in the view of state-run media journalists the electronic media earned more credibility than the print media. Finally, the findings pointed out to the school/college educated journalists that they perceived to the print media more credible; whereas, on the contrary in the eyes of university educated journalists the electronic media were more credible.

The credibility of English versus Sindhi/Urdu media

The perception of Sindh journalists varied strikingly about the credibility of English versus Sindhi/Urdu language media. As mentioned earlier according to the table 2 out of the total of 564 surveyed journalists, the proportion of over than two fifths (42.9%) reported that compared with Sindhi and Urdu the English language media, both print and electronic, were more credible in. However, in contrast the one fourth proportion (25.4%) of the journalists said that the English language media were less credible compared with the Sindhi and Urdu language media; whereas the third proportion of almost one fourth (24.8%) of the surveyed journalists viewed that English, Sindhi and Urdu language media all were 'about the same' level in credibility. Finally, the remaining proportion of 6.9% of the journalists reported to be 'not sure' in deciding that which language media were more credible. In this way, the findings showed that overall the highest proportion of the journalists perceived that compared with Sindhi /Urdu the English language media were higher in credibility.

The further analysis regarding the credibility comparison between English versus Sindhi/Urdu language media, it was found that (See table 4) first, in the context of multi-lingual media, among English language media journalists the proportion of those who considered that the English media were more credible (16.6%) was higher than the proportions of those from this group who considered to the English media compared with the other language media were either less credible (2.1%), having about the same credibility (7.1%) or were not sure (7.7%). However, in contrast, among the Urdu language media journalists, the proportion of those who considered that the English media were less credible than the Sindhi and Urdu media (35.0%) was higher than others. As far as the journalists of Sindhi language media were concerned among them the proportion of those who perceived that the credibility of English media was about the same as of the Sindhi and Urdu media (68.6%) was bigger than others. Thus, it mentioned that from the viewpoint of English language media journalists, English media were more credible than the media of any other language in Sindh. However, in the opinion of Urdu language media journalists, English media were less credible than Sindhi and Urdu media; whereas, the Sindhi language media journalists said that the credibility of all English, Sindhi and Urdu language media were about the same. Second, in the regard of monthly income, among the unpaid journalists the highest

proportion (35.9%) was of those who were ‘not sure’ about the rating credibility of English versus Sindhi/Urdu media. In comparison, however, among the better-paid and the lucratively-paid journalists the highest proportions (12.8% and 9.5% respectively) were of those who perceived that English language media compared with the media of Sindhi and Urdu language were more credible. And among the under-paid journalists the proportion of those who considered that all English, Sindhi and Urdu language media have about the same credibility (56.4%) was higher than others. Third, in the perspective of education, among the school/college educated journalists the proportion of those who deemed to English language media as less credible (46.5%) was higher than the proportion of those in this group who rated the English media either more credible than or as credible as the other language media. Among the university educated journalists the proportions of those who perceived to English language media as more credible (69.2%) and those who were (not sure) (69.2%) were both equal and higher than the proportions of those who considered it less credible and about at the same level.

Finally, in the regard of geographic affiliation among the rural journalists the proportion of those who thought that English language media were less credible (67.8%) was higher than those who considered it more credible. In contrast among the urban journalists the proportion of those who considered English language media to have about the same credibility as Sindhi and Urdu-language media (48.6%) was bigger. In summary, the rural journalists think that English media were less credible than Sindhi and Urdu language media; whereas the urban journalists perceived that all English, Sindhi and Urdu language media had about the same level credibility. The reason to deem to English language media less credible by the rural journalists, more likely, might be because of the reason that the majority of the rural journalists worked for Sindhi/Urdu language media.

TABLE 4

Distribution of the Journalists by Credibility of English Versus Sindhi/Urdu Language Media

<i>Selected variables</i>	English-language media versus Sindhi/ Urdu-language media are?				
	More credible (%)	About same(%)	Less credible (%)	Not sure (%)	Total (%)
Media language*					
English	40(16.6)	10(7.1)	3(2.1)	3(7.7)	56(9.9)
Sindhi	135(56.0)	96(68.6)	90(62.9)	24(61.5)	345(61.3)
Urdu	66(27.4)	34(24.3)	50(35.0)	12(30.8)	162(28.8)
Total	241(100)	140(100)	143(100)	39(100)	563(100)
Monthly income**					
Unpaid	51(21.1)	23(16.4)	26(18.2)	14(35.9)	114(20.2)
Underpaid	113(46.7)	79(56.4)	68(47.6)	16(41.0)	276(48.9)
Better-paid	31(12.8)	16(11.4)	9(6.3)	3(7.7)	59(10.5)
Lucratively-paid	23(9.5)	10(7.1)	6(4.2)	2(5.1)	41(7.3)
No answer	24(9.9)	12(8.6)	34(23.8)	4(10.3)	74(13.1)
Total	242(100)	140(100)	143(100)	39(100)	564(100)

Education[†]					
School/college	74(30.8)	51(36.4)	66(46.5)	12(30.8)	203(36.2)
University	166(69.2)	89(63.6)	76(53.5)	27(69.2)	358(63.8)
Total	240(100)	140(100)	142(100)	39(100)	561(100)
Geographic affiliation^{††}					
Rural journalist	132(54.5)	72(51.4)	97(67.8)	25(64.1)	326(57.8)
Urban journalist	110(45.5)	68(48.6)	46(32.2)	14(35.9)	238(42.2)
Total	242(100)	140(100)	143(100)	39(100)	564(100)

* $\chi^2 = 26.34, p.000, df = 6$; ** $\chi^2 = 33.07, p.001, df = 12$; † $\chi^2 = 9.99, p.019, df = 3$;

†† $\chi^2 = 9.91, p.019, df = 3$;

Discussion and Conclusion

The article mainly discusses the perceptions of the Sindh journalists regarding credibility-comparisons, firstly, between print versus electronic media, and secondly between English versus Sindhi/Urdu language media. For this purpose a cross-sectional survey of the working journalists, both print and electronic, in Sindh province, Pakistan was conducted. The data was collected through a self-completion questionnaire. In this way, in result the following statistically significant differences were found among the Sindh journalists about their media credibility perceptions. First, the typical Sindh journalist was of the opinion that compared with electronic media print media enjoys more credibility. However, subject to journalist type it was found that the journalists who worked in print media attach more credibility to the print media; whereas, the journalists who worked for broadcast and wire-service media ascribed higher credibility to the electronic media. In the light of such findings, this is to be deduced that such perception of the journalists might have developed due to their organizational affiliation rather than on the basis of their objective opinion. Moreover, it was very striking to know that the English media journalists, both print and electronic, supposed that the print media and the electronic media both enjoy equal credibility. In contrast, however, the point of view of the Sindhi media journalists was entirely different; as they deemed to the print media more credible than electronic media. As far as the journalists of Urdu media were concerned, they had a different perception than the English and Sindhi media journalists. As the Urdu media journalists thought that the electronic media were more credible than print media. Here the background of the Urdu media journalists and the Sindhi media journalists might be mattering most, and due to which both have differing credibility perception about the print versus electronic media. Because, the majority of the Sindhi media journalists belong to the rural area of Sindh province; whereas, the majority of the Urdu media journalists concentrate in the urban part of Sindh province. Hence, for the first ones print media are more credible, and conversely in the view of second ones electronic media are more credible. In the regard of professional seniority the cub journalists thought to the electronic media more credible. Against it both the junior and the senior cadre journalists perceived to the print media more credible. Such findings as well might be showing the influence of organizational affiliation of the surveyed journalists. As compared with print the electronic media in private ownership in Pakistan is a new phenomenon, a decade and some years more old. So this may be the reason that the cub journalists seem more impressive with the media of their age, i.e. electronic media, and in result deem it more credible. Whereas,

Pakistan inherited print media from British rule in the sub-continent. Therefore, the senior cadre journalists affiliate themselves to the print media and perceive that it enjoys more credibility. Other than that, it was found that the private media journalists attached more credibility to the print media and state-run media journalists gave higher credibility to the electronic media. Finally, there was variability among journalists in the perspective of education. As school-college educated journalists viewed that print media have more credibility. However, the university educated journalists deemed that the electronic media have higher credibility than the print media. Additionally, regarding the credibility of English versus Sindhi/Urdu language media; the highest proportion of the surveyed journalists (42.9%) reported that English media have higher credibility than Sindhi/Urdu media. However, when analyzed in the context of multi-lingual media, the findings mentioned that the English media journalists viewed that English media had more credibility than Sindhi/Urdu media. However, the Urdu media journalists in contrast perceived that English media were less credible in comparison to Sindhi and Urdu media; whereas, the Sindhi media journalists deemed that the credibility of all three English, Sindhi, and Urdu language media had about the same level.

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