



## MEDIA ROLES IN THE PERCEPTION OF SINDH JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper reports the findings of Sindh journalists in Pakistan about the news media role conceptions. The media role perceptions developed by journalists are considered very important; because they suggest and provide insights about the environment surrounding the journalists. For that purpose a cross-sectional survey of journalists in Sindh province, Pakistan was conducted. The data was gathered through a questionnaire, and the sample was selected by following a purposive and an opportunistic technique. The data was collected on a 13-item scale; it was then factor analyzed. In result, the Sindh journalists were found have nursed three media role conceptions. Accordingly, they wished media provide and analyze information, do public advocacy, disseminate political awareness, and play role in national development.*

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**Keywords:** Sindh journalists, Role perceptions, Media functions.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This research attempt focuses about what should be the role of news media in the context of Sindh province, Pakistan. However, Nawaz (1983) in this regard put that defining the role of media in Pakistan poses a challenge (Nawaz, 1983).

This may be because Pakistan has different demographic, geo-political, cultural and political characteristics, particularly compared with developed, European and Western countries. Among such characteristics of Pakistan its being more than ninety per cent Muslim populated and ruled under the two poles apart political systems, i.e. democracy and dictatorship, are conspicuous ones. And such characteristics of any state have contribution in determine the media role in the society of that state or country.

Moreover, about the general role of news media or journalism in previous studies the scholars have come with varying ideas. As first Singer (2006) has observed to many studies defining that

the basic purpose of journalism is to provide the information to citizens which they need to get free and self-governing. Or others like Chan and Lee (2011) found that the normative role of journalism is to provide service to the public and defending the interests of the public.

This is how the journalistic conflict between profit-seeking and public service is popular (Jaehnic and Onyebadi, 2011). Lastly, according to Seo (2011) previous studies hint that the journalists' role perception is significant element influencing to the news profession practice. Because newswriters' personal beliefs have influence upon their news decisions as observed Seo (2011) in various studies. In essence, observes Lecheler and Hinrichsen (2001) that journalistic role conceptions inform about journalists' work environment and – consequently – news production.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

To collect data a self-completion research instrument was administered to all accessible both print and electronic media organizations, and news agencies in Sindh province, Pakistan and in all district-level press clubs.

However, purposive and opportunistic sampling technique was used to select a sample, particularly with the aim to include as many working journalists as possible. Moreover, the survey was inclusive of only those journalists who were regularly employed to work for newspapers, magazines, news agencies, public and private television and radio stations mainly with the professional role status as reporters, sub-editors or editors.

The survey was conducted by field researchers who were to make sure that queries by respondents about questions could be answered properly and that completed questionnaires could be collected securely and timely.

The questionnaire of the study ranged widely over various topics about journalists' careers, their, training and experience, the media organizations they worked for, their political affiliations, their attitudes to and use of new technologies their membership of press clubs and other organizations, their educational backgrounds, and their financial and working conditions. In this way a total of 576 journalists filled questionnaires; and at the time of the survey, the total population of journalists in Sindh was estimated almost 2500. However, this number of journalists is inclusive of both those who were members of press clubs, and those who not members of press clubs, working mainly at district level and to some extent at sub-district level. Further, almost three fifths (59 percent) of the sampled journalists were surveyed at press clubs, and remaining 38 per cent at workplaces and 3 per cent in their homes.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Demographic Profile

See table 1 the typical Sindh journalist is dominantly male (98.1%), speaks the Sindhi language (70.9%) and follows Islam as a religion (96.7%). Academically the majority (63.8%) of the Sindh journalists is a university graduate; whereas, the remaining earned their final degree from colleges (28.5%) and schools (7.7%).

Further, about their education it was found that the majority (63.7%) had sought education as a regular student and the remaining proportion (36.3%) as a private student. In the context of the academic institute, the sampled Sindh journalists who had sought their final degree from university

(365), among them the simple majority (54.4%) had studied from University of Sindh, Jamshoro and the remaining from Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur (27.2%), University of Karachi (13.2%) and other various universities (5.2%).

Moreover, the first highest proportion (42.1%) of the surveyed Sindh journalists is young - up to 30 years old - and the second highest proportion (37.5%) is between 31 to 40 years old. Finally, in the salary context the highest proportion (37.7%) of the Sindh journalists earns monthly less than 10,000 (ten thousand) PK rupees.

**Table-1.**Composition of journalists by demographic variables

	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	565	(98.1)
Female	11	(1.9)
<b>Ethnicity/Mother language</b>		
Sindhi	405	(70.9)
Urdu	104	(18.2)
Siraiki	24	(4.2)
Other	38	(6.7)
<b>Religion</b>		
Muslim	551	(96.7)
Hindu	14	(2.5)
Other	5	(.9)
<b>Level of education</b>		
School	44	(7.7)
College	163	(28.5)
University	365	(63.8)
<b>Mode of education</b>		
As a private student	197	(36.3)
As a regular student	346	(63.7)
<b>Name of academic institute</b>		
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)
<b>Age</b>		
0-30 years (Young)	239	(42.1)
31-40 years (Mature)	213	(37.5)
Over 40 years (Old)	116	(20.4)
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
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)

### 3.2. Media Roles and Related Concepts in Sindh Province

To assess the media role perceptions and importance rating of the various media roles a 16-items scale, used by Ramaprasad (2001) in her Post-Independence Tanzanian study of journalists, was included in the survey instrument.

However, taking into consideration the different cultural background of journalists in Sindh the three (3) scale items out of the total sixteen (16) were dropped from the original scale; and the sequence of the items was also changed. Moreover, before analysing the results of the respondents' rating of the media roles the 13-items scale was made subject to a data reduction technique with the purpose to make the analysis more comprehensible.

Therefore, the items were factor analyzed by applying principal components analysis with varimax rotation (See table 2). As a result one item 'providing entertainment and relaxation' was excluded from the model; because it had low statistical communality. While the remaining 12 items came up with three orthogonal factors having eigenvalues higher than one and explaining 54.26 per cent of the overall variance. Additionally, if any variable loaded on more than one factor, it was clustered with the factor on which it showed the highest loading.

In this way, in the result of factor analysis statistical technique, the "*Information analysis and public advocacy*" role of the news media emerged as the main factor explaining 23.77 per cent of the variance and it captured a total of six item-statements mainly dealing with accuracy, timeliness, objective analysis, investigation of the information, and giving the common people a chance to express their views about public affairs.

The second factor "*National development*" having explained 17.80 per cent of the variance, gathered four statements related to portraying positively the national leaders, country, and supporting the government in the development of nation and country, and propagating its policy. Whereas, the third factor "*Dissemination of political awareness*" showing 12.68 per cent of the variance covered only two, however, very coherent items that is not only informing and educating voters about politicians but also about how the government operates. In this way, more about third factor it seems that the third factor had a close relevancy with the watchdog role of media; particularly in this case, sensitizing people against the wrongdoings of politicians and over the overall performance of the government.

### 3.3. Significance of Media Roles

To begin with, the journalists in Sindh assigned a significance rate to all items above the average, a distinguishing feature, which coincides with Ramaprasad's study of Tanzanian journalists; in which also 'respondents rated all functions above average to be important' (Ramaprasad, 2001).

Moreover, when analyzing the importance level in the context of the factors the highest mean score was for 'information analysis and public advocacy' ( $M=4.44$ ) role of the news media. Under this factor, particularly, the first two highest mean scores were given to items 'providing accurate information' ( $M=4.72$ ) and 'giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs' ( $M=4.61$ ) respectively.

In this way it appears that journalists in Sindh were of the view that the primary role of the news media should be 'providing accurate information in a timely manner'. Regarding the item 'accuracy and timeliness of information' it was found in the study of Nepali journalists that it had been 'rated as the most important' among all seventeen (17) items. And it was also similar in all *The American Journalist studies*; because, accuracy and timeliness are fundamental to journalistic practice the world over (Ramaprasad and Kelly, 2003). In addition related to that another scholar

in his study of Indonesian journalists also found that ‘getting information to the public quickly’ was the most important communication goal (Hanitzsch, 2005); and he (Hanitzsch, 2005) termed it one of the ‘classical’ values of a Western understanding of the news media which demands from the journalists a set of characteristics like neutrality, impartiality and objectivity.

Therefore, we can conclude that by assigning top-most importance to the media function ‘providing accurate information in a timely manner’ the Sindh news people have not only revealed that they also pursued those journalistic values which are cherished most by their Western colleagues, but also they have recognized themselves as pro-democratic or sustainers of democracy; because by ‘providing accurate information in a timely manner’ to the public on the affairs of government, business and special interests the media can form an environment of democratic debate and that subsequently help to the establishment and maintenance of good governance (Peters, 2003).

Moreover, under the ‘information analysis and public advocacy’ factor, by assigning the second highest importance rating to the statement ‘giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs’ (M =4.61) the journalists in Sindh revealed that they were biased in favour of a pro-poor news media agenda which assumes that the media should assume the role of ‘public advocates’.

This assumption also surfaced in the response which many of the journalists surveyed in this study gave to the open-ended question, “Why did you become a journalist?” One group boldly wrote that they became journalists so they could carry the voice of the public to the corridors of power. However, it was found surprisingly that the ‘public advocacy’ role of the news media was lesser in the importance rating of US (48.0%) and British journalists (56.0%) (See Mwesige, 2004) – both developed countries – compared with the Sindh journalists whose importance rating proportion of ‘public advocacy’ role of the media was above than two thirds (67.6%).

**Table-2.**Factor analysis of the media functions rated for importance

	Mean	Factors		
		I	II	III
Information analysis and public advocacy	4.44			
Give ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs	4.61	.694		
Investigate claims and statements made by the government	4.40	.688		
Provide analysis of complex problems	4.40	.682		
Provide accurate information in a timely manner	4.72	.676		
Objectively report on government national development programs	4.30	.619		
Discuss national policy while it is still being developed	4.24	.603		
National development	3.66			
Portray national leaders in a positive manner	3.53		.770	

Portray a positive image of the country	4.38		.729
Support the government's national development programs	3.69		.726
Propagate government policy	3.04		.643
Dissemination of political awareness	4.21		
Inform voters about politicians' viewpoints	4.11		.776
Educate voters about how government operates	4.32		.690
Eigenvalue	2.85	2.13	1.52
Percentage of variance	23.77	17.80	12.68

Principal Component Analysis Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization; KMO=0.82; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Note:** Higher mean scores equal greater importance. Scale ranges from 5 = very important to 1 = not very important.

Another coincidence of assigning first and second importance to 'getting information out quickly' and 'giving ordinary people a chance to express themselves', like Sindh journalists was also found in the study of Ugandan journalists (Mwesige, 2004).

This similarity implies that journalists in developing countries share a common understanding of the role of the media. In contrast, however, the two statements which were assigned second last and last mean importance scores among Sindh journalists were 'objectively reporting on government national development programs' ( $M=4.30$ ) and 'discussing national policy' ( $M=4.24$ ). Apparently, the reason for this is that on the one hand both these statements contain the words 'national development and national policy'; on the other in the execution of these media functions there seems to be a probable dissemination of government information; therefore, the Sindh journalists might have assumed that this role would involve propagating government policies. In other words, Sindh newspeople do not approve such role of media which involves propagating government policy in any form.

This is also indicated by the fact that under the 'national development' role which emerged as a second factor, the item 'propagating government policy' has also got the lowest importance rating score ( $M=3.04$ ) compared with the other items both under the national development factor and among all 13 items.

Even the item 'providing entertainment and relaxation' also got a higher rating ( $M=3.93$ ) than the item 'propagating government policy'. So this finding points to the ideology of the Sindh journalists that they do not want the news media to serve as a propaganda tool for the government; however by imparting an exactly equal significance at the third highest level among all the 13 items to the statements 'investigating claims and statements made by government' ( $M=4.40$ ) and 'providing analysis and interpretation of the complex problems' ( $M=4.40$ ) the Sindh journalists appear to support the watchdog-role ideology of the news media against the government.

Lastly, Ramaprasad and Kelly (2003) also found similar that like Sindh journalists, Nepalese journalists, who also are in South Asia, rated the item 'propagating government policy' as the lowest important among all the items.

Further, under the ‘national development factor’ which accumulated a total of four items under its purview with an overall 17.80 per cent variance, the highest importance rating was given to the item ‘portraying a positive image of the country’ ( $M=4.38$ ). It is noteworthy that this item got the fourth highest importance rating among all the 13 items – and it was even at the cost of the item ‘portraying national leaders in a positive manner’ ( $M=3.53$ ).

This way of ranking the importance ratings shows that from the viewpoint of Sindh journalists, the welfare of the country is more important than the welfare of the political or national leaders. Finally, the third factor ‘dissemination of political awareness’ - rated as the second significant factor ( $M=4.21$ ) - described overall 12.68 per cent variance with the two highly coherent items. In the item of this news media role the Sindh journalists seem to be clearly on the side of the voters/public.

Actually, they want to educate public not only about the conduct of the government but also to have a role in disseminating much more political awareness among them. However, out of the two items the preference was given to ‘educating voters about how government operates’ ( $M=4.32$ ) compared with just ‘informing voters about politicians’ viewpoints’ ( $M=4.11$ ).

An independent-samples t-test was to see the impact of journalist type, media organization ownership, education and geographic affiliation of the Sindh journalists on the importance rating of the news media roles.

As a result with regard to journalist type out of the total of 12 items the following 6 were observed having significant differences (See table 3). As under the ‘information analysis and public advocacy’ function news-reporting journalists in comparison with newsroom workers assigned greater importance to the items ‘objectively reporting on government national development programs’ ( $M= 4.39$  vs  $4.11$ ;  $t = -3.01$ ,  $p = .003$ ) and ‘discussing national policy while it is still being developed’ ( $M= 4.30$  vs  $4.11$ ;  $t = -2.07$ ,  $p = .03$ ).

Similarly, under the ‘national development’ role the news-reporting professionals compared with their newsroom colleagues placed those items higher ‘portray national leaders positively’ ( $M= 3.65$  vs  $3.30$ ;  $t = -3.4$ ,  $p = .002$ ), ‘portraying a positive image of the country’ ( $M= 4.45$  vs  $4.23$ ;  $t = -2.51$ ,  $p = .012$ ), ‘supporting the government’s development programs’ ( $M= 3.83$  vs  $3.44$ ;  $t = -3.56$ ,  $p = .000$ ), and ‘propagating government policy’ ( $M= 3.14$  vs  $2.85$ ;  $t = -2.44$ ,  $p = .015$ ). So, overall the findings indicate that news-reporting journalists compared with their newsroom colleagues considered to ‘information analysis’ and ‘national development’ role of the news media more significant.

**Table-3.** Journalist type and mean importance of media functions

	Journalist type		t Value	p Value
	(Newsroom)	(News-reporting)		
	Mean	Mean		
Information analysis and public advocacy	4.37	4.48		
Giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs	4.55	4.64	-1.340	.181
Investigating claims and statements	4.35	4.43	-.978	.329

made by the government				
Providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems	4.40	4.41	-.155	.877
Providing accurate information in a timely manner	4.70	4.73	-.587	.558
Objectively reporting on government national development programs	4.13	4.39	-3.010	*.003
Discussing national policy while it is still being developed	4.11	4.30	-2.071	*.039
National development	3.45	3.76		
Portraying national leaders in a positive manner	3.30	3.65	-3.059	*.002
Portraying a positive image of the country	4.23	4.45	-2.513	*.012
Supporting the governments' national development programs	3.44	3.83	-3.562	*.000
Propagating government policy	2.85	3.14	-2.446	*.015
Dissemination of political awareness	4.12	4.26		
Informing voters about politicians' viewpoints	4.00	4.17	-1.727	.085
Educating voters about how government operates	4.25	4.36	-1.337	.182

In the context of media organization ownership, it was found that out of the total of 12 items the following four were statistically significant (See table 4). First, under the ‘information analysis and public advocacy’ role, private media journalists compared with their state-run counterparts assigned higher importance to the item ‘giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs’ ( $M= 4.62$  vs  $4.38$ ;  $t = 2.11$ ,  $p = .03$ ). Whereas, subject to ‘national development’ role of the media, state-run media workers compared with their private media colleagues placed a greater importance on the items ‘portraying a positive image of the country’ ( $M= 4.67$  vs  $4.36$ ;  $t = -2.55$ ,  $p = .01$ ), ‘supporting the government’s national development programs’ ( $M= 4.29$  vs  $3.65$ ;  $t = -3.86$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and ‘propagating government policy’ ( $M= 3.90$  vs  $2.98$ ;  $t = -3.92$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Such differences in the mean importance scores indicate clearly that the state-run media journalists consider to the ‘national development’ role of the news media as more important. By way of contrast, private media journalists are more in support of the ‘information analysis and public advocacy’ role of news media.

**Table-4.**Media organization ownership and mean importance of media functions

	Ownership type		<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
	(Private) Mean	(Government) Mean		
Information analysis and public advocacy	4.45	4.34		
Giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs	4.62	4.38	2.119	*.035
Investigating claims and statements	4.41	4.31	.621	.535



made by the government				
Providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems	4.40	4.40	.022	.982
Providing accurate information in a timely manner	4.71	4.75	-.336	.737
Objectively reporting on government national development programs	4.31	4.23	.433	.665
Discussing national policy while it is still being developed	4.25	3.97	1.631	.103
National development	3.62	4.17		
Portraying national leaders in a positive manner	3.51	3.83	-1.420	.156
Portraying a positive image of the country	4.36	4.67	-2.559	*.014
Supporting the governments' national development programs	3.65	4.29	-3.868	*.000
Propagating government policy	2.98	3.90	.167	*.000
Dissemination of political awareness	4.20	4.40		
Informing voters about politicians' viewpoints	4.10	4.31	-1.085	.278
Educating voters about how government operates	4.31	4.50	-1.200	.231

**Note:** Higher mean scores equal greater importance. Scale ranges from 5 = very important to 1 = not very important. \*. The mean differences are significant at the < .05 level.

Moreover in the context of education, it was found that under the 'information analysis and public advocacy' role, school/college educated journalists assigned a higher mean score to the item 'investigating claims and statements made by government' than did their university educated counterparts ( $M= 4.51$  vs  $4.35$ ;  $t = 2.15$ ,  $p = .032$ ). Whereas, university educated journalists put more emphasis upon 'providing accurate information in a timely manner' ( $M= 4.75$  vs  $4.64$ ;  $t = -1.99$ ,  $p = .047$ ). In addition, under the 'national development' role of the media it was found that the item 'propagating government policy' was given a comparatively higher score by school/college educated journalists than those who were university educated ( $M= 3.49$  vs  $2.81$ ;  $t = 5.68$ ,  $p = .000$ ). So this finding shows that the highly educated journalists do not wish the media to be used by government as a propaganda tool.

(See table 5) in the perspective of geographic affiliation of the journalists it was observed that under the 'information analysis and public advocacy' role, the rural journalists compared with their urban colleagues wished more that media should 'give ordinary people a chance to express their view' ( $M= 4.68$  vs  $4.52$ ;  $t = 2.74$ ,  $p = .006$ ), and as well the media should 'investigate claims and statements made by the government' ( $M= 4.48$  vs  $4.31$ ;  $t = 2.23$ ,  $p = .026$ ). This indicates that rural journalists compared with urban journalists assign a higher priority to the watchdog role of the media, and also believe that media should favor poor people.

Moreover, the rural journalists compared with urban news-workers also assigned more significance to the item 'objectively reporting on government development programs' ( $M= 4.42$  vs  $4.17$ ;  $t = 3.14$ ,  $p = .002$ ) and 'discussing national policy while it is being developed' ( $M= 4.35$  vs  $4.10$ ;  $t = 3.01$ ,  $p = .003$ ); which makes it clear that the rural journalists prefer the media should

report and discuss government affairs and programs however maintaining the objectivity characteristic of the media. Additionally, under the ‘national development’ role too all items i.e. ‘portraying national leaders positively’ ( $M= 3.71$  vs  $3.31$ ;  $t = 3.63$ ,  $p = .000$ ), ‘portraying positive image of the country’ ( $M= 4.50$  vs  $4.23$ ;  $t = 3.17$ ,  $p = .002$ ), ‘supporting government’s development programs’ ( $M= 3.87$  vs  $3.49$ ;  $t = 3.61$ ,  $p = .000$ ), and ‘propagating government policy’ ( $M= 3.26$  vs  $2.79$ ;  $t = 4.09$ ,  $p = .000$ ) were assigned higher mean scores by rural journalists than their urban counterparts. In sum the findings point out that the rural journalists compared with urban journalists favoured more to the ‘national development’ role of the media.

**Table-5.**Geographic affiliation of journalists and mean importance of the media functions

	Geographic affiliation		<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
	Rural journalists Mean	Urban journalists Mean		
Information analysis and public advocacy	4.51	4.36		
Giving ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs	4.68	4.52	2.740	*.006
Investigating claims and statements made by the government	4.48	4.31	2.236	*.026
Providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems	4.43	4.38	.695	.488
Providing accurate information in a timely manner	4.72	4.72	-.063	.950
Objectively reporting on government national development programs	4.42	4.17	3.149	*.002
Discussing national policy while it is still being developed	4.35	4.10	3.018	*.003
National development	3.83	3.45		
Portraying national leaders in a positive manner	3.71	3.31	3.639	*.000
Portraying a positive image of the country	4.50	4.23	3.176	*.002
Supporting the governments' national development programs	3.87	3.49	3.613	*.000
Propagating government policy	3.26	2.79	4.099	*.000
Dissemination of political awareness	4.28	4.13		
Informing voters about politicians' viewpoints	4.19	4.02	1.776	.076
Educating voters about how government operates	4.38	4.25	1.646	.100

**Note:** Higher mean scores equal greater importance. Scale ranges from 5 = very important to 1 = not very important. \*. The mean differences are significant at the  $< .05$  level.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to find out the news media role perceptions that Sindh journalists in Pakistan have developed. It was like a challenging job, particularly taking into consideration the cultural and political background and developmental level of Pakistan.

On a general level the common role of journalism or news media is deemed to serve the public; even on the cost of standing against the internal and external threats posed to the local interests, as the related literature suggests.

To know the media role conceptions nursed in the minds of journalists is called very important; because they influence the news selection and making decisions of the journalists. In addition, media role perceptions provide insights about the news-workers' work surroundings and news production process. The data for this study was gathered by developing and administering a research instrument among the working Sindh journalists in Pakistan. However, the sampling was purposive and an opportunistic.

As a result of factor analysis of the data collected on 13-itemed scale the Sindh journalists came up with the following three major news media role conceptions. First, media should not only plainly provide information to the public but also to analyze that information, as the pros and cons of the reported event also be comprehended by the media consumers.

Moreover media have to perform the advocacy role for public. In other words media are to do public service. The second major role of the media should be national development. It relates to the idea that media have to guard the interests of country against the internal and external threats. Under the function particularly in the context of politics media have to portray national leaders and country positively, support and propagate the government in development work.

However, the third in importance major role of the news media should be dissemination of political awareness. Particularly, focusing on the aim to informing and educating voters about the activities, performance and instances of politicians and government of the time. So this is commonly the watching role of media.

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