

FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB-QUIT AMONG NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted on 446 newspaper journalists working in Karachi, who do journalism in Sindhi, Urdu, and English languages, to understand the reasons for their job quitting. The findings revealed that low salaries, job insecurity, and inconvenient administrative policies are why journalists leave their profession permanently. Additionally, a statistical test showed that the most significant issue is journalists receiving uncompetitive salaries, especially in Sindhi language newspapers. Furthermore, journalists working in the English language press tend to be pessimistic about their future in journalism. In contrast, Urdu language journalists are concerned about the threat to their lives, which is also a leading cause of job quitting.

Keywords: Job leaving factor, newspaper journalist, administrative policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

Journalists are finding less favorable working condition in newspaper industry of Karachi, a largest urban city in Pakistan, economically dubbed as economic hub. Many of the journalists also share similar concerns they have about their jobs across the country. In his paramount work on the role and status of journalists of Sindh province of Pakistan, Memon (2011) has highlighted the predicaments that newshounds, gazetteers and sleuth have been facing related to deteriorate work condition, mentioning low salary, and extreme low or significantly less job security, however, contrary to their concern with the work condition, the job commitment and value of journalism among the journalists were astonishingly high (p. 216). The question of the working condition of journalist as a human resource also got the attention of the scholars of different region. For instances, while exploring the problems that Filipino journalists confront, Tondoc (2017) found low pay and media violence are among the major concern for them. Another study on gender policies, Tijani-Adenle (2019) identified the issue of non-payment of salaries; remuneration disparity and sexual harassment are severe to such an extent that sometimes these disappointed Nigerian women journalists have to say goodbye to news industry. In another study the European Union funded to explore the structural working conditions of journalism in Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, Lohner, Neverla, & Banjac (2017) pointed out that the journalists of these regions are working under the precarious working condition. They further added that they face extreme job insecurity, draws meagre salaries that sometimes this make them more vulnerable to unethical practice of bribery and corruption, even have poor safety measure at the time of conflict-sensitive reporting, and observe overt and subtle political interference in the newsroom (2017). Further, Ali (2020) also identified multifaceted problems that fraternity of Pakistani journalists are facing including unsatisfied with editorial policy, job insecurity, non-existence of perk and privileges and

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even employment without contract. Apart from this major structural erosion in the working condition, the Pakistani journalists appears to be unaware to their employment rights and are subject to merely employers' discretion (Ali, 2020).

By the second half of the 20th century, journalism and journalist received trifling scholar attention; however, the first decade of the 21st century witnessed manifold expansion in the study of journalists when four major surveys of U.S journalists were conducted in 1971, 1986, 1996 and 2007. The scope of these major studies primarily focused on journalist: their role, character, work condition etc. (Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Additionally, David Weaver and Lars Willnat's paramount book presented the overview of various surveys of more than 29,000 journalists in 31 countries conducted between 1996 and 2011. It is, perhaps, most cited book of this time that provides insights into the working conditions of journalists from East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, North America, South and Latin America and the Middle East but does not include studies into journalists from South and Central Asia and Africa due to lack of representative survey. Weaver & Willnat (2012) piled up all major empirical or non-empirical studies that include philosophical discussions on the journalists' identity or their working conditions highlights the varying reasons for leaving journalism.

This study examines the possible factors associated with the decision of leaving the profession of journalism. Focusing on specific aspects of the newspaper journalists' attitude towards leaving the profession (if they intended to), it attempts to pinpoint which aspect is most significant factor influencing the decision of their departure.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Journalists may quit journalism for a variety of reasons, from political interference to lack of press freedom and low salary. Several studies have identified multiple factors may contribute or reinforce to the decision to leave the job as a journalists. Survey conducted in 1996, 2001 and 2006 on Hong Kong journalists indicate too much pressure, low salary are most important reasons for journalists to leave the profession. The study also found that the political climate might have an impact whether or not someone decides to leave journalism. For instance, journalists identified political interference as the primary reason pushing them to the brink of leaving the profession in a survey conducted in 1996, prior to sovereignty transfer to Hong Kong (Weaver & Willnat, 2012, p. 28). But the pattern of political interference was not stated same reason in surveys performed in 2001 and 2006. In another study of more than 500 newswomen, burnout was identified as significant factor for leaving profession (Reinardy, 2016, p. 15). The major study by David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit in *The American Journalist*, found that journalists who lay off the profession most frequently cited the not dignified pay and the absence of fringe benefits are main reasons for their decision (Weaver, Wilhoit, & Bergen, pp. 102-103).

In another empirical study at the University of Central Florida, the author concluded, "Respondents portrayed journalism as frustrating profession, characterized by low pay, poor management, and bad hours" (Stepp, 2013, p. 10). Bangladeshi journalists are also experiencing various issues regarding employment rights in the workplace. He found that vast majority of the journalists surveyed expressed their intention to leave their current job due to "low job security, low salary, high pressure at work, not getting promotion duly and not getting salary on time" Among the cited reasons, low salary and irregular salary were most significant factors among the journalists to think of changing the profession. Subsequently, they were found most dissatisfied with their life. (Çoban, Ataman, Appiah-Adeji, & Jamil, 2020, p. 185). In a hallmark study of Weaver and Willnat, it lacks to add the studies into journalist from Pakistan due to lack of representative survey, however, in recent years, some noteworthy studies into the journalists of Pakistan have been published, one of which is conducted by Memon (2011), while discussing on the job commitment, he compared the job commitment of English, Urdu and Sindhi language journalists and concluded that journalist of Sindhi language media appears to leave the profession for better paid job available as they are found financially weaker compared to their counterparts (p. 106).

3 Related Research in Pakistan

With the dramatic development of various means of communication, the question on the shirking space for the freedom of media has been addressed quite often in Pakistan. However, there is sobering evidence that the trace of scientific research gap can be seen in the realm of working condition of journalists. Some of the academic scholar have paid attention and have produced paramount study with the focus on the role and status of journalists. Memon (2011) examined the role and status of journalists in Sindh in the context of their geographical and professional profiles. In term of financial situation of journalist in 22 districts of Sindh, the scientific study concluded that, nevertheless, journalists are working without pay or with low pay, job insecurity is high, they would continue their profession of watchdog role despite the availability of lucrative job in other profession.

Tahir Malik conducted the first nationwide survey on “Working Condition of Pakistani journalists” in 2000. The study was non-scientific. In response of 450 questionnaires, only 200 were received from all Presidents of press clubs situated in Kashmir, KPK, Baluchistan, Sindh and Punjab. According to the finding of survey, rural journalists received no wage from newspaper and urban journalists are on pay roll but vast majority of them hardly receive salary or fright benefits entitled under the Wage Board Award. The study also found that 22 percent of salaried journalists must seek other resources to earn income from other sources and 43 percent from family members to meet their own family expenses. Additionally, journalists who participated in the survey expressed their intention to leave the profession for a higher income.

In another study of similar niches, Lqbal & Ullah (2013) highlighted the working conditions of journalists of Sawat, district of KPK. The study was conducted after the militancy ended in Sawat in 2012. They found that journalist encounter huge issues of the critical importance such as meagre pay, long working hours, job insecurity and believe job mobility within profession is conducive way for reasonable or dignified remuneration.

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in collaboration with Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) produced a delegation report on twin crises of press freedom and journalist safety in 2007. The mission revealed journalists face life threat or their security issues from two sides, the “major threat to journalists’ security come from the police and security services ... [secondly] rather than waste timing instituting court cases against journalists to shut them up, the government hires people to rough journalists up in the street making it hard to attribute the attack” The international delegation also addressed the crises of wages and conditions at work and found that service condition at newspaper and news agency is worse, especially those that never implemented Wage Board Award which enforced the employer to pay and grant other perk and privileges in compliance with the decision of commission. It concluded that media workers are fearful about their employment status due to insecurity that contractual system has inflicted (A State of Denial: The Crisis of Press Freedom and Journalists Safety in Pakistan, 2007).

This study attempts to identify the difference between some of the reasons that influence Sindhi, English and Urdu newspaper journalists to the decision of leaving journalism for any other profession. It also identities the first three most cited reasons among the journalists in general and within the group. A question, with a set of reasons, was asked the journalists what possible reasons of their intention of leaving could be if they do so. The respondents were given a set of seven reasons, plus an “others” option. The following main research question was formulated:

1. What are the differences between some of the reasons that influence Sindhi, English and Urdu newspaper journalists in leaving journalism?

4 METHODOLOGY

The newspaper journalists of Karachi participated in this study through a self-administered closed-ended questionnaire. Karachi is the capital city of Sindh province of Pakistan and is an economic hub with the population estimated at 16 million in 2017. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a more representative sample across the three groups, i.e., Sindhi, Urdu, and English. Total 500 questionnaires were distributed among the newspaper journalists, 448 were received and two were rejected

for being incomplete. Thus, 446 questionnaires were included in the analysis. The list of the member journalists was acquired from Karachi Press Club, and was used as a representative.

Respondents were asked “what would be the most likely reasons, if you decide to leave journalism?” three senior journalists of Karachi Press Club were consulted to formulate the list of reasons, plus an “others” option. The option of possible reasons is listed (1) low salary (2) unfair policy of employer, (3) additional workload (4) uncertain future (5) yellow journalism (6) threats to life and (7) others”. The obtained data was firstly coded in MS Excel software programme. After coding, the numeric data was analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.

5 RESULTS

The survey was conducted among 446 full-time journalists working for various newspapers in Karachi. The represented Sindhi, Urdu, and English-language publication and completed self-administered questionnaires. Urdu newspapers had highest representation at 54.9% followed by Sindhi at 28.3%, and English at 16.8%. Nearly all respondents (96.4%) were male and aged between 22 and 60, with a mean age of 36.39 and a median age of 35. Most of the journalists (66.8%) were married and university graduates. The majority held positions as reporters (58.5%) or newsroom staff (41.5%). About 37.2% of the respondents had no affiliation with any political or religious party, and 78.3% were contractual employees of the newspapers.

Table 1 Frequency of choosing the reason of leaving profession of journalism

Reasons of leaving	N	% Of respondents (n-466)
low salary	261	59.3%
Unfair policies of the employer	94	21.4%
Additional workload	66	15.0%
Uncertainty about future	204	46.4%
Yellow Journalism.	37	8.4%
Threat to Life	16	3.6%
Others	11	2.5%

The frequency of various factors that could influence journalists to leave their profession was analyzed through statistical methods. According to

Table 1, the most cited reason was “low salary,” with a high score 261 (59.3%). The second common factor was “uncertain future” with the score of 240 (46.4%), followed by “unfair policy of the employer,” which scored 94 (21.4%), and “additional workload,” as fourth major factor leading to the decision of leave. The fifth and sixth prominent factors were “Yellow journalism” and “threat to life,” which scored 37 (8.4%) and 16 (3.6%), respectively. The final option of the question was “others,” which scored 11 (2.5%).

According to recent findings, the newspaper industry may not offer favorable compensation to journalists. In fact, low pay was identified as the top factor influencing their decision to leave the profession. Additionally, newspaper journalists are facing an uncertain future, as there is no clear plan or goals in place to support them. This lack of direction has led to increased anxiety among journalists, with many considering leaving the profession due to concerns about the future. Furthermore, journalists have raised concerns about their employment rights being violated and unfair policies from employers. Additional workload was also identified as a key factor contributing to their decision to leave. Interestingly, yellow journalism and threats to personal safety were not identified as significant factors in their decision-making process.

5.1 Cross-tabulation with demographic variable

Three most cited reasons were identified among the Sindhi, Urdu and English newspaper journalists that are forcing them to leave journalism for another profession.

Table 2 Distribution of journalist and with related variable

		Reasons of leaving profession					
		low salary	Unfair policies of the employer	Additional workload	Uncertainty about future	Yellow Journalism.	life to threat
Sindhi	N	81	20	20	42	8	0
	%	31.0%	21.3%	30.3%	20.6%	21.6%	0.0%
Urdu	N	145	57	37	113	19	14
	%	55.6%	60.6%	56.1%	55.4%	51.4%	87.5%
English	N	35	17	9	49	10	2
	%	13.4%	18.1%	13.6%	24.0%	27.0%	12.5%

According

to

Table 2, English newspaper journalists have a distinct perspective regarding their reasons for leaving the profession when compared to their counterparts. The highest rated factor for their potential departure is their uncertainty about the future, followed by low salary and unfair employer policies as the second and third most significant factors, respectively. Interestingly, Urdu and Sindhi newspaper journalists have a similar approach towards the factors that influence their decision to leave the field. For both groups, low salary, uncertain future, and unfair employer policies were the top three dominant reasons for leaving. Although there are no significant differences in propensity across the three groups, salaries in the English newspaper sector appear to be higher than those in Urdu and Sindhi newspapers. Additionally, while English newspaper journalists express relative satisfaction, they have concerns about their organization's future plans.

Table 3 Distribution of journalists' designation with related reasons

Designation		Reasons of Leaving					
		low salary	Unfair policies of the employer	Additional workload	Uncertain Future	Yellow Journalism.	life to threat
Reporting	N	161	50	44	108	24	10
	%	62.6%	19.5%	17.1%	42.0%	9.3%	3.9%
Newsroom	N	100	44	22	96	13	6
	%	54.6%	24.0%	12.0%	52.5%	7.1%	3.3%

Table 4 Distribution of journalists' nature of job with related reasons

Nature of Job		Reasons of Leaving					
		low salary	Unfair policies of the employer	Additional workload	Uncertain Future	Yellow Journalism.	life to threat
Permanent	N	52	26	7	44	20	2
	%	53.6%	26.8%	7.2%	45.4%	20.6%	2.1%
Non permanent	N	209	68	59	160	17	14
	%	60.9%	19.8%	17.2%	46.6%	5.0%	4.1%

According to **Table 3**, both the reporter and sub-editor identified "low salary" as the primary reason for leaving journalism, followed by "uncertain future" and "unfair employer policies" as the second and third reasons, respectively. This trend was also observed in cross-tabulation with the dependent variable of "nature of job contract" for journalists. **Table 4** reveals that that the top three reasons for permanent and contractual newspaper journalists leaving the profession were "low salary," "uncertain future," and "lack of job security."

5.2 Distribution of the journalists and independent variables

The analysis of the table included both row and column comparisons. The row comparison provided insight into the priorities of leaving within the group, while the column comparison highlighted the preferred reasons for leaving the profession among the three groups.

Table 5 Distribution of journalists within group with reasons

Journalists of newspaper		Reason of leaving the profession					life to threat
		low salary	Unfair policies of the employer	Additional workload	Uncertainty about future	Yellow Journalism.	
Sindhi	N	81	20	20	42	8	0
	%	65.9%	16.3%	16.3%	34.1%	6.5%	0.0%

Urdu	N	145	57	37	113	19	14
	%	59.7%	23.5%	15.2%	46.5%	7.8%	5.8%
English	N	35	17	9	49	10	2
	%	47.3%	23.0%	12.2%	66.2%	13.5%	2.7%

According to **Table 5**, the majority of Sindh newspaper journalists (N=81, 65.9%) cited low salaries as their primary reason for leaving the profession. The second-largest group (N=42, 34.1%) believed that "uncertainty about the future" was the main factor. Additionally, "unfair employer policies" and "increased workload" were equally cited as third reasons for leaving the profession by the Sindh newspaper journalists (N=20, 16.3%). These findings suggest that the low salaries paid to Sindh newspaper journalists are a major factor affecting their commitment to the profession. The journalists also feel a sense of hopelessness and depression about the future, which has severely impacted their motivation levels. It seems that they are unable to see any positive developments on the horizon.

Among Urdu newspaper journalists, the **Table 5** shows a similar trend as seen among Sindh newspaper journalists. The first three groups of Urdu newspaper journalists, comprising 59.7% (N=145), 46.5% (N=113), and 23.5% (N=57), cited "low salary," "uncertain future," and "unfair policies of the employer" as the reasons for leaving journalism. The fourth and fifth groups of journalists, accounting for 15.2% (N=37) and 7.8% (N=19), respectively, mentioned "additional work" and "yellow journalism" as the dominant factors pushing them to leave. A small group of journalists (N=14, 5.8%) cited "threat to life" as their reason for wanting to leave the profession. This indicates that the Urdu newspaper industry, despite having higher volume than other language newspapers, presents a disappointing and discouraging situation in terms of dignified pay, uncertain future, and employer policies.

According to **Table 5**, there are some slight variations in the reasons why English newspaper journalists quit compared to their Urdu and Sindh counterparts. The majority of journalists (N=49, 66.2%) expressed uncertainty about their future as the main reason for leaving the profession, followed by a larger group (N=35, 47.3%) who cited low salary. A third group (N=17, 23%) mentioned leaving journalism due to unfair employer policies, while a smaller fourth group (N=10, 13.5%) cited yellow journalism as their reason. It's worth noting that a small but significant majority (N=7, 9.5%) chose "other" as their reason compared to just (N=2, 2.7%) who cited threats to their safety while on the job. This suggests that English journalism salaries are slightly better than those in Urdu and Sindh newspapers, but it still ranks second as a reason for leaving the profession. For English journalists, uncertainty about their future and unfair employer policies are the most worrisome concerns.

5.3 Low Salary

In this part of the research, we conducted statistical tests on dependent variables (Sindh, Urdu, and English newspaper journalists) and independent variables (low salary, unfair employer policies, extra workload, uncertain future, yellow journalism, and life-threatening situations) to examine the significance of the differences. To assess the impact of low salary on our three groups, we conducted a Kruskal-Wallis H test, which revealed a statistically significant difference in the "low salary" level among the groups ($\chi^2(2) = 6.09, p = .04$). The mean rank score for Sindh, Urdu, and English newspaper journalists was 236, 224, and 197, respectively. Our analysis indicates that Sindh newspaper journalists differ significantly from Urdu and English newspaper journalists. Sindh journalists are more likely to quit their profession due to low salary compared to Urdu and English journalists.

5.4 Uncertainty about future

According to the results of a Kruskal-Wallis H test, there is a notable disparity in the level of "uncertainty about future" among three groups - Sindh, Urdu, and English newspaper journalists. The test yielded a statistically significant difference with a $\chi^2(2)$ score of 19.38 and a p-value of .000. The mean rank score was 195 for Sindh journalists, 224 for Urdu journalists, and 267 for English journalists. These findings suggest that English newspaper journalists feel more uncertain about their future compared to their Sindh and Urdu counterparts. Although there is a significant difference between English journalists and their Sindh and Urdu counterparts, the difference between English and Urdu journalists is not significant.

5.5 Threat to life

According to a Kruskal-Wallis H test, there was a significant difference in the level of "threat to life" among Sindhi, Urdu, and English newspaper journalists, with mean rank scores of 215, 228, and 221 respectively. The analysis shows that Urdu newspaper journalists are more likely to leave the profession due to threats to their safety compared to their English and Sindhi counterparts. However, the test also revealed that there was no significant difference in terms of "unfair policies of the employer" and "additional workload" among the three groups of journalists, with $\chi^2(2)$ values of 2.864 and .598 respectively, and p values of .239 and .742.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For newspaper journalists, a dignified salary, secure future and fair administrative policy are crucial to staying in journalism. However, the reasons for wanting to leave the profession vary among different group. Sindhi newspaper journalists prioritize a higher salary, while English newspaper journalists are more concerned about future uncertainty. It is evident that the job commitment among the newspaper journalists has shaken to the point where they are considering leaving the profession. Newspaper owners should take note: the most important areas to focus on for long-term commitment from journalists are fair salaries, employment rights, and administrative support. Many journalists feel that their legal and labor rights are being violated. Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between pay and job satisfaction for journalist.

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