

Watchdog Role of Media: An Exploratory Study of the Editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language Dailies

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of Pakistani media as watchdog. It employs content analysis to examine the editorials of six leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies published in 2015. The researcher developed an index to measure the watchdog role in the editorials which consisted of two dimensions Information and Criticism. The main findings exhibited that the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies did not play their watchdog role satisfactorily. At the same time, comparing the watchdog role dimensions, the editorials were more informative and less critical. The findings also show that the performance of the watchdog role of the editorials of the English language dailies was comparatively better than the editorials of the Urdu language dailies. Keeping in view the Journalism's theory of democracy, the Pakistani newspapers did not play their part to strengthen democracy by providing the public with the required political information which comes from the proper watchdog role of media.

Keywords: *Watchdog role, Watchdogging, Information, Criticism, Editorials, Newspapers*

Introduction

The institution of media is considered among the most influential societal institutions. It informs the people about latest happenings in their surroundings and beyond; it educates them on the issues of public interest and of great importance and it entertains them through light and soft content. Media are the eyes, ears and tongues through which people see, hear and speak; they are used

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for advocacy campaigns, persuasion and developmental purposes as well as they enjoy the status of public opinion leadership in the society. Apart from these diverse and multi-dimensional functions, practices and roles, there is a normative watchdog role of media which asks them to expose the corruption, wrongdoings or malfeasance of the individuals and institutions of government and to criticize the policies and actions of the government. Though, it includes the monitoring of other powerful segments of the society like corporate sector but the very focus of the watchdog role of the media is on the government.

Media play a pivotal role in making democracy work in its true spirit especially the watchdog role of media contributes the most. Democracy, on the other hand, is a prerequisite for the watchdog role. It provides media with the freedom to operate in this fashion. Put it in another way, democracy is necessary for the watchdog role of media to flourish and the watchdog role of media is necessary for democracy to flourish; each one is essential and contributory to the other. The democratic governments provide better conditions for the watchdog journalism as “the institutional arrangements of democracy provide the most hospitable environment for watchdog reporting” (Coronel, 2010, p. 129). And in the words of Waisbord (2000), “There is a natural fit between democracy and watchdog journalism; democracies are better equipped to protect and facilitate watchdog reporting” (p. 59). On the contrary, in authoritarian regimes, constitutional rights are discarded, critical reporting is considered as problematic and dissent in media is crushed by them (Waisbord, 2000). The watchdog role is a classic model for media to

perform in democracy (Ibelema, 2012). The watchdog role of news media serves democracy and contributes to the democratic governance through monitoring the powerful segments of the society in public and private both domains (Waisbord, 2015). It helps keep democracy alive and strengthened and the public faith in it renewed through exposing the wrongdoings of the individuals and institutions (Cornel, 2010) and in holding them accountable for their deeds.

In the history of mankind, democracy is the most effective political system that humans have developed and the majority of them have come to agree upon. In the democratic system, people elect their rulers by themselves and for that matter they need to have information regarding political scenario of the country. In order to make a choice and take informed decisions, people need media to provide them with political information. The watchdog role of media helps them get informed and be aware of the political situation prevailing in the country in the context of politics especially regarding the government. When people come to know the actual performance of the people running the matters of the state through the watchdog role of media, they are in a better position to take informed decisions.

In Pakistan, the current set up is democratic. A democratically elected government started governing the system after a peaceful transition of the office. Before the current and previous government, the country was experiencing the dictatorial regime. So, now, democracy is operational and freedom of expression prevails in the country which fulfills the basic requirements for the media to play

the watchdog role. It is the normative responsibility of the media to play this role. In this situation, if media play their watchdog role, by having check and balance on the powerful people and exposing their misdeeds and as a result the awareness level of the public becomes high, they will participate in the political activities more actively and in a more informed way. In this way, the watchdog role serves people and strengthens democracy. This ultimately makes the lives of the people better. So, the researcher finds the watchdog role of media worth studying.

The current study is an exploratory one which focused on editorials to examine the watchdog role of the leading Pakistani newspapers. The researcher considered only the editorials in this study as editorials are important because the newspaper's policy on the issues is expressed in the editorials. If we compare news with editorial, news is objective and does not have any room for subjective commentary but editorial does. The watchdog role asks for the commentary and opinion in a critical way. It is also the most influential item of the newspaper because it contributes in the formation, reformation and manipulation of public opinion.

The researcher aimed to study the contemporary performance of the watchdog role of Pakistani media so the year '2015' has been considered. The year was also, comparatively, politically stable and smooth for Pakistan as no major political events happened in the year that could have slanted the course of the media practice such as general elections, opposition large protest movement etc.

Defining Watchdog Media

The concept of 'Watchdog Media' is defined as a role which asks journalists to hold the government – individuals and institutions – responsible and accountable for its policies and actions. Journalists play their watchdog role by exposing abuses, corruption, evil practices, fraud, waste, maladministration or malfeasance of the government (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Norris, 2010; Spark, 1999; Waisbord, 2000).

Conceptualization of Watchdog role by Different Scholars

Watchdog role of media has been conceptualized by several scholars and researchers.

It is explained as monitoring and having check and balance on the government (Waisbord, 2000). Exposing the malfeasance, corruption and wrong deeds of the government has also been emphasized (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995). According to some scholars, the publicizing of information (McNair, 2003; McQuail, 2010; Saman, 1978) and critical and skeptical coverage of the people in power is watchdog role of the media (McQuail, 2000; Whitten-Woodring, 2009). There are some other opinions to define the watchdog role such as the reporting and condemning the villains (Ettema & Glasser, 1998), naming the guilty and identifying failures (Spark, 1999) and providing interpretive evaluation in the form of editorials commentary along with information (Norris, 2000).

Characteristics of Watchdog Role of Media

Watchdog role of media is a 'normative expectation' by its very nature (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009) and a 'liberal conception' which lies in the philosophical tradition of the libertarianism back in the

eighteenth century (Fjaestad & Holmliiv, 1976). It is assumed that the watchdog role of media bears a responsibility to safeguard the 'public interest' (Coronel, 2010; Norris, 2000, 2010). Initially, it was referred to the process in which abuse of power in the 'government sector' was exposed but currently, it also includes the criticism and reporting on wrongdoings in the 'private or corporate sector' though the government still remains the focus of the watchdogging (Waisbord, 2000). It is the traditional 'fourth estate role' of media (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995; Ibelema, 2012) where media regarded as watchdog over the other three estates i.e., executive, legislative and judiciary (Saman, 1978).

Prerequisites of Watchdog Role of Media

One of the two major prerequisites for media to play watchdog role is 'media freedom'. To explain this very point, Waisbord (2000) says that "any discussion about watchdog journalism, or for that matter a democratic press, inevitably entails a debate about press freedom" (p. 3). Media freedom is instrumental and one of the necessary ingredients for media to fulfill their watchdog role (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995). It shows the nature of media-government or media-state relationship. So, the political environment is the most important factor which matters when it comes to ask media to perform or compromise their watchdog role.

The other prerequisite for watchdog role of media is 'democracy'. The notion of watchdog media lies in the libertarian theories (Esser & Pfetsch, 2004) which go hand in hand with democracy. Hanitzsch (2007) elaborated the same thing that "The normative appeal of journalism functioning as fourth estate

[watchdog] is clearly situated within the nexus of liberal democracy (p. 373). In dictatorships, media are not supposed or asked to fulfill watchdog role because they lack the freedom. And in democracies they are required to perform the watchdog role by having check and balance on government because they have freedom (McQuail, 2010; Whitten-Woodring, 2009). Esser & Pfetsch (2004) assert that in dictatorial regimes, media not only abstain to perform their watchdog role but also reinforce state control and serve the interests of those in power. But on the other hand, the liberal democracies inspire journalists to act as watchdogs (Norris, 2010) through exposing the abuse of power by government (Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1963). So, media need freedom which is provided by democracy to operate in a watchdog fashion.

Criticism on the Watchdog Role of Media

Criticism on the critical role of media – watchdogging – also exists in the community of media scholars and researchers. Firstly, the appropriateness of watchdog model in various parts of the world and allegiance of journalists toward this very ideal in their media practices are challenged by researchers (Norris, 2010). Secondly, scholars claim that objectivity and watchdog role of media cannot go hand in hand; they have a potential clash in between them. Because, the critical nature of watchdog ideal requires media personnel to choose and shape news information in an active way which converts the reporting into interpretation function of media (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Thirdly, the harmful consequences of watchdog function of media for democracy are contested by researchers as Thompson (1999) argues that the media persons

undermine democracy through their insignificant and antagonistic coverage of the issues. Fourthly, there is a conviction held by media scholars that watchdogging can lead to cynicism. Clayman, Herritage, Elliott and McDonald (2007) note that critics claim media become cynical of public officials and politicians contesting elections and become excessive or imbalanced during the critical coverage of the government affairs.

Empirical Studies

The review of existing related literature showed that the watchdog role has been studied across the print, electronic and online media both conceptually and empirically. Keeping in mind the purpose of this study, only those studies were focused which analyzed the content of newspapers mainly to examine the watchdog role. Furthermore, the literature illustrated two main points regarding the empirical studies on the watchdog role of media. First, the majority of the studies conducted through content analysis to analyze the watchdog role in media were issue specific (Brown & Vincent, 1995; Cornia, Ghersetti, Mancini & Oden, 2015; Eriksson & Ostman, 2013; Gnisci, Dalen, & Conza; 2014; Haberman, 2010; Houghton, 2013; Otopalik & Schaefer, 2008; Tanner, 1999; Weiderman; 2009; Yvette, 1988). Second, there was hardly any study done in which the editorials were examined for the watchdog role of media with two conditions: i) a study of editorials exclusively and ii) without focusing any specific issue. This study is exploratory in nature which focused on editorials to examine the watchdog role of newspapers in a general way i.e., without any specific context or focusing on any specific issue.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent did the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies play their watchdog role?

RQ2: How different or similar was the watchdog role performed in terms of information and criticism dimensions in the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies?

RQ3: What was the difference between the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies in the performance of watchdog role in their editorials?

RQ4: Are there any similarities or differences between the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies in the way information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role were dealt in their editorials?

RQ5: What were the comparative trends within the editorials of the leading Pakistani English language dailies in the overall performance and with respect to information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role?

RQ6: What were the comparative trends within the editorials of the leading Pakistani Urdu language dailies in the overall performance and with respect to information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role?

Theoretical Framework

The researcher used the concept of the “Watchdog Role of Media” to develop an instrument i.e., Watchdog Index, to measure the watchdog role of Pakistani media in editorials and provided the basis to the coding procedure. The “Journalism’s Theory of Democracy” used to explain, analyze and interpret the findings of

this study as the researcher aimed to conduct this study in the context of democracy. The journalism's theory of democracy has three main assumptions which are given, in a logical or temporal order, below:

- (1) The journalist's democratic role is to inform citizens;
- (2) The more informed these citizens are, the more likely they are to participate politically;
- (3) The more they participate, the more democratic the country is apt to be (Gans, 1998. p. 6).

Interestingly, the scholar who proposed the theory was the one who rejected the theory in the same text. Herbert J. Gans, in 1998, wrote a research article "What Can Journalists Actually Do for American Democracy" in which he criticized the role of American journalists that did not help strengthen democracy in the country. In other words, he tried to find a relationship between American democracy and American journalists. While discussing this dichotomous relationship, he introduced another stake holder in this phenomenon, the American citizens. Then, the role of the American citizens was put in the spot light in terms of strengthening the democracy. The citizens were also discussed with respect to their relationship with journalists, where journalists were supposed to make citizens participate and contribute in strengthening of their democracy (Gans, 1998). Thus, he formulated a trioka to explain this process in the form of a theory.

While explaining the theory, he criticized the journalists for not playing their role to strengthen democracy in America. He wrote that the fault of journalists could be seen in the limitations of the

theory. At that time, he called it the 'Journalistic Theory of Democracy' (Gans, 1998, p. 6) which he renamed, later on, as 'Journalism's Theory of Democracy' (Gans, 2003, p. 55). He wrote a book, in 2003, "Democracy and the News" in which he not only renamed it but also added a fourth assumption in the initial theory as: "citizens are assumed to be informed if they regularly attend to the local, national, and international news journalists supply them" (2003, p. 56).

He also claimed that journalists accept this theory in practice but theory does not exist in the written form: "The theory remains unwritten, but ... it seems to have widespread acceptance in the profession" (1998, p. 6). In another place, he noted that "As a theory it is not written down, and as an ideal, it is so widely accepted and thus taken for granted that it is not really discussed" (2003, p. 55). Talking about the roots of the theory, Gans wrote that "the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century, when muckrakers not only began to expose corrupt public officials and political bosses but the magazines that published them also sought "to extend the citizen's power". It is evident from this statement that watchdog or fourth estate role of media was clearly related with this theory.

In the context of this theory, Andrew R. Cline wrote an article with the title "Putting Journalism's Unwritten Theory of Democracy onto Paper" in which he reviewed Jeffrey Scheuer's book "The Big Picture: Why Democracies Need Journalistic Excellence" which was published in 2008. In this review, he asserted that Jeffrey Scheuer written down the theory whom Gans called unwritten theory of

democracy. He argued that Scheuer did not challenge or critically evaluate the theory but rather protected the assumptions whom Gans questioned (2009).

The researcher focused on the first assumption of the theory in this study where role of media could be analyzed in this context. Several scholars wrote about the main purposes of the media, especially news media. The two main purposes are to inform (Schudson, 2008) and to educate the public or citizens. According to Scheuer (2008), the information flow is vital for popular government just as circulation of blood is vital for body. Information, political, is the most necessary element in representative democracy for the formation and expression of public opinion and making of decisions (Althaus, 1998) and news media provide that information which enables the public to take informed decisions regarding political issues (Eveland, 2004). Similarly, Scheuer (2008) stated that the citizenry was supposed to get the knowledge, a form of power, in democratic societies more than anyone else and journalism was happened to be the most relevant channel of knowledge. And as Schudson (2000) notes that the proponents claim that "The job of the press is to help produce a more informed electorate. A more informed citizenry will create a better and fuller democracy" (Schudson, 2000, p. 204).

"The press is supposed to enhance democracy both by stimulating the citizenry's political interest and by providing the specific information they need to hold government accountable" (Entman, 1989, p. 3). The notion that journalism should work as a tool for the democratic empowerment is well accepted by journalists and their

critics (Schudson, 2000) but much criticism has been done on the role of media as provider of information, first assumption of the journalism's theory of democracy, and its relationship with the progress of democracy. If we talk about the information, scholars discussed that it was not explored that what kind of information is required for the citizens to participate politically and to take informed decisions (Gans, 2003).

The researcher has addressed this issue in the current study by relating the concept of watchdog role of media with the journalism's theory of democracy in a way that the information that is relevant and necessary for the citizens is the information produced by the watchdog role of media. Now, the question arises that the watchdog role only provides the information about the people in power, the government, but what about the people waiting to come in the power, the political parties in opposition, and political process in the country as whole. Well, the information produced by the watchdog role of media is the part of the information required for the citizens to know about the political activities and to participate in the political process and ultimately to take informed decisions that results in the form of strong democracy.

To educate is the function of media which is fulfilled in the editorials because the dynamics and characteristics of the genre of editorial deals with it. Editorials are supposed to educate the citizens, form and shape the public opinion and assist them in making informed decisions in democracy.

Research Methodology

The present study employed content analysis to examine the

watchdog role of media in the editorials.

Universe

The universe of this study is the editorials published in the six leading Pakistani English and Urdu dailies i.e., Dawn, The News, The Nation (three English language dailies), Jang, Nawa-i-Waqt and Express (three Urdu language dailies) which have directly addressed, discussed, covered or talked about the Pakistani federal government (where the federal government was the center or focus of the editorial) irrespective of the issues being discussed from January 01, 2015 to Dec 31, 2015, a time period of one year. The selected newspapers are the leading dailies of the country in both the languages. These newspapers are most circulated and widely read newspapers and considered as the most influential and powerful newspapers of the country.

Sampling

By using probability sampling, the researcher further used both stratified and random sampling (multi-stage random sampling) and, overall, it involved three stages. At the first stage, the researcher applied constructed week sampling, a type of stratified sampling. As, Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993) concluded the findings of their study that the constructed week sampling had a superiority over simple random and consecutive day sampling and a constructed week was efficient for a population of six months and two weeks for a year of newspapers' editions. Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014) stated that "taking 2 constructed weeks of daily newspapers works well to infer to 1 year of representative content" (p. 86). The researcher talked to S. Lacy, a co-author of the book "Analyzing

Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research” and of the study mentioned above, through electronic conversation and asked about the sampling of the of editorials for a population of one year. He advised the researcher that “The four constructed weeks would work because four weeks work with simple random selection, and the constructed week would allow you to control for any possible influence of day of the week” (personal communication, August 12, 2016). The studies which employed the same sampling technique (Elmasry, 2012; Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016; Mellado & van Dalen, 2014).

In order to construct four weeks, all the Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and so on, of the 52 weeks of the year 2015 were combined in seven different groups; in other words, seven strata were created. Then through random sampling, four days from each group or strata were selected to construct four weeks.

Then came the second stage where after the formation of four constructed weeks (28 days / 28 issues per newspaper) the researcher again employed random sampling to select one editorial each newspaper among two, three, or four editorials published in the four weeks (28 sampled days) and the number of total editorials was 168 (28 editorials per newspaper and 168 editorials from 6 newspapers).

And at the third and last stage, the researcher picked up those editorials from sample frame which met the criterion of the study i.e., the editorials which directly addressed, discussed, covered or talked about the Pakistani federal government irrespective of the issues being discussed in the editorials and the number of, final,

collected editorials was 98 (42 from English language dailies and 56 from Urdu language dailies).

Unit of Analysis

In the study, the unit of analysis is a single editorial (editorial and editorial notes) which directly addressed, discussed, covered or talked about the Pakistani federal government irrespective of the issues being discussed in the editorials.

Measuring Instrument

The researcher developed an index, the 'Watchdog Index' (WDI), to measure the watchdog role of media in editorials.

The researcher defined the Watchdog Index as to measure the *Watchdog Index*, an editorial would be analyzed in terms of two main parts as:

1. Information
2. Criticism

Information, the first part, was further classified into two dimensions:

- I. Context
- II. Details

Where,

Context could be:

- i. Yes
- ii. No

Details could be:

- i. In-depth
- ii. Superficial

To check, further, the dimensions of details, these 6 elements would

be considered:

- (i) Who
- (ii) What
- (iii) When
- (iv) Where
- (v) Why
- (vi) How

Criticism, the second part, was further classified into two dimensions:

- i. Cons
- ii. Pros (would be considered as opposite to watchdog role and seen in comparison to cons)

Index Scoring

- The overall total score of the Watchdog Index was 5
- The overall minimum score of Watchdog Index was 0 and maximum score was 5 where,
- Information portion contained 0-2 points (min 0 and max 2)
- Criticism portion contained 0-3 points (min 0 and max 3)
- Criticism portion was given more points (more weightage) than the information portion because of its significance
- Satisfactory Watchdog Role = 4 or 5
- Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role = 2 or 3
- Very Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role = 0 or 1

Information

- (i) Most Useful Information = 2

When context was stated and detail is in-depth in the editorial

- (ii) Less Useful Information = 1

When context was not stated or detail is in-depth in the editorial

(iii) Least Useful Information = 0

When context was not stated and detail is superficial in the editorial

Where these coded as:

Context [Yes = 1, No = 0]

Details [In-depth =1 Superficial = 0]

- Details were In-depth if at least any 5 or above of these elements were present in the editorial: 'Who, What, When, Where, Why and How'
- Details were Superficial if elements of details were any 4 or below
- Details were In-depth if maximum 4 or less of these elements were present in the editorial: 'Who, What, When, Where, Why and How'

Criticism

(i) Extreme Criticism = 3

When cons were 3 or above and pros were 0 in the editorial

(ii) Moderate Criticism = 2

When cons were 2 more than pros in the editorial

(iii) Minimal Criticism = 1

When cons were 1 more than pros in the editorial

(iv) No Criticism = 0

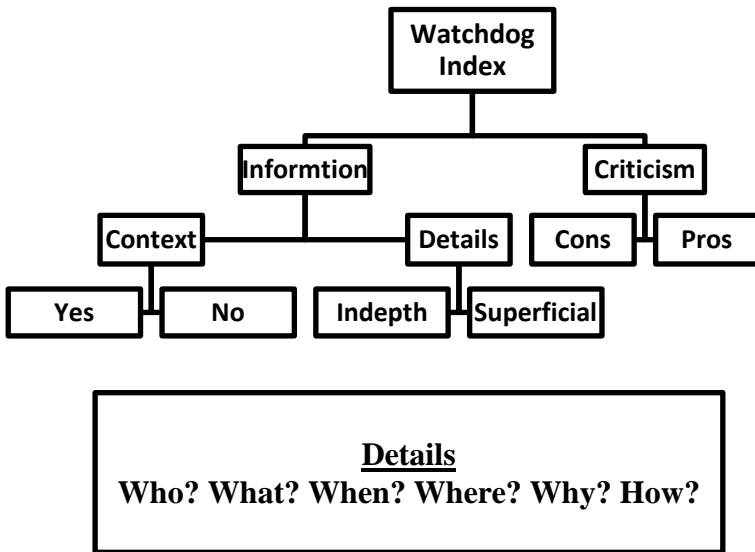
When cons were absent or cons and pros were equal in the editorial

- Cons and Pros were considered in comparison (working as opposite to each other)
- Cons and Pros were coded as:
1 = 1

2 = 2

3 = 3 or above

Figure 1: Diagrammatic Presentation of the Watchdog Index (WDI)



Operational Definition of the Watchdog Role of Media

Watchdog role of media is informing public about the wrongdoings and abuse of power of the government (Ettema and Glasser, 1998; McNair, 2003; McQuail, 2010; Norris, 2000; Saman, 1978; Waisbord, 2000) and criticizing the government's policies and actions (Esser & Pfetsch, 2004; McQuail, 2000; Norris, 2000; Waisbord, 2000; Whitten-Woodring, 2009) in public interest.

Personal Communication

J. Whitten-Woodring, Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Global Studies Ph.D. Program at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, guided the researcher that on the measurement of the watchdog role in editorials, that:

I think using editorials to identify watchdogging is fine. I think your criteria for identifying watchdogging editorials are for the most part appropriate, though when it comes to criticism, all you need is the con. The pro is not necessary for criticism to exist, though it does make for a more balanced approach – watchdogging does not have to be balanced. Nor does watchdogging require that a solution/alternative be presented. All watchdogging really requires is information and criticism of government, such that the government or businesses are held accountable for their policies/actions. In other words, watchdog journalism is not always conducted in a way that is fair and balanced. This is important because watchdogging is often conducted by media with ties to the opposition. (Personal communication, June 14, 2016)

S. Waisbord, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies. School of Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University

and editor Journal of Communication, in answering to a question of the researcher about examining the watchdog role in editorials, replied that “you will need clear theoretical and operational definitions of watchdog journalism before you conduct the analysis” (personal communication, July 15, 2016).

J. Pinto, Interim Executive Director and Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism + Media, in the School of Communication + Journalism, Florida International University, commented, while answering the question of the researcher regarding studying the watchdog role in editorials, that:

Looking at editorials is a fascinating angle. I specifically did not look at opinion pieces because I was examining the news content, but you could certainly make the case for examining the editorial line. For example, if editorials call for investigations into alleged corruption, or urge lawmakers to take specific action to reduce official fraud, or discuss themselves as watchdogs in some way, then you have a sense of the editorial ideology as media as watchdog. (Personal communication, July 21, 2016)

So, in the light of above scholarly studies and guidelines and keeping in view the dynamics and characteristics of the genre of editorials, the researcher formulated the Watchdog Index to measure the watchdog role in editorials, which contains two elements in it, Information and Criticism and included context, details, cons and pros (will be compared with cons) in the watchdog index.

Pilot Study and Coding

The researcher conducted a pilot study by selecting a subsample of the population through two independent coders. After the pilot study, the researcher made some changes in the coding procedure by specifically focusing on the instrument to measure the desired concept. Two coders coded the editorials according the defined parameters of the study. The coding of the editorials was done by reading the lines and considering the totality of impression in the lines. And some categories were coded by focusing the words like the mentioning of the places, people, timings, etc.

Intercoder Reliability

To calculate inter-coder reliability, Holsti's (1969) formula was used for determining the reliability of nominal data in terms of percentage agreement. $R = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$ Where R stands for reliability M is the number of coding decisions on which 2 coders agree and N1 and N2 refer to the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder respectively. The inter-coder reliability was more than 85% in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The Table 1 shows the total number of editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies, published on the defined criterion, collected through sampling is 98. Dawn had 15 (15.3 %) editorials, The News 12 (12.2 %), The Nation 15 (15.3 %), Jang 18 (18.4 %), Nawa-i-Waqt 20 (20.4 %) and Express had 18 (18.4 %) editorials.

Table 1
Overall Newspaper-wise Frequency & Percentage of Editorials

Newspapers	Editorials	Percentage
Dawn	15	15.3 %
The News	12	12.2 %
The Nation	15	15.3 %
Jang	18	18.4 %
Nawa-i-Waqt	20	20.4 %
Express	18	18.4 %
Total	98	100 %

The Table 2 tells us that the total number of editorials published in the leading English language dailies were 42 (42.9 %) and in the leading Urdu language dailies were 56 (57.1 %).

Table 2
English & Urdu Language Dailies-wise Frequency & Percentage of Editorials

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
English-language dailies	42	42.9 %
Urdu-language dailies	56	57.1 %
Total	98	100 %

RQ1: To what extent did the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies play their watchdog role?

The findings in the Table 3 clearly show that the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies did not play their watchdog role satisfactorily. Only 29.6 % (29) editorials played 'Satisfactory Watchdog Role'. On the other hand, 'Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role' was played in 52 % (51) and 'Very Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role' in 18.4 % (18) of the editorials. The majority (70.4 %) of the editorials was happened to be unsatisfactory in playing the watchdog role.

Table 3

Overall Watchdog Role Performance-Frequency & Percentage of Editorials

Watchdog Role	Editorials Percentage	
Satisfactory Watchdog Role	29	29.6 %
Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role	51	52 %
Very Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role	18	18.4 %
Total	98	100 %

RQ2: How different or similar was the watchdog role performed in terms of information and criticism dimensions in the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies?

The Table 4 illustrates that the editorials of the leading English and Urdu language dailies were more informative and less critical. The number of the editorials did fall in the category of the ‘Most Useful Information’ among all the categories of the information dimension of the ‘Watchdog Index’ is 64 (65.3 %) and the number of the editorials that did fall in the category of the ‘Extreme Criticism’ among all the categories of the criticism dimension of the ‘Watchdog Index’ is 23 (23.5 %). This difference displayed that the editorials played their informative role but did not play their critical role (did not criticize) in addressing the issues related to the Pakistani federal government.

Table 4

Overall Comparison of Information & Criticism Dimension of Watchdog Role-Frequency & Percentage of Editorials

Information & Criticism Dimension	Editorials Percentage	
Most Useful Information	64	65.3 %
Extreme Criticism	23	23.5 %

RQ3: What was the difference between the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies in the performance of watchdog role in their editorials?

The results describe that the leading English language dailies played comparatively more watchdog role than the leading Urdu language dailies. The Table 5 demonstrates that the percentage of the 'Satisfactory Watchdog Role' of the English dailies was 47.6 % which was greater than that of the Urdu dailies i.e., 16.1 %. In the 'Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role', the Urdu dailies had 62.5 % editorials and the English dailies had less i.e., 38.1 % editorials. Similarly, the Urdu dailies had more percentage of editorials in the 'Very Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role' (21.4 %) than that of the English dailies (14.3 %).

Table 5
Comparison of English & Urdu Language Dailies' Watchdog Role Performance-Percentage of Editorials

Watchdog Role	Newspaper Type	
	Percentage English-language dailies	Percentage Urdu-language dailies
Satisfactory Watchdog Role	47.6 %	16.1 %
Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role	38.1 %	62.5 %
Very Unsatisfactory Watchdog Role	14.3 %	21.4 %
Total	100 %	100 %

RQ4: What were the similarities or differences between the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies the way information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role were dealt in their editorials?

On the 'Information Dimension' of the watchdog role

(Watchdog Index), there was a similarity between both, English and Urdu language dailies. As the Table 6 shows that the gap between the percentages is not greater. On the 'Most Useful Information' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 64.3 % and Urdu dailies were 66.1 %. On the 'Less Useful Information' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 26.2 % and Urdu dailies was 21.4 % and, lastly, on the 'Least Useful Information' category, the percentage of the English language dailies was 9.5 % and Urdu dailies was 12.5 %.

The results in the Table 6 show that there was a difference between both, English and Urdu language dailies, in the performance of the criticism dimension of the watchdog role (Watchdog Index). The English dailies were more critical towards the government than the Urdu dailies in their editorials. The gap between the percentages is greater. On the 'Extreme Criticism' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 38.1 % and Urdu dailies were 12.5 %. On the 'Moderate Criticism' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 23.8 % and Urdu daily was 10.7 %. On the 'Minimal Criticism' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 2.4 % and Urdu dailies was 7.1 % and, lastly, on the 'No Criticism' category, the percentage of the English dailies was 35.7 % and Urdu dailies was 69.6 %.

Table 6
Comparison of English & Urdu Language Dailies' Editorial Performance on Info & Criticism Dimensions

Information & Criticism Dimension of the Watchdog Role	Newspaper Type	
	English- language	Urdu- language
Most Useful Information	64.3 %	66.1 %
Less Useful Information	26.2 %	21.4 %
Least Useful Information	9.5 %	12.5 %
Total	100 %	100 %
Extreme Criticism	38.1 %	12.5 %
Moderate Criticism	23.8 %	10.7 %
Minimal Criticism	2.4 %	7.1 %
No Criticism	35.7 %	69.6 %
Total	100 %	100 %

RQ5: What were the comparative trends within the editorials of the leading Pakistani English language dailies in the overall performance and with respect to information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role?

The Table 7 displays that Dawn played more watchdog role than the other English dailies. Dawn was followed by The Nation and The News played the least watchdog role among the three. The results in the Table 7 illustrate that in the provision of information regarding the issues under discussion, Dawn was at the top place, followed by The News and then The Nation. The findings show that Dawn criticized the policies and actions of the government the most, followed by The Nation and The News was the least critical

towards the government in its editorials.

Table 7
Comparison of English Language Dailies' Performance of Watchdog Role & Dimensions in the Editorials

Performance of Watchdog Role & Dimensions	Newspapers		
	Dawn	The Nation	The News
Satisfactory Watchdog Role	60 %	53.3 %	25 %
Most Useful Information	73.3 %	53.3 %	66.7 %
Extreme Criticism	53.3 %	40 %	16.7 %

RQ6: What were the comparative trends within the editorials of the leading Pakistani Urdu language dailies in the overall performance and with respect to information and criticism dimensions of the watchdog role?

The Table 8 exhibits that there was a similarity in the watchdog role performance among the three Urdu newspapers. The findings also show that in the provision of information regarding the issues under discussion, Nawa-i-Waqt was at the top place, followed by Jang and then Express newspaper. The results establish that Nawa-i-Waqt criticized the policies and actions of the government the most, followed by Jang and Express was the least critical of the government among the three.

Table 8
Comparison of Urdu Language Dailies' Performance of Watchdog Role- Dimensions in the Editorials

Performance of Watchdog Role & Dimensions	Newspapers		
	Jang	Nawa-i-Waqt	Express
Satisfactory Watchdog Role	16.7 %	15 %	16.7 %
Most Useful Information	66.7 %	70 %	61.1 %
Extreme Criticism	16.7 %	20 %	0 %

Discussion

This study is exploratory in nature as no research with reference to Pakistan has been carried out to examine an overall watchdog role in editorials without focusing any specific issue. The researcher developed and employed a new measuring instrument to examine the watchdog role of the editorials. The study explored that there was an absence of the performance of the satisfactory watchdog role in the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies. The findings also show that the Pakistani media, newspapers, not only did not fulfill their watchdog role for the public but they also supported the government to run the affairs of the state in the way it wanted to without criticism. To perform the watchdog role, the media require democracy and media freedom in the country. But in the presence of both, they favored and supported the government instead of providing a solid criticism and check and balance regarding the policies of the people in power.

The findings displayed that the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies did not play their watchdog role. By looking the results through the lens of the journalism's theory of democracy (Cline 2009; Gans, 1998; Scheuer, 2008), it can be claimed that the Pakistani media, leading dailies, are not fulfilling their democratic function of informing citizens, in this case, they are not educating citizens as is done through the editorials.

Information, it has been discussed that what kind of information do the citizens need or what information should be given to them by the media that can make them politically more

aware, more informed and more educated (Althus, 1998; Schudson, 2008). Because this information determines the attitudes and behaviours of the citizens towards politics and strongly influences their participation in the political activities. So, the watchdog role, the information given in the editorials regarding the issues under discussion and criticism on the actions and policies of the government, is a part of that broad information package that the public require. And the findings have suggested that the Pakistani citizens are not being provided with the information required for their political socialization and political education as the leading newspapers do not play satisfactory watchdog role in the editorials.

As the citizens' participation and involvement is considered "the lifeblood of democracy" (Franklin, 2002, p. 148) and it determines the quality of the democracy (Blais, 2010), in the light of the results of this study, the second and third assumption of the journalism's theory of democracy, the more informed citizens are more likely to participate in the political process and consequently the democracy will flourish and be strengthened in the country, the participation of the Pakistani citizens in the country's political process does not seem to be ensured by the newspapers because the citizens are not being provided with required political information and education regarding the issues in the country.

The findings have also illustrated that the Urdu language dailies are comparatively performing less watchdog role than the English language dailies which shows the comparative trends of the leading newspapers of the country.

Conclusion

The researcher concludes that the study explored the watchdog role in the editorials of the leading Pakistani English and Urdu language dailies by employing a new instrument i.e., Watchdog Index. The findings showed that the editorials of the leading Pakistani newspapers did not play their watchdog role. In comparison, the performance of the watchdog role of the Urdu language dailies was more unsatisfactory than the English language dailies.

In Pakistan, democracy and freedom of expression exist which are basic requirements for the media to operate in the style of watchdog but the Pakistani media are not fulfilling their normative watchdog role. Media are supposed to function in the line with the public interest but in this very study it is substantiated that they are not doing this.

Putting it in another way, the leading Pakistani newspapers are providing the people in government an open ground to play without any check and balance or public scrutiny. In countries like Pakistan where democratic system is always in danger, the media should play a more active and responsible role especially the watchdog role so that no segment of the society can get a vacuum to jeopardize democracy.

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