

**Citation:** Huma, Z. E., & Warsi, N. I. (2023). Analyzing the Implementation of Press Council of Pakistan Codes: A Sociological Perspective. *Global Mass Communication Review*, VIII(I), 37-43. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gmcr.2023\(VIII-I\).04](https://doi.org/10.31703/gmcr.2023(VIII-I).04)



p- ISSN: 2708-2105

p- ISSN: 2709-9458

Vol. VIII, No. I (Fall 2023)

Pages: 37 – 43

*Corresponding Author:* Zil e Huma (Lecturer, Media and Communication Studies, Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: [zile.huma@f.rwu.edu.pk](mailto:zile.huma@f.rwu.edu.pk) )



Cite Us



## Analyzing the Implementation of Press Council of Pakistan Codes: A Sociological Perspective



Zil e Huma	Lecturer, Media and Communication Studies, Rawalpindi Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.
Naveeda Irum Warsi	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan.

**Abstract:** *Mass media wield significant influence over human social, economic, and cultural realms. The formulation of media laws and ethics aims to regulate the press, with ethical codes playing a crucial role in decision-making. This study focuses on two ethical codes of the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP): unethical reporting and the projection of crime news. Employing quantitative content analysis, the research examines whether Pakistani newspapers adhere to the PCP code of ethics and the extent of unethical reporting. Two prominent Urdu dailies, Jang and Duniya, are analyzed, revealing that Duniya News publishes more news items in line with PCP ethics, while Daily Jang exhibits a higher intensity of unethical reporting, particularly in crime news. This study contributes to understanding ethical considerations in Pakistani media with its practical implementation of societal norms.*

**Key Words:** Crime News, Reporting, Codes of Ethics, Media Ethics

### Introduction

Media holds the power to shape perceptions, influencing everything from notions of good and bad to fostering hope or despair. In today's globalized landscape, mass media's role extends across social, economic, and cultural dimensions. As a few transnational corporations control global media, carefully crafted images can evoke diverse human emotions. The communication and information technology revolution further transforms societies worldwide (Kamalipour, 2007). Newspaper headlines serve as precursors to news reports, shaping national, cultural, and social representations. Ethical journalism is crucial for maintaining a newspaper's credibility, requiring adherence to established societal norms and traditions (Shamsi, 2005).

Journalists, as communicators, consistently make ethical decisions beyond legal requirements. These encompass choices related to truthfulness, accuracy, privacy, fairness, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives (Lucyanda, J. and Sholihin, M., 2023). The responsibility of the press is paramount, yet the media in Pakistan often neglects this duty. Press freedom, while vital, should not become a license for violating rules, risking the erosion of public trust (Raza et al., 2013). The constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedom of speech and Duniya for citizens, including freedom of the press, subject to reasonable restrictions. Recognizing ethical concerns and the need for

accountability, the Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) was established in 2002 to formulate and enforce an Ethical Code of Practice for the media. This study focuses on two PCP ethical codes: unethical reporting and the projection of crime news.

Media sets the perception of everything from good and bad to hope and despair. When people need information, they turn towards the media. In the present scenario, media have become more globalized, and disseminate information all over the world (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2007). The headlines of newspapers act as forerunners to news reports. Specifically, they disclose the national, cultural and social representations that circulate in a society at any given time. They reach a much wider audience as compared to those who read the news story. People usually take a glimpse of the headlines which might later become a matter of discussion in their offices or at home. Frontpage headlines are chosen more carefully to arouse a number of emotions in the reader. Newspaper editors intentionally go for striking expressions, and they choose emotive vocabulary, and rhetorical and graphological techniques in headlines to make an impact on the readership (Taiwo, 2007).

Certainly, laws might affect many of these areas (Moore & Murray, 2007). While assessing the newsworthiness of any news item or footage, the morals of the situation must be considered first before the editor assesses other journalistic ethics like accuracy and so forth (Nasir, 2013). In recent years, a media boom has occurred in Pakistan due to which the media industry has flourished a great deal (Gilani, 2000).

The responsibility is the key to journalism but the Pakistani media has forgotten this part. The press freedom shouldn't be used as a license to violate the rules. If the press would misuse freedom, then it could construct the situation of the law of the jungle. So for the sake of press freedom, every media organization must follow the code of ethics made by the higher authorities. When newspapers violate the press code of ethics for their own motives, they gradually lose public trust (Raza, Akbar, Numan, & Zai, 2013). The media in Pakistan lack the aspect of responsibility and try to exaggerate or create hype contrary to actual reporting (The News International, 2013).

In accordance with the defined functions, the Press Council of Pakistan formulated an Ethical Code of Practice for the press functioning in line with the standards of decency, professional conduct, and principles of freedom and responsibility to serve the public interest by ensuring a free flow of news and views with accuracy, objectivity, honesty, and fairness in any form of publication such as articles, news items, features, editorials, illustrations, cartoons, advertisements and photographs. So PCP created seventeen ethical codes for the press. In the light of these ethical codes, this study focuses on two ethical codes of PCP i.e. unethical reporting and projection of crime news. So the current study attempts to examine whether Pakistani newspapers report news according to the PCP code of ethics along with the extent of unethical reporting in newspapers. The study will also observe the ethical code of PCP regarding crime which Pakistani newspaper has more ethical violations while presenting crime news (Saeed, M., Farooq, T., Khan, M. A., & Mahmood, N., 2021).

## Literature Review

The literature underscores the importance of media respecting the public, providing accurate information, and avoiding manipulation of facts (Vanacker & Breslin, 2006). Journalists must prioritize truth-telling, objectivity, reducing harm, and public service to maintain credibility (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1987). While media codes are prevalent, their effectiveness is debated (Christians, 1985). The global media's violation of ethical codes, such as objectivity and privacy,

highlights the need for regulations (Raza et al., [2013](#)).

Ethical considerations in crime reporting are vital, as crime news is a pervasive topic globally. Studies reveal that crime news often tends to be sensationalized, misrepresenting facts and projecting a false image of crime's prevalence and policing effectiveness (Chermak, [1994](#); Grosholz & Kubrin, [2007](#); Marsh, [1991](#)). Sensationalized crime reporting can influence public perceptions and heighten the fear of crime (Chan & Chan, [2012](#)).

Shahid ([1994](#)) stated that through written and unwritten codes, obscenity is synchronized and this content could be controlled when high authorities continuously examine it. Nyamnjoh ([2005](#)) said that the use of indecent language and pictures is common in media. Through the technique of content analysis, the study revealed that newspapers use derogatory words for political leaders and show their biases. Edgar ([2000](#)) argued that in mass media, violent programs and events usually take more importance as compared to other stories. He also argued that if it bleeds, it leads. Likewise, "press photographers have no right to capture people's privacy. Photos of injured and dead bodies should not be published. Lady Diana always escaped photographers. At the time she died, the photographers were chasing her. The press was much criticized in the U.K. and people asked the government to make reporters responsible and they should not interfere with the privacy of the people" (Akbar, Raza, Hussain, & Ali, [2012](#), p. 2).

Nasir ([2013](#)) stated that media laws and ethics are used to formulate to regulate media. However, these laws and ethics do not exist in a proper way. Most of the content is unethical and not according to the norms and values. Some examples of unethical reporting could include violent images after a bomb blast or any other incident. Akbar et al. ([2012](#)) discussed the importance and role of print media in the digital age. They emphasized the significance of images that convey messages in a more attractive and strong manner. But now print media has forgotten the ethics of using images in newspapers. Most newspapers use violent images of dead bodies, torn body pieces, bloodshed and injured people without thinking about the norms and ethics of the society. They explored the front pages of three Urdu daily newspapers i.e. Jang, Express and Nawa-i-Waqt, and observed three main incidents of 2007, 2010 and 2011. They concluded that the print media of Pakistan commonly published bloody and terrorised images of victims on the front pages of the bomb blasts and suicide attacks.

No matter the country, the day or the time, "crime is an important news topic" (Chermak, [1994](#), p. 95). According to Chermak ([1997](#)), "print media present nine crime stories a day, on average, and electronic media four crime stories per day" (Chermak, [1997](#), p. 711). Grosholz and Kubrin ([2007](#)) examined the representation of crime news stories in The Washington Post and ABC News channel. Their focus was to observe how media report crime stories. Through the technique of content analysis, they explored seventy-one stories of crime in newspapers and television. The results indicated that crime news in both media was violent in nature, and 85% of results showed that crime events project violence, and distort the facts, and some words were highlighted to show prominence in news headlines. Meyer ([1975](#)) examined the crime events in two US newspapers i.e. The New York Times and The New York Daily News. The results suggested that The New York Times unsensationalized the crime events as compared to The New York Daily News. Davis ([1952](#)) examined the crime news in four newspapers in the American state of Colorado during the years 1948 to 1950. Through the technique of content analysis, the study indicated that newspapers misrepresented the crime news and most of the time exaggerated theft and murder cases. The results also showed that there was a great difference in reporting crime news in four selected newspapers.

Marsh (1991) comparatively analyzed the crime coverage in newspapers of the United States and other countries during the year 1960 to 1989. He elaborated on six studies related to crime events. He concluded from these studies that the US and other countries were the same in four areas i.e. He argued that newspapers misrepresent, sensationalize and alter the facts of crime events. Chan and Chan (2012) observed how crime reporting influences public opinion in Hong Kong. For this purpose, they measured the space and prominence given to crime news, and also the survey was conducted to get the opinion of the public regarding crime reporting. The results revealed that the more sensationalized reporting of crime events increased the fear of crime in the minds of people as compared to non-sensationalized reporting of crime incidents (Jamil, Sadia, and Gifty Appiah-Adjei., 2023).

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the theoretical framework of social responsibility, an ethical theory applied to the press. Originating from the Hutchins Commission report in 1947, this theory asserts that the press holds a responsibility to safeguard democracy by adequately informing the public and addressing societal needs and interests. In cases where the press fails in these functions, a regulatory authority should enforce accountability (Christians et al., 2009; Severin & Tankard, 1992). Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) emphasize the media's obligation to be socially responsible, ensuring fair presentation of all sides and providing sufficient information for public decision-making.

### McQuail (2010) Outlines Key Principles of Social Responsibility Theory

- Media should fulfil specific obligations to society.
- These obligations involve maintaining high professional standards of informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance.
- Media should be self-regulating within legal frameworks and established institutions.
- Offensive content triggering crime, violence, or harm to minority groups should be avoided.
- Media should reflect societal diversity, offering access to various viewpoints.
- High standards of performance are expected, justifying intervention for the public good.
- Journalists and media professionals are accountable to society, employers, and the market (Ravi, 2012).

### Research Questions

- RQ1. To what extent do Pakistani newspapers adhere to the PCP code of ethics in reporting news?
- RQ2. What is the prevalence of unethical reporting in Pakistani newspapers?
- RQ3. Which Pakistani newspaper exhibits more ethical violations in presenting crime news?

### Methodology

Quantitative content analysis serves as the research design for this study, employing an objective, systematic, and quantitative approach to describe the manifest content of communications (Berelson, 1952). Content analysis, a major method in social sciences research, offers a framework for evaluating frames, words, sentences, and other elements in media-related studies (Kerlinger, 1979). The population comprises reporting-based items published in the print media of Pakistan, with the Daily Jang and Daily DUNIYA selected for analysis. A purposive sample of 1,546 news

items, including 812 from Daily Jang and 734 from Daily DUNIYA, published between May 01, 2022, and July 01, 2022, forms the basis of this study. The unit of analysis is the headline of each news item.

### Operationalization of Key Variables

The researchers designed a five-point rating scale based on the Thurston scale to measure the intensity of variables in news items. This scale operationalizes two key variables: Unethical Reporting and Projection of Crime News. Each variable is accompanied by indicators and assigned values ranging from 10 to 30, reflecting the intensity of specific components within news items. The operational definitions and assigned values ensure a structured evaluation of unethical reporting and the projection of crime news in the selected newspapers.

### Analysis and Conclusion

**RQ1.** Do Pakistani newspapers report news according to the PCP code of ethics?

Results show that Daily Jang published 88.2% of news items in line with the PCP code of ethics, with 11.8% featuring unethical reporting. Daily Duniya published 96.0% of news items adhering to the code and 4% featuring unethical reporting, indicating that Daily Duniya exhibited a higher adherence to the Press Council of Pakistan's code of ethics compared to Daily Jang.

**RQ2.** What is the extent of unethical reporting in Pakistani newspapers?

The results reveal that unethical reporting for Daily Jang was 5.8%, the highest intensity. Daily Duniya had 1.8%, indicating a lower intensity of unethical reporting. The data demonstrates that the intensity of unethical reporting in the news items of Daily Jang was much higher than in Daily Duniya news stories.

**RQ3.** Which Pakistani newspaper has more ethical violations while presenting crime news?\*

Results show that Daily Jang published 89.6% of news items according to the PCP code of ethics, with 10.4% featuring ethical violations in crime news. Daily DUNIYA published 98.2% of news items adhering to the code, with 1.8% featuring ethical violations in crime news. The data suggests that the ethical violation in Daily Jang while presenting crime news was much higher than in Daily Duniya crime news stories.

The study examined whether two leading Urdu dailies of Pakistan, Jang and Duniya, report news according to the PCP code of ethics and the extent of unethical reporting in newspapers. The results indicated that Daily Duniya published more news items according to the PCP code of ethics compared to Daily Jang. However, the intensity of unethical reporting in the news items of Daily Jang was much higher compared to Daily Duniya. Daily Jang showed more ethical violations, especially in political news, while Daily Duniya exhibited more violations in international news. The study concludes that both Urdu leading dailies followed the PCP code of ethics in reporting news, but with levels of ethical violations. Daily Jang showed more violations in published news items, while Daily Duniya demonstrated fewer violations in presenting news stories. Overall, both dailies maintained a low intensity of violation, suggesting a general adherence to ethical standards in reporting.

## References

- Berelson, B. (1952). *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Free Press.
- Chermak, S. (1994). Crime in the News Media: A Refined Understanding of How Crimes Become News. In G. Barak (Ed.), *Media, Process, and the Social Construction of Crime: Studies in Newsmaking Criminology* (95-129). New York: Garland Publishing.
- Chermak, S. (1997). The Presentation of Drugs in the News Media: The News Sources Involved in the Construction of Social Problems. *Justice Quarterly*, 14(4), 687-718. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418829700093551>
- Christians, C. (1985). Enforcing Media Codes. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 1(1), 14-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900528509358250>
- Davis, F. J. (1952). Crime News in Colorado Newspapers. *American Journal of Sociology*, 57(4), 325-330. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2772636>
- Gilani, I. S. (2000). *Media Ethics: Country Paper on Pakistan*. Paper presented at the AMIC Seminar on Media Ethics, Kuala Lumpur.
- Grosholz, J., & Kubrin, C. (2007). Crime in the News: How Crimes, Offenders and Victims are portrayed in the Media. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 14(1), 59-83. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2028162>
- Jamil, S., & Appiah-Adjei, G. (2023). "Let's Draw a Line between Dos and Don'ts": Pakistani Journalists' Perspectives about the Ethics of Conflict-Sensitive Reporting. *Journalism and Media*, 4(1), 177-196. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia4010013>.
- Kamalipour, Y. R. (2007). Foreword. In T. Pludowski (Ed.), *How the World's News Media Reacted to 9/11: Essays from Around the Globe* (17-20). Spokane: Marquette Books.
- Kerlinger, F. N. (1979). *Behavioral Research: A Conceptual Approach*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Klaidman, S., & Beauchamp, T. L. (1987). *The Virtuous Journalist*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lucyanda, J., & Sholihin, M. (2023). The effect of gender and code of ethics on budgetary slack ethical judgment: Experimental evidence from Indonesia. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science*, 28(56), 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEFAS-05-2021-0044>.
- Machin, D., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). *Global Media Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Marsh, H. L. (1991). A Comparative Analysis of Crime Coverage in Newspapers in the United States and Other Countries from 1960-1989: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 19(1), 67-79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2352\(91\)90083-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2352(91)90083-8)
- Moore, R. L., & Murray, M. D. (2007). *Media Law and Ethics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nasir, M. (2013). Media Ethics - Why & How? A Case Study of Pakistan. *Inter discipline Duniya Journal of Contempor Duniya Research in Business*, 4(11), 224-236.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2005). *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Zed Books.
- Ravi, B. K. (2012). Media and Social Responsibility: A Critical Perspective with Special Reference to Television. *Academic Research International*, 2(1), 306-325.

- Raza, M. R., Akbar, M. W., Numan, W. u. D., & Zai, N. A. (2013). Code of Ethics and Laws for Media in Pakistan. *Asian journal of social sciences & humanities*, 2(1), 306-313.
- Saeed, M., Farooq, T., Khan, M. A., & Mahmood, N. (2021). Perception of Electronic News Media of Pakistan in the Digital Age. *Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research*, 9(3), 293-306. <https://doi.org/10.15206/ajpor.2021.9.3.293>.
- Severin, W. J., & Tankard, J. W. (1992). *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods and Uses in the Mass Media*. New York: Longman.
- Shahid, M. I. (1994). *Introducing New Trends in Mass Communication*. Lahore: Caravan Enterprises.
- Shamsi, N. (2005). *Journalism Ethics and Code*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd.
- Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four Theories of the Press: The*