



Original Article

**Reporting from the Conflict
Zone: Case of Bannu and
Lakki Marwat**

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Abstract

This article explores the complex environment facing the journalists in the conflict prone districts of Bannu and Lakki Marwat, Pakistan. Based on a quantitative methodological approach that is based on the Spiral of Silence theory, the research evaluates the effectiveness of security threats, lack of access, and editorial limitations, and inadequate training in affecting the objectivity of journalism. The main method of analysis was SPSS, but the authors have performed a battery of statistical tests, such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis, ANOVA, and t tests to support the empirical research results. A questionnaire of 100 journalists working in local press clubs revealed that there were serious risks of being threatened by militant groups and political forces, pressure from government authorities, lack of access to information, and the overall culture of self-censorship. To make the media operations in war-torn regions safer and more independent, the report suggests immediately needed institutional reforms, including certain safety precautions, editorial independence, and training focused on conflict-sensitive journalism. Finally, the research is a contribution to the overarching discussion on war journalism and provides policy suggestions to protect press freedom and protect journalists in risky situations.

Keywords: Conflict Journalism, Press Freedom, Self-Censorship, Security Threats, Pakistan, Spiral of Silence, Editorial Pressure, Access to Information

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Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study: The journalism in Pakistan has been made more dangerous not only internationally but also nationally throughout the past 10 years (Goodhand, Hulme & Lewer, 2000). According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 2024 became one of the deadliest years when media personnel got killed in Pakistan, which is depicted in Figure 1. Pakistan is also ranked the second-deadliest country to work as a journalist, with three other countries recording six murdered journalists (SFCG Pakistan, 2023). This evidence shows that the threats to the reporters in the front line have increased significantly. The plotting of the press-freedom trends in Pakistan shows disturbing tendencies. On the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, Pakistan dropped by two places to come 152 out of 180, a drop of two places since 2023; the government and terrorism rank the situation as very serious, as the interference of the government and terrorism have been weakening independence of journalism. Local laws put more and more pressure (Khan, Khan and Ullah, 2022). In early 2024, Pakistan passed the Punjab Defamation Act that imposed harsh punishment namely hefty fines and special tribunals on the offenders of so-called fake news. These actions prompted protests across the country by unions of journalists that threatened an increased trend of self-censorship. Besides internet disconnection and social media censorship, at least seven other journalists were assassinated, hundreds others were arrested or assaulted, thus highlighting a diminishing space in which to conduct a critical report (Khan, Wazir& Khan, 2019). Whereas the national statistics demonstrate the general threat, sub-national settings, especially conflict-affected regions like Bannu and Lakki Marwat are poorly researched (Aleemi, 2015). The media personnel must research these districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as they are historical areas of insurgency, militancy, and tribal warfare, which simultaneously increase the level of risk. In spite of their strategic value, the reporters to such locales work with little or no organisational support as well as training. It has been anecdotally claimed that most of them face threats, access restrictions, or editorial pressures on a regular basis, but there is no official data to follow intimidation, arrest, or local censorship (Youseaf et al., 2023). Coverage of conflicts in war zones is one of the most dangerous and vital types of journalism. Rural districts of Bannu and Lakki Marwat of the unstable province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have always proved to be the centers of violence, political turmoil and militant activities. These regions have been ravaged by cross border terrorism, military operations and insurgent attacks in the past. Those journalists who work there face life-threatening risks, surveillance, censorship, and ineptitude in institutions. Despite the fact that this type of profession is inevitable to enhance

democratic values and promote knowledge in the society, they are under systemic threats which undermine the basic purpose of objective media. In some regions, militants, political extremists and government extremists block the spread of information and punish those journalists who report or write about corruption, insurgency, or human rights abuses. These forces, combined with each other, have a strong negative effect on journalists and their ability to defend the common good (Imran Ahmed, 2024). As a result of this, these journalists are increasingly marginalised as a result of economic instability, poor media infrastructure, and limited international coverage and visibility, making them vulnerable and silent in the overall media sphere. This paper attempts to capture such threats, evaluate the effects they have on press freedom, and suggest ways of improving the journalism situation in such war-torn nations.

1.2 Overview of Bannu and Lakki Marwat

The area of study falls in the Bannu Basin, Pakistan that can be reached through the Peshawar through a major National Highway (N-55) that goes to Karachi. Chonai-01 and Isakhel 01 wells are located in Districts Lakki Marwat. . and Mianwali and is nearly 250 km away as Peshawar. The on-going study is implemented in the Bannu Basin, north of Pakistan (Shaza Al Muzayen, 2025). The Trans Indus Ranges are tectonically active fold and thrust belts that encompasses three geological entities that include the Marwat Ranges, Surghar Ranges and the Bannu Basin- Khisor Ranges (Fig. 1) (Abir et al. 2017). The Bannu basin is not as well investigated, by the earlier researchers, in order to explore hydrocarbons. The existence of salt and evidence of the main detachment surface can be shown in recent dated public domain 2D seismic lines and wells sample data in Bannu Basin. It is likely that the dominant detachment of the entire region would be Salt Range Formation (Khan, Khan and Asif Ullah, 2022).

The structural and stratigraphical similarities between the Bannu Basin and Potwar Plateau allow concluding that the Bannu Basin is the continuation of Potwar Plateau to the west. Structural geology reveals that the formation of potential traps occurs in major part of the bannu basin anticlines (I Alam, 2015). Bannu Basin has predominantly Oligocene anticlines as its hydrocarbon traps which are mainly structural. Besides, the transpression zones and salt diapirism together with other oil seeps along the side of the basin increases the potential of hydrocarbon accumulation and is extremely prospective and likely to be exploited and explored in the future (Abiret *al.*, 2017).

1.3 Research Problem

There are numerous complex issues that confront conflict reporters and endanger their personal safety, erode media integrity and suppress freedom of the press. Journalism is a profession full of danger to reporters in the Pakistani districts of Bannu and Lakki Marwat, where, historically, insurgency, military conflict, and tribal animosity have reigned. These dangerous situations include physical insecurity instigated by military groups, expression limitation by political and security organisations, and mental torture due to the incessant contact with violence (Afife, Salem and Aziz, 2018). Lack of institutional assistance to journalists such as lack of training programmes on conflict reporting, protective equipment and lack of legal protection of journalist's further compound on the misfortunes they face in the practice of journalism.

Although the media is supposed to play a central role in promoting transparency and accountability, the practitioners in these areas work under the pressure of fear and self-censorship, and in most cases, they have to omit or alter content to avoid consequences. The intimidation of the political group, religious institutions and owners of media are sources of pressure on the content and limit the exercise of objective journalism. These dynamics unwittingly endow a democratically privileged status on the media, so that the spread of plausible information may pass on, which is ostensibly available to the rest of the population (Khan, 2013). Despite the inalienable importance of the conflict journalism, the literature is scarce in the empirical studies that challenge the barriers to the functioning of local journalists in Bannu and Lakki Marwat. Current literature mainly concentrates on reporters on a national or international level, which creates the sensation of a gap in the understanding of regional and grassroots realities. This research undertaking attempts to fill this gap by determining the major security threats, editorial influence, access limitations and training shortages that journalists working in such conflict zones encounter.

1.4 Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the challenges journalists face while reporting from Bannu and Lakki Marwat. The research aims at reviewing the challenges that hinder the professional role of journalists. The objectives of this research are as follows:

- RO1:** To determine the security issues that journalists who have to work in conflict zones encounter.
- RO2:** To investigate the restrictions to journalistic freedom of information in conflict areas.

- RO3:** To explore the difficulties journalists, encounter in accessing incident sites within conflict zones.
- RO 4:** To analyze the editorial guidelines imposed on journalists covering conflict zones.
- RO5:** To assess the adequacy of training journalists, receive for conflict reporting

1.5 Research question

The ultimate research question of the study is:

- RQ1:** Do journalists reporting from conflict zones receive sufficient security?
- RQ2:** What are the primary threats to journalists' freedom of information in conflict zones?
- RQ3:** What are the key obstacles preventing journalists from accessing incident sites in conflict zones?
- RQ4:** To what extent are journalists required to follow organizational editorial guidelines while reporting from conflict zones?
- RQ5:** Are journalists adequately trained to report from conflict zones?

1.6 Significance of Research

This research is significant because it fills a critical gap in the comprehension of the real-time challenges faced by journalists who operate in high-conflict regions, such as Bannu and Lakki Marwat. Although the general decline in press freedom in Pakistan is frequently the subject of national and international discussions, there are few empirical studies that offer a glimpse into the localised, lived experiences of media professionals in volatile tribal and insurgency-affected areas. This paper explains the systemic and structural barriers to objective reporting by putting emphasis on the merging of safety issues, editorial pressures, lack of information accessibility, and insufficient training.

In addition to the contribution to the scientific literature on conflict journalism through the theoretical framework of the Spiral of Silence, the results also educate policymakers, media houses, and human rights activists about the urgent need to change institutional frameworks. These reforms include the infrastructural support, the enhancement of legal protection and conflict sensitive training that is aimed at ensuring the security of journalists, as well as safeguarding the freedom of the press in the most problematic areas of Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The current article is rooted in the theoretical construct of Elisabeth Noelle -Neumann (1984) that argues that the spiral of silence forces human beings to conform to what they see the majority side to be due to a perceived risk of being alone or persecuted. Media organisations can also engage in self-censorship or intentional misrepresentation of stories when these changes are politically or militants. This framework can help develop a subtle insight into the effect of perceived threats on reporting behaviour and silence opposing voices in conflict zones like Bannu and Lakki Marwat (Ishaq et al., 2021). The theory is divided into three situational components: (1) Fear of Isolation-journalists expect to be punished at work by publishing content that does not conform to dominant narratives; (2) Perceived Majority Opinion-media professionals evaluate the available dominant discourse and self-censure in this situation; and (3) Self-Censorship-journalists can avoid punishment at work by omitting or underreporting controversial information. The forces of emotion and professionalism that shape the work of journalism can be find proper contextualisation in the Bannu and Lakki Marwat framework.

2.2 Empirical Review

Against the backdrop of the global affairs including the World Wars, the Cold War, and the Global War on Terror, conflict journalism has changed significantly in the last 100 years. Scholars such as Harrison, Maynard and Torsner, (2020) have observed the growing difficulty modern war areas provide for reporters. Press freedom is consistently threatened in Pakistan by militant violence, government persecution, and political intervention. Specifically, Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., (2023) contend that changes in media ownership, market-driven rivalry, and technology advancements have changed the essence of journalism, hence increasing its susceptibility to outside control. According to Pettigrew and Reber, (2010) reporters working in unstable conditions can find themselves caught between the competing agendas of rebel groups and state authorities. Particularly in areas of conflict, studies by Palmer, (2022) show how political pressures and fear of reprisals often lead to self-censorship. Particularly in KP and Balochistan, the Pakistan Press Foundation and the Committee to Protect Journalists have documented many assaults, detentions, and deaths involving reporters. With almost 70% of these cases remaining unprosecuted Harrison and Pukallus, (2021) 12 journalists were killed and more than 60 attacked or arrested just in 2023 alone across Pakistan. Macnamara, (2014) also contend that internal strife has seriously threatened media professionals, particularly

in nations where legislative protections for reporters are either weak or underused. UNESCO (2023) emphasises the seriousness of the situation by stating that more than half of the murdered journalists worldwide in 2023 were covering war areas.

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative survey of journalists registered with press clubs or working with different print and electronic media outlets in Bannu and Lakki Marwat was conducted. The survey exclusively focused on identifying the challenges faced by journalists while performing their professional responsibilities in Bannu and Lakki Marwat. This chapter explains the data collection process, the population of the study, the sampling technique and sample size, the implementation procedures adopted for the survey, the scale and survey instrument, the variables and their operationalisation, the data analysis and interpretation, and finally, the limitations of the study.

3.2 Population:

The journalists registered with press clubs in Bannu and Lakki Marwat and working with various international, national, and local print and electronic media organisations were the population for the current study. The Bannu Press Club and Lakki Marwat Press Club have a combined membership of journalists, including sub-editors, news editors, editors, bureau chiefs, reporters, photojournalists, and columnists working with media outlets of national and international repute. Data collection was successfully conducted from a total of 100 respondents, with 65 journalists from the Bannu Press Club and 35 journalists from the Lakki Marwat Press Club.

3.3 Sampling:

The sample for the study was selected from the population of permanent registered members of the **Bannu Press Club** and **Lakki Marwat Press Club**. Using the **purposive sampling** technique, also called judgmental sampling, the researcher specifically targeted reporters registered with these press clubs and working with various print and electronic media organizations in **Bannu and Lakki Marwat**. The usable sample size for this study is **100**.

3.4 Selection Criteria of Journalist:

The sample size that can be used in this study is 100.

- Bannu and Lakki Marwat district employed journalists.
- One year experience in journalism.
- Admission of journalists representing a wide range of media enterprises, including both print and broadcast media, online media, as well as Press Club members.
- News reporters with a range of beats such as politics, conflict, human rights, local concerns and others that are relevant.
- To be willing and have the informed consent to participate in the study.

3.5 Data Collection:

To conduct this study a questionnaire was sent to permanent members of both Bannu Press Club and the Lakki Marwat Press Club who works as reporters with different print and electronic media organizations to get information about the challenges they faced when they were reporting in Bannu and Lakki Marwat.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected was systematically analyzed in order to make it precise and reliable. In its analysis, the researcher used descriptive methods of statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, to make sense out of answers collected via a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The SPSS software was used to analyze the data which was given in tabular and graphical form to make it easy to understand. The analysis discussed the research questions of the study by looking at the security threats, access difficulties, information liberty, editorial requirements, and training loopholes faced by the journalists in the Bannu and Lakki Marwat.

The researcher used Google Forms to conduct the survey, however, he also went to the Bannu Press Club and Lakki Marwat Press Club to maximize the understanding and participation of the participants in the research. Both press clubs held a presentation of the aims, objectives and questionnaire itself. In order to achieve a targeted sample, the researcher was able to get a list of all the registered members of both press clubs and this had the details of their organisations, address and contact number. Only the permanent members reporting news regularly were chosen out of this list. The visits were made personally as the researcher met the members and indicated the objective of the research in detail and urged them to take part by filling out the online survey. This method assisted in enhancing the response rate, as well as clarity in the research objectives.

3.8 Operational Definitions

Term	Definition
Security Concerns	Refers to perceived threats, risks, or challenges faced by journalists, including physical violence, intimidation, harassment, censorship, and surveillance.
Journalists	Individuals involved in gathering, verifying, and disseminating news through print, broadcast, or digital media, including both employed and freelance journalists.
Conflict Zones	Conflict Zones Geographical regions that are marked by armed conflict, an instance of instability or unrest. The Bannu and Lakki Marwat. . districts are determined to be conflict zones in the given study due to the historical occurrence of violence and continuous military action in these areas.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study will be conducted according to strict ethical principles, with the focus made on the confidentiality of the participants and the informed consent obtained.

3.9 Variables in the Study

The current study took a quantitative approach to examine how security issues and pressure groups influence the objectivity of journalism and its decision-making. The use of a structured questionnaire served to distribute it to the journalists working in the Bannu and Lakki Marwat districts, thereby facilitating the gathering of empirical data.

Variables

1. Independent Variable: Security Challenges

Security issues included all the threats that journalists faced in the process of reporting in conflict areas. These included

- **Physical Threats:** Direct assaults, kidnapping or assault on reporters.
- **Digital Surveillance:** Tracking of the online behavior of journalists (such as email checking or social-media investigations by the state or other non-state actors).
- **Censorship and Lawlessness:** Government limitations on media, such as prohibition on coverage of certain issues and threats in the law on defamation or anti-terrorism.

Measurement:

The frequency (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always) and severity of security threats were measured using Likert scale questionnaire. These questions included individual experience of harassment, censorship, surveillance and physical threats. The respondents have responded whether they have changed or omitted information because of security risks.

2. Independent Variable:

The pressure groups were the political parties, militant groups, business organisations, and religious groups that tried to influence journalistic materials. Influence occurred through:

- **Coercion:** Open threats to journalists or their relations.
- **Bribes and incentives:** bribing to cover favourably.
- **Editorial Interference:** This is when the editors or the owners of the media are pressurizing the journalists to report in a biased way.

Measurement:

The extent to which journalists were put under pressure by various groups was measured using survey questions. The respondents reported on whether they were coerced, incentivized or editorial interfered and outlined the nature of the occurrence.

3. Dependent Variable:**Journalistic Objectivity:**

Journalistic objectivity is a concept that defines how the journalists can report true, objective and independent news under the influence of external pressures. Factors that influenced objectivity were:

Self-censorship: The inclination to keep confidential information or not to discuss the controversial issues.

Framing of the story and language: the manipulation of news tone or presentation so as to fit into mainstream discourses.

Rode to the Rescue: Reusing not investigating journalism in favour of government or business press releases

Measurement:

A self-reporting scale was used to determine the frequency of self-censorship amongst journalists. The respondents were asked to rate how much the external factors impacted their news framing and source selection.

4. Control Variables

In order to come up with accurate findings, the study has taken into account the control variables that can affect the decisions made by journalists:

- **Level of Experience:** More experienced journalists used superior risk-management arrangements.
- **Media Affiliation:** Journalists of foreign media outlets had varied pressure over those of local reporters.
- **Gender:** Female journalists also faced gender-related security threats.
- **Availability of Safety Training:** Threat resiliency was higher in the case of journalists who had formal experience in conflict-reporting training.

Results/Findings

4.1 Demographic Information

The demographic factors of the respondents present a background insight into the population of the study and they are journalists in Bannu and Lakki Marwat. The following characteristics are provided to have a context to the findings based on gender, age, and years of professional experience.

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	98	98%
Female	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents. The figures show that the number of male respondents is overwhelming (98 %), which can be explained by the significant gender gap that the profession of a journalist has in these regions of conflict. The demographic data of the respondents in terms of gender is table 1. The statistics confirm that the overwhelming majority of the respondents are men (98/100/percent) as there is a considerable gender gap in the journalism industry in these war-torn countries.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
20–30 years	30	30%
31–40 years	40	40%
41 years and above	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 demonstrates the age distribution of the respondents. Most journalists are middle-aged with the age group ranging 3140 years (40) as the greatest proportion (40) followed by younger journalists age 2030 years (30) and older journalists age 41 years and above (41) with equal proportions of 30 and 41 years respectively.

Table 3: Years of Professional Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	25	25%
6–10 years	47	47%
More than 10 years	28	28%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 defines the professional experience of the respondents. Nearly fifty percent of respondents (47%), have tenure of 6-10 years, which is a pointer of deep field experience. Furthermore, 28 percent of the respondents have a professional experience of more than a decade long and 25 percent of them have less than five years of experience which is a relatively new experience in the profession.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

In order to interpret the Mean scores, the following ranges were chosen as they would allow having a consistent framework according to which the responses would be understood:

Table 4.3.1: Mean Score Interpretation

Values	Interpretation	Range
1	Very Low extent	1.00-1.80
2	Low extent	1.81-2.60
3	Moderate extent	2.61-3.40
4	High extent	3.41-4.20
5	Very High extent	4.21-5.00

Source: Moidunny (2009).

4.21 Security-related challenges faced by journalists in conflict zones

S: No	Statement	M	SD
1.	Journalists have free access to information in conflict zones.	1.75	0.978
2.	State agencies/forces restrict journalists' access to conflict zones.	4.24	1.016
3.	Militant groups are the major barrier to journalists accessing zones.	4.07	1.297
4.	Militant groups in conflict zones threaten journalists.	4.18	1.167
Overall Facet Mean		3.56	1.1145

The findings in relation to Facet 1 Security demonstrate a significant number of challenges faced by reporters when operating in conflictive environments. The overall mean score of the participants equals 3.56, which indicates that there is a large level of concordance in the issues of security concerns. The data that show a decisive opposition (Mean = 1.75) to the premise that journalists are free to access the information available in such regions, thus, implies limited working environments. The respondents greatly conform (Mean = 4.24) to the fact that there are strict restrictions on journalistic access by government bodies and forces which emphasize the issue of state control as one of the significant obstacles. Moreover, armed groups are recognized as one of the biggest hindrances (Mean = 4.07) and a direct threat to the wellbeing of journalists (Mean = 4.18). The standard deviation of the facet (1.1145) illustrates the moderate fluctuation of the responses, but the general agreement indicates the complexity of the problems faced by journalists because of the interference by both the state and militant organisations. Such consequences highlight the poor conditions in which journalists work and thus recommend measures of protection and changes in policies to provide protection on their health and access to information in the warring regions.

4.2.2 Journalistic freedom of information in conflict zones

S: No	Statement	M	SD
1.	Journalists have free access to information in conflict zones.	1.75	0.978
2.	State agencies/forces restrict journalists' access to conflict zones.	4.24	1.016
3.	Political parties restrict journalists from publishing real facts and figures.	4.15	0.989
4.	Journalists receive adequate training to handle conflict zone reporting.	1.82	0.947
5.	The government restricts journalists from gathering information freely.	4.12	1.122
6.	Journalists are free to publish real facts and figures.	2.11	1.127
Overall Facet Mean		3.03	1.02983

The review of the Journalistic Freedom of Information in Conflict Zones aspect suggests that there are significant obstacles that keep the journalists at bay on their way to receiving and sharing information without limitation. Having a facet mean of 3.03 and standard deviation of 1.02983, respondents do agree that journalists work in a confined environment although the opinions are not even. The data reflect a serious resistance (Mean = 1.75) to the idea of free information access to journalists, which is a factor indicating

the challenges faced by journalists. In addition, it is also strongly accepted that the state agencies (Mean=4.24) and political parties (Mean=4.15) also strongly restrict the freedom of the press. Governments are also seen to further hinder the information accumulation of journalists (Mean=4.12), which worsens the predicament. Another issue that is crucial and lacks enough preparation is conflict zone reporting (Mean = 1.82) as it puts journalists in poorly prepared states to handle tricky cases. Moreover, the lack of agreement with the statement that journalists are free to publish facts (Mean =2.11) implies that the information environment is very restricted and censored. All in all, it can be concluded that the freedom of journalism in conflict zone is gravely undermined by political, governmental and institutional barriers, which leave the journalists with limited access, insufficient support and threat of significant harm to the journalists trying to carry out their activities successfully.

4.2.3 Journalists' ability to access incident sites in conflict zones

S: No	Statement	M	SD
1.	Local tribes/lords restrict journalists from gathering or publishing information freely.	3.92	1.116
2.	Militant groups are the major barrier to journalists accessing conflict zones.	4.07	1.297
3.	Their organization provides journalists with safety equipment (e.g., bullet-proof jackets, helmets, and first aid).	1.87	0.960
4.	Journalists have full access to conflict zones.	2.11	1.014
5.	Religious groups in conflict zones threaten journalists.	4.04	1.072
6.	State forces/agencies restrict journalists from gathering information.	4.14	1.005
Overall Facet Mean		3.35	1.007

Findings related to Facet 3-Access show that there are significant barriers that journalists face when attempting to obtain information and report on the conflict-ridden regions. Having a facet mean of 3.35, the respondents show either moderate or a strong view that information was restricted in such regions. The standard deviation of 1.077 implies a medium degree of distribution of responses. The data demonstrates strong agreement (Mean=4.07) that militant organisations are a significant impediment to journalists, but religious groups (Mean = 4.04) and government forces/agencies (Mean = 4.14) are also significant impediments. Furthermore, it is seen that local tribes and leaders are considered serious impediments (Mean = 3.92) to free collection and sharing of information freely. On the other hand, respondents greatly differ with (Mean=1.87)

agreement that their employers do not have any adequate protective equipment, including bulletproof vests and helmets, to allow them to safely enter into war zones. The conflict (Mean = 2.11) with the idea that journalists can freely access the conflict areas is another indication of the limited nature of their working environment. These consequences draw attention to the complexity of the situation facing journalists because of restrictions which are imposed by various groups such as militant factions, religious movements, local governments and poor organisational support. This is the case, which requires even stronger efforts to increase the access of journalists to the information and their security in the conflict-ridden areas.

4.2.4 Editorial guidelines provided to journalists for reporting from conflict zones

S: No	Statement	M	SD
1.	Journalists ignore stereotypes while reporting from conflict zones.	3.82	1.149
2.	Political parties restrict journalists from publishing real facts and figures.	4.15	0.989
3.	Editorial policies prevent journalists from publishing real facts and figures.	4.05	0.978
4.	Journalists ignore their worldviews while reporting facts from conflict zones.	3.89	1.136
5.	Political parties in conflict zones threaten journalists.	4.06	1.118
Overall Facet Mean		3.99	1.074

The findings indicate that journalists are faced with significant limitations of covering war-torn regions not only by external forces but also by internal editorial policies. The facet mean of 3.99 shows that there is a high amount of consensus between the participants that these guidelines are limiting but the standard deviation of 1.074 shows that there is a moderate difference in opinions. Subjects are also in full agreement (Mean = 4.15) with the fact that political parties do not allow journalists to report accurate facts and figures and there is also a similar sentiment (Mean = 4.05) regarding the influence of editorial policies in censoring the release of authentic information. Besides, the political parties in war zones have been a major threat as indicated by the high agreement (Mean = 4.06) among the participants. Even though there is a certain tendency of journalists to ignore stereotypes (Mean=3.82) and personal views (Mean=3.89) when reporting, this fact creates a necessity of unbiased and objective reporting principles. Overall, it can be concluded that the results presented indicate that journalists are facing a twofold task of not only having to balance the burden of political and editorial limitations but

also endeavour to maintain professional integrity in their statements. This explains why the editorial rules need to be restructured and journalism practices must be devoid of unnecessary political interference to encourage proper and objective reporting in trouble-prone areas.

4.2.4 Training received by journalists for covering conflicts

S: No	Statement	Me	SD
1.	Journalists receive adequate training to handle conflict zone reporting.	1.82	0.947
2.	Journalists report facts from conflict zones honestly.	2.62	1.237
3.	Local communities support journalists in conflict zones.	2.02	0.853
4.	Political parties in conflict zones threaten journalists.	4.06	1.118
Overall Facet Mean		2.63	1.039

Facet 5 Training scores show a lot of deficiency in the training and support provided to journalists working in conflict zones. The facet mean 2.63 with a moderate response is an indication that there is an unrest with the available training and resources. The standard deviation of 1.039 indicates a moderate level of views by the respondents who participated in the survey. The respondents were in great disagreement (Mean:1.82) that journalists are adequately trained to cover the conflict zone areas and cite a high level of unpreparedness. It was also found that there was disagreement (Mean = 2.02) on the support of the local communities which denotes that there was a deficiency of collaborative networks that could improve the reporting situations. Although the degree of agreement was at least somewhat (Mean=2.62) when it came to honesty in reporting, it shows that it is possible to do more to maintain the journalistic integrity. In addition, the high consensus (Mean = 4.06) that political parties are a threat to journalists in conflict zones highlights the dangers and external forces that they face, which further undermines their capacity to deliver the news adequately. Overall, the findings highlight that there should be urgent specialised training programmes and support systems that would provide the journalists with skills, knowledge, and resources required to engage in conflict zone reporting. These gaps need to be addressed in order to encourage safer and more effective reporting practices.

Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the problems of journalists in two war-torn regions in Pakistan, Bannu and Lakki Marwat. The findings ratify that journalists work in very challenging conditions, such as threats, limited access to materials, editorial interference and insufficient training in the profession (Herrero-Gutiérrez et al., 2017). The effects of these forces are massive self-censorship, which cripples press freedom and the access of citizens to credible information. The spiral of quiet theory is a good explanation of how fear and social isolation have a role in creating journalistic silence and acquiescence in hostile settings.

5.2 Recommendation

- Safety equipment, life insurance and safety measures should be offered to the journalists who work in this dangerous area.
 - Conduct regular conflict sensitive reporting, trauma coverage, and digital security training.
 - The media houses must put internal controls in place to avoid being influenced by political or commercial players in reporting.
- Journalism organisations ought to provide psychological support to counter trauma and burning among reporters.
- Implement legal actions against violence against journalists and their persecution.

5.3 Implications for Research

The present research also adds to the paucity of empirical research in the area of regional conflict journalism in Pakistan, particularly in the least covered districts of Bannu and Lakki Marwat. The findings highlight how the priority of the day is the creation of provincial and national policy setting in media that would guarantee safety, autonomy, and legal security of the journalists working in conflict-affected regions. The study also highlights why media houses are required to invest in war preparedness and journalistic integrity as well as the psychological capability of frontline journalists.

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