

State of Investigative Journalism in Pakistan



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State of Investigative Journalism in Pakistan



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Contents

Executive summary	7
Introduction	9
Investigative Journalism: A History	11
Characteristics of Investigative Journalism	12
Types of Journalism	14
Challenges in Investigative Journalism	19
Investigative Journalism across the world	20
Responses of Subject Specialists	23
1. Concept of Investigative Journalism	30
2. The Scoop	33
3. Motivation for a Beat Reporter to Acquire Information	37
4. Pressure on Journalists Affecting Output	42
5. Strengthening of Democracy through Responsible Reporting	45
Conclusion	50
Annexure I	53

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Executive Summary

In many ways today's media landscape is more vibrant than ever, offering faster and cheaper distribution networks, fewer barriers to entry , and more ways to access and consume information. This should be of great benefit to investigative journalists, as Investigative Journalism thrives on the ability to access information and also the ability to freely disseminate it. The purpose of investigative journalism is to create an atmosphere of accountability by holding powerful interests liable for the benefit of the general public. In order to serve the public interest investigative journalism should highlight systematic corruption and abuse of power. The basic objective of this report is to provide an overview on what is investigative journalism and the state of investigative journalism in Pakistan.

This report summarises the history of investigative journalism in Pakistan and also talks about the methodology followed by Pakistani investigative journalists and the challenges the face as they go about their work in the current socio-political climate. Individualland Pakistan has taken the initiative to assess the current status of investigative reporting in Pakistan, through a multifaceted approach, in the four month long project "Mapping Investigative Journalism in Pakistan". The organization has carried out this analysis through numerous field visits, to journalists and news groups in various parts of the country. The core team of the organization has also conducted interviews with senior journalists and subject specialists. Focus group discussions (FGD) have also been carried out with journalists and media personnel on the subject, drawn from across the country. A directory is also being developed of investigative journalists, working throughout Pakistan.

Interviews were conducted with media subject specialists and their perspective was taken on the current state of investigative journalism in Pakistan and the challenges faced by the media. A total of seventy four journalists from Pakistan and overseas were interviewed, where the focus revolved around five main aspects:

- Conceptual understanding of investigative journalism
- Misconceptions regarding scoop journalism

- Inspiration for a reporter to conduct a thorough investigation
- The influences affecting the outcomes
- The role of journalism in strengthening the democratic process

The subject specialists were of the view that investigative journalism fulfills the basic objectives of journalism in Pakistan. It also highlights truth and assists in mobilizing public opinion, while making extra efforts to confirm that the information provided is accurate and the views of each stakeholder have been accommodated. The subject specialists came to the conclusion that responsible reporting and journalism contribute to the strengthening of democratic institutions, as the information is brought to public attention and any ambiguity in state machinery is highlighted. This will ensure transparency as citizens will be able to hold the authorities accountable for any wrongdoings.

However, it was stated that journalists in Pakistan currently lack a proper understanding of the tenets and methodologies of investigative journalism and are unaware of the norms followed internationally while working on an investigative story. The factors highlighted by the subject specialists were absence of proper training, internal and external pressures and lack of motivation.

Introduction

Various scholars, and subject specialists have defined investigative journalism in different ways. Paul Williams defines Investigative Journalism as:

"Investigative journalism is an intellectual process. It is a business of gathering and sorting ideas and facts, building patterns, analyzing options and making decisions based on logic rather than emotion."¹

This definition emphasizes the protracted fact-gathering process, which may take days, weeks, and sometimes months of tedious work. Thus, investigative journalism is a decisive and methodical way of reporting. Investigative journalism is committed to bringing forth information that someone wants to keep hidden from the public.

Silvio Waisbord, states that

"investigative journalism used to be associated with lone reporters working on their own with little, if any support from their news organizations. Recent examples attest that teamwork is fundamental. Differing kinds of expertise are needed to produce well-documented and comprehensive stories. Reporters, editors, legal specialists, statistical analysts, librarians, and news researchers are needed to collaborate on investigations. Knowledge of public information access laws is crucial to find what information is potentially available under "freedom of information" laws, and what legal problems might arise when damaging information is published."²

In addition to above, Waisbord also describes the importance of investigative Journalism for democracy in the following words:

"Investigative journalism matters because of its many contributions to democratic governance. Its role can be understood in keeping with the Fourth Estate

¹ Paul N. Williams, 1978. *Investigative Reporting and Editing*. P. 12.

² Waisbord, Silvio. *Why Democracy needs investigative journalism*. In: Global issues. US Department of State. Volume 6, Number 1, April 2001.

model of the press. According to this model, the press should make government accountable by publishing information about matters of public interest even if such information reveals abuses or crimes perpetrated by those in authority. From this perspective, investigative journalism is one of the most important contributions that the press makes to democracy. It is linked to the logic of checks and balances in democratic systems. It provides a valuable mechanism for monitoring the performance of democratic institutions as they are most broadly defined to include governmental bodies, civic organizations and publicly held corporations.”³

Zahid Abdullah and Reshma Mitra define the linkage between Investigative Journalism and Right to Information in the following words “When we take into consideration the fact that most people do not exercise their right to the freedom of information in a direct and personal way, the significance of investigative reporting becomes all more important. People are dependent on mass media: newspapers, radio, television and, increasingly, the internet, in order to have access to information. Therefore, it is the responsibility of journalists to empower citizens by exercising the right to information on their behalf, in matters pertaining to public interest, through investigative reporting.”⁴

Right to Information has been included in the Constitution as Article 19-A after the 18th Amendment in 2011. However, RTI petitions are yet not common, because of the lack of awareness, not only amongst public but also within the journalistic fraternity. Similarly, Investigative Journalism, which needs a lot of work and dedication by reporters and journalists, is also in its nascent phase in Pakistan.

³ Waisbord, Silvio. *Why Democracy needs investigative journalism*. In: Global issues. US Department of State. Volume 6, Number 1, April 2001.

⁴ Abdullah, Zahid., Reshma, Mitra. Investigative Journalism and Right to Information. In: The News. August 29, 2007. Accessed from: http://www.human-rightsinitiative.org/programs/ai/rti/international/laws_papers/pakistan/investigative_journalism_&_rti.pdf Date of Access: October 24, 2011.

Investigative Journalism: A History

Investigative Journalism has proved to be a double-edged sword as it unlocks news stories that people need to hear, while at the same time proving to be highly intrusive in innocent people's lives. Where there is risk involved that is taken by the journalist in exposing such elements, it also shows the lengths that journalist or organization will go to, to expose negative elements and practices within the society. However, if not carried out with extreme delicacy and sensitivity, with great regard for authenticity, such exposure can and does have repercussions on the innocent. We have to ensure that such work exposes the corrupt, instead of creating more victims within society.

Investigating suspicious actions on the part of political figures, business people or celebrities has produced stories that have captured the imagination of the common man and woman. Investigative Journalism involves reporters researching topics such as crime or political corruption in society. The results such exposes often lead to politicians' resignations, termination of employment, and damaged reputations for the person or people the story centres around.⁵

In the late 19th century and the 20th centuries, investigative journalists, who were instrumental in pushing for societal reform, were initially known as muckrakers. They exposed ills such as child labour and sometimes wrote in a sensationalist manner known as Yellow Journalism.

Malik Ayub Sumbal writing for European Journalism Centre, defined Yellow Journalism as the tabloidisation of journalism – the adoption of reporting practices focusing more on sensationalism than on research. In Pakistan, yellow journalism refers mostly to the exploitation and manipulation of issues of national interest to serve the vested interests of corrupt journalists.⁶

⁵ Campbell, JC. 2008. A brief History of investigative Journalism, July 4, 2011, <http://www.helium.com/items/1056059-a-brief-history-of-investigative-journalism>.

⁶ Malik Ayub Sumbal. The Curse of Yellow Journalism in Pakistan. European Journalism Centre. March 25, 2011. Accessed from: http://www.ejc.net/magazine/article/the_curse_of_yellow_journalism_in_pakistan/. Date of Access: December 8, 2011.

Early-nineteenth-century muckraking was infrequent and had little impact. By the beginning of the twentieth century, muckraking became ubiquitous and widespread. Ironically, this proliferation of investigative reporting was made possible by the very industrialised capitalism that the muckrakers often deplored the evils of. One of the well known muckrakers of this time was reporter turned novelist Upton Sinclair. In 1906, Sinclair published *The Jungle*, a book about the corruption of the meat packing industry. The working conditions were unbearable and exploited women and children. He believed that the mainstream political parties offered little means for progressive change.⁷

By the 1960s, however, a new muckraking era was discernible as a younger generation of journalists challenged isolation, the Vietnam War, political corruption and corporate world. The lawful climate for aggressive journalism improved with the enactment of the Freedom of Information. These new muckrakers resembled their forerunners of the early 1900s; educated middle-class urban professionals who believed in the importance of truth as a check on wrongdoing.⁸

CHARACTERISTICS OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative Journalism goes beyond dedicated in-depth research work with the ultimate aim of reporting rigorously in a manner that comprehensively explains and interprets events in a wider context.

Investigative Journalism calls for special kinds of reporters, who are willing to take risks with their lives. It also puts them under immense pressure to deliver credibly. Their work should be backed by detailed, in-depth research on the subject. An investigative journalist's work should have an impact on society.

⁷ Alison Myres, A brief history about Investigative journalism, July 5, 2011, <http://www.helium.com/items/1054042-a-brief-history-of-investigative-journalism>.

⁸ Feldstein, Mark. 2006. A Muckraking Model, 2-8. July 2, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~smpa/faculty/documents/Harvard.pdf>

These days, it is alarming to note that national journalists, without relevant training, think that a ‘scoop’ is investigative journalism. A ‘scoop’ will have an impact on an individual. However, issues that are of direct interest to the general public at large and that have the tendency to leave an impact on society are what investigative journalism is all about. This is where an investigative journalist differs from other journalists.

Some of the main characteristics of an investigative story are as listed below:

- Original reporting
- In-depth documentation of data.
- Multiple, diverse reliable sources
- Establishes motives and consequences
- Exposes wrongdoing
- Shows verification
- Is in the public interest.

Investigative journalism is more demanding than routine reporting. It is a craft that requires journalists with skills (as mentioned above), as well as the capacity to make sound, balanced political and social judgments.

An investigation needs serious commitment from both journalists and news organizations. An investigative story requires investment of time and resources. It also involves risk. Investigative journalists put their reputations on the line; news organizations risk their credibility and possibly damage their bottom line.⁹

Investigative Journalism uncovers new information through original research that would not have come to the public attention but for the journalist's initiative. Investigative reporting concerns those matters that are important to the public and not easily discovered. Investigative journalism contributes to the democratic system by fostering an informed citizenry. It is important that all in-

⁹ Forbes, Derek. 2005. A watchdog's guide to investigative reporting, 5-7. June 27, 2011. http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_8940-544-1-30.pdf

vestigative stories must be interesting to be newsworthy. An interesting story will have the greatest impact on people's daily lives and will explain details and facts that are of reader's interest. Information is an imperative resource for empowering a vigilant public that ultimately holds government accountable through voting and participation. With the ascent of media-centered politics in contemporary democracies, the media have eclipsed other social institutions as the main source of information about issues and processes that affect citizens' lives.¹⁰

TYPES OF JOURNALISM

The enthusiasm in an investigative journalist that compels him/her to take risks and expose the reality or to depict corrupt aspects of society is what sets them apart from other journalists, who can be termed as conventional journalists.

Ever since the evolution of media, particularly internet and social media, many new concepts have been introduced in journalism. For instance, citizen journalism. "Citizen Journalism" is the concept that anyone, anywhere, can be a reporter or journalist. The primary aim behind citizen journalism is that an ordinary person, who is not necessarily a journalist, can assume the role of a reporter by sharing his/her experience through a picture, a video or voice message or an article that is of interest to the public. This is similar to blogging because anyone can post a blog on the internet, which contains information that is of interest to the public. Citizen journalism is based on interaction with the public, so it can also be called as "interactive journalism."¹¹

¹⁰ Waisbord, silvio. 2001. Why democracy needs investigative Journalism. Oct 11, 2011. <http://www.4uth.gov.ua/usa/english/media/ijge0401/gj03.htm>

¹¹ Mollasch, Kpaul. 2006. Four types of citizen journalism, June 29, 2011, http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/brands/2006/01/four_types_of_c.html

The most common type of journalism is traditional journalism, where news journalists cover the news and other facts related to it. How this message is conveyed by the medium to the consumer is important. It should be clear, concise and accurate.

Investigative Journalism involves exposing of hidden facts by someone in power, or accidentally hidden behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding to the general public. It requires using both secret and open sources and documents.¹²

Traditional news reporting depends largely and sometimes entirely on materials provided by others (such as police, governments, companies, etc.); it is fundamentally reactive, if not passive. However investigative journalism depends upon material gathered or generated through reporter's own initiative.¹³

Investigative journalism and traditional journalism, both focus on same elements of inquiry, who, what, where, when and why. However in Investigative journalism the fifth element that is 'Why' becomes the 'How'.

The 'who' in investigative journalism may not necessarily be just a name and title, rather it could be a personality with character, traits and style. The 'when' is not the present of the news it is a historical continuum, a narrative; "what" is not merely an event, but a phenomenon with causes and consequences; "where" is not just an address, it is a setting, in which certain things become more or less possible. These elements provide investigative journalism an extra edge over other forms of journalism particularly conventional journalism. A journalist may pursue both forms in his/her career, but both may require profoundly different skills, work habits, processes and goals.

¹² Mark Lee Hunter, Nils Hanson, Rana Sabbagh, Luuk Sengers, Drew Sullivan and Pia Thordsen. Story-Based Inquiry: A manual for investigative journalists, October 27, 2011, http://markleehunter.free.fr/documents/SBI_english.pdf

¹³ Ibid

These differences are highlighted in a table given below ;¹⁴

Conventional Journalism	Investigative Journalism
Research	
Information is gathered and reported at a fixed rhythm (daily, weekly, monthly).	Information cannot be published until its coherence and completeness are assured.
Research is completed swiftly. No further research is done once a story is completed.	Research continues until the story is confirmed, and may continue after it is published.
The story is based on the necessary minimum information and can be very short.	The story is based on the obtainable maximum of information, and can be very long.
The declarations of sources can substitute for documentation.	The reportage requires documentation to support or deny the declarations of sources.
Source Relations	
The good faith of sources is presumed, often without verification.	The good faith of sources cannot be presumed; any source may provide false information; no information may be used without verification.
Official sources offer information to the reporter freely, to promote themselves and their goals.	Official information is hidden from the reporter, because its revelation may compromise the interests of authorities or institution
The reporter must accept the official version of a story, though he or she may contrast it to commentaries and statements from other source.	The reporter may explicitly challenge or deny the official version of a story, based on information from independent sources. The reporter disposes of more information than any one of his sources taken individually, and of more information than most of them taken together.

¹⁴ Ibid

Conventional Journalism	Investigative Journalism
The reporter disposes of less information than most or all of his sources. Sources are nearly always identified	The reporter disposes of more information than any one of his sources taken individually, and of more information than most of them taken together.
Sources are nearly always identified	Sources often cannot be identified for the sake of their security.
Outcomes	
Reportage is seen as a reflection of the world, which is accepted as it is. The reporter does not hope for results beyond informing the public	The reporter refuses to accept the world as it is. The story is aimed at penetrating or exposing a given situation, in order to reform it, denounce it or, in certain cases, promote an example of a better way.
The reportage does not require a personal engagement from the reporter	Without a personal engagement from the reporter, the story will never be completed
The reporter seeks to be objective, without bias or judgment towards any of the parties in the story.	The reporter seeks to be fair and scrupulous toward the facts of the story, and on that basis may designate its victims, heroes and wrongdoers. The reporter may also offer a judgment or verdict on the story.
The dramatic structure of the reportage is not of great importance. The story does not have an end, because the news is continuous.	The dramatic structure of the story is essential to its impact, and leads to a conclusion that is offered by the reporter or a source.
Errors may be committed by the reporter, but they are inevitable and usually without importance	Errors expose the reporter to formal and informal sanctions, and can destroy the credibility of the reporter and the media

Investigative Journalism should not be confused with scoop journalism – scoops are gained by leaking of documents usually by those in political power. It is also known as ‘story planting’, and the type of journalists who fall for it are not known as investigators but as ‘scoop journalists’. Scoops have impact only on individual concerns and are merely a source of gossip for people.¹⁵

Investigative Journalism differs from other forms of journalism because it can cover issues not covered in the mainstream press. Investigative Journalism is also inherently expensive due to the need for extensive research, whereas ordinary news stories are fairly easy to get hold of and might not require much investment of time or money. Consequently it could be said that Investigative Journalism not only differs from other forms of journalism in terms of content but also in the way that journalists go about getting the stories and the methods involved. An investigative journalist will choose stories that transcend the facts of a particular case and illustrate a broader trend that prevails within a system. They do more than disagree with how society runs; they point out that it is failing by its own standards. In this way, the investigative journalist calls on public officials and lawmakers, as well as the public itself.¹⁶ Unlike other forms of journalism, Investigative Journalism exposes something as it really is, rather than just a news headline or short story. Most investigative pieces seek to explore a matter of public attention/interest rather than just for the sake of a story. The journalists themselves may even face threats or pressure for their work, which would be less likely to happen to a traditional news journalist. However, this assumption can vary from one place to another. For instance, in Pakistan, a traditional journalist also comes under pressure because of a number of reasons e.g. working conditions, pressure of media owners, politics and terrorists etc.¹⁷

¹⁵ Basson, Adriaan & Dennen, Tom. 2010. Investigative Journalism Manuals, 9-11. http://fairreporters.org/portal/fairnew/docs/IJ_Manuals/Chapter_2.pdf

¹⁶ Ettema,J and Glasser, T.L (1998). Custodians of conscience: Investigative journalism and public virtue. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁷ Rose. 2011. What makes investigative journalism different from other forms of journalism? June 26, 2011.

<http://rosejournalist.wordpress.com/2011/02/05/what-makes-investigative-journalism-different-from-other-forms-of-journalism/>

CHALLENGES IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Investigative journalists are a rare breed facing a lot of problems. All over the world, Investigative Journalism is a dicey venture, especially in most Asian and African countries (which will be discussed later in the chapter) where the essential safety nets for journalists are practically nonexistent. The challenges of investigative journalism are many and varied, ranging from inadequate material resources for sustained research or investigation, hostile political environment, absence of legal frameworks that induce the filing of public documents and authorize public access to such documents, poor communications infrastructure, inadequate journalistic skills and poor ethical standards.

Though investigative journalism has gained recognition all over the world, the importance of emphasizing standards and quality has never been greater. Even among well known investigative journalists in developing and democratising countries, stories are often produced with few sources and little information to readers and viewers, as to where information is coming from and what are the sources used.

A better platform for Investigative Journalism is print media rather than electronic medium. It is because investigative reports can easily be published, without deleting necessary details, which provides a proper proof and evidence in support of its report. Whereas, in electronic media, the challenge that an investigative journalist faces is the time constraint and deletion of tedious, yet vital information and details, which helps substantiate its findings. This again poses a challenge for investigative journalism, as the general public may not be willing to pay the costs of printed newspaper, magazines or journals from their own pockets.

One way to assess the performance of investigative journalism is the existence and quality of information products that reveal the verifiability of facts. Collecting data requires patience, skill and responsibility. The need for in-depth reports calls for superior resources and time. This poses enormous challenges, because of lean resources; not many media organizations can afford what it takes to undertake the level of research required for Investigative Journalism.

Poor communications infrastructure and limited access to official archives and records is also an issue. This is even more so in the rural areas. There are many challenges for journalists in the current media environment. Journalists face a number of threats and risks in their day-to-day work. News about journalists being arrested, tortured or even killed due to investigative reporting is not very uncommon. Pakistan became the deadliest country for journalists in 2010. According to a yearly report by South Asia Media Commission, 13 journalists lost their lives in Pakistan.¹⁸

On one hand, issues such as political corruption, environmental degradation, failures in government, violence against minorities and social exclusion offer real risk of death to the journalists engaged in covering them, whereas, on the other hand, investigating these issues is fundamental for spreading awareness amongst the public. Investigative journalism is crucial to a more transparent society.¹⁹

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ACROSS THE WORLD

Over the period of time Investigative Journalism has assumed a very important place among different societies across the world. Throughout the world, regardless of whether the country in question is a developed or an underdeveloped society, Investigative Journalism has been able to highlight important issues affecting society for better or for worse. The journalists who are responsible for the unveiling of such scandals have helped set a standard for

¹⁸ 13 journalists killed in Pakistan in 2010: report. In: The News. December 29, 2010. Accessed online from:

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/TodaysPrintDetail.aspx?ID=22742&Cat=5> Date of Access: December 8, 2011.

¹⁹ Amaechi, Ikechukwu. 2010. Walking through a minefield at Midnight. July 11, 2011. <http://ikechukwu.wordpress.com/2010/05/24/challenges-of-doing-investigative-reporting-in-africa-%E2%80%98walking-through-a-minefield-at-midnight%E2%80%99/>

tough reporting to serve the interests of the public, by taking on corrupt politicians, organized crime, consumer fraud and corporate abuse.²⁰

This tradition of investigation in journalism has spread worldwide. But after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the practice of investigative journalism drastically grew in areas other than Europe and United States.²¹

Till 1989 only three non-profit organizations were working in the field of Investigative Journalism. This has increased to forty in recent years, with vibrant centers in such diverse places as Romania, the Philippines, Jordan, and South Africa.²²

Since the start of the new millennium, the field of Investigative Journalism has attracted some 2,000 journalists from more than fifty countries. Some of the major contributions done by these journalists are as follows:

1. In 1998, a Fellow of Stanford University, Chinese journalist Hu Shuli co-founded *Caijing*, a privately backed business biweekly. Through investigative reporting on China's financial markets, the Beijing-based magazine has become required reading among China's elite, helping spark crackdowns on stock manipulators, market reforms, and the breaking of taboos for reporting on natural disasters, epidemics, and financial crime.
2. In 2000, a team from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism ran an eight-month investigation into the hidden assets of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, detailing how the populist Estrada had amassed luxury homes, lavished money on mistresses, and held se-

²⁰ Global investigative journalism: strategies for support. December 5, 2007: http://www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Investigative_Journalism_Report.pdf accessed on November 1, 2011

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

cret stakes in a dozen companies. The series goaded the Philippine media into action, helped form key charges in an impeachment trial, and ultimately led to Estrada's downfall just months later.

3. In 2003, the Georgian TV channel Rustavi-2 was heralded as the voice of that nation's peaceful "Rose Revolution," helping overturn a rigged election and force the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze. Rustavi-2's staff, trained by Western journalists, had built much of their credibility through investigative reporting on government corruption and organised crime.
4. In 2006, a team investigation by reporters with three Balkan investigative reporting centers revealed how corrupt deals over electricity pushed power rates sky-high and contributed to massive outages in the region. The series, "Power Brokers," earned the first Global Shining Light Award, given for international investigative reporting under threat.²³

These journalists are playing a pivotal role in paving the way for an independent, watchdog news media. In major parts of the developing as well as the democratising world, such contributions are fostering accountability and transparency, fighting corruption, exposing organised criminal activity, strengthening civil society, instigating reforms and calling for justice.

"In countries where corruption and other abuse of power by public office holders are still rampant, investigative reporting has never been more important," noted a UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) call for training in 2006.²⁴

²³ Global investigative journalism: strategies for support. December 5, 2007: http://www.ned.org/cima/CIMA-Investigative_Journalism_Report.pdf accessed on November 1, 2011

²⁴ UNESCO Jakarta Office, "Encourage Journalists to Increase Numbers of Their Investigative Reporting," June 14, 2006, http://www.unesco.or.id/activities/comm/med_dev/135.php

In 2001, in an innovative project, the *African Peer Review*, some 25 African nations were involved in ‘peer review’ and self criticism. The first reports on countries like Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, indicated that there was a need for more investigative reporting in their country to fight corruption and foster accountability.²⁵

RESPONSES OF SUBJECT SPECIALISTS

Individual and Pakistan has taken the initiative to assess the current status of investigative reporting in Pakistan, through a multifaceted approach, in a four month long project “Mapping Investigative Journalism in Pakistan”. For this purpose the organisation has conducted interviews and arranged focus group discussions of print and electronic media journalists. Focus group discussions provided the opportunity to acquire information and consolidate further through the feedback of the participants, while interviews with the subject specialists shed light on the diverse and perhaps previously unexplored aspects of the theme. These interactions promoted better understanding of the concept of Investigative Journalism and the state of the profession in Pakistan.

Interviews were conducted with media subject specialists and the perspective of Pakistani journalists was collected from local and global platforms. A total of seventy-four journalists from Pakistan and overseas were interviewed. The details of the questions put forward to the media subject specialists are present in Annexure I.

In addition a total of five focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with journalists from print and electronic media in the cities of Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad. The participants in these FGDs were asked

²⁵ Global Development Learning Network, “Investigative Journalism Course Strengthens the Media in Latin America,” The World Bank Group, August 15, 2001, <http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/External/lac/lac.nsf/GDLN/12CD5FA7BB03C4885256AA300757211?OpenDocument>

about their perceptions and opinions on Investigative Journalism. The answers then led to further discussion and brainstorming. The questions put forth during the interviews and FGDs, focused on assessing the current state of Investigative Journalism in Pakistan. The FGDs and interviews assisted in conducting a need based analysis for the creation of awareness and sensitisation within the journalistic community on investigative reporting.

In this report, the major findings that have been extracted from the interviews of media subject specialists have been divided into five categories. The categories are as following:

1. Conceptual Understanding of Investigative Journalism
2. Investigative Journalism and Scoop, Diverging or Converging
3. Motivation for a Beat Reporter to Acquire Information
4. Pressure on Journalists Affecting Outputs
5. Strengthening of Democracy through Responsible Reporting

We will now discuss the response of each category individually, in which the responses of the media subject specialists have been accommodated.





State of Investigative Journalism in Pakistan









1. Concept of Investigative Journalism

The first question that was asked of the subject specialists was related to their personal understanding of Investigative Journalism. In the responses generated, subject specialists have similar opinions and consensus on many aspects of Investigative Journalism.

The subject specialists were of the opinion that Investigative Journalism is basically the unearthing of facts. The very first attribute of this form of journalism is the researching of facts by oneself. The facts and reality must be excavated, so that it uncovers details. The sources must also be reliable. An investigative story can only be compiled when there is thorough research done on the subject. An important point which was identified by subject specialists was that investigative stories can never be based upon accusations and statements. If this is done then it cannot be categorized as Investigative Journalism.

Subject specialists on numerous occasions also put forth the notion that Investigative Journalism can also be called as 'original journalism'. They concurred that as investigative reporting is in the public interest and can have an impact on society, it fulfills the basic objectives of journalism, which is to highlight the truth and assist citizens in generating educated opinions. It is not necessary that a story challenges or maligns a certain quarter, but an investigative report can underscore any issues facing society, while remaining neutral in its content. Investigative Journalism depends on in-depth details acquiring data and information, tapping multiple and reliable sources and, most importantly, verifying each and every detail before reporting, as it may have a profound impact on the public. Subject specialists were also aware of the fact that a majority of journalists in Pakistan are unaware of the norms for investigative journalism and due to various internal and external pressures, presented stories that were not wholly objective, consequently distorting facts and figures.

We will now discuss further the responses of subject specialists regarding the definition and basic concept of Investigative Journalism in Pakistan.

One of the subject specialists, Rana Jawad²⁶ stated what he thought was the real definition of Investigative Journalism, viz., "It is a story or report that is brought into public notice after digging out facts and figures." He emphasized that facts and not just unauthenticated statements were vital for an investigative story. The subject specialists also added that it was vital to understand that this sort of journalism did not base stories on a single source. It is crucial for a journalist to gain information from all stakeholders before compiling an investigative story.

The basic understanding of Investigative Journalism for Murtaza Ali Shah²⁷ was very similar to other subject specialists. He stated that, "For me it is about digging deep to uncover the details of a story which is either just hidden from the public eye or hidden as part of a scheme by the relevant parties to keep the readers and the public ill-informed." His response made it clear that it was the duty of the journalist to analyse and research hidden facts. After that one must collect evidence and bring it to the public eye as an investigative story. The respondent clarified that truth with evidence must be an integral part of Investigative Journalism, even if it displeased the people.

One of the subject specialists Nausheen Yousaf²⁸ explained that the investigative journalist is just like an intelligence official. The duty of this official is to dig deep into facts that are hidden from the public eye. These hidden facts must be scrutinized deeply.

One of the subject specialists, Khawar Ghumman²⁹ stated, "For me Investigative Journalism can also be called original journalism, where a media person regardless of his/her personal biases and political leanings strives to report facts." The subject specialist explained that this norm is not being pursued in the general media. There is a dire need to address this problem in Pakistan if Investigative Journalism is to flourish.

²⁶ Bureau Chief of Geo TV channel. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

²⁷ The News Assistant Editor in London. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

²⁸ Reporter at Geo TV channel. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

²⁹ Senior journalist at *Dawn* newspaper. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

A subject specialist also pointed out that one attribute of an investigative story is that it must attract a wide range of readers. Shehzad Baloch³⁰ stated in his answer to this question that, “On a topic of interest which attracts a wide-range of readers and audience, an investigative journalist may spend days, months or years researching and preparing a report.” The subject specialist continued to state, “An investigative journalist is one whose profession is to discover the truth and to identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available. The topic can be crime, politics, corruption etc. Reporting Intelligence fed information is no investigative journalism” It is vital to note that the subject specialist pointed out that the information provided or ‘fed’ by intelligence officials cannot be termed as Investigative Journalism.

Let us now discuss the response of Bari Baloch³¹ regarding the concept of Investigative Journalism. The subject specialist pointed out that investigation was all about researching a topic from various angles. He stated “To deeply report any single topic from all angles.”

The subject specialist Nadeem Mirza³² was also of the opinion that Investigative Journalism is the form of journalism that needs to be practised in the country. He stated, “In my opinion Investigative Journalism is to uncover the hidden truth, revealing hidden facts. You demonstrate to the public what others cannot. Almost every day different news reporters of a beat run behind similar stories and readers come across these stories in different news papers from different angles. But Investigative Journalism is that you show to the viewers something unique and different.”

³⁰ Reporter for *Express Tribune* at Quetta, Baluchistan. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

³¹ Bureau Chief of *The Nation*, Quetta, Baluchistan. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

³² Producer at Pakistan Television (PTV). Interview held on July 29, 2011.

Maimoona Aymen³³ stated, "As the name suggests, Investigative Journalism requires an extensive investigation into some issues. It is a kind of reporting where a reporter probes deeply into some issue, until all facts and figures are found with authentic documentation."

Another subject specialist Sana Gul³⁴ stated, "Investigative Journalism is mostly the research based story about the wrongdoings that affects public interest. It is exclusive work by a reporter that involves extensive research where the reporter gets access to secret documents and strong reliable sources."

The subject specialist Saadia Khalid³⁵ stated, "Investigative Journalism is a research based story by a reporter into some issue. This kind of journalism, involves extensive research therefore there is no time limit to finish or file one story. A story may take weeks, months and in some cases years to be properly investigated."

In Myra Imran's³⁶ opinion, "Investigative Journalism is about substantiating a story with facts and figures making it credible in every way possible. An investigative story has the minimum chance of carrying any bias as it involves authentic research around an issue while every time double checking the information provided by either side."

2. The Scoop

The next category was regarding the question about the difference between investigative reporting and scoop journalism. The subject specialists were asked about their opinions as to what was the main difference between these

³³ Reporter at *Daily Khabrain*. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

³⁴ *The Nation*, Quetta, Baluchistan. Interview held on August 9, 2011.

³⁵ Producer at Pakistan Television (PTV). Interview held on July 29, 2011.

³⁶ Journalist at *The News*. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

two forms of journalism. There was a consensus among all subject specialists that there was a major difference between the two forms. However, there is just a thin line dividing these two forms. It was pointed out that an investigative report could be a scoop but a scoop may not be an investigative story. An investigative story requires thorough digging of facts. Scoop journalism does not require this. It was emphasized multiple times that in scoop journalism, sheer luck and timing is extremely important.

A journalist may receive an anonymous fax with information. The information may or may not be true. Unless the journalist researches it him/herself, this will be considered as scoop journalism. Scoop journalism is in demand, especially in political reporting. It was pointed out that scoop journalism is without any authentic sources. On the other hand investigative reporting does not include chancing upon news-stories but it is done deliberately. A journalist does not receive information by luck or unnamed sources in investigative reporting. A journalist has to tap various authentic sources and gather information from reliable personnel. Scoop journalism cannot be defended as it lacks authentic source. It was pointed out that an investigative story is written after thorough investigation depending on several sources and documents which contain almost all the aspects of the subject under study. On the other hand, a scoop is big news but does not necessarily embody all the dimensions of the subject. In other words, scoop does not require exercise of the critical faculties. It was pointed out by subject specialists that scoop journalism is solely based on rumours. By contrast, Investigative Journalism is based solely on facts gleaned from reliable sources. The authenticity of scoop sources can be doubted.

The majority of subject specialists had similar opinions regarding scoop journalism. The subject specialists gave their understanding of both forms of journalism and differentiated them completely.

Nausheen Yousuf³⁷ was of the opinion that, “When you have news that is exclusive, it might be a single document, and you report it.” The subject specialist

³⁷ Reporter at Geo TV channel. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

mentioned that without investigating the single document, if a journalist publishes it then it shall be considered as scoop journalism. For instance, a fax has been received by a journalist that a political campaign in the city precincts has been very successful. If the journalist does not confirm the news by physically going there then his responsibility is not fulfilled. The subject specialist emphasized that it is crucial for a journalist to research a subject him/herself before publishing a news story. For instance, if a fax with exclusive information is received then it should not be published straight away. The journalist must go to the site of the incident or conduct an interview in person. The subject specialist stated that the difference between the two forms was “thorough investigation” by a journalist.

On the other hand, respondents also mentioned that due to major lack of training for investigative reporting, scoop journalism has recently taken an upward spiral.

Azmat Rasul³⁸ stated, “I think an investigative report could be a scoop but not all scoops are investigative reports.” The subject specialist was clear in explaining that scoop journalism is mere luck. Scoop journalism cannot be categorized as a relevant story as the research part is missing or not conducted by the journalist himself.

Afzal Bajwa³⁹ pointed out in his answer that, “Investigative report is not necessarily a scoop all the time while a scoop has to be investigative story anyways.” The subject specialist continued to explain that there is no real Investigative Journalism taking place in Pakistan. The subject specialist mentioned that this was mainly due to lack of rigorous training in investigative reporting.

³⁷ Reporter at Geo TV channel. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

³⁸ Journalism professor at Punjab University and currently doing Ph.D. at Florida State University. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

³⁹ Editor for Online news agency. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

Murtaza Solangi⁴⁰ stated in his answer, “You may get a scoop accidentally but investigative journalism is a well planned and carefully executed process. This is a process of digging out facts in a systemic way to prove or disprove an issue related to society, culture, politics, business or state institution.” Thus, in the case of investigative journalism the facts are mined and executed with responsibility.

A very interesting aspect was put forward by one subject specialist regarding scoop journalism. When Badar Alam⁴¹ was asked this question, he put forward the notion that both are two very different forms of journalism. He stated, “They are different, just as an asset that one earns through a lifetime of hard work is different from the money won through a lottery or a prize bond. An investigative report is the fruit of patient and persistent labour whereas a scoop is a matter of luck, of being at the right place, among right people and at a right time.” Shumaila Naureen⁴² regarding the difference between investigative and scoop journalism stated, “Investigative report is based on facts gathered by a reporter with reliable sources considering multi-dimensional aspects while scoop can be based on rumours.”

The subject specialist on the same question stated her opinion in affirmative. Asma Ghani⁴³ stated, “I think an investigative report can be on any topic or issue that is already a hot topic in the media and journalists have already been writing on it according to their information and understanding of the issue. But a scoop highlights an issue, topic or scandal that has not been reported before and a journalist has published the matter for the first time. The terms are interlinked as well somehow. A scoop is an investigative story as well but every investigative story can't be a scoop”.

⁴⁰ Director General, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁴¹ Editor at *Herald Magazine*. Interview held on August 4, 2011.

⁴² Journalist at Associated Press of Pakistan. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁴³ Journalist at The Nation. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

The subject specialists Zahida Mehmood⁴⁴ and Siddrah⁴⁵ stated, “Investigative report is based on facts collected by a journalist through authentic sources considering every aspect, while scoop may be based on rumours.”

According to Humaira Sharif⁴⁶ of Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), “Investigative report is fact based story well researched by a journalist and all the information provided in it should be checked by the reporter. This can be done through reliable sources while scoop is a story which is the demand of the organisation and are mostly used to get business and compete with other news organizations. The authenticity of scoop may be doubted.”

3. Motivation for a Beat Reporter to Acquire Information

The next category in which response of subject specialists will be discussed is regarding beat reporters and the ways to encourage them. A beat reporter may be characterized as, “Reporters that work specific beats, or areas of coverage. This allows reporters to build up a certain amount of expertise as they get to know the beat over time.”⁴⁷

The response to this question was very similar between subject specialists. The subject specialists were of the opinion that beat reporters need to dig deeper on daily basis reporting. Various ways were mentioned, to encourage beat reporters over a period of time to unearth more facts. Some of the main ways identified by subject specialists are as follows:

- Verbal appreciations and stories on main pages
 - Involvement in training sessions
 - Provision of better working atmosphere
 - Relaxation in story deadline
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⁴⁴ Journalist at APP. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁴⁵ Journalist at APP. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁴⁶ Journalist at APP. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁴⁷ Tony Rogers. 2003. *Newswriting on Deadline*.

It was pointed out that the factor of time is very vital for reporters. It decides the extent the reporter can dig into facts. The reporter has to face a lot of pressure from the editors. A reporter has to bring in a news story on daily basis and that makes it very hard for her/him to acquire information and go to various places to collect data regarding the subject. It was pointed out by all subject specialists that it is very crucial to encourage reporters at all costs. This will help the reporter to work harder and in a much better manner. This is the duty of the reporters that they need to write truthfully and also investigate before they publish because the citizens expect a lot from them. It was emphasised that only through exhaustive investigation can a reporter acquire facts.

Badar Alam⁴⁸ gave the opinion that they must be strongly urged to dig facts deeper. He stated, “I strongly believe that beat reporters should be encouraged to dig deeper even in daily-basis reporting. Most of their daily routine coverage is already losing significance in the wake of internet, social media networks and TV news channels. They need to be told that their daily/routine coverage will never establish their byline. If they want to make their mark, they will have to do some kind of investigative journalism.”

Regarding the duties of beat reporters Afzal Khan⁴⁹ stated “Investigative reporting is a refined form of journalism and beat reporters should also engage in the pursuit of some interesting reports. This can be different from routine reproductions of statements or speeches.” The subject specialist was of the opinion that reporters needed to go beyond the traditional form of reporting. This would automatically lead them to dig much deeper for facts. He pointed out that such digging would be very useful for the reporters as they would get a chance to engage in investigative reporting.

Imtiaz Gul⁵⁰ on this question explained ground realities that surround the lives of beat reporters. He was of the opinion that realities in Pakistan are different

⁴⁸ Editor of *Herald Magazine*. Interview held on August 4, 2011.

⁴⁹ Senior journalist writing for national and foreign dailies. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁵⁰ Senior journalist, T.V. anchorperson and author. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

from those in other parts of the world and it is vital to address them for healthy future of Investigative Journalism. The subject specialist explained that there was much pressure on the reporters in Pakistan and this did not give them enough time to dig facts deep enough. They are under continuous pressure to bring in at least one story per day. He stated, "Daily beat reporter cannot dig deeper. The pressure of producing a report or two daily is taxing and after a very short time this becomes boring - a compulsion, so they don't enjoy doing it anymore."

Another subject specialist Mudassir Mukhtar⁵¹ stated "Yes, it is necessary for a reporter to dig deeper in their work as they have great power which requires responsibility. " The subject specialist introduced some techniques that would encourage the reporter. He stated "There can be different techniques used for this purpose." One of the suggestions made by subject specialist was organising training sessions for reporters.

Let us now discuss another perspective of a subject specialist regarding beat reporting. Khalid Mustafa⁵² suggested "The beat reporters can easily go for exclusive and even for investigative reporting in their beats. If they are given incentives, such as their good stories being displayed on the front pages, they will definitely be encouraged to dig out exclusive stories". It was emphasised by the subject specialists that publication of investigative reports submitted by young reporters also serve as a tool for encouragement.

The subject specialist Mohammad Shehzad⁵³ stated "Yes, a beat reporter should constantly follow stories up. Motivation comes from the employer and the audience. Good feedback motivates. Now we have Facebook. You are motivated by FB friends."

⁵¹ Journalism professor at National University of Modern Languages. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁵² Chief Economic Correspondent, The News. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁵³ Editor, *Politics & Development Magazine*. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

Naheed Ahmad⁵⁴ stated that, “There is no doubt that a reporter should be encouraged to include investigative journalism in daily reporting and they should be encouraged by giving proper space to their stories in the paper.”

The subject specialist Saqib Raza⁵⁵ stated, “Being sincere and serious about your work can make a reporter successful.” The subject specialist was of the opinion that sincerity is one of the main attributes that needs to be present in a journalist.

Let us discuss the opinions of a few more subject specialists regarding beat reporters. A subject specialist Ashfaq Ahmad⁵⁶ stated, “A journalist should be sincere with his/her work and be involved a hundred percent in it. This will make him/her successful.”

Another subject specialist Sohail Chaudry⁵⁷ stated, “Yes, the approach of highlighting the work of a journalist can encourage him/her further, to look into concealed facts. It could be a great contribution to the development of society. People expect from a journalist that s/he will write for a noble cause as a journalist works not only as a reporter but also as a pioneering educationist who gives food for thought on different issues.”

The subject specialist Anwar Abbas⁵⁸ had a detailed perspective regarding beat reporters. He stated, “A beat reporter should have many contacts so that they may be able to probe the issues in detail to provide investigative news items. If one keeps various issues in the pipeline and continues collecting information along time, this could be investigative news. Assigning specific topics, followed by proper guidelines is the best source for encouraging one for investigative journalism. Appreciation could play a vital role in it.”

⁵⁴ Journalist at APP. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁵⁵ Media Specialist at Islamic International University. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁵⁶ Sub Editor *Daily Times*. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁵⁷ Journalist at Express 24/7 TV. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁵⁸ Journalist at *Frontier Post*. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

The subject specialist emphasized the pressures faced by beat reporters. Azmat Malik⁵⁹ stated, "Yes, a beat reporter should be encouraged to dig deeper to get a realistic picture and s/he can be motivated by publishing his/her stories with bylines as well as by verbal appreciation."

Another subject specialist Mansoor Ahmad⁶⁰ in his response pointed out some very crucial factors that need to be addressed. It was pointed out in his response that investigative reporting helps the journalist to work better on daily basis. He stated, "Beat reporters should be encouraged to work with complete devotion and diligence pursuing the tactics of investigative journalism. This will help expose the truth and reality before the readers even in day-to-day reporting. In this way the journalist gets into the habit of working more and more before filing any story. Beat reporters could be motivated to do extra-ordinary work on their stories on the pretext that stories are being discussed in the concerned corridors and among governmental authorities. Such motivating remarks encourage reporters to work efficiently."

The subject specialist Riaz-ul-Haq⁶¹ stated, "On daily basis it would be impossible for a reporter to dig out exclusive news item. It needs consistent potential and effort to do so and hence it might be possible on alternate days or every third day, if he could put in the effort."

Usman Cheema⁶² stated, "This involves the assigned deadlines and environment of the organization. If people running the news organisation appreciate such work and motivate their reporters, the quality of the reporters' work will automatically improve. Better placement and treatment of such work will also encourage the reporter to perform better in future as well."

⁵⁹ Journalist at Daily Express. Interview on September 15, 2011.

⁶⁰ News Editor at Daily Times. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁶¹ Reporter at Daily Times. Interview held on September 15, 2011.

⁶² Usman Cheema, reporter at The Nation newspaper. Interview held on September 20, 2011.

4. Pressure on Journalists Affecting Output

The response by the subject specialists on this question was similar to an extent. Majority of the subject specialists gave their answer in the affirmative. It was pointed out that journalism in Pakistan lacks quality. One of the main reasons for this is the excessive pressure that is exerted on reporters. This way the quality of reporting is being compromised.

The subject specialist Arif Nizami⁶³ stated, “There is too much emphasis on number of reports submitted rather than their content, which adversely affects the quality of the report. With increasing competition from electronic and the new media, there is a need for quality reports, based on interpretation, analysis and investigation.” Another subject specialist stated that “I absolutely agree. It is definitely happening in majority of country’s newspapers. How can a journalist produce quality work if s/he has to keep an eye on half a dozen beats allotted to her/him? I appreciate the few newspapers that have set up separate investigative cells, like The News. “

The subject specialist Zahid Hussain⁶⁴ on this question was of the opinion that there is great pressure on the reporter. He stated “Yes, the pressure of daily reporting does affect the quality of journalism. There is more stress on number of stories a reporter files, than on the substance in these stories. One good story in three or four days is better than every day filing of mediocre stories. Journalists are mostly remembered for their scoops and investigative stories and not number of stories they had filed.”

A subject specialist regarding quality of journalism gave similar opinion. Rauf Arif⁶⁵ stated, “I fully agree that this is the ground reality of our journalistic practices today. We need to revamp our newsrooms to overcome this problem.”

⁶³ Editor of *Pakistan Today*. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁶⁴ Senior Editor, *Newsline*. Interview held on August 3, 2011.

⁶⁵ Pakistani journalist presently doing Ph.D. (Journalism) at Iowa University. Interview held on August 1, 2011.

The subject specialist Talat Hussain⁶⁶ stated, “At one level, I agree that too many stories of different varieties that reporters are expected to file can spoil the quality of their work, but in a competitive world, more organised and hard working reporters can cope with this pressure.”

Rahimullah Yusufzai⁶⁷ stated in detail that it is vital to categorize different reporters for various beats. Pressure on the reporters will influence the quality of journalism. One solution is to have separate categories of reporters i.e. one category doing routine work and another involved in Investigative Journalism. The pressure of filing certain number of stories in the limited time at the disposal of reporters is a major cause of low quality journalism. This problem is common in Urdu journalism where beat reporters are under tremendous pressure to file as many stories as possible. Covering an event and following a particular assignment on a daily basis consumes time and effort even though it is something of a routine and doesn't contribute to the growth of healthy and productive journalism.”

The subject specialist Shakil Turabi⁶⁸ stated, “It's the known and accepted reality that excess of everything is bad, so excess reporting also makes no difference. It is the standard global practice that the reporters are responsible only for feeding raw information to the news desk. They usually have to work under great stress and pressure so they can't maintain high standards of grammar, style and facts. Basically, it's the responsibility of news desk to rehash, develop or energise the story.”

Usman Naeem⁶⁹ was of the opinion that reporters should only file investigative stories as this is the real form of journalism, where plain truth is delivered to the citizens. Knowing the truth is the citizen's right and to deliver this is the duty of reporters. In his answer to the question he stated, “Ideally speaking,

⁶⁶ Senior journalist and anchor person. Interview held on August 1, 2011.

⁶⁷ Resident Editor at *The News*. Interview held on July 25, 2011.

⁶⁸ Editor at South Asia News Agency (SANA). Interview held on July 23, 2011.

⁶⁹ Deputy News Editor at *Islamabad Dateline*. Interview held on July 23, 2011.

reporters should file investigative reports only because they and their organizations are generally known by such stuff. But absence of staff leads to the tasking of reporters with covering events. Generally, media organisations understand the importance of investigative reporting and do not push their reporting staff into excessive coverage of events. Even some have special cells, which cover no other events and only focus on investigations. The journalists presenting good quality reports are also highlighted as a result of their excellence in reporting. A major objective of journalism is to inform and it is the duty of investigative journalists to inform people about the conduct of public institutions, for reasons of accountability. Excessive burdening of reporters with covering events is tantamount to driving them away from their prime duty. The practice dampens the spirits of reporters so much that they either stop going after exclusive stuff or switch over to other professions."

Shaheen Sehbai,⁷⁰ stated that, "Basically we should not assign a reporter for a regular assignment. These journalists should be assigned the responsibility to investigate facts behind a certain event. The quality of reporting has become pathetic because reporters are content with only submitting a news report. This should be discouraged and the other side of the picture should always be presented along with the main story. Versions of all the concerned parties should be accommodated, rather than giving leverage to a certain quarter."

Similarly, a very important point was highlighted in one of the responses that it is the media that awards quantity rather than quality. The subject specialist Moeed Pirzada⁷¹, stated, "Fully agreed. However this has to do with the economics of Pakistan's media industry where society and thus industry rewards quantity rather than quality. Pakistan is not a quality conscious country in any respect; media will not be an exception."

Another subject specialist Matiullah Jan⁷², stated "An assignment is what one makes of it. A "regular" reporter will make an assignment as regular as s/he

⁷⁰ Group Editor of *The News*. Interview held on July 19, 2011.

⁷¹ Director current affairs, PTV. Interview held on July 19, 2011.

⁷² Senior journalist with *Dawn News*. Interview held on July 19, 2011.

can. Similarly, an investigative reporter can turn a regular event into something more important. The television media has particularly exacerbated the problem with real time coverage where the presence of presentations by reporters consumes a lot of time. Regular assignments can be covered by young reporters as a big opportunity to learn but at the same time presence of an investigative journalist at regular events also lead to bigger stories. Having said this it is important that journalists should spend more time on investigative reporting. A regular assignment report is like a roadside vendor asking you if you need anything, whereas an investigative report is like a policeman or a doctor warning and telling you to do this or that to save your life.

5. Strengthening of Democracy through Responsible Reporting

The last category of the questions was regarding democracy and investigative journalism. All the subject specialists had a consensus on this question. They truly believed that investigative journalism would not only strengthen democracy but also sustain it for a longer period of time. The true essence of democracy is accountability and transparency. Investigative journalism supports these attributes of democracy and assists in providing citizens with accurate information, resulting in the strengthening of the democratic process. It was highlighted in the responses that the aim of investigative journalism is not to sensationalise, but to investigate into the conduct and business of public institutions and officials, bringing out truth in front of the public eye. Bringing forth information to the citizens will allow them to develop an educated opinion and will also promote transparency in the government apparatus. It was pointed by subject specialists that informing the citizens introduces accountability, resultantly strengthening democracy.

The subject specialist Khaled Ahmed⁷³ stated that “Investigation and revelation are the essence of the process of accountability. Journalism gets away with

⁷³ Senior journalist and Director at South Asia Free Media Association. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

just printing statements. Democracy will be served well if reporting is not aimed at vilifying a party. Investigative reporting will encourage society to appreciate detail and avoid superficiality of approach to information.”

Another subject specialist on the question stated a similar opinion. Amir Ma-teen⁷⁴ stated “Briefly, good reporting in general keeps checks on the excesses and irregularities, which is the essence of transparent societies.” Subject specialist Lamia Zia⁷⁵ stated, “Investigative Journalism can play a pivotal role in promoting public accountability, transparency, integrity and combating corruption in our governments. In developing countries, press is the mirror that reflects the best that journalism can offer to democracy i.e. holding power accountable.”

On the same question subject specialist Irfan Ashraf⁷⁶ was of the opinion, “Revealing truth and then bringing it before the public helps contribute to the concept of informed public opinion. Perhaps, aware and informed public is the bedrock of democracy.” The views of Asma Shirazi⁷⁷ on the subject are very interesting. She stated, “Investigative Journalism is the best mode that helps democratic norms and set up to get more transparent, effective and strong. But it depends on how much freedom of expression you have. Investigative Journalism is a check on the government as well as opposition to hold them accountable for their corruption, embezzlement, or any act that is kept undercover. Investigative Journalism is a constant check that helps improve governance and systemic flaws, ultimately leading to a strong mode of democracy.”

On the same question Javed Rana⁷⁸ explained how crucial it was for Investigative Journalism to blossom so that the democratic system could be strength-

⁷⁴ A senior journalist. Interview held on July 29, 2011.

⁷⁵ A journalist with pursuing studies at Iowa University, US. Interview held on July 25, 2011.

⁷⁶ Journalist, professor at Peshawar University and writer for *Dawn*. Interview held on July 25, 2011.

⁷⁷ Senior anchorperson/producer of SAMAA TV. Interview held on July 25, 2011.

⁷⁸ Senior journalist with *The Nation*/Press TV. Interview held on July 25, 2011.

ened. In his response, it was made clear that the menace of corruption could be curtailed if there was proper execution of Investigative Journalism. The subject specialist stated, "Investigative reporting sets a corrective course of action over the period of time in a society with a greater amount of awareness among people. It leaves little space for powerful corrupt elite to counter facts through propaganda in developing and under-developing countries. Only a sustained follow-up of investigative reports, however, determines its scale of contribution in strengthening democracy."

The subject specialist Ashaar Rehman⁷⁹ stated, "Democracy is about pluralism and stake holder participation. Investigative Journalism is a voice that inspires many other voices to contribute to the discussion. It can be destructive though when a group of journalists take it upon themselves to provide the coup-makers with the 'evidence' which can lead to the dismissal of elected governments and a scuttling of democracy. Journalists have their own interests and like corrupt politicians and generals and bureaucrats they can also be found abusing their authority to serve some vested interests."

The subject specialist Tariq Butt⁸⁰ stated, "Although Investigative Journalism may displease different vested groups, for example the ruling elite, business class or landed gentry for the simple reason that what they want to hide has been laid bare, yet more openness, exposure and transparency that such reports are expected to introduce would certainly supplement and bolster democracy. The most significant positive aspect of Investigative Journalism is that in a democratic setup, that is, the product of people's will, the sovereigns become more educated, enlightened and knowledgeable about goings-on than those concerned who did not want to be disclosed. When people become more aware about different affairs and matters through investigative reports, they are better informed to make judgments and choices in selecting their elected representatives. This will definitely bring quality democracy. Additionally,

⁷⁹ Resident Editor of Dawn Lahore. Interview held on July 19, 2011.

⁸⁰ Senior journalist at *The News*. Interview held on July 26, 2011.

Investigative Journalism is a key to accountability, something that is sadly missing in a country like Pakistan. It could be an excellent tool to hold accountable those who decide the destiny of the nation, whether they are in government or opposition.”

Another subject specialist Raza Rumi⁸¹ stated, “A robust, independent media is a *sine qua non* for democratic development. Openness and citizen accountability come via a free media, which informs the public and also represents their aspirations and concerns. In addition to the judiciary and parliamentary supervision, media is a critical pillar that keeps the executive in check as well as influences legislative business and policy setting. More directly, citizen needs and priorities are articulated by the media for all pillars of the state. With increased media development, all pillars of the state then are kept under check. In a country like Pakistan, media responsibility needs to be fostered for the journalists to play a positive role in democratic evolution. However, the media houses often resort to ‘partisan’ reporting, which could jeopardize the evolution of fragile democratic institutions. Media owners and publishers have a great responsibility along with the field reporters in ensuring that democratic values are nurtured and not violated just to uphold short term political agendas.”

The subject specialist Mehtab Haider⁸² stated in response to this question, “It is beyond any iota of doubt that investigative reporting strengthens institutions and institutions in turn strengthen democracy in any society. Investigative reports generate debates in any society that ultimately strengthen democracy.”

Another subject specialist Malik Siraj⁸³ stated “Often, people think Investigative Journalism is all about sensationalism, unearthing corruption scandals and bringing politicians and officers to their knees. It is not true. The primary role of investigative reporting is to allow the people to attain credible and authentic

⁸¹ News Editor at *Friday Times*. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

⁸² Senior Economic reporter at *The News*. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

⁸³ Editor-in-chief of an online daily, *Baloch Hal*. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

information about their governments' policies. Since people are an essential part of the democratic process, informed citizens can at best hold their elected representatives accountable. Thus, investigative journalism is essential for sustainable democracy because it paves the way for good governance, justice and transparency."

The subject specialist Wajahat S. Khan⁸⁴ stated, "Disclosure is the first step towards accountability, and accountability is a basic tenet of democracy." Another subject specialist Imtiaz Ali⁸⁵ stated, "It can put a check on the rulers - more than that, it can feed in right information, not only to the people, but also to the rulers themselves. Moreover, an investigative piece is supposed to bring in multiple views - this directly builds a social process which adjusts to multiple views."

The subject specialist Usman Manzoor⁸⁶ stated, "Informing people always soothes the way of democracy. The basic theme and motive of Investigative Journalism is to ensure transparency in affairs of the government that are being run on the tax payers' money. Therefore, through Investigative Journalism the lacunae of any democratic government can be highlighted to make the system better."

From the preceding interviews with the subject journalists, it has been observed that most of the subject specialists have termed investigative journalism as "original journalism". It has also been discussed how a majority of journalists in Pakistan are unaware of the norms of investigative reporting and lack knowledge even of the basic concept. This is due to a number of reasons, pointed out by these specialists, including internal and external pressures, absence of proper training and lack of motivation. One point which has been continuously emphasised is that investigative journalism highlights the issues

⁸⁴ Senior anchor person of Samaa TV. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

⁸⁵ Senior Pakistani journalist based in Washington. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

⁸⁶ Investigative reporter of *The News*. Interview held on July 20, 2011.

faced by the common citizens and an investigative report generates public interest. The utilisation of multiple sources, confirming the authenticity of information acquired, and accommodation of views from all the stakeholders have been termed as important fundamentals of investigative journalism.

It has been duly noted and mentioned here that there is considerable difference between scoop and investigative journalism, which has not yet been realised by many journalists. Besides these, the respondents have stressed encouragement of reporters and journalists as a major factor for acquiring quality output. They concur that verbal appreciation, printing of stories, better work environment and realistic deadlines contribute to the enhanced performance of journalists and reporters.

All the respondents however agree that there is a pertinent need for a proper training institute for Investigative Journalism in Pakistan. Media organisations refrain from investing in developing their human resource potential and the reporters mostly learn from their on-the-job experience. The subject specialists also agreed unanimously on the point that investigative reporting can play an important role in the strengthening of democracy and democratic institutions. As the facts will be made available to the citizens, an environment of accountability and transparency will prevail in the public institutions.

CONCLUSION

From the response of subject specialists and the introduction of the report, it is obvious that investigative journalism has an important role to play in any society. The fact that journalists are prepared to go to such lengths in the public interest means that organisations and individuals are always accountable for their actions. As Pakistan develops, so does its media and the need for more sophisticated forms of journalism to fulfill the media's role in keeping the public informed of major events and issues. Pakistani society needs the media to play a critical role in reforming the present state of the country.

The concept of investigative journalism is still new among Pakistani journalists. In a country that lacks transparency and neutrality, it is important that investigative journalists fulfill their roles and duties.

The definition of investigative journalism is versatile. It is original reporting full of rigorous documentation and numerous interviews. It questions waste, fraud and abuse in government agencies. Investigative journalism takes more time and more experienced journalists to produce results. It is generally the most expensive work the news media undertakes.

Investigative journalism also can strip away the pleasing façade of a deceptive leader. It can expose flaws in “conventional wisdom” that is taking the nation in a dangerous direction. Done right, investigative journalism is a huge threat to powerful elites trying to manipulate a population.

There are several reasons why societies need investigative journalism. They include:

- People have a right to know about the society in which they live. They have a right to know about decisions which may affect them, even if those in power want to keep them secret.
- People in power - whether in government, the world of commerce, or any other group in society - can abuse that power. They can be corrupt, steal money, break laws and do all sorts of things which harm other people. They might just be incompetent and unable to do their job properly. They will usually try to keep this knowledge secret. Journalists try to expose such abuse.
- Journalists also have a duty to watch how well people in power perform their jobs, especially those who have been elected to public office. Journalists should constantly ask whether such people are keeping their promises made during election campaigns. Politicians and others who do not keep their promises may try to hide the fact; journalists should try to expose it.

There is a need for investigative reporters to be careful how they work. They need to be accommodating and accountable. Most journalists work under very clear journalistic ethics and as result compile reports that make a clear difference to the status quo, causing corrupt governments to fall, putting criminals behind bars or causing an organisation to change its standard operating procedures.

Apart from their role in exposing corruption, wrongdoings and injustices, investigative journalists can bring a lot of benefits to their media organisation as well. Investigative stories that touch every day issues affecting ordinary citizens can help increase awareness and arouse the sympathies of the public for the media as well.

Annexure I

Interview Schedule

The questions that were put forward to the media subject specialists during the interviews are as following:

- How do you define investigative journalism?
- Do you see any difference between an investigative report and a scoop?
- Do you understand that a beat reporter should be encouraged to dig deeper even in daily-basis reporting. If yes, how can s/he be motivated into doing this?
- The excessive pressure on individual reporters to cover regular assignments cause deterioration in quality of journalism. Do you agree?
- In what ways does investigative reporting complement strengthening democracy?



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