

The Impact of Linguistic Censorship on Freedom of Expression in Pakistani Print Media: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the impact of linguistic censorship on freedom of expression in Pakistani print media. Five research articles in the literature that were closely correlated with the study have been selected from Google Scholar using a purposive sampling method. On the other end of this spectrum, the 3D Model of Critical Discourse Analysis established by Fairclough (1989) and the Agenda-Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw (1972) were applied to the data taken from the selected sample. The researcher found that language politics, religious sensitivities, and economic factors considerably influence linguistic censorship in Pakistan print media. It was concluded that linguistic censorship is confirmed to be regulating not just media freedom but also a diversified discourse encapsulating in Pakistan, and there is a need to push up against it by engaging a quake amongst policy architects, media professionals, and civil society stakeholders. The report recommends Pakistan should take concrete steps to ensure media freedom and protection for journalists.

Keywords

linguistic censorship, freedom of expression, Pakistani print media, 3D model of CDA, Critical Discourse Analysis, Agenda-Setting Theory, sociolinguistic factors.

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic censorship in Pakistani print media intersects sociolinguistic dynamics and political control significantly, resulting in a crash in freedom of expression. This is not a linguistic problem but an issue in the Pakistani socio-political matrix. Language linguistic censorship means the control and obstruction of the language and knowledge are considered illicit or distressing by rules enacted or embittered by the existing position or cultural or religiopolitical norms (Umber et al., 2024). Pakistan is a diverse country in terms of linguistics and socio-political scenarios; print media in Pakistan has served as a freedom of expression instrument as well as a censored phenomenon (Siddiqi, 2024)

Since media in our country has been a battleground for competing ideological forces, print media has substantial influence over public opinion and discourse. Print media, including newspapers and magazines in both English and Urdu, act as an important forum for informing the public and educating residents in Pakistan (Rashid et al., 2024). Yet, linguist censors in civil and non-civil administrations raise questions about freedom of expression and whether it is allowed or restricted. The purpose of censorship can be a result of national security needs, or it is related to keeping the social order, which primarily means censoring critics or anti-establishment voices (Umer, 2024).

This is not the first time that censorship has been imposed on Pakistani print media. Governments have historically used censorship to control the narrative and contain any opposition. In addition to a long legacy of other forms of authoritarian censorship, the 1980s saw an aggressive campaign of state censorship by the authoritarian regime of General Zia-ul-Haq to Islamize the media and shut down any form of dissent, Aftab (2024) provides an analysis of Pakistani censorship. Despite a shift to democratic rule in recent years, censorship lives on in Myanmar, albeit in different guises and levels of sophistication. These range from direct censorship by the state and self-censorship by the media to control exercised by regulatory bodies such as the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) (Awan & Ali, 2024).

The sociolinguistic aspect of censorship is especially interesting in Pakistan since the society is multilingual, and language often conveys identity and power (Saxena, 2024). Although Urdu, the national language, and English, the official language, are perhaps more prominent, regional languages are equally important. Given that the language used in media has consequences for both its reach and reception (Syed et al., 2023), censorship may have variable effects based on the language of publication (CITE). If the ideological set of the elite and the rest overlap, as is the case in Pakistan, they let their English newspapers be censored but come down like a ton of bricks on the Urdu papers (Sohail, 2024).

Linguistic censorship has serious consequences for the ability to express oneself freely. It also has consequences for press freedom and information quality, as it narrows the range of perspectives that can reach the public (Siddique et al., 2024). All of this suppresses public conversation, and that must be limited. Thankfully, the media is a democratic watchdog, even

if the state might not be. This would, in turn, likely lead to a climate of self-censorship and encourage journalists to decide in advance not to cover certain stories or to convey certain messages for fear of punishment (Afzal, 2024).

Such suppression of the words in print has countless dimensions regarding print freedom in Pakistani print and is subject to a complete research area. This means looking at sociolinguistic (i.e. what is being censored or why certain words/topics are censored) and sociopolitical (i.e. economic, business-information relations, etc.) factors. The research is likely to clarify the controversy that Pakistan media is embroiled in; its report on the media constraints will contribute to the regulations versus the freedom media envelops media and what prompts the media to face big obstacles so far (Ahmad, 2024; Akhtar et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

This study focuses on solving the research problem of linguistic censorship in the Pakistani print media and its effect on the freedom of expression. He said that the print media is a key to guiding public discourse. Yet, many sociolinguistic conditions are governed by political, cultural and economic forces by which language is silenced. Language is policed. In doing this, the censorship of journalistic space commits an act of censoring free speech, which then reduces voices and impedes democratic processes and democratic processes as well as uninformed civic engagement. This research focuses on identifying and analysing these sociolinguistic aspects and exploring their role in the freedom of expression vis-a-vis the print media published in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

The study has the following research objectives:

- To investigate the sociolinguistic factors affecting language censorship in Pakistan.
- To Examine the Effect of linguistic censorship on the freedom of expression in Pakistani print media.

Significance of the Study

This is important because it unearths the complex functioning of censorship around language in the Pakistani print media and how that contributes to the overall freedom of expression. This research adds to our understanding of how language is regulated to influence information and one's ability to critique one's society by decentering standard sociolinguistic foci on censorship through case studies of language choices, productions and practices that demonstrate how language is manipulated to control information and suppress dissent. Such insight is important for policymakers, media professionals, and scholars to keep in mind as we need more transparent and fairer laws in the media that guarantee freedom of the press and foster diversities in narrations. The findings of this study can guide pro-democratic system practices and provide basic moments of wise and educated government bodies operating in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have widely discussed investigating linguistic censorship in Pakistani print media, with a primary focus on the implications this has for freedom of speech. Indeed, the resulting body of research highlights censorship as a complex and contextual phenomenon and a product of historical, political, and sociolinguistic conditions (Latif et al., 2024).

Previously, censorship in Pakistan meant political control over the media landscape and during the General Zia-ul-Haq regime (1977-1988) suppressed dissent, and for the propagation of the state even ideology, media censorship raised its heads Human Rights Commission Pakistan (Chaudhary et al., 2024). Political power and media control were inbred in this era, and the words used in print media were scrutinised meticulously. Zia-ul-Haq's regime set a trend for the following generations of plundering media content for national security and public morality (Saleem 2024).

Though broad state censorship in present-day Pakistan has decreased, subtle types of control continue. Research has also emphasised how the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) controls content by imposing excessive regulations, indirectly forcing its journalists and media houses into self-censorship mode (Cooper, 2024). Allegedly designed to uphold journalistic ethics, these regulations often suppress critical reporting and the range of perspectives necessary for enabling freedom of expression (Rabbani et al., 2024).

Linguistic censorship, in particular, is central to that regulatory atmosphere. In Pakistan, language is a major identity and power marker, as Fian's (2024) research revealed. Urdu and English are the two main languages seen in the media. Even newspapers in regional languages are under more stringent checks and censorship as they can present their regional dissent and other views contradicting the central govt position (Nazeer et al., 2023).

The impact of censorship of language on freedom of expression is extensive across the creation and existence of media content. Khan (2024) observed that the English-language media, catering to a smaller and more elite audience, also experiences censorship based on managing international perceptions and elite discourses. However, the government's main focus is on Urdu-language media as it has a wider outreach and, therefore, is more carefully censored to paint a grace picture of the national narrative and help maintain peace across the board, avoiding widespread public dissent. This variation in treatment shows how language can shape censorship (Hussain et al., 2024).

The literature also addresses self-censorship among journalists, pressures on journalists to do so in the form of granting access to the government, and the impact that produces yield. Jahanzeb Jahan et al. (2024) note the role of the fear of reprisals in covering stories and how coded language is used to bypass censorship, hence making journalism a restricted domain. This self-restraint is furthered by economic demands and the pressure of keeping the media outlets financially viable, having to get governments up to their knees in advertising revenue (Nazir & Gillani, 2024).

In addition, the consequences of censorship on the public right to information are also preeminent. Censorship is a double negative with unsympathetic chains by limiting journalists in their practice and restricting the wider public's access to diversity and contentious perspectives imperative if it is to make informed decisions (Iftikhar et al., 2024). Censorship causes the homogenisation of media content, devoid of the watchdog role the media can play as vital gatekeepers of democracy (Masood et al., 2024).

Pakistani Print media, on the other hand, often benefits from linguistic censorship in the name of moral high-ground justification, such as preserving the very essence of condemned cultural values. Jabeen and Saleem Abbas (2024) opine that these justifications are used to curb the progressive and dissenting elements of human rights activism or advocate minority issues. These regulatory frameworks are broad and vague, allowing for arbitrary interpretations and enforcement, enabling this suppression (Nazeer et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on a qualitative research method due to the exploratory nature of study objectives and social factors affecting linguistic censorship and its effect on freedom of expression in Pakistani print media. Five already published research articles closely relevant to the research subject were chosen from Google Scholar using the purposive sampling method. Sociolinguistic aspects of linguistic censorship in Pakistan were extracted from these articles following a thorough review. The reviewed data was analyzed and thematic analysis was conducted by using Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze media language in a framework that reveals how language is historically based and maintains power relations and ideologies. The study used the Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) to investigate how linguistic censorship would affect freedom of expression. While this theory is intended to explain how media agenda is controlled by censorship, a view then steers public opinions and dialogue. The incorporation of CDA with Agenda-Setting Theory contributed to a deep analysis of how linguistic censorship works and affects all levels of media freedom and public conversation in Pakistan. The following articles were shortlisted for this study, and the titles and names of the authors are as follows:

1. Freedom of Expression and Media Censorship in Pakistan: A Historical Study (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018).
2. Media Landscape in Pakistan and Censorship through Viewers' Complaints to PEMRA (Khan, 2016).
3. A Descriptive Analysis of Linguistic Taboos of Urdu Language in Pakistan (Pervaiz et al., 2021)
4. Media Matters in Pakistan (Aslam & Ali, 2009).
5. The Dissident: Addressing Historical Lacuna and State Censorship with Documentary Prose (Sayani, 2021).

DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

The researcher searched for relevant articles on Google Scholar. We downloaded 15 articles through the search engine mentioned above. Nevertheless, only five papers were chosen as appropriate for this research study based on their characteristic and features. All five articles were similarly under review by the research, and the results were different after reading and reviewing each literature. The results are given below:

Sociolinguistic Factors Influence Linguistic Censorship in Pakistan

These sociolinguistic barriers, mainly in the prism of print media in Pakistan, are some of the most prominent factors behind this linguistic censorship issue. Those elements are language politics, Religious Triggers, Political conditions as one of the big issues, cultural factors, economic factors, Security issues, and dimensional international relations.

1. Language Politics and Ethnolinguistic Identity

The national language, Urdu, is prioritized over regional languages, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi. As a result, regional language content can be censored to prevent its hegemony and incitement of ethnic sentiments (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018). Ethnolinguistic marginalization is a political discourse that occurs when non-dominant languages are strangled to quash local autonomy movement or prevent the expressions of ethnolinguistic identities that can potentially undermine national narratives (Sayani, 2021).

2. Religious Sensitivities

Censorship of content that could be deemed insulting to the Prophet Muhammad, the religion of Islam, or religious texts is enforced in Pakistan using the country's extreme blasphemy laws. This encompasses both the representation of religious minorities and material that may fuel violence based on sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia communities (Aslam & Ali 2009). Religious content is sensitive to the extent that even small signs of transgressions and the voice are muffled or ethical sanction forthcoming (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018).

3. Political Climate

Censored content is often critical of the government and military, especially their policies and actions. Print media is controlled by the political elite, which uses it to mould public opinion and discourage any opposition (Khan, 2016). In political turmoil or elections, censorship may be exacerbated to manage narratives and deter mass outrage (Pervaiz et al., 2021).

4. Cultural Norms and Societal Values

Conservative views of modesty and sexuality mean that content that is considered immoral or indecent is based on the general rules of a particular society, which often can lead to topics on sexuality being censored because of how it can affect the family structure (Sayani 2021).

Conversely, traditional norms of stereotype, gender and sexual orientation might lead to suppression of dialogues about gender equality, women's rights, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans genderqueer or questioning (LGBTQ) impact (Pervaiz et al., 2021).

5. Economic Factors

Media control and ownership are major determinants of linguistic censorship. However, when editorial policies are supposed to cater to some political or economic interest, the print media is widely dominated by people with strong political or economic interests. This contributes to the self-censorship of journalists and editors to the danger that the economy poses to them (Aslam & Ali, 2009).

6. Security Concerns

Meanwhile, terrorist and militant group (TMG) content is ruthlessly monitored and censored to prevent the dissemination of extremist ideologies in the interests of national security. This includes both pro-extremist content and critical analysis that might be seen as undermining counter-terrorism efforts (Sayani, 2021).

7. International Relations

Articles and editorials that could harm Pakistan's diplomatic relations, especially with powerful allies or neighboring countries, are often subject to censorship. This ensures that international relations are not negatively impacted by media coverage (Pervaiz et al., 2021).

Case Studies and Examples

The Baloch nationalist movement has often been a target of censorship in Pakistani print media, with reports on human rights abuses in Balochistan frequently suppressed (Rasool Saeed & Shah, 2020). The assassination of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer for his opposition to blasphemy laws highlights the extreme sensitivity and consequent censorship surrounding religious issues (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018). During the lawyers' movement against President Musharraf in 2007, print media faced severe censorship, with many newspapers heavily edited or temporarily shut down (Khan, 2016).

Critical Discourse Analysis (3D Model)

A critical discourse analysis of the selected articles was also carried out and the results are given below:

Textual Analysis of Linguistic Censorship in Pakistan

The results of this analysis of print media reveal the complete dominance of Urdu in Pakistan print media over the regional languages, e.g. Punjabi, Shenk, Pashto, and Balochi. It has also

been reaffirmed repeatedly concerning the priority of Urdu in media content, underscoring its role as the nation's binding language. This emphasis on Urdu is part of Pakistan's ideology that aims to create a national identity and can often end up sidelining regional languages (Rasool et al. 2023). Rather, the power underpinning each of these media texts, both in terms of the languages of these media texts and that which they derive from, is reflected onto the reader such that it is through Urdu where national unity is to be forged, and in the production of Urdu in such media texts we see not only a tactical attempt to drown out articulate expressions of ethnic and linguistic identity that might threaten the singularity of the narrative state but instead how these media texts come to be homogenized under conditions of contested national discourses.

The tight blasphemy laws of the country have also escalated the scrutiny of religious content in print media in Pakistan. Because of these laws, authors tread lightly when mentioning religion, constantly self-censoring, systematically neutral and polite so as not to be reputed of blasphemy. It also means that content concerning religious minorities or sectarian issues is highly flammable indeed, and some of the mildest perceived slights can lead to extreme punishments. The breadth of the area seems to have warranted rules governing how media discusses them, rules that draw bias in language use from religious orthodoxy back to religious influence on doctrines and its societal normative authority, the consequence of outing these norms.

Discursive Practice of Linguistic Censorship in Pakistan

Institutional biases and state-centric policies of Urdu above regional languages also shape the discursive practices in Pakistan's print media. Editors and journalists have an editorial mandate to guide their work more frequently than authors to promote Urdu as the national language with the help of state objectives. These editorial directions result in a larger systematic erasure of regional languages and their associational cultures (Nawaz et al. 2024). Consequently, media organizations articulate an institutional bias for using Urdu in their production and distribution processes and sustain the aphorism that a common national identity necessitates using Urdu.

Additionally, religious sensitivities dictate the editorial processes. No content is produced without rigorous due diligence, including anything remotely perceived as blasphemous or disrespectful to Islam. This, in turn, nurtures a culture of self-censorship by journalists and editors, who tread a fine line between producing material sympathetic to strict religious belief and material capable of landing them in deep legal and social trouble (Rasool et al. 2024). As a result, media is subjected to the filter of theological orthodoxy, and the material is then published in line with the demand and expectations of society to contribute to the sustainability of religious amity.

Social Practice of Linguistic Censorship in Pakistan

However, the social practices of linguistic censorship in Pakistan's print must be seen in the broader context of societal attempts to ensure national unity and prevent ethnic tensions. This

is how the state promotes Urdu over regional languages as a means towards the construction of a homogeneous national identity. This often includes restricting local languages, an action understood as repression of regional autonomy movements and ethnolinguistic expressions (Rasool & Saeed, 2026). To reclaim the discursive terrain, the state then looks to contain it and tests to re(root) it back into the national, in the mother tongue, Urdu, and not the terrain of regional diversity.

The result was seen as deeply offensive in Pakistan, where religious sensitivities are a recurring cause of media censorship. Both the labour of media production and the viewing practice in consumption are impacted by Pakistan's extreme blasphemy laws, as well as the intrusive demand for respect for Islam, which governs what must be produced and what / who is watched. Widespread fear of punishment over supposed instances of blasphemy is likely to lead to safe and sanitized religious discourses (Khan et al. 2025). This practice also highlights the overarching place of religion in Pakistani society, where maintaining religious harmony and social order takes precedence. Censorship involves flagging content that could be dismissive of Islam or broadcasted to love to sect organized violence from the media: this keeps it in line with the conservative religious values of the faith and avails in the avoidance of religious conflicts and promoting social cohesion.

Impact of Linguistic Censorship on the Freedom of Expression

For analyzing the effect of language censorship over freedom of expression in the print media of Pakistan, the Agenda-Setting Theory established by Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw in 1972 was applied to five previously selected research articles. Specifically, the Agenda-Setting Theory holds that the mass media has a powerful effect on the public agenda by bringing attention to certain issues, thus affecting the public's perception of the most important issues (McCombs & Shaw 1972; McCombs 2004). Instead, this is a theory of the media that says the media doesn't tell us what to think but what to think about. The application of this theory to linguistic censorship in Pakistan's print media illustrates the way censorship controls what the public talks about and what is at stake.

i. Media Agenda

The analysis of the chosen articles establishes that the media agenda in Pakistan is significantly framed by linguistic censorship. The Daily Bettal, just one example, ran in the highly respected Urdu language daily press, a testament to the more coordinately unified national ethos that the state was keen to promote in the country itself. It happens that in the mess of things, we fail to notice (failing to the extent of not talking about) even the extensive studies of Parveen & Bhatti (2018), who argue that all these years and policies, Urdu has secured an often invisible yet overall upper hand to regional languages in the often hypocritically Urdu-speaking regions. Against this backdrop, Parveen and Bhatti demonstrate that the current policy does not allow the growth of regional languages but instead promotes using Urdu over regional languages. This way, Urdu asserts its hegemony on the media agenda, leaving little space for concerns from the relevant regional languages and cultures.

Similarly, Khan (2016) highlights how PEMRA complains channel media focus on reiterating established cultural and political narratives, banning acts of dissent and diverse language voices.

ii. Public Agenda

The public agenda, as determined by the media, is dominated by Urdu and the consequent oblivion of regional linguistic identities. Pervaiz et al. Anonymous researchers writing in this vein last year (2021) identified how linguistic taboos within Urdu shape public discourse, as they keep unsavoury or even just sensitive topics off-limits in conversation. Thus, the public internalizes these taboos and refrains from talking about them, further entrenching the linguistic status quo. Media's selective coverage, voluntarily or otherwise, serves to set the public agenda in harmony with the state objectives (Aslam & Ali, 2009), shaping media content towards the preferences of the elites due to economic and political imperatives, increasing the limits of public discourse in every direction.

iii. Salience of Issues

Linguistic censorship in print media determines the strength of salience of issues, or the importance the public places on them, more than in social media. The spotlight on Urdu has created an ongoing propaganda that binds the national fabric to Urdu, outperforming regional linguistic-cultural considerations. Sayani (2021) exemplifies this in practice when discussing how the suppression of particular histories and political discourses serves to re-channel dissenting narratives into unofficial scripts and mediums to render them less visible and of less significance to the public. This means the public's awareness and fear are grossly skewed towards narratives central to the state's framework of fear.

iv. Framing

Linguistic censorship also works to shape framing - the way that issues are reported in the media. Parveen & Bhatti (2018) brought the issue to the centre of their discussion, stating that the depiction of religious issues neutrally and politely is one of the orthodoxy of the news media to frame the discourse of religion in a narrow circle. This descriptive style is a major factor in whether topics appear religious, framing everyday issues conservatively religiously to the public. Media framing reflects the economic and political pressures identified by Aslam & Ali (2009) that produce media framing in the interest of elites, thus outlining public opinion leaning towards these narratives and stifling independent or protesting stories.

Had we applied the Agenda-Setting Theory, it would have helped us figure out how linguistic censorship in Pakistani print media moulds the media agenda, public agenda, saliences of the issues, and their framings. Pakistan's consensus has been shaped by the dominance of Urdu and suppression of regional languages, the containment of religious themes and the institutional pressures of economic and political interests. This selective focus truncates freedom to voice concerns, limits the scope of conversation among the public in a

manager/subordinate structure, and constrains the public persona and dialogue they see relative to the state and elites.

Findings

This study demonstrates that sociolinguistic variables such as language politics, religious sensitivities, political state of affairs, cultural values, economic impact, security issues and international ties influence censorship in Pakistani print media. To ensure national cohesion and to prevent ethnic tensions, support for the national language, Sufismalay, is highlighted. In contrast, regional languages such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi are neglected and marginalized. The restrictive blasphemy laws demonstrably define the media agenda in a way to censor any content that might be seen as disrespectful to Islam or religious minorities to maintain social peace and comply with the conservative norms of society.

The political elite and media ownership relations may cause editorial decisions to self-censor following the political and economic powers. Insecurity also undermines reporting on terrorism and other armed groups. Violating international relations: the govt manages content. As a result, the content material wouldn't damage courting with other countries. This variety of censorship practices is mind-bogglingly similar to the more explicit state efforts to build nationhood, religious harmony, and political peace and stability by supporting certain narratives and silencing certain counter-voices, all in the name of how the conversation in the future should be.

Discussion

The results are relevant to the intricate array of root and proximate reasons that intersect to culminate in linguistic censorship in the Pakistan print media and warp with political, cultural, religious, economic, and security factors. More importantly, it appears that Urdu is being valorised as the national language at the expense of the regional languages and not without good reason because it serves a functional purpose in language-citing nations, resulting in what may be described as language politics. However, favouring one language relegates regional selves to the back bench and could deepen the friction based on ethnicity. Additionally, blasphemy laws have been used fairly liberally here, putting constraints on public discourse and media content that extend to ineffective self-censorship merry-go-rounds.

Media self-censorship on economic issues under the influence of media ownership and control economic pretext of the case against described most clearly. The robust bond between media and the business elite illustrates media persons and editors' formidable task of maintaining editorial independence and objectivity. After all, the equally anxious obsession with security illustrates how thin the fine line has to be walked between the sovereign nation's security needs and the press's mores and freedoms. Protecting against the dissemination of harmful ideas is one thing. Still, talk of censorship of terrorism is equivalent to a novel version of the suffocation of attention, potentially functioning critical judgement, a capacity that provides transparency and accountability.

The results expose some of the complicated sprigs of discursive censorship mechanisms on Pakistan's socio-political print, which went beyond just muzzling dissent but were complete in shaping public attitudes, reproducing power relations and creating a societal fringe. Addressing these issues related to understand the complex, interacting, sociolinguistic stresses and strains. It is also argued that the conditions for an open and inclusive dialogue should accompany free media and freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION

This study provided an understanding of some of the sociolinguistic aspects and factors functioning in linguistic policing in Pakistan. It was a structured inquiry on the issue, conducted from the several points of view of Language Politics, Religious Responsibilities, Political landscape, Social Behavior, economic compulsion, Security mandates, and Diplomatic Relations, positioned through the mantles of self-censorship or referral of invisible threads running behind the mesh of Proper Press Censorship and Linguistic Regime within the instruments of print media operating in Pakistan. The hegemony of Urdu over other regional languages, blasphemy laws, and vested interest in politics and economy lead to narrowing public discourse to benefit the excluded or alienated Psthuns.

This also indicates the profound effect of censorship on freedom of expression in Pakistani print media, as shown in this study. From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the media agenda, public agenda, the salience of issues, and framing converge to demonstrate how censorship itself constrains both the topics considered and the range of discussion and also how it, in return influences popular perception and public discourse in favour of the interests of the state and elites. The accentuated focus on specific narratives at the expense of other narrative variants underlines the dilemmas confronting journalists and media practitioners in promoting press freedom and nurturing an environment conducive to free speech and diversity of opinions.

Recommendations

After studying the results, the conclusion would be that in Pakistan, there should be serious attempts to extend media freedom and protect the rights of journalists. The way to do this is by adopting policies that reduce political intervention in media institutions, enable editorial independence and protect journalists so that it is taken away from media places for censorship and retaliation. LingoLoops: The Need to Enhance Linguistic Diversity and Awareness of the Benefits of Diverse Perspectives in Public Discourse It also includes supporting efforts to integrate regional languages into programming and to foster a culture that is tolerant to and respectful of differing perspectives. In addition, continuous dialogue and collaborative work among media stakeholders, government authorities, CSOs and international partners are essential to help overcome the sociolinguistic bases for exclusion and fashion a media landscape that fosters a free and fair media open to all.

Implications

The study has important implications to suggest; first, it depicts that linguistic censorship in Pakistani print media is a major bottleneck to the progress of democracy, pluralism and human rights and needs to be urgently addressed. To promote media freedom, if we know more about how and why journalists censor themselves in particular sociolinguistic contexts, then perhaps the group of policymakers, media professionals and civil society actors can work together to improve the environment for the free flow of expression and a conducive environment for open, diverse dialogue. Failure to confront those challenges not only abridges the most basic right of free expression, it perpetuates inequalities, stifles the democratic debate, and harms progress toward an inclusive and equitable society. Hence, united efforts are warranted to defeat linguistic censorship and to protect the freedom of the press and pluralism in Pakistan.

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