

Gatekeepers in Live Coverage of Television News in Muslim Asia: An Evidence from Pakistan

Muhammad Farooq Haider: Ph. D Scholar, Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Noshina Saleem: Associate Professor, Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Abstract

Current study was aimed at investigating gatekeeping role of the media personnel while providing live coverage of television news. Pakistan being a major Muslim country in Muslim Asia was taken as a case. The bureau chiefs, news editors, news producers, cameramen and reporters of live television news coverage were taken as the major gatekeepers. In live television news coverage, it is perceived that cameraman and reporter are main gatekeepers who have to show more responsibility while providing live coverage of television news. 25 channels based in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar and licensed by PEMRA were selected. Multistage sampling technique was used and responses of 207 media personnel were obtained. The results revealed that reporter and cameraman had the most control on gatekeeping aspects as compared to bureau chief, news editor and news producer. This study provides opportunity for future research in journalism of Muslim countries by various Islamic perspectives.

Keywords: *Media, PEMRA, gatekeepers, bureau chief, news editor, news producer, cameraman, reporter, live news coverage, Pakistan*

INTRODUCTION

Television has replaced the newspapers and radio in recent times as a main source of information and news due to its effectiveness and efficiency. Li & Lee (2014) studied that people now believe in what they see, so now the main source of information for public is television. The advent of 2003 policy of government of private channels has created the same scenario in Pakistan. A mushroom growth of news channels can be seen in Pakistan within a short span of time. This abundance of news channel has changed the viewership trend from entertainment items to news in Pakistan according to Medialogics Report of 2015. Cowling (2015) explored that television has a great advantage to telecast the happening LIVE from the scene of happening. Viewers take more interest in LIVE news coverage to watch the activity in real time. Kremmer (2015) further added that a race has been started to go on air "First" directly from the location and this race has compromised the standard of ethical, moral, social and professional norms. Ryfe (2013) had pointed out that LIVE has a disadvantage of loose control on content. Wouters (2015) echoed the same that LIVE news reporting put negative impact on content.

Such negative impact can also be seen in Pakistani LIVE TV news media also. Many incidents like dead bodies and badly injured in terrorist attacks, cross fire of Lal Masjid in Islamabad, Bomb Blast of Karsaz in Karachi, Ms. Bhutto assassination in Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi, Bhoja Airline plane crash Islamabad, burning of oil tanker and vehicles near Shahkot, Charsaddah University attack in 2016 and reporting from the grave of Edhi in Karachi in 2016. The footage of blasts, wreckages, dead bodies, blood went on air without editing. The second horrible aspect of faulty and incorrect information collected in hurry and disseminated without rectifying. Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has taken notice of such irresponsible and careless reporting by many channels not once but several times while going live from the

scene of happening. PEMRA issued notice to 25 channels on LIVE reporting of the news of a bomb blast in Gulberg Lahore on 24th February 2017. The news proved to be a hoax as the basic facts were not varied by reporters. The misleading story was covered LIVE by top rated channels, mid rated channels and even city channels also on the same pattern.

Merazand Papacharissi (2013) that rapid communication of information is the prime focus of all channels. These hurries often result in faulty news details. Coddington and Halton (2014) studied that there is always an underlying tension going on between the reporters and editors during LIVE news coverage. Tompkins and Anderson (2015) revealed that in live news coverage reporters are unreliable about information dissemination. The initial information in live news often proves erroneous. Tandoc Jr. (2018) explored while referring to a senior editor of newspaper Daily New York Times that the content of the live news coverage has always caused problems and tension in news room for editors regarding lack of control on content. Erzikova (2018) contributed that now reporter has started acting as first gatekeeper and news editors, producer and bureau chief serve as terminal gatekeepers. Many scholars have explored the impact of technology on communication. The technological advancements have influenced the whole process of news gathering. The scholars have re-examined and re-visited the process of gatekeeping in advent of new technologies.

Rationale of the Study

Coddington and Halton (2014) explained that new technology in communication field has always opened new gates. Li and Lee (2014) explored that use of DSNG has connected the viewers directly with the reporter on the scene of happening so presence of the established gatekeepers of routine news coverage have been compromised. Bro and Wallburg (2014) pointed out that now a huge space has been created therefore there is no room for traditional gatekeepers. This observation needs a thorough re-examining of the phenomenon of gatekeeping in new world of technology.

Early research of gatekeeping revolved around the basic query that who is performing the role of the gatekeeper. This primary question arises again and again in new scenarios and changing phenomena. The studies of gatekeeping of middle era focused on identify the process and gates. The latest studies explored the influences on decision making of gatekeepers. The recent studies of focused on modern technology in field of communication and their impact on news gathering process and gatekeeping. Every time when the technological advancement is made in the field of media, the basic query of who is performing the role of gatekeeper. The same basic question is yet to be explored in wake of the technological induction of DSNG and its excessive use.

Scholars have explored the gatekeeping role of Director News, News Editors and Producers in recorded new packages and coverages however a few have explored the phenomenon of live news coverage and gatekeeper's role. The role of two major stake holder, reporter and cameraman, is yet to be explored in gatekeeping. This study aims to contribute in the existing knowledge of gatekeeping theory by addressing the fundamental question of "who" performs the role of gatekeeper in the live news gathering.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were desired to be attained by the researchers from this study:

1. Investigating the differences among the gatekeeping roles of bureau chiefs, news editors, news producers, cameramen and reporter in live coverage of television news.
2. Analyzing the significance of contributory roles of cameramen and reporters in live coverage of television news regarding decisions of gatekeeping.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Do Bureau Chief, News Editors and Producer are significant gatekeepers during live coverage of television news?

2. Is the role of reporter significant as gatekeeper during live coverage of television news?
3. Does the cameraman do any gatekeeping during live coverage of television news?

Limitations of Study

Pakistan was taken as a case among Muslim Asia. The present study explored the phenomenon the live coverage of news on Pakistani TV Channels. Therefore, recorded news formats and all other live programming formats were excluded from the scope of this study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gatekeeping

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) has defined gatekeeping as “Gatekeeping is the process by which the billions the messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day”. Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley (2001) further explained gatekeeping as “overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed”. Welbers et.al.(2018) explained gatekeeping as it is not just decisions but material should be produced and what audience should be aware of. It is a process of information control.

Gatekeeping Theory

Lewin (1947) has given the initial concept of decision making known as gatekeeping. Early scholars like White (1950), McNelly (1959) focused on the process of gatekeeping. Later on the research in gatekeeping focused the gatekeepers like gatekeepers from broadcasting (Bass, 1969), editors (Whitney & Becker 1982) from TV Stations women gatekeepers (Bleske, 1991), photo journalists (Bissell, 2000) and from digital media gatekeepers (Singer, 2006).

Bennett (2004) has explained that the literature of gatekeeping can be categorized in four major types. First are the routines of media organization secondly the economic factors of new gathering, thirdly the impact of new technologies in communication and fourth professional or personal factors of gatekeepers that influence the judgment.

Gatekeepers during Live Coverage of TV News

Casella (2013) defined that live is actually on seen reporting of any event which is televised in the real time. Bock and Araiza (2015) pointed that live coverage of news events have grown into an essential part on a television channel as viewers or more keen and demanding to watch the actual seen of happening in the real time. Tuggle and Huffman (2001) explored that new technologies in the field of media has enable the telecast live from the place of news. It has caught the attention the researchers to explore the novel dimensions created in the new phenomenon. Live news coverage has given a lot of space and time to the reporters but in the minimum available time to come on screen. The reporters are under esteem pressure to authenticate the fact and information in the short time available on the scene of news (Witschge & Nygren 2009). Welbers et. al. (2016) examined that such live news coverage is disturbing for viewers psychologically. It creates panic and anxiety. It also interferes with the law enforcement agencies to handle situations.

News producers have issues in live news reporting as they think that reporters consume more air time to be on the screen without much information and facts in hand. (Welber et al., 2018). News directors are in favour of live news coverage for a longer span to grab the attention of the viewers. They argue that interaction of reporter on scene of happening with the anchor in studio creates depth in reporting and provide analysis which appeals the viewers (García-Perdomo, Salaverriá, Kilgo, & Harlow, 2018). Campbell, Martin and Fabos (2018) found out that the growing appetite of screen had created justification of live news coverage. The market competition between the news channels of grabbing ratings of viewership has put a race of going on air at the first place even on the cost of authentic information and news values.

Reporter as Gatekeepers

The main character in live news coverage is the reporter on the scene of happening (Tuggle & Huffman, 1999). Print media has toiled several decades to remove the personality the reporters from the new story but live news coverage on television has implanted him back. Casella (2013) found out that during the live coverage of news, reporter do not have sufficient time for authenticating the facts he commonly does in traditional and routine pattern. So the hurriedness results in ironies information incorrect facts and lack of objectivity. Willnat & Weaver (2013) observed that the reporters believes that they role is dissemination and interpretation of the complicated situations on the spot of news during live coverage of television news. The advancements in the technology have transformed the functions and responsibilities from terminal to initial as gatekeepers. Such technology development in media like DSNG has more empowered the staff in field like reporter and cameraman (Welbers et al., 2018).

Gatekeeper Role of Cameraman in Live Coverage of TV News:

Andrews and Caren (2010) had explored that the new technology has changed the news gathering scenario and enhance the role of traditional gatekeepers placed in news room are more less dissolve. Allen (2005) explored that the even media professional under estimate the power of visuals. The cameraman who produced the visuals information is not given importance and proper intention. Bock and Araiza (2015) explained that camera brings the “reality” directly to the home. People think that camera never lies. Every selected short has its impression and a story for the open suggestions for the viewers. In the situation like crises, riots, war, crime and terrorism where live news coverage is aired without editing and the selection is entirely in the hands of cameraman who decides what should be aired (Wettstein, Esser, Schulz, Wirz, & Wirth, 2018).

Hypotheses

On the basis of review of relevant literature, the following hypotheses are developed:

- H1: The gatekeeper role of bureau chief, news editor and news producer is less significant during live coverage of television news.
- H2: The reporters are the significant and major gatekeepers in live coverage of television news.
- H3: The cameraman has an important and significant gatekeeper role in live coverage of television news.

METHODOLOGY

According to the objectives of the study, the researchers used descriptive research design to complete this study. 25 channels licensed by PEMRRA were selected on the basis of their ability to broadcast LIVE news. These channels based in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar. Out of the target population of around 800 persons, researchers chose 300 as sample size by using statistical formulae at 5% level of significance. Researchers used multistage sampling technique in this study. At first stage, news channels that have DSNG vans were selected. At second stage, three strata of top rated, middle rated and channels with low ratings were made on the basis of ratings issued by the only rating company of Pakistan; Medialogics. Thirdly that the persons directly taking active part in live coverage of television news. Lastly, the groups of professionals comprising of bureau chiefs, news editors, news producers, reporters and cameramen were formulated by selecting proportionate samples from them. A response rate of 69% was obtained.

The bilingual questionnaire (Urdu and English) was used which was self-administrative to gather the data. SPSS 21.0 was used to manage and analyze the data. Besides demographic variables, selecting variables of gatekeeping (information, words, tone, slant, visual, shot, frame and placement of camera) were used. After pilot testing, the main study was conducted whose results of reliability are provided in the given table:

Table: Reliability Coefficients

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
-----------	------------------	-------

Deciding Information	.73	13
Deciding Words	.70	13
Deciding Tone	.73	9
Deciding Slant	.79	5
Deciding Visual	.79	5
Deciding Shot	.92	5
Deciding Frame	.96	8
Deciding Camera Placement	.91	4
Total Items		62

DATA ANALYSIS

This sections presents only relevant results according to the objectives of the study, research questions and the hypotheses. The following sections present data analysis and the results.

Normality Analysis

The researchers checked normality of the data set to decide whether or not to use parametric tests for testing hypotheses. The results are as follow:

Table: Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	T-statistic	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis	T-statistic
Deciding Information	.22	.17	1.32	-1.09	.34	-3.26
Deciding Words	.22	.17	1.31	-.81	.34	-2.39
Deciding Tone	.43	.17	2.59	-.43	.34	-1.27
Deciding Slant	.38	.17	2.28	-1.28	.34	-3.81
Deciding Visual	.84	.17	4.97	-.32	.34	-0.96
Deciding Shot	.89	.17	5.27	-.57	.34	-1.69
Deciding Frame	.87	.17	5.16	-.873	.34	-2.59
Deciding Camera Placement	.65	.17	3.86	-1.019	.34	-3.03

The results of T-statistics of Skewness showed that majority of the variables more skewed than the normal range of two (± 1.96). Moreover, the T-statistics of Kurtosis (peakedness) also showed that many variables had kurtosis problem. By summing up both these results of normality analysis, the researchers concluded that the data sets were not normally distributed. Therefore, used Kruskal–Wallis that is a non-parametric statistical test to test the hypotheses.

Comparison of Groups through Kruskal–Wallis Test

The researchers used this test to evaluate differences among five categories of gatekeepers. The results are given as under:

Table 4.2: Ranks

Categories of Staff	Mean Ranks							
	DI	DW	DT	DSL	DV	DSH	DF	DCP
Bureau Chief	32.2	74	53.3	55.6	68.9	50.8	48.1	32.2
News Editor	74.2	96.7	60.3	62.3	70.3	51.4	71.4	61.5
line Producer	40.1	42.2	96.7	81	89.2	78.2	56.1	58.8
Reporter	150.8	171	154.8	172.3	76.9	90.4	90.5	100.2
Camera man	122.4	77.4	92.2	80.4	166.8	173.5	174.1	172.4

The results revealed that reporter and cameraman has the most control on gatekeeping aspects/variables. Which means that bureau chief, news editor and news producer were having lower authority on deciding information, deciding words, deciding tone, deciding slant, deciding visuals, deciding shot, deciding frame and deciding camera

placement. Hence, the hypotheses framed by this study were accepted. The hypotheses are:

H2: The reporters are the significant and major gatekeepers in live coverage of television news.

H3: The cameraman has a significant role as gatekeeper in live coverage of television news.

In order to confirm these descriptive statistics, test statistics were calculated which are provided below:

Table: Test Statistics^{a,b}

			DI	DW	DT	DSL	DV	DSH	DF	DCP
Chi-Square (H)			112.167	130.173	78.935	125.586	100.910	132.483	133.133	140.400
Df			4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.			.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Monte Carlo Sig.	Sig.		.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c	.000 ^c
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		Upper Bound	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
a. Kruskal Wallis Test										
b. Grouping Variable: Designation										
c. Based on 10000 sampled tables with starting seed 213798720.										

The results of chi-square (H) showed that all the variables of gatekeeping were significantly affecting gatekeeping activities by the five categories of the staff as was shown by the p-values which were 0.000. Monte Carlo significance was also 0.000 that confirmed that the effect was genuine and there was also a clear difference among five categories of the staff. Therefore, researchers failed to accept the null hypotheses and accepted the alternative hypotheses that there was significant difference in the responses of five types of staff in terms of gatekeeping process in LIVE news. A graphical depiction of the hypothesis testing is provided in the figure given below:

Figure 4.1: Summary of Hypotheses Testing

DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of current study was to explore the gatekeepers in live coverage of television news. The objectives were to examine the activeness and control of traditional gatekeepers i.e. bureau chief, editors, producers of news and investigate the gatekeeper role of reporters of news and cameraman on location. The findings explained the transformed roles of gatekeepers in live coverage of television news. The gatekeeper role of bureau chief is terminal in routine news gathering as final authority to decide the information, tone, slant and words in the news story before going on air. The gatekeeper role of the bureau chief has been marginalized in live coverage of television news. As the information is directly disseminated from the location of the news so the authority of bureau chief on decision making is minimal. The control he has left with is of deputing the reporter and going on air live and of how long.

The news editor was the key gatekeeper in traditional news gathering. He was the decision maker of selection of information, tone and slant. In the phenomena of live news, he has lost the authority of selection of words, setting of tone and deciding the slant. The information is directly given from the scene of happening so it no more under his jurisdiction during live news. His role as gatekeeper has also been compromised in selection of visuals, framing and deciding the shots in the news report. The observations

have revealed that the live coverage has no role of news room as the signal is directly up link to satellite.

The news producer is the decision maker of finalizing the frame, shot, composition and duration of shot in routine news coverage. He could add graphic, archival footage and other available information during the normal news coverage. He could add music in back ground to give a specific tone and mood to the whole news footage and visuals. The producer has no influence on cameraman for directing visuals, shots, composition and frames also during live reporting. His role is reduced only to pick certain information given by the reporter during live and put it in ticker.

The role of reporter during live coverage of television news is pivotal and central. The gatekeeping control of selection of information, order of information, deciding the tone and deciding slant is shifted to reporter from chief, editor and producer of news bureau. He is not only a disseminator of information but also has assumed the role of analyst and elastrator. He has full control and authority of decision making of content and information in live coverage which empowers him as the most significant gatekeeper role in live coverage of television news. The gatekeeping role of cameraman is always under estimated. In routine news coverage is considered nearly an operator and the decision making lays the producer. But the live phenomenon of news gathering has given the cameraman the control of deciding of shots, frame and composition. Cameraman has emerged as the decider of the visual content. Every visual material and information, which he produces is disseminated directly to the audience through DSNG. His role as gatekeeper has emerged significantly in live coverage of television news from the location.

This study concludes that the roles of prime gatekeepers in normal and routine news gathering i.e. Bureau chief, news editor and news producerware marginalized relegated and minimized whereas reporter has transformed as a key gatekeeper with the role disseminator, illustrator and analyst of information. The cameraman has got the control of visual information so he has emerged as a significant gatekeeper during live news coverage.

References

- Allen, C. (2005). Discovering "Joe Six Pack" content in television news: the hidden history of audience research, news consultants, and the Warner class model. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 49(4), 363-382.
- Andrews, K. T., & Caren, N. (2010). Making the news: Movement organizations, media attention, and the public agenda. *American Sociological Review*, 75(6), 841-866.
- Bass, A.Z. (1969). Redefining the gatekeeper concept: A U.N. radio case study. *Journalism Quarterly*, 46, 59-72.
- Bennett, W. L. (2004). Gatekeeping and press-government relations: A multi-gated model of news construction. In L. L. Kaid (Ed.), *Handbook of political communication research*. Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum.
- Bissell, K. (2000). "A Return to 'Mr. Gates': Photography and Objectivity." *Newspaper Research Journal* 21 (3): 81-93.
- Bleske, G. L. (1991). Ms. Gates takes over: An updated version of a 1949 case study. *Newspaper research journal*, 12(4), 88-97.
- Bock, M. A., & Araiza, J. A. (2015). Facing the death penalty while facing the cameras: A case study of television journalism work routines. *Journalism Practice*, 9(3), 314-331.
- Bro, P., & Wallberg, F. (2014). Digital gatekeeping: News media versus social media. *Digital Journalism*, 2(3), 446-454.
- Campbell, R., Martin, C., & Fabos, B. (2018). *Media essentials: A brief introduction*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Casella, P. A. (2013). Breaking news or broken news? Reporters and news directors clash on "black hole" live shots. *Journalism Practice*, 7(3), 362-376.
- Coddington, M., & Holton, A. E. (2014). When the gates swing open: Examining network gatekeeping in a social media setting. *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(2), 236-257.
- Cowling, D. (2015). Social Media Statistics Australia-September 2015. Retrieved from SocialMediaNews.com.au.
- García-Perdomo, V., Salaverría, R., Kilgo, D. K., & Harlow, S. (2018). To share or not to share: The influence of news values and topics on popular social media content in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. *Journalism studies*, 19(8), 1180-1201.
- Kremmer C., (2015) The Gatekeepers' Legacy: Professionalism, ethics and expertise in the Age of Citizen Journalism. University of New South Wales (Australia).
- Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: II. Channels of group life; social planning and action research. *Human relations*, 1(2), 143-153.
- Li, H., & Lee, C. C. (2014). Guanxi networks and the gatekeeping practices of communication journals in China. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 7(4), 355-372.
- McNelly, J. T. (1959). Intermediary communicators in the international flow of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 36(1), 23-26.

- Meraz, S., & Papacharissi, Z. (2013). Networked gatekeeping and networked framing on# Egypt. *The international journal of press/politics*, 18(2), 138-166.
- Ryfe, D. M. (2013). *Can journalism survive? An inside look at American newsrooms*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. Routledge.
- Shoemaker, P. J., Eichholz, M., Kim, E., & Wrigley, B. (2001). Individual and routine forces in gatekeeping. *Journalism & mass communication quarterly*, 78(2), 233-246.
- Singer, J. B. (2006). Stepping back from the gate: Online newspaper editors and the co-production of content in Campaign 2004. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83(2), 265-280.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C. (2018). 12 Journalism as Gatekeeping. *Journalism*, 19, 235.
- Tompkins, P. K., & Anderson, E. V. B. (2015). *Communication Crisis at Kent State: A Case Study*. Routledge.
- Tuggle, C. A., & Huffman, S. (1999). Live news reporting: Professional judgment or technological pressure? A national survey of television news directors and senior reporters. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 43(4), 492-505.
- Tuggle, C. A., & Huffman, S. (2001). Live reporting in television news: Breaking news or black holes? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(2), 335-344.
- Welbers, K., van Atteveldt, W., Kleinnijenhuis, J., & Ruigrok, N. (2016). A gate eeper among gate eepers: The impact of a single news agency on political news in print and online newspapers in the Netherlands. *Journalism Studies*, 1-22.
- Welbers, K., Van Atteveldt, W., Kleinnijenhuis, J., & Ruigrok, N. (2018). A gatekeeper among gatekeepers: News agency influence in print and online newspapers in the Netherlands. *Journalism Studies*, 19(3), 315-333.
- Wettstein, M., Esser, F., Schulz, A., Wirz, D. S., & Wirth, W. (2018). News Media as Gatekeepers, Critics, and Initiators of Populist Communication: How Journalists in Ten Countries Deal with the Populist Challenge. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(4), 476-495.
- White, D. M. (1950). The "gate keeper": A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 27(4), 383-390.
- Whitney, D. C., & Becker, L. B. (1982). 'Keeping the gates' for gatekeepers: The effects of wire news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 59(1), 60-65.
- Willnat, L., Weaver, D. H. & Choi, J (2013), "The global journalist in the twenty-first century: A cross-national study of journalistic competencies", *Journalism Practice*, 7(2):163-183.
- Witschge, T., & Nygren, G. (2009). Journalistic work: A profession under pressure? *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6(1), 37-59.
- Wouters, R. (2015). Reporting demonstrations: On episodic and thematic coverage of protest events in Belgian television news. *Political Communication*, 32(3), 475-496.