

Investigating the Relationship between the Sources of the News Media and Audiences' Gratification:

Balochistan Case Study

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Abstract

The primary purpose of journalism is to create knowledgeable people and societies. This can only be possible when news sources tell the truth and earn the trust of the public through people-centric reporting. Previous reports show that the news media in many societies around the world failed to satisfy users by broadcasting human-centric programming. Even news sources tried to mislead and misinform the public, thereby losing their trust. This article focused on understanding the relationship of news sources with audiences of Balochistan by examining which news sources people in Balochistan use most often to be well-informed about their issues. This study used the qualitative method and conducted 18 interviews of key informants who belonged to diverse professions with at least 15 years of experience. The findings of this study conclude that the participants primarily rely on Haal Ehwaal (human-to-human interaction) to become well-informed about issues in Balochistan because they trust it the most. Participants treated two local newspapers as the second, and social media platforms as their third sources of news. The results of this study may help news media groups in Pakistan in improving their relationships with viewers in Balochistan by giving them equal representation in reporting.

Keywords: Audiences in Balochistan; Public Trust; News Sources in Balochistan; User and Gratification Theory; News Media and Public Relationship; Distrust in the public sphere.

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1. Introduction

Notable scholars, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel believed that the primary purpose of journalism is the function news plays in people's lives. No doubt, journalism provides people with knowledge and information so that they can make the best possible decisions about their lives, culture, communities, societies, and governments. In general, people want journalism to be fair, balanced, accurate, and complete. People do not care about how news organizations can achieve these factors and maintain the truth. In fact, they receive the trust of the public in return for telling the truth.

Although, the decline of people's trust in media began in the 1970s as stated by Hoque (14), however; it has recently become a hot topic in the public sphere all around the world, especially after the emergence of social and digital media sources. According to a survey, half of Americans believed national news organizations intended to mislead, and misinform audiences, or persuade the public to adopt a particular point of view through their reporting. Media groups intended to deceive people [7]. Dallas News mentioned that public trust in the news media is tragically low and news organizations are no longer considered credible sources of objective and accurate information. People are wondering if what they are hearing or reading is true or made up, fair or slanted [18].

In fact, the media's credibility is interlinked with telling the truth, which puts down all fingers, if raised against media groups that follow ethics. There are many media groups that have built trust over the past many decades, such as BBC, New York Times, Reuters, Guardian, Washington Post, etc. In 2023, the three media groups in the world gained widespread trust in the USA. According to Sanders [27], "Americans view The Weather Channel, PBS, and the BBC as the most trustworthy major media organizations".

In the meantime, sources of news and information are also very important parts of telling real and true stories and exposing lies. The truth cannot be revealed without trustworthy news sources or media organizations. Sources of information help journalists build trust with the public. Authentic and reliable sources increase the knowledge of journalists and provide them with facts about hidden things or events. Critics argued that news sources provide speedy insights that scholarly sources may not or that will take a long time to get into scholarly sources. Hence, news sources are excellent for finding out people's reactions, opinions, and prevailing attitudes around the time of an event. It is the duty of the media to know about people's satisfactions, needs, and behaviors and perform accordingly to get the public's support and trust. Failure to show care to the public means the media do not have people-centric coverage.

Now the problem is how to understand people's views whether they like certain news media or not. Experts suggested conducting academics, which is a vital way to understand people's gratification or attachment to media sources and how people influence the media or how media influence people. Researchers, scholars, and students from the journalism field are contributing to studying people's needs, stratifications, hopes, and goals that they keep with the media. However, there are still many hidden lands, societies, and communities, that seek the particular attention of media scholars to conduct studies for understanding their perceptions and behaviors on whether the media sources satisfy their needs and goals and whether people in particular regions trust the

media. Balochistan is one such region of the world, where people of this land face many problems in terms of media and journalism practices, which need to be addressed in the shape of an academic paper.

1.1. What is Balochistan?

The term Balochistan means, the land of the *Baloch people*. It is the largest province of Pakistan by area wise that encompasses 44% of the country's total territory. However, it is the least populous province holding 5.94% aggregate of the total population while the Baloch ethnic group holds only 3.57 %. Balochistan has a borderline with Afghanistan on the western side, Iran on the southwestern part, and the Indian Ocean on the South [33].

Balochistan used to be an independent state, but the East India Company arrived in the Indian sub-continent in 1600 and gradually strengthened its control in Balochistan. Consequently, British General Willshire killed Mir Mehrab Khan (Khan of Kalat) and occupied the state on November 13, 1839 (34). In 1873 and 1893, one part was given to Iran and another to Afghanistan, and the third part (current Balochistan) became part of Pakistan [28]. When Britain intended to divide India, the Khan of Kalat declared independence on 11 August 1947 [37]. Seeing this, the Pakistan military occupied Balochistan in March 1948 [37].

This situation led to the first armed insurgency against Pakistan organized by Prince Karim Khan who was the brother of the Khan of Kalat [5]. The political and economic marginalization raised five insurgencies in the province. For example, the first insurgency began in 1948, the second in 1958, the third in 1962, the fourth one between 1973 to 1977, and the fifth started in 2002 and continues to date [21]. Chandrasekhar [9]. stated the last insurgency, which is going on; is for complete independence from Pakistan.

The Punjab (land of the Punjabi ethnic group) is the most dominated and the thick populous Pakistani province (56%) that not only holds strong authority at the State level, but it has the largest representation in parliament, the armed forces, civil and military intelligence, bureaucracy, and judiciary. In 2001, the Punjabis constituted over 71 percent of the armed forces [39]. The study findings of Seyal [38]. stated that this dominating and major ethnic group does not consider the political, sociological, economic, and social status of indigenous, minority, and weak nations in Pakistan, including the Baloch population in Balochistan. The people of Balochistan have a historic feeling that Punjab exploits and takes their resources but does not remove deprivation [20]. Not only this, but Punjab also dominates and controls the entire media industry in Pakistan.

In this case, Arif (2) discloses that the Punjabis own media companies, hold important positions, and promote, and protect their interests very similarly, to the Whites do in America. Most senior journalists, columnists, TV anchors, and analysts are retired military and civilian bureaucrats from Punjab. They ignore reporting the issues of people from other ethnic groups and languages in similar ways to the Whites do with minority social groups in America.

Many research findings support this argument such as, Alam and Jullandhary [1] revealed that Pakistani national media gives little attention to Balochistan. In the opinion of Ashraf and Badar [3], the media played a silent role in Balochistan issues. In like manner, Sangar Publication described that no one dares to disclose the

facts of whatsoever happening in Balochistan. Additionally, Akbar [4] disclosed that the editors of television channels and national newspapers in Pakistan censor the stories when filed by Balochistan-based local correspondents. As a result, the issues of the Baloch ethnic group do not reach outside the world and this large province stays under a media blackout. Similarly, local people face communication and information hurdles within their own country. It is very important to find out what sources of news they trust and use them to become well-informed about issues of their province and people. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate what news media sources the people of Balochistan mainly use to get information about issues in Balochistan. The aim has also been to examine their gratification with the news media.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper selected only one research question, which is mentioned below:

1) What primary source of media do you use to get news, information, and knowledge about issues in Balochistan?

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Some ask the question of why public trust matters in media. Researchers believe that people's trust in the media is important because people influence media, and meanwhile, it relates to people's socio-political activities, thoughts, ideas, and behaviors towards or against certain issues [14]. The Ivey Business Journal expressed that trust is a key factor in building loyalty, increasing credibility, and supporting effective communication. Loyalty means people are totally active and engaged with the media which shows the truth. They pay special attention and spend time, and money, install news apps, and share and promote news with their friends and family [24].

Some stated that people's trust in media is important for a functioning democracy [15], and some claimed that it builds a critical mechanism in social cohesion [11], and serves as an important information channel for major public issues [36]. Some mentioned that the media could be a significant source of political information, knowledge, and an inducer of political participation [27]. Some argue that the media influences the public by changing their behavior and compels them to favor or go against any commodity [14].

Whereas some stated that people influence the media with their power. People don't read, hear, or watch the media if that does not fulfill their certain needs, or they even reject it. Some raise questions such as which news media source people are gratified with, and whether it represents them equally or offers them in-depth information and knowledge about their issues and problems. The African American and Hispanic news consumers say it is very important for them to see their communities and people in news coverage. This shows that race and ethnicity also matter when it comes to why people trust or rely on different news sources. This public perception takes us to the User and the Gratification (U&G) theory of the press.

The media effects model or the hypodermic needle theory was introduced during World War II, which suggested that media messages are injected directly into the brains of passive audiences. This theory claims that people are the same and all respond to media messages in the same way. However, the Uses and Gratification

theory, developed in the 1940s was at the complete opposite end of the hypodermic needle theory. U&G took the audience's viewpoint and stated that the individuals were active participants in media exchange. This theory suggests that media has no power over audiences. Instead, audiences are highly active in their media usage, seeking out media to fulfill a certain need. Audiences create their own individual meanings after they seek out that media. Uses and Gratification come from the idea that the media serves a purpose. If the audience has certain uses or needs, then the media fulfills or gratifies those needs. Audiences turn to the media as a useful tool to gratify their needs.

Blumler and Katz [40]. claimed that individuals participate actively in the process of media consumption if media content matches their goals, desires, and needs, or represents their culture, social and ethnic backgrounds. Meaning to say, users like to choose a media source that best satisfies their needs. This process of choosing the right media comes under the Uses and Gratifications theory. Derek Lane endorsed Blumber and Katz's theory and stated that in the U&G process, users are goal-oriented in choosing the right media to use [40].

Importantly, Katz theorized that both uses and gratifications are connected to a set of human needs, such as orientation, understanding, showing traditions, or storing of knowledge of a community. People predict which media serves their needs in a positive way, and which media ignores them or their needs. For example, people want to see them, their representatives, community representation, their culture, and norms, in the media. If the media gives them proper coverage and equal representation, they like to use it. If the media propagates against them, or their group, they don't like to use it. However, theorists also stated that not all needs can be satisfied by just any medium.

Theorists mentioned that there are several examples where the audience stopped a TV show or movie from being broadcast. Likewise, there are countless examples of people boycotting the media or being pulled from broadcast due to audience backlash or disinterest [29].

Literature shows that this theory was first introduced by Lazarsfeld and Stanton in 1944. They wanted to know the reasons people used mass media and the different types of gratification they received from it. According to them, gratification was the happiness or satisfaction shown by the individual. In the 1980s, Rubin stated that researchers had to understand audiences' desire and their consumption trends in using media, as both could increase the effects of media. He stated that children had six purposes for using television, such as learning, passing time, companionship, escape, arousal, and relaxation. In the case of adults, they use the TV for passing time, information, entertainment, companionship, and escape. Importantly, Rubin (1984) also identified two types of audiences, ritualized and instrumental. Ritualized use of TV as a diversion and instrumental for information purposes, which is very important in relation to this research paper.

Levy and Windahl [29] declared audiences as totally active who choose mass media in different communication settings, times, and sequences. During this process, audiences pursue three types of activities. First is pre-activity in which their behaviors matter while looking at the content of the media. Second is dura-activity in which their psychology, and experience of their personal involvement matter while choosing the mass media. Third is post-activity in which their behaviors matter after choosing media, whether it reflected their cultural or

societal norms, values, and issues of their community. These perceptions clearly show that people are attracted to mass media that represent them and their communities. They repel the media if that undermines their societal norms or does not give them representation. This was what was said by Levy and Windahl [7] that people understand the media's ability whether it gratifies their societal and psychological needs. Similarly, Garramone [8] stated that people's choices in media matter a lot during information processing because they possess decision-making power in deciding whether the media channel and content attract them.

The very important thing, in theory, was that people could not merely become passive media consumers and believe whatever media broadcast, but that they play an active role in selecting different media that meet their needs as mentioned by [7,14,29]. U&G gained widespread popularity in the late 1950s, and 1960s at a time when traditional theories could not explain people's experiences with mass media [8].

Through the U&G theory, Blumler and Katz presented five core elements. First is goal-directed in which media offer knowledge and information to audiences related to their own society. In the second element, the audiences are responsible for connecting with the type of media that fits their communication needs. The third element talked about competition in which media competes with other sources to maximize viewers by satisfying their needs. According to the fourth element, the audiences possess a sense of self-awareness to discuss the role of media in satisfying their needs. The fifth element explains that the audience chooses the information provided and explores the content on its own terms. Only the audience can apply value judgment to the media because each experience is unique and fulfills different needs. Meaning to say, if the content or narrative propagates their needs, they reject the media.

An interesting finding by Martin [40] showed that negative news coverage was a stimulator of political participation and increased awareness of problems and peoples' interest in politics [14]. This means people are politically too active to participate in socio-political activities and understand the media's negative role in terms of undermining or under-representing them. Commonly, civil society organizations and political parties target news media with different words such as claiming that media is the enemy of the public, it's the puppet of the government, it releases fake and fabricated news, and propagates against one and favors another. Meaning to say, people are geniuses in choosing the right media and become happy if that satisfies them by representing them, their culture, society, community, social and political contributions, and struggle.

Some mass communications scholars criticized the U&S theory and contended that it is not a rigorous social science theory. However, in his recent research findings, Ruggiero [41]. asserted that uses and gratifications have always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each medium such as newspapers, radio, television, and now the internet. His findings asserted that any attempt to speculate on the future direction of mass communication theory must seriously include the uses and gratifications approach [41].

3. Methodology

This study employed the Qualitative Research Approach and conducted an investigative field survey in the shape of in-depth interviews in Balochistan. The researcher used semi-structured question outlines and an audio

recorder instrument.

The researcher used Purposive Sampling to choose the informants randomly, which represented the portion of the population in Balochistan. The target was to collect about 20 key informants from diversified backgrounds who had at least 15 years of experience in their respective fields in Balochistan. However, the researcher managed to take 18 interviews. Below is the list of various individuals who belonged to diverse backgrounds:

Table 1: Category of Informants

Nature of Informants	Nos of Informants	Assigned Codes
Journalists and News Editors	6	JE
Media Owners	2	MO
Academics and Researchers	2	AR
Politicians and Parliamentarians	3	PP
Intellectuals and Authors	2	IA
Human Rights Activists/Defenders	3	HR
Total	18	

Table 1 provides data on the categories of informants interviewed according to their profession and long years of experience in their respective fields in Balochistan. The opinion of these informants was extracted and explained accordingly.

4. Results

The study conducted interviews with participants from diversified professions and backgrounds who had at least 15 years of experience in their respective fields, serving in Balochistan. Interestingly, their opinion and comments have been almost similar in terms of choosing the main source of news and information, which helped them to be well-informed about events, incidents, and many other issues of Balochistan province.

Politicians and Parliamentarians (PP) class stated that people-to-people or human-to-human interaction is their main practice and activity. However, they mentioned that their respective political organizations have a wide network across the province. They mainly get news from their party workers, members, and local leaders. Meaning to say, social interaction has been the main component in receiving news and information, whether individually, or in the shape of gatherings. PP-1 said,

“I do personally travel to different areas of the province for party conventions, meetings, and public gatherings and see the situations directly”.

He said, also he uses local newspapers and online media but mostly trusts communicating with party workers that provide him with authentic news and information about ground realities. Some local newspapers, such as the Daily Intikhab and the Daily Azaadi, somehow also, provide trustable news stories about people and the province and I usually read them. I do not trust electronic media because they release speedy news without

authentication or misinterpret the events in Balochistan.

PP-2 argued that he deals with two types of news sources. In the first one, the stories are planted, engineered, intentionally created, and then spread by powerful classes, groups, and parties to achieve their respective interests and goals. In the second type of news sources, the stories are believed to be real and true and are spread by trusted sources of newsgroups, which is lacking in Balochistan. He said, *"Therefore, I have a group of like-minded friends, political personalities, triable leaders, tribal chiefs, and opposite-minded friends all over Balochistan. We interact either personally or through phone calls share information and talk about issues. This is the best way in which we discuss and debate Balochistan issues, regional and global politics, and much more"*.

Similarly, for PP-3, the party workers, members, and local activists have been the main sources through which he comes to know about the issues of people and this province and through political activities and corner meetings at local levels. PP-3 said, *"We are aware of the issues and ground realities, and this has been possible through people-to-people talks"*. He said that Balochistan has historically been blacked out in national and international media but somehow, BBC Radio reports issues and I trust BBC. He said, *"I also rely on social media"*.

PP class mentioned that issues and problems of people are hidden and do not become part of news media outlets. If someone wants to know what people think, how they react to political matters, and what injustices they face, then must personally interact with people. Otherwise, nothing becomes publicized and remains hidden. They argued that the issues in the remote areas of Balochistan are totally different from Islamabad, or other cosmopolitan cities of Pakistan.

Journalists and Editors class get news and information from their reporters, correspondents, social workers, political activists, or sometimes visiting various areas personally. Sometimes, people from different walks of life and parties protest and come to the streets to record protests. So, this class collects information directly. JE-1 said, *"I get information from my fellow journalists, political parties, student wings, human rights activists, and the masses all over Balochistan"*.

JE-2 said, *"I live abroad, so, people from Balochistan provide me with information and share their stories through talks on the phone or chatting through digital Apps"*. He said he also read online versions of the local newspapers, such as the daily Intikhab, daily Azaadi, and daily Qudrat. These local newspapers provide better information about Balochistan.

JE-3 gets information from correspondence, politicians, social workers, well-known friends, and social networks. He said that it is easy to get news stories through social media, but it has become very difficult to publish or circulate them in their news outlets because nothing is reliable and trustworthy. He said, *"Relying upon people is the best way that share in-depth information about their communities"*. Moreover, he stated that he sometimes personally visits different areas of the province where he sees the ground realities.

JE-4 argued that he has a network of friends, and relationships with people, politicians, and colleagues from the

media industry. He said that there is no better and more authentic source of news media than human-to-human interaction that provides in-depth information about the issues of Balochistan. He said, *"I also use social media, but I do not trust or publish them until I get it confirmed from my hidden sources. There are risks and fear that parties, governments, and banned organizations, will pressurize me to know about my hidden sources and will face consequences"*.

JE-5 had an anonymous network of people who covered different beats, including the educated class. He stated that he gets information about various incidents, events, and problems of respective areas. He argued that his network personally informs him about incidents through telephone, email, and digital Apps. JE-6 also relies on a network of friends, relatives, family members, political and social workers, lawyers, human rights defenders, and other community leaders who talk and share knowledge and information about Balochistan. He also gets news from social media and then authenticates through people in the area.

Intellectual and Authors class (IA) also mentioned that they mainly rely on Haal Ehwaal with people who travel from far-flung areas of Balochistan and share stories of their respective areas.

IA-1 said, *"I don't trust media sources because they face restrictions, and they don't have sources and resources, or access to report about the huge province"*. He argued that media sources don't have professional skills and training. They don't report on issues professionally. Moreover, there are security issues in Balochistan. It is difficult for reporters and media outlets to address the hidden issues. *"Therefore, I rely on people mostly that leak hidden incidents"*, he said. IA-1 argued that he also reads local newspapers, online platforms, and international media such as CNN, BBC, and Aljazeera.

IA-2 had the same thoughts, He said that there is no news media source that we believe. *"I interact with people, friends, relatives, that send information through text, talking via phone, and discussion through personal visits."*

Academic and Researcher (AR) class seemed to be disappointed because according to them there were no trustable or reliable sources of news media that could give in-depth information and knowledge about the people and society of Balochistan. AR-1 said, *"I do not see a source of news that makes the voices of the people heard at the national or international level"*.

AR-2 stated that there is not even a single local magazine that truly represents the voices of people, people should trust it and use it as a platform to express their views and opinions freely. *"In a general way, I only receive true information through people-to-people interactions"*, he said.

Human Rights (HR) class complained that there is no authentic and people-oriented news organization in Pakistan that addresses the real issues of the people of Pakistan. This class complained that mainstream media hides serious and sensitive issues of Balochistan and other human rights abuses. This class stated that they do not trust the news media of Pakistan anymore.

HR-1 argued that he prefers social media platforms because they are influential, and people can easily share their matters. However, he said that he does not fully rely upon social media because social media is not free

and second there are internet coverage issues, and electricity. He said, *"I verify news through my network of friends and people. If people use the same stories, I then believe"*.

HR-2 said that he has a group of friends all over the province and their organization operates social media that reports issues all over Baluchistan. He said, *"These platforms help us to get information about different incidents in Balochistan"*. He said that he also relies on local newspapers, such as the daily Intikhab, and daily Azaadi, which highlight common issues of people and political activities.

HR-3 mainly relied on the Haal-Ehwaal. He said, *"This is the most authentic way of sharing information in Baloch culture. So, this is my first and most authentic source of information"*. He said that Twitter is another important source but since there is no internet or electricity in most parts of Balochistan, as a result, issues remain hidden.

Media Owners (MO) stated that they depend on people, reporters, and correspondence. People are their main sources of news throughout Balochistan. They get information about issues of the province, and stories about events or incidents through phone calls, WhatsApp, email, social media, phone, and mobile text. MO-2 said, *"People in Balochistan are the primary sources, but I don't get news from the national media. People call to our office and share stories"*.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The collective opinion of all the informants disclosed that they considered people-to-people or human-to-human interaction as the topmost trusted source of receiving information about issues, incidents, and other matters of Balochistan. Most of the time, ground realities are different and are not reported in the news. Findings proved that this channel has been treated by the participants as the most trustworthy, reliable, authentic, and common practice of sharing confidential, secret, and hidden stories, which do not become part of any news media channels.

On serious and sensitive issues, people like to get together, interact with and influence each other, and finally be well-informed. This interaction is called Social Interaction [42]. It usually refers to face-to-face encounters in which people are physically present with one another for a specified duration. However, in the digital world people mediate through calling, texting, telephone, skyping, and messaging using digital devices [43]. Through social interactions, people predict the well-being of their community, society, and the physical health of individuals [43]. The practice of people-to-people interaction is closely related to social interaction.

In Balochistan, people historically used to travel from one village to another, one area to another, one territory to another, and one region to another. They used to carry information about their communities and regions and share it with one another mostly in the shape of group discussions. So, in this way, information was transmitted and expanded to a large population. This tradition is still practiced in Balochistan. The only difference is that before people used to expand it with a physical presence, but in the current digital age, they also expand and transmit information via telephone, WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, and messenger calls.

In the Balochi language, people-to-people interaction is called, *Haal Ehwaal*; an old and traditional way of communication; which has been practiced in Baloch traditions for centuries. Through *Haal Ehwaal*, people carry information while traveling from one village to another, and from one corner of the land to another and share it with people of the respective area, which is then expanded throughout the region. This practice still exists but digital information devices and sources made it easier for people to interact with one another through telephone, WhatsApp, and Messenger. People share their difficulties and grievances and discuss many other sensitive issues through interpersonal communication.

Key informants stated that Balochs not only live in Balochistan but throughout the country, including in Sindh and Punjab provinces. Therefore, the Baloch population in other parts of the country also receives information about the hidden issues of Balochistan through people-to-people interaction as people routinely travel and pay visits to one another.

Human rights activists stated that the traditional ways of communication are more authentic in the case of Balochistan even in the digital age of digital media because people at the grassroots level have in-depth knowledge of their territory and are passionately curious to share it with others. Journalists and editors class get information by interacting with their reporters, correspondents, social workers, politicians, students, activists, and members of civil society. They use multiple news and information sources to fact-check. Politicians receive information through party members and voters. Likewise, human rights defenders, intellectuals, authors, writers, and academics receive information from their industry and professional peers, friends, and civil society institutions.

Since key informants belonged to different professions and schools of thought, therefore; they received information and knowledge about the province from different categories of people. For instance, politicians and parliamentarians mainly relied on their party workers, party members, and student organizations. The intellectual class is the backbone of any society because they maintain unbiased and impartial perceptions on societal issues. This class used writers, authors, scholars, poets, and literary classes as sources of knowledge.

Similarly, human rights activists treated lawyers, bar councils, legal experts, human rights organizations, members, defenders, NGOs, and social workers as their sources of news and information. They treated people-to-people interaction as more credible, reliable, and authentic. However, they stated that the process of people-to-people interaction is slow and does not have a speedy, and wider reach. The leaking of information takes time to reach all corners of Balochistan, which is a strong communication barrier. However, the right information finally reaches all corners of Balochistan and politically mobilizes people. For example, enforced disappearance in Balochistan is a serious issue. Participants said that security forces suddenly jump into the houses and abduct youth, students, journalists, political activists, writers, intellectuals, and human rights defenders, which is not reported and remains hidden in news media. However, people are witnessed. The victimized families, their relatives, and others share or locally protest, which is then expanded all over the province through human-to-human interaction.

Academics and researchers relied on their fellows from different colleges and universities, researchers, students,

teachers, family members, and relatives. JE class stated that they rely on invisible sources, educated class, social workers, friends, relatives, fellow journalists, politicians, leaders, police, agencies, lawyers, human rights and political activists, and civil society institutions. Local media owners receive information through their reporters, correspondents, freelance journalists, analysts, writers, columnists, and stringers.

Collectively, all the key informants treated local newspapers, such as the Daily Azadi, and Daily Intikhab as their second and social media platforms as their third, source of news and information after people-to-people interaction. Some participants believed that local newspapers provided them with reliable, trustworthy, and authentic news stories about incidents in Balochistan. However, some pointed out that local newspapers cover general issues but do not address sensitive issues and human rights abuses. Most local newspapers are government dummies as their focus is on generating revenue and remaining silent on serious issues. The military and intelligence agencies scrutinize the activities of local writers, journalists, reporters, and correspondents and pressure newspaper owners not to publish sensitive stories. However, the findings showed that participants have trust in local newspapers. Likewise, local journalists have the will to perform journalistic duties, but they lack skills and training in investigative journalism as well as story-telling competencies in all dimensions. Findings show that submitting information and communications to international news outlets is a risky practice for local journalists. Meanwhile, local news lacks resources, training, and international-oriented platforms to broadcast or publish stories.

Participants stated that they are redirecting to online and social media because it is easy and quick to post stories and hold up photos and videos of sudden incidents. Participants stated that social media mobilizes people, exposes corruption and injustice, and brings tough times to government institutions. However, social media lacks maturity, fact-checking, and authenticity. Individuals and groups do not follow ethics and play the role of jury and judge and use offensive language.

The results show that many areas of Balochistan lack electricity and internet connections, and as a result, people face obstacles and difficulties in using social media platforms. Similarly, the Cyber Crime Act introduced by the government in 2016 restricts social media platforms. Government agencies monitor the activities of social media activists. Social media is therefore treated as a powerful voice-raising vehicle when free from government control and authority. Somehow, they also relied on BBC Radio Urdu language service, which according to them, reported issues of Balochistan professionally.

This is very symbolic and alarming that a population from the largest province of the country does not rely on the mainstream media of its own country to get stories about their province. Usually, the mainstream media of a country is considered an ideal public-oriented platform for its citizens, which gives equal representation to all social groups that live in different corners and far-flung areas without being biased. However, this is a dilemma with the Pakistani mainstream media, which is not trusted by the people of the largest province of Pakistan.

The opinions of the participants surprised me, and one can wonder why they mostly liked to use human or people-to-people interaction in the age of science and technology where news media can easily be accessed through radio, TV, and the Internet. The other perspective is Pakistan has seen a very vibrant media landscape

after 2002 and the government issued more than 100 licenses for news channels to operate. Undoubtedly, these TV channels have become very influential in the Pakistani political system, attracting viewers despite in presence of powerful social media. Another question arises as to why participants did not use mainstream TV channels of Pakistan or the international press to get the news about the issues of Balochistan and its people. The human rights violations and other serious incidents in Balochistan do not capture the attention of the mainstream media of its own country. Many local journalists are even killed in Balochistan without the mainstream media taking much notice.

Salamat [45]. stated that not a single instance proves that the mischiefs, which are part of daily routine in Balochistan; get coverage by the mainstream media of Pakistan. She further stated that the powerful institutions wittingly black out human rights violations of Balochistan in the national media. The findings of Sharif [45] showed that mainstream media of Pakistan ignored to report the issues of Baloch missing persons, lawlessness, uncontrolled inflation, lack of civilian governance, under-development, poverty, public health issues, potable drinking water, and unjust distribution of resources, etc. Whereas [46] stated that when Pakistan's mainstream media cover issues related to Balochistan they tend to distort their coverage and misinform their audiences and the country's wider audience is not informed of human rights violations in the province. The dilemma is the mainstream media did not even portray the recent flood and heavy rain which destroyed a huge human population and a large area of Balochistan in 2022 and was busy covering political rivalries in Punjab and Islamabad [47].

Looking at the above-cited reports and arguments, it seems, the people of Balochistan do not trust mainstream news media in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistani national media do not much care about addressing in-depth and serious issues of the people of one of the provinces of their own country. These situations might have created frustration in the minds of people in Balochistan and as a result, they do not trust Pakistani news media. Hence, they mostly rely on people-to-people interaction, which according to them is a more authenticated, trusted, and reliable source of information in Balochistan.

Usually, mainstream journalists excuse for not raising issues of Balochistan by saying that they are prohibited from talking, which gives them the best reason to avoid serious human rights abuses. The fact is bold people choose journalism mission because it needs sacrifices and dedication to expose the truth. Compromising with this field and excusing not raising public issues means they don't follow the true path of journalism. A former political scientist at Harvard University and journalist at Fortune magazine, Paul H. Weaver argued that the U.S. press, like the U.S. government, is a corrupt and troubled institution. Corrupt not so much in the sense that it accepts bribes but in a systemic sense. It fails to do what it claims to do, what it should do, and what society expects it to do. Both are entwined in a vicious circle of mutual manipulation, mythmaking, and self-interest. The news media are unable to tell the public what is true, and the government is unable to govern effectively (Vanerwicken, 1995). If Paul thinks that the press and government in the USA are corrupt, then what would be the scenario of governance system and journalism practices in a third-world country like Pakistan?

To conclude, the findings proved that human-to-human interaction has been the primary source of news and communication for the users of Balochistan which they trusted the most and relied upon deeply. The participants

believed this channel gratified them and enabled them to discuss and debate issues of their community, and Balochistan mutually. Local newspapers, such as the daily Intikhab and the daily Azadi have been the second, and social media has been the third source of news and information for the participants. They use these platforms to get information and gain some knowledge about various incidents, injustices, and events in Balochistan.

5.1 Limitations

There have been certain limitations, which certainly affected this study. These could be the sample size, methodology, research framework, academic research expertise, etc. I could not decide whether the size was significant and ensured the representation of the entire Baloch population or not. I conducted 20 interviews, but one participant requested me later, not to include his opinion. Second, I lost the audio of another participant. So, I had the data that came from 18 participants. Crewell suggested that the sample size ranges between 20 and 30 interviews is adequate. Patton suggested that thematic saturation is mostly achieved following the completion of 20 interviews. Meanwhile, quantitative research can be conducted in the future to test the satisfaction of viewers by involving many people in the Baloch population. The big benefit of open-ended questions was that they allowed the researcher to explain the theme of the question in front of informants in detail, and in return, key informants were given enough brief, and space to understand the purpose of the research. In a quantitative framework, and by merely distributing questionnaires; the individual participants might not understand the in-depth purpose of the study, except by choosing an option enlisted in the questionnaire.

Undoubtedly, Balochistan has numerous human rights issues, but these serious issues are hidden both in the journalistic and academic world. As a result, researchers find rare studies, especially in the media and journalism fields. There is a lack of prior research that could focus on trust or distrust of news media in Balochistan or that could clarify how people can react to blacking out of media, what could be their feelings about sources of news and information, what could be their grievances about the state's media, and mainstream media and what role journalists and journalism could play in addressing their serious issues worldwide. There are a couple of universities in Balochistan with media and journalism departments, but their research is limited and does not touch on sensitive issues. They should have played a vital role in exposing lies, atrocities, injustices and inequalities, and human rights abuses through academic work, but they did not. Therefore, advancement for further research is urgently needed.

Similarly, I collected self-reported data in the shape of qualitative research. There must not be any doubt that whatever has been spoken by the experts, I included their opinions exactly in the way they talked. I did not misinterpret any of their details. However, some may raise questions about its authenticity, exaggeration, and verification. This can also create limitations in this study. Currently, I am new in the academic field. I do not have experience in conducting academic research, or expertise in writing and describing scientific phenomena perfectly in academic ways. I might not define my research the way it should have been. This thing might create limitations and viewers should keep this thing in mind.

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