
PEACE JOURNALISM – A PRESSING NEED IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract: The changing and increasingly volatile nature of conflict from inter to intra-state has resulted in the requirement of all key players to intensify their roles and confirm their commitment towards peace building. A study of reporting of conflicts has shown that a majority of media content fall in what can be categorised as war journalism, which feeds into the frenzy of the time instead of reporting in a responsible way. It is argued that current journalism or mainstream news values are conflict oriented.

Journalism being the fourth pillar of the society has a larger role to play in peace building and its contribution in shaping the opinions of the people cannot be ignored. If media play a negative role in terms of increasing the tensions between and among the sides of the conflict, they can also play a positive role by promoting peace. Peace Journalism that has emerged as a recent discipline believes in this premise. However, as with any new discipline, peace journalism has to undergo extreme scrutiny and critique before it is accepted and established as a serious field of study. This paper is an attempt to do so.

The paper will talk about the emergence of peace journalism as a separate discipline. It will critically evaluate the requirements for such a discipline outside of the conventional journalism and the differences between good journalism and peace journalism. It will also attempt to document some important peace journalism experiments conducted worldwide so that the impact of Peace Journalism can be assessed.

Keywords: Media, Journalism, Peace Journalism, Conflict

Introduction: ‘Peace Journalism’, a term coined in the 1970s by Johan Galtung, is increasingly being used to describe what *ought to be* done by journalists rather than what is currently being done. As with any such term, there are various definitions that encompass the whole nature and proposed structure of what Peace Journalism (PJ) means and should encompass. This paper will analyse the concept of Peace Journalism and trace its history, study its contemporary relevance and analyse its critiques and limitations.

Methodology: Advancements in Information Technology have created a revolution in the area of social science research. Enormous amounts of data have been gathered that is now easily available for secondary research. This has created a requirement to utilize the existing data for research so that the information gathered and compiled is not emaciated. So, there is a greater need to conduct secondary data analysis to properly utilize, analyse and organize the existing literary resources.

At a time where the large amounts of data being collected, compiled, and archived by researchers all over the world are now more easily accessible, the time has definitely come for secondary data analysis as a viable method (Johnston, 2014). The current paper has adopted secondary data analysis as the main method for research. The researches, debates, discussions and reports on the subject have been thoroughly analyzed, verified and scrutinized to reach the final conclusion.

Peace Journalism – a brief history: Two of the major proponents of Peace Journalism, Lynch and McGoldrick define Peace Journalism as: “Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report

them- that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict” (Lynch, 2005)

Irvan sees it as “a normative rather than descriptive theory in that it brings obligations to journalists about what to do, how to do and why to do” (Irvan, 2006)

The Centre for Global Peace Journalism (Youngblood, 2016) defines PJ as “editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. Peace Journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable.” (Youngblood, 2016)

Shinar (2007) defines PJ as “a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict, that aims at contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards war and peace.” (Shinar, 2007)

Johan Galtung began by segregating what he called ‘War journalism’ from ‘Peace journalism’, the former, according to him being what is practiced and the latter what ought to be practiced. The idea is well explained by the ‘Rashomon effect’, named after the famous film *Rashomon* (1950) by Akira Kurosawa which deals with the nature of truth. Using this idea to understand PJ, we see that there can be different versions of the truth, all depending upon the perceptions of the people reporting it.