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Exploring Media Quality Indicators: Analyzing Journalistic Content on Pakistani News Websites**Wajid Zulqarnain¹**¹Assistant Professor, Media Studies, SZABIST, IslamabadEmail: dr.wajid@szabist-isb.edu.pk

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine media quality indicators and how they contribute to improving journalistic content on electronic news websites. The survey approach was used in this descriptive research study. Tools for in-depth interviews and a questionnaire were employed. One hundred employees of Pakistani news websites made up the study sample. The study concluded that there was a medium level of quality understanding and that a modern administrative structure and excellent output in all site services are the keys to achieving media quality. It gives these websites the ability to offer material that is appropriate for the current technological era and the preferences of the general public.

Keywords: Quality content, website, quality indicators, journalistic content, Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

The media lacks objective and specific indicators that can be used to measure its performance efficiency, especially in the absence of quality units and centers responsible for the overall institutional performance evaluation. This evaluation can be carried out at the level of employees' performance within their departments, departmental performance within the framework of the organization's general policies, and the organization's performance in interacting with the surrounding environment with its political, economic, and social variables. These indicators should be based on efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and product quality. Furthermore, the performance evaluation process within some media organizations lacks a scientific and systematic approach. Instead, it relies on personal criteria set by the leadership to evaluate the employees, resulting in a lack of objectivity in the evaluation. Even the reports issued by unions and entities responsible for regulating press and media affairs are limited to assessing the adherence of newspapers to professional and ethical standards, without addressing administrative performance evaluation or measuring the efficiency of economic performance, even though these cannot be separated from professional performance. Additionally, studies and research have not yet identified specific indicators that can be used to evaluate media performance.

Therefore, many institutions and bodies are concerned with performance evaluation as a fundamental pillar that enables an organization to measure the results achieved from its intended objectives, ensure the efficiency of execution, identify obstacles that hinder the achievement of certain goals, diagnose their causes, and recommend ways to resolve them to avoid repeating mistakes in the future. Performance evaluation, as a process, has inputs represented by the intended goals to be achieved by employees in various sectors of the organization. It requires a set of executive activities performed by these employees to reach the outputs or achieve results. These outputs can be used to judge the extent of the organization's success in achieving its intended goals. To conduct a performance evaluation objectively, it is necessary to establish clear and defined indicators that can be measured. These indicators

should stem from the organization's vision, mission, and work philosophy. However, auditors of most media organizations find them struggling and lacking professionalism, economy, and administration in their performance. This is due to the low level of content provided by some newspapers, focusing on sensationalism and avoiding discussing serious issues, as well as the decline in their professional and societal responsibilities. In addition, they suffer from reduced advertising revenues, declining distribution numbers, rising printing and production costs, intense competition with digital media, and the stagnation of administrative and organizational thinking, which hinders their development.

The primary goal for any media institution is to achieve the best media performance, as it enables control over the internal work system within the institution, as well as the regulation of media content quality. According to the concept of media engineering, it is necessary to create a quality control system within the media institution. This system, which is based on media quality control, should oversee all aspects of work, both inside and outside the institution, through the produced content. It is impossible to work without it or even dispense with it. The media engineering of an institution may involve quality control factors within the media institution, supervising the quality and regularity of work activities, as well as controlling the media product produced by the media institution.

Ahmed (2019) aimed to identify the requirements and mechanisms necessary to improve the status of newspapers and online news websites. The study concluded that achieving quality standards in news websites requires a focus on local information content to enhance the information culture of website users. Hassani (2019) shed light on the quality criteria available in photojournalism published on news websites. The study revealed the limited role of photojournalists on these websites and the reliance of website administrators on the internet as a source of photos to be published with reports and news articles. Shahata (2019) aimed to develop a model for evaluating the quality of media observatory websites in the fight against terrorism and extremism. The study found that the websites of Al-Azhar and Fatwa observatories use criteria such as attractiveness, availability of media, clarity, color, and others. Abu Bakr (2018) diagnosed the orientation of the Algerian daily newspaper "Echorouk" towards adopting the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM). The study revealed that implementing TQM added many advantages but faced challenges due to the lack of specialized competencies

This research study on media quality indicators is vital for understanding the journalistic standards and practices on Pakistani news websites. By analyzing the content, it seeks to uncover the extent to which these platforms adhere to principles of accuracy, objectivity, and fairness. This is crucial in a media landscape where misinformation and biased reporting can significantly impact public perception and democratic processes. The findings will provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of Pakistani online journalism, offering recommendations for improvement and fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance the credibility and reliability of news media in Pakistan.

1.1 Problem Statement

The problem of the study lies in identifying the indicators of media quality in Pakistan's online news websites, considering the challenges that arise from the evaluation process of news websites. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of studies that have addressed how websites comply with quality indicators for building digital media content. With the increasing interest in applying comprehensive quality indicators in various fields, including the media field, this study aims to develop a future perspective for developing and organizing digital media content in news websites. This is intended to enhance their competitiveness and media performance and establish plans and strategies to enhance the value of media content in the digital space.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. What are the essential indicators of media quality that should be present to improve quality performance on online websites?
2. How can media quality be evaluated to enhance digital content on online websites?

3. What is the nature of editorial policy and its influence on the communicators within the study sample, and how does it impact their professional performance from the perspective of media quality?
4. What are the obstacles that affect professional performance in implementing quality on online websites, and what visions does the institution aim to develop to enhance and keep up with media quality?

2. Literature Review

How to Define Media Quality

The ability to enlighten and engage the public, as well as aspects like accuracy, impartiality, objectivity, and credibility, are just a few of the many characteristics that make up the concept of media quality. Normative theories, which specify the roles that media should play in society, can be used to evaluate the quality of media, according to McQuail (1992). These views place a strong emphasis on the media's ability to uphold democracy, disseminate reliable information, and serve as a watchdog. Various frameworks have been offered by scholars to evaluate the quality of media. For example, Chomsky (1997) addresses how political and commercial motives frequently undermine media quality, resulting in skewed reporting in the Propaganda Model. Graber (2010) contends that professional journalistic standards, such as adherence to moral principles, reporting depth, and the presentation of a range of viewpoints, should be used to assess the quality of the media.

Media Quality Indicators

The literature has identified several variables that are crucial for evaluating the quality of media. These indicators can be divided into three main categories: outcome-based, process-based, and content-based.

Material-based Indicators: These metrics concentrate on the caliber of data that is conveyed in media material. Relevance, thoroughness, and accuracy are important content-based metrics. For example, Entman (1993) contends that since false information has the potential to deceive the public and erode democratic processes, accuracy is essential to media quality. According to Bennett (2012), comprehensiveness is the degree to which media coverage presents the viewer with a whole image by covering all pertinent facets of a topic.

Process-Based Indicators: These metrics are associated with the steps taken in the creation of media content. Process-based metrics such as transparency, editorial independence, and ethical journalism practices are essential. Following values like integrity, justice, and accountability is a requirement of ethical journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). According to Baker (2002), editorial independence guarantees that reporters can do their work without undue interference from other sources.

Outcome-Based Indicators: These metrics evaluate how media content affects society and its audience. Important outcome-based measures include audience participation, public trust, and the capacity to promote educated public conversation. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), public trust in the media is a crucial indicator of media quality since it shows how trustworthy and legitimate the information is.

The Standard of Media in the Digital Era

The emergence of digital media has revolutionized the creation, dissemination, and consumption of news. Many people now rely mostly on online news websites for their information, so it is necessary to reevaluate media quality measures in light of this development (Hermida, 2010).

Assessing the Quality of Media on Online News Portals

Assessing the quality of media on online news platforms entails looking at both conventional and digital-specific metrics. While traditional metrics like fairness and accuracy are still important, new metrics that take into account the special qualities of digital media also need to be taken into account.

Interactivity and Engagement: More communication between journalists and the public is made possible by digital media. The quality of the media can be inferred by the degree of audience interaction as demonstrated by likes, shares, and comments. High levels of engagement imply that the material speaks

to the audience and encourages discussion in public (Chung, 2008).

Multimedia Integration: The quality of journalistic information can be improved by incorporating multimedia elements like infographics, films, and interactive features. According to Pavlik (2001), multimedia integration facilitates the thorough and captivating presentation of complicated information.

Accuracy vs. Speed: Accuracy can occasionally be compromised by the need to publish news on digital channels as soon as possible. Assessing the way online news sites strike a balance between accuracy and speed is essential to determining the caliber of the media. According to research by Karlsson (2011), accuracy must be maintained to maintain public trust, even while speed is crucial for digital media.

Accountability and Transparency: The journalistic process can be made more transparent by using online platforms. Transparency about sources, corrections, and editorial choices can improve media quality by increasing accountability (Singer, 2007).

Editorial Policies' Function

The caliber of journalism on internet news portals is greatly influenced by editorial policies. These guidelines guarantee consistency in reporting, direct the decision-making process, and establish the benchmarks for moral journalism. Shoemaker and Reese (2013) assert that editorial policies have an impact on the material presented, the issues that are framed, and the news articles that are chosen. Editorial policies must be in line with the values of high-quality media. Policies that put clickbait and sensationalism ahead of in-depth reporting, for example, might degrade the caliber of media coverage. On the other hand, procedures that prioritize careful fact-checking, impartial reporting, and the incorporation of various viewpoints can improve the legitimacy and dependability of online news sources (McChesney, 2004). Journalists' training and education also have an impact on the caliber of their reporting. Investigative reporting, digital literacy, and media ethics are among the areas of concentration for professional development programs that can provide journalists the tools they need to create excellent content. Deuze (2005) asserts that ongoing education and training are necessary to meet the changing needs of digital journalism.

Possibilities and Difficulties

The shift to digital media offers chances as well as obstacles for improving the caliber of media. The dissemination of false information, the demise of conventional income models, and the requirement for new legal frameworks to guarantee responsibility are some of the difficulties. Nonetheless, digital media presents prospects for inventive narrative, heightened audience involvement, and the use of data analytics to comprehend audience inclinations and enhance content excellence (Newman et al., 2019). Qayyoun et al., (2023) observed that “people have no direct access to information, so that is the reason they depend on the media to provide them with fruitful information” (Walter Lipmann, 1922).

Future studies must examine media quality metrics and how they might improve journalistic content on online news platforms. Through the identification and assessment of critical metrics including impartiality, accuracy, engagement, and transparency, this study can offer significant insights into the requirements for online journalism. Academic institutions are essential in this regard since they provide specialized programs in media studies and journalism. According to Lowrey and Gade (2011), these programs have the potential to foster ethical journalism and critical thinking values, thereby equipping upcoming journalists to maintain elevated standards of media quality. The distinctive qualities of digital media, professional growth, and editorial policies all have a big impact on the quality of media. Sustaining high standards of journalistic ethics and public trust will need constant investigation and innovation as the media landscape changes.

3. Methodology

This study falls under the category of descriptive research. The study employed a survey research method, specifically using a survey to explore the practices of journalists working on online websites in the Gaza Strip regarding media quality. A questionnaire was used to collect data from editors and heads of editorial departments on the selected websites. The questionnaire aimed to measure the opinions of Pakistan journalists working on online websites regarding media quality in online news websites. The

questionnaire was reviewed by a group of experts and specialists to ensure its ability to answer the research questions and achieve the desired objectives.

Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants, including editors-in-chief, deputy editors, and managing editors of the online news websites. Additionally, the study sought the opinions of experts, academics, and journalists with relevant expertise in the field of study. These interviews were pre-prepared, structured, and specific in terms of time, place, and expected answers, aiming to gather insights into the theoretical aspects of the study.

Study Population and Sample

The total number of online news websites in Rawalpindi and Islamabad was 100. A simple random sample of 100 individuals was selected from the population of communication practitioners, including media organization managers, editorial department directors, or their representatives on Pakistan online news websites.

4. Findings and Analysis

Table 1. How to achieve media quality in implementing quality in all website services

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Organizational Culture in an Institution	43	14.3
Modern administrative system	52	17.3
Conformity of the site with the specified international standards	41	13.6
Excellence in production	61	20.3
His ability to meet the needs of the public	66	21.9
Conforming to the specifications and standards of the schemes set by the organization so that the product is of quality	37	12.3
Other	1	03

Based on the previous table, it is evident that 21.9% of the study sample stated that achieving media quality in implementing quality in all website services is through its ability to meet the audience's needs. Additionally, 20% mentioned that achieving media quality is through excellence in production, while 17.3% indicated that it is through a modern management system. Furthermore, 14.3% stated that achieving media quality is through an organizational culture within the institution, and 13.6% mentioned that it is through aligning the website with specified global standards. Another 12.3% stated that it is through complying with the specifications and standards included in the institution's plans to ensure product quality, and 0.3% indicated that there are other ways to achieve media quality by implementing quality in all website services. The researchers perceive that the participant's understanding of these criteria and factors, as indicated in the low percentages, is insufficient and that there is a lack of general comprehension regarding quality outcomes. This poses a problem in overall understanding and the application of specific details, which is necessary for individuals working on websites.

Table 2. Degree of Management Importance in Implementing Media Quality on the Website.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Very high level	34	34
High level	48	48
Moderate level	14	14
Low level	1	1
Very low level	3	3

Total	100	100.0
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Based on the previous table, it is evident that 82% of the study sample said that the degree of management importance in implementing media quality on the website is high. Additionally, 14% stated that the degree of management importance is moderate, while 4% mentioned that it is low.

Table 3. The Beneficial Return of Implementing Quality Indicators in Work.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Develop myself and my journalistic performance	81	38.4
Promotion to a higher position	13	6.2
Job discrimination	50	23.7
Salary increases and bonus	14	6.6
Respect for myself and raise my practical efficiency	53	25.1

Based on the previous table, it is evident that 38.4% of the study sample participants stated that the beneficial return of implementing quality indicators in work is reflected in their personal and professional development as journalists. Additionally, 25.1% mentioned that the beneficial return is manifested in self-respect and increased work efficiency. Moreover, 23.7% indicated that the beneficial return lies in professional differentiation, while 6.6% emphasized the impact of salary increases and rewards. Lastly, 6.2% mentioned that the beneficial return is in the form of promotion to higher positions.

Table 4. Application of Media Quality on the Website.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Reducing costs and increasing profits for the site	21	8.8
Reducing public complaints and increasing turnout	28	11.8
Increase site visitors	57	23.9
Motivating workers to create job satisfaction on-site	72	30.3
Provide the site for all services continuously	58	24.4
Others	2	0.8

Based on the previous table, it is evident that 30.3% of the study sample participants stated that the application of media quality on the website is achieved by motivating employees to create jobsatisfaction on the website. Additionally, 24.4% mentioned that the application of media quality onthe website is accomplished by continuously providing all services. Furthermore, 23.9% stated that the application of media quality on the website leads to an increase in website visitors. Moreover, 11.8% expressed that the application of media quality on the website results in reducing public complaints and increasing public interest. Additionally, 8.8% believed that the application of media quality on the website leads to cost reduction and increased profits for the website. Lastly, 0.8% mentioned that the application of media quality on the website can be achieved through other methods. The media professional, Ismail Al-Thawabteh, and the responsible of the Opinion Agency, stated that these percentages require development plans to enhance the understanding of employees. Understanding and perception of the benefits of implementing quality aspects are essential to creating an impact on the form and content of websites.

Table 5. The extent of the availability of media quality with the features of online journalism on websites in general.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Very high level	18	18
High level	41	41
Moderate level	38	38
Low level	2	2

Very low level	1	1
Total	100	100.0

According to the previous table, it is evident that 59% of the study sample stated that the availability of media quality with the features of online journalism on the website is high. Additionally, 38% mentioned that it is moderate, while 3% reported that it is low.

Table 6. Indicators of the use of media quality on websites.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Focus and abbreviation	45	9.5
Editorial policy	57	12.0
The speed of spreading the news	49	10.3
Trust and credibility	65	13.7
Attract and capture the audience's attention	51	10.7
Culture and linguistic wealth	32	6.7
The availability of an electronic guide that explains the mechanism of dealing with the site	15	3.2
The nature of the journalistic material	43	9.0
The speed and accuracy of the answer to the inquiries of the site surfers	22	4.6
Possibility of using multimedia	35	7.4
A summary of the link content appears before clicking on it	21	4.4
Check sources, photos, etc.	32	6.7
The ability to comment on the news	9	1.9

According to the previous table, it is evident that 13.7% of the study sample stated that trust and credibility are important indicators of using media quality on websites. Additionally, 12.0% mentioned that editorial policy is an important indicator, while 10.7% reported that attracting and engaging the audience is important. Furthermore, 10.3% highlighted the importance of speed in news dissemination, and 9.5% emphasized the importance of focus and conciseness. Other indicators mentioned include the nature of the journalistic content (9%), the ability to use multimedia (7.4%), verifying sources and images (6.7%), prompt and accurate responses to user queries (4.6%), displaying a summary of the content before clicking on the link (4.4%), the availability of an electronic guide explaining the website's functionalities (3.2%), and the ability to comment on articles (1.9%).

Table 7. The most important factors influencing the dissemination of journalistic content.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Institution's editorial policy	75	35.2
Society's values and customs	42	19.7
Partisan orientations of the institution's officials	20	9.4
Moral and religious values	44	20.7
Compliance with applicable law	18	8.4
The margin of freedom of expression	14	6.6

According to the previous table, it is evident that 35.2% of the study sample stated that the editorial policy of the institution is one of the most important factors influencing the dissemination of journalistic content. Additionally, 20.7% mentioned that ethical and religious values are important factors, while 19.7% highlighted the significance of societal values and customs. Furthermore, 9.4% mentioned that party affiliations of institution officials affect the dissemination of journalistic content, and 8.4% stated that compliance with the applicable law is a significant factor. Additionally, 6.6% emphasized the

importance of freedom of expression as a factor influencing the dissemination of journalistic content.

Table 8. The most important indicators are considered as an integral part of the news quality used by websites.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Commitment to media ethics and charters	84	23.7
Free expression of opinion	48	13.5
Excitement and suspense	30	8.5
Literary rhetoric	29	8.2
professional independence	46	13
Honesty and objectivity	71	20
Compatibility of the news article with the design	19	5.4
Analyze statements and positions	22	6.2
Other	6	1.7

According to the previous table, it is evident that 23.7% of the study sample stated that adherence to media ethics and codes of conduct is one of the most important indicators considered as an integral part of the news quality used by websites. Additionally, 20% mentioned that truthfulness and objectivity are important indicators, while 13.5% highlighted the significance of allowing freedom of expression and opinion. Furthermore, 13% mentioned that professional independence is an important indicator, and 8.5% stated that provocation and sensationalism are considered integral parts of news quality. Additionally, 8.2% emphasized the importance of literary eloquence, 6.2% mentioned the analysis of statements and positions, 5.4% highlighted the alignment of news content with design, and 1.7% mentioned the existence of other indicators considered integral parts of news quality used by websites.

Table 9. Distinctive reasons are believed to contribute to the superiority of the website.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
The power of style	72	18.8
Editorial policy	56	14.6
Specialization in specific issues	40	10.4
Arouse human feelings	22	5.7
suitable for the method	17	4.4
Take into account the wishes of the readers	45	11.7
Availability of reports in multiple formats such as word and pdf	12	3.1
Previous years' information is archived for timely reference	31	8.1
Trust the information the site presents	53	13.8
Suitability of the news article	20	5.2
There is an e-mail for those in charge of the site to contact them	14	3.7
Other	1	0.3

According to the previous table, it is evident that 18.

8% of the study sample stated that the power of expression is one of the distinctive reasons believed to contribute to the superiority of the website. Additionally, 14.6% mentioned that the editorial policy is an important factor, while 13.8% mentioned trust in the information presented by the website as a significant factor. Furthermore, 11.7% highlighted the importance of considering readers' preferences, and 10.4% mentioned the relevance of the website's specialization in specific issues. Moreover, 8.1% mentioned the availability of archived information from previous years as a contributing factor, 5.7% emphasized the importance of appealing to human emotions, and 5.2% mentioned the suitability of

the website's content. Additionally, 4.4% highlighted the compatibility with the medium, 3.7% mentioned the presence of an email for contacting the website administrators, 3.1% mentioned the availability of reports in multiple formats such as Word and PDF, and 0.3% stated that there are other distinctive factors believed to contribute to the superiority of the website.

From the researchers' perspective, these results reflect the extent of the diversity of quality aspects aimed at enhancing the form and content of Pakistani websites. These aspects are interconnected and unified in influencing public opinion on the issues at hand. Any decline or disruption in any of these factors negatively affects the performance of the websites.

Table 10. Challenges faced by journalists in using media quality on websites.

Opinion of Sample Individual	Frequency	Percentage%
Not well known	74	18.8
Some of the methods are similar to each other	32	8.1
Unwillingness to keep up with modern technology	38	9.7
The institution's management does not adopt quality indicators	43	10.9
The site's policy does not match it	27	6.9
Insufficient experience in using it	62	15.8
Weak editorial capabilities of journalists	47	12.0
The absence of training courses on modern editorial methods	42	10.7
Absence of the institution's role in training journalists to use it	26	6.6
Other	2	0.5

According to the previous table, it is evident that 18.8% of the study sample stated that lack of good knowledge is one of the main challenges faced by journalists in using media quality in websites, 15.8% stated that lack of sufficient experience in using it is one of the main challenges, 12.0% stated that the limited editorial resources for journalists are among the main challenges, 10.9% stated that the management of the institution not adopting quality indicators is one of the main challenges, 10.7% stated that the absence of specialized training courses on modern editorial methods is one of the challenges, 9.7% stated that the lack of willingness to keep up with modern technology is one of the challenges, 8.1% stated that the similarity of some methods is a challenge, 6.9% stated that the website's policy does not align with the methods, 6.6% stated that the absence of the institution's role in training journalists on using the methods is a challenge, and 0.5% stated that there are other challenges faced by journalists in using media quality in websites.

5. Discussion

Implementing media quality on websites was linked to motivating employees, providing continuous services, and increasing website visitors. Ease of finding information, attractive design, and a search tool within the site, and communication tools were also noted as important aspects of media quality. Trust and credibility, editorial policy, audience engagement, and speed in news dissemination were considered significant indicators of media quality.

The study also underscored the influence of editorial policy, ethical and religious values, societal values, and party directives on the dissemination of journalistic content. Barriers to applying quality indicators included lack of full knowledge, experience, awareness of importance, and limitations due to editorial policy or available resources. Overall, the findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of media quality and its pivotal role in enhancing website services and journalistic practices. The researchers view these results as reflecting the participants' awareness of the reasons behind the decline in quality, as confirmed by some results from the previous tables, indicating their knowledge of the aspects of quality, its importance, and the necessity of its presence.

The researchers believe that this repetition of participants' knowledge about the impact of the presence and absence of quality has helped them generate various ways to enhance quality and overcome obstacles and deficiencies. They also believe that these suggestions align with technological advancements and the reliance on them in the production of content for websites.

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