Exploring The Challenges Facing Afghan Journalists While Performing Journalistic Duties in Taliban’s New Regime

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Abstract: Afghanistan is a country where people have been facing war and conflicts for decades. Journalism is considered the backbone of a society and is referred to as the fourth pillar of the state. On August 15, 2021, the situation in Afghanistan dramatically changed, when the Taliban reclaimed all powers of the state. The purpose of this research is to look into and point out the issues and challenges facing Afghan journalists under the new regime. Husserl’s phenomenological approach was used to analyse the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with Afghan working men and women journalists (n=10) who live and work in Kabul, Afghanistan. This work provides valuable insight into Afghan journalists’ concerns and demonstrates how they work in a challenging and dangerous environment where working conditions are not conducive to journalistic work and functions, whether the conditions are of press freedom, safety, or economics. This research developed recommendations to the Afghan new regime of the Taliban, international organizations, and other journalists’ bodies for viable solutions to facilitate the media and local authorities.

Keywords: Taliban, Afghan New Regime, Afghan Journalists, Journalistic work, Challenges, Safety, Security, Media Censorship, Press Freedom

Chapter 01
Introduction

The Afghan media landscape has undergone a significant transformation since the Taliban took power, according to a survey conducted by Reporters without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA). Since August 15, more than 6,400 journalists have lost their jobs and 231 media outlets have had to close. Four out of five women journalists have lost their jobs, making them the hardest hit.

According to the RSF and AIJA survey, the Taliban takeover has had a significant impact on Afghanistan's media. Sixty percent of journalists and media employees are no longer able to work, and more than four out of every ten media outlets have vanished. Women have endured far more hardships than men: 84% of them are out of work. Before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, a survey of journalists and other members of the media was conducted, and the results provide the figures for the previous situation.

From 1996 to 2001, when the Taliban invaded Afghanistan, the country's media landscape was virtually non-existent. Music and movies were outlawed. The dictatorship had complete control over the press. Newspapers lack pictures. Afghans acquired access to television with several news channels and newly launched FM radio stations following the US-led NATO war in Afghanistan, which evicted the Taliban. People began to pursue university degrees in journalism as mobile phone ownership grew.

After the US-led NATO intervention in Afghanistan, journalists were able to fulfill their duties and exercise their right to free expression. As technology advanced, they gained more access to the internet and were able to gather and publish news freely, even while the country was at war.

In the end, On August 15, 2021, the situation abruptly altered when the Taliban reclaimed power in Afghanistan and took control of the country, nearly 20 years after being evicted by a US-led military coalition. The Taliban's new dictatorship has complete control over the media. The music and film industries have been outlawed. Journalists began to encounter plenty of issues, and their work suffered the consequences. This is the first research which is on challenges of Afghan journalists after 15 of August 2021.

In today's Afghanistan, journalism is expanding and facing several difficulties. The nation's journalists work in one of the most complicated and contentious information environments in the world. Sometimes there is a blurring of the lines between journalism, espionage, and propaganda. Some journalists who have reported on the activities of insurgent groups have been accused of being traitors or arrested, while others have been murdered, kidnapped, beaten, or harassed by the insurgent groups and occasionally by the government. In Afghanistan in 2017, there were 21 deaths, 23 injuries, and 21 physical assaults on journalists

and media personnel. Afghan journalists have various difficulties, including access to information, a lack of expertise, and numerous other issues, in addition to security and violence.

1.1 The Afghan Media

The history of journalism and media in Afghanistan spans more than a century and a half. Shams-al-Nehar, the country's first news piece, was originally published in 1873, but it did not catch on due to the country's turbulent political climate at the time. The first colour television broadcast debuted in 1978, and in addition, "Radio Kabul started transmitting in 1925, ushering in a new age of mass media in the country" [1]. Following that, the 1980s and 1990s civil conflicts badly damaged the media industry. Strict media rules, such as those that forbade listening to music and viewing television, typified the media landscape during the Taliban government in the 1990s. The lone radio station broadcast propaganda and religious programming; it did not play music. Press censorship in Afghanistan steadily eased after the Taliban were overthrown at the start of the new millennium. The country now boasts dozens of television channels, about 200 FM radio stations, hundreds of printed publications, around 10 news agencies, and more than 4 million internet users. At the same time, other public infrastructure is also rapidly increasing. The cost of such advancement, however, has been heavy for Afghan journalists. All parties in the fight frequently beat, threaten, intimidate, and obstruct their access to information.

1.2 Barriers to Journalists

Although since 2001, Afghanistan's mass media has played a significant role in educating the people, promoting rebuilding, combating corruption, promoting freedom of expression, and upholding human rights, media professionals still face several difficulties.

1.3 Insecurity

This is one of the biggest challenges for Afghan media personnel. Last year (2017) is reported to have been the second-deadliest year in Afghan history for journalists and the media. According to the Nai report (an NGO working for open media in Afghanistan), in 2017, "a total of 21 journalists and media workers were killed, 41 were injured, and 21 journalists were beaten." 69 journalists were threatened and humiliated, and 14 other journalists were deprived of their liberty. Reporters cover conflict zones and sensitive issues such as corruption. At times, it is particularly perilous: all aspects of the war are at work behind all of these threats to Afghan journalists. Additionally, according to Nai's December 2017 monthly report, 37% of violent crimes were reported by government officials and security forces. Of the 167 violent incidents reported to reporters by government officials, 62 involved threats, insults, harassment, and the denial of journalists' freedom. Terrorist groups are responsible for 40% of violent crimes against journalists. Of her 167 violent incidents in 2017, 62 were targeted by terrorist groups. One of the deadliest recent incidents occurred on December 18, 2017, when terrorists launched attacks on Afghan culture and the Voice of Afghanistan. The attack, which killed 21 journalists and media workers and injured 18, was claimed by the terrorist group IS. The Taliban and ISIS have repeatedly warned the media against promoting immorality, foreign cultures, and "anti-Muslim" programs.

1.4 Lack of experience

Afghanistan has made significant progress in media freedom, press freedom, and freedom of expression since 2001, but the industry still lacks experience and capacity. Immature and unprofessional behaviour can get journalists into trouble. Moreover, the lack of experience itself is a challenge for Afghan journalists. This is because free media is young and immature in this country. This challenge has left print, audio, and visual media staff unable to deliver what citizens really need. Lacking basic information about media regulation and ethics, some reporters violated ethics and media rights; slandered, insulted, and violated the privacy of real people.

1.5 Lack of job security and insurance

Journalists still lack job security and insurance, despite a significant increase in media outlets over the past decade. Employment contracts are generally unfair and biased in favor of the press. Reporters and other media workers are hired at low wages. Employment insurance is almost nonexistent. Nearly 75% of those surveyed complained about low wages and heavy workloads. On the other hand, media owners and directors most often seek to pursue their personal interests through their employees. This affects professionalism in the field of work (Haand, R. 2019).

1.6 Forced Resignations

However, the Taliban takeover in 2021 has resulted in the large-scale gutting of many Afghan media outlets. According to Hassanyar, some presenters and staff members of ATN and Ariana News TV simply quit when Kabul fell on August 15. However, the whole story is more complicated. Roya Naderi, a social issues-focused morning host and one of ATN's most popular hosts, told CPJ she was at the office that day. Ariana executives asked ATN women to leave the broadcaster as the Taliban approached the city. Naderi told CPJ that when she got home, she wore a long black suit, fearing what might happen if the Taliban saw her dressed differently and waiting to see what her future holds. Four days later, Naderi recalls, someone from ATN's human resources department called to ask for his resignation, saying the Taliban would not tolerate female presenters. She said that although she and others fear retaliation from the Taliban, they still want to return to work because they desperately need an income. But Naderi says she and many of her female colleagues have been forced to quit despite this. (A spokesperson for ATN's human resources department told CPJ via email that it did not fire the employees mentioned in this article "due to so-called "pressure" from the Taliban" and disputed that some were fired.) a different approach to ATN. Representatives from several news outlets, including
Hassanyar, grouped together in early 2021 to form a monitoring group called the Afghanistan Center for Freedom of Speech. After the Taliban took over, they decided to continue broadcasting female broadcasters. Fawzia Wahdat, a curator for Ariana News, told CPJ she could keep the news on the air until November 9 last year. She worked for Ariana News for about a decade until then. After the takeover, she said, Taliban intelligence agents forced Ariana to separate male and female employees into separate workspaces, a story confirmed by two former senior executives of the company. Ariana News. Ariana's human resources officer, apparently under the direction of the Taliban, ordered staff to wear black ao dais. For most of the period from 2004 to 2021, "we worked completely freelance," Wahdat told CPJ. But with the Taliban takeover, all the programs, producers, news editors, and hosts are under pressure. Oftentimes, the producer will ask specific questions to ask guests, and we couldn't go.

For veteran journalist Sharif Hassanyar, the latest came last September. The Taliban had ousted the elected government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani nearly a month earlier, and American soldiers had finally retreated in a chaotic race to get out. As the director of Ariana News, an independent broadcaster, Hassanyar initially asked his panicked employees to focus on their work. "We know that under the Taliban regime, all civil liberties will be very limited," Hassanyar told me. "But despite all this, I will try to keep the morale of our colleagues high... and encourage our employees to work without fear." Gradually the pressure grew—directly from Taliban spies who beat up some journalists or visited the homes of others in hiding, and indirectly from Ariana executives, who argued that this station should self-censor with caution. Hassanyar himself felt directly threatened and left the country for Pakistan on September 1. Since then, he has run news operations remotely, still believing that the station would be able to continue covering events, directly as before. When one of his news agents contacted him for advice on how to cover a protest by dozens of Afghan women, Hassan Yar asked him to live-stream the protest and invited Afghan analysts to discuss it on the air. It didn't take long for Hassan Yar's cell phone to start ringing. Taliban intelligence officials repeatedly called him, asking him to stop the broadcast. Hassan Yar did not give in to the Taliban immediately, but soon after, bearded Taliban intelligence officials arrived at Ariana's office at the Bayat Media Center. They threatened that if live coverage of the women's protest did not stop immediately, the Taliban militia would close the gates of the BMC complex and prevent staff from entering or leaving the building. CJF

1.7 Women and Journalism

In the past, journalism was basically viewed as a profession dominated by men. As it grew, women were restricted by custom, tradition, and religion from getting into the profession, and those who dared were faced with significant discrimination. In spite of this, women are not relenting in their efforts to get to the top and desired positions like their male counterparts who are editors, reporters, sports analysts, and journalists. Although, the profession is deeply characterized by gender segregation, with women in the minority, they are still noticeable and found to be actively involved in journalism. Female journalists are aspiring to improve their status and to resist the culture of stereotypes that has been the bane of the industry by embracing areas that women in the minority, they are still noticeable and found to be actively involved in journalism. Female journalists are aspiring to improve their status and to resist the culture of stereotypes that has been the bane of the industry by embracing areas that have been traditionally occupied by women, such as hard news, crime, and politics. Similarly, the relationship between the choice of career by women and their level of childlessness suggests that women journalists are more likely to change jobs after they become mothers. Furthermore, the pay gap between male and female journalists was examined, and it was found that there has been a great disparity in the way male journalists are paid in comparison to what female journalists get all over the world. This is because journalism has been observed to be organised based on masculine values, notwithstanding the rise in the number of women entering the field. Historically, journalism was regarded as more of an apprenticeship than something that could be obtained through academic qualifications. This was believed to be more effective since learning informally could improve someone’s practical proficiency on the job as opposed to learning a series of theoretical facts without having to spend enough time acquiring the required practical skill on the field. However, there was a shift in this trend when universities, especially in the United States of America (USA), started offering courses in journalism, thereby giving young aspiring journalists the opportunity to acquire formal education training, which in turn encouraged the influx of women into the industry. Since the introduction of formal education in journalism, there has been a gradual increase in the turnout of female journalism students in the USA, and this trend was subsequently noticed in the United Kingdom and many other countries where the system was embraced. Thus, academic journalism training in the USA began at the University of Missouri in 1908, when female students made up 15% of the first class. Several studies have been conducted in order to explore why women, even after graduating with an appreciable number of student journalists, do not enter the field in that number. They found that women journalists were discouraged because, after graduation, they do not get jobs as their male counterparts do, and if they do, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to rise through the ranks to higher positions and consequently do not get the representation they desire in the industry.

Women, Journalism, and Challenges Women journalists are increasingly facing a lot of challenges, which is not serving as motivation on the job. In male-dominated societies, women journalists are confronted with the challenges of religious and cultural limitations that make the notion of inequality a natural concept existing between the male and female genders. A woman’s duty outside the home is usually viewed as inappropriate, which may leave room for suspicion of infidelity, especially in the area of journalism, where a woman is expected to work extra hours beyond the normal working time or have to travel to spend days, weeks, or even months to get some stories covered. The path of women’s entry into journalism was not a steady one; women struggled to survive in the industry despite many obstacles. In 1932, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) introduced an official marriage bar, which impeded women’s progress as they were obliged to resign from the corporation after marriage, whereas men still retained their jobs and positions (Ogundoyin, O. S. 2019).
1.8 Problem statement

The Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan 20 years after their ouster by US troops. Sparking concerns that they will impose harsh rules, neglect to provide basic services and human rights along with freedom of speech and expression. In the new Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, media companies were forced to cease all operations, particularly those of women journalists who were barred from working, as well as telecommunications outages and increasing violence and threats directed at media employees.

New regime of Taliban’s takeover has affected over 7,000 media professionals, with many unable to work, hiding, and fearing for their own and their families' lives.

Women journalists, independent Afghan media, and high-profile and investigative journalists have also been identified by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) as being particularly vulnerable. Human Rights Watch claims that strict new media rules, such as a dress code, disproportionately affect women journalists by limiting their ability to criticise and fostering an environment of rising restraints. It emphasises death threats made against journalists who have criticised Taliban officials, as well as the requirement that journalists submit reports for approval before publishing them.

As of November 2021, the UNHCR believes that 3.4 million people in Afghanistan have been displaced by warfare. Women and children make up the majority of these figures. In September, a delegation of UN human rights experts recognised Afghan journalists and media professionals, especially women, as being particularly vulnerable, and urged all countries to provide immediate protection to those seeking asylum abroad.

According to news reports, the takeover has resulted in the closure of over 257 media establishments around the country. Among the reasons are financial constraints and limitations on media operations. More than 70% of professional journalists are unemployed or have departed the country, according to TOLO News.

1.9 Objectives of the study

- To determine the best way to illuminate concerns and obstacles faced by Afghan journalists in the new administration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- To help the policy makers understand and address the issues in their policies,
- To explore the challenges faced by Afghan journalists after the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021

1.10 Significance of the study

Afghan journalists in Afghanistan are facing a variety of issues that have affected their careers and are being disregarded by policymakers after August 15, 2021. When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, journalists faced threats to their lives and the safety of their families, were blackmailed, faced economic hardship, faced security issues, lost their freedom of speech, were tortured, kidnapped, and were attacked by the Taliban while performing their journalistic duties.

This research highlights the challenges that journalists faced and facing in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study will help the policy makers to understand and address the issues in their policies; in addition this research developed recommendations to the Afghan new regime of the Taliban, international organizations, and other journalists’ bodies for viable solutions to facilitate the media and local authorities.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The hallmark of authoritarian governments is media censorship. For centuries, information sources have been foreshadowed by the global phenomena of media control. The maintenance of order is a popular justification for censorship, but the real goal is to prevent the people from knowing facts that can pose a danger to the government.

Any expression that can threaten the state's order is formally controlled and suppressed through censorship. Censorship has historically been employed to keep controls on public morality, to manage public perception, and to suppress resistance. One of the earliest examples of censorship was Socrates, who in 399 BC received a poisoning sentence for recognizing unorthodox divinities. The first censorship office was founded in Rome in 443 BC, marking the beginning of governmental censorship.

China introduced its first censorship regulation in the year 300 AD (Newth, 2010). Before they are released, government censors traditionally review newspapers, periodicals, books, news broadcasts, and movies to remove any questionable material (Bennett and Naim, 2015). Proponents of non-censorship shout slogans against restrictions on freedom of expression, free speech, and information contaminating. Media censorship is used by dictatorships and faltering democracies to keep the public ignorant while disguising it as a tool for upholding law and order. The third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, advocated for a free and independent press.

To shut down uncooperative media outlets and exile, arrest, or even execute the journalists working there, dictatorships use brutal force. Autocratic governments limit information while claiming to be preserving law and order. As a result, only a small portion of individuals in advanced democracies have access to a variety of independent information sources. The press is crucial to a society's democratic transformation and transparency as well as to the global fight against illiteracy (Newth, 2010).

The most serious attacks on freedom of expression are perpetrated by countries, which are struggling democracies, new democracies, or non-democracies. Although, half of the world’s population lacks an independent press (Newth, 2010); the top 10 countries where the press is most restricted include Eritrea, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Azerbaijan, Vietnam, Iran, China, Myanmar, and Cuba (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2015).

The newsletters that were published in various areas of India as early as the 16th century might be considered the press's historical antecedents (Newth, 2010). After that, in 1610, Switzerland took the initiative to start the first newspaper. Following in the footsteps of England (1621), France (1631), Denmark (1634), Italy (1636), Sweden (1645), and Poland, this commencement set off a chain reaction (1661). The authorities, however, did not like the fast expansion of informational channels and individuals' unrestricted access to all informational resources.

In Germany, censorship was combined with trade restrictions, a lack of printing paper, and other factors to successfully suppress the press. As the public's desire for a free press grew, a domino effect was seen in other European nations. The first country to abolish censorship rules and enact legislation guaranteeing press freedom was Sweden in 1766. Denmark and Norway followed suit in 1770. The United States Constitution's First Amendment established freedom of speech and expression in 1787.

The Afghan media landscape has undergone a significant transformation since the Taliban took power, according to a survey conducted by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA). Since August 15, more than 6,400 journalists have lost their jobs, and 231 media outlets have had to close. Four out of five women journalists have lost their jobs, making them the hardest hit.

According to the RSF and AIJA survey, the Taliban takeover has had a significant impact on Afghanistan's media. Sixty percent of journalists and media employees are no longer able to work, and more than four out of every ten media outlets have vanished. Women have endured far more hardships than men: 84% of them are out of work. Before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, a survey of journalists and other members of the media was conducted, and the results provide the figures for the previous situation.

Most journalists are not happy with their existing employment situations. There are too many challenges they must deal with, such as job security concerns, threats, the need for professional development, pressed deadlines, and long work hours. The respondents also revealed that these difficulties are having a negative impact on their ability to do their jobs by producing certain physical and emotional symptoms (Qamar, A., Manzoor, S., & Shahzadi, M. A. I. 2020).

A number of issues that affected the journalists' professionalism and safety. Media practitioners, such as journalists and editors, frequently find themselves in paradoxical and dangerous circumstances that pose ethical and legal challenges to the news creation and delivery process (Tajuddin, S. N. A. A., & Ali, R. 2020).
Through document analysis, the article inductively develops a classification scheme for the resistance practices the journalists used to cope with the perceived interference with their professional autonomy that came from within their media organization. These practices include having internal discussions, voicing concerns during newsroom meetings, writing an internal letter to the management, meeting with the management, establishing a trade union, requesting mediation, and writing an open letter to the viewers and listeners (Urbániková, M. 2021).

The most significant source of professional stress is a lack of managerial assistance. However, the outcome also suggests that “harassment” at work is a minor influence. According to the report, “unclear objectives,” “insecure employment atmosphere,” “extreme time pressure,” “friction,” “extended working hours,” and “life threat” are other significant stressors (Shalini, S.).

The tendency to self-censor one’s content and editorial judgement, working under ill-defined safety protocols, and failing to seek psychological assistance for handling posttraumatic stress disorder were the most common challenges faced by field journalists in Pakistan (PTSD) (Siddiqua, A., Latif, F., & Muslim, I. 2020).

The research study reveals some significant facts that open the door to developing a more effective rural journalism paradigm. It has been shown that media outlets do not adequately and fairly report the problems and events that affect rural areas. (Riaz, S. 2015).

What might be more effective ways to have a clear impact on conflict and to make sure journalists at work are prepared to cover the conflicts many of them face on a daily basis, in a difficult and dangerous environment (Betz, M. 2011).

It is possible for reporters to play a part in conflict resolution to some degree, but this is a very difficult function to play and it differs from story to story (Siddiqua, A. 2018).

It was discovered that 86% of respondents believed that having a permanent job was associated with high performance, while 89% said that job uncertainty had an impact on journalists' ability to function professionally (Rauf, A., Riaz, S., Safdar, G., & Rauf, A.).

Everyone involved in the situation kept pursuing impractical goals, which led to the failure of earlier attempts at peace negotiations (Mirza, M. N., Abbas, H., & Baneen, U. 2020).

To identify the challenges faced by women journalists in Afghanistan and the impact they have on their intention to leave the job (Siddiqi, A. W., Hakimi, H., & Karimi, F. 2022).

Stating that Afghan journalists are caught in a balancing act, facing powerful violent insurgents, oppressive authorities, and media owners (Eide, E., Khalvatgar, A. M., & Shirzad, H. 2019).

2.1 Theoretical frame work:

Censorship had been largely associated with the political right, whereas the political left generally advocated for quasi-libertarian attitudes towards free expression. The right to freedom of expression and information constitutes one of the essential foundations of democratic society. In conflict situations and wars, the role of the media is critical in providing the public with accurate and timely information. Trustworthy news and images can contribute to the protection of civilians and conflict prevention, bring to the attention of the international community the horrors and reality of conflict and expose violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

As a consequence, the work of journalists in conflict zones is fraught with dangers: denial of access, censorship, harassment, arbitrary detention and attacks are alarmingly frequent. Authoritarian theory is an important theory of four theories of press. Authoritarian theory describe that all forms of communications are under the control of the governing elite or authorities or influential bureaucrats. Long before the democratic societies could think of matters pertaining to freedom of speech, there existed a thought that the emergence of media should not challenge the writ of the government which were more in dictatorial form and less they looked like democracies. The media was forced to remain under state control. It had following features which, in non-democratic governments still rule on media:

a) Direct governmental control of the media. Typical to pre-democratic societies, where the government consists of very small ruling-class.

b) No printing that could undermine the established authority or offense to existing political set up.

c) The government may punish anyone who questions the state's ideology and the Media professionals are not allowed to have any independence within the media organization.

This theory stemmed from the authoritarian philosophy of Plato (407 - 327 B.C), who thought that the State was safe only in the hands of a few wise men. Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), a British academician, argued that the power to maintain order was
sovereign and individual objections were to be ignored. Engel, a German thinker further reinforced the theory by stating that freedom came into its supreme right only under Authoritarianism. The world has been witness to authoritarian means of control over media by both dictatorial and democratic governments. This theory essentially applies to authoritarian societies, but can surface in less authoritarian societies (particularly in times of war, terrorism). It depends on the medium/media of press subject to a greater control in some countries. There are certain assumptions attached to the Authoritarian approach, which are as follows:

a) Press should do nothing to undermine vested power and interests;
b) Press should be subordinate to vested power and authority;
c) Press should avoid acting in contravention of prevailing moral and political values;
d) Censorship justified in the application of these principles;
e) Criminalisation of editorial attacks on vested power, deviations from official policy, violation of moral codes.
f) Media is an instrument/mouthpiece to publicise and propagandise government ideology and actions.
g) Absolute power of state versus subservience of the individual press. These assumptions in turn help us in understanding the basic premise of the theory. It explains the principles on which this theory is based and the approach which the authoritarian society used to follow.

2.2 Research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are Afghan journalists free to perform journalistic duties?

RQ2: What core challenges are facing Afghan journalists during their duty?

RQ3: What is the role of the state and international community in terms of media freedom and expression in the Taliban regime after August 15, 2021?

Chapter 03

Methodology Design

The research used qualitative methods to explore the study and collect data, which was completely based on in-depth interviews with Afghan journalists who work and live in Kabul, Afghanistan and content analysis of the feedback of respondents.

The study focuses to determine the challenges that Afghan Journalists are facing after Taliban take over Afghanistan on 15th of August 2012. A qualitative approach is utilised when a researcher converts observations into data analysis from an objective perspective.

Qualitative research can tell you when, where, and how often things happen. Data that is gathered later can be assigned to categories so that detailed findings can be described.

Husserl’s phenomenological method is very essential and supportive in this regard. 3.1 Husserl’s Model

This model helps in the understanding of the overall experiences of people living in social systems and explains how journalists are confronted with different challenges and have experienced critical situations while being in social systems.

The questionnaire consists of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with journalists who face various challenges while performing their professional duties. The questionnaire has been developed on the basis of three components: the level of freedom enjoyed by journalists while performing their journalistic duties, challenges faced by Afghan journalists, and the role of the state and international community in the protection of those rights.

A good and polite response is received regarding the questionnaire by the journalists who take part in the interview session. The privacy of the participants was kept confidential. Their interviews were meticulously documented. Important and essential
statements of the interviewees are taken into account as well as their experiences. These statements then come together to form themes and cluster to appear and extract meaning.

In the month of August 2022, the data collection process was completed. The study is completely based on content analysis and semi-structured interviews with ten working journalists who work and live in Kabul, Afghanistan. Seven working journalists are male and three are female; due to fear and safety purposes, female journalists were not ready to be interviewed.

3.2 Universe of the study

Afghan journalists face different kinds of challenges while performing their duties, like freedom of speech threats and those who are working with different media platforms, i.e., digital media and electronic media. These journalists are working with various national and international media organisations and performing their professional duties in Kabul, Afghanistan.

3.3 Population of the study:

Afghan journalists working in Afghanistan were interviewed for the study in order to collect feedback furthermore to research the challenges and how they affect the performance of journalists.

3.4 Sample:

The information was gathered from Afghan journalists, particularly those who live and work in Kabul, Afghanistan. The study’s outcome was determined by gathering data from journalists based on in-depth interviews.

3.5 Sample size:

The sample size is ten working journalists, from whom the data was collected and analyzed.

3.6 Sampling technique:

Afghanistan is undergoing a period of war and regime change. It was difficult to track down the journalists and conduct face-to-face interviews with them in Pakistan. In that situation, it was difficult and nearly impossible to manage a list of Afghan journalists to be interviewed.

Since, the researcher is associated with media and has some personal links and references in Afghanistan; with the help of these links, the researcher was able to conduct interviews via the Internet. On account of the nature of the study and sample size, a convenient sampling technique was adopted.

3.7 Operationalization:

The study focuses on determining the challenges Afghan journalists are experiencing after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan on August 15, 2012.

For this exploratory study, semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted through internet mediums with Afghan journalists who reside and work in Kabul, Afghanistan.

The research used a qualitative approach to explore the challenges and collect data, and it studied the level of freedom Afghan journalists have as well as the significant challenges they encounter while on the job and the role of the government and the international community in ensuring media freedom and expression under the Taliban administration after August 15, 2021. The study's nature and sample size led to the adoption of a convenient sampling technique.

The phenomenological approach of Husserl is crucial and helpful in this regard.

Chapter 4

Techniques, Data Analysis and Findings

The findings of the study result from in-depth interviews on the challenges faced by Afghan journalists while performing their professional duties in Afghanistan after the Taliban take over Afghanistan on August 15, 2021. Journalists are working with different media outlets, like digital and electronic media, in Kabul, Afghanistan. The journalists interviewed about the challenges they face ranged in age from 25 to 30 years old. Their work experience ranged from three to ten years.
In addition to this, the qualifications of these Afghan journalists were different; nine had their bachelor’s degree in journalism and one had a master’s degree in journalism. Interviews were conducted in Pashto and Dari with the informed consent of the interviewee. The names of the interviewees, the specific location of their work places, and other detailed information have been withheld to protect their safety.

The findings of the study of the in-depth data collection are discussed.

1. **Choice to choose the beat to cover;**
   - No specific beat is assigned to the Afghan Journalists
   - Beat is assigned by organization mostly
   - In some rare cases the Afghan journalists are asked for their choices.

**Findings 01:**
According to male and female Afghan Journalists, they mostly do not have choice to select a specific beat rather to report and cover events assigned by the organization but in some rare cases the Afghan journalists are asked for their choices.

2. **Risk involved in reporting after 15 August 2021:**
   - Limitations on crime reporting
   - Limitation on reporting ground reality
   - Reporters are beaten, harassed, threatened
   - Not easily access to the place of incident
   - Afghan women reporters are more limited than man to report

**Findings 02:**
When Kabul fell to the Taliban on August 15, 2021, the environment for Afghan journalists in Afghanistan was drastically altered; several journalists had been beaten, detained, and flogged while performing their duties. Afghan journalists still find it challenging to cover many topics in Afghanistan. Religion, women’s empowerment, crimes, general human rights issues, and anything that calls the officials of the new regime into question are all sensitive topics to cover. Journalists can easily get beaten by Taliban staff in public, and no one is held responsible for the action.

Afghan journalists are censored to report ground realities; they are limited to reporting on crimes, political issues, or any news against the new regime’s policies. They cannot quickly approach the incident area for coverage. Officials from the Islamic Emirate restricted women journalists from working in various areas, and those few who were permitted to carry out their journalistic duties were generally not allowed to interact directly with the public or conduct field reporting.

3. **Personal experience of threatening, harassing, detaining or beating:**
   - Threaten, harassed and beaten
   - Not beaten but threaten and harassed
   - Not detained but beaten
   - Detained, harassed and beaten

**Findings 03:**
Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021, there have been an increasing number of arbitrary detentions, arrests, and attacks on media personnel. The majority of Afghan journalists from the interview were allegedly assaulted, threatened, harassed, attacked, and beaten by the Islamic Emirate Intelligence.

Reporters are detained by Taliban intelligence agents and held for hours, days, or weeks while being interrogated. The vast majority of Afghan journalists who participated in the interview were physically assaulted, had their cameras and memory cards taken, and were being thrashed by the staff of new regime during their journalistic duties.

**Major challenges facing by Afghan Journalists:**
- Death threats, harassments and beat up
- Threats to family members
- Home raids
- Detentions
- Viewing of Afghan journalists as spies
- Limitation on reporting ground reality
- Limitation on covering events
- Restrictions on right of the freedom of speech
- Restrictions on coverage of incident places
Taking and breaking of cameras by Islamic Emirate’s staff during reporting
Using of abusive language to journalists
Journalists are asked lot of questions while reporting.
Journalists are ready to leave or leaving their profession
Security staff having lack of understanding about media functions
To conduct the interview of representatives of new regime is very difficult to approach
Before reporting something, it is compulsory to seek permission from ministry of information and culture.
Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is issuing special cards to the journalists
The process of getting those cards are hard to processed or complete
Due to the above mentioned hurdles, reporting of an event is not smooth.
Afghan journalists having feelings to flee a country due to oppressive environment to work.
Not easy to work with international media
Financial issues like low salary packages, salary backlogs etc.
Women Afghan journalists became more limited and restricted to perform their journalistic duties
Afghan Journalists are not allowed to take females interviews or to make their footages.
Male and female Afghan journalists are told to have separate offices and avoid talking with each other
Lack of active representative bodies of Journalists.

Findings 04:
As a result of the Taliban takeover, many journalists who worked for different national and international media outlets have fled abroad, including Afghan women journalists. Many others have also been questioned or arrested by the Afghan police and the Istikhbarat. These arrests can last for a few hours to almost a week. Afghan journalists and their families are facing death threats and home raids under the new regime, and Afghan journalists are viewed as spies.

Officials from the new regime rarely allow Afghan journalists access to incident sites; they are unfamiliar with the media function and have pushed Afghan journalists to practice self-censorship, forcing some to give up their careers. The majority of still-active media outlets are experiencing a terrible economic situation which affects the salaries of journalists and after all there are no active representative bodies to protect the rights of the Afghan Journalists. Since August 15, 2021, numerous journalists have left the country, and media outlets have been compelled to close in large numbers as a result of threats, severe regulations, and the economic downturn. The pressure on the media and official censorship is stifling, and the situation is even worse in the provinces than in Kabul.

4. Working conditions of women journalists under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan:
   - Facing gender discrimination
   - Islamic Emirate do not allow women journalists to work with media
   - End of careers
   - Dangerous situation for female Afghan Journalists to continue profession
   - Harassments and threats via written, physical or verbal
   - Losing of financial support
   - Forced to wear masks and Hijabs in front of camera
   - Restrictions on reporting in public and taking comments from the public
   - Restrictions on inviting male guests
   - Women Afghan Journalists cannot contact representatives of Islamic Emirate for interview purposes; they strictly gain rejection and do not give answers to the questions.
   - Restrictions on running program with male co-host
   - Lack of Journalistic facilities and opportunities for female afghan journalists.
   - In previous government working female journalists were nearly 70% but now nearly 20% and soon it will be equal to zero.
   - Hurdles in covering different government events such as conferences and protests, women right issues and crime issues.

Findings 05:
5.1: Afghan women journalists in Afghanistan are restricted by custom, tradition, and religion from getting into the profession, and those who have dared are facing significant discrimination and have lost all journalistic rights and opportunities. Their fear and restrictions on reporting and continuing their profession have increased, they are harassed, threatened, and beaten by the Taliban soldiers; additionally, not only they but their families have also endured verbal and written death threats for doing their journalistic duties, leaving Afghan women journalists with no choice but to end their careers.
5.2: Most of the working Afghan women journalists are the sole economic support of their families, due to leaving and resigning from their jobs they are losing financial support and many have already experienced.

5.3: Those female Afghan journalists who are still working with media organisations have hardly continued their profession; they are restricted from reporting in public, making it harder for women reporters to go into the field and travel far distances for news coverage. It is more difficult for them to speak and debate about many subjects and concerns because Afghan women journalists are not allowed to invite male guests to their shows; they cannot run a programme with a male co-host; they are not allowed to contact representatives of the new regime for interview purposes; they strictly gain rejection and do not give answers to the questions.

The Islamic Emirate's officials make Afghan female journalists wear masks. Having their mouths covered makes it incredibly difficult to speak for one to two hours and to convey a clear message to the public while appearing on screens with their faces covered. They face obstacles in covering various government events, such as conferences, as well as protests, women's rights issues, criminal issues, or any other story; simply due to their gender.

Leaders in the Islamic Emirate regime believe that women working in the media are against Sharia and Islamic teachings, which is why female Afghan journalists lack access to facilities and opportunities for their profession in the new regime.

According to Afghan female journalists, in the previous government, working female journalists accounted for approximately 70% of the total but now it is 20% and soon it will be equal to zero.

6. Freedom of Afghan journalists on reporting news:

- Afghan Journalists are not free to report any news.
- Afghan Journalists are censored and supposed to work according to the choice of Islamic Emirate.
- Publishing filtered news
- Afghan Journalists are supposed not to go against Islamic Emirate policy
- Afghan Journalists cannot report an event or issue without Islamic Emirate’s permission
- Afghan Journalists cannot show the actual ground reality.
- There are committees sitting for monitoring media channels therefore Afghan Journalists cannot present any news live it must be confirmed by the ministry of information and culture before to publish or broadcast
- Afghan Journalists should only publish positive news
- No balance reporting
- There is no strategy for Afghan Journalists to use for publishing their news story
- Those who go against can face a lot of challenges.
- Afghan Journalists use soft and friendly language with Islamic Emirate official.
- Afghan journalists make Islamic Emirate officials believe that they are not going against Islamic Emirate’s policy but are showing their good image to the world.

Findings 06;

After fighting a 20-year struggle against foreign and Afghan forces, the Taliban, who took control of Kabul on August 15 and are once again in control of Afghanistan, have vowed to permit the media to function but failed.

Journalists in Afghanistan are not allowed to report any news. Afghan journalists must follow the policies of the new regime and are subject to censorship. They publish news that has been edited. Journalists from Afghanistan are expected to follow Islamic Emirate policy. Without the permission of the Islamic Emirate, Afghan journalists are unable to report on a situation or address a problem.

Afghan journalists are unable to convey news in real time because committees are in place to monitor media outlets; every piece of news must be approved by the ministry of information and culture before it can be published or broadcast.

Journalists in Afghanistan should only convey good news; there is no balanced reporting. There is no plan for Afghan journalists to follow when they post a news item. Those who disobey may encounter many difficulties. The only strategy available to Afghan journalists is to speak softly and politely with new regime officials in order to persuade them to publish news and to satisfy and persuade them that they are adhering to Islamic Emirate policies and projecting a positive image of the Islamic Emirate to the outside world.

1. Role of gate keepers in publishing:
There is not only one gatekeeper for publishing news. Ministry of Culture and Information, the Istikhbarat (the Taliban intelligence agency) and Amr-bil-marof have check on Afghan media.

Afghan media is censored and filtered.
Role of media organization’s gatekeepers in current government is equal to zero.
Gatekeepers from media organizations are influenced by the Islamic Emirate’s officials.
If gatekeeper from media organization decided to publish any news, he/she must consult it from organization or Islamic Emirate’s officials before publishing
News against the Islamic Emirate’s officials remains unpublished.

Findings 07:

There is not just one gatekeeper for publishing news, but also the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Istikhbarat (the Taliban intelligence agency), and Amr-bil-Marof keep an eye on Afghan media. Afghan media is filtered and censored. In the current government, gatekeepers for media organisations play no role at all. Gatekeepers from media organisations are influenced by the Islamic Emirate’s officials. If a gatekeeper from a media organisation decides to publish any news, he or she must first consult with the organisation or Islamic Emirate officials before doing so; news against Islamic Emirate officials is not published.

2. Freedom of Afghan Journalists in social media:

- Social media accounts of Afghan journalists are under observation
- It is not easy for Afghan journalists to post anything against the new regime though it is based on reality.
- Journalists are public faces and they are known everywhere, whether in news channels or whether on social media for public.
- Islamic Emirate followers are active in social media platform, such as Facebook and twitter
- Numbers of social media accounts of Afghan journalists are reported and try to block/ed.
- Afghan journalists receive death threats.
- Many of them detained and targeted by posting regularly content against Islamic Emirate.
- Those Afghan journalists who fled from the country and live abroad can post negative content against Islamic emirate
- Afghan Journalists within Afghanistan are censored on social media too.
- Because of posting on Facebook against new regime, number of journalists detained, beaten and threatened by Islamic Emirate.
- Afghan journalists can post only routine news or soft news.
- If any news remains unpublished in their media channels, Afghan journalists can post it on their social media accounts, but it must not be against the Islamic Emirate’s policy.
- Afghan journalists are strictly told by their organization that not to post against Islamic Emirate.
- Afghan journalists receive different types of feedback on their social media posts.
- Intensity of positive or negative Feedbacks depends on the value of news and topic.

Findings 08:

Afghan journalists’ social media profiles are being monitored. Even if it is based on truth, it is difficult for Afghan media to post anything critical of the current government. When it comes to news outlets or social media, journalists are well-known public personalities. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are often used by the new regime’s supporters; therefore, there have been attempts to block or report several social media accounts belonging to Afghan journalists.

Threats to the lives of Afghan journalists are common. Even if it is based on truth, it is difficult for Afghan media to post anything critical of the current government. When it comes to news outlets or social media, journalists are well-known public personalities. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are often used by the new regime’s supporters; therefore, there have been attempts to block or report several social media accounts belonging to Afghan journalists. Threats to the lives of Afghan journalists are common. For consistently publishing stuff that was hostile to the Islamic Emirate, several of them were jailed and singled out. The only Afghan journalists who may publish against the Islamic Emirate are those who have abandoned the nation and now reside overseas.

A number of journalists have been detained, beaten, harassed, and threatened by the new regime’s personnel as a result of Facebook posts critical of it. Only regular or light news can be posted by Afghan journalists. Afghan journalists may disseminate unpublished news on their social media profiles if it is not prohibited by the Islamic Emirate’s policy to do so.

The Afghan press is severely forbidden by their organisation from posting anything critical of the Islamic Emirate.

Various kinds of feedback are given to Afghan journalists on their social media posts because there are huge number of audience in social media platforms with different personalities, understandings and mindsets. It may be negative or good, feedback of posts is based on how important the issue and news are.

3. Relying of Afghan Journalists for safety; (organization, family, friends or international community):

- It is not easy for the Family, friends and organization to help Afghan journalists for their safety concerns.
- International communities not do anything for afghan journalists for their evacuation and for their protection.
Finding 9:
It is difficult for Afghan journalists’ families, friends, and organisations to assist them with their safety concerns. Afghan journalists who live and work in Afghanistan are defenseless and can only rely on Allah. The international community takes no action to protect and evacuate Afghan journalists.

4. Access of journalists to representatives of Islamic Emirate:
- Difficult to access representatives of Islamic Emirate for the interview
- Many Afghan journalists neglected for conducting interviews with important personalities of new government.
- New government usually allows journalists from other countries for interviews on important events
- Before conducting interviews, journalists must share interview questionnaire with the invited representatives of Islamic Emirate
- The questionnaire must be according to their choice; otherwise Afghan journalists gain cancellation of conducting the interview.
- Many of representatives of Islamic Emirate do not have permission for appearing on screen and talking with media.
- The representatives of Islamic Emirate make number of excuses if they are called for the interview
- While out of ten only one journalist said that, it is easy to conduct interview with the representatives of Islamic Emirate than conducting interviews with the representatives of previous government in their rule
- The representatives of previous government are mostly not in Afghanistan
- Those who are in Afghanistan avoid to appear on screen for the interview.
- In staring days some of the representatives of previous government were interviewed by Afghan Journalists
- In current situation representatives of previous government avoid giving comments, due to threats to their families within Afghanistan

Finding 10:
It is challenging for Afghan journalists to speak with representatives of the Islamic Emirate during the interview. Except for a few of them, many Afghan journalists are turned down for interviews with significant figures in the new government. Officials from Islamic emirates frequently let foreign journalists conduct interviews for very significant purposes. Interview questions must be chosen by the invited representatives of the Islamic Emirate and shared with journalists before conducting interviews; otherwise, Afghan journalists face being denied permission to conduct the interview.

Many Islamic Emirate representatives do not have permission to speak to the media or appear on television, and those who do so offer a variety of justifications when contacted for interviews.

Only one journalist out of ten claimed that it was simpler to interview Islamic Emirate spokespeople than it was to interview members of the previous administration during their tenure. Most of the former government's representatives are gone from Afghanistan. Those who are currently in Afghanistan avoid appearing on camera for the interview. This may be because they are afraid of the Taliban, feel guilty, or are unable to respond to all of the questions posed by Afghan citizens.

Some former government officials who fled Afghanistan and now live abroad were interviewed online by Afghan journalists at the start of the Islamic Emirate regime, but they now refrain from doing so because of threats against their family members who still reside in Afghanistan.

5. Representative bodies for Afghan Journalists in Afghanistan:
- Yes there are two or three representative bodies for the protection of Afghan journalists in Afghanistan
- These bodies are only present by name, they are not working as actively as they are working in previous government
- Number of representative bodies got closed after 15th of August 2021
- Many journalists are in contact with these representative bodies but get no help from them.

Finding 11:
Journalists claimed that there are two or three representative organisations available in Afghanistan that is responsible for protecting Afghan journalists. These organisations are just officially present; they are not operating as actively as they were during the previous administration. After August 15, 2021, a number of representative bodies closed their doors. Although many journalists interact with these representation entities, they never receive assistance from them.

6. Bill or law for the protection of speech in constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:
- Article 31, 32, 33 and 34 Freedom of speech is strongly supported by Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- There was access to information law in previous government, access to information commission and complaint commission.
- In previous government journalists were able to work free and the constitution was implemented to some extend
- In previous government Afghan media was free more than many countries in world
- In current government the constitution is not implemented
Officially Islamic Emirate officials admit the constitution about freedom of speech but in reality it is not acceptable for them.

Afghan journalists cannot report any news freely

Afghan journalists cannot get help from constitution.

Findings 12:

Articles 31, 32, 33, and 34 *Freedom of speech is strongly supported by the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*. In the previous administration, there was an access to information law, an access to information commission, and a complaint commission, Afghan journalists were permitted to work for free, and the constitution was partially implemented.

The Afghan media was freer than that of many other nations during the previous administration.

Currently, the constitution is not being implemented. Officially, Islamic Emirate officials acknowledge freedom of speech, but the laws as written and how they are actually applied differ significantly. Press freedom is not allowed in the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; thus, Afghan journalists are unable to report news freely and are not eligible for assistance under the constitution.

7. Difference Afghan Journalists Experiencing in Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and in Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan:

- In previous government, there was,
  - Freedom of speech
  - Freedom of reporting
  - Numerous media channels.
  - Women were free to work in media
  - New school graduate students were willing to study journalism
  - No media censorship
  - No financial issues
- In current government everything is opposite.

Findings 13:

Under the previous administration, there was freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom for women to work in the field of media, there was no media control, new school graduates were eager to pursue journalistic studies, there were numerous active media channels, and there were no financial concerns, but when Kabul fell to the Taliban on August 15, 2021, the media environment was radically changed, and everything in the current government is in opposition.

Threats, strict rules, and the economic collapse have forced several media outlets to close, forcing many journalists to flee the country. There is no media freedom, no freedom of speech, and strict rules for women Afghan journalists, as a result of which numerous Afghan journalists confront difficulties, challenges, and threats.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Discussion

Journalism, function as a mirror to society, educating the public and drawing attention to problem spots in order to address and resolve these problems in society. Information is gathered and shared with the public by journalists. However, due to the new Islamic Emirate regime and the country's weak and poorly implemented laws and policies, working Afghan journalists have faced a variety of difficulties, including physical violence, safety and security issues, economic issues, and restrictions on their freedom of speech and reporting.

The flow of reporting has been restricted due to various issues, and journalists are under pressure and are receiving death threats along with their families, which severely restrict their freedom of speech and expression. Press freedom is flagrantly violated when the Islamic Emirate staff or other groups attack Afghan journalists or media personnel. Afghan working journalists, including female journalists, need a safe and unrestricted environment to carry out their various journalistic duties, and most problems in these contexts cannot be ignored. Journalists can reduce the risks by developing techniques to deal with them, and it's important that Taliban officials compromise with journalists in this circumstance. Poor implementation of freedom of the press in Afghanistan makes it hard to do reporting according to the needs of journalism.
Journalism professionals must focus on a specific beat because it builds in-depth knowledge and commitment to reporting and highlights concerns specific to that area. It also enables a fair information flow. (Finding 1)

The media is an institution that informs through analysing information, promoting debate, and reporting reality. The freer the reporter is, the better informed people can be. (Finding 2)

Reporters are threatened, harassed, and physically assaulted. If they continue to be physically assaulted for carrying out their responsibilities, it will be hard for them to work in Afghanistan, and a negative perception of the country will grow. (Finding 3)

There will be no opportunity for the media to exist in Afghanistan in the future if there are additional difficulties and challenges for Afghan journalists. (Finding 4)

Women journalists in the country are particularly vulnerable. For women, journalism and working in the media have grown increasingly challenging and risky. Many female journalists are their families' primary source of income, so they are left defenseless. If things stay as they are, there may be no more chance for women in journalism in Afghanistan in the future. (Finding 5)

Afghan journalists are at risk as a result of the Taliban taking over Afghanistan. Reports of threats, assaults, and detentions against journalists have already surfaced. Local journalists, particularly female journalists, are prone to deliberate attacks. Journalists will no longer be able to live in Afghanistan if the condition is severe. (Finding 6)

There is not only one gatekeeper for publishing news in Afghan media, but there are also the Minister of Culture and Information, the Istikbarar (the Taliban intelligence agency), and Amr-bil-Marouf, who check content before publishing it in Afghan media. Censorship violates free speech because it imposes restrictions on actual information that promotes the growth of local communities for the sake of preventing harmful information. Ignorance frequently results from ignorance of something. (Finding 7)

Social media accounts of Afghan journalists are under observation; many of them have been beaten, detained, and harassed for posting against the new regime's officials as well as facts. They violate the right to free speech since they limit the availability of information, and people may remain unaware of a lot of things happening around them. (Finding 8)

Afghan journalists do not rely on anyone for their safety or feel safe at all. The future of journalism in Afghanistan may not exist if the lives of journalists there continue to be unsafe and in danger. (Finding 9)

A lot of material remains unapproved, and reporting may also be delayed for days or weeks as a result of the majority of journalists being rejected by Islamic emirate officials for interviews. (Finding 10)

Numerous representative bodies for the safety of Afghan journalists in Afghanistan will be shut down after August 15, 2021and those bodies that still exist in the country. Journalists are in contact with these representation entities, but they never provide much assistance, so cases of harassment, beatings, threats, home raids, and detention remain unresolved, and no justice has been served. (Finding 11)

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Constitution strongly supports freedom of speech; however it is not really enforced there. Most journalists experienced consequences for reporting on the truth and real events. As a result, the freedom of speech and press in Afghanistan, an Islamic emirate, is violated, and journalists have the right to report anything, which may lead to media censorship. (Finding 12)

The previous government provided opportunities and media independence, but once the Islamic emirate took power on August 15, a lot of media organisations stopped publishing and were shut down. Access to information was very difficult in various towns and provinces, and many journalists lost their jobs Afghan journalists were more worried and afraid than ever during the Taliban's control since they had repeatedly violated the right to free speech for decades, including by attacking numerous Afghan journalists directly. (Finding 13)

5.2 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the safety of journalists in Afghanistan is greatly affected by contextual variables. Studies clearly show that there are many challenges that journalists experience. A number of media outlets stopped their operations and are closed; however, it appears that some media outlets are still operating, they reportedly have to follow Taliban instructions in order to continue to operate. Many working Afghan journalists, especially women journalists, lost their jobs and are facing financial crises. Access to information in different cities and provinces is quite difficult. In addition to concluding that Afghan journalists are receiving death threats, many of the targeted journalists claim that the Taliban is searching their homes. In response, they are moving around from place to place in order to stay safe. The study observed that Afghan journalists in Afghanistan are no longer able to safely do their jobs and are sometimes even tortured, beaten up, detained, threatened, and harassed by the Taliban, while others...
have been attacked they are defenseless and cannot rely on anyone for their safety, and also they did not receive any help from international organizations. This research developed recommendations to the Afghan new regime of the Taliban, international organizations, and other journalists’ bodies for viable solutions to facilitate the media and local authorities.

5.3 Future Research Recommendations:

This research covering the male and female both and the questionnaire covering only the period of new regime of Afghan Taliban since their takeover on August 15, 2021. In future this research can extend to cover only male or female Afghan journalists separately. Furthermore, a comparative study can also be carried out on pre and post period of takeover of new regime.

5.4 General Recommendations

- Ensure that all journalists and media professionals have the freedom to report and produce news freely.
- Put an end to the illegal detention, beatings, torture of journalists and media support staff.
- Restore the freedom of female journalists to pursue their careers without interference or discrimination.
- Journalists to freely work with international media channels.
- Ministry of Information and Culture, should review their control practices over the media.
- Ministry of Information and Culture of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan must play their role in terms of to support journalists and other media professionals to work freely and without any hesitation or fear.
- Afghan authorities should insure the right of access to legal system and safeguards under the law for those journalists who have been detained or other crimes against them for their reporting or fulfilling their journalistic duties.
- Maintaining of communication and positive engagement with the Human Rights Unit of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to address the situation of journalists.
- International stakeholders should work closely with new regime to use political and diplomatic influence to ensure an inclusive and favorable working environment for journalists and other media professionals to play their role for the betterment of Afghan nation on national and as well on international level.
- International community should advocate the rights of women journalists and female media professionals and should take some steps to help new regime in terms of legislations and other code of conducts as advised by international forums of journalists and experts.
- Afghan journalists and media professionals should free access to different facilities like international traveling, technical supports and capacity building programs offering by international organizations and forums.
- Humanitarian and technical support should provide to journalists who are working in Afghanistan.
- Visa process should be easy and simple for any Afghan journalists, media workers or for their families.
- New regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should take serious the concerns of Afghan journalists and media professionals and address the solutions and taking steps that acceptable for all stakeholders.
- New regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should get help from journalists and media professionals to build a developed and prosperous Afghanistan to lead the world.
- New regime should accept and led the journalists and media professionals to play their role in the development of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- It seems that there is a communication gap between Afghan journalists and media professionals and new regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. New regime should take steps to reduce the communication gape through regular interactions, cooperation and exchange of views.
- New regime of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should make responsible their authorities and lower level officials to facilitate the work and duties of journalists without any gender discrimination.
- United Nation should provide immediate support to those Afghan journalists along with their families who are at risk.
- UNESCO and the European Union should support Afghan media outlets and journalists and work for their capacity building.
- The Committee to Protect Journalists, should take serious steps for the promotion and development of press, its freedom and safety of journalists in Afghanistan.
- International community and organizations should help in investigations, registered and vetted high-priority cases of Afghan journalists facing clear and imminent threats.
- The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) should provide support to afghan journalists.
- The International Women's Media foundation should provide support women journalists in Afghanistan.
- Emergency Fund for Afghan journalists and media professionals should create to help them.

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**Annexure 01**

**Informed consent**

Email: ………………………..cell……………………

Degree: BS Media Studies and Mass Communication, Iqra National University Peshawar, Pakistan.

Asalaamualaikum!

This is Marwah Sadat, I want to ask for your permission to interview you on the behalf of research which aims to highlight the challenges facing by Afgh Journalists while performing their duties. The interview might take a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes of your time.

You can refuse any question to answer and can choose to stop to process any time. I will record your answers to use them in my research but I will not mention you by your name and will not share the details with anybody.

Thanks

Questionnaire ID

Date: ( )

Demographics Information
Gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female
   c) Other

Age group up to:
   a) 20 to 24
   b) 25 to 29
   c) 30 to 34
   d) 35 to 39
   e) 40 to 45, or above

Education:
   a) 14 years
   b) 16 years
   c) 18 years

Associated with:
   a) Print media
   b) Digital media
   c) Electronic media
   d) other

Mode of education last degree:
   a) private
   b) Regular

Working experience up to:
   a) less than 3 years
   b) 3 years
   c) 5 years
   d) 7 years
   e) 10 years or above

Working as:
   a) Freelancer
   b) b) attach with any media organization
      I. Local Media
      II. National
      III. International

Discipline (Education):
   a) Journalism/ Media studies
   b) Other

Country:
   a) Afghanistan
   b) abroad

Research Questions for in-depth interview

1. Which field do you cover? Is this being your choice or your organization assigned to you?
2. How has the risk involved in reporting after august 15, 2021?
3. According to many reports that in Afghanistan number of journalists during their duties that they have been beaten, detained and flogged. Tell me about your personal experience have you ever threatened, harassed, arrested or beaten?
4. As per reports Afghan Journalists encounter tough times under new regime tell me about the major challenges facing by Afghan Journalists?
5. As you mentioned about the major challenges that are facing by Afghan Journalists, can you tell me do men and women journalists are facing the same challenges?
6. As Afghan journalists are not free to report each and everything, rather than to report filtered news, in this case what kind of strategies do Afghan Journalists are using to publish a news story?
7. The role of gatekeeping is vital during publishing news stories; my question is how they are playing their role in current situation?
8. As social media is used by the half of the world population, and everyone try to share their opinions, are Afghan journalists free to post any type of content and which type of content normally Afghan journalists are posting and what types of reactions on their posts they receive?
9. As a journalist, who do you mostly rely on for your safety on?
10. Is it easy to access representatives of current government rather than the previous government for seeking comments or interviews or vice versa? Furthermore, how many interviews you have conducted with the representatives of previous government in new regime?
11. Is there any representative body in Afghanistan? If yes than how it plays its role in solving Afghan journalist’s issues? Are you in contact with that representative body?

12. Is there any bill or law for the protection of freedom of speech in constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan? If yes then is it implemented or ever you or someone other took help from clause?

13. Furthermore, what is the difference you or other journalists are experiencing about the working environment and journalistic opportunity in current regime and previous government?