

'Political Role in Journalism': Issues and Challenges in Nepal and Beyond

Ishwori Prasad Kandel, PhD

Associate Professor, Central Department of Political Science, TU

ishworikandel2026@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the intricate connection between politics and journalism, highlighting the difficulties and effects of political influence on journalistic practices. The study shows, through a review of the, statement of problem, study of object and literature, that political beliefs have a major influence on media narratives, which frequently results in skewed reporting. The study is dependence of self-censorship, especially in authoritarian regimes. The crucial role that journalism plays in influencing public opinion and its consequences for democratic processes are also covered in this essay. It also draws attention to the difficulties that journalists encounter in politically delicate situations, such as censorship, physical threats, and legal constraints. The results highlight the necessity for journalistic independence and integrity to support democratic processes, as well as the dual role that media plays as a safeguard for democracy and a possible conduit for political influence. The study highlights the role that independent journalism plays in defending democratic norms in Nepal and notes the challenges that journalists confront in upholding impartiality and moral standards in the face of political polarization.

Keywords: Challenge, Independence, Journalism, Media, Politic.

Introduction

As a distinct mode of communication, journalism plays a crucial role in spreading political themes locally. In order to ensure that the truth is appropriately portrayed, journalists have a duty not only to communicate information but also to objectively narrate stories based on their observations and discoveries (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Mass media, sometimes known as the "heart of the people," is a vital institution in democratic countries, as it is essential for maintaining democratic norms and ideals (McNair, 2017). To ensure democracy, adherence to these norms and values must be accomplished.

By acting as a liaison between the public and the government, the media ensures that people are aware of their rights and responsibilities (Schudson, 2008). In this situation, journalism's role is to expose topics that some would prefer to remain undiscovered, thereby undermining authority and providing informed information to the public (Glasser, 1999).

The more educated the public is, the better decisions they can make, especially regarding issues related to the management of shared resources and the disclosure of mismanagement (Brooke, 2016; Habermas, 1989). Misinformation and fraud can undermine the public good, especially in recent years with the emergence of an information-based society characterized by the dominance of electronic media and social networking sites (Crowe, 2020).

According to Curran and Gurevitch (2005), journalism provides a forum for the expression of a range of viewpoints within society, in addition to keeping us informed about the realities of our local community. This role of journalism is demonstrated in a variety of media, including articles, reports, radio shows, and even social media sites like Twitter (Allan, 2010). Maintaining an informed public is essential to the practice of journalism, which entails the meticulous collection and presentation of news and information in the context of media training, digitization, and globalization (Clapperton, 2020; Tuchman, 1978).

Nepal has seen a dramatic shift in media technology and journalistic methods since the political unrest of 2006, which was influenced by a number of political changes (Bhattarai, 2018). While the growth of populism offers an alternative approach to journalism, the dominance of party politics in Nepal has affected journalistic standards and practices (Sharma, 2021). This changing media landscape highlights the necessity to investigate how political dynamics affect journalism in Nepal specifically and to make comparisons with other global experiences in order to understand the particular opportunities and challenges that exist within the Nepalese context (Dhungel, 2021; McNair, 2017). The study seeks to provide a sophisticated examination of the relationship between politics and journalism by situating it within both local and global frameworks and underscoring the implications for media freedom and democracy.

Method

With an emphasis on the effects and challenges presented by political influence on media practices, this review-based study aims to examine the political function of journalism in a global context in general and in the Nepalese context in particular. A thorough literature analysis of scholarly books, reports, and articles on media studies, journalism, and political communication in Nepal was a necessary step in the research process. The selection of sources focused on their academic rigor, relevance, and ability to shed light on the interactions that exist between politics and journalism in Nepal as well as in an international context.

In order to detect common themes and gaps in the research, the study aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on the difficulties journalists experience in upholding impartiality and ethical standards in a politically charged context by critically reviewing the existing body of material. This approach guarantees a thorough investigation of the topic, utilizing a range of viewpoints to provide a complete understanding of how the political environment affects journalism in Nepal.

Result and Discussion

Global Context

Influence of Political Ideologies on Journalistic Practices

The study discovered that pressure to align information with the prevailing political ideology is common for journalists working in politically heated situations, which can jeopardize journalistic integrity (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). For example, journalists may self-censor in countries with strong authoritarian regimes in order to avoid prosecution, which reduces the variety of viewpoints in the media (Lee, 2020). This ideological influence impacts not only the substance of journalism but also its legitimacy as a source of objective information.

In recent years, it has been observed that this problem is exacerbated by the political interests entangled with media ownership. Media companies controlled by organizations with political affiliations are more likely to create content that marginalizes competing viewpoints and advances specific political objectives (Noam, 2016). Concerns are raised regarding the role of the media in democracies, as they ought to act as watchdogs rather than as mouthpieces for the ruling class (McNair, 2017). The results point to the necessity for greater autonomy in media ownership and editorial processes in order to ensure that journalism fulfills its democratic duties.

The Role of Journalism in Shaping Public Opinion

Public opinion is greatly influenced by journalism, especially in politically delicate situations. The study discovered that news narrative framing frequently shapes the public's perception of political issues and events. For instance, even in the absence of factual accuracy, the use of emotive language and selective reporting can influence public opinion in favor of a given political position (Entman, 2007). Because of its ability to influence public opinion, the media is a vital instrument in politics and is frequently employed by political players to sway public opinion (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013).

Furthermore, the study showed that the spread of digital media has increased the influence and audience of political journalism. In particular, social media platforms have developed into breeding grounds for the quick dissemination of politically sensitive material, sometimes without sufficient editorial control or fact-checking (Tandoc et al., 2018). As a result of this tendency, there is a phenomenon known as "echo chambers," in which people are only exposed to information that confirms their preconceived notions, further polarizing public opinion (Sunstein, 2001). The results emphasize how crucial it is to practice responsible journalism, which prioritizes objectivity and accuracy in order to reduce the spread of false information.

Challenges Faced by Journalists in Politically Sensitive Environments

The study also emphasized the dangers to journalists' bodies that they encounter when covering political stories. An environment of fear that stifles free expression has been created by the frequent harassment, arrests, and even deaths of journalists due to their work (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2023). The work of journalists covering politically

sensitive subjects is made more difficult by legal constraints like defamation laws, which are used to silence critical voices (López-Escobar et al., 2008). The results show that there is a need for both increased international lobbying and better protections for journalists in order to preserve press freedom.

Impact of Political Journalism on Democratic Process

The positive and negative effects of political journalism on democratic processes are significant. The media plays a critical role in democratic countries as a means of informing the public and holding politicians accountable (Schudson, 2008). However, the study also showed that the politicization of journalism might threaten democratic norms by disseminating false information and inciting polarization among the populace (Ward, 2019). Journalism's dual function as a protector of democracy and a possible cause of conflict underscores the nuanced interaction between the media and politics.

Moreover, the results imply that a democracy's health is directly impacted by the quality of political media. An informed voter is necessary for making wise political decisions, and this is achieved through high-quality journalism that prioritizes fact-checking and investigative reporting (McChesney, 2015). On the other hand, sensationalism or biased agendas pushed by subpar journalism can undermine public confidence in democratic institutions and the media (Gans, 2011). The study emphasizes how important it is for journalists to adhere to standards that prioritize objectivity, accuracy, and accountability in order to promote democratic processes.

Nepal's Context

The Historical Context of Nepalese Journalism

The turbulent political history of Nepal, which includes periods of monarchy, a ten-year civil war, and the eventual transition to a federal democratic republic, has long impacted the country's journalism (Rijal, 2017). Political power has significantly influenced media narratives during these periods, frequently resulting in biased reporting that serves the interests of the powerful (Dhungel, 2021). This historical background is essential for comprehending the current struggles faced by Nepali journalists, including political influences that jeopardize their neutrality. In Nepal, political affiliations are often linked to media ownership, which has a significant impact on how news stories are framed and what they cover (Ghimire & Poudel, 2019). Political party loyalists own or control a large number of significant media outlets, which encourages the promotion of particular political agendas at the expense of fair reporting (Thapa, 2020). This situation calls into question the ability of the media to serve as a neutral forum for public discussion. To preserve the media's reputation, the focus should be on bolstering journalistic standards.

Censorship and Self-Censorship: Navigating a Politically Charged Environment

In Nepal, censorship and self-censorship are commonplace for journalists, especially when covering sensitive political subjects. Journalists frequently steer clear of particular topics or present stories in a way that minimizes any backlash out of fear of retaliation from

government officials or political elites (Bhattarai, 2018). This self-censorship is especially common in rural areas, where journalists may face substantial pressure from local political dynamics that restrict their freedom to report (Bista, 2019). The widespread practice of self-censorship undermines the credibility of journalism and impedes the dissemination of information required for a well-informed audience.

The Role of Journalism in Nepal's Democratic Process

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the media in Nepal is essential to the democratic processes of the nation. As a watchdog, the media holds public officials accountable and offers a forum for discussion (Poudel, 2021). However, as previously mentioned, the politicization of journalism jeopardizes this function by eroding public confidence in the media (Adhikari, 2020). Thus, the conversation needs to center on how Nepali journalism can strike a balance between its duty as a guardian of democracy and the demands of political interests.

Challenges in Reporting

Journalists in Nepal face several obstacles when covering political corruption, as influential political figures frequently threaten, intimidate, and sue them (Acharya, 2019). These pressures put investigative journalism, in particular, at risk because it is essential for exposing wrongdoing and holding governments accountable (Sharma, 2021). The impact of these difficulties on journalistic standards and the public's right to know should be considered during the conversation. It should also explore possible remedies, such as bolstering legal protections for journalists and supporting investigative journalism with external funding sources.

Impact of Digital Media on Political Journalism

The emergence of digital media in Nepal has brought about a significant transformation in the field of political journalism, presenting novel opportunities and challenges. Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for journalists to quickly disseminate information, but they also carry the potential for spreading false information and politically biased content (Khadka, 2022). The topic of debate should be how Nepali political news is now reported and consumed on digital media, taking into account both the advantages—such as easier access to information—and the disadvantages—such as the rise of fake news and echo chambers. It's important to emphasize the value of digital literacy as well as the necessity of ethical standards for online media.

Moving Forward: Strengthening Journalism in the Face of Political Challenges

Ultimately, the conversation needs to focus on methods for bolstering Nepali journalism in the face of persistent governmental obstacles. This entails supporting ethical standards in all media, advocating for increased editorial independence, and enhancing legal protections for journalists (Koirala, 2020). The role that journalism plays as a cornerstone of Nepali democracy cannot be overstated, and measures must be taken to ensure that the

media is free from excessive political influence. In addition, as part of the broader initiative to safeguard journalism in the country, the role played by foreign organizations in promoting press freedom and fostering a strong and independent media landscape in Nepal should be considered.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes the relationship between politics and journalism. It is a double-edged sword that can either uphold democratic values or be used as a tool for political manipulation. Political beliefs have a significant influence on journalistic practices in areas where there is a tendency toward authoritarianism. This results in skewed reporting and self-censorship. The legitimacy and integrity of journalism are undermined by this politicization, which raises questions about its effectiveness as a watchdog and a source of objective information. In addition to distorting the news, political objectives have a detrimental effect on journalism, undermining the media's ability to serve as an open and responsible forum for public conversation.

The report also emphasizes how important journalism is in influencing public opinion, particularly in the digital age when social media spreads information quickly. To stop the dissemination of false information and prevent public opinion from becoming further divided, responsible media is crucial. The increasing prevalence of "echo chambers" on digital platforms exacerbates the problems caused by biased journalism, which has the potential to widen rifts in society and undermine confidence in democratic institutions. To address these issues, journalism needs to prioritize accuracy and objectivity, strive to give equal weight to both sides of the story, and lessen the influence of partisan biases.

The results also highlight the various difficulties that journalists encounter in politically sensitive settings, such as censorship, physical threats, and legal constraints. These challenges underscore the need for more robust safeguards and global advocacy for press freedom. Journalism's role as a cornerstone of democracy depends on maintaining journalistic independence and adherence to ethical standards. To create a media environment that supports informed citizens and robust democratic processes, Nepal's complicated political landscape demands a commitment to truth, accountability, and transparency. By addressing these issues, Nepal will be able to preserve democratic principles and ensure that the media continues to be a reliable and influential force in society.

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