Chapter 8
Human Development and Advocacy Journalism in the Spotlight:
Evidence From a Developing Country

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary media-saturated societies, media exercise a considerable influence on every aspect of our lives. The issues that reach public consciousness become significant and consequently exhibit more potential to influence the public policymaking process. Advocacy journalism carries a great potential to advocate human development issues to policymakers. This chapter reviews the role of advocacy journalism in human development journalism practices in a developing country such as Pakistan. It is not a comprehensive survey of the factors associated with media coverage of human development issues; instead, it offers empirical insight into the role of media in human development.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (hereafter MDGs) identified certain human development spheres, including human capital, infrastructure and human rights, that is necessary to raise the quality of life (Bedriñana, Martín, & Añaños, 2021; Das, 2018). Scholars affirmed a critical role of media in achieving

the MDG's through adopting advocacy journalism practices (Kamboh & Yousaf, 2020). The advocacy journalism paradigm suggests media coverage to immerse stories to aid human development goals through fostering societal changes (ElAlfy, Darwish, & Weber, 2020). However, mainstream media coverage remains limited in reporting facts instead of implementing advocacy journalism while covering human development issues (Alvares, Cardoso, Crespo, & Pinto-Martinho, 2021; Charles, 2019). To embark upon human development goals, a transformation of mainstream media journalistic practices has been observed in the form of advocacy journalism (Williams Fayne, 2021). This paradigm has shifted the locus of journalism from captivating sides to tap what creates news stories (Laursen & Trapp, 2021). To this point, advocacy journalism revolutionizes the journalistic practices and necessities participation of the audience. Compared to the traditional media practices that are limited to reporting the mere facts, this genre of journalism guides how to find and act-oriented engagement of the audience. In this way, advocacy journalism serves as an alternative model of journalistic practices to enhance people's engagement in human development issues (Pearson, 2021). This emerging advocacy model gradually counters mainstream media news values and influences journalistic practices. As such, the reliance of the advocacy journalists moves into profoundly transformed journalistic practices focusing on human development issues instead of objectivity (Charles, 2013). Previous understandings of the news values in reporting human development issues are now in question. For example, do delineation facts in a news story regarding human development can accomplish the objective of people engagement? Scholars (e.g., Charles, 2013; Pearson 2021) affirmed that advocacy journalistic arguably had shifted away from mainstream media objectivity and new values into more ethical and action-oriented practices (Peuchaud, 2021).

In this standard, media plays an imperative role in the change and development of society by engaging people with stories. Advocacy journalism encourages public participation, so it can be applied to improve a country's human development landscape. In this regard, Roger noted, "a participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and martial advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment" (Roger, 1978, p. 68). Several studies have acknowledged a strong correlation between media and human development in societies (Lerner, 1958; Lerner & Schramm, 1967; Schramm, 1964). Some of these studies treat media as an independent variable that plays a crucial role in development. The amount of communication correlates with the level of development in society (Lerner & Schramm, 1967; Schramm, 1964).

In contrast, other studies outline that media were necessary to change the traditional values customs of the traditional Middle Eastern societies. It was found that the traditional values and habits of these societies were inconsistent with the Western-centered values; therefore, communication was an essential factor to transform the values and bring them in conformity with the western values to make the development process smoothly take place in these societies (Lerner, 1958). However, this Western-oriented modernization paradigm failed to bring any significant change and bridge the gap in poverty in developing countries. Another reason was that development was not only based on amount and knowledge but also ethos, values and religion. Therefore, new inclusive and participatory approaches such as Human Development from 1990, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 were introduced and propagated (UNESCO, 2015). Although these studies have pointed out different reasons for the failure of the modern paradigm, however, these all studies shared a common conclusion that the western paradigm of modernizing the underdeveloped countries did not meet the desired targets and is dead (McAnany, 1978; Moemeka, 1994; Parker, 1978;

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