



## WhatsApp and Journalism: News Practices of Pakistani Journalists

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**Abstract:** WhatsApp has changed the way of traditional texting. It is a mobile messaging application that allows free exchange of texts, videos, documents, location and pictures. Although, the professional use of WhatsApp is an emerging concept from the news media perspective but certain news forums are identifying its emergent regularity in Pakistani journalism. Various questions arise about the use of WhatsApp in journalistic news practices. This study is an attempt to provide an insight into the concept of journalistic news practices through WhatsApp along with historical growth of work practices in the field of journalism. It also qualitatively explores the use of WhatsApp as a media coverage tool. The study underhand brings on record the views of Pakistani journalists on the growing trends of application of this new technology for information gathering and news reporting. A critical analysis has also been presented on the basis of information gathered from semi-structured in-depth interviews, taken by 20 journalists. The study points out that WhatsApp is an advance tool for information flow and has provided the fastest news sharing mechanism. The study further explored that due to inexpensive and secure services of WhatsApp, it has not only promoted but provided a new horizon to the citizen journalism.

**Key words:** WhatsApp, In-depth interviews, Journalism, Pakistan, Media coverage tool, Information gathering, News reporting, News coverage.

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### INTRODUCTION

Right from the emergence of Pakistan, the field of journalism has evolved significantly, as it is under continuous transformation. In the initial days of the independence of Pakistan, journalists faced resource constraints impeding efficient publication and circulation of newspaper. These constraints flowed from multiple resources, such as, influx of migrants, dearth of industries in the newly born country, etc. Under these strenuous conditions, the key stakeholders, for the field of journalism, started progressing step by step by initiating various national newspapers, news channels and news magazines.

Journalism is not just a profession, it is the biggest responsibility for a person, who is called journalist, because journalists are not just telling their audience, what is happening in this world, rather they also give them information that will help them to make the best possible decision about their lives, humanities and government.

Before 20<sup>th</sup> century, journalists in Pakistan faced tough conditions as a lot of physical input was required. Journalistic practices in those times required

a lot of manual labor as journalists had to use hands in the process of newspaper making. This manual labor started from the phase of gathering of news from the surroundings, followed by the phase of noting it on the paper for an intelligent analysis of the collected information. The final phase of this manual labor demanded dispatch of news to printing press, where decisions about the color and format of the news were finalized. Pakistani news media has experienced significant enhancement due to various factors, such as, high-tech advancements in news production, and increased news awareness among individuals, due to the increase in literacy rate and university education. Journalistic media is showing divergence from print to electronic broadcast media or newspaper to TV and from websites to digital technology.

In today's era, the news media is an instant source of getting information about the world, therefore, there is a responsibility on journalists' shoulder who provide this information. New development in news media in Pakistan started in 2002 with promulgation of freedom of information ordinance of 2002, the PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory

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Authority) Ordinance of 2002. The freedom of information ordinance contains positive features acknowledging citizens' right to know.

Advancements in science and technology have affected the field of journalism and consequently journalist's practices are changing. Journalism is such a profession, in which truth, equality and authentication are important elements of journalist's practices. It is the duty and responsibility of journalists to advocate societal news and modify them, present the facts, carried out non-adoptability behavior towards plagiarism, unveil the truth, keep the information source private and present the assumptions with facts. However, in order to bring the instant big breaking news on daily basis, journalists are using and utilizing new trends and advancements in their text message applications (Edwards, 2016).

However, in news practices, digital communication activities get recognition from incident of London bombing that occurred in July, 2005. Other incidents, like, Airplane in the Hudson River Twitter photo 2009, 2011's Egypt protest video on YouTube, 2015's Syrian baby's lifeless body lying in the surf on Turkish beach (Hermida, 2012), etc., all these incidents demand the need of new communication channels.

Journalists and other media person always strive for new technologies (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001). This is the demand of journalism profession because journalists are always eager to discover the unfold facts that can generate any news story or breaking news. In Pakistan, this new advancement in technology makes journalists life easy as it provides support to handle the burden of journalistic practices (Arshad and Ashraf, 2014). In today's era, for journalists to fulfill their information communication needs, they are using different digital applications and "WhatsApp", which is one of them that greatly influences the news practices of journalists.

All around the world, "WhatsApp" usages frequency increases among the journalists as well as high authorities. Like, Kenya's Ministries are using "WhatsApp" for press releases and reporting for good public relations. Kenya's Ministries also shared their important information with the journalists with the help of "WhatsApp" application (Wainaina, 2016). After the emergence of "WhatsApp" in Asia, it is considered as one of the most reliable and friendly usage applications among journalists in Pakistan. According to the research, conducted by Pruto (2016), one billion active users used "WhatsApp" every month. After the appearance of this new messaging application "WhatsApp", journalists have realized its importance in the field of journalism.

In Pakistan, journalistic practices are considered as controlled by the strict editorial practices. However, media organizations are enthusiastically using "WhatsApp" to distribute their news and beats (Cohen, 2016). Journalists are now well aware that

traditional practices are no longer useful in communication and "WhatsApp" easily replaces the way of news and information dissemination (Siapera, 2012). Due to its easy use, now Pakistani journalists are also adopting this new messaging application "WhatsApp" and share their pictures with others, exchange recordings within their colleagues, reports, voice recordings and much more. Journalists are writing digital tickers for news channels, stories, headlines, news, research, discussions and records interviews, taking pictures, makes videos on the spot, and also writing scripts (Edwards, 2016). WhatsApp is a growing ground for learning and application for journalists and it is shaping the new practices of journalism (Brown *et al.*, 2015). Due to immense effects, "WhatsApp" emerged as "Global Phenomenon" (Pew Research Center, 2010).

"WhatsApp" is advanced correspondence application that promises comfort usage to its application users and its effects seen on journalism field. This application is not only influencing the way messages but also are conveyed rather it also affects the journalist's practices of news gathering in the whole world. Journalistic practices are changing, news gathering and transferring of information is becoming digitalized day by day (Herbert, 1999). In today's digital space, social interactions have become so tangled with "WhatsApp" that it is important to examine how journalists are using it for the news practices.

The aim of this research paper is to explore the perception of Pakistani journalists practicing of "WhatsApp" application in their news gathering process. This research study attempts to explore and analyze the journalist's viewing patterns of "WhatsApp", its role, benefits and perceived reliability of "WhatsApp" usage in news practices. The insufficient study on journalistic news practices and the impact of "WhatsApp" or new technological advancement in the journalistic practices, reinforce the need of such study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Historical evidence demonstrates that new practices can spread generally crosswise over journalism, which is ultimately transforming the field. Journalism has been around "since people recognized the need to share information about themselves with others" (Zelizer, 2004), and journalists share different news and information with others, with the help of new applications (Cochran, 1997). New message exchange applications have improved the practices of gathering news-stories and information that is interesting for journalists (Council of Europe, 2015).

Day by day "WhatsApp" has changed the way of how news are gathered and is becoming an important source for news. According to a report "WhatsApp" transmits around 42 billion messages from its 320 million active users each day (Smith, 2014). Anything a journalist posts on "WhatsApp" group is going to be

a successful 100% hit to subscribers (for effective delivery and understanding of the message conveyed) (O'Donovan, 2014). So, "WhatsApp" has huge potential and an influential platform for news distribution (Marrouch, 2014). Trushar Barot, the World Service Application Editor, supported this argument by saying that such numbers represent massive possibilities for journalists and news organizations in reaching sources for stories. He also said that "We can't compete with services like "WhatsApp" in India" (Radcliffe, 2015).

"WhatsApp" first got recognition, when a Syrian immigrant shared his fight to reach Europe immediately on "WhatsApp" in term of reporting and news gathering (Specia, 2015). In this report, a young man's struggle was made public in Turkey via a chat on messaging service on mobile. Reporter found that just an application facilitated her to build a relationship with her source that would not have been easy otherwise (Warren, 2015). According to a research, one out of every seven persons in this world is using "WhatsApp", therefore, "WhatsApp" is now used as a media tool as well (Reid, 2016). In current circumstances, "WhatsApp" can help to diminish the hindrance between the reporter and the sources.

Dutton (2013) focused on four types of Journalistic practices, namely: (a) editorial flow modification, (b) news gathering practices' alternate, (c) production's temporal patterns acceleration, and last is print, electronic and online operation's convergence, in which the researchers explore new news gathering practices alternative, like "WhatsApp". Navy Journalist (2014) identified four most repeatedly used processes in news-gathering, which are scrutiny, telephone conversations, research and discussions and "WhatsApp" fulfill all these steps with few flaws (Integrated Publishing). Trushar Barot, Assistant Editor, BBC's UGC (user-generated content) and social media core, told that one of the thing which we understand is that we are reaching a very wide demographic and in some areas of the world the people who use "WhatsApp" are really poor (Reid, 2014).

BBC incorporated "WhatsApp" in news-gathering practices like they use "WhatsApp" for *health* news, such as *Ebola* education in West Africa (Frankenhauser, 2015). "WhatsApp" is the main application, which triggers 500 million people in this region as it is free, that is why people benefit from it (Lunden, 2014). BBC World Service used "WhatsApp" quite efficiently during "*Typhoon Haiyan*" at the end of 2014, in the Philippines (Shukman, 2015). In this case, the creative team on the ground in the Philippines set up "WhatsApp" account on the team phone and encouraged listeners to get in touch with the program "World Have Your Say Programme" via "WhatsApp" alongside the more traditional channels (Reid, 2014).

Apart from the coverage on health issues, "WhatsApp" is also being used for the political

coverage. BBC used "WhatsApp" for India's *election* by distributing news, information and political trends. Liz Corbin, the BBC News Singapore Bureau Editor, says "WhatsApp" is something we have been using for major deployments for some time now (Llewellyn, 2016). For promoting journalism on "WhatsApp" we have some examples like "*Pope Francis*" coverage in The New York Times by "WhatsApp". New York Times experimented with "WhatsApp" to updates pope watcher. People who want "*Pope Francis*" information first they added the contact numbers and then texted "*POPE*" on that number which signaled that you want updates and, at any time, if you want to leave this then just write "*UNSUBSCRIBE*" to the same number and you quit (Welsh, 2015). BBC News India gives a number to those who are interested to know about India's election progress and people think "WhatsApp" is the biggest game changer in elections (Barot, 2014). Real advances from experimentation and continuously hard-hitting the way journalistic work has facilitated in lessening the gap among skilled print professionals, digitally-intellectual editorial people and developers in the newsrooms.

The Guardian's reporter Adam Gabbatt, used a "WhatsApp" Broadcast List to hold the chat on "Republican Presidential Debate, 2015". He covered the politics debate by taking the conversation to "WhatsApp", posted updates, chatting about all the big moments and posted a few pictures. He also used to give a number to those who want to participate in this conversation, they write "*JOIN*" before starting chatting and broadcasting. After joining the group if a member, he/she wants to quit, he writes "*STOP*" to unsubscribe. As a result, during this broadcast phase, Gabbatt repeatedly replied back to the broadcast group what people were discussing with him separately (Gabbatt, 2015). "WhatsApp" broadcast lists allow the users to send out messages to many contacts at one time, but the contacts who accepted the messages are only able to send replies to the original person who started this broadcast (Marshall, 2016). Trushar Barot, the World Service Apps Editor, says that this innovative service might right away make it easier to convey content to "WhatsApp" clients (Barot, 2014).

"WhatsApp" has a unique feature of end-to-end encryption. An improvement to its confidentiality makes it almost unfeasible for anybody to understand writing and read users' (Journalist's) communication – even the group independently. The innovative encryption system means "WhatsApp" communication will currently trek all the means to the receivers' gadget before simply being encoded among the user's gadget along with "WhatsApp" server (Greenberg, 2014). "WhatsApp" founder, Jan Koum stated that the annual subscription fee was still a blockade to some users (Fried, 2016). PPF (Pakistan Press Foundation) reported that since 2000, more than 200 journalists were killed (Rehman, 2014) and another report says that 28 journalists were killed in

2015 (PPF, 2015). According to CPJ (Committee to Project Journalism) report there are the 14 countries where at least five journalists have been murdered without a single perpetrator being convicted in which Pakistan is on 9<sup>th</sup> position (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2015). According to the CPJ, Pakistan is the 4<sup>th</sup> deadliest country for journalists where sensitive or serious news reporting and news coverage punishment is death by the hands of unknown groups (AFP, 2016). Dawn newspaper editor, Zafar Abbas takes “WhatsApp” initiative to save the journalist’s life and is remarkable (Huang, 2016; PPF, 2016). In terms of source safety, “WhatsApp” co-founders Jan Koum and Brian Acton said that “WhatsApp” has always shown its main concern in making user data and communication as secure as possible. Due to its end-to-end encryption, journalists feel extra protected and secure than before (Aljazeera, 2016).

In order to explore the use of “WhatsApp” in Rawalpindi/Islamabad (Pakistan) in term of their professional demands, this paper analyses the qualitative study, the topic of study is being implemented by other researchers in different aspects and with various point of views. There are many researches, which have been done regarding “WhatsApp” use, its new feature and key role in communication scenario and the positive impact of “WhatsApp” on youth cherished the chat (Ms and Jisha, 2014). In this study, they found that “WhatsApp” has created a sagacity of familiarity, closeness, belongingness and relationship with friends and relatives. Some of the most well-known technological modernizations are smart phones, laptops and the use of internet in journalism. Journalists have significantly exaggerated, many aspects of survives. Today, the Internet usage in journalism is growing day-by-day at a far-fetched speed (Dutton, 2013).

In this research, in order to understand the Journalistic news practices, Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) grounded theory process is being followed. Grounded theory is a technique or a process in qualitative study, which indicates major themes of any analyses (Martin and Gynnild, 2011). As a whole, researches make it obvious that journalistic news gathering practices have been changing with the passage of time. The researches, reports and news articles will become the basis of this study as the research is identifying that the WhatsApp, more or less, fulfills the journalistic demands. This research deals with the journalistic news practices in media and the effect of changing trends in modern news practices. Glaser and Strauss (1967) declared that grounded theory is a methodical finding of a theory from given information and it is a general method of comparative analysis of gathered data. For current study, we have used semi-structured interviews. The semi-structure in-depth interview directly gives an apparent position of instructions for inquirers and can present consistent, analogous qualitative information

(Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). In this qualitative research, we inductively derive theory through analyzing rich data carefully and presented through thick description. The grounded theory process is followed in this research to explain the changing patterns in news practices, due to technological advancements like “WhatsApp”.

### Research Questions

RQ1: How are the journalists in Rawalpindi and Islamabad using “WhatsApp” to meet their profession’s demands?

RQ2: How and in what ways is it affecting their news practices?

### METHODOLOGY

This article follows the qualitative approach by utilizing in-depth interviews to examine the perceptions of Pakistani journalists about using of “WhatsApp” in their practices. In-depth interviews are useful tool in exploratory qualitative social research and the main tool for inquiring research objectives (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). Semi-structured in-depth interviews can convey the meaningful discussion of the respondents’ personal verbal communication (Lindlof and Taylor, 2010).

For this research study, researchers have used snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is also called referral sampling technique and it is used when a proper sampling frame is not available or the characteristic under study is rare. Snowball sampling is mostly used for different respondents (Bailey, 1994). The researchers have conducted 20 interviews of professional journalists, working in Pakistan (Rawalpindi/Islamabad). It has been made sure that sample is made representative by covering respondents from diverse groups, i.e., different in their gender-specification, working experience, Job designations and in their languages, but they are selected on their availability. Before the interview, researcher made phone calls to different journalists upon the reference of other journalists (snowball technique) in order to explain reasons for conducting this research and ask for their help. Some interviews were taken telephonically, while for some interviews, the researchers visited different offices. The average time to conduct the interview was twenty minutes.

A total of 20 interviews of professional journalists were conducted for this research study, out of which, one senior journalist was Bureau-Chiefs of news channel Abb Takk, others 4 interviews were taken from different senior news editors, 14 in-depth interviews were working news journalist and one in-depth interview was conducted with the President of National Press Club (NPC), Islamabad. Researchers after getting the oral/audio-recorded consent from the interviewee transformed these recordings into paper according to McCracken (1988). All transcribed information was divided based on its distinguish

sayings and sentences that stood significant for probable themes.

The question of interview consisted of two portions, the 1<sup>st</sup> was regarding personal information, such as, a person's name, occupation or job time period. The 2<sup>nd</sup> portion was linked by the Pakistani journalists using patterns of "WhatsApp". For example, the questions were asked about Pakistani journalists' "WhatsApp" using motivation, their favorite "WhatsApp" features, etc. Other key interview question deals with a journalist's perception about the usage of "WhatsApp" in different media like in their perception what is the relative advantage of "WhatsApp" in broadcast coverage? What is the level of satisfaction they feel with this application? And which one is the easiest feature of "WhatsApp" in journalistic practices? Researchers made joint conclusions on every portion of the transcribed interviews.

**Table 1: Characteristics of interviewee.**

Gender	Male Journalist	<b>18</b>
	Male Urdu News-Paper	10
	TV-Channel Male Journalist	08
Gender	Female Journalist	<b>02</b>
	Urdu News-Paper Female Journalist	01
	TV-Channel Female Journalist	01
	Total Journalists	<b>20</b>

In this research paper, we conducted interviews with eighteen male journalists, in which, ten were from Urdu newspaper and eight were from TV-channel's news journalists. We just found two professional female journalists, one was from Urdu newspaper and the other was from TV-channel's news journalists.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of this research study was to find out that how journalists are using "WhatsApp" in their news practices. In the light of our in-depth interviews, four themes were identified. First theme, the work practices, deals with how the work practices of journalists were associated with the use of "WhatsApp" in journalism. Second theme, News Reliability, deals with how the news reliability on "WhatsApp" advances the journalistic practices. Third theme deals with end-to-end encryption. Fourth theme, Citizen Journalism, deals with "Is citizen journalism boosted through "WhatsApp"? Finally, the fifth theme, Information Flow, deals with looking of quickest information flow in journalistic practices.

### Work practices

Work practices of journalism are related to previous methods used by the journalists for information gathering and news reporting to meet their journalistic demands. Through, in the in-depth interviews, we tried to gain a multi-faceted approach keen on the journalists' old news practices, the

practice of information gathering and the use of "WhatsApp". In an interview, a senior journalist and bureau-chief Abb Takk news channel, Mazhar Tufail (Retd.) said;

'In 2002, when electronic media came in Pakistan, we used just *Fax*, which was very difficult as ink used to fade away with the passage of time and we did not have any other evidence of our reports, and due to lack of physical evidence, the higher authorities said, "it is a typical mistake" so many of our journalists were dismissed or fired from their jobs. Then we used *Email*, which gave ease but, at that time, we needed trainings for manage archives. With the help of *Messenger*, we felt more ease in our journalistic practices. But now I see that all journalists welcome new mobile applications for news gathering practices like "WhatsApp".

According to Ramaprasad *et al.*, (2012), previous research, "respondents" believed that these technologies, especially, computer, Internet, and cell phone or their different upcoming applications, had located news at their fingertips, eased contacts with international and national information sources, varied their thought's pool, and made their careers ready quicker and easier in a few ways". Journalists welcome new technologies all the time and with the passage of time, our journalistic practices have changed. In Pakistan broadcast journalism is less practical in history and flourished after 2002 (Shrivastava, 2005).

Though some journalist pointed that now reporting days are rarely 'tough' as in the past when new technologies, mobile apps and other facilities were rare we worked day and night to save our jobs. The view about the traditional and current work practices in journalism, Daily Halaat Islamabad's newspaper journalist, Ijaz Farooqi said;

'In my 30 years' of experience in print media, I saw many new technologies and practices in journalism's field. In the start, we worked with typing machines and we faced a lot of troubles because of the lack of resources and inefficient record management. Nowadays, new journalists are more advance and quick, they use different mobile applications and send us news, we send it to the printer and the printer prints them in good quality. Now the flurrying of news gathering practices has become tranquil'.

Journalists also receive some training in new technology for improving their news practices. Mr. Riaz-ul-Haq, Express Tribune journalist mentioned;

'Due to "WhatsApp" and other facilities now I call my job a "Couch Journalism" because we get or pick news from different "WhatsApp" group in our news room or offices from different ministries PRO's side and we rewrite them according to our channel's policy or interest'.

Mr. Tazeen Akhtar, Senior journalist, Daily Azkaar, says;

‘Very fast, very effective and most convenient application is journalist life is “WhatsApp”.

Journalists express their satisfaction with the usage of “WhatsApp” because it allows them to get information and share it or report it from a distance and connect them with their offices or work places.

#### **Reliability:**

From journalist’s interviews, we understand that in the start of news reporting and news gathering, the journalists use or find different tools for checking their news’ reliability and these tools are changing with the passage of time. When the researcher, asked about the reliability issue of news-gathering in “WhatsApp” some of them said mostly it is reliable.

Shams Rehman Abbasi, Economy journalist and member of National Press Club, said;

“As a journalist, when I see “WhatsApp” group for any news then I also know the other journalists too, who share and report any news in this group. Some time, we see some fake news, which was not properly verified than all group journalists become furious and said who are you? What is your designation? Tell us your channel name, etc., but it is rare and in my view, just 30 to 40% chances are for unreliability issue, otherwise 60 to 70% are reliable and accurate”.

Daily Times journalist, Miss. Memona Arif noted that:

“Yes, I feel it is reliable because government ministry officials and spokespersons upload their events on “WhatsApp” group for journalists and news channels”.

All interviews gave almost same reply in term of reliability and said that “WhatsApp” is reliable for news practices. Nearly every news outlet is using “WhatsApp” in some way or the other. The majority of the journalists, editors and reporters, said “WhatsApp” is frequently used for work. The following summarizes those findings that are most relevant to journalism practices.

Mr. Tazeen Akhtar mentioned that;

“WhatsApp” is the fastest and reliable platform for news sharing and reporting for journalist and we all use it very well because it gives us safe environment to practice. Now many media houses encourage new apps for instant news coverage or reporting”.

#### **End-to-End Encryption:**

When the researchers asked about the “WhatsApp” new feature end-to-end encryption role in journalism and news gathering practices, as Shakeel Anjum, a senior journalist and president of the Pakistan National Press Club, said:

‘I just found that the foremost and basic benefit of “WhatsApp” is that we talk to our sources without external tapping and it is protected. On phone call, news gathering is tough and not safe. This new

security provides us good confidence and our sources also feel secure on “WhatsApp” call rather than any other for news sharing’.

Mr. Farukh, Telecom journalist, ARY news TV channel answered;

“WhatsApp” call or message is not easily traced out, so as a journalist, I and my source are safe and secure’.

Mr. Syed Asim Raza, senior journalist at “SUCH TV” also told,

‘In “WhatsApp” our privacy is better maintained and we feel secure in news sharing’.

In an interview, Mr. Javeed Jadee, Senior Journalist NewsOne TV channel, said,

‘I and my friend talk on some confidential issues and we know about online Bug, then we use code wording on telephone and we face wrong interpretation problems but on “WhatsApp” we are openly discussing every issue without any hesitation and code wording’.

Other journalists mentioned that end-to-end encryption is a good feature in term of source privacy. Because every journalist’s first priority is, that their source becomes safe and secure and “WhatsApp” provides this security.

#### **Citizen Journalism:**

For some interviewees “WhatsApp” has become a good news sharing tool in term of citizen journalism. Mr. Nawaz Raza, Chief Reporter of Nawa-e-Waqt newspaper, encouraged “WhatsApp” in newsroom communication. He stated; ‘Most of the time, citizens report before our reporters, so they are more active than us now’.

In the interview, Mr. Javeed Jadee, Senior Journalist, said;

‘Citizen’s participation has increased due to “WhatsApp” in media and it has built a partnership between citizens and media channels. Citizens record a video on spot and send it to media channels. Citizens are very active in media in term of news sharing practices’.

Mr. Riaz-ul-Haq, Express Tribune journalist, said,

‘In Pakistan, some channels motivate citizens to report them but this trend is so rare at that time. But yes, with the passage of time it will improve with citizen journalism’.

Senior Journalist, Mr. Tazeen Akhtar mentioned,

‘some people criticize on that boost of citizen journalism because they think people exaggerate in news but, I think, every new technology has some positive or negative aspect so it’s good because we are informed before anyone else. He also said that, “WhatsApp” is a medium of connection between reporters, journalists and news-channels’.

#### **Information Flow:**

For many interviewees, “WhatsApp” in many ways was more useful and quick than any other news

gathering tool. It unleashes its power when you reverse the newsroom-audience information flow – from news-gathering to broadcasting. According to the Director, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, on the basis of their distinctive data from 10 countries they found that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Google+, and “WhatsApp” are considerably significant set-ups for news. In these findings “WhatsApp” was being used for information sharing and discovering news. According to statistics, 26% of users in Spain, at the age of 18-24 years, use “WhatsApp” for news purpose (Newman and Levy, 2014).

Mr. Shahbaz Ahmad, a SUCH TV journalist, stated that;

‘Today, without “WhatsApp” you can not do anything in electronic media. Within minutes, we share any news in groups and every journalist is informed with this news’.

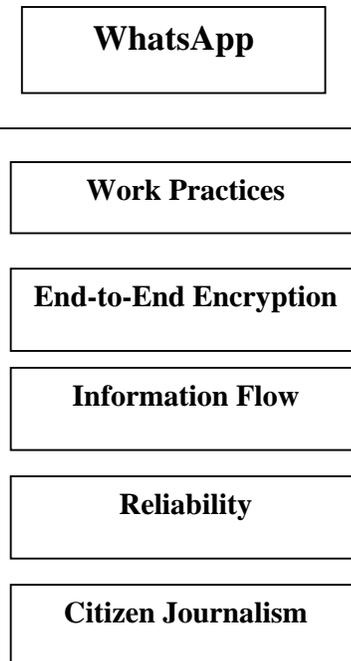
Print and electronic media journalists both use “WhatsApp” at some level but the difference of reporting is just based on time. In electronic media, every second is important so “WhatsApp” helps them in quick sharing and editing their reports for news channels. However, print media have 12-hour time relaxation and they share their news coverage and images on WhatsApp. Now a new trend in Pakistan has risen which is called Visual Journalism in which every print or electronic media has its own webpages where they update current audio-video news for which they appreciate “WhatsApp” because it gives them instant news-feed.

It’s quick, easy and cheap, more personal than email and less likely to be overloaded. It is very simple to share photos and video that others could start to check out and verify. It’s great for multi-location deployments or where your team is spread over a wide area. Everyone can see what everyone else is doing so correspondents would not be asked for ‘lives’ when they’re out of action/busy. Miss. Memon Arif, a journalist, the Daily Times, said;

“WhatsApp” gives ease in this field but some journalists rely on shortcuts and forget the field practices. Now official statements and regular news are updated on WhatsApp and if it is in Urdu news then we go on WhatsApp web, apply bar-code then convert it in Unicode and finally air it on different TV channels’.

Mr. Shahbaz, a journalist at SUCH TV, said, ‘the places where access to camera is difficult or not allowed then we use our mobile-cameras and “WhatsApp”, to send our news to our channels. And it’s excellent for team-building and mutual support. The majority of interviewers from the electronic media stipulate that their TV channel’s standards were strict on timely news, and made worse by “WhatsApp”. Now we run with time and use “WhatsApp” for TV news and send tickers with “WhatsApp”.

inspite of these efforts, the paper has its limitations. At first, this study has its narrow area of research because this research is limited on Rawalpindi/Islamabad’s working journalist, therefore for further research on other countries and cities is required while the second limitation is gender in this process as the researchers just go to the next person (snowball sampling), which is referred by the first one so many of the interviewees were male which was a shocking finding as the number of male journalists are far greater than female journalist in Pakistan. Since it is not the major finding of this study, so for further research will be focused on gender base journalistic practices as well and find their views too. The final limitation in this research is that it is a qualitative study; therefore, in future, other quantitative methods may also be applied.



## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

This research’s results conferred the scope of “WhatsApp” in journalistic news gathering practices. The results showed diverse opinion of journalists regarding “WhatsApp” usage in the field of journalism, some senior journalists’ interviews revealed that they were still hesitant to adopt “WhatsApp” in their newsroom. Research study results added better understanding of how the Pakistani journalists organized “WhatsApp” within the current work practices, news reliability, end-to-end Encryption, citizen journalism and information flow inside the journalistic practices. All journalists mentioned that people are now more active in using “WhatsApp” and with the help of that tool they are more inclined to join journalism profession.

Some journalists believed that new mobile application “WhatsApp” decreased the attraction of

journalism. Other reason, they highlighted, was that “WhatsApp” made the journalists lazy as they did not verify the news-stories physically. The other effects of “WhatsApp” include changing patterns in information flow and even sometimes it is used as shortcut method for gathering news which contains little risk or threatening the journalism’s future in Pakistan.

Interview’s results revealed that journalists were not only using “WhatsApp” for chatting purposes, they also gained benefit practically by using this texting application in professional practices. Secondly, current study revealed multi-dimensional themes (Work practices, Reliability, End-to-End Encryption, Citizen Journalism and Information Flow) influencing the Pakistani journalists towards adoption of WhatsApp in their news practices.

In spite of its limitations, this research study suggests that “WhatsApp” may become a new application for journalists, which helps them in instant news gathering process. From interviews, we understand that with the invention of “WhatsApp” journalists’ news practices are gaining changes with time. Now Pakistani journalists are using and find “WhatsApp” as a cheaper and reliable service for sharing their news, information and pictures. Another aspect of research in this area can be a comparison of Pakistani journalistic practices with other countries and cultures.

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