

The Role of Media in the Reconciliation Process in the Context of Post War Sri Lanka

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An unprecedented number of research studies has been conducted on the relation between media and conflict. While many have pointed out that the media aggravates conflict, others point out how the media helps build reconciliation. All are united in the claim that the media plays a role in conflict ignition and in the reconciliation process. This research study is an attempt to find out the role played by Sri Lankan media in the reconciliation process in the context of post war Sri Lanka.

To address this problem, four research questions were addressed:

1. Do journalists know their role in the reconciliation process?
2. Do ideological closures of journalists affect the reconciliation process?
3. Does stereotyping of journalists affect the reconciliation process?
4. Does market logic of the media affect the reconciliation process?

Three mainstream media newspapers were selected for analysis. The data were collected during a constructed week. Accordingly newspapers were collected Monday in first week of the month, Tuesday in the second, Wednesday in the third, and Thursday in the fourth and so on. Data obtained from interviews with experienced journalists were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. ANOVA was computed using SPSS to analyse the newspaper data while the interview data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis method. The results revealed that different newspapers reported the news based on the ideologies that they represented. It was also revealed that journalists were biased, and thus reported ethno centered news creating more tension among the two ethnicities. The results also indicated that there were relatively few reports on reconciliation in all the newspapers. The study revealed that being market oriented, the newspaper followed a war reporting approach and leading to further provocation of people instead of promoting reconciliation.

Keywords: Reconciliation process, post war context, war reporting, peace reporting