

PERCEPTION OF YOUTH REGARDING THE CREDIBILITY OF TV NEWS CHANNELS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Television is considered a powerful mass medium, which is not only meant for dissemination and analyzing the news but also has a strong impact on the social, cultural, and political approach of the audience. The boom in the TV industry of Pakistan in the early 21st century has resulted in the massive popularity of private news channels among viewers. The Urdu transmission of these channels is one of the reasons for popularity as the national language is spoken and understood by the majority population all over the country. However, the credibility of the content remains an issue always. The purpose of this research is to find out the perception of youth regarding the credibility of leading TV news channels Dunya News, ARY News, and Geo News. The study examines the youth's perception regarding the credibility of news content. It also seeks to find out to what extent, prime-time talk shows of these channels, "On the Front", "Off the Record" and "Capital Talk" are considered credible among youth considers. The present study is survey research in which data was collected from the undergraduate students of public and private sector universities of Lahore. Data were analyzed through Descriptive Statistics. Further, T-test was applied to find out the difference in perception based on demographic characteristics. The results show that the youth is more interested in watching talk shows rather than news bulletins. TV news channels are popular among youth due to a better understanding of the Urdu language, but with compromised credibility. The viewers believe that every TV channel has a certain agenda and it gives coverage to every news with a political bias. This biasedness has raised a question about the credibility of news channels among young viewers.

Keywords: Perception, Credibility, Talk shows, News Channels, Political Bias

INTRODUCTION

The free flow of information across the borders in 21st century has enforced the concept of the "Global Village" given by Marshal McLuhan, where a person can have access to the news from each corner of the world (Hungbo, 2007). The boom in information technology in the early 21st century has resulted in the massive popularity of private TV channels among viewers. Television is considered the best source of information and entertainment. Private news channels are popular among viewers due to the variety of news and less restriction by the government. The news media has become a global sensation due to its reach across boundaries (Aslam, Sarwar, Bhatti & Shakoor, 2020).

Pakistan Television (PTV) was the first TV channel established in November 1964, with the collaboration of Japan (Yousaf, 2012). In the first two decades of the 21st century, the TV industry in Pakistan experienced a mushroom growth that resulted in the bombardment of information to the audience, however, the quality of news remained a serious concern. Freedom of expression,

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unbiasedness, objectivity, and neutrality are some factors that are considered missing in the news of Pakistan's electronic media (Saeed, Farooq, Khan & Mahmood, 2021).

The earlier studies reveal that the audience has a negative perception of the news coverage on TV channels in Pakistan. Credibility is one of the most important factors, in fact, the backbone of the TV news industry. Hence, it is a need of the day to analyze the credibility of news channels among audiences. The present research is aimed to explore the audience perception regarding the credibility of the three most popular private TV news channels in Pakistan ARY News, Geo News, and Dunya News. Geo News founded by Jang Media Group in 2002 is considered the very first news channel in Pakistan.

The channel introduced a totally new and different style of news broadcasting. Geo News has established its image as a torchbearer for freedom of speech in Pakistan. The popularity of Geo News expanded its broadcast by starting many new entertainment channels, named "Geo Entertainment", "Geo Super", "Geo Sports", "Geo Aag", "Geo Taiz", and "Geo Kahani". This media group revolutionized TV broadcast in Pakistan by using the latest media technology (Yousaf, 2012).

The boom in the television industry gave opened the doors for new private channels; both news and entertainment. ARY News is another popular private news channel in Pakistan. (Yousaf, 2012). Being the first international news channel in Pakistan, ARY has its correspondence all around at the national and international levels.

Dunya News, owned by the National Communication Services, is another popular private news channel in Pakistan, which telecast news and current affairs programs around the clock. This channel started its broadcast in 2008 with vast coverage outside Pakistan including the UK, US, Gulf, and South Asia. The channel is among the 10 top news channels in Pakistan (Media Ownership Monitor Pakistan, 2018).

The negative perception of the audience has set a notion of poor credibility and mistrust towards news channels. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan also shared his observations regarding biased and one-sided coverage of news by claiming the current affairs programs as "planted" and "useless". Whereas, the other political parties have the same point of view regarding their coverage of media (Aslam et al, 2021).

At present, the main objective of all news channels is getting a high rating and earning maximum profit. The quality of news is being compromised in the race for profit earning and high ratings According to Saeed et al (2021), the media portrays facts and news to promote its hidden agendas through framing and management. This research contributed a new aspect of media perception in contemporary media research. It was a focus group study with a sample of 72 students of Media and Communication in Lahore, Pakistan. The results were important as they included the perception and opinion of future journalists and media literates. The results of the study showed that the media in Pakistan is not working fairly. Most of the respondents believed that Pakistani news media is unethical, biased, and inaccurate. The journalistic ethics and code of conduct have been left behind by twisting the facts; hence promoting yellow journalism and Lifafa (envelopes) journalism (Ahmad, 2011).

Media credibility is an important topic of research not only in Pakistan but all over the world. The audience is not sure of the authenticity of the news items being presented in news media. As per audience perception, objectivity and accuracy have been always compromised due to biased coverage (Quackenbush, 2013). Objectivity in news can be maintained by not adding personal likings and disliking, personal opinions, and analysis while writing the news. However, very few journalists follow these practices in a true sense (Carroll and Hackett, 2006).

According to Baloch, Qamar & Tariq (2018), audiences are more inclined toward the news channel that reinforced their political affiliation. The study concludes that if the news channels are unbiased, the audience also has a biased approach toward the news and information. Previous studies conclude that the credibility of information available on the internet always remains a question. People access the internet frequently but they do not have a positive perception regarding the credibility of online material as compared to the information available in traditional media. It was further concluded that people have also some credibility issues about traditional media as well but they are negligible as compared to the internet (Johnson and Kaye, 1998).

Ahmed (2011) concludes in his research that "Talk Shows" has a strong impact on the political efficacy of young viewers. Young viewers of political talk shows have high political efficacy because of more political awareness. Further, these young viewers more actively participate in political debates.

The results show that the youth who were the viewer of political talk shows were more socialized as compared to those who were not (Ahmed, 2011).

According to Hassan (2018), Pakistani media is controlled by a few people and is often used by different pressure groups to propagate their ideology. Sometimes, this is done by spreading false cognizance among the people. The media and media persons work on different agendas and ideologies. The researcher analyzed the socially constructed ideology portrayed in headlines of news bulletins of different Pakistani news channels.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are:

- To examine the perception of youth regarding the credibility of Pakistani news channels.
- To examine if the youth of Pakistan has any interest in electronic news media.
- To examine in what aspects Geo News, Dunya News, and ARY news are different or similar regarding the perception of credibility among youth.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed by the researchers to carry out the study:

- RQ₁:** Does the youth in Pakistan prefer to watch private TV news channels for news and current affairs talk shows?
- RQ₂:** Which Pakistani news channel among Geo, Ary, and Dunya news is considered as most credible among youth?
- RQ₃:** Do private TV news channels give neutral coverage to the political news in Pakistan?
- RQ₄:** Do the news contents on private TV news channels have objectivity?
- RQ₅:** Is there any relationship between Gender and the credibility of news channels?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was quantitative in which data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire. The responses were taken on 5 points Likert scale. The data was collected from 180 respondents chosen through the purposive sampling technique. The respondents were undergraduate students of public and private universities of Lahore, both male, and female between the age of 20-30 years, who were viewers of all three news channels ARY News, Geo News, and Dunya News. In this study, credibility was studied at the following three levels:

The credibility of Content (News & Current Affairs) was measured on the following parameters:

- Trustworthy
- Neutrality
- Objectivity
- Difference between facts and opinion
- Accuracy
- Follow the Journalistic Code of Ethics

The credibility of the Source (Anchorperson) was measured on the following parameters:

- Trustworthy
- Qualified
- Well Informed
- Unbiased
- Non-aggressive Strategy
- Authoritative
- Values Peoples's Privacy
- Separates Facts from opinion

The credibility of Media (News Channels) was measured on the following parameters:

- Accurate
- Trustworthy
- Audience interests
- Active and Fast
- Comprehensive Coverage
- Socially Responsible

- Objectivity
- Journalistic code of conduct
- Avoids sensationalism

DATA ANALYSIS

This section sketches in detail the data collected via the questionnaire.

Table No. 1 Credibility of content/ Message

FACTORS	GEO NEWS	ARY NEWS	DUNYA NEWS
Trustworthy	47	76	56
Neutrality	40	40	53
Objectivity	27	46	28
Difference between facts and opinion	55	78	63
Accuracy	65	84	90
Follow the Journalistic Code of Ethics	57	58	63

Table No. 2 Credibility of Source (Anchorperson)

FACTORS	GEO NEWS	ARY NEWS	DUNYA NEWS
Trustworthy	85	115	88
Qualified	140	156	140
Well Informed	140	156	147
Unbiased	77	111	69
Non-aggressive	95	111	43
Authoritative	121	100	121
Values People Privacy	75	100	69
Separates Facts from opinion	77	113	51

Table No. 3 Credibility of Medium (TV Channel)

FACTORS	GEO NEWS	ARY NEWS	DUNYA NEWS
Accurate	50	77	57
Trustworthy	50	77	61
Audiences Interest	65	59	61
Active and Fast	78	89	108
Comprehensive Coverage	91	113	125
Socially Responsible	50	61	61
Journalistic code of conduct	68	78	78
Avoids sensationalism	44	77	99

Table No. 4 Gender and credibility

Groups	Message credibility	Source Credibility	Medium credibility
Male	3.1587	3.1508	3.1826
Female	3.1648	3.1483	3.1826

The T-test result shows that the perception of credibility does not depend on the demographic variable "Gender" and there is no significant association between Gender and credibility.

Table No. 5 TV Channels vs. Credibility Factors

Groups	Message credibility	Source Credibility	Medium credibility
GEO NEWS	3.761	3.4039	3.0957
ARY NEWS	3.796	3.5804	3.0532
DUNYA NEWS	3.502	3.5550	3.1657

To test the association between the credibility factors and TV channels, T-test was conducted. Results show that Dunya News is considered a more credible TV Channel. However, the message and Source credibility of ARY News was rated more than the other two news channels.

DISCUSSION

The credibility of TV channels was measured at three levels; Message credibility, Source credibility, and Medium credibility. The viewers have a different perception of credibility for Geo News, ARY News, and Dunya News. The majority of the respondents believed that Dunya News is considered the most credible TV channel by giving comprehensive coverage and following the code of conduct. However, ARY News had a high value for message credibility than the other news channels, as 43.3% of respondents believe that ARY News separates facts from opinion.

Similarly, ARY News has the highest value of source credibility. It means that Kashif Abbasi is ranked as the highest credible anchorperson in comparison to Hamid Mir of Geo News and Kamran Shahid of Dunya News. The result shows that most of the young viewers had a more positive perception of the anchorperson of ARY news rather than Geo News. 63.8% of the respondents said that the anchorperson on ARY is more trustworthy, followed by the anchorperson of Dunya TV and Geo News with 48.8% and 47.2% respectively.

A difference of perception was observed regarding the credibility of the anchorperson of these three channels on the basis of trustworthiness, unbiased approach, qualification, well-informed, non-aggressive attitude with less sensationalization, less authoritative style by valuing people privacy, and presentation of facts and opinion separately.

The data shows that youth is more interested in watching current affairs programs on TV channels rather than “News”. 62% of the respondents said that they prefer to use social media for getting the news, whereas they like to watch prime-time talk shows due to their favorite anchor person. 51% of the respondents said that these programs are easy to understand for being in the Urdu language. The viewers believe that every TV channel has a certain agenda and it gives coverage to every news with a political bias.

CONCLUSION

- Prime time talk shows are more popular among youth as compared to News Bulletins.
- Youth prefers to watch these talk shows for their debate in the Urdu language.
- The anchorpersons of the prime time talk shows are qualified, well-informed and have a non-aggressive strategy mostly.
- TV channels lack credibility due to their political affiliation and agenda.
- Most people are affiliated with their favorite political parties and they preferred to watch those news channels which give coverage to their favorite parties more than other channels. It is proven that these news channels are influenced by political parties which used for propaganda or critical statements to opposite parties (Baloch, Qamar & Tariq 2018).

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