

## “The Political Affiliation of TV News Anchor and Viewers Opinion”

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### Abstract

*Electronic media has grown quickly in Pakistan and has become a successful business. In this regard, it is basically the media itself, which holds an important concern towards socio-economic growth including poverty improvement, education, health and many other change fields. This responsibility can only be fulfilled when the professionals representing the „fourth pillar of the state“ work delivering material to the public with utmost transparency, responsibility and accuracy. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring the role of TV anchorpersons in influencing public insight in the republic. This research study mainly motivations the irresponsible role of the anchorpersons working in different news and current affair channels as an emerging marvel in electronic media. The study was intended to investigate the perceptions of students regarding the role of anchorpersons in different TV talk shows and political affiliation. The discussion*

*shows that the students thinks that the anchors person have political affiliation.*

### Introduction

People are mainly affected by the news and news talk shows that are on air on different news channel of Pakistan around the clock. People may or may not agree with the conclusion drawn by the anchor. Opinionated news has always been a hard pill to swallow in any society. People who do not agree with the opinion will call that anchor to be biased. Then comes the policy of channels, which is originally never exposed, on the face of it every channel claims to have the policy of nondiscriminatory, unbiased anti racialism and non-prejudice but widely held believe remains that different channel support different political parties and social group. Today, every one of us is spending more of our leisure time watching TV, listening to the radio or reading newspapers and magazines. The shows on the TV and the

articles in the newspapers influence our decision process, shaping our perceptions for the world. Besides the positive fact that we are better informed and in touch with the latest news, we should be aware that accepting this enormous flow of information and allowing it to make our mind can be dangerous. The TVs infiltrate our lives, guiding us what are we supposed to wear, how we are supposed to look and act. Media coverage is life blood of politics because it shapes the perception that forms the Reality on which political action is based. Media depict the political environment ([www. webworld.unesco.org](http://www.webworld.unesco.org), retrieval date: February 12, 2012).

Media has become more powerful and its importance is growing in modern societies. Media is a source of information; they have power to influence truth. Far from it continuously gathers and reshapes information and then presents them as reality. Dominantly, it is also driven by specific interest individuals or groups that follow their agendas by controlling and spreading facts. In private TV channels news coverage is mostly focused on political and social issues and also focused on conflicts; some media persons argue in the

defense of the media that political issues and the prevailing conflict have been intense because of that all the journalists pay more attention and cover the political and conflict issues (Alam, 2007).

In today print, broadcast and electronic media is performing very important role in the life of every member of the society. One of the most important functions of media is shaping, reshaping and transforming the societies at micro and macro level. Media is also significant in term of bringing changes in human lives. Sociologist refers to mass media as prime and electronic instrument of communication that is used to disseminate messages as mass level. Prime instrument of communication is known as electronic media which includes radio, television, motion pictures and internet. Today media has become the state of metamorphosis. Field of media technologies is changing day by day. After the advent of cable, TV has been entered in the global level as the most significant source of information and entertainment. Satellite TV has given an easy access to the viewers and it connected the whole world. In short the world has been shrunk into remote (Schaefer, 2004). Television programs have great impact on

politics, social values, life styles of people, relationship of masses and foreign policy. People watch TV as major source of information and entertainment (Narula, 2006).

Mass media always had been an important means of communication. Over a period of time it has passed through various changes and has gradually acquired a new significance and importance in the present times. Earlier it used to be small in size and in the strict control of the authoritarian governments to “Control Public Mind”. Pakistan too has its share, along with the government channels; there are several private channels available on cable TV network. Channel like (GEO, ARY, AAJ, Indus Vision, Duniya, TV One, DM Digital, Al-Noor, and QTV Digital etc.) are busy round the clock on regional and national level showing great variety of programs of Entertainment, Information, Religious, Discussions and Talk Shows etc. The rapid increase in viewing satellite T.V programs during the last decade is an example of the cultural change that has taken place in the media of mass communication and has produced a cultural pattern of behavior and in prescribed ways of doing things.

Although its effect vary according to the socio-economic conditions from country to country, but no one can deny the process of rapidly changing orientation that it has operated after having been installed in a society. Various researches have been conducted to delineate the role of this news programs on people thought it is extremely difficult to identify its exact effects on audience behavior.

### **Literature Review**

Aleena, Mahurhk and Rana (2006) conducted the research “Level of interest in T.V programs channels and its impact on personal aspiration of youth”. For the conducted research, the greater the level of interest in TV programs, the greater will be the impact on personal aspiration of the students. Further, to find out the relationship, if any, between the level of interest in TV programs and its impact on personal aspiration. Political talk shows always remained the focus of discussion among the audiences. The inauguration of private news and current affair channel in Pakistan has brought innovative change in landscape of Pakistani media and revised the concepts of political talk shows. Today, hot political talk shows have become the part

and parcel of news and current affair channels where critical socio-political issues are being discussed and analyzed by the different anchorpersons.

Cheema noted that political talk shows have created sense of political awareness in the society. He believed that today people are better inform and aware about the political scenario of the country. He further argued that private channels through talk shows are not only providing political information but also have power to change the political opinion of the people. Media is moving the political mood of its audience toward particular direction. Today people are more critical and choosy in their choices regarding political parties. Following political talks shows hosted by famous anchorpersons are regarded the most influential talk shows among the audiences:-

Anchorperson has a key role in developing the mood of society to bring change in socio-political ambiance. In fact, he/she is one who developed and proliferate an opinion in society. So anchorperson has a key importance in electronic media. The new chapter of electronic media was introduced by the General Pervaiz Musharaf. Pakistan electronic media regulatory

authority

(PEMRA) was established in 2002. Private sector was promoted to launch new TV channel in the country. Experts believed that this liberation policy was the result of two major incidents (i.e. Kargil War and hijacking of the Indian Airliner by the Pakistani militants) when strong Indian media launched full fledged media war against Pakistan and weak Pakistani state-owned media was failed to respond precisely to encounter the Indian propaganda. Today Pakistan has strong and vibrant electronic media. More than 80 national and regional TV channel are working in the country. This positive change in media developed openness in the society and provide greater choice of entertainment and information. Especially news and current affairs channel has brought revolutionary change in political perception of the audience regarding political affairs of the state. Geo News, Express News, Duniya News, ARY News, Saama News and Aaj News are regarded most influential news and current affair channels in the country.

Uks stated in its report that lower income segment and youth of Pakistan think that

anchorperson wants to dictate audience minds. They believe that anchorperson instead of resolving the issues, make them more complicated. Rizvi asserts that mostly anchorpersons in their talk shows trying to create controversies on the issues of public interest which they perceive the way to get better rating for his/her program. He suggests that information should be disseminated only when it passes through strong professional editorial judgment and its societal impact must be ensured. Gillani quotes Dr. Mehdi Hasan, Chairman, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, by saying “Anchorpersons have every right to criticize the government, but many time they do it without proper research or evidence and without realizing how their ‘declarations’ will be received by the general public.”

A well known TV anchorperson tells in an interview to “*The Daily Jinnah*” that the anchorpersons of Pakistan are camels without bridle (Shutr-e-bemahar).” However the same anchorperson was blamed for a planted interview with Malak Riaz against judiciary in the case of Arsalan Iftikhar (son of

Muhammad Iftikhar Choudhry, Chief Justice of Pakistan Suprem Court). A famous TV anchorperson and columnist, Saleem Safi has asserted in his column in the daily “Jang” that TV anchorpersons have become aql-e-kul (knowing-all) and start striking the pose of a mufti. Instead of taking and giving news they start creating news. Instead of analyzing the news they start giving dictation.

some of the communication experts believe that anchorpersons have their own agenda and some time they even follow the agenda of their owner who always look into their financial benefits. They believe anchorpersons come up with preplanned agenda to align the public opinion with their own opinion about different cultural, religious and critical socio-political issues. Some of the anchorpersons openly declare that they have personal opinion about an issue to disseminate in the public. They believe people like or dislike them due to their diverse opinion on different crucial social and political issues.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Since the main purpose of the study is to

explore the viewer's opinion about political affiliation of TV anchorpersons and develop due to media nurturing, therefore, we opted for qualitative method in order to get a deep insight of the research study. The convenience sampling technique was used for the selection of 20 respondents (five anchor persons and thirty general public members). The research study was conducted through semi structure interviews for the purpose to get a deeper understanding of TV anchors' political afflictions.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is an anchorperson's political affiliation with political parties or political leaders
- ii. What is the viewer's opinion about anchorpersons political affiliation?
- iii. Whether anchorpersons set agenda according to the political leaders?

### **Anchors Role for Media**

The role of the TV anchorperson is very important in opinion making of the audience members. The literacy rate is low in the

developing societies like Pakistan. People usually believe in the media wherever awareness level is not so high. There is a serious debate among the politicians and even the media persons themselves: i. whether or not the anchorpersons are biased and partisan towards some social, political, religious and economic issues; ii. What should be their legitimate role as media persons during conducting talk shows on different issues? However, very few studies have been conducted to inquire audience's perception towards the role of the anchorpersons. So the need is immense to scientifically inquire the audience's perception regarding this new phenomenon. The anchorperson is an important entity in news media. The role and importance of anchorpersons has remained the center of talks in the west. However, this phenomenon is new in Pakistan. Therefore, it is the right time to understand, evaluate and analyze the role of anchorperson, which is holding the most important place in news media. The role of an anchorperson is like a life line between the information and audience. He/she is like gatekeeper who control the in and out flow of information.

### **Anchorperson as Analyst**

Javed Choudary, a famous TV anchorperson and columnist in Pakistan claims (personal communication, July 12, 2010) that anchorperson is an opinion maker. He/She has his/her own opinion about an issue. So anchorperson can never become impartial. He/She always has his/her own personal opinion and people likes or dislikes him/her on basis of his/her position on critical issues. Shahid Masood, a renowned TV anchorperson also asserts (personal communication, July 12, 2010) the same point of views in the TV talk show “Views on News” that anchorperson has his/her own opinion. He believes that anchorperson should analyze the critical issue and give his/her opinion about the issue. Moeed Pirzada, a renowned journalist argues (personal communication, July 12, 2010) that every anchorperson has his/her own line on the issue and nobody is neutral, anchorperson run a program, organized a program and also gives a sense of direction to that particular program. Mubashir Lucman affirms (personal communication, January 13, 2011) in his own TV talk show “Point Blank” that anchorperson is nothing himself/herself but has a quality of professional team behind him/her. An anchorperson personality drives the

direction of talk show. When an anchorperson is in front of camera, he/she looks very independent. But this is not the case; his/her production team controls him/her, often stop him/her and also give him/her new lines etc. Katrina Hussain, a well-known TV anchorperson asserts (personal communication, January 13, 2011) his point of views in the same TV talk show that anchorperson is not a solo flight. There is a complete team work behind him/her. However the final call is from the anchorperson. Work of an anchorperson is different from a reporter who task is to report the facts only but anchorperson has to discuss the issue whether it is right or wrong according to his/her own perspective. The job of anchorperson is to probe behind the news and also analyze the pros and cons of the issue. She further elaborate that anchorperson task is to create understanding and awareness in the people about an issue and educate them how this issue will affect their lives. Anchorperson must criticize government because his/her role is like a watchdog

### **Role of Anchorperson**

The role of anchorperson has become controversial in Pakistan. Different communication experts/media practionar views the role of anchorperson differently. Some of powerful voice are as under.

### **Anchorperson as arbitrator**

According to American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (2009), “anchorperson is a person who narrates or coordinates a newscast in which several correspondents give reports.” Today, no doubt anchorperson has become the face of news media and possessing the most important place in new electronic media. He/She is playing the role of blacksmith who can mold the iron the way he/ she wants. Similarly an anchorperson has again power through his/ her charismatic personality to mold the public opinion the way he/she presents the facts. Therefore his/her role should be like a mediator. He/ She should facilitate the discussion between the participants in way to help and facilitate the audience to reach on the opinion of their choice. He/She should analyze the facts in impartial way and should put forward the both side of the opinion rather to impose his/her own opinion and thought on the audience. Ahmed suggests that

anchorperson job is to conduct the discussion between the participants in way to facilitate the audience to reach on the conclusion. He/She should not accentuate on what he/she think is the right opinion to support

### **Anchorpersons and Student Perception**

The association between the media and the public has been debated for decades. Starting with the work of Marcuse whose study revealed that public can easily get off the track by images and ideals of popular culture. This means that public includes all the individuals of a society whose buying behaviors are affected by different channels that exist in a culture and can easily be fooled into culture of consumerism. This has been further agreed by through the cultivation theory. According to this, people who were involved in watching violence on television were more likely to think of the world as a violent place as compared to those who did not watch violence on television. This is supported by study conducted by which revealed correlations between highly publicized prize fights and homicides and also high correlation between highly publicized suicides and the general suicide rate. The same reveals that whatever

is shown in movies, on television, or in any form of tabloid, people tend to copy it and get moved by it in one way or the other. One of the important entities that play a significant role in changing public perception is the TV anchors themselves. The word “Anchor Person” is often known as news anchor, anchorman or anchor woman in the media industry. The role of an anchor person is to deliver material prepared for a particular news program and if necessary must be able to manage commentary for a live presentation. For the first time the term “anchor man” was used for Walter Cronkite for his role in the Democratic as well as Republican National Conventions. The term anchor was first used in 1952 to describe the most famous or well-known person from a panel of reporters or experts. Whereas the role of a journalist is to collect and distribute information about current events, people, trends, and issues. It has been argued by that media personnel have the strength to bring into public attention the issues prevalent in the society. However, they argue that people think differently about these various issues. This has been agreed by whose study reveals that media plays an important and influential role in developing the attitudes of people towards

the current issues of a country, when people have less knowledge on an issue and one will expect to see them participating actively in complex situations like the conflicts in the Middle East. Such an approach is known as the agenda-setting approach and has gained a lot of popularity and has a strong linkage between the media anchors and the public. People who work in this perspective may not claim that they are able to predict the views or opinions of the public, but they still argue that what is being shown in the media will be surely discussed in the public. However, Morley argues that the society includes public who are not much interested in various issues addressed by the media, even though the issues maybe of vital importance and newsworthy according to the experts. People have been found ignoring the issues which they consider have little impact on their lives. Another study exposed that the number of people who owned television or radio sets in a particular country was positively related to the amount of demonstrations and strikes . This shows how different occasions are dealt with by the public, hence, adding to the media influence on the public. However, Baum argues that

media researchers should go out in the streets and look for the truth and present that truth to the public, since mostly, the truth presented is usually a fictional account of the reality. People are affected by the media researchers and not the media. The results show that people are affected differently by the media content. Another argument suggests that media is a reflection of public views. This is supported by an argument by that reporters feel that they represent the public so they try to find ways to report not only the current affairs but also bring into light the issues that can help them in improving their lives. Talking about improving lives, media can contribute immensely towards development by bringing about countless changes in the behavior of individuals, groups and organizations. This is agreed by some authors that media has the ability and the inability to change views. In this regard targeted social exchange campaigns are used where an effort by one group is organized to persuade the targeted audience to accept, to modify or to abandon some ideas, attitudes, practices, or behavior. While in the developed countries the media can also create

behavioral change which in return produces results in the developing countries. A few examples include the “Make Trade Fair” campaign which was sponsored by Oxfam International; “The Child Slavery and Chocolate Production Campaign”, which was sponsored by Global Exchange; these campaigns were centered at the developed countries which later on affected the developing countries. Therefore, such public perceptions and the role of an anchor person can mould the way people think or behave in a particular society. Sometimes, inducement can also influence the story of a journalist, anchor or a broadcast.

### **Program Name with Anchor Person**

- Aaj Kamran Khan Kay Saath (Geo) - Kamran Khan
- Capital Talk (Geo) - Hamid Mir

- Aapas Ki Baat (Najam Sethi Kay Sathe.
- Choraha (Geo) - Hassan Nisa
- Kal Tak (Express) - Javeed Chaudar
- Aaj Ki Khabar (Aaj) - Absar Alam
- Off The Record (ARY) - Kasif Abbasi
- Islamabad Tonight (Dunya) - Nadeem Malik
- Jirga (Geo) - Saleem Safi

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The growth of news media in Pakistan in last few years has traumatized media landscape in the country. Specially, the audience gained by the private news channels in very short span of time is incredible. Private news channels have increased political awareness among audience through political talk shows. Thus the role of anchorpersons hosting these political talk shows has become very important. The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the role of anchorperson in influencing students perception. Therefore, semi-structure interviews and focus group discussion were conducted with anchorpersons and general public. The analysis was conducted into two

phases: the first phase addressed the anchorpersons, in order to understand their perceptions, feelings and opinions towards media they are working in, PEMRA as the regulatory authority and influence of prime time talk shows on public perception. Similarly, the second phase consists of focus group discussions with general public in order to check the effects of these talk shows on them. The major findings for the first phase of the analysis was that the role of PEMRA should be defined more precisely whether it is just a regulatory authority for issuing licenses to those who want to invest in media business or it has some other functions to perform as well, like censorship and code of conduct for these channels or anchorpersons etc. whether all such matters fall in the domain of PEMRA or the ministry of information. It is to be decided by the concerned ministry that where media is to be taken more seriously by. The students has perception about this Anchorperson develops and maintains par asocial relationships with viewers due to his eye-catching personality. These par asocial relationships then help them to influence loyalty of viewers and also influencing the selection of the content of media. The role of

anchorperson as agent provocateur was also studied in this research studies

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