Influence of Electronic Media on Public Policies and Narratives in Pakistan Post-2005

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Abstract: *The research article investigates the role of the news media and specifically electronic media since 2005, which has emerged as a strong force in Pakistan in the past decade and, under certain circumstances, shapes public policymaking in Pakistan. Media across the world is seen as a tool to shape public narratives and influence policymakers in crafting policies that adhere to the interest and welfare of the general public. Electronic media has emerged as a powerful medium of communication in Pakistan, even though its political decision-making role has mainly been ignored. The independence of electronic media in Pakistan is highly debatable; the emergence of private news channels has a relatively short span of age. Before the emergence of a broad spectrum of electronic media channels, a single state-owned news channel existed, and information flow was highly controlled. The influx of news channels made the news media landscape in Pakistan highly vibrant from 2005 onwards. During the Musharraf regime in Pakistan, the mushroom growth of electronic channels was witnessed, which made media the fourth pillar of the state. During the same rule, electronic media in Pakistan started influencing public policies and narratives and saw sanctions imposed by the same ruler. In Pakistan, electronic media played a more significant role in influencing public opinion, policies, and views that compel policymakers to draft policies accordingly. The public was made aware of their rights as citizens and reacted to government policies and current political happenings. Interestingly not just in Pakistan, but the international academia as well has not paid much attention to the media's influence on public policymaking. There is limited scholarly literature available as not much focus has been given to how media influences policymaking. This research article using a Foucauldian lens on "power-knowledge" will specifically examine how certain media groups in Pakistan have impacted policymaking and have played a significant role in major political happenings, which have directly impacted Pakistan's public policies.*

Keywords: *Electronic Media, Policy Making, Narratives, Pakistan, Influence, Masses.*

Introduction

The News Media's influence in the public policymaking process has gained significance in the 21st century, where the masses have access to television, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. A large population in the country is uneducated and heavily relies on what the electronic media says despite its authenticity. The role of news media has

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also become significant in liberal democracies where media freedom has been made a part of the system. Media has emerged as the fourth pillar of state to check state policies and bring them closer and closer to public welfare (Coronel, 2003). The consolidation of democratic policy witnessed in Pakistan has raised a legitimate and interesting question in the last few years. Who sets the public policy in Pakistan, and how is it formulated? It is observed that media has emerged as an inseparable part of modern democratic life. It is often considered dominating the political process. It is widely believed that Media in Pakistan is the key influencer and has a significant impact on shaping public opinion and changing government decisions. It is perceived that both mass media and new media have become essential tools of politics.

There has always remained confusion about the sole authority of public policymaking in Pakistan; the responsibility lies with the elected governmen. Under Pakistan's constitution, policymaking responsibility lies solely with the executive branch while creating further division among the federal, provincial, and local governments. Through the 18th Amendment, the coexisting list has been abolished, and most of the powers are transferred from the federal to the provincial governments. Besides, the provincial government can delegate authority, powers, and resources under its control as per its discretion to the local governments and its administrations. It is observed that public policymaking is politically motivated and affected by various social and economic factors. News Media systems also play an integral role in shaping the social context through which policies develop. Observers claim that the news media has become the fourth pillar by emerging as a driving force and the key influencer in Pakistan. Through the news media, citizens learn about current happenings and the way government policies will affect them. The governments gain feedback and acquire public reaction towards their initiated policies and programs. Within News Media, the electronic channels serve as the central platform between those who may want to impact policy and its makers controlling the scope of political discourse and regulating information flow. In reality, the policymaking process is more fluid, where systems form through the struggle of ideas of various advocacy coalitions in what describes as a policy primeval soup. The policies focused by the electronic media can, and often do, play an essential part in determining the focal issues for policymakers. The media demonstrates an active role in shaping public opinion on government policies. However, the media needs to adopt salient tactics to improve public policymaking in Pakistan while safeguarding the media personnel's well-being. In a country with experienced dictatorships and spells of a weak democracy, it becomes difficult to form a robust public policy system that opens the way for influencing agents to influence the public policymaking process. Thus, with the advent of private news channels in the Musharraf era, the narrative of freedom of media was promoted. It was indeed a reality that electronic media channels played an essential role in various important public policy matters. The electronic media also put its weight on the democratic norms and opposed undemocratic measures, especially during the lawyer's movement and the 2007 Emergency. In Pakistan, the earthquake, Honor killing bill, NRO, lawyers movement, 18th Amendment, and Panama Leaks are some noteworthy incidents where the electronic media has significantly impacted policymaking and the country's overall political scenario due to its vast outreach.

Positioning the Author

The author identifies herself as a doctoral student researcher from the University of Karachi and the University of Toronto, a racialized migrant woman of color living in Canada, born and raised in Pakistan. She identifies herself as a Muslim by birth and has lived for decades in Karachi, Pakistan. She has worked most of her life with the most prominent foreign mission serving in Pakistan as a Public Diplomacy Specialist for Sindh and Balochistan Provinces. She is a social activist and an advocate for women, labor, and children issues and has professional expertise in public diplomacy and media; she is also an experienced educator, professional development trainer, and entrepreneur.

The Objective of the Study

The paper is aimed to (a) study the role of electronic media in influencing the public policymaking process in Pakistan. (b) To investigate the impact of electronic media on some political happenings and examine the direct influence of electronic media on prominent policies implemented in the last decade. The study will critically reflect on whether the media has successfully influenced public narratives in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Existing literature on media's relationship with public policy is minimal; thus, obtaining literature specifically discussing the connection between media's role in policymaking in Pakistan has been challenging and has been quite challenging due to the scarce availability of scholarly work on the research topic. The available literature suggests contrasting views, and on the one hand, it emphasizes the positive impact media has. Similarly, it also indicates that many governments consider media an intrusion to their policymaking process, thus regard media as an interference.

The article focuses on the media's role in influencing the public policymaking process in Pakistan; for the paper, I have examined the literary works of various scholars who have closely studied the way public policies are made and implemented in Pakistan and, if there is any direct influence of the news media in the formation of policies within the country. Pakistan is a unique country where media has both enjoyed freedom as well as sanctions.

It is notably considered the fourth pillar of the country after the government, establishment, and judiciary. Some of the authors studied and discussed within this literature review have highlighted vital factors that influence the policymaking in Pakistan; for instance, Aminullah Chaudry considers the military a decisive and significant stakeholder in the policymaking process in the country. He believed that the government had weak civil institutions and external security threats. The role and influence of the military significantly increased in the process of policymaking.

Muhammad Javaid Akhtar criticizes political leaders for maintaining that political leaders always remained powerless due to their incompetence and lack of skills. He thought that bureaucracy got the driving seat in the policymaking process due to its competence compared to political leaders. He thoroughly criticized the political elite for politicizing

bureaucracy for their interests and benefits, which negatively affected the performance of bureaucracy. The different military regimes of Pakistan have also strengthened civil bureaucracy by relying on them to run the affairs of the state smoothly. Consequently, it has made bureaucracy unchallenged and unrestrained in the corridors of power even with low performance. He maintains that the role of parliament remained relatively low in public policy and law-making since they had to serve their interests. Renowned political and military analyst and former bureaucrat herself, Ayesha Siddiqa, believes that military and civil bureaucracy joined hands in the process of policymaking. Therefore, they became unchallengeable in the process. She also criticizes the political leaders and class, in these words:

"One of the reasons for the prolonged military control relates to the weakness of the political parties. The importance of political leadership and the civil bureaucracy can be attributed to their attitude and composition. As a part of the dominant classes in the country, the civil bureaucracy and the political elite have always viewed the armed forces as an essential tool for furthering their political objectives. This use and abuse of the military created a unique political niche for it. The acceptance of the military as a political arbiter, compounded with its prominent role as the guardian of the country's security, sovereignty, and ideology, added to its significance compared with other domestic players" (Siddiqa-Agha, 2007). Stephen P. Cohen's in his book clearly describes the Pakistan Army's multidimensional role as:

"There are armies that guard their nation's borders, there are those that are concerned with protecting their position in society, and there are those that defend a cause or an idea. The Pakistan Army does all three." Renowned academician Prof. Dr. Askari describes the role of military and bureaucracy in Pakistan in such words: "A centralized policy with an entrenched bureaucratic apparatus and a strong military saved Pakistan from collapsing in the early years of independence. Two constituent assemblies (1947-54, 1955-56) spent about eight years grappling with some of the basic political questions like the role of Islam, especially the nature of the Islamic state, distribution of powers between the center and the provinces. The delay polarized the situation to such an extent that when the constitution was finally approved in 1956, it hardly represented a broad-based consensus in the polity."

In his other book, "The Military & Politics in Pakistan," Dr. Askari discusses the continuation of military supremacy over political affairs and governance in such a manner that he maintains that once armed forces enter the political field, it becomes impossible for them to disassociate themselves from politics. Military leaders play an essential role during democratic governments by establishing puppet governments, becoming a watchdog of the governments, and having retired generals as civilian rulers (Rizvi, 2000).

Public Policy analyst and expert Dr. Saeed Shafqat maintain that public policymaking in Pakistan never became institutionalized due to solid personalities or individuals in both democratic and dictatorial regimes; therefore, we see the inconsistency in the policymaking process.

He writes, "In a democratic system, the political leadership plays a key role in devising public policy, but if the political leadership is relatively weak, if the parliament is incompetent and devoid of public good, then regulation of the bureaucracy will not take place, and without regulation, policymaking will be usurped or taken over by the bureaucracy. Thus,

in Pakistan's case, both policy formulation and implementation roles have been assumed by the bureaucracy" (Shafqat, 1990). He also emphasized the need for research in our public policy decisions and academia, especially universities.

Prof. Dr. S.M. Taha also observed that the colonial mindset of policymaking and administration had a long-lasting impact on the region's economy and the administrative policies of Pakistan. He maintained that Public Policy practices in Pakistan are precisely what the power elites tended to see, and they always promoted such policies which safeguard their position and stakes. East Pakistan, the integral and pivotal part of United Pakistan, got separated due to the same procedures. The primary grievances of the people of East Pakistan were related to public policy areas, political participation, and proper allocation. The constitution of any nation is a social contract among its people and the government; the Pakistani constitution guarantees human development and has constitutional status in the 1973 constitution.

In order to more closely establish the connections between media and public policy, the literature review cannot be completed till the works of Koch-Baumgarten, S., & Voltmer, K. (Eds.). (2010) is not reviewed.

The notable scholar Koch-Baumgarten, S., & Voltmer, K. (Eds.). (2010), in their literary work "Public policy and the mass media: The interplay of mass communication and political decision making," has explicitly elaborated on how media influences political decision-making in the world. The author has given examples of the media's role in influencing significant wars, especially in recent times. It also talks about some of the directly impacted policies through the media's influence in the US. It critically examines various periods in history in the 19th and 20th centuries where media has drastically established its connection with the public policymaking process. The author also touches on the fact that although media shows its relationship with the policymaking process, it lacks accountability. It is a strong argument that the authors have made towards the end. This piece of writing has several contributors who have made such a vital revelation. The authors have consolidated the various aspects through which media serves as a binding force and, in certain circumstances, operates to shape the outcomes and processes of policymaking in different countries. Nevertheless, the media's presence in the political process is undeniable. Still, their role in the policymaking process is greatly ignored.

Research Methodology

As the role of media is well recognized globally, especially in the developed world, and keeping in view the title of the research paper, it has been considered appropriate to apply the qualitative research method and deductive approach for this paper.

The methodology of the article is descriptive as it relies on secondary data sources. The study was conducted using online databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, and other library search engines to ensure the scope of the topic. For the analysis, the above-listed academic databases were used to review the existing literature. With the help of the keywords, published articles and journal papers were also examined. The literature review presented in the study is based on some of the shortlisted readings from the data

retrieved.

In addition to the above-listed data sources, archived documents made available on government websites of Pakistan and published newspaper articles, blogs, and books were assessed to investigate electronic media's role in influencing policymaking in Pakistan.

The author has hypothesized that the electronic media in Pakistan does impact policymaking and public narratives. The author developed her hypothesis from reading prior research and theories on the topic as listed above. Next, she tested the hypothesis by analyzing the existing data that reflects electronic media's influence on public policies and opinions in Pakistan while relating it with the theoretical lens identified.

Theoretical Framework

It will not be wrong to apply the theory put forward by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, as a social scientist Foucault introduced the term "Power-Knowledge." As per his understanding, power depends heavily on the knowledge and makes effective use of knowledge; contrary power reproduces knowledge by shaping it following its anonymous intentions. In the light of the definition, the Foucauldian lens on power-knowledge applies to the case of the electronic media in Pakistan; it has not just emerged as a powerful tool to serve the public interest but has also suffered the most for enlightening the masses with the knowledge that has a direct impact on their livelihoods. The struggle for acquiring power and information and dissemination of both in Pakistan is very intricate.

Foucault has played an essential role in theorizing power and governmentality; his book on discipline and punishment provides a deeper understanding of how governments function. Through the Foucauldian lens, it is not tricky to critically reflect on the way governments have been involved in the policymaking process in Pakistan. Foucault's theory is indicative of the way power brokers work and cripples the system as well as dysfunctions society. Thus the electronic media in Pakistan, while shaking the power corners and intervening in the functioning of the government, face the consequences in terms of sanctions by governments as a form of punishment.

Public Policymaking in Pakistan

Pakistan came into being in 1947 and failed to make its constitution for nine years. The country's political history presents a highly diversified outlook since it saw different regimes, including parliamentary democracy and military dictatorship. The pillars of the state, i.e., Legislature, Military, and Executive (Bureaucracy), played a vital role in public policymaking in (Siddiqa-Agha, 2007). However, relations between these state institutions didn't remain smooth, which dented the general policymaking process in the country. The power structure in the country remained highly unstable, due to which every new government completed changed the policies of the old government. This inconsistency significantly damaged the public policymaking process of the country.

The country's population is rapidly increasing, but the level of governance is going down day by day. Some major issues of the country remain unattended to a greater extent,

including unemployment, lack of health care facilities, inadequate education system, and lack of quality transportation. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, the policymaking process is not standardized but based on personal decision-making, whether in democratic governments or dictatorial regimes. In both cases, policies revolve between influential individuals rather than institutions, so the policies perished when the said individuals left.

In Pakistan, issues are not simply related to public policymaking but also its implementation is an issue. The public and private sectors both have to work together to improve the situation. There are various ways to improve the problems. It can undoubtedly be done through the effective use of media to resolve and address pertinent issues impacting the country's people. In Pakistan, due to the rich media, everybody is seen to impact public policy. The media shape public narrative and influence the elected governments to take a direct course of action.

Issues in Public Policy Making Process and Role of Electronic Media

The capabilities of the public policymakers of Pakistan are highly questionable in the context that majority of them are inconsistent and not committed. Corruption and favoritism are significant issues that influence the policymaking process. Since the advent of electronic media, these issues have been highlighted widely on media, reducing corrupt practices and forcing policymakers to avoid anti-public policies. Their dedication is rare to be found. they need to be committed to addressing policy matters and fulfilling public needs. Corruption and dishonesty in Pakistani bureaucracy are a hindrance and a menace in the formation and execution of policymaking. Hence the media barges in to highlight the negligence of elected government and enforces policymakers to adopt or form a particular policy in the public interest. If the policymakers and the elected governments put their act together in addressing the mass's needs and demands, the media role may not emerge as a driving force. A prominent reason for the media's role is the incompetency and corrupt practices in the country's policymaking process. Media became the nation's voice, which was frustrated from the corrupt practices and wanted an advocate of their rights. Therefore, media influenced public policy and kept it in line with the general public's interest.

Another major issue in the process is that all the stakeholders are not taken into meaningful consultation in the first place. The opinions are not incorporated in the final policy, which creates a rift among stakeholders, i.e., institutions. Political leaders, primarily cabinet members, have a highly unwelcoming attitude towards media criticism; they don't understand that this criticism is not personal but towards the public interest.

A very little attention is given to implementation modalities and consequences that may arise during the implementation phase of the policy/s. It results in a vast performance gap in the country, extensively highlighted by the news media. Impressive speeches and figures are presented to the news media but seldom come to reality since these so-called fate-changing policies are flawed. Since the government remains involved in political measures, the implementation process remains off track as interest is diverted towards emergent issues which are not that important publically but for political gains. Significant portfolios don't have the relevant expertise since the ministries are given to accommodate the key

political leaders. This lack of knowledge contributes to incompetency and ineffective public policymaking in critical sectors, including education, health, finance, etc.

Role of Electronic Media in Shaping Public Opinion

There is a dire need in Pakistan to examine the public policy in pakistan since it is the government policies that directly impact Pakistan's day-to-day lives. Often, it has been noted that the people of Pakistan are not in favor of the policies developed by the ruling government or former governments. they use media as a tool to express their opinion in favor or against government policies. Media takes up public opinion and tries to influence the government in reshaping or adjusting their policies. while exerting its power of expression, the news media and especially electronic media not only disseminates knowledge but also serves as a watchdog to the government. It serves as a bridge between the public and the government. Ihe power-knowledge and agenda-setting theory encompass public opinion about political figures and elected representatives. Due to the extensive coverage and access of the electronic media, it plays a vital role in the image buildings of the political parties and their political mandates. It marks an essential theoretical expansion from the communication to the knowledge sharing process to what issues the public and media consider crucial.

Impact of Electronic Media on Policymaking In Pakistan

Electronic Media systems are identified to reflect the "socially shared" notion of the society, political parties, the state, and the association between political and economic interests (Khan & Safder, 2010). Usually, one could not comprehend the state's media of news without the comprehension of the patterns. Hence, it is essential to begin by mainly evaluating Pakistan's media system and the social context' under which it is primarily embedded before examining the degree to which the state's political elites have used the media for decision making. Correspondingly, politically Pakistan, has been described to be a "transitional democracy." Hence, it is evaluated that Pakistan's media is massively integrated under the political party's influence; however, it remains a sturdy role amid the weak commercial media development background. Basically, in Pakistan's case, opposing power centers have existed under the parliament, the military, and the Supreme Court. The army serves as the main ultimate power in the state.

Additionally, Pakistan's political parties are known to be massively polarized, and in few cases, it is also known to be militarized. Thus, the individual organizations of media are considered allied closely with one of the particular camps: the structure referred to as the parallelism (Safdar, 2019). Studies have identified that the following equivalence has raised Pakistan's political media environment's polarization, specifically during the elections.

Moreover, Pakistan's social and political system is also known to be possessing the massive clientelism degree that is evaluated to be the political environment under which the sponsorship (patronage) has mainly bind the social actor (media) of the country (Hingorjo & Memon, 2019). It usually results in the aspect under which media owners leverage their

authorities and assets for economic power leveraging in the media context. Thus, as per this aspect, it is known that the culture of "political media" has been serving the Pakistani media elites playing a significant role in influencing the policies in the state (Abid & Bilal, 2019). Hence, through the evaluation, it has been evaluated that the interest under the dichotomy under which the policymaker have started to acquire the logic of media, where they have been influencing the journalists and other media individuals for acting as per their desire in the media during the civil war and security state conditions.

Therefore, it has been evaluated that the ARY and GEO group (particularly their news channels) have been the country's sturdiest media (Qamar, Tariq, & Baloch, 2018). They have been known to be the expert of their tradition and style in Pakistan. Hence, it has been identified that Pakistan's illiterate and professional community has been acquiring their country's information through the news being offered by the GEO and ARY news. Moreover, many individuals rely on ARY and GEO to achieve updates related to political problems. It is also evaluated that the country's population, professionals, educated, urban individuals, etc., are known to be part of the state's policymaking through the ARY and GEO news (Qamar et al., 2018). Concerning this, it is clear that several educated individuals have been watching these news channels regularly.

Moreover, the public is also massively interested in the state's politics and voice their perspective regarding a particular policy that might be passed. These individuals are massively interested in viewing the content of ARY and GEO news associated with the agenda. Thus, it has been provided that due to these news channels, few enhancements have been constructed in the Pakistan Political structure, i.e., change in few policies have been seen due to these media channels Siddiqui, Shahbaz. "Tag Archives: ARY." The more massive political representation of women in Pakistan enhances systems associated with justice, education, and health, strengthening the minority rights. Though it is not known to be an entirely adequate democracy, some of the norms of politics have been enhanced due to these channels as the individuals in the society have been started to feel that for improving the structure of politics, private media should be further enhanced. Specifically, ARY and GEO news have enhanced the awareness regarding democracy in the state by introducing the fundamental rights and norms of democracy that a citizen possesses in the democratic society, their program, and discussion associated with politics. Similarly, it has been identified that these media groups have been playing a significant role in the empowerment process acceleration. Correspondingly, the awareness for the minority and women's rights have been enhanced, and as the outcome of this influence of the media groups, the states' society minority have been improved.

Empowerment has been taken to the grassroots range, which is the modification in the policy structure, policymaking process, and the individuals constructing the state policies (Riaz, 2019). It mainly assists in maintaining the adequate 'democratic structure' of the state. Similarly, Ary and Geo's groups have played a significant role in the process of empowerment. They have influenced the policy structures, such as the policies that have been associated with the specific social group, etc. Correspondingly, one of the significant achievements of these media groups in Pakistan is the construction of several private news channels in Pakistan, such as Express news, Dawn news, etc. They have promoted and influenced the policies that restricted the freedom of the Pakistan media (Raza, 2019).

Minute newscasts, heated discussions, and other interactive news talks have affected the perception of society. They have influenced them to understand their rights and resist the policies that might affect the public interest.

Furthermore, these Groups have been covering the issues of society. They have initially started to criticize the adverse government policies and provide insight into the world's reality rather than just government sycophants. Also, because of the political socialization process, the media groups have played an adequate role in creating awareness among (Ali & Rahman, 2019) as diverse programs have been offered in an acceptable media campaign against the government's improper policies.

Furthermore, these groups influence the policies that have favored women's rights, the peace process, job opportunities, education enhancement, and health have been constructed. Moreover, the media have certainly played a role in enhancing the expression of freedom in the country. Pakistan media have now acquired more space, in contrast to the past.

Simultaneously, several severe foreign policy problems came to the front due to the media groups of Pakistan. For instance, the Indian state's war was known to be imminent. These types of dire period media groups had known to play a crucial role in keeping the nation moral and have supported the soldiers by airing the acceptable content. Similarly, one of the private media channels was also identified to seize the chance of driving away from the anti-Indian emotion through the "Aman Ki Asha" initiative that soon acquired significant backlash (Khan & Safder, 2010). It presents the ability of the private media to disregard the public and government stance at any period. Similarly, through the advancement of the media groups, the state-owned media monopoly was broken, and the policy for private media freedom was provided. Media was evaluated to be the fourth pillar of the country.

On the contrary, being directed toward the United States, Pakistan has become a significant ally in the massively exciting war that had become a considerable talk among the Pakistan media (Hussain, Siraj, & Mahmood, 2021). Correspondingly, the public's massive opinion was identified to be in the alliance's favor with the United States-led "war on terror." Hence, the media groups provided the cons and pros of the coalition that was visible to the public. Media mainly experienced global coverage, and exposure was recognized to be significantly in favor of the alliance. Moreover, Musharraf was particularly welcomed as the country's savior. The media groups were not identified to be challenging the construction of foreign policy decisions concerning America. Besides the US alliance, the media (Cyan, Koumpias, & Martinez-Vazquez, 2016) also discussed the Afghanistan turmoil. The period during which the split among the media started to be seen as Pakistan's media began to question the state's double policy associated with the extremist elements. Correspondingly, the journalists began to allege ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) of protecting the links. Nevertheless, in this period, Musharraf maintained a sturdy image in the public eye and the global audience regardless of the regional media's harshness. During this period, though, the media groups continually discussed and raised their voices, but the president was identified to remain defended for the country's interests.

Moreover, the United States' demand from Pakistan for stepping up to address more of their concerns and play a more strategic role in the fight against terror, their demand

has been from Pakistan to do more. Similarly, during this situation, the media group of Pakistan began to analyze the decision to support the forces in contradiction to viewing the "war of terror critically." As it took a toll on the economy and life, the criticism was identified to be turned under a significant movement called "anti-Musharraf" just after the saga of "Laal Masjid." Correspondingly, the more straightforward way to harm Musharraf was mainly to criticize the foreign policy developed by him directed towards the United States and its usage of drones in Pakistan tribal regions. In this situation, the media began to raise the hoax of sovereignty, and the private media groups such as GEO, ARY, Dawn, etc. started to fuel the Anit-Americanism. Hence, the media began to set the public consent extensively that helped end the "era of dictatorial rule" in Pakistan. Thus, these media groups primarily assisted in altering the state's political modification and modifying stance towards India, the United States, and Afghanistan (Iftikhar, Ullahis, Naureenis, & Aliis, 2020). Media groups were identified as active members in the development of the foreign policymaking known to be the "unprecedented revolution" of Pakistan.

The major media groups such as Jang Group, ARY, Dawn, and Express have been recognized to be playing a significant role in the public policy formulation in Pakistan; their rivalry with each other has directed them toward being one directed toward supporting a particular news story while others being against the element. Due to this, there might be some decrease in their influence over time, and people considering the channels more pro or anti-government. These media groups have also been modified over time, such as the dawn group initially started with the printing media (newspaper). Still, now it has also been providing its services to media through TV channels. It can be stated that, to a large extent, these media groups, as identified by the researcher, enjoy the freedom of expression for some time despite political pressure and direct bans sometimes administered by political stakeholders upon them. It is observed that in Pakistan, political media pressure is generally done indirectly. The government's most common tool is to cut off 'unfriendly' media from providing them with governmental advertising. The government has also banned or officially silenced the selected media groups on different accounts using strict laws. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has been used to silence the broadcast media, typically by suspending licenses or simply threatening to do so. Besides, media is also threatened by non-state actors involved in the current conflict or current affairs. The security situation of the journalist is subject to threats off and on, and the number of the journalist killed in Pakistan has also declined considerably. But a new trend is witnessed where journalists are abducted, and later their stance on particular issues changes. However, it is reported worldwide that press freedom in Pakistan continues to decline. In its report published in 2020 on Press Freedom Index, reporters without borders ranked Pakistan number 145 out of 180 countries based on freedom of the press.

However, still, they have been identified to be forming perceptions and affecting the mindset of the public and have been significantly influencing the policies of Pakistan, which could be evaluated through their role in the relationship between Pakistan and the US, foreign policy, eighteen amendments, lawyers movement, Benazir assassination, honor killing bill, elections, Panama scandal, and many other prominent events.

Recommendations

As Pakistan has emerged as a country where media is not just vibrant but is the country's driving force, policymakers must use media as a tool to shape policies rather than see it as an enemy. During the 70 years-long history of Pakistan, very few elected governments have completed their tenure; most of the time, the governments have been charged with mega corruption, poor performance, and negligence in serving the public. Throughout the history of Pakistan, media has been an active player, be it print or electronic, in making and breaking governments. Hence it is high time that the electable seek the advantage of the strong prevailing media in Pakistan and use it as a tool to enhance their delivery. It can be achieved by forming working groups comprising analysts observing public opinion expressed through the media on policies adopted and developed by policymakers. Media also needs to play a positive role in highlighting the positive steps taken by the policymakers. Rather than be a critique of elected governments. The media must analyze the constructive impact of legislation and policies. The implications for the general public and their response should also be measured. Media practitioners to develop themselves and be equipped with the modern world need also attend training and observe the foreign media from developed countries to further enhance their skills to address public needs more efficiently. It should also be considered that it is the prime responsibility of all stakeholders to strive hard for the betterment of the country. It is the responsibility of the media and the policymakers, and the general public to deliver for the prosperity, growth, and development of Pakistan.

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