Mediatization's Impact on News Media Trust and Credibility: A Comprehensive Analysis of Viewer Perceptions

Muhammad Ahmad Sheikh[a], Zamr Ashraf[b]. Basim Mir[c], Saleem Akhtar[d]

[a]Assistant Professor, School of Creative Arts, University of Lahore, Pakistan. [b]Research Scholar, School of Creative Arts, University of Lahore, Pakistan. [c]Assistant Professor, School of Creative Arts, University of Lahore, Pakistan. [d]Senior Lecturer, University of Central Punjab

[*]**Email:** saleemmaghrana@gmail.com

Abstract: This study looks at why trust and belief in news of Pakistan has lost its credibility and how Pakistani news media portray the relation between believing stories, democracy, and changes happening around us. To explore what factors harm media credibility, and how can we restored a qualitative research method is applied. The variables used to judge the credibility of the news media were, belief, accuracy, fairness, bias, trustworthiness, and dependability. In-depth interviews with a diverse group of media professionals were conducted using purposive sampling Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data, giving an understanding of the effects of mediatization on viewer's perceptions. The results specified issues causing distrust on media content and some solutions to rectify these issues were suggested by the selected panel of journalists/ Broadcasters.

Key words: Media credibility, Mediatization, Transparency, Balance reporting, Media and democracy.

1. Introduction

The relationship, between trust in media and democracy holds significance because in countries the consent of informed citizens relies on their understanding of policies and current events as well as their ability to express their opinions through voting (Miller & Krosnick,2000). The media shapes public opinion. It shapes people's social and political opinions. Politics and social concerns should be known to media consumers. It connects students to the information world in addition to satisfying their fundamental knowledge demands (Anwar & Jan 2010). Newspapers and television news play a role in providing knowledge about events, particularly the state of the nation's overall economy (Mutz,1992). According to Sanders (2000) it is important for the general public to grasp advancements and economic trends than needing to be familiar with specific economic metrics. Pakistan is currently facing issues that demand prompt attention from policymakers amidst a changing global landscape. The presence of an environment marked by volatility and disputes, among political parties often serves as a source of economic challenges.

According to Dahl (1998) trust in media and democracy are closely related. Dahl argues that in order for democracy to bloom people need to have access, to information and believe in the reliability of news sources. Trust plays a role in ensuring that the public has access to shared knowledge. Examining the link between trust, the news media, and freedom is important. Because they all influence each other Gallup published a study in 2021 detailing the most recent developments in American citizens' faith in the media. According to previous Gallup polls, the public's faith in the media reached its lowest point in American history in 2016. But during the Trump administration, it

rebounded. Still, public trust in American media has been declining in recent years, and as of 2021, it is at the second-lowest level ever. Americans' trust in the media is based more on their assessment of quality journalism than it is on the code of ethics (Izard, 1985). Credibility has become a factor, in the media landscape. In today's world of information overload and numerous competing sources perceptions of trustworthiness greatly impact which sources people choose, shaping their attitudes and behaviors. Credibility is frequently determined by a mix of experience, trustworthiness, completeness, correctness, and bias (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000). Although the belief of credibility has historical back ground, extending back to its exploration in conversion strategies in ancient Greece, the emergence of radio, television, and the Internet has accelerated the progress of credibility studies in modern times. The full range, from press freedom to the media serving as the fourth estate to repression and misapplication for propaganda, is known from history. The necessity of having faith in the media hasn't diminished in the contemporary world. The term media embraces much more than the usual outlets of mainstream media. Traditionally, the media were agents that filter information. They served as gatekeepers who greatly influenced public perception. Because of this, since the 1950s, they have been the focus of extensive research in conventional communication science (Purer, 2014). The media is now the least trusted worldwide institution for the first time, according to the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer It is necessary to thoroughly verify this as there are different depending on the nation, and media is often characterized as a platform and journalism together. According to the poll, journalism has regained public confidence as a news source when compared to previous years—possibly more than before, considering the widespread concern about false news. Still, a number of nations saw a decline in platform trust. (Edelman, 2018).

Public perceptions are significantly shaped by public trust in the news and its relationship to media bias in today's media landscape. Eveland and Shah (2003) and Lee (2010) have highlighted people's natural feeling to believe that the media favors other viewpoints while projecting a negative image of themselves. In this particular context, trust is a crucial component that has a strong connection to an institution's capacity to fulfill societal expectations and represents the reality of those expectations. The degree to which organizations live up to these expectations affects how long people are willing to put their faith in them. But this kind of trust is selective and varies in strength and depth. A functioning democracy depends on its citizens being informed, and a critical component of this is the confidence that citizens have in news sources (Coleman, 2012).

The article "Press Freedoms in Pakistan: 2012). The article "As The polarization Deepens, Journalism Pays the Price" by Furqan Khan (2022) explores the limitations placed on media freedom in Pakistan during the last 20 years. It describes the difficulties that journalists face, such as legal procedures, physical threats, and violence. A free press is essential to advancing democracy because it provides readers with unbiased, thorough news coverage, a range of viewpoints, and the opportunity to make their own decisions (Sheikh et al, 2023: Icks et al., 2017). Concerns over the increasing mediatization of society are raised by the recent highlights of the deterioration of journalistic standards and the growing incidence of media bias this process impacts an individual's perception of events by integrating media logic into different social organizations

1.1 Objective of Study

   a) To investigate how economic challenges affect trust in Pakistani news media.
   b) To examine the impact of political polarization on media trust in Pakistan.
   c) How shifts in the media affect people's belief in news sources?
   d) How can news channels lower bias and gain trust?

1.2 Problem Statement

The growing mistrust of people on Pakistani media, where television news and newspapers remain vital sources of information on political and economic events, is a matter of great concern (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Doms and Morin, 2004). People may lose trust in the system where they can speak up if news isn't accurate and people don't know what is happening.

This is because democracy needs people to be knowledgeable and make wise decisions. Our democracy system might not work well if people can't get information and the news is not true. The drop in trust for media places heavy pressure on companies like newspapers, radio stations and TV networks.

This is affected by things like disagreements over politics, money problems not being sure where to get prices right at times now days. Also it has been influencing changes about how we go through news these recent years (Pasha et al., 2023). The main challenge right now is looking into how this trust erosion changes what viewers think. (Eveland & Shah, 2003). And how it affects how news and information are consumed by the public, especially in Pakistan. In order to clarify the crucial interactions between medialization, media credibility, and public perception

in a democratic society, this study attempts to disentangle the intricate dynamics surrounding media trust and its effects (Baum & Groeling,2008; Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014).

Media all over the world considered a dynamic source of information which shape the democratic value in public sphere. (Sheikh et al, 2022: Iqbal et al., 2014). In general, individuals assess the quality of news through the lens of credibility, a pivotal factor that often shapes their subsequent utilization of the information (Kiousis, 2001).

There are many factors that has led to mistrust of people on media content. In the U.S trust in the news media has declined, influenced by changing news consumption habits, evolving business models, and political partisanship. Misinformation adds complexity. Personal connections with journalists and news organizations positively affect trust. Americans have disaggregated trust, favoring specific sources (Gottfried, Walker, & Mitchell, 2020). Trusting the media goes beyond believing they report news accurately. It also means having a common understanding of the media's role in today's societies Taylor (2004).

1.3 Research Questions
    a) Why News media lose their credibility?
    b) How does the changing media landscape affect our trust in news sources?
    c) What happens when people lose trust in the media, and how does it impact how they consume news?
    d) What steps can news channels take to reduce bias and enhance trust

2. Literature Review
2.1 News credibility and News Media
News credibility stands as a focal point in the extensive research landscape of journalism. The study of trust in the news media is part of a long tradition of credibility research. In general, individuals assess the quality of news through the lens of credibility, a pivotal factor that often shapes their subsequent utilization of the information (Kiousis, 2001). Media stands as a dynamic and crucial information source, contributing significantly to awareness and information dissemination among the masses (Sheikh et al, 2023: Iqbal et al., 2014). In Pakistan, various media channels, including television, radio, and newspapers, serve the public, with television emerging as the predominant source due to its widespread availability and public acceptance (Yaser et al., 2011). The variables used to judge the credibility of the news media were belief, accuracy, fairness, bias, trustworthiness, and simplicity of use, completeness, dependability, and presenters' attractiveness. The way that the public feels about their own government is greatly influenced by the media. A nation's political and social environment may be significantly shaped by its diplomatic connections, internal political and social atmosphere, and the dynamic worldwide political and economic landscape Helms, L. (2012). Television (TV) is a globally popular medium with significant impact on modern society, offering diverse perspectives, facilitating public education, and enhancing people's lives. In developing nations like Bangladesh, TV holds potential for a pivotal societal role.

2.2 Role of media in Pakistan
The media's role is to attract attention to societal problems and put pressure on the public and government to find effective solutions. The media's duty at the federal level is to create a link between the public and the government. The media acts as a checkpoint by making sure the government is carrying out its duties. But as globalization has progressed, so too have the media's obligations. It must contribute to upholding and furthering the state's national interests while showcasing its perspective in regard to global issues. Rather than focusing on global security, it must examine how international contacts are carried out and identify global hotspots (Hussain, 2008). The rise of data journalism has a big impact on the critical function that journalists perform as watchdogs on democracy, particularly when it comes to covering and analyzing topics of public interest. The "watchdog role" is further expanded since data opens up avenues for significantly more intricate investigations utilizing software and numerical data, allowing the public to be notified about noteworthy stories (Uskali and Kuutti 2015).

During Pakistan's electronic media explosion, there was a serious shortage of competent labor; the majority of this labor came from the state-owned PTV, where many employees departed to join financially more lucrative companies. Profitable private media. Conversely, when the large media companies that were closing down started their own television networks, individuals from the print media inevitably became involved. With little to no prior experience in the electronic media, the young individuals who went on to become the first wave of reporters and journalists entered the field after receiving their terminal degrees in International Relations or Mass Communication/Journalism. As a result, the electronic medium had several limitations when it first began to operate, which was reflected in the broadcasts. Furthermore, the involvement of unlicensed business and commercial organizations in electronic media further weakened the credibility, experience, and professionalism of

these groups. Consequently, Noam Chomsky observes that "it would scarcely come as a surprise if the picture of the world they now the viewpoints and interests of the buyers, sellers, and product—the product being audiences' willingness and ability to pay—were to be reflected in the present. (Newsweek Eyes Pakistan Media Market, 2010). The overemphasis on the media has given media anchors tremendous power; via political discourse and public appeal, they have gained sway over policy decisions and, on the other hand, have attempted to decision- makers. The news is displayed as it happens and has a significant impact on the public through live broadcasts and "breaking news," which also eliminates the need for editors and government oversight. Also, as media has become more commercialized, corporations that sell consumer products have become the new media's main customers rather than governments.

2.3 Media Trust and its Decline

In the U.S trust in the news media has declined, influenced by changing news consumption habits, evolving business models, and political partisanship. Misinformation adds complexity. Personal connections with journalists and news organizations positively affect trust. Americans have disaggregated trust, favoring specific sources (Gottfried, Walker, & Mitchell, 2020). Trusting the media goes beyond believing they report news accurately. It also means having a common understanding of the media's role in today's societies Taylor (2004).

In 2023, Pakistan faced economic crisis by issues surrounding an IMF loan program initiated in 2019. With the IMF suspending loan disbursements due to Pakistan's perceived lack of commitment to reforms, the nation's economic stability hung in the balance (Rana, 2023). In 2023, Pakistan's media landscape saw a significant event. On March 5, PEMRA banned television channels from broadcasting Imran Khan's speeches, citing his criticism of state institutions. Khan challenged the ban, arguing it exceeded PEMRA's jurisdiction. This occurred amid political instability, with Khan criticizing General Bajwa. Similar bans on political speeches have occurred before. Growing polarization raises concerns of extending speech restrictions to online platforms as elections near (Yuns, 2023). This incident highlights how practical limitations and external pressures can constrain media independence, leading to self-censorship and alignment with certain narratives influenced by government directives and military influence. This complex dynamic raises questions about the true extent of media freedom in Pakistan Davies, C. (2023)

From April 2022 to August 2023, PEMRA, Pakistan's media regulator, emerged as a significant player in shaping the nation's media landscape and influencing political discourse. Notably, on August 18, 2023, PEMRA issued a directive mandating TV channels to halt the broadcast of content involving 11 specific individuals. This group included close associates of the former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, critics of the government and military, as well as individuals facing court proclamations. This big decision by the leader made people worry about how it could affect what politicians talk about. It was especially noted because Imran Khan, who had lost power in April 2022 and is now banned for many times before, might be affected very much. ARY News lost its right to broadcast one of Khan's speeches because PEMRA didn't like it. This shows how much power they have in the world of media (Hassan et al 2020: Rumi & Kumar, 2023). In the same time, a report called Panama Papers showed problems about hiding money and overseas properties. Their big reports on Panama Court trials and words from different political groups or people got a lot of notice. In a deep look, it showed that ARY News gave all-around news. They had more people watching them, especially when talking about recent events shows happened. People usually said they were happy with ARY News' reporting on the Panama Leaks. They supported the charges against Nawaz Sharif and aligned with Imran Khan's stance on the Panama Leaks. This research delves into the dominant role of private news TV stations in shaping public perceptions and understanding of political affairs in Pakistan (Amin, S., Amin, A., & Ali, S., 2021). PEMRA's granting of licenses to several private channels marked the start of the growth of Pakistani channels, and that the legitimacy of Pakistani news media was then asked a question. Since the foundation of the whole media system is credibility, determining the reliability of the news channel audience is essential. Comprehending the legitimacy of news outlets is becoming more and more important. This research looks into how news viewers see news outlets' credibility. The information showed that opinions of news media channels' reliability were positively correlated with political affiliation, but negatively correlated with age, gender, education, and occupation Qamar et al. (2018).

2.4 Private News TV Stations and Public Perception

In urban areas of Pakistan, private news TV stations play a pivotal role in disseminating political information, outshining other media outlets in this regard. Notably, the country's newspaper circulation has remained significantly low, with only 6.1 million copies in 200, despite a population of 207 million people, and this trend is declining (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, as cited in Enn, 2012). Moreover, several popular political television programs in Pakistan have achieved widespread popularity by skillfully blending entertainment with informative

content. These programs delve into various national and international issues, as well as current political developments (Munir et al., 2018). Numerous media outlets in Pakistan are owned by businesses other than journalists. Geo Television, founded in 2002, is associated with the Independent Media Corporation and has played a key role in promoting freedom of speech in Pakistan. ARY News, established in 2004, is a bilingual channel based in Dubai with an extensive global correspondent network and partnerships with international networks. Both channels hold significant influence in shaping public opinion through their focus on international news. The trust levels of audiences varied significantly between ARY and Geo News, as evidenced by a study (Gehlbach, 2011). The media is a revenue stream for these profit-driven corporations, endangering the integrity of journalism as a whole (Warrich et al., 2020). This was made clear when Jang/Geo Group's owner, Mir Shakeel-Ur-Rehman, declared in 2017 that "this is my business; forget about journalism." Acting against government departments or defaming them are the most common accusations used in court proceedings filed against journalists A notable finding was that a higher number of respondents considered ARY as a more trustworthy news source. However, when it came to perceived information richness, the audience leaned towards Geo News. Interestingly, another substantial portion of respondents favored ARY for credibility over Geo News. According to the survey, 23% of participants expressed the view that sources featured on ARY were more intelligent. In contrast, only 19% strongly agreed that Geo News sources demonstrated intelligence in delivering news stories.

The study identified several dimensions contributing to the credibility of news sources on both channels. These included reporters' trustworthiness, unbiased reporting, expertise, intelligence, authority, accurate portrayal of events, respect for people's privacy, the ability to separate facts from opinions, and avoidance of sensationalizing news. Notably, the audience perceived that Geo News prioritized people's privacy and values more than ARY. It is essential to recognize that audience perceptions of media credibility are multifaceted and can be influenced by various factors, as suggested by Gehlbach research (2011). The researcher's analysis seeks to illuminate their unique characteristics and impact within the global information landscape. (Yousaf. 2012)

2.5 Theoretical Framework
2.5.1 Mediatization Theory
Mediatization, an essential idea in modern sociology, has a complex connection to the broader process of societal and cultural modernization. While classical sociologists such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel concentrated on industrialization, urbanization, and secularization, the role of mass media remained peripheral in their analyses (Bourdieu, 1999). This historical perspective is rooted in the 19th-century perception of "media" as instruments of literature, science, and politics rather than autonomous entities. The theory of mediatization offers a key foundation from which to understand how news media portray the world today. An institutional transformation of media is referred to as "mediatization," a long-term process of societal change and have grown more integrated into society at large (Strömbäck 2008). Differences between the real world and the media's portrayal of it may occur in a mediatized setting when news values and selection biases are more pronounced. Over time, biases towards negativity and distortion have increased (Farnsworth & Lichter 2006). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in modern, highly industrialized Western societies, with connections to globalization (Thompson, 1995). Mediatization holds the potential to shape political functions, encompassing enhancement, adaptation, obstruction, or substitution in alignment with the media system's rationale. It can, at its most extreme, result in "mediatized politics." where political autonomy diminishes, dependence on mass media deepens, and continuous shaping occurs through media interactions (Mazzoleni, 2000: 250). Entities prioritizing power and publicity in self-presentation are more susceptible to media logic than those focused on policy and decision-making (Marcinkowski & Steiner, 2010). The 20th century marked the recognition of mass media as distinct forms of communication, resulting in specialized disciplines such as Communication Research and Media Studies. This specialization, however, created a schism between media studies and broader sociological perspectives. Medium theory, exploring media's societal role, remained largely unembraced by sociologists (Silverstone, 2006). Recent years have witnessed efforts to reconcile these disciplines, with Manuel Castells' work on the internet, the network society, and studies on globalization bridging the gap. Mediatization theory will help analyze the impact of economic challenges and political polarization on the mediatization process, thereby influencing trust in the Pakistani news media. Mediatization is both a societal process necessitating dialogue between disciplines and a theoretical concept demanding a fusion of Sociology and Media Studies. It should be perceived as a modernization process akin to urbanization and individualization, where media dismembers and remembers social relations in new contexts, becoming a fundamental aspect of modern society (Thompson, 1990).

2.5.2 Agenda Setting Theory

Another theoretical context that will guide the study is Agenda-setting theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (2000), and has undergone extensive examination over several decades. Initially concentrated on creating connections and drawing broader conclusions, subsequent research has delved into contingent conditions. This theory analyzes how the media shapes public perception, emphasizing specific issues at the first level and exploring attribute salience at the second level. The substantive dimension encompasses qualities, while the affective dimension considers emotional tones, enhancing the comprehension of media's impact on public opinion. Agenda-setting, a highly influential theory on media's political impact (Graber, 2005), not only delves into its effect on public opinion but also explores its significant role in shaping the agendas of political actors and policy makers. Scholars often use the terms 'political agenda-setting' or 'agenda building' to describe the process of transferring media priorities to political priorities. McCombs and Shaw, further explored that the media play a pivotal role in shaping the agenda for political campaigns, thereby altering the salience of views on political issues. The theory supports this research and fit to its framework which suggest that media institutions shape the political debate by choosing which topics and issues should feature in the news.

3. Methodology

A qualitative method is applied. In-depth interviews will be conducted with a diverse group of media person, chosen through purposive sampling, to explore their perceptions regarding media trust and credibility in the context of mediatization. Informed consent will be obtained from participants, and the interviews will be guided by a structured protocol, allowing for open-ended discussions. Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data, giving an understanding of the effects of mediatization on viewer perceptions Denzin and Lincoln (2018) highlight that in-depth interviews contribute to the validity and credibility of research findings through their ability to provide detailed contextual information and participant perspectives. By complementing and corroborating quantitative data, in-depth interviews strengthen the overall rigor and trustworthiness of the research In-depth interviews serve two purposes: on the one hand, they allow the interviewee to communicate his or her experience with a certain issue, and on the other, they allow them to express enough of it in their own manner (Seidman, 2006). In-depth interviews (face-to-face) and focus group discussions were conducted to examine four study questions:

3.1 Tool of Research

The primary research tool is in-depth interviews, supported by a structured interview protocol. These interviews will facilitate a deeper understanding of participants' viewpoints on media trust and credibility in the age of mediatization.

3.2 Sampling Type and Size

The sampling method selected for this research is purposive sampling. This approach will involve purposefully selecting participants based on their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and expertise relevant to News media. The sample size for this study will include a diverse group of participant 6 full-time and freelance journalists from print and electronic media of Pakistan. In this study, a 12- to 15-minute interview was conducted with each journalist. In order to get answers of study questions. Media trustworthiness, political news, and reducing bias and how media can regain its credibility) were asked were asked to the selected panel of journalists. The data later was analyzed to seek out the result.

3.3 Research Questions
3.3.1 Section 1

1. What factors harm media credibility, and how can we address them?
2. Why does Pakistani news media focus more on political news rather than social issues?
3. As a media professional, do you think news channels show bias? Why or why not?
4. As a media professional, how do you perceive the impact of Pemra's decision not to share news about Imran Khan on the public's access to information?

3.3.2 Section 2

5. How can Pakistani media maintain independence, report freely, and be a voice for the public amid challenges?

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Table 1: Selected panel of journalists

Participant	Name	Professions	Channels	Experience
1	Abdul Majeed Sajid	Secretary press club	Jang group	25
2	Jawad ur Rehman	Senior Correspondent	The Nation	22
3	Nawaz Tahir	Senior report	Daily Kabrain	16
4	Zubair Bashir	Producer Urdu service	Dosti Channel FM-98 (Urdu service) of China Radio International)	21
5	Abrar Nadeem	Manager and Writer	FM101	15
6	Ahmed Shiekh	International	Prof of advance Media studies and Freelance International Broadcast Journalist.	37

4. Data Analysis
Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze the data collected from interviews, identifying common themes and patterns among participants' responses.

4.1 Unverified Information from Social Media
Majeed Sajid opines *"Media credibility is the widespread use of unverified information from social media without proper authentication".* Media credibility faces significant challenges, including the widespread use of unverified information from social media, political polarization, and a shift towards profit-driven journalism along with government pressure all these factors are responsible for this situation of media distrust.

4.2 Biases in News Media
Transparency, open discussions on biases, and a steadfast commitment are core principles of objectivity. Mr. Abrar Nadeem opines *"One significant issue is the perceived bias in reporting, which often leads to accusations of favoritism towards certain political figures or parties."* International Broadcaster/Journalist Mr. Ahmad Sheikh said that multifaceted nature of these issues underscores the importance of transparency, journalistic integrity, and balanced reporting.
 Public trust on news media can only be achieved by removing these issue and the level of media houses. Ahmed sheikh further opines "*When people are aware and think critically, they can better notice biases when they get information."*

4.3 Media Prioritization of Political News in Pakistan
The Media focus on political news the prioritization of political news over social issues in Pakistani media. This focus is linked to sensationalism, well-established reporting habits, and the belief that the public is more interested in political affairs.
Interviewee (Majid Sajid) highlights the internal and external pressures faced by journalists, including recent suspensions and limits on coverage they emphasize the necessity of addressing societal issues alongside political coverage to foster a more responsible and credible media environment.
Interviewees express concerns about the potential limitations on journalistic freedom, restrictions on the public's right to information, and the stifling of diverse viewpoints. Interviewee Ahmed sheikh "*People have the right to know what their leaders are doing. If there are attempts to limit this access, it raises concerns about transparency and accountability".* The balance between supporting journalists and addressing the challenges faced by media associations due to external pressures is emphasized. This shows why we need a media that is aware and independent, able to understand power dynamics, and give the public fair and complete information.

4.4 Enhancement of Trust in news Media

News channels can take steps to enhance the public's understanding of biases in both news production and consumption. People not trusting the media is a big problem. Some of our interviewees condemned any inaccuracy, others accepted that the news will comprise some levels of misinformation such false information was sometimes perceived as a chance rather than as damaging. Trust in the news is vital, and when trust levels drop, it causes issues. Sometimes, we may not fully understand or talk enough about why media trust is crucial and why it's decreasing. It's a complex issue that needs a closer look to figure out why people are losing trust and how to fix it. Interviewee Nawaz Tahir "*To build trust in the media, to make people trust the news more, media should talk about many different things, not just politics*". The interviewees suggest some important steps. First, they recommend using strict processes to check references and make sure information is accurate second, they highlight the need for journalists to be skilled at fact-checking and to work without being influenced by outside pressures.

4.5 Need for Transparency and Balanced Reporting

In Pakistan, the government often stops media from speaking freely and bothers those in charge. They also don't allow journalists to get information they need badly. Often, government officials stop journalists from getting important details and hide information they need to tell stories accurately. Along with stopping reporters from reporting honestly, this hiding of information breaks the public's right to know. Interviewee Ahmed sheikh "*As media professionals, we should support freedom for the press and make sure rules match the values of an open and well-informed democracy*" interviewed (Nawaz Tahir) says that people are trying to control what news is shared. This has led to an increase in websites for online news and more regular folks telling stories as a way of getting the truth out there without using big companies or official sources.

4.6 Media Trust and Credibility

All interviewees agreed on the point that false information and external pressure have potentially harm the media credibility of media outlets in Pakistan. The factor of sensational political content to boost ratings and slanted news representation have severely damaged the credibility and viewership of electronic and print media. Interviewees stressed that media organizations need to prioritize transparency in their operations. Clear disclosure of sources, avoidance of hidden agendas, and providing context to news stories can go a long way in enhancing trust. We really need to break this pattern, find a balance, and make sure our media covers both political and social issues responsibly. Dosti Channel (CRI) Broadcaster based in Beijing, Zubair Basir stated that diversifying content will not only enrich the information landscape; it is also conducive to more balanced and responsible portrayals of both political and social issues. Ahmad Sheikh, Majid Sajid, Jawad Ur Rehman, Senior Reporter and Analyst all were in view that historical instances of media control by authorities, financial considerations favoring political news for higher viewership, and the geopolitical challenges in Pakistan contribute to mistrust on news media operating in Public and Private sector.

The digital world is changing, and sometimes the information is not accurate. It's important to help people by promoting skills like checking facts and being clear and honest in reporting. This makes news channels more trustworthy and reduces bias. (**Jawad Ur Rehman, Senior Reporter and Analyst (The Nation)**

Truthful news build trust in the channel and make sure information is accurate. As news channels supply people with a direct road map for critical thinking, they assist them in picking out the errors of information. As well, news channels need to cultivate deep thought and bearing witness. It must teach people how to find out if the stories are true so as not only reduce bias but also strengthen trust in their audiences. (Nawaz Tahir)

5. Findings and Discussion

The qualitative research employing in-depth interviews with a diverse group of media professionals in Pakistan uncovers key challenges affecting media trust and credibility they need to build trust and make others believe their words more during this time when everything is going through the news. Unchecked news from social media platforms is becoming a big worry. This makes it important to check the truth of any information carefully. Recognizing biases in news shows highlights the need for openness and balanced reporting. The focus on politics instead of social problems shows the internal and external stresses that journalists face. Public trust can be regained and maintained by being clear, fair reporting in the newspapers, along with responsible actions of those who report. Respondent, collectively advocate for a more balanced journalistic approach, urging coverage of vital social issues like poverty and crime. In summary, the results give problems and solutions about declining public trust on media in Pakistan. They also show ways how to rectify these issues.

5.1 Recommendation

- Mistrust of the news was fueled by a number of factors, such as a history of false reporting, Pakistani media in this regard have to care about the difference biases they most commonly used in their stories. Bias by placement, Bias by submission and omission, and bias by spin doctors. Actual malice if occurred should be rectified promptly by media channel who committed to air the false news.
- Pakistan's media gatekeepers have to stop the specific messages from political leadership that is heavily biased in favour of one's own position and demoralized the other. It happened in recent General election held in 2023.
- Media have to think the grievances of public and set its agenda accordingly.
- Media regulator should play its role as true watchdog and work for national interest.

- Independent Media regulator is prime need.

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