

# DO MEDIA ANCHOR PERSONS INFLUENCING THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the last ten years, electronic media has grown rapidly in Pakistan and has become a successful industry. In this regard, it is basically the media itself, which holds an important responsibility towards socio-economic development including poverty alleviation, education, health and many other development fields. This responsibility can only be fulfilled when the professionals representing the 'fourth pillar of the state' work delivering information to the public with utmost transparency, responsibility and accuracy. Therefore, the present study aims at exploring the role of TV anchorpersons in influencing public perception in the country. This is an exploratory research which focuses around the role and power of anchorpersons in shaping the public opinion in Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with anchorperson and general public respectively. This study contributes towards enhancing the understanding about electronic media and anchorpersons in shaping information, education and cultural change in Pakistani society and paves the way for future research.*

**Key Words:** Electronic Media, Anchorperson, Change Agent, Public Perception, Code of Conduct

## INTRODUCTION

Truth is a bitter reality and most of the society trampled due to speaking of harsh realities because history reveals that truth can never be suppressed. It always had linkages with dangerous consequences. That's the reason why John Stuart Mill emphasized the need for freedom of speech, he believed in the sovereignty to read or write because these are the integral pillars of any democratic society in order to ensure self-development and self-fulfillment of citizens.

Media of a particular society is considered to be one of the significant pillars in enlightening certain truths and giving awareness to the public which is being practiced in today's real world. . Today's Media is a major source of delivering a message to the target audience who understands and forms opinions on certain events. Media can be called as the most effective weapon contributing to losing or winning a war without firing a single bullet. Rapid change of opinions, perceptions of different incidents / happening and emotional approaches towards ideologies are being influenced by today's analysts and their analytical skills during talk shows by anchors and fast changing tickers giving news with every click of the clock.

In the given scenario, the electronic media today holds a serious responsibility towards socio-economic development in developing countries such as Pakistan. This responsibility can only be fulfilled when the professionals representing the 'fourth pillar of the state' work with the information and news they receive, with utmost transparency, responsibility and accuracy. News, contaminated with vested interest of any type, not only become dangerous but also is extremely poisonous by nature. However, opposing the mishandling of news does not imply that we are also opposing positive distortion. Undoubtedly, it is a difficult task to disclose bad news to an audience, who are either directly or indirectly affected by it.

The role of regulatory bodies like Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), and Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has undermined as a watch dogs within their respective ministries. A rapid change in societal behavior is noticed which does not seem to be positive, influenced by the new phenomenon - where some news are retrieved by a reporter, news anchors ask irrelevant questions and the analysts join in (whose credibility at times as analyst is also questionable) adding different angles to the news without considering the fallout of that particular incident. During this musical chairs of being first in breaking the news without adding value of analysis, the element of trust and responsibility is often found missing.

This happens because the roles of producers, anchors, hosts, analysts and the responsibility associated to them is neither documented by PEMRA nor by the channels themselves as a private entity. The anchorpersons suppose to perform multiple roles at a time such as the role of presenter and the analyst as well. Moreover, since there is already existing intimacy between these anchorpersons and the source of news therefore it is difficult to do justice with one's professional obligations. Such journalism produces faulty perceptions, mismanagement, mishandling and confuse the masses, hence, driving their perceptions towards negativity at times.

In this business of News trading, the element of mitigation adversely affects the type of society that we are living in today. If it happens in a country having some respect for rule of law and human rights activism, such anchorpersons are levied with penalty for breaching public trust as well as for playing around with matters of national security and sovereignty. Because of limited contribution this ten years old industry, resultant is a confused nation with extreme behaviors. Our perceptions are influenced, managed, built and maneuvered 24/7. The anchors are our celebrities and news is a source of entertainment only. Several studies

discussed that mass media continuously works on modifying their programming according to the needs and interest of the audience [1,2,3].

This area is highly under-researched in the context of developing countries. Most of the research has been conducted in the American context, but that also does not explore issues regarding the role of an anchor person in changing public perceptions. Additionally, Very few studies have studied the concept of anchorperson in the context of Pakistan [4] whereas none of the study has investigated the role of anchorperson in changing public perception. This research study fills this gap and an aim of this research study is to discover the role of anchorpersons in influencing the public perception. It will help the media personnel to answer long outstanding questions of how to develop a code of ethics for the anchorpersons in order to enhance their credibility for having influence on public perception. Furthermore, the study will also provide guidelines for the policy makers to come up with policies which should enable them to develop the anchorpersons as a change agent for the society.

#### **Global Perspective: influence of broadcast media**

Media has no decisive boundary as it becomes a symbol to speak freely and express a feeling to the society.

Gitlin stated that “society’s most powerless received television as a consolation prize”. Every person takes information from this source and wants to idealize those entities which were acting on the television screen that may be an actor, speaker, newscaster, or an anchor [5].

Television is a different source having all forms of discourse as no one goes to cinema to watch a movie on the government policy or see the latest scientific advances. Nobody buys a booklet to find out the cricket scores or to get information about the weather forecast. But everyone watches television to see all the things and much more, which is the basic reason for the television’s penetration in the culture. That is why most of the public community gets influenced by the media talk shows and they form an opinion about issues on the basis of the way the media exposes a topic [6].

There have been quite a few examples, where media has played an active role in changing society’s mindset. In Romania, the revolution started from a small city of Timasoara sharing common border with Yugoslavia and Hungary. People in Timasoara saw CNN broadcast witnessing what was happening in Hungary. Similarly, in Philippines a news report on the assassination of President Ferdinand Marcos, political opponent of Benigno Aquino got exposed on media and its video tapes were widely copied and shown to groups of people. Massive mailing of news clippings eventually worked as adding fuel to fire of people anger. Resultantly, this news toppled Marcos and brought Aquino’s widow, Corazon Aquino to power [7].

There is a common practice in the media to portray things in a negative way just for their own vested interest or to enhance the channel ratings. In the Vietnam war, the journalists, camera men and various reporters filming the war gave daily updates on how brutally the war was turning out to be with the civilian death toll rising loss the US as a nation was going through, and fighting just to extend the duration war was merely a way of making the people see that the war was endless [8]. At that time, Walter Cronkite, was considered to

be the most trusted man of America. He at that time took into account the consensus of the people [9]. However, his perspective started to change whereas public view was somewhat stagnant, but later when he spoke out against the war, coupled with the prestige and power to convince the American people, more and more people started to join him. The public along with Cronkite started to give benefit of doubt to the Government as well as the military leaders since the war had begun. The media as it was with limited broadcast time, got frustrated and left along with the field reporters and the emphasis was given to showing the brutal footages had started making the people realize how endless and hopeless the war was.

#### **Anchorpersons and Public Opinion**

The association between the media and the public has been debated for decades [10]. Starting with the work of Marcuse [11] 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 [12]. This has been further agreed by [13] 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 [14] 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 [15]. The term anchor was first used in 1952 to describe the most famous or well-known person from a panel of reporters or experts [15]. Whereas the role of a journalist is to collect and distribute information about current events, people, trends, and issues.

It has been argued by [16] 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 [17] 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 complexed 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 of opinions of the public, but they still argue that what is being shown in the media will be surely discussed in the public [18]. 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 [19].

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 [19]. 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 [20]. People are affected by the media researchers and not the media [21]. 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 [22] 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 [23,24] 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 [25].

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.

## METHODOLOGY

Since the main purpose of the study is to explore the role of TV anchorpersons in influencing public perception and understand the public opinions which 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 35 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' influence on formulating public perceptions. One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the meaning attributed to these

behaviors (e.g. their thoughts, beliefs, feelings and values), therefore, focus group discussion was also conducted in order to get their opinion about these anchors and to have an insight whether media influences their perceptions towards certain controversial issues that prevail in the society or the findings signify something different. The main questions of the study included:

- i. What is an anchorperson's opinion about the media and its role in developing a code of conduct and what do they feel about it?
- ii. What is the public perception towards current affair talk shows and how do they decide about the credibility of a media channel?
- iii.

## RESULTS

### Demographic profile of participants

For the first part, we chose five anchor persons to participate from different media channels including Geo, Duniya, Dawn, and Express for the study. They belong to the age group between 25-50 years. The work experience of these TV anchorpersons ranges from five to ten years. The second part of the study included thirty participants from different walks of life (both males and females). The division in age group was so done that ten participants were twenty years of age (5 males and females each), five are 25 years of age (3 males and 2 females) and fifteen were 30 years of age (8 males and 7 females). 10 participants were from graduate and post graduate disciplines, 10 were working in different industries and 10 were owners / workers of retail shops. All the participants were those who watch current affair shows, either regularly, or on weekly basis.

### Findings

The findings were presented on the basis of thematic analysis using preset themes which emerged from general coding analysis. Semi-structured interview technique was adopted in which questions were designed to elicit information about the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, understating and experiences of the participants. The findings are organized in to two parts as per the scope of the study.

### Anchorpersons' Perspective

The findings of the first part of the study are organized as follows: PEMRA'S role and mandate, agenda setting in political shows the phenomenon of rating and its effects, difference between news anchor, anchor person and a journalist, and whether there is a need to devise a policy or a code of conduct for current affairs anchor person or otherwise.

### PEMRA's Role and Mandate

This section highlights different anchorpersons' understanding of PEMRA's role and its mandate and those who claim that the rationale behind issuing licenses to private entrepreneurs was to give a wider choice to the people of Pakistan in the avenues like News, Current Affairs, Art, Culture and Scientific Knowledge. PEMRA as a regulatory authority is still controlling the private channels under the PEMRA Ordinance 2002. When asked, if the anchorpersons agreed to PEMRA's mandate and role, or whether, they thought that changes should be made in its performance so that it could be more effective and efficient, different

anchorpersons had difference of opinion. One of the anchorpersons, case A commented:

*"I agree with PEMRA's mandate up to some extent, because if you critically analyze the trends in the last decade, you will realize that now there are many choices for the viewers to see a program of their particular choice. Before this, viewers had very limited choice which did not generate interest of their desirable level."*

Similarly, Case B made a statement that:

*"There is no doubt that PEMRA's mandate for issuing licenses to the private channels is just like adding another feather in the cap. I support this decision taken by PEMRA, because now the media is getting more responsible on issues related to Governance, Accountability and National Security. For example the Lawyer's movement is an important issue of present time which was telecasted live by all the private channels and finally it became a real time development in the history of judiciary."*

During the discussion, case C stated:

*"Absolutely, free electronic media viewers have a wider spectrum of choice. People are no more bound to listen and watch only the officially certified state version. People are better informed and public institutions are now more accountable than before. Yes the mandate is being followed."*

Apparently, participants have mixed opinion about PEMRA and its authority as highlighted above. Another question which was based on the participants professional experience was that what role would they like to suggest for PEMRA to play? Generally the participants were not satisfied and expressed it in different ways, however, some of the participants came up with some genuine suggestions. According to one respondent, Case D:

*"Role of PEMRA has to be taken seriously and there is a dire need for a media development policy."*

Whereas, another respondent, Case C stated:

*"Though it is neither perfect nor ideal and has committed serious mistakes. Still by the end of the day, it was terribly restrictive. Likewise, both, the media and the regulators are learning from each other mistakes."*

Similarly, one of the respondents, Case A said:

*"PEMRA has its rules and regulations, but it needs to be strict in terms of their implementation as no game can be played without rules."*

One of the respondent Case E made a very tough statement on PEMRA's role in Pakistani Media:

*"Satisfaction is a bigger term, I will say that PEMRA is doing its job for what it was established for, like a goon in the media industry, controlled by the Government."*

Although, the anchorpersons are not the policy advisors who set the rules of the game, but still they do, however, it is surprising that they hardly have any concrete suggestions to make, which implies that there is zero growth in the role of anchorpersons, thorough and professional journalists and public representatives in true letter and spirit.

### **Agenda Setting in Political Shows**

This is one of the major dilemmas that every anchor person has to face or sometimes has to obey unwillingly, being a channel policy. For every hour which is being broadcasted on the TV channels there are some objectives to uplift in their right order. Most of the anchorpersons have difference of

opinion on the question of agenda setting and its role in current affair shows. Some feel that this is based on intuitive decision; some believe that this is based on a channel's editorial policy, some consider it as setting frame for the show at the start and some take it as an effort put by every team member for the intention to add more spice to it. Case C said:

*"Again impulse drives the agenda, though, newsrooms are now beginning to how to take a laid back view of an important issue, but nucleus remains the event of the moment and the day."*

Case E, in this context stated:

*"... the content of any program is set by its content and the content is always according to the channel's policy, so there is no such thing as setting an agenda in one prime time hour, the complete 24 hours transmission of that channel is a campaign of agenda setting, which reflects channels editorial policy."*

Another respondent, Case A said:

*"Agenda setting in my opinion is starting a program with a set frame of mind and then wanting to influence the entire program with it, starting it with a particular direction and making sure it ends like that too. Agenda setting is unfortunately part of our prime time."*

Case B expressed his idea as follows:

*"It is an effective and prominent part of industry. Sometimes we are part of it without even realizing it. We fail to question the reason behind flow of news at times in this regard the Indian media is doing a very good job."*

Whereas, Case D considered it as follows:

*"TV does not subscribe to any ethical following. Take the example of visual medium like "YouTube" and you will understand that how far you can go to distort things. TV is an extension of my experience in print media so spice is not my tool kit, I can sharpen the questions, mitigate things, stop being formal, play around with the issue and yet provide with the right information."*

So, it can be concluded that some of the respondents consider it a fruitful thing to set an agenda as a framework; some of them consider it as a tool kit to add spice. Hence, agenda setting should be there, but not for the sake of adding fuel to fire, but just to align the things and develop an outline for the complete show.

### **The Phenomenon of Rating and its Effects**

Rating, a single word, but has an impact on anchor's career in today's media orientation. Most of the media channels give immense importance to rating as it will enhance the profitability of their businesses. For an anchor person, rating is a most crucial thing which he/she needs to face during the talk shows. When we asked that why rating is important and what role does it play an anchor's delivery and overall media? We got a cliché of mixed opinion as some of the respondents are in favor of this rating phenomenon and some of them deny this rating system. Two respondents have same opinion regarding this question, Case B and C said:

*"It's a commercial world. News channels are in the business of making profits not losses, hence the ratings are important, yet, many a times cheapness sells. People like firefights rather than a healthy, issue oriented debate or discussion and*

*it allows several news anchors only to arrange for a bullfight and take a back seat."*

Case E expressed her view as follows:

*"Rating... it's like the life line for us - anchors. We live on ratings. I know a few anchors that can do anything for ratings"*

Other respondents did not believe this rating phenomenon. However, Case D said:

*"I am not driven by the rating phenomenon as my editorial is more important because I am a journalist, not a politician. I have to lead public opinion not follow it. Even if the rating is low, because of my strong editorial, advertisement would not drop; hence channel owners are not bothered about my ratings. Owners don't follow my rating as this is why I avoid the main stream channels like Duniya, Geo, and Express because I think they are neurotically obsessed with rating and because of rating, anchors have very less place to maneuver. I have my own credibility and I can't follow the expectation of my owners."*

Some believed that rating phenomena it is not a bad thing but the system to assess that rating is not up to the mark. Case B said:

*"When we are demanding that we have to pay as well and the accountability has to be there for us as we are heavily paid. Ratings expose the weak anchor person this is why they are afraid of it. However, rating system is questionable and not the phenomenon."*

Similarly, Case A stated:

*"I do not believe in ratings as it is not the correct representation of viewer's choice. Maximum meters that record rating has been installed in Karachi so you can not present choice of Karachi public over the choice of whole Pakistani viewership."*

### **Difference between News Anchor, Anchor Person and a Journalist**

Initially, there was no difference between a news anchor, anchor person and a journalist. But with the passage of time as the world become an emerging economy then the meanings of being an anchorperson or a journalist have changed and are not the same. In response to a question about the difference between news anchor, anchor person and a journalist, every respondent had their own way of explaining this term. Some believe that there is no difference in these three terms, as everyone's role is to present material in front of the viewers. Some believe that if you are a good journalist, then you can be a good anchor. Case D said:

*"Anchor can be without journalistic material but a journalist not necessarily can be an anchor person. A journalist can be a good anchor as he has more material to report. They are desperate to retain their thrill of being visible. They can do anything to retain, this celebrity status and visibility on screens. The tone and body language has much gone down, female dressing code is more close to Bollywood. They are selling human elements and marketing themselves."*

Case B believed that:

*"I think a news anchor has to be a journalist as they deal with news and view on the news, so unless and until they have strong journalistic background it is not possible to be a good news anchor or host of news show."*

Some other perceived that there is no difference between being an anchor or a journalist, in this regard Case C said:

*"There can't be any distinction. All three should be just reporters and have spent life just doing that."*

Case E stated:

*"Journalist is an ugly looking guy who knows something and an anchor is a beautiful or handsome fellow who doesn't know anything."*

### **Need to Devise a Policy or a Code of Conduct for Current Affairs Anchor Person**

With reference to literature there is no such study which has been conducted in the past in which some code of conduct has been defined for an anchorperson. Being an anchorperson, you would work for a major change for the good of society. So, there should be certain parameters or a coast line for an anchor to present itself in front of his viewers. When we raised this question in front of our respondents that did they prefer to have certain policies that delivers a code of conduct and if yes, then what do they propose to be added in it? We found positive responses from most of the respondents. Case B stated:

*"Media houses themselves are not conforming to any ethics. I may not like PPP but I have to respect the institution. If there is a single iota of doubts regarding their president personality? It becomes a national concern. So there is a need for a code of conduct but for media houses themselves."*

Similarly, Case A said:

*"Yes, there has to be code of conduct not just for anchor persons but electronic media in totality and best way to do it, would be for media organizations to sit together and devise a strategy rather than one imposed to them by PEMRA or the government."*

On the contrary, Case D said that:

*"It is to be drawn for government as they are representative of the people, for owners, for journalist."*

### **Public Perspective**

The second part of the study is based on focus group discussion which was conducted from general public, in order to get a deep understanding about media's influences on them. The findings of focus group discussion were organized as, general perception about media and how media current affair talk shows influence their perceptions regarding different issues.

### **General Perception about Media**

It is very important to find out what the public thinks about electronic media and how many watch television. When asked about their exposure to different news channels where current affair talk shows are being aired, the different participants had different views. Some of the participants representing different retail outlets and business community preferred watching these current affair talk shows on daily basis. Some reported that they watch such current affair talk shows when they get time either on daily basis or at least twice a week or even after a month. Most of the student participants said that they are not much interested to watch current affair talk shows, but sometimes when an issue is in line with their choice then they prefer to watch a current affair shows.

### **Media Current Affair Talk Shows Influence Perceptions Regarding Different Issues**

We asked the participants about how the current affair talk shows influence their perceptions regarding certain issues. We got mixed opinions from different participant like some simply stated that we are so much immune to these daily talks that we don't have any feelings about them. One of the participants, Usman stated:

*"Nothing affects me now, because I have become so immune to this that I did not get time to talk about TV anchors discussions because I have no time to discuss their talks".*

Another participant, Imran stated:

*"I acknowledge the efforts made by certain TV anchors in order to give us awareness regarding certain issues and they are the biggest source that exposed the real facts in front of public which make the different bodies accountable and responsible towards their tasks."*

Media generally leaves an impact on the mind of its viewers and sometimes people behave the way the media wants them to. Repeated hammering of incidents by the anchorperson, his delivery, selection of words, capabilities of guests and timing of screening the programme plays a vital role in changing perceptions and views in general and generates positive/negative responses in particular.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the qualitative study was to explore the role of anchorperson in influencing public 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 concerned ministry if there has to be a code of conduct for the anchorperson.

Another finding revealed that many of them were of the opinion that rating plays a major role in an anchors' life as it decides who is bringing more viewership to the channel through his or her program and accordingly an anchor with continuous high rating is more valued by the channel owners. While the rating phenomenon was studied it came to our notice that the company that conducts the rating survey is owned by exclusive media channels and is not a neutral body, moreover, the meters are installed only in few areas of Northern Karachi, central Lahore and Faisalabad. Such an uneven distribution of data gathering that too by a company run by one of these channels is not at all an authentic criterion to deduce who is at the top and who is not. Hence, there is no room for young and fresh media graduates and there is a professional lag in the HR policies of these channels.

Another key finding was about the ambiguity regarding the definitions of a news anchor, an anchorperson and a journalist which lead to zero criteria for selection and hiring of these anchor persons. As most of the participants said that a news anchor has to be a journalist as they deal with news and views on the news, so unless and until they have strong journalistic background it is not possible to be a good news anchor or host of news show.

In the next phase of the analysis focused group discussions revealed that most of the participants admitted that they are greatly influenced by whatever is shown and told in the current affair shows. Similarly, several participants said that they highly trust the information provided by these anchor persons. One of the participant said that a lot of people consider these anchorpersons as a role model. On the other hand where these anchors know their deep influence on public, people are entirely unaware of the technical details of these shows and flaws in our media system, anchorpersons selection, and their professional capability. While listening to people's opinion it came to my notice that what is the true and transparent reporting, how media influence their minds and how social fabric is distorted when the focus is on rating in spite of authenticity of news and its display on screen. There were significant similarities among the responses of different participants, either the respondent was an anchorperson or a common man, opinions mainly revolved around confused personal opinions and it was more discouraging on part of anchorpersons who are the driving force of public perception in Pakistan's case of media.

Table 1. Summary of Findings

Factors	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D	Case E
	All the respondents are agree with the current mandate implemented and followed by PEMRA, their opinions are discussed below:				
<b>PEMRA's Role and Mandate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Viewers have ample choices to see the program of their choice</li> </ul>	Media is getting responsible on issues related to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance</li> <li>Accountability</li> <li>National security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free electronic media viewers have wider spectrum of choices</li> <li>People are better informed</li> <li>Public bodies are accountable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PEMRA role is taken seriously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction is a bigger term</li> <li>PEMRA performing its job as per the nature of its establishment</li> <li>Goon in media industry, controlled by govt.</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda Setting in Political Shows</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Its only about starting a program with a set frame of mind and ends the discussion with same direction</li> <li>Its unfortunately part of our prime time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impulse drive the agenda</li> <li>Newsrooms are well aware that how to neglect some important issue but nucleus remain the event of the moment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TV subscription did not based on ethical following</li> <li>TV is only extension of print media so, spice is not a tool kit because I can                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharpen toolkit</li> <li>Mitigate things</li> <li>Stop formal nodes</li> <li>Play around issue being discussed</li> </ul> </li> </ul> So, it's all part of agenda setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As Contents based on channel policy so, one cannot set agends in 1 hours show</li> <li>Complete 24 contents are based on agenda setting as per the policy of editorial board</li> </ul>
<b>The Phenomenon of Rating and its Effects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I least bother about rating as it's not a correct representation of viewer's choice</li> <li>The rating tools assessment is not cover the representation of maximum audience as most of rating meters are installed in Karachi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As it is an era of commercialization, so profit orientation is the preference for any business</li> <li>Ratings have fundamental importance but still many a times cheapness sell as per the audience requirement such as people                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>firefighting rather than healthy</li> <li>issue oriented debate</li> <li>bullfight and keeping the anchorperson on a back seat</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I least bother about rating as I am a journalist not a politician</li> <li>I have to lead people not to follow them</li> <li>Some channels neurotically obsessed with rating which hinders anchors to play on their natural pace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it is like a life line for an anchor</li> <li>few anchors can do anything for rating</li> </ul>
Factors	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D	Case E
<b>Difference between News Anchor, Anchor Person and a Journalist</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anchor has to be a journalist as they deal with news which they suppose to share with millions of audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no distinction.</li> <li>Three of them are reporters and have spent life just doing that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anchor can be without journalistic material but journalist not necessarily be an anchor person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journalist is an ugly looking guy who knows something</li> <li>Anchorperson is beautiful fellow who doesn't know anything</li> </ul>
<b>Need to Devise a Policy for Current Affairs Anchor Person</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes there has to be code of conduct not for anchorperson but media in totality</li> <li>Media bodies together should devise policy rather than one imposed to them by PEMRA or government</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is to be drawn for government as being representative for                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People</li> <li>Owners</li> <li>Journalist</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**Strengths and limitations of the study**

The study has various strengths and weaknesses as any other research. The major strength of the study is that it is first ever study of its kind which is going to address the role of anchorpersons in influencing public perception in Pakistani perspective. Another significant strength of the study is its flexibility with respect to data collection tools such as semi-structure interview and focus group discussions which was conducted using open ended questions. This sort of flexibility allows the respondents to share their feelings, perceptions and ideas in a more lucid way. Furthermore, it

can be a hall mark in influencing the dire need for a policy on media in Pakistan. Similarly, Sociologist can greatly be benefited from this study by knowing the reasons of increasing chaos in the society.

There are certain limitations as well with respect to this study. The first and the foremost limitation is that the study focused on a small sample relatively which raises an issue of generalizability of this particular study in other sectors or with larger population. Another loop hole is convenience sampling as this will sometime add the element of biasness in the right selection of respondent that can affect the results.

Another limitation is that PEMRA and ministry verdict is not involved and the study only focused on Lahore city for taking public perception.

### Implications of the study

It is highly valuable for training need assessment (TNA) for the potential and existing anchorpersons which would serve as a major base for setting criteria for anchorperson selection in the media. True spirit of journalism can be revived by noticing the discontent and confusion among the anchorperson themselves and the public views. It is a major hall mark for policy makers if the media industry has to be streamlined ever.

The study can be an initiative which can resolve issues related to national security, governance, corruption and many other socio political issues by letting the flow of expression float in a responsible and authentic way. The government and people together can benefit from the free media only if the true sense of journalism be made a part of selection and credibility criteria for reporters, anchorpersons, producers and channel owners by providing them with a policy. The issues related to channel owners and their editorial policies; their corporate interests and political affiliations of entire media industry, from reporter to anchorperson level, training of anchorperson and role of the regulatory authority can only be handled if there is a political will to correct this fourth pillar of state in national interest. For example, issues like national security which need a unanimous stance at the national level can be only catered if the media related issues are resolved once and forever. In this way, the image of Pakistan at international level can be corrected and be raised. By relating to this will to correct this industry foreign funding and training can be seek to produce a better journalist, anchorperson, producer and content manager to be inducted into the media industry in future.

### CONCLUSION

Through this research, we have tried to find out the role of anchorpersons in influencing public perception. We came to know that because of the proliferation of media into the bedrooms and work places of people, current affair talk shows are getting more and more attention of the public. So not to be influenced by these political talk shows is no more possible. These anchorpersons contribute immensely in managing public perception. Majority of the public consider an anchorperson as a role model or no less than a celebrity, which has become a major agent of change within no time. People believe in them more than politicians and technocrats. Resultantly their opinions are valued at least if not followed. Furthermore, during a discussion which was conducted with anchorpersons, we explored that few of them were not at all bothered about the negative influence of their views on particular news, while some were absolutely clear that how powerful their voices were. Interestingly, both categories of anchorpersons justify their actions one way or the other and are not bothered about their roles. A few think that there is a great need of a policy on media if we want to keep it on a beneficial note. It is also noteworthy that the unjustified heavy pay packages for these anchorpersons make them do anything that can please their owners who are into enormous competition with other competitor channels. Finally, because

of the small sample size the generalizability of this study is limited but if explored further in future, this initiative will be a significant contribution to the body of knowledge regarding Pakistani media.

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