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## Media and Agenda-Setting: Analyzing the Role of Electronic Media in Fostering Youth Political Awareness in Pakistan

1. Zain Abbas, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan. ([zainabbaskhokhar98@gmail.com](mailto:zainabbaskhokhar98@gmail.com))
2. Muhammad Javed Ashraf, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan. ([ranajavedashraf23@gmail.com](mailto:ranajavedashraf23@gmail.com))
3. Dr. Salma Umber, Associate Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Government Collage University Faisalabad, Pakistan. ([salmaumber@gcuf.edu.pk](mailto:salmaumber@gcuf.edu.pk))  
(Correspondence)
4. Muhammad Asim Khan, M. Phil Scholar, Department of Applied Linguistics, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan ([asim1412@gmail.com](mailto:asim1412@gmail.com))

### Abstract

This research analyzed how the selected Pakistani TV channels: ARY News and Geo News have impacted organizational political awareness, public opinion, and agenda setting among Pakistani youth. This study also looked at how perceived bias and alignment compromises the concept of journalism. The agenda setting theory was utilized as framework. The study was adopted a quantitative research design. Framing theory provided the ground to explain how the presentation of news affects audience comprehension. Primary data were obtained from 50 structured questionnaire prepared based on the research questions and concerns respondents' perceptions about the credibility, bias, and influence of these channels. Descriptive analysis was employed in the process of data analysis. The study indicates that both ARY News and Geo News are important in raising political consciousness and 74 percent of the respondents credited both in facilitating understanding of political matters. However, perceived biased and political affiliation were more dominant for Capital Talk with

respondents perceiving political bias of Geo News influenced Capital Talk by 68 percent while 32 percent perceived political bias on Off the Record only. ARY News also recorded a better reach of 76 percent among youth due to its programming and perceived impartiality towards PTI but such a situation calls for manipulation of the masses. Both channels have been faced with issue that include partiality and bias hence the importance of emphasizing the middle road. This study concerning the level of the media in Pakistan regarding its political responsibilities and duties while practicing media responsible journalism. It would be beneficial for media practitioners and policymakers for reducing the bias and promoting the role of the electronic media for informed and responsible voters.

*Keywords:* electronic media, ARY News, Geo News, political awareness, agenda-setting theory, framing theory, media bias, Pakistan.

## **Introduction**

The political awareness rate of a country is determined by the electronic media, and this has become prominent in today's modern world. The electronic media with the Pakistan's famous news channels like ARY News and Geo News is good source of disseminating information and shaping people's opinions and setting political agenda. With their programming and talk shows, these channels incubate millions of viewers, including the youth, in politics and hence, politics frame up the way these millions of viewers and the youth in particular grasp the political problems and governance (Ahmed, Khan, Dr. Muneera, Siddiqui, & Zarar, 2023). Youth represent an important demographic since they largely depend on electronic media to get news and other information, something that makes the media crucial in raising political consciousness. Knowledge of politics, meaning what people know about politics in respect to issues, actors or processes is critical for people to have in order to engage in the exercise of the franchise. Thus, electronic media is of immense importance in this context to frame up stories, report different versions of a story and offer political discussions and arguments (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Currently, the idea of talk shows in Pakistan has hit the roofs and shows like Off the Record and Capital Talk have won the heart of auditors resulting in the formation of political attitude and behaviors of the spectators. However, fears about bias, sensationalism and over-identification with political

parties have also lead to further suspicion on the part of audience about the reliability and the role of such media in providing audience with an objective understanding of political process.

The present research is based on the objectives of the agenda-setting theory, which focus on how media shapes the public agenda by prioritizing issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). According to Memon, electronic media not only provides information but also selects topics of concern and present these in specific ways that guide the perception of the targeted population (2014). The purpose of this research is to analyze electronic media in relation to the extents of the political awareness of youth in Pakistan using ARY News and Geo News. The discovery of this research can help to advance the knowledge base about how extant electronic media influence political consciousness and democratic participation. Thus, in pursuing the viewers' perceptions of bias and credibility, the study hope to contribute towards understanding the role the media plays in cultivating an enlightened voters'. These are useful for those currently in policy making, media practice, or in education who want the media's beneficial influence in the politics of Pakistan.

### **Scope of the study**

The major consideration of this work is the impact that Electronic media especially TV's, News like ARY News and Geo News have on the Political awareness of the youth of Pakistan. It explores how these channels and their programs including News and discussion shows like Off the Record and Capital Talk set Agenda, and form opinion in the Pakistani political scenario. Youth forms the main focus of study based on their reliance on electronic media and more importantly their voting power in reference to future political elections in Pakistan. From the study of audience perception of credibility, bias, and transparency in media reportage, the study establishes the gains and weaknesses of these media Centre's in educating the electorate. The coverage will also focus on how e-media is playing its part to spread awareness about the politics and at the same time it raises the issue of sensationalizing news and partiality towards the political parties. In this study, the implications for media practitioners, policy makers and educators are of importance to increase the part of media in increasing the young generation's political awareness and participation in Pakistan.

## **Problem Statement**

It has been observed that political awareness among students and especially among the youth of Pakistan has emerged a key contribution to the electronic media and this is in relation to the news channel of ARY News and Geo News. Despite these factors play a huge role in shaping the opinion and setting the agenda in society, doubts in the negative value biased, sensationalism, and political affiliation affect the channels' reliability and impartiality of their information. Due to the fact that the youth are known to be the politically active group of people which can easily be influenced through the information provided by the above said media outlets. Although, electronic media has the potential of enlightening the electorate with current information, the elements supporting political parties and perceived lack of transparency undermines the role of electronic media in disseminating impartial information. This study aims to fill this gap by looking at the role of Electronic media in the formation of political awareness amongst youths in Pakistan, the positive and negative effects of Electronic media in contributing to the creation of an informed political citizenship.

## **Research Questions**

- 1) How do ARY News and Geo News influence political awareness and perceptions of credibility among youth in Pakistan?
- 2) What role do talk shows, such as Off the Record and Capital Talk, play in shaping public opinion and agenda-setting within the Pakistani political landscape?
- 3) To what extent do political alignments and perceived biases of ARY News and Geo News affect their ability to foster balanced political reporting and public trust?

## **Literature Review**

TV and radio broadcasts, in addition to the Internet media, are the primary determinants of political awareness as informational and discursive contexts. Since early 2000, Pakistan has several private news channels which have altered the way people of Pakistan consume political content. Today the Pakistan news agencies like ARY News and Geo News have become the integral of political advocacy through debates and discussions. These outlets educate the public on political events and at the same time and provide

meanings to these events, thus shaping perception and understanding of the events (Ahmed et al., 2023).

## **Theoretical Framework: Agenda-Setting Theory**

The agenda-setting theory is used as the theoretical foundation for analyzing the effects of electronic media on political perception. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), media not only educates but also sets agendas by select issues. Zain (2014) building on this theory argues that framing is predominant in shaping people's perception. With respect to Pakistan, it interprets how and in what ways ARY News and Geo News achieve this by their selective coverage and talk shows.

### ***Agenda-Setting Theory and Media Influence***

The idea of agenda-setting suggests that the media can alter the agenda of the public in that those issues which receive reinforcement from the media become more prominent in the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In more detail, the phenomenon of political news interest in Pakistan is analyzed with the help of the valve model, according to which news channels, particularly Pakistani ones, shape the agenda to a considerable extent. This selective emphasis results in enhancing the public understanding of some of the political issues as well as the concern this showcases the media sensitization role (Memon, 2014). The agenda setting theory offers the population an explanation as to how the media agendas are setting up in the minds of the people. Second, framing theory analyses how the information is presented, and what meaning is understood by the audience. In Pakistani context, both agenda setting and framing are apparent as news channels choose and highlight certain political matters and present them in a manner that can set the periphery for the public (Zain, 2014).

### ***The Role of Media in Shaping Political Awareness***

Today, media especially the electronic media is one of the most important vehicles of political awareness in modern democracies. According to the agenda-setting theory professed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), audience is influenced by media as the latter identifies and orders the problems that the former should address. The same way is adopted in Pakistan where electronic media is now at its peak with network like ARY News and Geo News becoming a forums of political discourses. Ahmed, Khan, Dr. Muneera, Siddiqui, and Zarar

(2023) describe how the categories of electronic media in Pakistan have moved from state-owned to self-owned and have full roles in political agenda setting. These channels often give detailed information on political issues, hence informal and formal capacity to encourage the youths to participate in governance.

Media as a tool and instrument is especially significant in the awareness on political news among young people since they lead to creation of news frames and setting of agendas. Ashraf et al. (2023) described how representation of political activities inherent to specific media outlets does not only reveal power relations and ideology but also constructs audience perceptions of political processes like regime change operations. In much the same manner, Kalsoom et al. (2024) on this subject explain the dynamics through which the media can tell two opposing stories and provide focus on contentious power dynamics, especially on soldiers and civilians in the case of Pakistan. These studies highlight the agenda-setting role of the media, whereby discursive strategizing enhances knowledge and facilitates political turn-up of the youths and reveals hidden power relations.

### ***Impact of Talk Shows on Political Awareness***

Today political educative and participatory platform namely talk shows are gaining prominence in media culture. Channel's program like Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi and Capital Talk with Hamid Mir is part and parcel of political coverage in Pakistan. It is namely important to mention that these shows both educate viewers and shape their political beliefs and positions. Shah, Riaz, and Mukhtar (2022) also highlighted the way in which talk shows provide spaces for politics and political talk and the way in which these shows establish forms of political accountability. However, according to Memon (2014), the same programs creates tendency that favors bias and sensationalism that does not portray a true political situation warranted by the audiences to the viewers. Different political talk shows are also an important part of the Pakistani electronic media and are mostly a platform in politics for discussing different matters of politics. Some of the show that has impact on the political perception of the viewer's include Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi and Capital Talk with Hamid Mir. These shows usually have politicians, analysts or any expert on political issues, giving the viewer's different views on any issue. However, defining the topic of conversations

and the choice of topics could be aligned with specific biases of the channels, which could preset the further changes in the public's opinion in certain directions (Shah et al., 2022).

### ***Youth as a Key Demographic***

The electronic media is much influential to the youths as they form a large percentage of Pakistan's population. Most are fans of news and talk shows with which they keep updated on the state of politics and the country's affairs. Bilal, Ishtiaq, and Wadood (2022) suggest that the youth's interaction with media includes aspects of political knowledge and participation. But since they focus mainly on the media, they can be easily trapped by media bias and or partisan journalism. As Farooq (2021) points out the youth needs critical media literacy because most media content should pass through certain analysis to prevent misinformation and politics in it. The youth of Pakistan, forming a very large part of the population, is especially most interested in the electronic media. It was estimated that young people often rely on television and other internet sources for their news and politics. This particular engagement helps them in developing their levels of political literacy and political citizenship. However, youth's vulnerability to media bias and sensationalism discuss the importance of media literacy as the education of choosing information critically (Bilal et al., 2022).

### ***Credibility and Bias in Media***

The influence of media on political awareness therefore has some dependent variable which include credibility. Audiences evaluate news channels in terms of credibility through the credibility of the journalists practicing journalism in the specific television news channels (Lee, 2015). Nonetheless, favorable biasness in reporting by journalists, occasioned by the political colour of the owners or senior management of media organizations, erodes the credibility of media organizations. In Pakistan, media sources like ARY News along with Geo News are considered affiliated with different political party, so there is the lack of unbiased coverage (Khan & Shahzad, 2020). This alignment makes one question the usefulness of these channels in offering compound information. Ideological bias in media and availability of certain news channels to political party there are major problem faced in Pakistan. Administrative relationships correspond with editorial policies of such channels as ARY News and Geo News and, consequently, the perception of bias. This alignment does not

only concern public trust but also consequence the quality of political communication as channels may shift to reporting only the selected party's version of events (Ali, 2021).

### ***Media Credibility and Public Trust***

It is the credibility of the news channels that decides the level that they can go with the awareness of political events. Credibility factors like accuracy, bias, and openness are part and partial of influencing people's trust in media houses. In Pakistan, audiences have complained of political bias in some of the news channels hence a question mark on the credibility of news channels. Research shows that they still believe media sources that reflect their political affiliations, therefore resulting in selective exposure and even polarizing (Khan & Shahzad, 2020).

### ***Challenges in Promoting Political Awareness***

However, the behavior of electronic media channels is not without its problems when it comes to serving the awareness political awareness needs of the public. So, the most important problems of operation for them are sensationalism, partisan approach, and poor control. Based on Livingstone and Lunt (2021), the media practices such as the demonization of 'the Other', polarization especially in the matters of dialogue are destructive to the trust and politics. Such challenges are further compounded with the political affiliation that many of the new channels in Pakistan have adopted," (Ali, 2021).

A large number of studies have been conducted in the agenda-setting and framing theories and the impact of electronic media on political awareness but the impact of talk shows in terms of effectiveness in Pakistani context has received scant attention. Past literature like Memon (2014) and Shah et al. (2022) have emphasized media role in people's perception and political, but most of such studies are generalized and do not undertake a comparative study of specific shows like Off the Record and Capital Talk. In addition, media engagement among youths has been described by Bilal et al. (2022), however, the specific ways in which such talk shows relate to the political parties and the consequences for perception of credibility and trust, is yet to be analyzed. Furthermore, there is evidence in the prior literature, highlighted by Khan and Shahzad (2020), which focuses on media bias and political alignment, while there is insufficient discussion regarding how such perceptions



affect the agenda-setting regarding political awareness among youths in Pakistan. This research will seek to fill this gap by comparing two of Pakistan's leading television news channels; ARY News and Geo News on the impacts of their flagship talk shows on young peoples' political awareness in terms of credibility, bias and framing. Thus, filling this gap, the study advances knowledge of media content and youth political activities, which are essential issues in the media and political context of Pakistan.

The literature also gives importance to the part played by the electronic media in creation of political consciousness in Pakistan. Although news channels are part of the information channels the following issues raise awareness on bias, credibility, and political association, making people engage in critical consumption of the news while encouraging more professionalism among journalists. Media power relations must be the focus of analysis for developing an enlightened citizenship.

## **Methodology**

The present research will adopt a quantitative research approach to analyze effects of two electronic media, namely ARY News and Geo News, on political awareness amongst the youths of Pakistan. Quantitative techniques are suitable for analyzing association between variables and analyzing patterns in the perceived audience (Creswell, 2014). The systematic nature of this design enables the systematic collection of data and conclusion on the role of media in raising political consciousness. The study is underpinned by the agenda setting theory as it looks at how media impacts on public perception through their importance attributed to certain topics (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Moreover, the framing theory is applied in order to explain how media packaging and encoding influences the reception of texts and political knowledge (Entman, 1993).

## **Population and Sample**

The target population includes all the youths within the age of 18-30 years of Pakistan since the selected group is one of the most active users of the electronic media. In this study, purposive sampling method was used to sample 50 people resulting to ensure that both the urban and rural population had been considered in as far as Media influences was concerned.

Purposeful sampling is allowed when particular features of the investigated population are important for the research goals (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

## **Data Collection**

Participants were administered a survey consisting of fixed choice items and a set of five Likert-type questions. This self-developed instrument was developed to assess the extent to which respondents seen ARY News and Geo News talk shows, Off the Record and Capital Talk respectively, as credible and bias and the extent to which the programs helped them to be more aware of political issues. Online and self-administered and self-completed questionnaires were employed, implying the spread of the survey hose, and convenience to the respondents.

## **Data Analysis Technique**

To examine audience perceptions, the collected data were analyzed descriptively in terms of the current trends and patterns. In study's quantitative component, responses on each question were summed up, while using frequencies and per cent as a way of presenting data. This approach outlines the degree of media influence and the nature of the influences that talk show have on political discourse and the opinion of the public (Bryman, 2016).

## **Limitations of the Study**

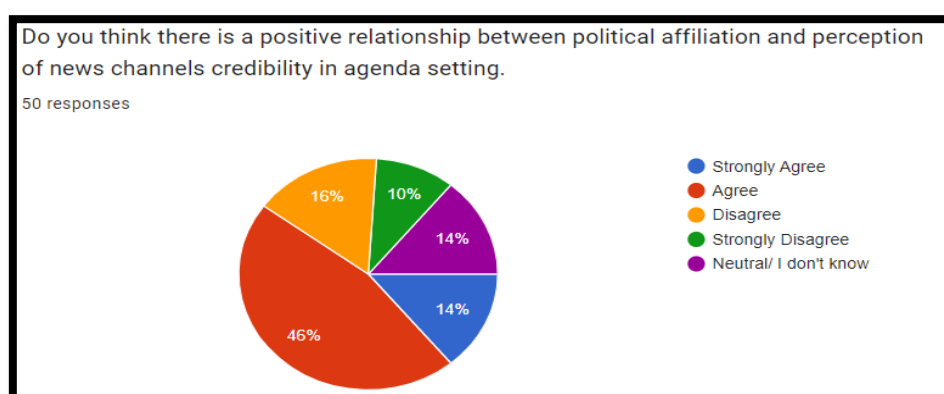
This study has some limitation such as the sample size used and the fact that the data was administered try using self-based questionnaires which may bring in bias. Future works could triangulate results by increasing the sample size, as well as starting to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve more realistic results.

## **Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, data was collected from youth of Pakistan through a structured questionnaire that aims at finding out how Youth of Pakistan have become politically aware through ARY News and Geo News. More specifically, the emphasis was made on assessing the credibility bias and role of the selected news channels in respondents' views about the formation of opinion and political discussion. SDES analysis consists of

evaluating figures and percentages of the respondents' attitudes towards ARY News and Geo News talk shows Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi and Capital Talk with Hamid Mir. These figures shed light on nature of these channels and how effectively they perform the task of creating political awareness, generating public trust, and setting up the agenda among youth belonging to Pakistan. Frequency and percentage distributions were employed for the qualitative data collected since it was in the form of nominal data. This approach made it easy to distinguish pattern and trends in the respondent's impression of the role played by Off the Record by Kashif Abbasi and Capital Talk by Hamid Mir. The analysis was structured into the following key areas:

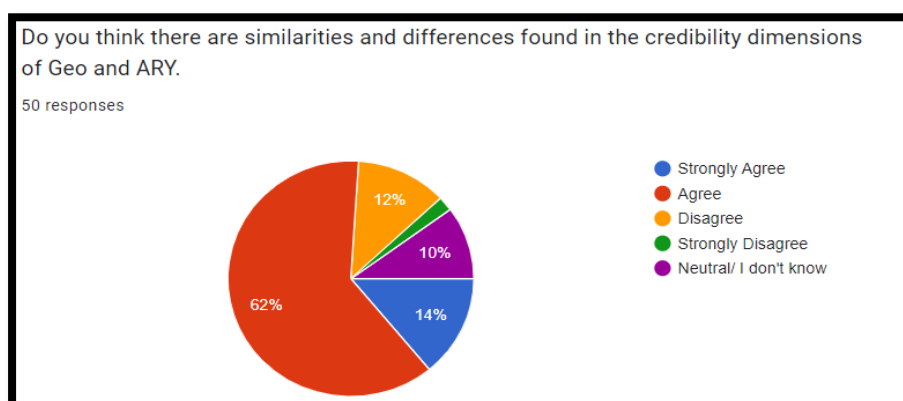
**Figure 1**



While answering the question that was concerning the findings which revealed a positive relationship between political affiliation on one hand and perception of the credibility of news channels in agenda setting on the other hand. In this context 14% had positive response where 14% strongly agreed in this context and 46% had agreed. However, 14% answered that they were in a neutral position, 16% said they disagreed with it and 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement the credibility of news channels means the ability of the news channels to provide accurate information. These includes aspects of practicing journalism including the level of ethical practice, trueness in reporting, fairness in writing, openness, and other issues to do with ethical practices. Audiences' credibility is always judged depending on its perspectives, perception, and experiences with bias. To establish credibility, news channel can aim at being clear about its stand, admitting mistakes when made, and offer multiple angle news on critical news events. Therefore it

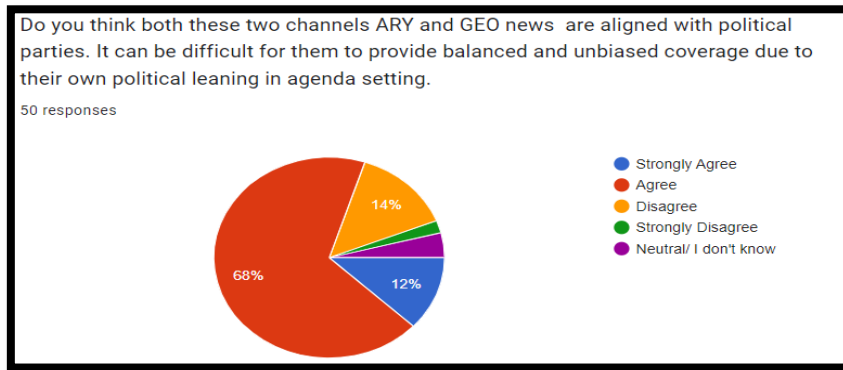
could be concluded that there can exist a positive association between political views and credibility of News channels in agenda setting. Those audiences also have the tendency to watch only those news channels that they agree with, and hence their believability may be skewed. Thus, to attain credibility assessment of news providers it is necessary to critically appraise news sources.

**Figure 2**



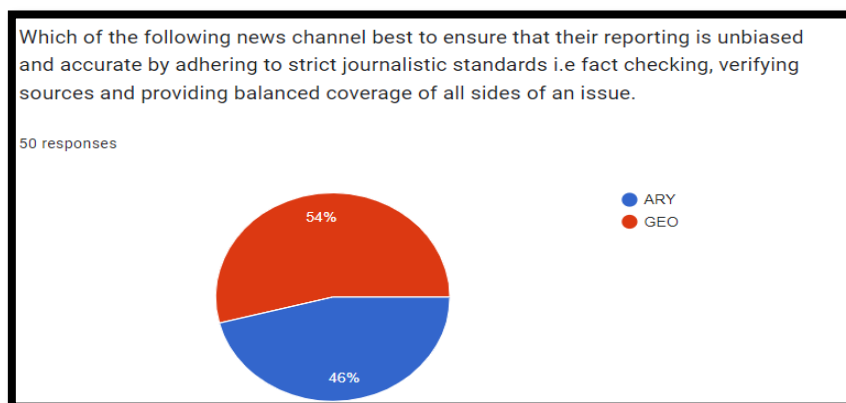
In the response of the question to know the opinions of the respondents as they highlighted there are similarities and differences between the credibility dimensions of the ARY and Geo news channels. In this regard, 14% answered affirmatively: the respondents fell under strong agreement in this regard while 62 % said they agreed. However, 10% responded that they are in a neutral position 12% of the respondent said they disagree with this statement while 14% responds strongly disagree. Staking credibility dimensions of news channels, the similarity is in terms of professionalism, and reliability in reporting news. However, sources can differ in the level of bias, in agenda, and, especially, in the degree of ethical compliance being demonstrated.

**Figure 3**



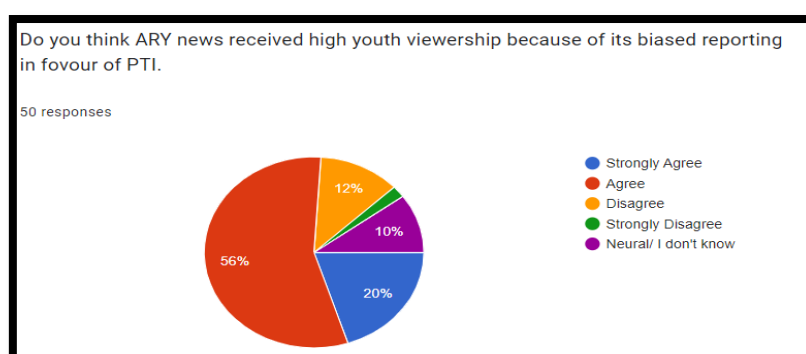
While answering the following question 12% responded positively strongly agree in this context 68% respondents said they agree. However 5% of the respondent were in the neutral category, 14% in disagree and 3 % in strongly disagree with this statement. Thus, after aggregative the replies of this question it will not be wrong to say that news channels in Pakistan can be affiliated with political parties. It is organization duality because the affiliations of the news channels towards the political parties serve the promotion of their agendas through biased reporting. As a result, it can be said that due to their own self propaganda under the given ARY and Geo news channels, it is quite difficult for them to be neutral and impartial in terms of agenda setting even if they want to be so. The biases of news channels may affect the kind of news as well as the manner in which the news is relayed to the public Default rendering via page translators: These biases may in some way affect the kind of news we receive and or the manner in which it is delivered to the public. That why, it is necessary to developed a critical view towards the information provided and look for more sources in order to get a better view of the matter in discussion.

**Figure 4**



When it comes to deciding whether the respondents with biases toward ARY news (54%) or Geo news (46%) provide a better view to ensure impartial coverage in line with tenets of true journalism, the returned analytic scrutiny offers nothing but far more shades of gray. Although both of the channels proclaim the non-bias and objectiveness through providing quality journalistic content and strict internal regulations, it should be mentioned, that the channels' perception might be subconsciously entangled with ideology and interpretation of events. Here the scope of identified investigations show that the popularity among viewers does not necessarily translate into better performing journalists' responsibility due to political affiliation, selective exposure to media and narratives that reflect viewers' self-preferences. Therefore, to determine which of the channel presents clear and accurate information in adherence to professional journalism standards, an examination of the editorial process employed, adherence to and violations of ethical standards, and observable positive and negative bias the content presents becomes critical. However, for such and any other investigation, only a critical evaluation of one's work allows identifying how objective and accurate the reporting is rather than being a claim before the audience.

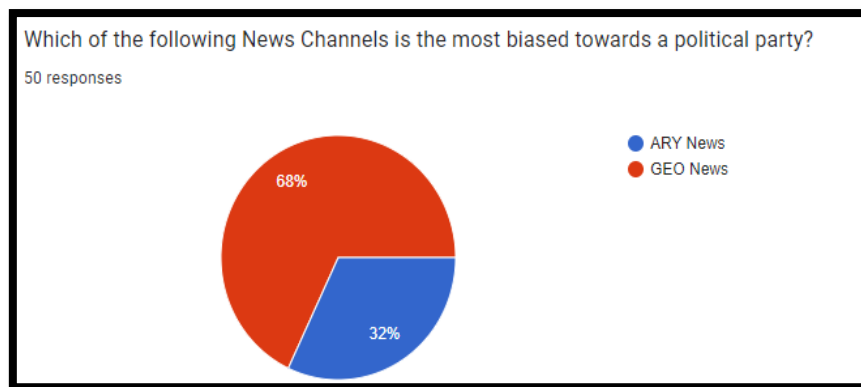
**Figure 5**



In the response of the question to know the public response that got the ARY news high youth viewership due to bias news reporting in favour of PTI. In this perspective, 20% responded positively they were strongly agree to it in this regards and 56% respondents agreed to it. Whereas, 10% were having a neutral opinion 12 % were disagreed and 2 % respondents were strongly disagreed this statement. This is because ARY attract high youth

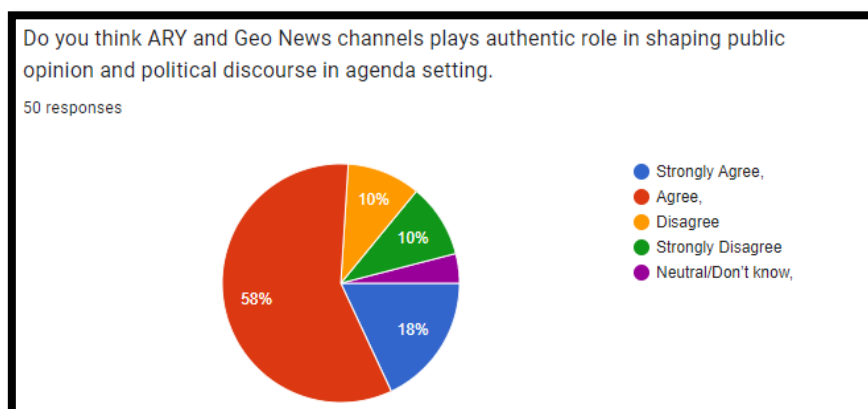
viewership on account of their programming, content and brilliance. For example, some viewers may think that bias to support a specific faction in the political process exists, even though personal bias exists. It is always important to question a lot from several sources in order to get a balanced view on that particular topic.

**Figurer 6**



To be the answer of this question total 50 respondents 68% said Geo news channel is the most bias towards which political party and 32% talked about ARY biasness about any political party. It was observed that the people favored those channels that portrayed a positive image of the selected political party. Introducing a new comparative analysis, the supporter of PML-N preferred Geo News more than the supporter of PTI who preferred ARY News more as it is quite believable for its news. Otherwise, individuals said they had no bias either in the positive direction or the negative direction. Before moving to Geo and ARY, one should have a critically oriented perspective. Well, everybody knows that there are particular tendencies regarding some news channels being biased in favor of particular political forces.

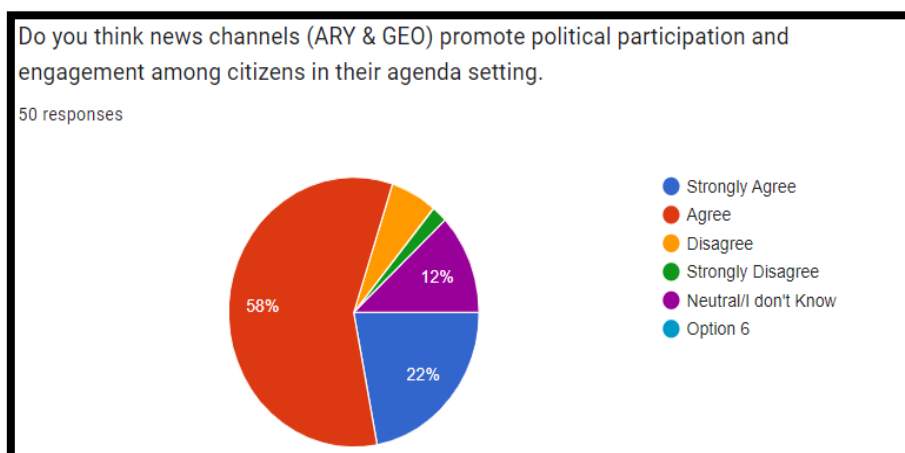
**Figure 7**



Of course, the percentage of respondents who perceive that through agenda-setting Geo and ARY have a role of subjective influence in determining public opinion and political processes in Pakistan are 76% and these are either strongly agree or agree. However, this influence brings important questions to the extent of compliance of their content with principles of objectivity and accuracy. As discussion hosts of their own pluralistic talk shows as well as news broadcasting services, they are well placed to lead the political discourse while it cannot be denied that they can frame or selectively report given the increasing polarization of media in Pakistan. The part that can advise to share some content with other sources and compare it is the effective way to address the possible bias in news. It should not only be followed by viewers but also the channels should have a policy of critical skepticism and verification in its programs. Both of these responsibilities located within media producers and consumers underlines the requirement for a media intelligent public and a mediatory sphere that is more accountable to act in accordance to change the public opinion and political discourse for the better.

**Figure 8**





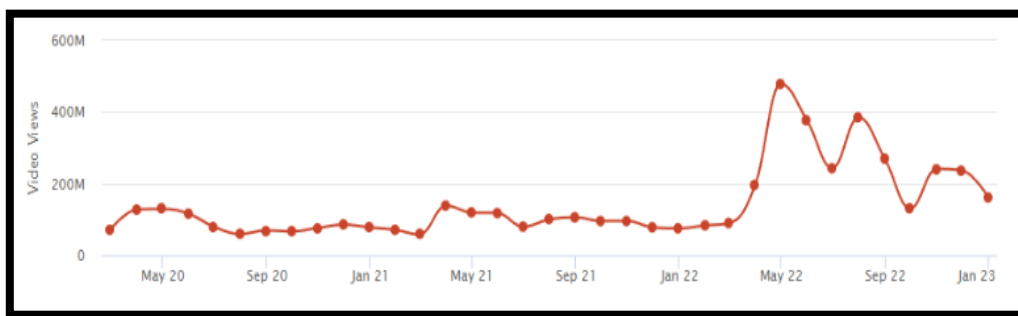
Thus 58 percentage respondents agreed with the statement while 22 percentage strongly agreed with the same. Similarly, 12% were in the middle, no one said disagree or strongly disagree to this assumption. All in all respondent's response toward news channels encourage political participation among citizens that could be regarded positive whereby 50% responded strongly assured on the competence of none of them disbelieved on it. Questions were asked about the news channels that are Geo and ARY with an aim of influencing the public to participate politically in the agenda setting. Political participation that centers on the process through which citizens engage in the political process. It comprises voting in an election, affiliating with a political party, protesting or demonstrating for political cause or stirring a discussion on a political matter. It's an opportunity for people to have a say and be heard to some of the issues that touch on their lives and the society as well. Citizens felt that whilst both Geo and ARY news channels help to set the agenda that nearly encourages the Pakistani public to be more politically active. Their talk shows and their political event programs can say more that encourages viewers to get more engaged in politics. Viewers have to be critical of the information presenting and engage themselves in creating positive social changes.

About respondent's perception, 76% considered that ARY News has got more young audience because of some programmed and inclined towards PTI. This is a testament to the ability of the channel to reach the youth audience effectively but it also raises questions as to the effect that bias may having on political perceptions. ARY News has been easily able to engage the youth in Pakistan by scoring high on dynamism of content as well as being seen

as aligned with the political strand of PTI. These arguments are rather associative; however, the possibility of stabilizing political preferences in youth raises doubts about the positive impact of the channel on the formation of political literacy. The figure below presents the Pakistan ARY news channel subscribers during last two years.

**Figure 9**

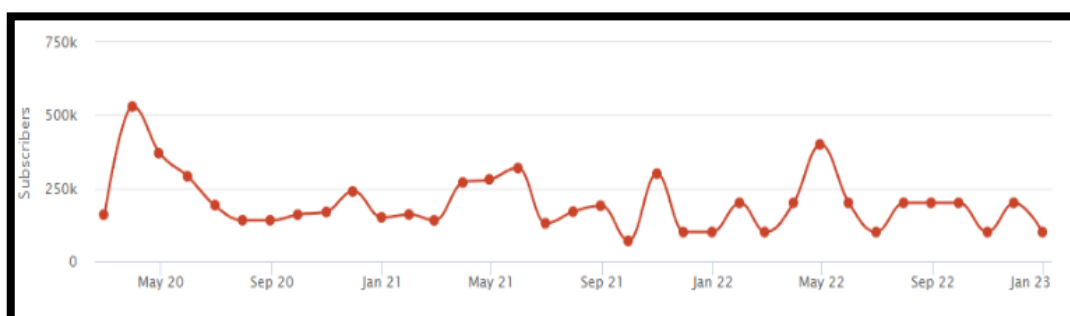
*ARY News Channel Subscribers*



The following illustration shows the trends of the number of subscribers of Geo news channel for the last two years.

**Figure 10**

*Subscribers of Geo News Channel*



About 54% of the respondents said that ARY News was right in following strict journalistic standards than the 46% for Geo News. However, criticisms that petition and letter writing are bias and mostly inclined with the extremes of politics are the detriments to the two channels. The results suggest that the news channels should focus efforts on improving best practices of conveying authentic information while practicing journalism. ARY News is

considered to be slightly less invasive to journalism professionalism in comparison to Express News, nonetheless challenges of sensationalism, political agendas remain the same for the two. This limits their capacity to ensure confidence from the punters and to produce fairness in their reports. Both outlets need to enhance their editorial freedoms and decline unethical practices since it is vital for the field.

Among these respondents, 62% attributed Capital Talk as having worsened political reporting because of perceived bias while 38% said the same concerning Off the Record about the same. In relative to the higher criticism of Capital Talk, it features the inclination to political discourses as hindering its contribution to agenda setting. On the other hand, the Off the Record has less criticisms in this regard, which suggest that it is a better placed in terms of the ability to maintain political reporting. The findings also show that as our two selected channels, ARY News and Geo News both contribute to the formation of political consciousness and political agenda in the country, both the sides have perceptual issues with biased and politically sided journalism. The numbers suggest that ARY News has somewhat better prospects in terms of credibility among the youth and trust deficits making Geo News the key challenger. These findings Create awareness of the need for professionalism, ethical and accuracy in the reporting in order to allow informed viewership to prevail.

This study found that both ARY and Geo News are important players in the political communication system to an equal degree. But, opinions over bias and affiliation to political parties are more, for Capital Talk compared to Off the Record. These differences indicate that even though both programs are influencing Political awareness among the citizens their impact is subjected to the perception of partiality of the media. The data again establish that these two channels, namely ARY News and Geo News, play a pivotal role establishment of political awareness among youths in Pakistan and their talk shows appear to be essential platforms for the discourse. Nonetheless, perceived partiality, political leaning, and sensationalism raise profound questions indicating that, apart from creating two separate outlets, it is high time that both outlets for objective reporting adhere to high ethical standards and strive for accurate reporting, and the absence of partiality when setting the popular agenda. It has further aims to contribute to the existent body of knowledge about the

dynamics of electronic media in Pakistan by offering insights regarding the extent of political awareness created by this media and the obstacles to arriving at the capacity for objective depictions of political reality that operate in this context.

## Discussion

Geo News and ARY News play a substantial role in youth political consciousness by allowing the talk shows namely Off the Record and the Capital Talk Space. About this, 74 % of the respondents accepted the fact that these programs help in increasing political awareness in as much as they discuss important political matters and engage in arguments. This underscores them as the major info providers to most of the youths. But the impact of credibility is not the same in both these channels. 29% respondents rated Off the Record highest for reliability of information followed by 21% for Capital Talk. The split perceptions suggest that there is a small perception-based advantage for ARY News in the study. There was also an added insight by the analysis that 68% of the respondents estimated Capital Talk as proving the political allegiance of the owners of its channel against 32% for Off the Record. Of the youth rotation, the perception of bias weakens Geo News rotation as the trust in media rotates with impartiality.

The involvement of young people with ARY News is also complemented by programming and orientation to PTI, which is supported by 76% respondents. But it also casts doubts in relation to the intention to strengthen specific political bias. This paper also noted that both channels have issues with credibility as they have been accused of sensationalism and bias reporting; indication that all need to embrace journalistic principles as a way of encouraging positive political awareness among youths. To sum up the studies of both ARY News and Geo News, these-two Pakistani tv channels are found very much influential to enhance the political consciousness among youths. ARY News gets a slightly better score due to trustworthiness and youth appeal, yet both channels need to answer for alleged bias and lack of disclosure to remain trustworthy political informative instruments.

Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi on ARY News and Capital Talk with Hamid Mir on Geo News are one of the most acknowledged programs in Pakistan where people's opinions and events related to other events or issues are created. Regarding the proposition

that political awareness is promoted through highlighting important political questions and holding discussions because of these programs, 74% of the respondents expressed their agreement. Such programs serve as soap boxes upon which politicians, analysts and other experts discuss matters and determine how the society views them and assigns them importance.

But the figures also highlight that there is distinction between ‘American Idol’ and another show Big Brother when it comes to public opinion. According to the respondents, about 55% of them gave Off the Record more accurate information than Capital Talk. This means that there is a slight tendency for the audience to trust ARY News in setting the opinion of the public. However, Capital Talk is recognized for its policy discussions and policy contributions to political journalism as earlier revealed, 68% of the respondents condemned Capital Talk for presenting a politically biased Geo News ownership due to its agenda-setting function.

In other ways, both shows are similarly used to restructure the political agenda by packaging issues in terms that are familiar to the audience at large. For instance, confidence that Off the Record has a greater youth-orientation regarding the perceptions expressed by 76 percent of the sample indicates the success of the channel in attracting the youth. On the other hand, Capital Talk got more negative comments, 68% of the respondents described it as a ‘paid media’ that rejects its perceived neutrality and its agenda setting capacities. In conclusion, it can be said that Off the Record and Capital Talk share a significant function to bring plans to construct the political reality in Pakistan. As they promote the civility and politics, issues to do with biasness, and political affiliations suggest the need to balance and fairness in reporting in order to remain relevant in the political arena.

Political affiliations and perceived political party affiliations of specific TV channels namely ARY News and Geo News influence the degree and manner that these two TV Channels can approach political reporting and coverage and in turn, influence public trust. The survey shows that political affiliation perceived by the viewers is Capital Talk with Hamid Mir Geo News 68% affiliated to the owner’s political preferences Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi ARY News 32%. This perception of alignment poses a problem to Geo News’ integrity, because viewers tend not to be faithful to channels they think lean political.

Percentages are also illustrated as 68% of the respondents construed Capital Talk to be in operation like paid media because of the Political perception. This does not only negatively affect people's confidence in the channel, but also reduces its credibility to the extent that it becomes bias. Nevertheless, Off the Record experienced lesser complaints of political bias as a result, which may be why 55% of respondents chose it for credible information over Capital Talk's 44%.

These biases extend to agenda-setting as well respondents confirm that both the channels shape public opinion but with political bias in their political narratives. Such selective framing of issues can reduce the variety of stakeholder voices that they allow into the media, and consequently strain the chances for a balanced array of media coverage. Among the limits, respondents pointed at sensationalism – they criticized both channels in terms of the orientation on political motives rather than the impartial coverage of an event. However, we see that both these channels continue to play significant role in influencing political issue, as supported by the 74 % who agreed that the either channel raised political consciousness. But this influence is appeared to be limited by the necessity to be more transparent and respect newspaper ethical codes.

Thus, the political orientation, and perceived bias of ARY News and Geo News are considerably critical determinants of the degree of their partisan news reporting disposition and the level of public trust in them. Although both sources are very influential in making political awareness and in the setting of political agendas, these biases, thus have to be addressed to make better the conduits and contribute to the enhancement of impartiality of politics.

## **Findings of the Study**

The research findings in the study provide the following important understanding of the research questions concerning the role of ARY News and Geo News, and particularly, their talk shows Off the Record and Capital Talk, to form political awareness, opinion, and agenda among the youth in Pakistan. Off the Record and Capital Talk respond positively to the question concerning the impact of the programs on the political awareness of the audience, 74% of the audience confirmed that these programs help them in increasing their

awareness about political matters. The talk shows offer the platforms for elaboration and analyses, and debates, which always assists in arresting and engaging the youthful segment politically.

Altogether, 55% respondents supported for Off the Record to get right information compare to 44% for Capital Talk, which shows that there is little more inclination with the ARY News for credibility. Respondents were also ambiguously diverse on impartiality of both programs 50% considered both program impartial while 50% did not. In general, legitimacy of both programs rests with their reliability and journalistic ethic, which are highly sensitive to public attention. Interestingly, 68 percent of respondents considered Capital Talk to bear the political color of Geo News ownership while only 32 percent held such an opinion of OT WOTR: Further, 68% considered Capital Talk as a ‘paid media outlet’...which is a disservice to its credibility and reliability. Both these programs are hailed as having affiliations to the political parties hence cannot offer efficiency in dispensing fairness in reporting and molding the public opinion.

A noticeably higher percent of youth watch ARY News and 76% of these people said that this is due to the programming style of the channel and its perceived affiliations with PTI. Young people as the audience emphasize the importance of ARY News in forming this segment’s political perspective, although it poses a question about dependence on political orientations. Both channels contribute to the setting of the agenda, direction and definition of dominant narratives, and other objectives within the discursive battlefield. However, the main problem of sensationalism and selective framing of issues does not allow them to contribute to the development of a more fair political coverage. Capital Talk was criticized more, having only 62% respondents who agreed that it affects the reliability of political news and information negatively in contrast to 38% for Off the Record. Transparency and making correction regarding the error was said to be very important in creating trust. Many respondents stressed that such programs should be samples and should not distort the information provided. This is because the credibility of both of these channels depends on citizens’ opinions of its political affiliations and bias, thereby implying that more of the content transmitted through them should be balanced and independent of political influence.

These findings confirm that ARY News and Geo News are among the most powerful sources which create political awareness and influence the opinions of man in Pakistan. Nonetheless, ideas of impartiality and predisposition act as hurdles to their credibility and news-factual objectivity. For these channels to offer more to the democracy, they need to adopt the two principles of the responsible and ethical journalism.

To some extent, these conclusions fully correspond with the agenda setting theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972), who focused on the role of the media in the formation of the audience's concern and pointed to its explanatory role. Persuasively, 74% of respondents confirmed that Off the Record and Capital Talk improve political consciousness, and these programs make the corresponding topics relevant among viewers. It also supports Memon's (2014) findings that framing influences political perceptions - 68% of them associated Capital Talk with its channel political leaning as opposed to 32% for Off the Record. Furthermore, youth visit ARY News with the ratio of 76% with political information dependency on electronic media as highlighted by Bilal et al. (2022). Nevertheless, in line with the argument of Khan and Shahzad (2020), credibility and bias which include the view of Capital Talk channel as paid media, which has been identified by 68% of respondents denote the constant major issue of political impartiality. Such observations reaffirm the role of transparency – as pointed out by Lee (2015) and imply that the bias between news channels and political discourses eliminates public trust. Therefore, findings of this study align with the extant research pointing to the informational and narrative functions of electronic media and concerns over source credibility and partisanship.

The conclusion of this study shares epistemological affinity with the agenda-setting theory that was advanced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, which suggests that media sets the priority of issues in the public sphere. The fact that 74% of the respondents acknowledge these programs increase awareness of politics (Off the Record and Capital Talk) supports this theory because these programs focus on primary political subjects-priming the public opinion. The framing theory (Entman, 1993) was also applied since 68% of the respondents said Capital Talk was biased due to political affiliation of Geo News; therefore, how selective framing influences the perception of the audience was clearly demonstrated. These findings support Memon's (2014) study on the effects of media framing on political knowledge and



previous observation in Pakistan news channel bias by Khan and Shahzad (2020). Moreover, more youths were found to use ARY News (76%) watch the programs and perceived it inclined towards PTI; which is consistent with Bilal et al., (2022) who highlighted how youths use electronic media to gather political information. However, as pointed out by Lee (2015), due to political leanings an important issue such as credibility and bias is affected as the respondents view Capital Talk as a paid media outlet (68%). These results support the previous work concerning the significance of journalistic ethnicity and responsibility and reveal the ambiguous functions of electronic media as sources of political enlightenment along with some concerns about the questions of credibility and neutrality.

## Conclusion

This research examined the role of Pakistani television channels ARY News and Geo News, and two political talk show programs, Off the Record and Capital Talk, in raising awareness, shaping opinions, and setting the political agenda among Pakistani youth. These observation pinpoint towards the future innovation for these program since it proves that such a program has profound aspect in influencing the political perception of the concerned country as it opens doors and platform for debates and discourses that will engage the viewers. However, the findings show that there are recurring issues to do with perceived political affiliations and, hence, political neutrality of these channels which determine their reliability. It fits the agenda setting theory this sense, especially in highlighting the central role of the media in agenda control as well as in shaping the public opinion. On this, the respondents sighed that these talk shows increase political enlightenment (74% agreed) but the following murmurs of bias compromised the production of programs that are nonpartisan: Capital Talk was categorized by 68% as having a party line. A higher of the youths 76% watch ARY News, this is good in a sense that it attains a variety of the younger generation but a negative angle is that it then reinforces political biases. In line with earlier works, the study affirms the two-fold capacity of electronic media in political enlightenment, but with trust dilemma. Honesty, objectivity and respecting ethic policies are the ways to eliminate the pro- biased and make news channels useful to the people by providing them full information needed for voting. This study will help viewers understand the importance of reflecting on the programs air and to seek other sources of information that presents a different view of the

political events. Hence, more focused on particular sets of competitive political awareness and setting the political agenda of Pakistan – ARY News and Geo News, it is necessary to overcome the problems associated with bias and credibility. A thorough understanding of the policies of the electronic media maximum positive impacts can be achieved by enhancing sound principles adopted by journalism properly educating the audience.

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