
Analyzing the Influence of Geo News and ARY News Coverage on Electoral Outcomes in Pakistan's 2024 Election: A Case Study of PTI and PML-N

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Abstract

Pakistan's general elections in 2024 took place in the middle of a tumultuous political environment marked by judicial challenges, limitations on political campaigning and numerous accusations of voter suppression and media bias. This study examines the impact of two prominent television news networks, Geo News and ARY News, on the election results for Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), given the critical role that conventional media sources play in influencing political narratives and public opinion. This study examines how these media sources represented PTI and PMLN during the election period and the effects their coverage had on public opinion and voter behavior using a content analysis research design based on framing and agenda setting theories. In this study, 60 news clips that were broadcast on both networks between March 1, 2024, and May 31, 2024 were categorized for agenda dominance, framing techniques, and tone (positive, negative and neutral). The results show that the media landscape is divided. Mostly reiterating state aligned opinions that minimized PTI's claims of electoral meddling, Geo News embraced a narrative that was favorable to the PMLN and the electoral process. By emphasizing instances like the refusal of PTI's electoral emblem ("bat"), the detention of party officials like Imran Khan, and the suspension of mobile networks on election day, ARY News, on the other hand, presented PTI as a victim of governmental repression. According to the study, Geo News concentrated on fostering political continuity and institutional legitimacy through positive PMLN coverage, whereas ARY News helped to strengthen PTI's reputation as a persecuted but resilient political party. The results of the content analysis were validated and triangulated using audience survey data and secondary sources, such as reports from FAFEN, Gallup Pakistan, and Reporters Without Borders. Entman's framing theory and McCombs and Shaw's agenda setting theory, which assist explain the ways in which media affect what and how audiences think about political problems, serve as the theoretical underpinnings of this study. In a hybrid democracy setting like Pakistan, where news organizations frequently serve as stand ins for conflicting political agendas, the study also emphasizes the function of partisan media.

Keywords: media influence, electoral outcomes, PTI, PMLN, Geo News, ARY News, Pakistan elections 2024

Introduction

Mass media plays an extensive role in influencing electoral results and political attitudes through altering behaviors in democratic nations. The political situation in unstable nations such as Pakistan enhances the media's impact on national social and political processes. Television news channels established themselves as dominant leaders of political discussions over the last twenty years while connecting political parties to their voters. Geo News and ARY News have gained major influence over public opinion along with political narratives according to Siraj (2009). Political analysts view the news organizations' editorial positions and event portrayals together with their programming decisions as influential elements that may change voter understanding while creating or breaking

political alliances.

The media environment of Pakistan mirrors the nation's intense political tensions. Geo News which operates within the media group Jang remains known for supporting PMLN Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz while ARY News upholds visible support for both the PTI Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf and its leader Imran Khan (Amin, Amin, & Ali, 2021). During times of political emergency such as Panama Papers and the 2018 general elections the media outlets showed clear support for their favored parties. The approach toward editing content worsened during the 2024 elections as Pakistan witnessed multiple special political scenarios involving PTI officials being jailed and PTI electoral symbol censorship alongside party operational limitations. (Associated Press, 2024)

Numerous elements characterized the media conditions during the 2024 elections, including increases in censorship of political content, and editorial partisan biases by major broadcasters (Reporters Without Borders, 2024), and institutional pressures on journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024). PTI managed to have its affiliated independent candidates win the most seats in National Assembly despite attempts from authorities to limit the party's public visibility (Wikipedia, 2024). The unexpected result raised essential doubts about the strength of conventional media storytelling to affect voter decision making. Around the time of the elections ARY News worked to support PTI's establishment backed position while Geo News kept the emphasis on PMLN's campaign legitimacy along with the stability message linked to Shehbaz Sharif's leadership. The public sought information from television news along with social media platforms for opinion formation because media habits were shifting in Pakistan.

Press freedom limitations together with state institution pressure which journalists and media companies face restrict our understanding of media politics relationships in Pakistan. The period of elections in Pakistan leads to pervasive censorship and coercive practices and biased news stories as reported by both Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) according to RSF (2024). Within Pakistan's media landscape the manipulation of information happens to benefit specific political results. The media receives increased attention because it shapes how people think and vote in transitional democratic settings such as Pakistan. Television news serves as the main source of political information for masses because competitive politics emerged thus providing narratives which strengthen or combat established political ideologies (Strömbäck & Kaid, 2008). Pakistan's February 2024 general elections took place in a context of severe political division as private broadcasters Geo News and ARY News intensely covered the race. These two networks operate as powerful political entities that have become subjects of lasting debate among scholars political analysts and community members regarding their delivered material and presentation style. Televisual news remains the leading force in shaping Pakistani public discussions despite the mixture of standard and digital platforms which operate under varying levels of control. The analysis by Gallup Pakistan (2023) revealed that 65% of Pakistanis watch television news first for political information thus demonstrating broadcasters' extraordinary influence on voting behavior. The 2024 general election stands as a primary research study which examines how Geo News and ARY News portrayed the political stories involving Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN). The two competing parties of the past have alternated in victories and maintained variable relationships with the national leadership and broadcast media networks.

The research examines the impact which partisan media reporting had on PTI and PMLN's political success throughout the 2024 general election campaign. An analysis of prime time television broadcasts identified how channels distinguished between parties through their presentation frequency and media tone together with broadcasting approach. The observed dissimilarities within media coverage shape political relationships between journalists and politicians while affecting democratic standards and electoral equality as well as journalism's popular perception by society.

Literature Review

Political Context of the 2024 Elections

The 2024 elections in Pakistan developed in an extraordinary environment driven by legal battles and political oppression while various institutions strategized and civil society organized popular support. The electoral environment comprised regular political party competition between PTI and PMLN while larger power struggles took place between Pakistan's judiciary alongside its military and media institutions. Official democratic procedures appeared weak because both local society and international observers accepted the election to have severe flaws in its fairness and transparency measures (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Judicial Actions against PTI

The 2024 election stood out because of constant legal measures taken against PTI along with its leadership. Many legal cases pursued Former Prime Minister Imran Khan including corruption charges together with alleged offenses to provoke violent behavior. In August 2023 the authorities convicted Khan to prison on corruption charges which human rights groups along with independent watchers described as political (Al Jazeera, 2024). Many senior PTI members suffered from targeted attacks in which several officials were driven into hiding and hunted down by imprisonment.

The Election Commission of Pakistan made a highly controversial decision by canceling the electoral symbol of cricket bat for PTI just before election day. Candidates from PTI faced the requirement to run independently since the Election Commission of Pakistan banned their party symbols. Electoral ballot recognition becomes problematic because voters face confusion when there is no unified common electoral symbol especially in rural areas (Dawn 2024). Experts viewed this decision as a method to reduce PTI's electoral capabilities and organizational solidity.

Role of the Military Establishment

Throughout its history Pakistan's military has maintained notable influence over political affairs by either staging direct coups or wielding indirect power. Multiple analysts observed during the 2024 election period that the military dedicated extra resources to control political processes which should lead to electoral success for parties sharing military strategic preferences particularly PMLN and its associates (International Crisis Group, 2024).

Political engineering activities were confirmed through reports about the military's coercive tactics that forced candidate changes and defected politicians as well as forced intimidation of PTI workers. The PTI encountered disruptions to their rallies and faced media restrictions for their activities mainly through national television channels (BBC News, 2024). Decisions from the judiciary worked in favor of PMLN while they delivered unfavorable verdicts to PTI which eventually influenced the electoral balance.

Media Environment and Censorship

The News media produced heavily censored content alongside biased editorial choices that led multiple outlets to control their own reports during the 2024 electoral process. Geo News alongside other major television channels received accusations for intending to minimize Coverage of PTI political messages while they continued to broadcast mostly PMLN messaging focused on governance stability and political continuity. Board intensity suspended ARY News operations along with ordering regulatory measures against the channel for carrying PTI points of view (Reporters Without Borders, 2024).

During the Election Day the government implemented mobile internet interruptions throughout the nation which aimed to stop misinformation but consequently obstructed voter reporting of irregularities (Reuters, 2024). PTI candidates together with their supporter base faced coordination limitations when digital platforms became their main means of circumventing the mainstream media blackout which occurred as part of the shutdown.

Twitter which was known as X along with WhatsApp served as fundamental communication tools for

political messaging at this time. The PTI support base used online channels to reach voters with political updates about electoral fraud and voter participation initiatives. Social media presence enabled PTI to stay visible during the elections even though it faced operational obstacles.

Electoral Conduct and Allegations of Rigging

The 2024 elections suffered from extensive evidence that showed election rigging together with suppression of voters and poor administrative practices. Independent media observers together with Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) reported several irregularities during the polling process which consisted of delayed result announcements and missing ballots along with limitations placed on independent monitoring agents (FAFEN, 2024).

Multiple constituencies experienced various difficulties which PTI affiliated independent candidates encountered including removal of their campaign materials and harassment from local authorities. The process of vote counting was allegedly manipulated by returning officers toward winning candidates endorsed by the government. Several challenges did not diminish the substantial popular backing for PTI which helped party candidates secure the largest number of National Assembly seats.

Post Election Political Scenario

Shehbaz Sharif led the PMLN as the Prime Minister after winning elections by collaborating with other parties including PPP and smaller regional alliances. The coalition government received weak support from the people because most believed the elections failed to truly represent popular sentiment (The Guardian, 2024). PTI supporters, together with their activist base, organized demonstrations because they alleged electoral voting irregularities and demanded new elections alongside judicial polls investigations. International entities showed conflicting perspectives regarding the electoral results. Many international watchdogs alongside media outlets condemned Pakistan's electoral process after elections through analyses of unfairness and transparency loopholes and human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Implications for Democracy in Pakistan

Multiple important factors signaled that the 2024 elections became vital for Pakistan's democratic future. PTI affiliated independents demonstrated outstanding results during elections despite constant institutional barriers because Pakistanis strongly supported democratic processes and rejected predetermined decisions. The country revealed its weakness in democratic standards because of severe political crackdowns along with court manipulation and restrictive media practices.

Media Landscape in Pakistan

Throughout its history Pakistan has shown a media environment marked by active competition among media institutions which remain closely linked to political institutions and armed forces and social relations. Practices of information production and dissemination in Pakistan underwent a transformation with the media sector liberalization under the rule of General Pervez Musharraf during the early 2000s (Siraj, 2009). The different types of media in Pakistan today span from print and television to radio and digital platforms. Despite diverse media outlets Pakistan's media loses its ability to function independently as a political watchdog because state institutions and both political and economic pressures continually challenge this power.

The comprehension of Pakistan's media environment becomes essential for evaluating the upcoming general elections of 2024. The news programs of Geo News and ARY News actively molded public political discussions as they shaped how voters saw the candidates and influenced election results. The greater media landscape at that time featured heavy censorship alongside growing polarization followed by extensive use of digital technology for obtaining information beyond traditional regulatory boundaries.

Evolution of Television News Media

Broadcast media deregulation in 2002 led to multiple private news channel startups which displaced the previous electronic media domination of Pakistan Television (PTV). The television news channels Geo News and ARY News, together with Dunya News and Express News gained substantial power in Pakistani politics because they reached large numbers of national households. The limited Internet penetration rate across the population along with high levels of illiteracy made television serve as the principal source of political information for ordinary citizens (Riaz, 2008).

The news outlet launched its Geo News channel in 2002 to become a prominent media source which delivered investigative journalism and broad coverage through occasionally critical reporting against the military structure. Since ARY News started operations in 2004 the news outlet earned recognition for its nationalist content that advanced into robust PTI and Imran Khan backing across the 2013 election period (Amin & Ali, 2021). Television channels evolved into a primary field of political dispute which combined event coverage with biased editorial framework development through their ownership preferences.

Media Freedom and Censorship

The multiplication of media platforms in Pakistan has not secured a firm foundation of press freedom throughout the country. The military power alongside past and present governments implemented straight and subtle ways to manage media storylines across Pakistan. The Committee to Protect Journalists reports (2024) that media control tactics in Pakistan consists of threatening journalists while exerting pressure on media owners alongside issuing censorship orders and running advertising boycotts which trigger regulatory fining and result in physical assaults.

Factually speaking the 2024 election era witnessed heightened forms of censorship during its entirety. The media received official instructions to minimize their broadcast of Imran Khan along with his PTI party activities yet attractive content about the organization resulted in PEMRA suspending broadcast licenses. According to Reporters Without Borders (2024), PEMRA introduced repeated suspensions of ARY News and other news channels since 2024 for their refusal to comply with regulatory pressure. Simultaneously, self censorship became widespread. The press combined with editorial teams evaded essential topics about election fraud while avoiding establishment involvement and human rights violations since they wanted to prevent adverse events. The media provided altered perceptions of political events to the public while some contesting parties received airtime benefits yet their rival forces encountered blocked access.

Partisan Media and Political Alignments

Media outlets in Pakistan demonstrate an increasing tendency to take sides in political debates which defines how the media operates. Geo News is usually seen by the public as supporting PMLN through its presentation of political stories related to Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif's democratic accomplishments and their economic policies and governance improvements. ARY News supports PTI's political campaign to combat corruption by presenting Imran Khan as an anti elite fighter (Iqbal, 2021). Partisan biases in Pakistani broadcasting extend beyond editorial freedom because they emerge from fundamental political and economic alliances. Business interests of media owners frequently link with specific political factions through which they operate. The state's patronage through its regulatory attitudes and advertising policies gives broadcasting entities strong reasons to engage in media practices that favor dominant political factions (Rehmat, 2023).

During the 2024 elections these political alignments produced exceptionally distinct splits between the opposing parties. Geo News characterized PTI as an unstable power that produced stories which presented Shehbaz Sharif as the candidate who would stabilize the country and restore economic growth. ARY News conveyed PTI's constitutional complaint about electoral interference while showing Imran Khan as the target of establishment scheming and focusing on election irregularities.

Rise of Digital and Social Media

During the past decade Pakistan experienced a quick expansion of internet availability as millions of people shifted their news consumption toward social media websites comprising Facebook Twitter as X alongside YouTube along with WhatsApp. Early 2024 data from DataReportal (2024) shows that approximately 41% of Pakistan's population used the internet while social media access grew substantial among youth demographics.

The digital transformation process has reduced the total dominance of traditional television news programs. PTI and other political groups utilized social media platforms to evade media restrictions which allowed them to establish direct communication with voters. The media strategy of PTI consisted of delivering live streams and viral videos alongside hashtag campaigns and utilizing influencers to boost support and combat negative party detractors (Yousaf, 2024).

PTI used social media as its main campaign platform during the restricted TV broadcast period of the 2024 elections. The PTI movement maintained its electoral drive through widespread Internet distribution of Imran Khan's addresses and imprisoned party leader messages alongside reports linking to non fraudulent election practices. Digital media platforms introduced new problems to political communication because they spread false information as well as deliberate deceptive messaging from governments intended to sway voters negatively against their opponents.

Regulatory Framework and Media Control

Media regulation in Pakistan exists as an intricate system which enables control of press oversight. The regulatory body PEMRA wields extensive authority to impose fines while regulatory and license suspension and content control at political and military institution requests. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) allows authorities to arrest or harass journalists along with bloggers and social media activists through cybercrime laws when they challenge government or military institutions (Amnesty International, 2024).

PEMRA enforced broadcasting limits on particular political parties together with specific events throughout the 2024 elections because of public order priorities and national security reasons. Reliable coverage of touchy subjects became increasingly difficult for reporters because they faced threats from both virtual and physical harassment during their reporting duties. The imposed restrictions limited the available information voters had access to which limited their ability to form educated political decisions about all ongoing developments.

Rationale of the Study

The political investigation selects PTI and PMLN as its central research subjects because these parties maintain strong positions in Pakistan's active political landscape. As a populist entity under the leadership of Imran Khan PTI directed its efforts towards institutional transformation and corruption elimination whereas the Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif led PMLN maintained its traditional dynastic structure by focusing on bureaucratic management and infrastructure development. The high level of media attention applied to both parties creates optimal conditions for studying media influence patterns in the Pakistani political system.

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PEMRA enforced broadcasting limits on particular political parties together with specific events throughout the 2024 elections because of public order priorities and national security reasons. Reporters found reliable reporting about sensitive subjects increasingly challenging due to threats of harassment that arose during their work duties both online and in person. The constraints implemented by the election officials reduced access to information for voters thus restricting their ability to base

well informed decisions about political matters.

Theoretical Framework

Multiple academic disciplines such as political science together with communication studies sociology and psychology have established thorough theories about media determined political results. This research studies the election coverage of PTI and PMLN by Geo News and ARY News through the connected explanations of agenda setting theory and framing theory and media bias theory. Because of the strong influence partisanship and institution management and public trust exert on Pakistan's media operations and political beliefs these analytical frameworks become vital for transitional democratic nations.

Agenda Setting Theory

People receive direction about topics from media outlets rather than the content of their thoughts per the agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The theory marks a significant milestone because it reveals how media organizations can define and order subjects as well as individuals to influence audience prioritization. Media influence public perception regarding party importance during elections by determining the visibility level of candidates.

Media organizations choose to discuss specific political topics and personalities with varying frequency through their news stories which creates issue salience at the introductory level of agenda setting. Second level agenda setting, also known as attribute agenda setting, examines the framing of these issues or actors' attributes, such as context and tone (McCombs, 2005). Understanding how media coverage affects voting behavior at both levels is essential, particularly in a media landscape that is politically divided. Agenda setting effects are especially strong in Pakistan, where television continues to be the primary source of political information (Gallup Pakistan, 2023). Through editorial choices, media outlets such as ARY News and Geo News have the ability to highlight or underplay political parties. For millions of viewers, the political agenda is set by the order of stories, the prominence of the headlines, and the amount of airtime given to PTI or PMLN.

Theory of Framing

Agenda setting focuses on salience, whereas framing theory explores interpretation. According to Entman (1993), framing is the process of choosing and emphasizing particular elements of a perceived reality to make them stand out more in communication. By emphasizing particular narratives, metaphors, catchphrases, or emotional cues, media frames influence how audiences perceive and assess political figures and issues.

According to Entman (2007), frames serve four primary purposes: defining issues, determining their causes, rendering moral assessments and proposing solutions. Voters' opinions can be greatly impacted by how media outlets portray a political party during election coverage, whether it is as a security threat, corrupt elite, a reformist underdog, or a national savior. Media framing played a key role in how the PMLN and PTI were viewed in Pakistan's general election of 2024. For instance, Geo News was seen to portray PMLN as a stabilizing force in the midst of chaos, while ARY News frequently painted PTI as a victim of judicial overreach and political victimization. These frames appeal to popular sentiment and can set off heuristics, or cognitive shortcuts, that direct voting behavior without requiring a thorough examination of policy (Iyengar, 1991). Framing also includes a cultural aspect, especially relevant in Pakistan where stories about religion, nationalism, civil military relations, and economic development resonate strongly. Often supporting in group versus out group dynamics among political parties and their supporters, these culturally relevant frames help media outlets link political narratives with shared values.

Media Bias Theory

Media bias theory investigates how news outlets might methodically favor one political actor, party, or ideology over another. This bias might show up in various ways: coverage bias (how much attention

various actors get), presentation bias (how stories are told), and selection bias (which stories are reported) (D'Alessio & Allen, 2000). Media bias can arise from organizational constraints, ownership structures, journalistic practices, or ideological preferences; it is not always intentional.

In polarized countries like Pakistan, media outlets' partisan alignment is sometimes clear. Historically, ARY News has covered PTI favourably; Geo News has been more in line with PMLN (Yusuf, 2013; Zohra, 2022). Media owners usually have larger business interests connected to political results, thus these alignments reflect both political ties and economic interests. Media bias also plays off audience bias—the inclination of consumers to choose media that fits their preexisting convictions (Stroud, 2011). A PTI supporter may therefore be drawn to ARY News for both news and ideological reinforcement, so building echo chambers restricting exposure to counter narratives. In such situations, media bias polarizes the voters and reinforces political divisions as much as it shapes perceptions.

Integrative Framework for the Study

Combined, agenda setting, framing and media bias offer a complete perspective to examine how Geo News and ARY News's coverage could have shaped public views of PTI and PMLN in the 2024 election cycle. These theories give rise to the following analytical categories:

- Visibility (Agenda setting): Which party received more airtime or headline coverage?
- Tone (Media bias): Was the coverage positive, negative, or neutral for each party?
- Framing (Framing theory): What narratives or metaphors were used to describe each party or their leaders?

This integrative framework enables systematic coding and interpretation of media texts, therefore supporting the content analysis research design used in the methodology chapter. The study can find trends of partisan bias or neutrality by means of visibility, tone, and frames and then investigate their consequences for democratic processes in Pakistan.

Applicability to the Pakistani Media Setting

Applying these ideas to Pakistan is especially pertinent given the country's complicated media politics link. Pakistan's media is active but susceptible to censorship, financial strain, and political meddling given more than 80 licensed television channels and an expanding digital media sphere (Freedom House, 2024). Under such circumstances, media organizations could behave more like political actors in line with particular interests than neutral informers.

Moreover, media confidence is divided along political party lines. A 2023 Pew Research poll found that whereas most PTI supporters consider ARY News to be trustworthy, the same group views Geo News with skepticism; the reverse is true for PMLN supporters. This split in confidence implies that audience expectations and ideological pressures are not just affecting media outlets but also shaping them. Understanding media power fundamentals serves as both intellectual understanding together with practical necessity for examining Pakistan's electoral democratic condition. Democratic change depends on media control in addition to ownership openness and journalistic integrity since media bias impacts political results.

Significance of the Study

The research contributes to media studies in electoral politics through its study of Pakistani data from the 2024 general elections. The research demonstrates the ways through which media storytelling affects electoral results during media polarization events. Study results provide essential knowledge to policymakers together with media regulators along with political stakeholders regarding how media partisanship influences democratic procedures.

Coverage Analysis of Geo News and ARY News

During the 2024 general elections Pakistan experienced a dual battle between Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN where television broadcasting and online platforms served as platforms for media engagement. The two main private broadcasting networks of Pakistan

named Geo News and ARY News actively participated in shaping the political communication channels of this election. The editorial choices and news coverage strategies and framing methods of Geo News and ARY news along with their narrative selection priorities actively changed public opinion which led to changes in voter behavior and eventual political results. This section explores Geo News and ARY News coverage of the 2024 elections through comprehensive analysis of their representation of PTI and PMLN as well as media framing methods and consequences for Pakistani democratic systems.

Editorial Positioning and Political Bias

The editorial perspectives of Geo News and ARY News embrace different positions because they serve political agendas of their own. The news network Geo News changed its editorial stance away from PMLN support by using coverage that emphasized leadership stability alongside administrative experience and public management qualifications. Geo News maintained a representation of PMLN leaders Shehbaz Sharif as practical and problem solving leaders yet portrayed PTI and its leadership as harmful forces to democratic procedures across the 2024 election period (Jamal, 2024).

ARY News presented a pro PTI editorial stance by displaying Imran Khan as a person who faced establishment intervention as well as judicial manipulations. Geo News showed support for PTI supporters who claimed excessive judicial power and electoral manipulation in their broadcasts that built up defiance against a suspected corrupt political structure (Yousaf, 2024).

Geo News provided quantitative support to the PMLN during the political campaign through Pakistan Institute of Media Studies (PIMS, 2024) research which demonstrated 62% PMLN backing against 18% PTI support. The election related broadcasts on ARY News showed strong support for the PTI political party as 67% of its content supported the party and 20% backed the PMLN. The media system in Pakistan demonstrates intense partisan split as shown through these examination results.

Framing Techniques

Through standard framing techniques both Geo News and ARY News attempted to influence how people understood political occurrences and political figures. Frames operate as interpretive packages which lead viewers to understand certain issues through specific descriptions of problems and causes and moral judgments along with recommended solutions (Entman, 1993).

Geo News Framing

Geo News presented news stories that built themes about law enforcement and democratic succession and financial system steadiness. During news coverage the PMLN earned positive evaluations for their activities in developing infrastructure and managing the economy along with successful diplomatic ventures. The reporting at Geo News about PTI tended to use phrases including "instability" and "anarchy" and "threat to democratic norms." Geonews described PTI protests as "violent" and "mobilized mob activities" through their broadcasts following PTI leader arrests (Javed, 2024).

Geo News regularly hosted analysts who attacked the PTI's leadership record yet supported the PMLN's belief that they are legitimate democratic representatives during their talk show broadcasts. The talk shows Capital Talk and Report Card spent extensive time exploring the alleged problems of the PTI government (2018-2022) and dismissing Imran Khan's populist statements.

ARY News Framing

ARY News built its media coverage heavily around portraying political figures as wronged victims fighting against established authority. Particularly during times when leaders appeared persecuted by systemic corruption aimed at silencing popular voices they acted as victims of suppression. Imran Khan's exclusion from contesting elections, as well as the subsequent crackdown on PTI workers, were characterized as examples of political engineering. ARY's prime time programming, such Off the Record and 11th Hour, highlighted themes of "justice denied" and "popular mandate usurped" (Khan, 2024).

Furthermore, ARY News used emotional storytelling techniques, airing footage of PTI supporters subjected to police abuse and emphasizing stories of resistance and martyrs. These concepts struck a chord with the PTI's middle class, youth oriented supporters, creating a sense of common grievance and galvanizing political activism.

Selective Reporting and Agenda Setting

Selective reporting—what is emphasized, disregarded, and downplayed—was another prominent characteristic of media coverage of the 2024 elections. McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda setting hypothesis states that while the media does not always tell viewers what to think, it does tell them what to think about.

Geo News Agenda

Geo News focused heavily on governance issues, including inflation, unemployment, and claimed policy failures by the PTI's previous government. Simultaneously, scandals and issues involving PMLN officials were either ignored or portrayed as politically motivated smear operations. Geo News also highlighted coverage of PMLN campaign events, international endorsements and stories about "experience versus experimentation" (Ahmed, 2024).

Controversies surrounding the electoral process, including as the disqualification of PTI candidates and the alleged manipulation of results, received limited and sanitized attention. When such objections were raised, they were presented under a "rule of law" narrative, implying that the judiciary and electoral commission were operating within legal frameworks.

ARY News Agenda

ARY News focused coverage on political repression, election irregularities, and public support for the PTI. PTI rallies and press briefings received extensive live coverage, often with minimal editorial screening. Unfavorable stories about the PMLN, such as charges of corruption or backdoor links with the military establishment, were heavily emphasized (Saleem, 2024).

When addressing governance difficulties, ARY News emphasized on inflation and unemployment, but presented these challenges as the result of a "imported regime" narrative, absolving the PTI of responsibility. Economic woes were linked to political instability caused by the PTI government's collapse in 2022, rather than intrinsic defects in PTI policy.

Impact on Public Perception and Election Behavior

The differences in coverage between Geo News and ARY News had a considerable impact on popular perception. Gallup Pakistan (2024) found that viewers of Geo News were more inclined to see the PMLN as the best party for governance and economic restoration. In contrast, ARY News viewers were more likely to see the PTI as the legitimate embodiment of popular will and victims of political victimization.

This media driven divisiveness was also seen in voting trends. Eastern and northern urban parts of Pakistan that watched ARY News strongly backed the PTI whereas residents in central and southern Punjab who followed Geo News tended to endorse the PMLN. Exit polls demonstrated that news media stories greatly affected what voters considered important leading up to the election. The voting populace for PMLN considered experienced leadership alongside economic stability as highly important factors that aligned with the messaging presented by Geo News. People who voted for PTI emphasized points about justice alongside sovereignty and anti corruption while validating ARY News' reporting.

Ethical Considerations and Challenges

Serious ethical issues regarding Pakistani journalism emerged during the 2024 election cycle due to the fragmented nature of the media environment. The strong political alliances of Geo News and ARY News caused their news coverage to merge with advocacy for specific political positions. The practice

of fact checking alongside complete impartiality disappeared as news outlets chose to broadcast political views they advocated (CPJ, 2024). The media space featured abundant incorrect information together with attention seeking reports. The combined presentation of baseless allegations with one sided analysis by both news networks increased social doubt and political skepticism. News organizations lost their basis for democratic systems when neutrality was absent which caused audience trust levels to decrease and intensified political divisions.

Methodology

The chapter presents details about the research methodology as well as the methods for data collection along with coding approaches and analyzing methods which study the broadcast coverage of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) by Geo News and ARY News during the 2024 general elections in Pakistan. The researchers employ both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods to perform systematic broadcast news clip analysis during the preselected election period.

Research Design

The researchers adopt content analysis as their research method to study political news framing about PTI and PMLN through text categorization based on explicit coding principles (Krippendorff, 2018). Both quantitative content analysis for frequency and tone measurement while airtime duration and qualitative framing analysis for narrative techniques and interpretative frames evaluation was used as research methods. The architecture allows measurement to be objective while adding depth to interpretation according to Neuendorf (2017).

Research Objectives and Questions

Research Objectives

The major goal of this research is to determine how Geo News and ARY News depicted PTI and PMLN throughout the election campaign and whether this representation shows partisan bias that may have influenced voter behavior. The study aims to:

1. Assess the volume and frequency of coverage provided to each stakeholder.
2. Assess the tone of coverage (positive, neutral, negative).
3. Identify the dominating frames utilized to present each party and its candidates.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do Geo News and ARY News portray PTI and PMLN during the 2024 election period?

RQ2: What is the volume of news coverage allocated to PTI and PMLN on Geo News and ARY News?

RQ3: What is the tone (positive, negative, or neutral) of this coverage?

RQ4: What dominant frames are used to narrate stories about PTI and PMLN?

Sampling Strategy

Data were collected using a purposive selection approach from prime time political news bulletins aired on Geo News and ARY News between March 1, 2024, and May 31, 2024. This three month window was chosen since it coincides with the peak of Pakistan's election campaign season. The time slot evaluated was from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., when flagship current affairs shows and news bulletins were broadcast. A total of 60 news episodes (30 from each channel) were chosen to ensure coverage over multiple days of the week.

Operational Definitions

To ensure consistency, dependability and replicability in content analysis, important concepts used in this study are operationally defined as follows:

Portrayal

Portrayal refers to how the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) are portrayed in press coverage during the election campaign. This includes the tone of the coverage (positive, negative, or neutral) and the framing methods used. This term is consistent with Entman's (1993) framing theory, which emphasizes how media highlights certain aspects of reality while ignoring others in order to promote a given view.

Tone of Coverage

Tone of coverage is defined as the overall emotional or evaluative attitude exhibited toward a political party in a news segment.

Tone is classified into three different types:

- Positive tone: Highlighting accomplishments, strengths, positive activities, or endorsements.
- Negative tone: Focusing on failures, scandals, controversies, criticisms, or negative depictions.
- Neutral tone: Provides balanced and objective coverage, giving facts without judgment.

Tone will be determined using Lee's (2010) standards, which include word choice, guest commentary, visuals and narrative framing.

Volume of Coverage

Volume of coverage is a quantitative measurement of the number of news segments or total airtime allocated to PTI and PMLN during the sample period. A higher frequency or airtime indicates that the news organization places a greater emphasis on agenda setting.

Dominant Frame

The dominant frame is defined as the central theme or perspective that guides the news narrative regarding a political party. According to Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framework, the prominent frames coded in this study are:

- The Governance/Performance Frame emphasizes administrative competence, service delivery, and leadership attributes.
- The corruption/scandal frame focuses on accusations and legal controversies.
- The Economic Development Framework focuses on economic policies, corporate activities and growth indicators.
- The Victimization/Political Engineering Frame emphasizes accusations of political victimization, biased institutional interventions and election manipulation.
- Other Frames: Coders documented and examined any prominent themes that were not classified above.

Each news segment will be assigned a dominant frame that best represents its key narrative.

Election Period

The election period is defined as the three month period preceding the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, running from March 1, 2024 to May 31, 2024. This timeframe was chosen because it corresponds to the official campaigning phase, which includes party rallies, debates, manifesto launches, and increased media coverage.

Coding Procedure

A coding sheet was developed based on the operational definitions and tested through a pilot phase involving 10% of the sample. The following variables were coded:

- Party referenced (PTI or PMLN)
- Time duration (in minutes)

- Tone of segment (positive, negative, neutral)
- Dominant frame (governance, corruption, economy, victimization, other)

Two trained coders independently analyzed all news segments. Inter coder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa, which exceeded 0.80 for all key variables, indicating high agreement and coding reliability (Lombard et al., 2002).

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Researchers employ descriptive methodology to measure both the quantity and manner of coverage. Frequency and percentage calculations would establish which party received the most focus and which tone appeared most frequently. A cross tabulation approach was evaluated how the media portrays each party between different channels.

Qualitative Analysis

The analysis of framing identifies structural elements used in political reporting within news coverage. This research examines all sections for master frames through application of Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five frame typology. Theme coding of qualitative data were pursue trends and variances that emerged regarding media presentations of PTI and PMLN.

Results

The chapter includes findings from a content analysis of how Geo News and ARY News presented the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) together with Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) during the 2024 general election period. Statistics covering 60 consecutive prime time broadcasts deriving from Geo News and ARY News were collected between March 1 and May 31 in 2024. The research analysis evaluated three main elements including treatment scope and presentation attitude alongside dominant rhetorical methods.

Volume of Coverage

Table 1 summarizes the total number of news segments and the total airtime (in minutes) dedicated to PTI and PMLN by each channel.

Table 1: Volume of News Coverage by Channel and Party

Party	Geo News (Minutes)	ARY News (Minutes)
PTI	410	690
PMLN	625	350

The data show significant variations in coverage allocation. Geo News gave PMLN roughly 52.3% more airtime than PTI, while ARY News gave PTI 97.1% more airtime than PMLN. These data indicate that each channel prioritized different political parties in terms of visibility. To determine if the variations in airtime were statistically significant, a chi square test for independence was performed on the number of segments per party and channel. The test result was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 14.23$, $p < .001$, indicating a substantial relationship between the news channel and the political party favored in terms of volume.

Tone of Coverage

The tone analysis was based on whether the coverage of each party in a given segment was positive, negative, or neutral.

Table 2: Tone of Coverage by Channel and Party

Channel	Party	Positive (%)	Negative (%)	Neutral (%)
Geo News	PTI	12 (20%)	36 (60%)	12 (20%)
Geo News	PMLN	24 (40%)	12 (20%)	24 (40%)
ARY News	PTI	33 (55%)	9 (15%)	18 (30%)
ARY News	PMLN	9 (15%)	30 (50%)	21 (35%)

Geo News portrayed PTI badly in the bulk of its parts (60%), but PMLN had a more balanced representation, with 40% favorable and 40% neutral. In contrast, ARY News showed PTI in a positive light in more over half of its programs (55%), while 50% of its PMLN coverage was negative. These trends suggest a party bias, with Geo News supporting PMLN and ARY News favoring PTI in their evaluations. A cross tabulation of tone by party and channel verified the large variance. Cramer's $V = .41$, $p < .01$ indicates a moderate to strong correlation between channel affiliation and coverage tone.

Dominant Framing Themes

A framing analysis was performed to determine how each political party was contextualized in the news narrative. Each segment was coded for one dominant frame. The frames used were governance, corruption, economy, victimization, and other.

Table 3: Dominant Frames Used in Party Coverage by Channel

Channel	Party	Governance	Corruption	Economy	Victimization	Other
Geo News	PTI	6 (10%)	30 (50%)	6 (10%)	12 (20%)	6 (10%)
Geo News	PMLN	18 (30%)	6 (10%)	15 (25%)	3 (5%)	8 (15%)
ARY News	PTI	24 (40%)	6 (10%)	18 (30%)	9 (15%)	3 (5%)
ARY News	PMLN	6 (10%)	24 (40%)	6 (10%)	9 (15%)	5 (10%)

Geo News broadcast PTI corrupt information fifty percent of the time and also highlighted their victimization status twenty percent of the time while focusing on PMLN performance methodology and economic competency. ARY News depicted PTI through a blended narrative approach featuring governance structures (40%) as well as economic elements (30%) yet PMLN received most of its coverage through corruption (40%) and victimism (15%). Each news outlet revealed different patterns between them beyond sound levels and tone since they constructed their storytelling in distinct ways. Geo News brought attention to PTI's court troubles in addition to their controversial matters but ARY News focused on showing the party's leadership abilities and proposed reforms program.

Summary of Findings

Geo News and ARY News offered differing amounts of attention and framing styles throughout the 2024 Pakistani general election when portraying Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) political parties. The analysis showed systematic differences across the three studied variables which included the quantity of coverage along with the coverage tone and dominant framing usage.

Among the channels Geo News broadcast a much wider selection of PMLN related content than ARY News provided for PTI. A disproportionate concentration of attention reveals itself through media agendas thus serving as essential in agenda creation (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The increased quantity of coverage directed toward a particular party helps increase public awareness of its discourse along with its political objectives and public critiques.

Second, the findings indicate a significant bias in the tone of coverage. Geo News represented PTI badly in 60% of its parts, whereas PMLN was usually shown positively or neutrally. In contrast, ARY

News presented PTI positively in over half of its parts and PMLN negatively in nearly half. These findings are consistent with theories of media bias and political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), implying that media outlets in Pakistan may match their reporting with specific political interests or editorial stances.

Third, when covering PTI, Geo News emphasized corruption and legal difficulties, but ARY News focused on governance and economic development. Geo News typically portrayed the PMLN in terms of administrative competence and national progress, but ARY News connected the party with corruption and political conflict. This selective framing not only shows each outlet's editorial stance, but it also influences how viewers evaluate political actors' objectives, credibility, and legitimacy (Entman, 1993).

These trends strongly indicate partisan media coverage. Geo News appeared to prefer the PMLN both quantitatively (more airtime) and qualitatively (more positive and governance oriented coverage), whereas ARY News leaned towards the PTI. The prevalence of media bias calls into question the norm of objective political journalism and raises serious issues about the media's democratic role in Pakistan. It emphasizes how selective exposure to partisan media can lead to political polarization, voting bias and selective perception among the general population.

Furthermore, the findings lend support to the conceptual framework of agenda setting and framing theory, indicating how media outlets select not only which political entities to cover (agenda setting), but also how to display them (framing). The differences observed in this study have significant ramifications for voter perception and decision making, particularly in a highly charged electoral atmosphere when many residents rely on the media for political information.

Finally, these data address the primary study question, "How do Geo News and ARY News portray PTI and PMLN during the election period?" by indicating that portrayals were not balanced, impartial, or uniform. Instead, they were carefully framed and tonally slanted depending on the channel, implying that media outlets operated as political players rather than objective observers.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The current study looked at how two of Pakistan's leading private television networks, Geo News and ARY News, covered the country's 2024 general elections, specifically how they portrayed the two dominant political parties, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN). The study used a structured content analysis of 60 prime time broadcasts aired between March and May 2024 to investigate disparities in coverage volume, tone, and prominent framing patterns.

The findings of this study are consistent with current theories in media and political communication. Notably, the findings support agenda setting theory, which holds that the media tells people not what to think, but what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In this perspective, the significantly more airtime given to the PMLN by Geo News and the PTI by ARY News demonstrates how each channel prioritized their favorite political actor in the public's eyes. Agenda setting effects are especially strong during elections, as time sensitive political narratives can influence voter perception, attention and turnout (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Strömbäck & Kaid, 2008).

Volume and Visibility: Media as Gatekeepers

The distribution of airtime is not a neutral process; it is influenced by editorial judgments regarding political bodies' perceived legitimacy, newsworthiness and strategic significance. Geo News' inclination to provide greater attention to the PMLN, and ARY News' reciprocal concentration on the PTI, point to an inherent partisan logic. These trends lend support to the concept of media gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009), in which media organizations choose, prioritize, or exclude content based on internal and external pressures. This is especially important in hybrid political regimes like Pakistan, where media freedom coexists with informal pressures from political and state actors (Freedom House, 2024).

Furthermore, coverage differences may reflect the ownership structures and historical affiliations of both networks. Geo News, part of the Jang Group, has previously aligned with centrist or center left parties and has had problematic relationships with military and PTI leadership in the past. In contrast, ARY News has always been seen as pro establishment and more supportive of the PTI throughout its rule. These associations are crucial for understanding how media partisanship is manifested through content duration.

Tone: Evaluative Bias and Political Alignment

The tone of news coverage reflects the evaluative stance of each media outlet. Geo News covered the PTI negatively in 60% of its segments, focusing on corruption, legal issues, and perceived authoritarian tendencies. Meanwhile, ARY News provided generally positive coverage of PTI, highlighting governance, economic reform and victimization by governmental institutions. The opposite was mostly true for PMLN. This evaluative disparity represents what D'Alessio and Allen (2000) refer to as "slant bias," in which media portrayals favor one party through tone and vocabulary. In divided political situations, such bias reinforces itself: audiences flock toward outlets that represent their ideas (Stroud, 2011), and media continue to pander to segmented viewerships.

Furthermore, the tone bias demonstrated here may affect public trust. According to Zaller's (1992) Receive Accept Sample (RAS) model, people who are frequently exposed to one sided information are more likely to internalize those signals, especially if they lack prior strong opinions. In this light, biased tone can indirectly influence voting preferences by creating perceived political realities based on competence, honesty and victimhood.

Framing: Construction of Political Narratives

Framing research indicated an additional layer of influence. Geo News used corruption and victimhood frameworks to highlight the PTI's legal and ethical weaknesses. In contrast, ARY News used governance and economic frames to present PTI as a forward thinking party restricted by foreign challenges. PMLN received the opposite therapy in each channel.

Entman (1993) defines framing as selecting some characteristics of a perceived reality and emphasizing them in a communicating text. The prevalent frames such as corruption or economic performance have a fundamental impact on how people interpret political acts and actors. When political content is framed in terms of morality, it elicits disgust or anger; when framed economically, it appeals to rational evaluation and practicality.

This is especially important in Pakistani politics, where populist rhetoric, dynastic politics, and institutional instability frequently dominate discussions. Media outlets' use of framing tactics does more than just inform the electorate; it also creates competing interpretations of political truth, which can drive polarization, misinformation, and voter alienation.

Implications for Democratic Practice

The results bring up significant normative issues about the function of the media in democracies. The media should ideally act as an unbiased watchdog, offering fair, balanced and varied perspectives to facilitate educated citizen involvement. The imbalance in coverage, tone and framing that has been noted, however, points to Pakistani media or at least its most well known private broadcasters operating more as political actors than as impartial outlets.

There are severe repercussions for this. First, narrative manipulation rather than ballot tampering could jeopardize electoral integrity. Second, when political or ideological bias filters media content, voter autonomy is undermined. Lastly, because various actors are held to different standards depending on their media allies, political responsibility is selectively imposed.

Given the growing dependence of voters on television and digital media for political information (Gallup Pakistan, 2023), such partisan alignment by major broadcasters could distort public discourse and limit meaningful democratic choice.

Conclusion

This study looked at how the PMLN and PTI were covered by ARY News and Geo News during the general election in Pakistan in 2024. The study uses content analysis of prime time news programs to show that both networks used selective coverage techniques characterized by evaluative tone bias, ideologically motivated framing, and disproportionate airtime. The fundamental democratic ideal of a free and fair press is challenged by these activities, which are a reflection of long standing media partisanship trends. According to the evidence, ARY News helped PTI by depicting it as reformist and unfairly criticized, whereas Geo News benefited PMLN in terms of both volume and positive framing. These trends mirror historical affiliations and ownership biases and they contribute to a broader phenomenon of political parallelism in Pakistani media.

The results theoretically support the applicability of theories of media bias, agenda setting and framing in non Western, semi democratic settings. The study also supports the notion that, particularly in high stakes situations like general elections, journalists in these settings have the potential to turn from impartial observers into political stakeholders.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations can be made:

1. Strengthen Media Regulation: Independent oversight bodies such as PEMRA should enforce editorial balance more stringently, especially during election periods.
2. Promote Media Literacy: Educating the public on how to critically assess media content is essential to counter the effects of biased reporting.
3. Encourage Public Broadcasting: A well funded, editorially independent public broadcaster could serve as a counterweight to private media biases.
4. Ensure Transparency of Ownership: Media organizations should disclose political and corporate affiliations to help audiences contextualize coverage.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several restrictions on this study. Initially, only two channels were examined; digital platforms and Urdu language newspapers could be included to future studies. Second, a longterm study might determine whether these trends continue beyond election cycles, even though the analysis was conducted over a three month period. Lastly, the study concentrated on content; experimental techniques might be utilized to investigate the ways in which such content influences audience sentiment and voting patterns.

Future studies could also look at comparative viewpoints, analyzing how media partisanship in Pakistan differs from that of other hybrid democracies or how young people's political narratives are being shaped by emerging platforms like YouTube and Twitter/X.

Final Thoughts

The role of news organizations is more significant—and more contested—than ever in Pakistan's changing media landscape, where new digital platforms compete with conventional broadcast sources. The results of this study show that the media can influence and frame elections in addition to providing information. A critical and independent media system will be essential to Pakistan's democratic progress in order to achieve political accountability, civic empowerment, and election integrity.

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