S.A.M.A.R.

Society for
Alternative Media
and Research

Monitoring of
General Elections Coverage by Electronic Media
in Pakistan

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Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR) is a non-Governmental organization based in Pakistan's federal capital, Islamabad. It was established in March, 2005 .SAMAR has been working in different social, political and environmental development fields for the past seven years with collaboration of international donor agencies including Oxfam GB, ActionAid, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, International Union against Lungs Disease (France), Campaign for Tobacco free Kids (USA) and others.

Strengthening Democratic Media Development - Since 2008, the organization has been working on a project "Strengthening Democratic Media Development in Pakistan" with the collaboration of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The organization has published an analytical report, 'Newspapers' Monitoring Report' on media contents with citizens' perspective monitoring and analyzing three English and three Urdu national dailies. Booklets on 'Media Literacy' and 'Media Democracy' have also been published. Under the project educative meetings, training workshops, orientation sessions and seminars on media literacy, democratic media, and citizens' role particularly on "Why do we need democratic media" and" Media ethics and citizens' role have been held in all major cities of the country.

The organization is publishing quarterly '*Media Review*' in Urdu language for the past three years. In 2011, the project's target audience was faculty and students of mass communication departments of different universities and colleges focusing on values of media ethics, responsibility, rights of news and views consumers, and to influence changes in curriculum of mass communication to introduce media sociology, issues of economics of journalism and media literacy.

SAMAR

Monitoring of General Elections Coverage By Electronic Media

Contents

Background

According to a British media review by Media Standards Trust (2011), the public have little faith in the willingness of the national press to behave responsibly: research conducted for the review found that fewer than one in ten people trust national newspapers to behave responsibly. Nor do people believe we can rely on editors for guidance. 70% of the respondents disagreed with the statement "We can trust newspaper editors to ensure that their journalists act in the public interest."

Situation in Pakistan is not different. In April 2012, the results of an online survey conducted by The Express Tribune revealed that most Pakistanis feel the local media spreads negativity, is sensationalist and is sponsored by political parties. A total of 1,025 Pakistanis and expatriates participated in the online survey. Respondents included a majority of those aged between 20-30 (61%) and 30-40 (21%). Males comprised 83 per cent of the total sample whereas journalists and media personnel constituted 13 per cent of total respondents, which sums up to approximately 133 people.

The question of ethics and responsible reporting led to questioning the sample whether they had ever been offended by a news story or TV report and if they had ever made an official complaint or signed a petition against a media group. With regards to the former, a large majority of 88 per cent, 902 people out of the total sample, said they had been offended by a news story or TV report.

The Express Tribune, in its editorial on 17 June, 2012, commented that news bulletins blare out everywhere and are available over mobile phones and computers. As a result, there has been an obsession with the news and all that it contains. Endless discussions continue along the lines of the themes laid out, with news organizations setting the agenda for news by determining what we are interested in and what should capture our attention. Not surprisingly then, many issues that we should be concerned about go unnoticed and uncommented on for the most part.

There are laws and rules that regulate the media. But these parameters do not reflect on a comprehensive basis the need to view the role of media from the most important perspective: that of the citizen. At the same time, citizens also have obligations to support and strengthen media independence.

"PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) is clearly not doing its job," says Zohra Yusuf, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "There is a dire need of set up an independent body to regulate the media, she says, adding that there is too much bias in reporting.

Election Coverage

The general elections have been announced in Pakistan in May, 2013. Political parties have already started their activities in this regard. Pakistani media are also preparing for full-fledged coverage of elections. However, keeping in view the concerns about objectivity, impartiality and balance in media, as discussed above, and impulse to manipulate media and control information by different actors in the elections, the need arises to keep an eye on the role of media and election coverage by them.

We have already witnessed a lack of experience and training in reporting election issues in 2008 in an ambivalent media environment. At that time, the Election Commission of Pakistan departed from its tradition of issuing a Code of Conduct for media during the elections and instead issued a directive to Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to monitor the operations of all TV channels including state-owned Pakistan Television, and ensure that coverage as to electoral activities of political parties and candidates till poling day were fair, un-biased and balanced. However, the PEMRA never issued any report during three months of electioneering.

Why this Project?

The media monitoring of elections coverage is done by PEMRA, the state-owned body. The ECP, while proposing Code of Conduct this time, has again directed PEMRA to monitor the election coverage whereas PEMRA failed to produce any report during the whole electioneering period in 2008. There is a need of fair, independent and unbiased monitoring of elections coverage by an independent and impartial body from civil society. SAMAR intends to fulfill this need.

The objectives of the project:

"Monitoring, analyzing and preparing findings reports of Elections 2013 coverage by electronic media in light of Code of Conduct laid down by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and Pakistan Coalition for Ethical Journalism (PCEJ)."

Methodology

Six most viewed current affairs Urdu language TV channels shall be monitored for pre, post and during election coverage. Monitoring tools and indicators shall be developed in this regard in the light of Code of Conduct. Time and space allocated to different political parties and candidates and content of electronic media shall be scrutinized. The categories of media products to be monitored shall be:

1. News Headlines
2. Talk shows
3. Paid Political Content

The approaches used for this project include **"Content Monitoring" and "Economy of Production"**. These approaches entail the following facets of a broadcast content:

a. Content Monitoring

1. The Text
2. The Context
3. Gesticulation
4. Time slot
5. The Outcome

b. **Economy of Media**

1. Time slot of Political paid content
2. Duration of each Political paid content
3. Frequency of each Political paid content

Monitoring period and Time Duration

This report is based on the data collected in **six day's** consecutive monitoring of the content aired in Prime time **(7pm-11pm)**, from **25th April 2013 to 30th April 2013**. The total monitoring duration therefore comprise of **24 hours**.

List of TV Channels monitored

The list includes following mainstream State owned and Private News channels:

1. PTV News
2. Geo News
3. Express News
4. Duniya News

5. Dawn News
6. Sama Tv
7. ARY News
8. Waqt News

Time slot

The objective towards selection of merely **"The Prime Time"** for monitoring is mainly because of its significance in terms of **"Viewership"** and **"Commercial outcome"** which are both essentially relevant to each other. According to the popular media viewership indicator's Prime time grasp maximum number of viewers in front of their Tv screens worldwide, and obviously is the most high priced slot.

News Headlines

All Private TV channels projected accusations from the party leaders against each other as News headlines. Most public rallies by mainstream politicians on private TV channel often comprised personal attacks and accusations against one another.
Emergency coverage of Election violence, specifically "Bomb blasts", on private TV channels was mostly based on speculations, disinformation and exaggeration.
Care taker government and state affairs were not given adequate coverage on private TV channels.
The smaller political parties and independent candidates were not given appropriate coverage.

Abbreviations

|			
AJI	Awami Jamhori Ittehad	PMLN	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
AML	Awami Muslim League	PMLQ	Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid e
APML	All Pakistan Muslim League	PPP	Azam)
AWN	Awami National Party		Peoples Party Pakistan
JI	Jamat Islami	PTI	Pakistan Tehrek Insaf
MQM	Mutihida Quomi Movement		
		ECP	ECP - Election commission of Pakistan

Programs / Talk Shows

TV Channels	Dominant Issues	Party Representation (in order of representation)	Public opinion	Fairness
Dunya TV	Election Violence, Taliban	1. MQM 2 .PPP,ANP & PMLN 3. PTI & PMLQ	Nil	90 %
PTV News	Election violence, threats, governance	1. MQM ,PPP & ANP	5 %	80 %
Dawn News	Elections, Manifesto, Security	1.PML N 2.PPP, ANP, PTI PML Q & MQM	60%	80 %
ARY News	Terrorism	1.PTI 2.PPP, PMLN, JI, PMLQ & APML	60%	80%
SAMA TV	Election campaign	1.PTI 2.PMLQ 3.PMLN 4.PPP,ANP ,AML	40 %	60 %
Geo News	Election debate, Violence, women candidates	1.PTI 2.PMLN 3.PPP,ANP & MQM 4.JI	40%	80%
Express News	Election campaign , Manifesto, Feudalism, threats	1.PML N 2.PTI 3. PPP ,ANP	90 %	90%
Waqt News	Election campaign, Governance, Media role & Responsibility	1. PML N 2. AML	25 %	80%

Paid Political Content (Air Time)

PPP	PTI	PML(N)	PML(Q)	JI	AJI	MQM
1:21:00	3:38:00	2:07:00	2:10:00	0:10:00	0:01:20	0:01:00
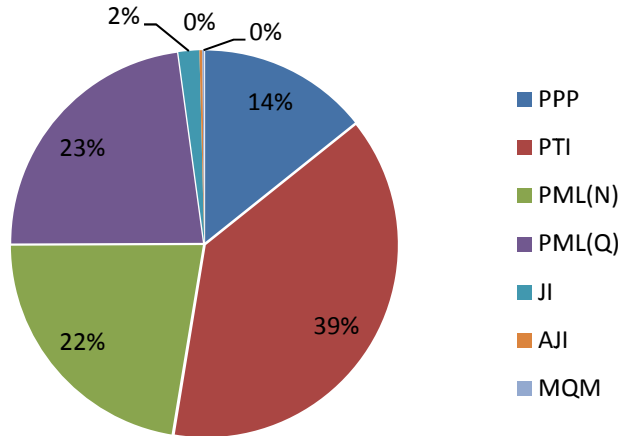
Paid political content (by frequency)

Total Number	PPP	PTI	PML(N)	PML(Q)	JI	AJI	MQM
704	119	228	180	148	22	5	2

- *PTI stands the top political advertiser with highest frequency and airtime in the mainstream private electronic media.*

Gesticulation of the content
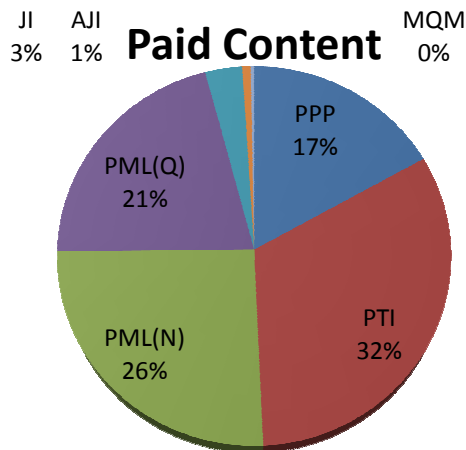
Conclusion:

Pakistan's first transition to democracy after completing of five year tenure by the PPP and coalition has opened media space and greater levels of information availability and consumption. Growing media pluralism, information availability in real time, and news accessibility in local languages has changed people's access to information on issues such as politics, elections, legislation and democracy.

The majority of stories were based on press releases with very few news items appearing to be generated by the reporters themselves. There were very few investigative reports. There was no attempt to educate the media consumers, merely to provide routine information on the subject. The vast majority addressed the performance of the present/outgoing government. There was clear lack of news stories/shows about Baluchistan, FATA, law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Election commission violations of code of conduct, women's participation in the elections and minorities etc.

All broadcast media monitored failed to comply with the basic obligations of balance and equitable coverage of parties and candidates. Due to the vague and inadequate provisions of the Election Commission of Pakistan about media 's code of ethics, the allocation of airtime on broadcast media was extremely selective. As the content analysis demonstrates the coverage of the elections, although enjoying a very prominent position in the national news agenda, it overwhelmingly showed PTI and PMLN. TV channels denied its consumer/viewer of their two basic rights protected in the electoral process: the right of voters to be informed about political alternatives and matters of public interest and the right of candidates to put their message across.

With regards to the allocation of airtime to the different political parties in news programmes, quantitative data shows that there is an extremely high percentage of coverage dedicated to PTI and PMLN and low coverage of ANP, PPP and MQM who are under attack from Taliban. These parties (PPP, ANP & MQM) received some time, although their coverage concentrated on specific events of bombing and attacks on their rallies and offices during elections.

Date: ----------------   Monitor no: ....   List no: ----------------

1. **Tv Channel**

Geo News   Duniya Tv   Dawn News   ARY News   Express News   Sama Tv   Waqt News   PTV
News

2. **Starting time…………….**   **Ending time……………….**
3. **Duration:**

30:00 minutes   40:00 minutes   45:00 minutes   50:00 minutes

4. **Program Title……………………………**
5. **Anchor person…………………………**

6. **Participants (Studio/Video conference) names:**

1.   2.   3.   4.

On Telephone

1.   2.   3.   4.

7. **Topic/ Issue/Issues**

Electoral Process Party Manifesto Governance Transparency Restraints Threats (Any other)

8. **Scope**   National   Provincial   Local
9. **Constituency**   NA No……..   PP No……..
10. **Participants backgrounds**

Party Rep (No:)   Analysts (No:)   Journalists (No:)   Retired Armed Personnel(No:)   Retired/Serving
Bureaucrats (N0:)   Legal Expert (No:) Independent Contestant (No:)   Public(
students   urban   rural) Others

(i) If students then institution

a.   **Public**   b. **Private**

 (ii)Public Opinion

a.   **Yes   b.   No**

(1) live   (2) recorded

(i) No of respondents…………..

(ii) The number of neutral respondents

(iii) The number of respondents having party affiliations

(iv) The proportion

        a. **Biased   b. Balanced**

11. **Represented Parties**

PPPP PML(N) ANP PTI MQM PML(Q) JI JUI(F) APML PML(F) NP BNP PMAP PPP(SB) JSQM Others

12. Participation of Marginalized/ Vulnerable Groups

Women (no:) Religious Minorities(no:) Transgender(no:) Ethnic Minorities(no:)   Other

13. **No. of questions to each Participant**   1.   2.   3.   4.   5.   6.

14. **Time Dedicated to each Participant (percentage)**

  1.   2.   3.   4.   5.   6.

15. **Method of Questions raised** (a) Fair (b) Discriminative (c) Factual (d) speculated (e) Direct (f) Ambiguous (g) Biased Other

16. **Basis of Bias or discrimination** (a) Against a particular Candidate/Party name_____ (b) Religion_____ (c) Creed_____ (d) Gender_____ (e) Ethnicity_____ (f) Political affiliation/Ideology…………. Other

17. **Questioning Manner** (a) Polite (b) Harsh (c) Emotional (d) Offensive (e) Neutral

18. **Repeated Words/Terminologies/Variables** (a)Democracy (b) Transparency (c) Economic crises (d) Energy crises/ Power outage (e) Rigging (f) Unemployment (g) Price hike (h) Army (i) America (j) Drone strikes (k) Taliban/ Banned religious outfits (l) FATA (m) Balochistan (n) KPK (o) Sindh (p) Punjab (q) Saraiki province (s) Judiciary (t) Agencies (u) Polling station (v) Security (x) Election commission (y) corruption (z) Peace, change Others

19. **Deemed outcome of discourse**

    Information about (a) Parties (b) Candidates (c) Campaign issues (d) Voting process (e) Electoral reforms (d) Incitement to violence/ hatred /intolerance/ Pubic disorder Other

Monitor's Name & Signature   Supervisor's Name & Signature

News Monitoring Form

Date: **Monitor no:**   **Form no:**

Broadcast outlet/Channel:

News Bulletin/Program Title:

Time Start: **Time End:**   **Total Duration:**

Head lines in order of presentation:

1._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Govt.Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

2._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

3._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

4._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

5._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5

Est Time:

6._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

7._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

8._____

Statement   Press conference   News Report
Supporting visuals: a.Video b.Pictures c.Documents
Org/Ind/Party/Inst/Official Other
Positive/negative: 1 2 3 4 5
Est Time:

Parties/Institutions Represented:

PPPP PML(N) PTI ANP JUI(F) MQM PML(Q) NP   BNP(M) PML(F) PPP(SB) APML   AML JI JUI(N) others

ARMY JUDICIARY ELECTION COMMISSION CARE TAKER GOVT. Others

Social Issues Represented:

Gender Health Education Environment Un employment Price hike Load shedding Others

Marginalized Groups Represented:

Women Religious minorities   Ethnic minorities   Transgender   Others

Govt. Official's Represented:

PM   Governor   CM   Federal Minister   Provincial Minister

Other

Monitor's Name & Signature   Supervisor's Name & Signature

Date: **Monitor no:**   **Form no:**

1. Time Slot:

2. Tv Channel:

3. Total No of Paid Commercials/Content:

4. Total Duration of Paid Content:

5. Adverting parties:

 PPPP PML(N) PTI MQM PML(Q) APML   ANP JI Other

6. Duration of each Advert (Party wise):

  a. PPPP   b. PML(N)   c. PTI   d. MQM
  e. APML   f. PML(Q)   e. JI   Other

7. Frequency of each Advert (Party wise)

  a. PPPP   b. PML(N)   c. PTI   d. MQM
  e. APML   f. PML(Q)   e. JI   Other

8. Nature of the Paid Advert/Content (Party wise):

     Nature   Party Name/Names

  a. Documentary style
  b. Video song
  c. Emotional
  d. Biased
  e. Neutral
  f. Comparative

Monitors Name & Signature   Supervisors Name &Signature

Annex:Paid Content Monitoring Form
Electronic Media Monitoring
Society for Alternative Media & Research

Date: **Monitor no:**   **Form no:**

1. Time Slot:

2. Tv Channel:

3. Total No of Paid Commercials/Content:

4. Total Duration of Paid Content:

5. Adverting parties:

 PPPP   PML(N)   PTI   PML(Q)   JI   MQM   APML   ANP   Other

6. Duration and frequency each Advert (Party wise):

PPPP	Frequency	**PTI**	Frequency	**PML(N)**	Frequency	**PML(Q)**	Frequency
Duration		Duration		Duration		Duration	
JI	Frequency	**APML**	Frequency	**MQM**	Frequency	**ANP**	Frequency
Duration		Duration		Duration		Duration	

7. Nature of the Paid Advert/Content (Party wise):

Nature	Party Name/Names
Documentary style	
Video song	

Emotional	
Biased	
Neutral	
Comparative	

Monitors Name & Signature   Supervisors Name &Signature