



RESEARCH PAPER

Media Development VS Human Development: The Case of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The twentieth century was characterized by the evolution of media whereas the twenty-first century is witnessing its rapid development. An opportune manifestation of this can be found in its massive expansion in Pakistan. The pace at which electronic media in Pakistan has expanded, especially after the establishment of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), is enviable, to say the least. A brief analysis of the facts and figures reveals that, there has been an increase of whopping 3744per cent in the number of electronic media (radio stations and television channels) outlets while that for print media (dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, quarterlies and others) has been recorded at 46per cent. This means that as a whole there has been an increase of 134per cent in the number of media outlets. The electronic media of Pakistan records tremendous growth in short period of time but reputation of Pakistani media has violated due to its failure in comprehensively understanding the affairs, as media contributes toward crispy issues and crisis rather than addressing the real facts and causes of societal and human developmental issues.

Introduction

In 1947 when Pakistan emerged as an independent nation on the world map, it had only three public sector radio stations(Radio Pakistan, 2015) but now their number has surged to 62 having a setup of 40 Frequency Modulation (FM) and 22 Medium Wave (MW) stations(Radio Pakistan, Sales, 2017). The first private sector commercial FM radio station started operations in 1995(FM100, 2017) and the number of such channels have reached 142(PEMRA, FM, 2017). Similarly, Pakistan's first non-commercial FM radio station was established by University of Peshawar's Communications Department in 2004(DAWN, 2004) and the number

of radio stations in this sector now stands at 45 (PEMRA, 2017). And, if we take a cursory look at the development of the TV medium in the country, we find that since the establishment of Pakistan Television Corporation – the first state TV channel – in 1964 (PTV, 2017), the number of its channels, at present, is 8 (PTV, 2017) whereas that of private media, which entered the country in 1990 (Wikipedia, 2017), has soared to 84 in 2016 (PEMRA TV, 2015). Print media outlets, which numbered 370 in 1953 (Federal Bureau of Statistics, 1998) as per data provided by Federal Bureau of Statistics, were 646 in 2016 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Pakistani Media Outlets

	Latest Available No	Base line No	% Change
Print Media	539	370	+46
Govt. Radio Stations	62	3	+1967
Private FM Radio Stations Licensees Issued	142	3	+4633
Non Commercial FM Stations Licensees Issued	45	1	+4400
Govt. TV Channels	8	1	+700
Private Satellite TV Channels Licensees Issued	89	1	+8800
Total Electronic Media Outlets	346	9	+3744
Total Media Outlets (Print & Electronic)	885	379	+134

Although this massive expansion of media is a welcome development but the question that warrants an extensive research on prospects of media in Pakistan is: what service did it provide to the masses? There are two dominant viewpoints in this regard. The first argues that this enormous expansion of media is actually only a race to win the biggest chunk of the audience as well as of the market whereas the second one maintains that this development is to bridge the chasm that exists in the country regarding people's communication needs. Nevertheless, both these views point toward a common factor and that is the concept of media responsibility.

Theoretical Basis

In order to find the answers to these burning questions, we would have to give due consideration to various facets of media's role. A noted mass communication scholar, Mr Wilbur Schramm, lays down three fundamental roles of media in developing countries. He says that the media should serve as 'watchdogs', 'policymakers', and 'teachers' for change and modernization. As 'watchdogs' media should keep an eye on the activities of public institutions and report any anomalies and irregularities that impede the development. As 'policymakers' media should not only highlight the wrongs but also suggest how to correct it. It should help governments in making and implementing policies. Agenda-Setting theory explains how media agenda shifts agenda into public

agenda and ultimately becomes policy agenda. As 'teachers' media should teach people how to contribute actively in the community for change, modernization and development. Knowledge and skills should be imparted through media so that people can play their new roles and responsibilities (Schramm, 1964).

This three-pronged role of media is actually due to its importance as its content has immediate yet long-lasting effects – a fact elaborated by various media theories. For instance, the Cultivation theory, which states that high frequency viewers of television are more susceptible to media messages and the belief that they are real and valid. This suggests that media can be used to channel public opinion in a specific direction. It's a means to change people's behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. The Bullet theory asserts that just like the bullet is fired from the gun, in the same way messages from media are shot in the minds of the masses, hitting directly the target audience with desired effects. It means that the media is a catalyst to developing or moulding public opinion regarding the development process. Furthermore, the Agenda Setting theory suggests that media builds public opinion on a particular issue rather than altering the same. Today researchers believe that when a matter gets public attention, then it inevitably affects government policies. The fundamental role of the media is to create awareness about social issues and offer solutions to these core issues. Through the representation of these issues, the media tell the readers what issues are more important and how the readers or audience should feel about these issues. This process of creating awareness and representation of issues is called framing which is the most important way to emphasize certain beliefs and ignoring others non-significant issues. This framing is further elaborated by Entman (1993) as:

"Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".

Unfortunately, the Pakistani media failed to utilize its framing effects on the behaviors setting pattern and instead of educating the masses and imparting awareness among the general public about the gravity of the human developmental issues, just have been acting as a business enterprises and promoter of the governmental policies. According to Kahneman & Tversky (1984), the media frames have direct influence on the people about how they view social problems and what actions they take on these representation.

So, it is now established that the media makes public perception and alters public attitude and beliefs. Anything disseminated through media has immediate effect and its agenda sets the country's development course. In the light of all the above mentioned aspects, if our media were playing the role of a watchdog, a policymaker and a teacher and had its agenda been of highlighting problems of the masses, or more rightly public service broadcasting, then the state of affairs regarding human development in our country would have been much better than

it is today. Although the state media seems quite proactive in public service broadcasting, the flood-like influx of private media outlets has eclipsed the same. But, private sector media seems oblivious to its responsibility toward public broadcasting. The Human Development Index in UNDP's Human Development Report 2016 ranks Pakistan at 147th position among 188 countries (Human Development Report 2016 Team, 2016) and it includes among the countries on the list of Medium-Human development countries. The HDR brings to light the bitter fact with regard to the human development in Pakistan, who in South Asia is ahead only of Afghanistan that has been ranked at 169th position.

Human Development Situation

Many social development indices expose the situation with regard to public broadcasting. Take population for instance, if this subject been a part of media content and agenda, then was it possible that Pakistan, which was the 14th most populous country in the world in 1950, could notch up the sixth place today? (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017). Furthermore, had the highest number of out-of-school children and third highest of illiterate adults belonged to Pakistan? (EFA Global Monitoring Report team, 2017) could the literacy rate in the country be only 58 percent in 2015-16? (Economic Advisor Wing, 2017) And, would only 67 % of children of school-going age have been enrolled in primary schools? (UNICEF, 2017) According to the Alif Ailaan's Pakistan District Education Rankings 2016, the retention score at primary school level is 59 percent (AlifAilaan, 2018), which in other words means that only 41% of children did not complete their primary education. This state of affairs warrants serious attention of our media and calls for immediately doing something positive in this regard.

Owing to insufficient media coverage, numerous manifestations of carelessness and ineptitude in the performance of health sector, both at individual and collective levels, are regularly witnessed. For instance, it's our duty as parents to complete the course of immunization of our children and the state institutions are duty-bound to provide the requisite facilities but sometimes we show slackness in this regard while sometimes the state institutions become an epitome of sluggishness. Resultantly, only 60% of children (on record basis) between the age of 12 and 23 months could get immunized (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2016) and perhaps it's the principal reason behind the sad fact that Pakistan stands at 20th place in the ranking of under-five mortality rate (UNICEF, 2017) and every year approximately 431,568 kids die before reaching the age of 5 (UNICEF, 2018). Similarly, births of only 34 percent of kids of below-5 age are registered (UNICEF, 2017) which, again, puts a big question mark over the dutifulness of parents as well as the state institutions. The Economic Survey of Pakistan 2016-17 also highlights this sorry state of affairs by reporting that there is one doctor for 997 and one dentist for 10658 persons, and further finds that at present, there are 123394 hospital beds in the country which give a population-bed ratio of 1584 (Economic Advisor Wing, 2017).

This situation, on the one hand, calls for radical improvement of healthcare facilities, while highlights the need for increasing the ratio of GDP allocated for health sector, on the other. But, at present, what we get is too insufficient to fulfil our needs. Sadly, the country is spending 0.5 to 0.8 per cent of its GDP on health for the last 10 years. These percentages are less than the WHO bench mark of at least 6 percent of GDP required to provide basic and lifesaving services. According to World Bank latest report, currently Pakistan's per capita health spending is US\$ 36.2 which is below than the WHO'S low income countries bench mark of US\$ 86" (Economic Advisor Wing, 2017).A factor in which media has not paid any attention yet.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has created the Global Access to Healthcare Index. It measures how healthcare systems across 60 countries with a diversity of income levels are working to solve the most pressing healthcare needs of their population. The index looks at access to specific kinds of care to find an answer to the key question: in a country, do people have access to appropriate health services and Pakistan ranked 52nd in this Index(The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Moreover, Pakistan is the fifth country, after India Indonesia, Nigeria and Ethiopia where a huge population; twenty five million people defecate openly (JMP, 2017) because 13% houses in the country don't have the toilet facility(Pakistan Bureau of Statistics PSLM, 2016). Moreover, there is a great difference in this ratio between urban and rural areas and only one per cent households in Pakistani cities are without toilet facility whereas 21 percent of those in villages are deprived of it. PSLM reveals that this unhealthy activity is prevalent mostly in rural areas of the Punjab province where 24 percent houses have no toilets followed by Balochistan with 18 percent. Similarly, 16 percent rural houses in Sindh and 14 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are deprived of this facility(Pakistan Bureau of Statistics PSLM, 2016). The havoc that the non-availability of this basic human need is playing with the nation's health couldn't get any media attention.

Besides these problems, another neglected issue is nutritional health. National Nutrition Survey 2011 paints a dismal picture of nutritional status in Pakistan by saying that 58.1% of households in Pakistan were food insecure(Bhutta, Soofi, Zaidi, Habib & Hussain, 2011) and even more distressing is the fact that the nutritional status of the people has declined in the last decade. In addition a report reveals that Pakistan's 19.9percent population is the victim of undernourishment(FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017). Given all these facts, Pakistan has been ranked 106thamong 119 countries on the 2017 Global Hunger Index(Grebmer, et al., 2017). The tool adopted by the Institute to measure extreme hunger has been divided into the following categories:

GHI Severity Scale				
≤ 9.9	10.0-19.9	20.0-34.9	35.0-49.9	50.0 ≤
low	Moderate	Serious	alarming	extremely alarming
0	10	20	35	50

Pakistan, with a score of 32.6, falls in “serious” category. But, did our media pay any attention toward it?

In terms of gender equality, there exists a huge gap in the country. World Economic Forum’s report puts Pakistan at 143rd place among 144 countries where gender discrimination and inequality exists in sectors like health, education, economy and politics (World Economic Forum, 2017). In addition to this, the role of media becomes more important when it comes to discouraging the violence against women and to make people aware of the adverse impacts of this vice. But, the facts and figures that PDHS presents reveal that nearly 32.2 percent of married women of age group 15-49 years are physically abused whereas 38.5 percent women bear the pain of physical or psychological torture by their husbands. The highest ratio of such unfortunate women was found in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where husband of 57.4 percent women subject them to violence. The second highest ratio was found in Balochistan with 50.1 percent followed by Punjab (39.3 %), Islamabad Capital Territory (38.9 %) and Sindh (23 %). The lowest ratio of this shameful was recorded in Gilgit-Baltistan where, nearly 20 % faced violence. Instances of physical violence on and/or psychological abuse of women are more rampant in rural areas as 41.6 percent of married women in these areas were subjected to violence as compared to 32.2 percent in urban areas (NIPS, 2014). Still, there are thousands of unreported incidents most of which die down inside the four walls of the house. Women themselves too prefer not to raise voice against violence, abuse or economic exploitation they have to bear. The prevalence of such vicious acts is only due to a sheer lack of awareness among the women about their rights; which again is a fundamental duty of media’s public service.

Youth is considered an invaluable asset of a country. For Pakistan, the significance of youth is enormous because the country is blessed with the largest population of young people in the whole world. The United Nations defines 'youth' as the persons having age between 15 and 24 years (UNDP, 2014). Pakistan has adopted the Commonwealth standard which puts anyone between 15 and 29 years in the youth cohort (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2010). Given any of these two age brackets; Pakistan stands tall as the fourth and fifth largest country of the youth population respectively (U.S. Census Bureau International Data Base, 2017). Pakistan hosts 21st largest population of youth (in respect of percentage) with 20.9% while as per the Commonwealth standards, it is at 8th place with 30.4 % (U.S. Census Bureau International Data Base, 2017) of its population consisting of youth. But, is media paying requisite attention toward these facts and is it making the development and welfare of this asset of the nation a priority in its content?

Similarly, a report ranks Pakistan at 71st position in terms of economic poverty (Population below \$1.90 a day %) on the list of 131 countries (World Bank, 2017). Thus, the situation of human development across the country calls for immediate, serious and large-scale efforts; and this is where exactly the role of media becomes more important. Media should play its role of a watchdog, a policymaker and an educator so that the situation of human development could be ameliorated and the huge gulf that exists among the four provinces of the country could be bridged.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index 2017-18 further reinforces this fact. The Index has been prepared by the Oxford University's Department of International Development on the basis of 10 indicators regarding life standards in terms of health, education and quality of living. As per this Index, Pakistan's 44.2% population is suffering from multidimensional poverty meaning thereby that they are the victims of non-provision of basic human rights like education, health and quality of living. On this modern measure of poverty, 70.6% population of Balochistan, 50.1% of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 53.2% of Sindh, 36.6% of Punjab, 46.9% of Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) and 9.2% of Islamabad is a victim of multidimensional poverty while an additional 12.7% population of Balochistan, 19.1% of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 17.2% of Punjab, 8.3% of Sindh, 22.8% of Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan) and 7.1% of Islamabad is also vulnerable to it (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2017). It is estimated that there are 20 million people without housing in Pakistan (Homeless World Cup Foundation, 2018).

This situation prevails only due to the provision for either no or inferior basic human needs to the Pakistanis, but this fact is still unable to get into the media agenda.

Conclusion

It is often said that media print or broadcasts only that content which people want to see, listen to or read. But, who develops the choice of the masses? Media cannot evade its responsibility in this regard. Numerous media theories suggest that media builds the public viewing, listening and reading choices through its agenda.

Summing up the debate, it can be asserted that there are numerous subjects related to human development on which the Pakistani media is not paying sufficient attention. Although some coverage is given to almost all problems, statements and ceremonies, yet when it comes to following up the matters, no mentionable development has been seen because the top priority of our media is political subjects and conflict-ridden, spicy issues. Media Responsibility and Independence Index (MRII) suggesting the "concerned stakeholders" believe the media in Pakistan is relatively independent, but the degree of responsibility it demonstrates falls shorter of its claims (Ajmal, 2015).

Let it be clear to everyone that the objective of this discussion is not to develop a perception that our media is not performing the role it is obligated to rather the purpose is only to remind media and the policymakers that the subjects like human development and social welfare must be as important in media content and agenda as other subjects and issues.

The government should also draw up a media policy whereby both public sector and private sector media would be duty-bound to make public broadcasting (human development issues) an integral part of their content and agenda so that the recent expansion of media may also effect human development and welfare of the country.

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