



Evaluating Quality of Media Content in Pakistan through the Lens of Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract

This article is an examination of literature on the topic of quality of media content. Studies which analyzed the different types of content on Pakistani media are reviewed and conclusions are made about the quality of these contents. Both qualitative and quantitative Content analysis and perception-based research articles were analyzed. Results showed that advertisement appearing in media are creative but are full of gender stereotypes, often have immoral content and violate social values and ethical standards of Pakistani society. Furthermore, content of news and current affairs programs is not much according to the professional standards. Drama content has some shortcomings but is still in a very strong position. Films are much behind in terms of quality and quantity.



Key words: quality of content, media in Pakistan, television, film, music, news, advertisements Introduction

This is a review article and its basic purpose is to review the research work related to the quality of media content in Pakistan. A large number of research studies is reviewed by the researchers; most of them are content analysis a few are perception based studies. Qualitative and quantitative both type of researches are included in the review.

Any content produced and distributed by using any kind of media is called media content (Law inside, 2021). Basically content means the experiences and information shared for target audience, by using some medium, it may be an image, audio, video, written word etc. (Dhawan, 2021). These content may be disseminated by using different type of media like printing press, radio, television, social media. While talking about the quality of media content it must be kept in mind that it is a relative concept having normative basis. To check the quality of media content, empirical media presentation is compared with normative assumptions. Most important indicators of quality are balance, diversity and neutral coverage (Jandura & Friedrich, 2014). Another standard may be the perception of audience about this content. Most of the time media users attach higher expectations with the



media content. Many researchers studied the quality of media content by putting it against the users' perceptions.

Analysis of content is very important to find about the effects on people. Content not only influences the attitudes, behaviors believes and thoughts of the users but it also influences others for creating their content. Social learning theory says that media users learn from the contents they consume; they also learn from their environment. They learn from media and behave and act the accordingly in real life.

Content analysis is a replicable and systematic technique to examine media content, it is being used to find the nature, quality, characteristics, presentations, trends and patterns of the content. It provides an empirical basis for monitoring shifts in public opinion (Stemler, 200). In this paper we tried to compile the conclusions of the studies to get insight of the mass media content of Pakistan, that what standards are they following and how much competent their content is.....

CRITICAL REVIEW OF DIFFERENT CONTENTS

1. Advertisements

Pakistani media is often criticized for the misrepresentation or underrepresentation of females. Dramas, movies, advertisements are



specifically under the focus of criticism. A large number of researches proved it scientifically true that females are presented in stereotypical gender roles in the commercials (Ali, Ali, Kumar, Hafeez, & Ghufuran, 2012). But a few studies resulted that situation is getting better and television advertisements in Pakistan are creative, having novel ideas (Ahmad & Mahmood, 2011).

Jamil (2018), studied the women portrayals in advertisements on Pakistani media and found that women are showed in subordinate roles, and as a misconceive object. Stereotypical representation of females reinforces the conventional believes in society about the gender roles. Another researcher concluded that females are portrayed stereotypically and also are presented in a fashionable way. They are never exhibited in intelligent characters (Babul & Niaz, 2019). When man are portrayed as decisive, dominating and strong, while females just as a sexual object; these stereotypical depictions disseminate stereotypical gender roles and strengthen male chauvinism in the society (Tehseem, Sibtain, & Obaid, 2018). Another study saw the television advertisements violating the social values of Pakistani society and professional code of conduct. Findings of this study indicated that these advertisements are full of obscenity, deception and stereotyping. These ads transgress the code of conduct of PEMRA and cultural values (Rawan & Bibi, 2009).



2. News

While analyzing the content of leading newspapers of Pakistan researcher found that Content of news is based on manufactured reality instead of reality (Riaz, 2007). Pakistani news media was compared with the news media of Ghana. Researchers found that After the introduction of mobile journalism fake news are prevailing in Pakistan (Jamil & Appiah-Adjei, 2019). Negligence of professional ethics by journalists results in the poor quality content on media (Arshad & Ashraf, 2014). While comparing the English and Urdu dailies, researchers tried to examine the biasness, coverage and objectivity in these papers. Results showed that Dawn is best at adoption of professional ethics. Urdu dailies are less professional than that of English ones (Arshad & Ashraf, 2014). Pakistani news media is full of yellow journalism due to corrupt journalists (Sumbal, 2011). There are many reasons behind the corrupt practices of journalists such as lack of education and professional training. As a study signposted that Lack of education and expertise results in the poor reporting of environmental change and it results in misinformation about the issue (Ejaz, Ittefaq , & Arif, 2021).

In Pakistan Media content is greatly under the influence of government as government control their content by providing or restricting the advertisements (Riaz, 2007). Along with being a source of information



papers in Pakistan are good source of learning for their readers. For example results of a research project depicted that English language newspapers in Pakistan are a good source of learning English for their readers (Shahzad, Israr, Lodhi, & Moin-ud-Din, 2015). News channels also have the great potential for health education but a content analysis regarding health news resulted that health reporting in the English daily is of poor quality, pessimistic and insufficient (Mahesar, Pasha , Pathan, & Qadeer, 2021).

It is evident that our channels less bother to investigate the events and they heavily rely on studio productions (Marwan & Wadood, 2018). Ignoring the investigating line often creates troubles for our journalists as Claims about the Zaneb Incident made by Dr. Shahid Masood were proved false in court and he had to face the consequences. Moreover, for international news our newspapers highly depend on the international wire services, so the news on international pages of different papers were very similar. This overwhelmed dependency results in one sided interpretation of the matter (Shaheen, 2014). Results of a research revealed that audience have less trust on the quality and credibility of news presented on news channels. Users want timely and truthful information which channels fail to provide (Mursaleen, Ijaz, & Kashif, 2014). Television channels cover the trivial matters while often miss important events, they do not give balanced coverage to the all viewpoints. On airing the Unconfirmed news and less



consideration to the ethics (Arshad & Ashraf, 2014) are the reasons that's why public lost trust in these channels. Paracha, Shahzad and Nazir (2013) documented that national media spreads terror in spite of information, they create panic by presenting subjective, exaggerated, sensational and unverified news. One more study resulted that practices of private television channels do not properly follow the professional ethics i.e. neutrality, treatment and impartiality. These news channels consider themselves as sovereign and autonomous and neglect the rules (Riaz, Javed, & Bhutta, 2021). According to some other researchers, news and current affairs programs of Geo, Aaj, Dunia, Express, ARY, and Samaa are full of sensationalism. Geo is the more sensational then all others (Raza, Sultan, & Jan, 2012). Another study presented the similar results, but a new addition was made as it was documented that Dawn News has the lowest graph of sensationalism (Yousaf, Yasmeen, & Ali, 2019).

3.Drama

Pakistani drama has a glorious history. There was a time when roads became empty at the time of broadcast of serials. Even today Pakistani drama is a popular source of family entertainment. These dramas have a long list of topics and themes. Conventional to novel stories are depicted in Pakistani dramas (Tahir & Rehman, 2021). Another study results shown that the television dramas depicted the very actual picture of the condition and



Pak. Journal of Media Science, Vol 3, Issue 1 (2022) Evaluating Quality of Media

problems of the women of South Punjab (Shafiq, Akhtar, & Abbas, 2021).

A perception study resulted that women from both high and low socioeconomic status believe that women portrayal in Pakistani dramas is got better and now they are presented as strong, empowered and independent (Tahir & Rehman, 2021). While according to some other researchers career oriented and independent women are presented as bad women in the dramas (Tabassum & Amin, 2021)

Though our dramas are very popular not only in country but abroad too but these dramas face criticism for disseminating immoral content (Nawaz, 2006).

Culture of Pakistani society is based in Islamic ideology and according to this ideology obscenity and inequality are prohibited (Rawan & Bibi, 2009).

But it is concluded by researchers that dramas are promoting extramarital affairs, dwindling the family units. These dramas are normalizing the illegitimate relations (Arafat , Sial , & Zafar, 2020).

Presentation of quality substance make the Pakistani drama on a high position among international drama producers. Pakistani drama is well known because of practical stories in a simpler depiction (Huma, 2015).

These shows are a source of family amusement with a high level decency (Ashfaq & Shafiq, 2018). Researcher argued by putting the examples and analysis of dramas like *khuda mera bhi hai*, *iltija* and *udaari* that Urdu dramas are educating the public on social issues (Chaudhary, 2021).



Fatima (2019) saw dramas of PTV as a good source of education, highlighting the genuine problems of common men. While private channels are focused on glamorization and ignoring the social issues. Most popular topics of today are domestic violence, marriage, sexual harassment/rape, religious standing and economic roles.

Pakistani television is considered a powerful force (Ahmad D. S., 1983) to bring a social change research evidenced that PTV dramas presented real image of the society and its problems. So they were very popular, and a source of education for general public both at micro and macro level. Each and every strata of society had its representation in those dramas but commercialization influenced the Urdu drama in a negative way. Now static story lines are being presented under the influence of Indian teleplays. Most of the content is contradictory to our societal values (Khan, Haq, & Din, 2020). In an examination of pre and post cable dramas' content it was concluded that pre cable dramas showcased more loving and positive relations between married couples while in post cable dramas these are negative and deviant from Islamic values. Moreover extramarital relations are on the rise too (Khan, Arafat , & Shahzad, 2020).

It is also evident that Pakistani dramas are promoting westernization and modernization among viewers (Noreen, Zubair , Tareen, & Tareen, 2021).

With the advent of satellite television Pakistani media gone under the



influence of western media (Khan & Arif, 2009). In a study researchers analyzed the content of four dramas from two different private channels. Findings showed that physical and verbal violence and foul language is present in these dramas. These dramas are evidently promoting the foreign culture along with anti-social and anti-cultural components. Researchers looked these dramas as a source of frustration. Inappropriate dressing, use of slang language and vulgar dialogues made it difficult to watch these dramas with family (Faiz, Khalid, & Mahmood, 2020). With the reference to violence some other studies also proved the similar results as a study observed the psychological violence in Pakistani drama (Parvez, Roshan , Riffat , & Qasim, 2009). According to Khan (2020) Pakistani television dramas are Normalizing the Domestic violence.

Underrepresentation of women in prime time drama is a proved fact even in the countries like US (Sink & Mastro, 2016). Same is with Pakistani drama industry. Researcher compared the content of different dramas broadcasted in four different political regimes in Pakistan and concluded that all these dramas failed to present the real image of Pakistani women (Ahmad S. , 2018).

Farooque and Khan (2020) tried to dig out the reasons behind the popularity of Turkish dramas, specifically ‘*Ertugrul*’ among Pakistani masses. Study resulted that due to the real depiction of Islamic culture, teachings and



values, along with the high quality content, strong characters, cast, dialogues, well knitted script and wonderful performances attracted the audience toward the drama. Researchers argued that local drama lacks these qualities so it is losing its audience.

Researchers compared the PTV drama of 1980s with the PTV drama of 21st century conclusion revealed that passing time changed the drama drastically. According to them 80s drama was best while between 2000 and 2010 it lost its perfection. It had failed to adopt the new technology and even in highlighting the changing culture of the society. findings revealed that attractiveness and physical appearance of actors have got better in new dramas then 1980s, but background music of 1980s was more enchanting then that of now. Acting standard was higher in 1980s, it represented the all subgroups of society while new drama is just focused on elite class. Social issues were also part of dramas along with the domestic problems in 80s but in 21st century only domestic issues are under consideration. Dressing in old dramas was Pakistani and Indian but western dressing is overcoming over Pakistani dressing in new dramas. Interestingly more English language was used in 1980s dramas than new dramas (Ze, 2015). Another researcher also concluded that PTV lacks of pluralistic culture and had failed to give the participation to all sections of society (Tayyaba, 1998). While comparing



the drama of PTV with Geo Saba (2005) found that PTV is presenting the local culture of Pakistan whereas Geo is presenting only a blurred picture of it.

4. Music

Pakistani music has immense diversity due to multiethnic population of Pakistan. Different formats of music are popular in the country including *qawwali*, classical music, semi classical, rock, pop etc. Pakistani music accepted influence from South Asian, Central Asian, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Western music and created its own identity in the world. Radio, film and television remained the platforms for the production of music in Pakistan (Afzal, Hussain, & Iqbal, 2020). Same like the all other type of media content according to critics music is on decline in Pakistan. Afzal, Hussain and Iqbal (2020), depicted that history of Pakistani music is full of ups and downs. They tried to explore the factors responsible for the downfall of Pakistani Urdu music. Findings suggested the six factors responsible of fall music industry i.e. low quality, Social defiance, influence of Indian film and music industry, negligence for music by the governments, and lack of promotion. Another research project discovered that music programs of Pakistani television copy the Indian themes of singing and dancing (Khan & Arif, 2009). Coke Studio is a very popular music show of Pakistan mostly famous for Sufi and traditional music. A study on coke studio music



Pak. Journal of Media Science, Vol 3, Issue 1 (2022) Evaluating Quality of Media

determined that fake signs of spirituality are being used by organizers to promote their product and a new kind of entertainment among the listeners. They use beautiful female singers, romantic and worldly lyrics (Qaisar & Hashmi, 2018).

5.Film

Lumière brothers brought cinema to the subcontinent in the year 1896. They were from France and showed short movies in Bombay (Gazdar, 1997). Pakistani film industry named as Lollywood, has its roots in pre partition history. Movies remained the vital source of entertainment. They are also a part of folk traditions of the society. A reflection of social values, norms, poetry music and other arts can be seen in them (Khan & Ahmad, 2016). Cinema has been accepted as a source of social change globally but in Pakistan, this concept not exist. 1950s and 1970s was the golden era of Lollywood movies. But films are reduced in quantity and are presenting the compromised Qualities after 1980s (Ali & Zulfiqar, 2020).

A comprehensive study results explored that due to many reasons Pakistani film industry reached at the eve of collapse. Deficiency of good writings, substandard production, insufficient technical facilities, second-rate direction, low standard music and vulgar and cheap lyrics, poor acting, display of Indian films, unproductive policies of government, non-representativeness of society and formula films are the main factor behind



the downfall of Pakistani film industry. Low scholastic qualification, lack of training, low financial resources, deficiency of newer technology are some other reasons (Abdul Wajid Khan, Adnan, & Tariq, 2015). These films are poor in quality in their script, sounds, music, and visual storytelling. Lack of Quality in Lollywood movies open a way for Bollywood movies in the country (Aslam, 2012). An exploration revealed that due to the lack of training in film making and avoiding to adopt new changes in production methods and emergent technologies films are became lowest in quality (Bilal, 2015). inappropriate dressing, presentation of physical contact between male and females, use of slung languages make it impossible to watch these Pakistani movies with family members (Rehman, 2016). Due to overlooking the aesthetic forms and social realities in film content industry reached to the death end (Ahmad, 2014).

The element of violence and horror remained present in Pakistani cinema from the start (Khan & Ahmad, 2010). But in the first decade of 21st century these elements crossed the limit so viewers left the cinema houses.

According to the researcher “*Khuda Kay Liye*” proved a little supply of oxygen to the dying film industry another movie “*Zibahkhana*” revived the disappearing genre of horror (Ali & Zulfiqar, 2020). Some researchers saw the production of movies with quality content like “*Main Hon Shahid*



*Pak. Journal of Media Science, Vol 3, Issue 1 (2022) Evaluating Quality of Media
Afridi'', "Waar" and "Zinda Bhaag" as a start of new era of Pakistani film
industry after a substantial decline (Taylor, et al., 2014).*

CONCLUSION

According to scholars diversity of channels results in more diversity and quality of content (Koemen, Peeters, & D'haenens, 2007). But as the many studies mentioned above indicated that in Pakistan concentration of media ownership is resulting in homogenized content and lack of diversity (Rasul & Proffitt, 2013). Advertisements on Pakistani media are creative but are full of gender stereotypes and often have immoral things and violate the social values and ethical standards of Pakistani society. General observations about music show that quality of Pakistani music is good enough but research results are not according to these observations. There are many reservations of researchers about the content of music and news. Though many lope holes are identified but drama is somewhat in a better position while number of movies being produced is very low. Though some movies are appreciated by the researchers but still there is a need for improvement.

This review of literature gathered the results of maximum research studies related to media content. As this review provides an insight about the covered areas of research on other hand it highlighted many research gaps



for further research. For example it is said that lay viewers of television are not much good at the judgement of production value and quality assessment (Shamir, 2007). Even researchers ignored this area while analyzing the content of media. Most of the above mentioned studies are focused on the depiction of gender, violence, culture, religion etc. less rather no consideration is present for professional and technical standards to check the quality of content against them.

Many studies showed that all type of media content is under the influence of foreign content. Researchers looked media content of our cable television as a tool for cultural imperialism (Khan & Arif, 2009). Pakistani media copies western and Indian content (Hussain, Iqbal, & Yaseen, 2020; Khan & Arif, 2009). There is a need to examine this area of research more deeply. Professional training and education, adoption of new technology, search for new ideas and new talent can be helpful in improving the quality of media content. There is a responsibility of government along with the media houses and content producers that they should take measures to ensure the quality content on media.



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