

Causes of popularity of ARY news among Pakistani youth

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Abstract:

This study examined the popularity of news channels on social media platforms and the news consumption habits and opinions of young people in Pakistan using the uses and gratification theory. The results showed that ARY News has experienced a significant increase in popularity on social media following the ousting of Imran Khan in April 2022 and is the most preferred news channel among respondents aged 16 to 32. This popularity may be due to the perception that ARY News is more unbiased and less prone to spreading misinformation compared to other news channels, as well as its alignment with the interests and values of its audience. The survey results also revealed that a significant majority of respondents use social media as their primary source of news and are interested in political news. Despite these trends, most respondents still believe that ARY News provides the most accurate and reliable news coverage. These findings suggest that news channels should focus on building their presence on social media and strive to be perceived as unbiased and reliable sources of information to attract and retain young viewers. In addition, it may be beneficial for news channels to use social media analytics tools to understand the demographics and interests of their audience and tailor their content accordingly.

Keywords: Misinformation, political news, public perception, news consumption habits, youth opinion, Pakistani youth.

Introduction:

The popularity of news channels among youth has been a subject of debate in recent years. In recent years, there has been a rise in the consumption of news on social media, particularly among younger individuals (Boczkowski et al., 2018). It is increasingly evident that social networks have a significant impact on young people and have become an integral part of their lives (Akram et al., 2017). The increase in the number of information channels and sources, as well as the enhanced ability for interaction and co-creation among information consumers, has transformed the way news is consumed. (Pentina et al., 2014). This shift has raised questions about the future of traditional news channels and their ability to engage and retain a younger audience. In this research paper, we aim to investigate the popularity of a ARY news among the youth and identify the factors that contribute to its success or failure in attracting and retaining a younger audience. Through a combination of surveys and previous research studies, we will

explore the attitudes and behaviors of young people towards ARY news, as it has been one of the most popular news channels among the Pakistani youth recently and assess its effectiveness in meeting their news and information needs.

The main reasons to conduct this research on the popularity of ARY news among youth are. First, understanding the news habits and preferences of younger generations is important for the future of the news industry. As the younger demographic becomes an increasingly important consumer group, news organizations need to adapt their content and delivery methods to meet their needs and preferences. By conducting research on the popularity of ARY news among youth, researchers can identify the factors that contribute to its success or failure in engaging and retaining a younger audience. This information can be used by news organizations to develop strategies for effectively reaching and engaging with younger audiences.

In conducting this research, it is important to ensure that the sample is representative of the youth population, and to use appropriate statistical methods to analyze the data and draw conclusions. It is also important combining the results from surveys and interviews to provide a more complete understanding of the popularity of ARY news among youth.

The study will compare ARY's popularity with its main competitors on the most frequently chosen medium by our sample audience. Most of the channel views will be taken from the publicly available 3rd party resources which have no biases, and the numbers will be analyzed and compared to see what channel did well and we will look at the dominating news of those times when the channel did well and use this information to derive an accurate conclusion as to why the youth choose to watch this channel.

Problem statement:

Pakistani media has divided its viewers and how they look at the political situation of the country. Since, the removal of Imran Khan as prime minister. The youth has chosen to watch ARY news more than any other news channel. When ARY was banned, the youth gave ARY great viewership on social media. The aim of this research is to determine How did ARY news manage to attract so many viewers?

Literature Review:

The popularity of news media among young people has garnered increasing attention in recent years, as traditional news sources face competition from online platforms and social media. In this literature review, we examine the factors that influence the popularity of ARY news among young people aged 18-30.

Social media can be a useful way for people to stay up to date on the latest political developments and to engage in discussions about political issues with others. It can also

provide a platform for underrepresented voices to be heard and for people to connect with others who share similar political viewpoints. (Erkel & Aelst, 2021). News outlets (companies that produce and distribute news) are facing challenges in the current media landscape, including the need to reach new and younger audiences. The rapid growth of mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets) has created new opportunities for news outlets to create, share, and consume news content through these devices (Rosengard et al., 2014).

People were asked which news channel they watch for information about politics. The results of the study show that most people watch ARY News for this type of information, and that most people believe that ARY News has a stronger influence on their perception. This suggests that ARY News is a more popular or influential source of political information among the study's respondents. (Rana et al., 2020). The relationship between news consumers and the media has become more complex and is no longer a simple, linear relationship. This suggests that factors influencing an individual's perception of the credibility of news may be more nuanced and multifaceted than previously thought (Choi et al., 2015).

According to Sultan et al. (2017) the results of a focused group discussion and interviews, the media in Pakistan is lacking in the areas of media maturity and professionalism and this is seen as a major obstacle to achieving objective and independent journalism. Some of the interviewees also pointed out that social issues are largely absent from the national news, and that ordinary people are rarely featured in the news. A journalist named Najam Sethi is quoted as saying that the media in Pakistan is in a state of anarchy and lacks responsibility. It also mentions that some media outlets in Pakistan either act as mouthpieces for the establishment or seek out controversial stories without verifying their accuracy or considering the potential consequences. The findings of the same study suggest that based on the research conducted in the text, it seems that a significant number of people have negative perceptions of TV channels in Pakistan, particularly Geo News and ARY News. Many respondents disagree that these channels are following the PEMRA Code of Conduct, and the research findings suggest that both channels have violated some of the codes, including those related to defamation, disrespect for state institutions and the judiciary, and promoting uncultural values. These findings suggest that a considerable number of people may have negative views of these channels and their practices.

ARY News is more popular than GEO News among viewers, particularly for its coverage of current affairs and the Panama Leaks. According to research studies, most viewers watch current affairs shows and feel that ARY News presents more accurate information about the Panama Leaks than GEO News. The data also suggests that viewers believe the charges against Nawaz Sharif are accurate and support Imran Khan's stance on the Panama Leaks. The study hypothesis was supported by the ANOVA Test. Overall, the findings suggest that private news channels, including ARY News and GEO News, are frequently watched by respondents for a

variety of reasons, including gathering information, entertainment, and enjoyment

. Our objective is to find out if this trend has continued to grow or has the situation changed over the past year. The impact of mobile technology on the journalism notes that in 2010, references to mobile skills (such as the ability to create and produce content for mobile devices) were present in only a small percentage of television job postings. However, by 2012, mobile skills were mentioned in more than 27% of television news job listings. This trend is even more pronounced in the newspaper and online sectors, where the demand for mobile skills is even greater. This suggests that the use of mobile technology in journalism is rapidly increasing, and that having skills related to mobile is becoming increasingly important for those seeking jobs in the field (Wenger et al., 2014).

People often have a preferred political party and tend to watch news channels that support that party more than others. These channels may be influenced by the party and may be used to promote the party or criticize other parties. Politicians may give these channels special treatment and pay for advertisements. Talk show hosts and reporters may create conflict between parties for their own gain. It is likely that these channels show bias in favor of their preferred party and may promote propaganda .

Research Objectives:

- Understanding the factors that contribute to the popularity of ARY News.
- Assessing ARY News' competitive landscape: By comparing the popularity of the channel to that of its competitors.
- To identify and analyze data on the demographics, preferences and who is most likely to watch the channel and how to better engage with these viewers.

Research Question:

- What were the causes for ARY News' sudden rise in numbers and popularity?
- What impact did Imran Khan's removal from office have an impact on ARY News?

Hypothesis:

H1: ARY news received high youth viewership because of its biased reporting in favor of PTI.

H0: ARY News' bias and its youth viewership had nothing to do with its reporting of PTI related news.

Methodology:

Mixed methods research, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods, has gained attention in the social media research field. This type of research allows for a more

comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied, as it combines the strengths of both approaches (Snelson., 2016).

Survey research is a common method for collecting data on news consumption habits and opinions is using surveys. Surveys can be administered online or in person, and can include questions about respondents' preferred news sources, the reasons for their preferences, and their perceptions of the accuracy and bias of different news channels. Surveys can be useful for collecting a large amount of data from a diverse group of people but may be subject to response bias and may not provide in-depth insights into people's motivations and experiences.

Another option for collecting data on news consumption habits and opinions is through in-depth interviews with individual respondents. Interviews can be conducted in person, over the phone, or online, and allow researchers to ask more detailed and open-ended questions about respondents' news consumption habits and opinions. Interviews can provide rich and nuanced insights into people's experiences and perspectives but may be time-consuming and costly to conduct and may not be representative of the broader population.

In this research a survey was conducted to analyze the habits and opinions of the young media consumers in Pakistan. It is important to note this survey is conducted at a politically charged time in Pakistan and everyone filling the survey has their own biases and leanings politically. This helps us in our research as it will help us identify whether our hypothesis of whether ARY news has gained popularity only because it is support of PTI is valid or not.

Theoretical framework:

We will focus on our research in line with the uses and gratification theory. The U&G Theory (Uses and Gratifications Theory) is a sociological approach to understanding the media and its effects on individuals and society. It suggests that people are active media users who select and use media for specific purposes, rather than being passive recipients of media messages. The theory suggests that people use media to fulfill a variety of psychological, social, and personal needs, and that these needs drive their media consumption behavior. The U&G Theory has been widely studied and applied in the field of mass communication and has helped researchers to better understand the motivations and behaviors of media users. (Musa et al. 2015).

The Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that people use media to fulfill various psychological, social, and personal needs. This theory is relevant our study because it aims to understand people's viewing habits and views because of their exposure to current affairs programs. Theoretical framework of Amin, & Qaiser et al. (2021) will aid our current study in laying out a proper theoretical plan. The theoretical framework for the 2021 study is based on three theories: Media Dependency Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Uses and Gratification Theory. These theories suggest that the views of heavy viewers of current affairs programs are

more influenced by the views presented on those programs, and that heavy viewers of Panama-based programs may have a greater fear of being victims of corruption. The media dependency hypothesis suggests that viewers who watch more current affairs programs believe that these programs depict reality as it occurs in society. The uses and gratification hypothesis is relevant to the study because it aims to understand people's viewing habits and views as a result of exposure to current affairs programs. Overall, the theories suggest that the views and habits of viewers may be shaped by their consumption of media, particularly current affairs programs.

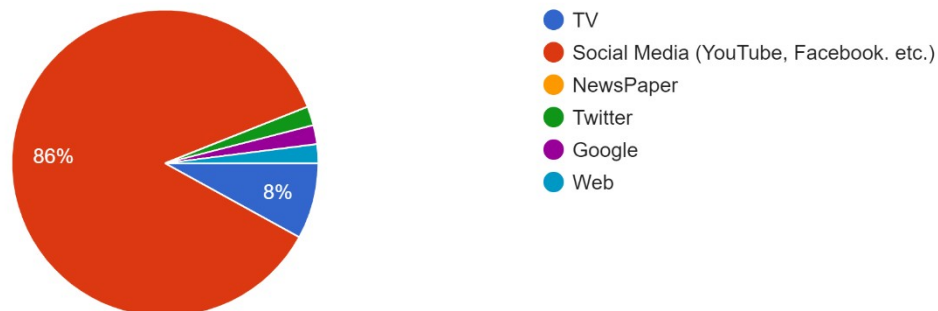
Findings:

We chose to measure social media followings and views after April 2022, when Imran Khan was ousted from office. Another reason was after completing our survey we found out that almost most of our studied young population use social media to get their news as shown in figure 1.0 below.

Figure 1.0 Survey results to which platform do participants prefer to use for news consumption?

Which platform do you primarily use to get news?

50 responses



Measuring the popularity of a news channel on its social media platforms can be a useful way to gauge the reach and engagement of the channel's content. Social media platforms provide a way for people to interact with and share news and information, and the number of followers, likes, and shares a news channel's posts receive can give an indication of its popularity. Additionally, social media platforms often have analytics tools that can provide more detailed information about the engagement with a channel's content, such as the demographics of its audience and the types of posts that are most popular. This can be useful for news channels to understand the interests and preferences of their audience and to tailor their content accordingly.

Figure 1.1 Survey results to which channel do participants prefer to watch.

Which news channel do you prefer to watch?

50 responses

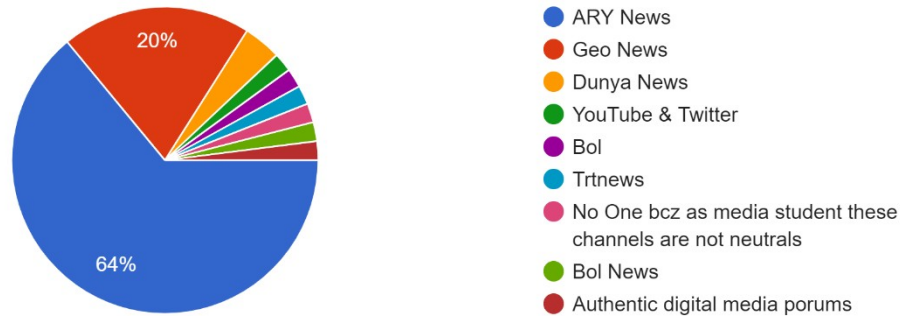


Figure 1.1 (above) shows that our surveyed youth prefer to watch ARY over other news channels as 64% chose ARY over other channels as their preferred news channel. GEO came in 2nd with 20% saying that they preferred GEO. While the other 16% chose different news channels.

At first, we chose the two major social media platforms twitter and Facebook and compared the total followers and overall interaction and numbers of the ARY news and its biggest competitor Geo news. The reason we looked at social media was because an overwhelming amount of the surveyed youth expressed that they primarily use social media sites to get their news.

Figure 2.0 ARY news's monthly YouTube numbers over the past 2 years.

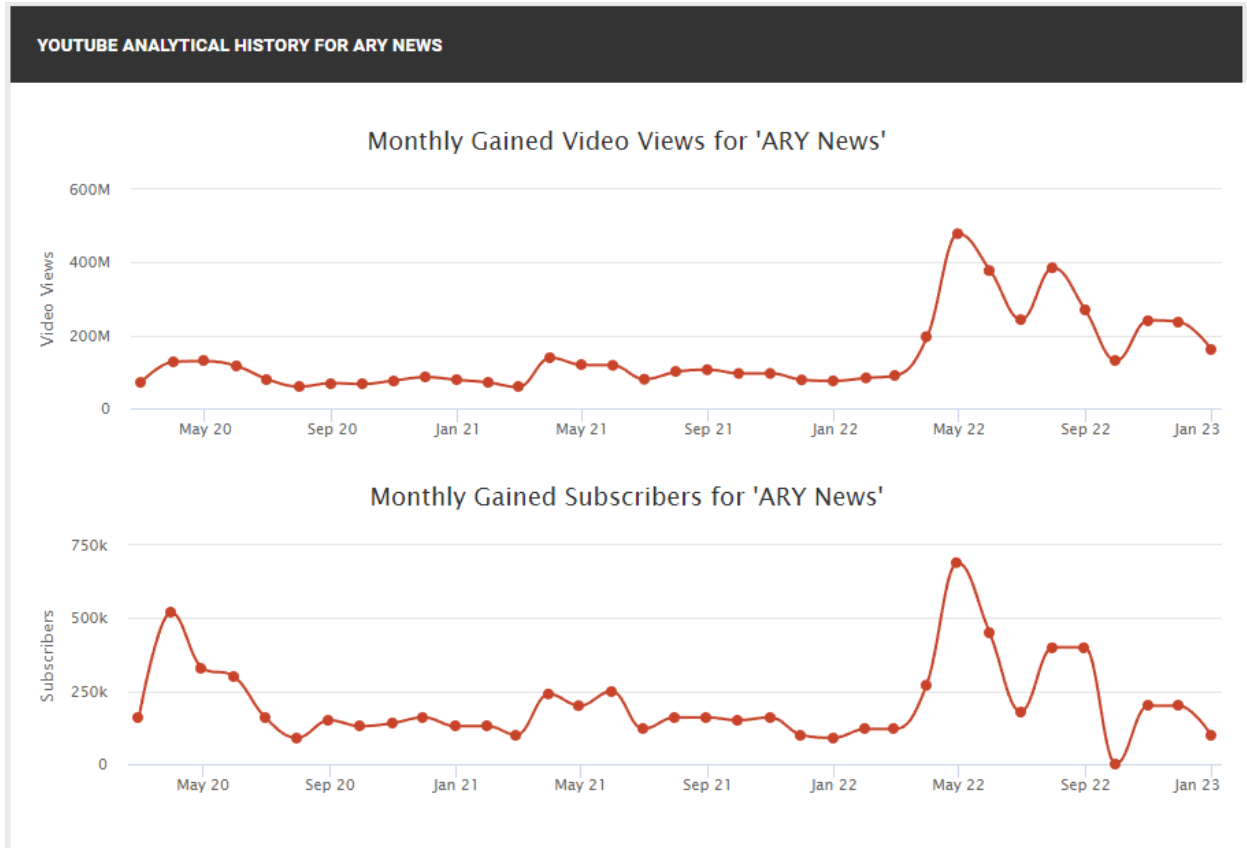
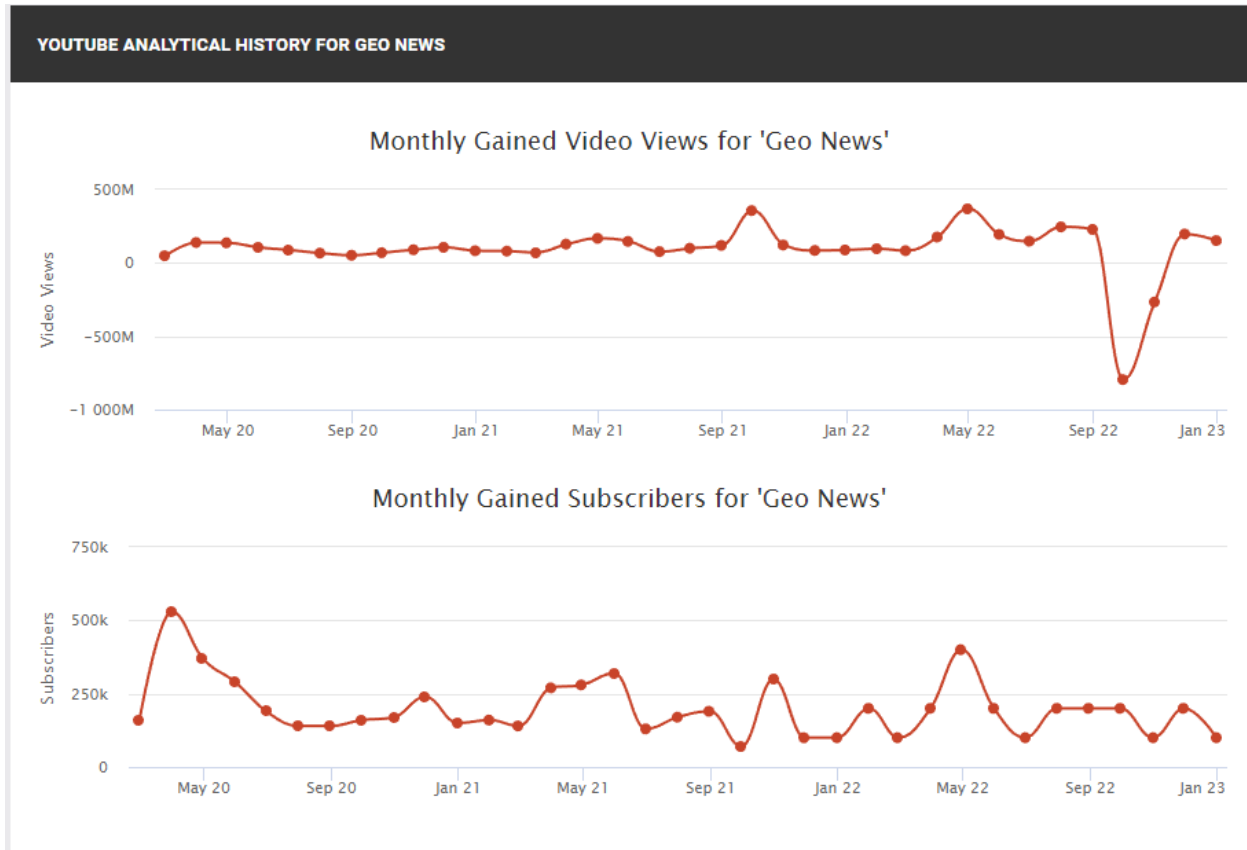


Figure 2.1 GEO news monthly YouTube numbers over the past 2 years



As clearly visible in Figure 2.0 (above) starting April of 2022, exactly around the time Imran Khan was ousted, ARY saw a big boom in its average monthly viewership. Exactly around the same time their subscriber growth on YouTube is also clear for everyone to see. If we compare this to Figure 2.1 (above) the difference in numbers between ARY and GEO is clearly visible. We can see that at least on YouTube suddenly after Imran Khan was ousted from office ARY saw an abnormally large growth in numbers which means people started watching ARY more than they have in the past 2 years.

Figure 3.0 ARY news's Twitter followers gain since 2018.

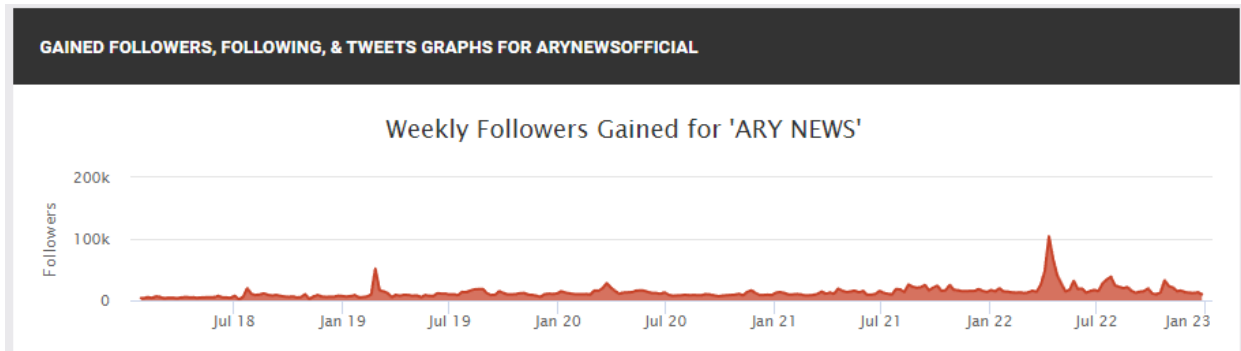
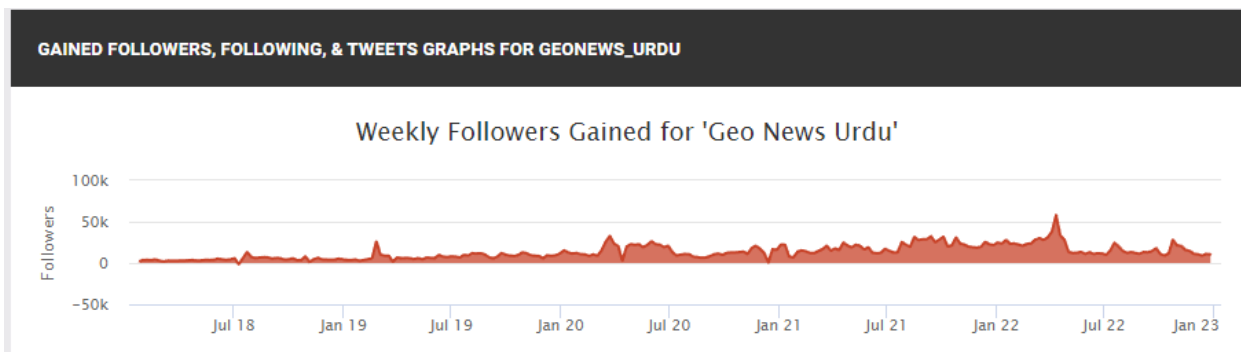


Figure 3.1 GEO news's Twitter followers gain since 2018.



Similarly, to YouTube we looked at the twitter gain of ARY news and compared it to GEO. As it can clearly be seen in figure 3.0 and figure 3.1 around the same time as when Imran Khan was ousted, ARY saw a spike in its twitter follows unlike any other. Where ARY gained over 100,000 followers during the same timeframe GEO barely gained over 50,000 followers.

After establishing the dominance of ARY on social media. A survey was conducted to examine the news consumption habits and opinions of people aged 16 to 32 in Pakistan. The results of the survey show that ARY News is the most popular news channel among respondents, with 65% reporting that it is their preferred source of news. This contrasts with only 14% of respondents who said they prefer GEO. It is worth noting that a significant majority (85%) of respondents said they use social media as their primary source of news, indicating the influence of social media platforms on their news consumption habits.

Figure 4.0 shows the age range of the participants as intended only the youth has filled out the survey.

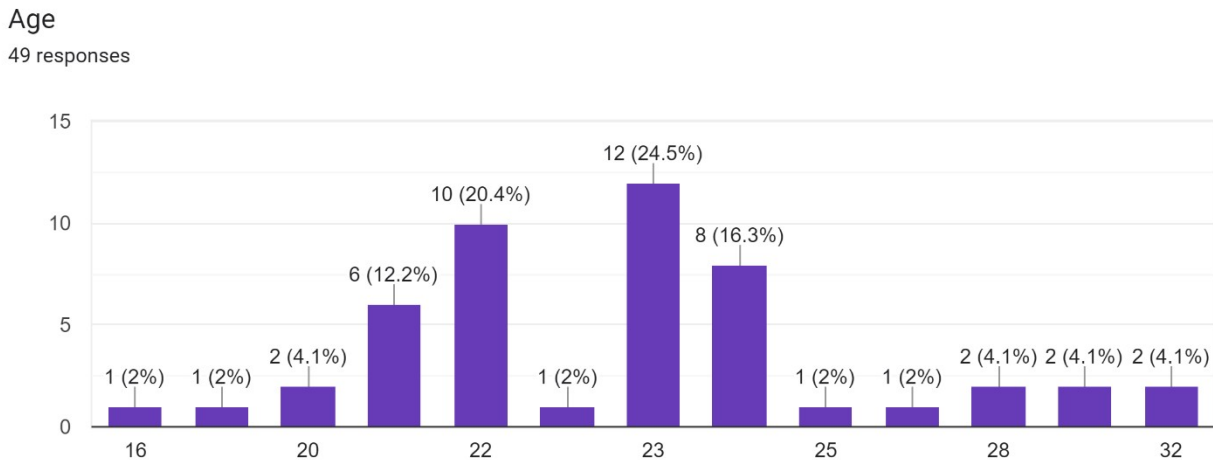
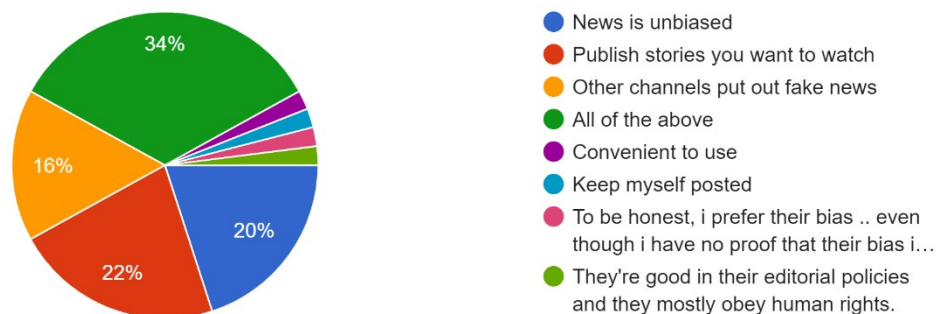


Figure 4.1 Reasons to watch a preferred news channel

Reasons for watching a preferred news channel.
50 responses



One possible reason for the popularity of ARY News among respondents is the perception that it is more unbiased compared to other news channels. Many respondents said they believe ARY News publishes stories that align with their interests and values, and that it avoids

disseminating fake news. This stands in contrast to other channels, which respondents said are often biased and prone to spreading misinformation.

Figure 4.2 People's news category preferences

What news category do you like look at the most?
50 responses

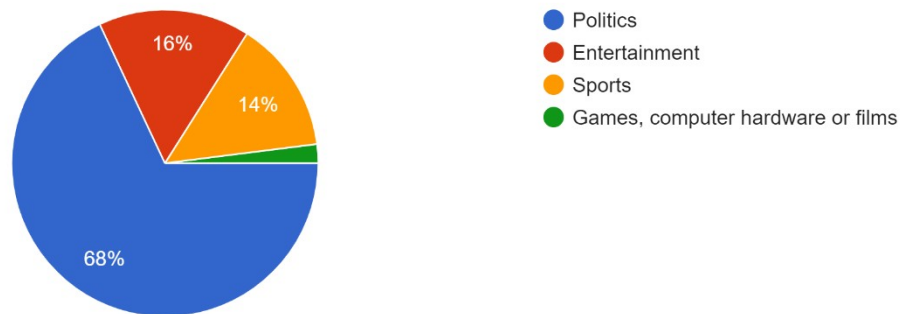


Figure 4.3 People's opinion on the Existence of biasness in Pakistani news media

Do you think Pakistani news channels are biased?
50 responses

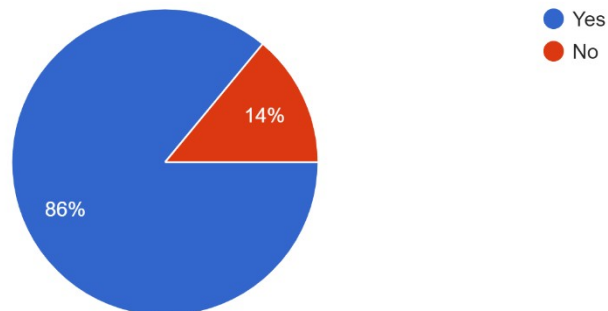
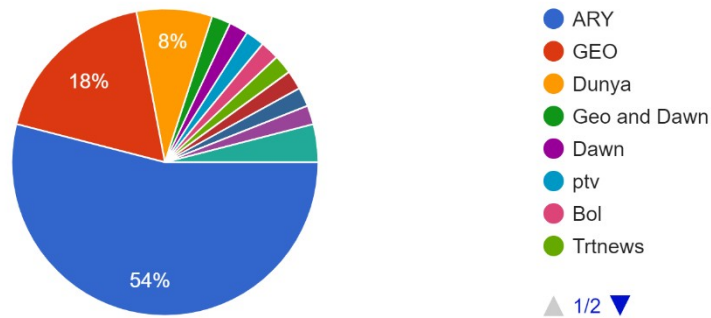


Figure 4.4 What do the participants think is the most reliable news channel

Which Pakistani news channel provides the most accurate information in your opinion?

50 responses

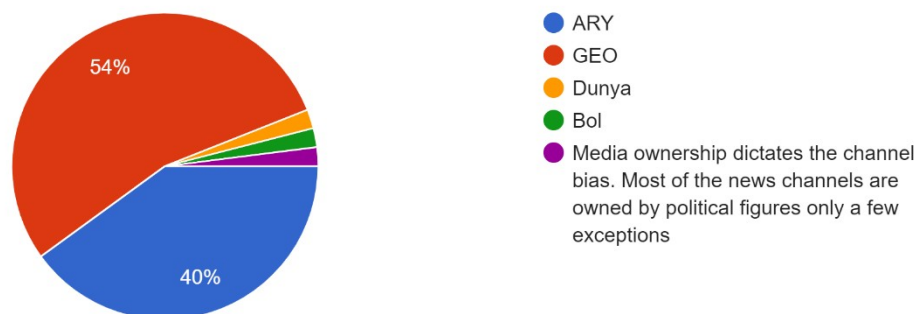


As shown in the graphs above a majority of respondents (68%) said they watch news channels primarily for political news, and a large majority (86%) believe that Pakistani news channels are biased. This suggests that there is a high level of cynicism and distrust among this group when it comes to the media. However, despite these concerns, most respondents (54%) still believe that ARY News provides the most accurate information. This may be because ARY News is perceived as being more balanced and objective in its reporting.

Figure 4.5 Survey result on people’s opinion on Pakistani news channels biasness

Which news channel is the most biased towards a political party?

50 responses



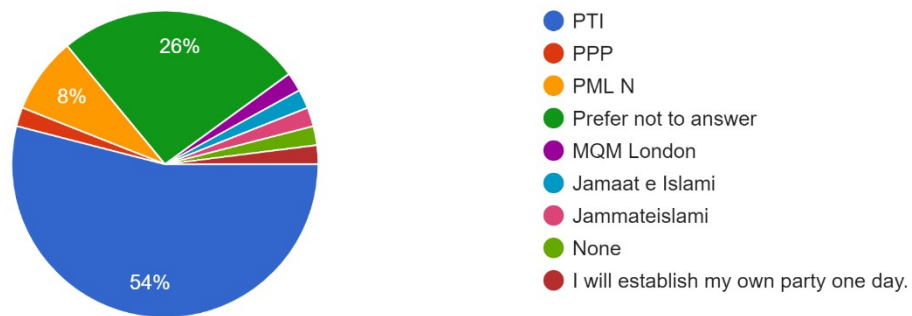
While most respondents (54%) believe that GEO News is the most biased news channel, a slightly smaller percentage (40%) said that ARY news is the most biased. This suggests that

there are differing opinions on which channel is the most reliable and objective. It is important to note that bias in the media is a complex issue, and what one person perceives as biased may be viewed differently by others.

Figure 4.6 Survey results to which political party do participants support?

Which political party do you personally support?

50 responses



In terms of political preferences, most respondents (54%) said they support the PTI political party. This aligns with the finding that most of the respondents are interested in political news and may be influenced by the political leanings of the news channels they watch.

Overall, the survey results provide valuable insight into the news consumption habits and opinions of a younger generation in Pakistan. ARY News appears to be the most popular and trusted news source among this group, but there is still a high level of skepticism and concern about the biases of Pakistani news channels overall. The role of social media in shaping news consumption habits is also evident, with a significant majority of respondents reporting that they use social media as their primary source of news. Further research could examine the factors that contribute to the popularity of specific news channels and the role of social media in shaping news consumption habits among different age groups in Pakistan.

Some of the participants of the survey were interviewed and asked why they choose to watch ARY over other news channels and the interviews aligned with the survey as well as almost everyone believed that other channels were treating their favorite political figure harshly and were spreading fake news.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is a political party in Pakistan that was founded in 1996. It started out as an activist party during a period of military rule, and later became a formidable opposition party, using populist rhetoric and tactics to position itself as the ideal voice for the people and to differentiate itself from other conventional parties. The party has also been known to incorporate a variety of ideologies in support of its populist message (Yilmaz & Shakil

2021). In the 2018 general elections, PTI won the most votes, securing 31% of the popular vote and winning 149 seats in the national assembly (Election Commission of Pakistan, 2018). PTI has recently been the most popular political parties in Pakistan. Although some studies claim that PIT's time in government fail to deliver on many promises. However, the recent approaches by big media channels like ARY's after Imran Khan was replaced as prime minister has helped PTI (Yilmaz & Shakil 2021). While the party rose to power with the support of an unregulated media, it is now said to rely on the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to censor content that it considers inappropriate or unaligned with cultural values. The government has also been accused of targeting journalists and media organizations that are critical of the government, including the arrest of the head of the Jang Group, Mir Shakeel-Ur-Rehman, on corruption charges and backlash against those who defend him (Yilmaz & Shakil 2021).

This is where ARY's consistent positive reporting about PTI has given them larger figures than other news channels. As PTI had a populist rhetoric and always said things which the people like to hear. It only makes sense for a news channel to boost that populist rhetoric and gaining themselves in the process. ARY's numbers on social media platforms are much higher than its competitors.

Suggestions:

One potential recommendation based on the findings of this analysis is for news channels to focus on building their presence on social media platforms, as this appears to be a key way for young people in Pakistan to access and engage with news. To attract and retain young viewers, it is also important for news channels to be perceived as unbiased and reliable sources of information. To align with the interests of their audience, news channels may want to consider tailoring their content to focus on political news. To maintain trust in the media, it is important for news channels to be transparent about their sources and fact-check their stories to avoid spreading misinformation. To help news organizations better understand their audience and create more engaging content, social media platforms could consider providing more tools and resources. Finally, governments and media regulatory bodies may want to work to promote media literacy and encourage critical thinking skills among young people, to help them better evaluate the credibility of different sources of news and information.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, our analysis of social media data and survey results reveals several key insights into the news consumption habits and opinions of young people in Pakistan. Firstly, it appears that ARY News has gained a significant amount of popularity on social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, particularly following the ousting of Imran Khan. This increase in

popularity is also reflected in the survey results, which showed that ARY News is the most preferred news channel among respondents aged 16 to 32.

One possible reason for this popularity is the perception that ARY News is more unbiased and less likely to disseminate fake news compared to other channels. This is particularly important to young people in Pakistan, as the survey results indicate that a significant majority of respondents believe that Pakistani news channels are biased. However, despite this skepticism, most respondents still feel that ARY News provides the most accurate and reliable news coverage.

Additionally, the survey results highlight the importance of social media in the news consumption habits of young people in Pakistan, with a significant majority of respondents stating that they use social media as their primary source of news. This is consistent with the trend of increasing social media use for news consumption globally. Furthermore, the survey results suggest that young people in Pakistan are particularly interested in political news, with a large majority of respondents stating that they watch news channels primarily for this type of content.

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