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## **Public Perceptions towards Media Coverage of Panama Papers in Pakistan**

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The study has investigated the role of news channels in portraying Panama Papers in Pakistan. More specifically, it has examined the public perceptions towards coverage of Panama Papers by Pakistani TV channels. A sample size of 400 respondents was drawn from political science, media and communication students, who watch TV channels for collection of data through a questionnaire. Findings revealed that Panama Papers is the most debated topic in Pakistani media. The results showed that Pakistan media has mainly concentrated on the former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and his family while reporting Panama issue. Findings also revealed that Pakistani media has been successful in changing the mindset of the people on this issue.

**Keywords:** Public perceptions, media coverage, Panama, Sharif family, Pakistani media, media bias, TV talk shows

Media's role is vital in providing credible information, reporting events, formulating the public opinion, guiding people and creating awareness among masses. As far as relation of media with politics is concerned, it plays role of a bridge between public and the government. According to an European Commission Report, "a modern democratic society cannot exist without communications media" (Oreja, 1998). Therefore, it is well established fact that media has an integral role in any democratic society. It serves as an important tool to highlight achievement and failures of ruling parties and governments. Thus media affects people's opinions, perceptions and priorities and assertive media affects those proactively (Ashraf & Islam, 2014).

It would be fair to claim that for the last two decades, electronic media has gained a lot of popularity in Pakistan. A number of private news channels have been established in Pakistan since 2001. According to Gallup Pakistan, there are 86 million television viewers in Pakistan out of a population of 200 million people (Gilani Gallup Pakistan, 2009). A BBC survey further revealed that 69% of the urban population had access to satellite and cable television compared with 11% of rural respondents in Pakistan (Yousuf, 2013). These channels have played a crucial role during judicial restoration movement in 2007, covering 2008 and 2013 elections, 2014 sit-ins, and Panama Papers in Pakistan. According to Marcus Michaelson, media has certainly contributed to a re-initiation of Pakistan's democratic transition (Yousuf, 2013). In 2013 elections, media played an important role in mobilizing the political behaviour of the masses and the result was a remarkable voters' turnout of 55% (Eijaz, Rahman, Ahmad, & Butt, 2014).

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Panama Papers is a worldwide issue which exposed the financial corruption of ruling elite of various countries. International media in general and national media in particular, gave exclusive coverage to Panama Papers in Pakistan. After observing the coverage of Panama Papers scandal in the Pakistani media, the researchers noticed that media is the key element which formed a narrative against the corruption of Pakistani elite. It focused more on Sharif family and others by exposing irregularities of the corrupt ruling elites and pointing out their established offshore companies. However, media's concentration was mainly on a particular family, while reasons for this kind of selective focus remained unknown (Malik, 2016).

It seems that media formed public opinion and changed public attitude towards ruling elite through its reporting on Panama Papers. We need to understand how people in Pakistan perceive the role of media in coverage of Panama Papers scandal and why it focused particularly ruling Sharif family and ignored other offshore company owners totally? So far, no study has been conducted to examine the public perceptions about media coverage of Panama Papers in Pakistan. This study focuses to examine the role of Pakistani media in covering Panama Papers scandal and how people perceive it. This study not only portrays media and politics relationship but also reveals important facts regarding media coverage about Panama Papers in Pakistani perspective. The main objectives of this study are: (i) to find out the relationship between media and politics, (ii) to examine public perceptions about media coverage regarding Panama Papers in the Pakistani perspective, (iii) to analyze the role of media in framing political events critically portrayal of Sharif family, and (iv) to investigate the effects of media coverage in forming public opinion in the country.

To achieve the above stated objectives, the study was guided through below mentioned research questions and hypotheses. **RQ1:** How much time viewers spend watching TV?; **RQ2:** Which format of news is viewed more by viewers?; **RQ3:** Which time slot is consumed by viewers frequently to watch talk shows?; **RQ4:** What is the reason behind liking of some specific talk show?; **RQ5:** What are the reasons for liking a specific political party?; **RQ6:** What is the biggest issue of Pakistan in the current scenario?; **RQ7:** How did you get to know about Panama Papers? and; **RQ8:** What are the respondents perceptions about media coverage of Panama Papers in Pakistan?

## Literature Review

The basic responsibility of media is to provide information to people. In order to get the latest information and above all, checking authenticity of information, public use different tools of media. The findings of a survey conducted by Gallup shows that an average TV viewer spends two hours daily watching television (Gallup Pakistan, 2017). A survey conducted by *Herald* magazine in 2013 investigated that in Pakistan, 42% people gather information by watching television, 24% people are the net surfers, 12% people listen to radio and only 8% read newspaper to enable themselves as a well-informed citizen (Ponkey, 2013).

Sadaf (2011) conducted a research to find out public perceptions about the role of media focusing the judicial restoration in 2007 in Pakistan. She found that media acts as a mobilizing agent among people and public perceptions are highly affected by the prominence given by newspapers. So far as the role of media is concerned, it was observed that media not only informed masses but also formulated public opinion on certain issues directly linked to public interest. Results reveal that active audience or regular viewers play a prominent role in bringing social change.

Social media is an important media in forming the public opinion. Its role in politics is undeniable and all political parties are using social media to highlight their achievements and their opponents weaknesses (Rahman, 2017). Jensen (2017) found that social media has created lot of opportunities and challenges for political parties, especially the tweets and retweets are influencing directly and instantly in shaping the public opinion. In another study (Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra, & Tormey, 2016) used the term mediatization in communication between the political parties and found that new modes of communication have proved to be the most important ways of influencing both the public and the leadership.

The relationship between media and politics is not new. It is the responsibility of media to report political events and create political consciousness among masses so that they can actively participate in political activities. Puglisi and Snyder searched 200 newspapers and collected data on 32 USA political scandals. They found that Democratic-leaning newspapers, those with a higher propensity to endorse Democratic candidates in elections provide relatively more coverage of scandals involving Republican politicians than scandals involving Democratic politicians, while Republican-leaning newspapers tend to do the opposite (Puglisi & Snyder Jr, 2011). Media mostly adopts offensive approach when it comes to cover political scandals. In past, we saw Bob Woodward's reporting in Watergate scandal in 70s which finally proved to be the last nail in Nixon's political coffin. Theorizing the influence of media on politics Robinson revealed that media significantly influences in policy making and agenda setting by political leadership hence impact the public opinion on certain important issues. Similarly, media is helping leadership in setting their public agenda. Media has the capacity and holds the demonstrated record of influencing the public internationally. Public perceptions are not only being influenced locally but also internationally by media (Robinson, 2001).

Naz et al. (2014) explained that majority of youth preferred to watch talk shows to gratify their need to know about political issues. The researchers applied stratified sampling technique and collected data from the students of University of Sargodha. Results revealed that targeted audience took interest in watching discussion of experts and satisfy themselves with that political information which polishes their skills to understand the political scenario.

Media is considered a link between government and public as it formulates public opinion. In this way, the democratic system gains strength. Findings of (Safdar, Shabir, Javed, & Imran, 2015) show that media plays a vital role in promoting democracy by acting as a watchdog.

In a study about political impact of media (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2008) found that media has gained a position where it significantly influences the public perceptions about political and other issues. They further found that media has demonstrated over the years its ability to shape the narrative and mindset of the viewers. Therefore, media need to behave impartially while dealing with issues of public interest.

There is no doubt that Panama Papers is the biggest political scandal of 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has now become an international issue (Walkowski, 2016). This issue has gained a lot of attention of political scientists who started searching corruption of ruling elites. While analyzing Pakistani media coverage on Panama Papers, O'Neill said that Pakistani media seems to be keenly interested in this case. Over 200 Pakistanis have been identified who own offshore companies and their names are mentioned in Panama Papers. However, all media houses are immensely focusing only on the case of Nawaz Sharif and his family and nobody investigated or focused on the cases of other 199 people (O'Neill, 2016).

The present study explores the role of media in covering the Panama Papers. Framing theory is associated with this research. Framing is a part of Agenda-Setting theory proposed

by McCombs and Shaw (1972). This theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience. It examines the idea about how people use expectations to make sense of everyday life (Baran & Davis, 2009). Media draw the public attention to certain topics; it decides where people think about. It is the process through which media emphasizes some aspects of relative and downplay other aspects. Gatekeeper in media houses decides the way or the frame in which information is presented to the audience. Media sets agenda for public discussion and frame events in its particular style. Focusing attention on Panama Papers and then placing it within a field of meaning brings this theory closer to this research.

## Hypotheses

- H1:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that gatekeepers did not make efforts to distinguish between news and analysis in Panama Papers.
- H2:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that standard of Journalism has decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers.
- H3:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) warned news channels to avoid discussing Panama Papers during court hearings.
- H4:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that government should form new code of conduct for electronic media.
- H5:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that anchor persons promote their personal agenda creating hype in the name of analysis.
- H6:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama Papers i.
- H7:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media concentrated more on Sharif family while covering Panama Papers i.
- H8:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media tried to influence the judicial process during the coverage of Panama Papers.
- H9:** A significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media played a vital role to present Panama Papers as a major issue in Pakistan.
- H10:** A significant difference exists between the viewers' level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that gatekeepers did not make efforts to distinguish between news and analysis in Panama Papers scandal.
- H11:** A significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that standard of journalism has decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers.
- H12:** A significant difference exists between the viewers' level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) warned news channels to avoid discussing Panama Papers during court hearings
- H13:** A significant difference exists between the viewers' level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that Govt. should form new code of conduct for electronic

media.

- H14:** A significant difference exists between the viewers’ level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that anchor persons promote their personal agenda, creating hype in the name of analysis.
- H15:** A significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama Papers.
- H16:** A significant difference exists between the viewers’ level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media concentrated more on Sharif family while covering Panama Papers scandal.
- H17:** A significant difference exists between the viewers’ level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media tried to influence the judicial process during the coverage of Panama Papers.
- H18:** A significant difference exists between the viewers’ level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media played a vital role to represent Panama Papers as a major issue in Pakistan.

**Methodology**

The basic purpose of this study is to examine public perceptions about the role of media concerning Panama Papers in Pakistan. Therefore, survey method was applied to seek opinion of a large segment of population. A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from political science and media and communication studies students from University of the Punjab and University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. Respondents were approached personally and randomly to make it representative to the extent. Of the 400 questionnaires, 390 questionnaires were received appropriately. Ten questionnaires were not filled properly and these questionnaires were not included for analysis. Data has been analyzed through SPSS while getting descriptions of responses and testing of hypotheses through ANOVA test.

**Data Analysis**

Answers to the research questions have been obtained through analysis of the data and they are presented below:

RQ1: How much time viewers spend watching TV?

Table 1. Time spent by viewers before TV

		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	1 hour	92	23.6
	2 hours	173	44.4
	3 hours	54	13.8
	4 hours	55	14.1
	More than 4 hours	16	4.1
Total		390	100.0

Table 1, reveals that 23.6% viewers watch television one hour daily, while majority 44.4% watch 2 hours, 13.8% watch 3 hours, 14.1% watch 4 hours, and high television viewers are just 4.1% who watch television programme more than 4 hours.

RQ2: Which form of news is viewed more by viewers?

Table 2. Most viewing form of news

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	News	79	20.3
	Talk shows	215	55.1
	Crime shows	81	20.8
	Others	15	3.8
	Total	390	100.0

The findings, as mentioned in Table 2, reveal that 20.3% viewers watch news, while a majority 55.1% prefer to watch talk shows, while 20.8% like to watch crime shows.

RQ3: Which time is preferred to see talk shows?

Table 3. Timing of most viewing talk shows

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	7 pm to 8 pm	50	12.8
	8 pm to 9 pm	213	54.6
	10 pm to 11 pm	104	26.7
	Others	23	5.9
	Total	390	100.0

Table 3 reveals that 12.8% respondents watch talk shows between 7 pm and 8 pm. Majority of the viewers 54.6% give preference to watch talk shows between 8 pm and 9 pm; 26.7% see the talk shows between 10 pm to 11 pm and only 5.9% viewers watch talk shows on television at their preference time.

RQ4: What is the reason behind liking of specific talk show?

Table 4. Reason for liking a specific talk show

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	Anchor	132	33.8
	Content	193	49.5
	Channel	55	14.1
	Others	10	2.6
	Total	390	100.0

The findings reveal that 33.8% viewers like their specific talk show due to the personality and style of anchorperson. Majority 49.5% like and watch talk show because of the content of the program. 14.1% favour to watch due to channel's popularity and 2.6% like for other reasons.

RQ5: What are the reasons for liking a particular political party?

Table 5. Reason for liking a particular political party

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	Manifesto	125	32.1
	Party leadership	168	43.1
	Previous work	77	19.7
	Any other	20	5.1
	Total	390	100.0

Table 5 reveals that 32.1% respondents like a particular political party for its manifesto while 43.1% respondents like party leadership, 19.3% support previous work of party for the welfare of the people, and 5.1% like for other reasons.

RQ6: Which is the biggest issue of Pakistan?

Table 6. Presently the biggest issue of Pakistan

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	Terrorism	97	24.9
	Panama Papers	161	41.3
	Illiteracy	48	12.3
	Unemployment	42	10.8
	Others	42	10.8
	Total	390	100.0

The findings, as mentioned in above table reveal that 24.9% respondents consider terrorism as the biggest problem of Pakistan, majority 41.3% respondents called Panama Papers is right now as the biggest of the country, 12.3% pointed illiteracy, 10.8% unemployment, and 10.8% replied to other s.

RQ7: How did you get to know about Panama Papers?

Table 7. Respondents get to know about Panama Papers

	Frequency	Per cent	
Valid	Newspaper	67	17.2
	Television	153	39.2
	Radio	27	6.9
	Social media	95	24.4
	Others	48	12.3
	Total	390	100.0

Table 7 reveals that 17.2% respondents obtained information about Panama scandal through newspapers, majority 39.2% came to know by watching television, 6.9% through listening radio, 24.4% respondents first time came to know about Panama Papers through social networking sites and 12.3% know about Panama through other sources. Therefore, the study found television played an important role in disseminating information to the public on Panama Papers in Pakistan. Social media still comes to number two position in getting information about Panama Papers.

Analysis

Respondents’ perceptions about media coverage of Panama Papers in Pakistani media have been investigated through 7 statements on a Likert scale asking them to show their agreement and disagreement. The same are presented in Table 8.



RQ8: What are the respondents' perceptions about media coverage of Panama Papers in Pakistan?

Table 8. Statements on perceptions about media coverage of Panama Papers

Statement	SA	A	Neutral	DA	SDA
Media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama issue	24 6.2%	191 49.0%	14 3.6%	138 35.4%	23 5.9%
Media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama issue	54 13.8%	150 38.5%	49 12.6%	117 30.0%	20 5.1%
Anchor persons promote their personnel agenda creating media hype in the name of analysis	31 7.9%	156 40.0%	34 8.7%	151 38.7%	18 4.6%
Gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis	20 5.1%	168 43.1%	80 20.5%	88 22.6%	34 8.7%
Standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers	12 3.1%	202 51.8%	30 7.7%	130 33.3%	16 4.1%
PEMRA warn news channels to avoid discussing under hearings	24 6.2%	241 61.8%	30 7.7%	83 21.3%	12 3.1%
Govt. should form new code of conduct for electronic media	61 15.6%	182 46.7%	56 14.4%	76 19.5%	15 3.8%

SA: Strongly agree, A: Agree, DA: Disagree, SDA: Strongly disagree

Findings reveal that a majority of 55.2% of the respondents showed agreement, while 41.3% disagreed with the statement that media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama issue. 13.8% strongly agree that media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama issue, while 5.1% strongly disagree to it. Around 40% respondents agreed to the statement that some anchor persons promoted their personnel agenda and created media hype in the name of analysis, though 38.7% disagreed to it. Majority of the respondents 43.1% showed their agreement that gatekeeper in media houses don't make effort to distinguish news from analysis. Majority 51.8% respondents think that the standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers whereas 37.4% disagreed with this statement. Comprehensive majority of 68% respondents show their consent that Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) must issue warning to news channels to refrain from unethical broadcasting. Similarly, 62.3% respondents agreed that government should form a new code of conduct for electronic medium while 23.3% disagreed to it. Inferential statistics as obtained through Analysis of Variance tests have been drawn through testing hypotheses. The same are presented below.

## Hypothesis Testing

Eighteen hypotheses were formulated to examine the respondents perceptions about Panama Papers through media coverage. Analysis has been performed through testing difference between the means of independent variable: (i) Time spent by viewers before TV and (ii) Viewers level of interest in watching TV talk shows. The results are appended in below tables.

Table 9. Time spent by viewers before TV and below statements

Statements		<i>df</i>	Mean square	<i>f</i>	Sig.
H1 Gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis	Between groups	4	14.294	13.492	.000
	Within groups	385	1.059		
	Total	389			
H2 Standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama	Between groups	4	12.691	12.766	.000
	Within groups	385	.994		
	Total	389			
H3 PEMRA warn news channels to avoid discussing under hearings	Between groups	4	25.943	35.762	.000
	Within groups	385	.725		
	Total	389			
H4 Govt. should form new code of conduct for electronic medium	Between groups	4	8.745	7.894	.000
	Within groups	385	1.108		
	Total	389			
H5 Anchor persons promote their personnel agenda creating media hype in the name of analysis	Between groups	4	12.952	11.113	.000
	Within groups	385	1.166		
	Total	389			
H6 Media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama	Between groups	4	6.690	5.050	.001
	Within groups	385	1.325		
	Total	389			
H7 Media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama	Between groups	4	20.602	18.583	.000
	Within groups	385	1.109		
	Total	389			
H8 Media tried to influence over judicial process during coverage	Between groups	4	23.090	15.368	.000
	Within groups	385	1.503		
	Total	389			
H9 Media played vital role to make Panama as a major	Between groups	4	11.746	9.722	.000
	Within groups	385	1.208		
	Total	389			

**H1:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis of Panama Papers with *f* value of 12.766, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.

**H2:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers with *f* value of 13.492, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.

**H3:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that PEMRA warned news channels to avoid discussing Panama Papers during court hearings with *f* value of 35.762, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.

- H4:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that government should form new code of conduct for electronic media with  $f$  value of 8.745, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.
- H5:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that anchor persons promote their personnel agenda creating media hype in the name of analysis with  $f$  value of 11.113, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.
- H6:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 5.050, significant at .001 level. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.
- H7:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 18.583, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.
- H8:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media tried to influence over judicial process during coverage with  $f$  value of 15.368, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.
- H9:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the time spent by viewers before TV and their perceptions that media played a vital role to make Panama Papers as a major issue in Pakistan with  $f$  value of 9.722, significant at .000 levels. Hence, tested hypothesis is supported.

Analysis of above nine hypotheses indicate that television viewers who spent different level of time on TV significantly differed with each other on all statements regarding media role on Panama Papers.

Table 10. Level of interest of viewers in watching talk shows

Statements		$df$	Mean square	$f$	Sig.
H10 Gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis	Between groups	3	3.607	3.065	.028
	Within groups	386	1.177		
	Total	389			
H11 Standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama	Between groups	3	4.114	3.771	.011
	Within groups	386	1.091		
	Total	389			
H12 PEMRA warn news channels to avoid discussing under hearing	Between groups	3	1.279	1.302	.273
	Within groups	386	.982		
	Total	389			

H13 Govt. should form new code of conduct for electronic medium	Between groups	3	5.917	5.147	.002
	Within groups	386	1.150		
	Total	389			
H14 Anchor persons promote their personnel agenda creating media hype in the name of analysis	Between groups	3	8.266	6.707	.000
	Within groups	386	1.232		
	Total	389			
H15 Media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama	Between groups	3	8.031	6.046	.000
	Within groups	386	1.328		
	Total	389			
H16 Media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama	Between groups	3	9.704	7.802	.000
	Within groups	386	1.244		
	Total	389			
H17 Media tried to influence over judicial process during coverage	Between groups	3	3.888	2.277	.079
	Within groups	386	1.708		
	Total	389			
H18 Media played vital role to make Panama as a major	Between groups	3	4.342	3.358	.019
	Within groups	386	1.293		
	Total	389			

**H10:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis of Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 3.065 significant at level 0.028. Hence, the above stated hypothesis is supported.

**H11:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that standard of journalism decreased as a whole due to the coverage of Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 3.771 significant at level 0.011. Hence, the above stated hypothesis is supported.

**H12:** Results indicate that no significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that PEMRA warned news channels to avoid discussing Panama Papers during court hearings with  $f$  value of 1.302, significant at level 0.273. Hence, this hypothesis is not supported.

**H13:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that Govt. should form new code of conduct for electronic media with  $f$  value of 5.147 significant at level 0.002. Hence, this hypothesis is supported.

**H14:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that anchor persons promote their personnel agenda creating media hype in the name of analysis with  $f$  value of 6.707 significant at level .000. Hence, hypothesis is supported.

- H15:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media has changed mindset of public through its reporting on Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 6.046 significant at level .000. Hence, hypothesis 15 is supported.
- H16:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama Papers with  $f$  value of 7.802 significant at level 0.000. Hence, the hypothesis is supported.
- H17:** Results indicate that no significant difference exists between the viewers level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media tried to influence over judicial process during coverage with  $f$  value of 2.277 significant at level 0.079. Therefore, hypothesis is not supported.
- H18:** Results indicate that a significant difference exists between the viewers' level of interest in watching talk shows and their perceptions that media played a vital role to make Panama Papers as a major issue in Pakistan with  $f$  value of 3.358 significant at level 0.019. Hence, hypothesis 18 is supported.

Findings of the hypotheses tested through Analysis of Variance tests indicate that respondents who spent different level of time on TV significantly differed with each other on all 9 statements regarding media role on Panama Papers in Pakistan. Regarding viewers with different level of interest in talk shows revealed that respondents perceive media role about Panama Papers in the same way as on the statement that media tried to influence over judicial process during coverage and PEMRA warned news channels to avoid discussing Panama Papers during court hearings. However, viewers with different level of interest in talk shows think differently on the remaining statements. Results reveal that respondents with varied level interest in politics differed significantly regarding media's role in Panama Papers on most of the statements. However, their perceptions are similar that (i) gatekeepers don't make efforts to distinguish news from analysis of Panama Papers, (ii) Government should form new code of conduct for electronic media, (iii) media concentrated more on Sharif family covering Panama Papers rather than focusing on corruption, and (iv) media played a vital role to make Panama Papers as a major issue in Pakistan.

## Discussion

The study results showed that a majority of viewers spend two hours daily before television. Talk shows are viewed more by viewers. Majority of the respondents prefer to see prime time talk show of 8pm to 9pm. This study shows that news channels frame Panama Papers, keeping in view the editorial policy of their organization. Facts were mostly distorted and media coverage Panama Papers was not based on facts and objectivity. While covering Panama Papers, news channels mostly concentrated on Sharif family. However, the other individuals who were also named had not been part of media discussion. Few individuals promoted their personnel agendas using media platform and created media hype in the name of free and fair analysis. Research studies conducted by Naz and Rameez have highlighted the significance of talk shows. This research also acknowledges the importance of talk shows and results clearly indicate that media has the capability to form public opinion and change people's perceptions about corruption and similar issues.

No doubt, media is creating awareness among masses but at the same time it is also creating political instability. While reporting news, facts are distorted and personnel agendas are fulfilled. In November 2009, Gallup Pakistan poll analysis found that almost

one third of all Pakistanis (31%) blame media for political instability in Pakistan (Zia, 2011). In order to set right direction of media, government need to form rules and regulations. Summarizing the findings, it is concluded that media plays a crucial role in formulating public opinion regarding corruption and political s. Pakistani media has played a crucial role in covering Panama Papers and changing mindset of people by forming opinion against corruption. However, media often violates code of conduct, distort facts, spread speculations, misuse freedom violating Article 19 of the Constitution, promote personnel agenda and undermine national interests.

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