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# Perception Of General Public Regarding Role of Tv News Channels in Highlighting Poverty Reduction Policy: Ehsaas Program-A Data-Driven Study

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# INTRODUCTION

Since the 1880s, three alternative conceptions of poverty have evolved as a basis for international and comparative work, and they depend principally on the ideas of subsistence, basic needs and relative deprivation (UNDP, 2006). According to ADB,

### Highlighting Poverty Reduction Policy

# Iqbal, N, et al., (2023)

Asian Development Bank, in Pakistan, 24.3% of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2015. For every 1,000 babies born in Pakistan in 2018, 69 die before their fifth birthday because of poverty. In Pakistan, various poverty reduction policies have been implemented by successive governments in collaboration with international organizations such as the UN, World Bank, and IMF. These efforts aim to alleviate poverty and support the country's development. Significant initiatives include the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), launched in 2008, which provided direct assistance to poor families. Under BISP, allocations for social safety-net programs were increased, contributing to poverty reduction. Another notable program is the Sehat Sahulat Program, initiated by Prime Minister Imran Khan in 2019, to provide free healthcare to underprivileged citizens. This program aims to improve access to quality medical services through a micro health insurance scheme, benefiting millions of poor families across Pakistan. Despite challenges, these initiatives represent important steps towards addressing poverty and promoting social welfare in the country.

The Ehsaas Program, launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan in March 2019 under the supervision of Dr. Sania Nishtar, aims to address poverty and inequality in Pakistan. It operates under the framework of BISP and focuses on various interventions to benefit its beneficiaries. The program employs a multidimensional approach with 115 policy pillars executed through collaboration with 28 agencies. Its objectives include reducing inequality, providing safety nets for the marginalized, creating livelihoods, investing in human capital, and uplifting lagging areas. Target groups include the extreme poor, orphans, widows, the disabled, and others vulnerable groups. The program's goals include providing safety nets for 10 million families, livelihood opportunities for 3.8 million individuals, healthcare access for 10 million families, education incentives for 5 million students, financial inclusion for 7 million individuals (with a focus on women), and fostering an enabling environment for poverty reduction through multi-sector partnerships and innovations.

# Role of TV News Channels in Highlighting Poverty Reduction Policy: Ehsaas Program

Accelerating poverty reduction requires effective promotion of poverty reduction policies, often facilitated through mass media channels such as TV news channels. These channels have become integral to daily life for a significant portion of the population, making them a crucial medium for disseminating information about government initiatives. Particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, TV news channels play a vital role in highlighting the features and achievements of programs like Ehsaas. They emphasize various aspects, including the distribution of cash to needy families, the identification process for eligibility, and the utilization of online transaction methods like Easy Paisa and Jazz Cash. Additionally, they spotlight initiatives like the Tiger Force, which distributes ration bags to marginalized communities, effectively raising awareness and engagement regarding poverty alleviation efforts.

Kim, S.H., Shanahan, J., & Choi, D.H. (2012, January 1). TV News Framing Supports Societal Poverty Solutions, An analysis of television and newspaper coverage of poverty indicates that coverage has focused largely on societal-level, as opposed to individual causes and solutions. Television news viewing was positively associated with viewers' perceived government responsibility for solving problems. The concept of poverty in the US is often

### 3(1), 274-284

misunderstood, with the Census Bureau's definition differing from common perceptions. While over 30 million Americans are reported as "in poverty," many still possess modern amenities like air conditioning and cable TV. Most have stable access to food, adequate housing, and medical care. Although some face hardships, they represent a minority within the poverty population. Accurate understanding of poverty is crucial for effective policy-making to address real material deprivation and develop targeted solutions. (Rector, R., & Sheffield, R., Sabah et al., 2019)

The Agenda Setting theory of mass media communication explores how media agendas influence societal perceptions and why mass media holds significant sway over public opinion. Originating in the 1968 presidential election, this theory, as proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, posits that media content shapes public perceptions of issue importance. McCombs emphasized the media's ability to influence public awareness and prioritize certain issues. Through agenda setting, the media filters and highlights key subjects, directing public attention accordingly. This theory holds relevance in understanding the promotion of initiatives like the Ehsaas Program by TV news channels. By consistently highlighting such programs, the media sets the agenda for public discourse, influencing perceptions of issue significance.

Agenda setting operates through the cognitive process of accessibility, whereby extensive media coverage makes issues more memorable and consequently perceived as more important. Thus, by extensively covering the Ehsaas Program, TV news channels shape public perceptions and control public agendas, ultimately influencing societal priorities (Muazzam, & Tiwana, 2015; Hassan, & Muazzam, 2013).Framing theory, originating from Gregory Bateson's concept, explores how media presents news within familiar contexts to influence audience perceptions and choices in processing information. Frames organize message meaning and shape public understanding of issues, focusing on essence rather than specific topics.

Frames can enhance understanding or serve as cognitive shortcuts, linking stories to broader narratives. Framing involves various techniques such as conflict prioritization, human interest/personalization, consequence emphasis, morality portrayal, and responsibility attribution. Frames can be specific or generic and operate at communication and thought levels. News framing aims to establish cognitive shortcuts, oversimplify news, distract from important issues, and shape audience perceptions, often leading to the activation of the "magic bullet effect" on cognitively shaped audiences.In relation to the problem, framing theory suggests that media agendas influence public agendas, making stories highlighted by the media significant to the public. TV news channels strategically frame news about initiatives like the Ehsaas Program to make it more prominent and relevant to the public, thereby shaping public perceptions and priorities.

**H1.** TV News Channels are playing significant role in highlighting the Ehsaas Program under COVID-19 pandemic.

**HO.** TV News Channels are not playing significant role in highlighting the Ehsaas Program under COVID-19 pandemic.

# METHODS

### Participants and procedure

Survey method was used to collect data of the research. Online questionnaire was conduct in order to measure the role of TV News Channels. Population was the educated youth of Lahore. The target audience of the present study was general public, and the sample size was 126 persons.

# MEASURES

# Demographic data

Self-created demographic questionnaires were utilized in which name, age, gender, qualification was asked from the Individuals. Moreover, a questionnaire was used in the study and it includes 13 questions to conclude the result. All questions were closed ended.

### Processing of data

The information was gathered using the questionnaire. Microsoft Word office 2013 was used for reason of typing material and Statistical Packages for the social sciences (SPSS) 17.0 used for the purpose of applying statistical test.

# FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

- ITEM ANAYLSIS
- ITEM 1
- Table 1.

#### Are TV News Channels playing their roles in highlighting Poverty Issues in Pakistan?

			frequency	percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes		53	42.1	42.1	42.1
	To extent	some	49	38.9	38.9	81.10
	Neutral		5	4.0	4.0	84.9
	No		19	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total		126	100.0	100.0	

The results show that 81.0% respondents think that TV News Channels play their roles effectively in highlighting poverty issues in Pakistan. This comparison gives the direction that TV News Channels can be used to set agenda in order to overcome poverty Issues in Pakistan by highlighting it.

Table 2.				
Are TV News Channels do	framing in h	ighlighting	Poverty Issues in	Pakistan?
	frequency	norcont	Valid	Cumulative per

			frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes To extent	some	44 50	34.9 39.7	34.9 39.7	34.9 74.6
	neutral		21	16.7	16.7	91.3

The Asian		3(1), 274-284				
	No	11	8.7	8.7	100.0	
	Total	126	100.0	100.0		

The majority of respondents think that TV News Channels frame Poverty Issues in Pakistan. These Poverty Issues shown by the TV News Channels will eventually become important issues in the public's mind as well. This framing helps in overcoming Poverty in Pakistan as more people become aware of the ways to overcome it and memorize it by seeing them again and again.

#### Table 3.

### Are TV News Channels giving enough coverage to Poverty Reduction Policies?

		frequency	percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
valid	yes	30	23.8	23.8	23.8
	To some extent	49	38.9	38.9	62.7
	neutral	11	8.7	8.7	71.4
	no	36	28.6	28.6	100.0
	total	126	100.0	100.0	

The 62.7% respondents think these policies get enough coverage by TV News Channels that is meant to be given in order to overcome poverty issues in Pakistan.

### Table 4.

# Do you know about Poverty Reduction Programs like Ehsaas Program, Sehat Sahulat Card and Kamyab Jawan?

			frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	yes		92	73.0	73.0	73.0
	To extent	some	19	15.1	15.1	88.1
	neutral		10	7.9	7.9	96.0
	no		5	4.0	4.0	100.0
	total		126	100.0	100.0	

According to the results 88.1% of people know about Poverty Reduction Programs like Ehsaas Program, Sehat Sahulat Card and Kamyab Jawan that are currently launched in Pakistan by Imran Khan for the needy ones. This gives the direction that our TV News Channels highlighting Poverty Reduction Policies effectively in order to overcome poverty issues in Pakistan.

#### Table 5.

### How did you first find out about Ehsaas Program?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	newspaper	14	11.1	11.1	11.1
	TV news	85	67.5	67.5	78.6
	TV programes	27	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

88.9% respondents respond that they came to know about Ehsaas Program by TV News, and TV Programs. This is giving the direction that Ehsaas Program has been highlighted

#### Highlighting Poverty Reduction Policy

by TV News Channels by different TV Programs transmissions on this policy along with making of TV News. Thus, TV News Channels are playing significant role in highlighting Ehsaas Program under COVID-19 situation.

#### Table 6.

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	ARY news	46	36.5	36.5	36.5
	Duniya news	25	19.8	19.8	56.3
	Geonews	10	7.9	7.9	64.3
	All of these	45	35.7	35.7	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

# Which TV News Channel do you think, doing un-bias coverage of Ehsaas Program?

The results show that 36.5% ARY News, 19.8% Dunya News, 7.9% Geo News and 35.7% All of these. These percentages give reflection that all these three TV News Channels are doing un-bias coverage about Ehsaas program but ARY News is being preferred by the respondents as they think it highlights both negative and positive aspects equally. Similarly, Geo News get the minimum percentage as it highlights negative aspects of Ehsaas Program more than the positive ones.

#### Table 7. Which TV News Channel do you think highlights the positive aspects of Ehsaas Program?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
valid	ARY news	65	51.6	51.6	51.6
	Duniya news	25	19.8	19.8	71.4
	Geonews	11	8.7	8.7	80.2
	All of these	25	19.8	19.8	100.0
	total	126	100.0	100.0	

The result show that ARY News highlights the positive aspects of Ehsaas Program like Tiger Force, Distribution of money among poor, Fairness, and Non-Political agenda more than Dunya News, and Geo News as it received the maximum percentage of 51.6% among all the three. Dunya News received the moderate percentage whereas on the other hand Geo News received the minimum percentage of 8.7 as it highlights the negative aspects like negative oppositions and public opinions more than positive ones.

		frequency	percent	Valid	Cumulative percent
			-	percent	-
Valid	ARY news	12	9.5	9.5	9.5
	Duniya news	9	7.1	7.1	16.7
	Geo news	89	70.6	70.6	87.3
	All of these	16	12.7	12.7	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

The Result percentages show that Geo News highlights negative aspects of Ehsaas Program more than positive aspects as it got 70.6% responses. It gives the direction that this channel is doing un-bias coverage and highlights the negative views of opposition

and public more than the positive ones that are Tiger force, Fair behavior, and Non-Political agenda.

#### Table 9.

# Which aspect of Ehsaas Program do you think discuss more by the TV News Channels?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Marginalized the poor	36	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Tiger force	46	36.5	36.5	65.1
	Non political agenda	26	20.6	20.6	85.7
	Fairness	18	14.3	14.3	100.0
	total	126	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked that which aspect of Ehsaas Program is discussed more by TV New Channels and the results show that TV News Channels highlights Tiger Force than other aspects of this Program. Tiger Force is discussed more by TV News Channels as this Force is used to provide food bags to needy in COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Table 10.

In your opinion, which TV News Channel highlights the views of opposition regarding Ehsaas Program?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
valid	ARY news	21	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Duniya news	14	11.1	11.1	27.8
	Geonews	61	48.4	48.4	76.2
	All of these	30	23.8	23.8	100.0
	total	126	100.0	100.0	

The results show that Geo News highlights views of opposition more than ARY News and Dunya News and also highlights the negative aspects of this Program more than positive ones.

#### Table 11.

#### Which TV News Channel do you think covers public opinions about Ehsaas Program?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	ARY news	48	38.1	38.1	38.1
	Duniya news	25	19.8	19.8	57.9
	Geo news	17	13.5	13.5	71.4
	All of these	36	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

The results show that ARY News presents more public opinions on Ehsaas Program than Dunya News, and Geo News. Dunya News and Geo News also highlights the public opinions but as Geo News do biased coverage it only covers negative public opinions about Ehsaas Program more than positives. While ARY News and Dunya News gives unbias coverage of public opinions but ARY News highlights it more.

#### Table 12.

During current situation of COVID-19, which TV News Channel do you think highlights the distribution of money under Ehsaas Program?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	ARY news	53	42.1	42.1	42.1
	Duniya news	15	11.9	11.9	54.0
	Geo news	9	7.1	7.1	61.1
	All of these	49	38.9	38.9	100.0

Highlighting Poverty R	eduction Poli	су		lqbal, N, et al., (2023)
total	126	100.0	100.0	

The results show that all of these TV News Channels play their roles effectively in highlighting distribution of money but ARY News highlights more as it gives coverage to all the positive aspects of this program. Similarly, Geo News gives coverage to negative aspects more than highlighting distribution of money under Ehsaas Program.

#### Table 13.

Which TV News Channel do you think highlights the problems faced by Ehsaas beneficiaries in the process of distribution of money?

		frequency	percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
valid	ARY news	37	29.4	29.4	29.4
	Duniya news	18	14.3	14.3	43.7
	Geonews	18	14.3	14.3	57.9
	All of these	53	42.1	42.1	100.0
	total	126	100.0	100.0	

Results show that all the three News Channels highlight the problems faced by Ehsaas beneficiaries in the process of distribution of money. But ARY News highlights more as it gives un-bias coverage. On the other hand, Geo News and Dunya News received the same percentage.

# **HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

Researcher applied T-Test to check if H1 is acceptable or rejected for this study.

T-Test between Genders of the respondents.

#### Table 14. Results of T Test between Gender

	Male		Female		t(124)	р	Cohen's d
	М	SD	м	SD			
Equal variance assumed					2.630	.010	

Since the p-value is 0.026 which is less than level of significance it is concluded at 95% level of confidence that gender difference exists on the perception that TV News Channels are playing significant role in highlighting the Ehsaas Program under COVID-19 pandemic.

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic insights reveal a diverse representation among respondents. The findings reveal that a significant majority of respondents perceive TV news channels as effective in their role of highlighting poverty issues, framing them, and covering poverty reduction policies. There is a notable awareness regarding poverty reduction programs like Ehsaas Program, Sehat Sahulat Card, and Kamyab Jawan, with TV news channels being identified as the primary source of information (Shakil et al., 2023). Furthermore, specific channels, particularly ARY News, are acknowledged for their unbiased coverage of poverty-related programs like Ehsaas Program. However, there exist variations in how different channels portray certain aspects, with ARY News being preferred for highlighting

positive aspects and Geo News for emphasizing negative ones. In essence, the findings suggest that TV news channels play a crucial role in disseminating information about poverty-related policies and programs, shaping public opinion, and facilitating discussions on poverty reduction strategies in Pakistan.

# EVALUATION

The study concludes that TV news channels effectively highlight poverty issues and poverty reduction policies, notably the Ehsaas Program. They frame poverty reduction policies in both positive and negative lights, leading to increased awareness among the public about initiatives like Sehat Sahulat Card, Kamyab Jawan, and Ehsaas Program, which are crucial for addressing poverty in Pakistan. TV news channels, particularly ARY News, provide unbiased coverage of the Ehsaas Program. However, Geo News tends to emphasize negative aspects, focusing on opposition and public opinions, while ARY News highlights positive aspects like Tiger Force and fair distribution of funds. Despite differences, all channels contribute to informing the public about the Ehsaas Program during the COVID-19 pandemic effectively.

# LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

• The researcher has considered a small sample of 126 people in order to study the role of TV News Channels in highlighting Ehsaas Program is not enough for the representations of the entire universe of TV Channels viewers.

• The selected respondents for this research study are only educated youth of Lahore, which is the weakness of this research thesis.

• Viewers of TV News Channels also includes illiterate people, therefore their opinions on Role of TV News Channels are missing in this study.

• This topic should be researched including opinion leaders or made multipronged by interviewing chairperson of Ehsaas Program and opinions of News Directors of ARY News, Dunya News and Geo News pertaining this topic.

• The study was carried out only in city of Lahore. other cities and regions should be explored in future researches in order to obtain diversified perception.

# Suggestions and Recommendations

For the further research on the same topic following suggestions can be used practically:

• Future researchers can use a large sample size.

• Future researchers should also add the illiterate people and find out their opinions on role of TV News Channels.

• This research can also be done by qualitative method and researchers should interview TV News directors and chairperson of Ehsaas Program in order to know their opinions on role of TV News Channels in highlighting Poverty Reduction Programs.

# DECLARATIONS

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#### Consent to Participate: Yes

**Consent for publication and Ethical approval:** Because this study does not include human or animal data, ethical approval is not required for publication. All authors have given their consent.

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3(1), 274-284

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