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## Role Of Independent Media in Promoting Governance and Effective Policymaking Process In Pakistan

**Abstract:** *This paper investigates how anyone may shape policy by interacting with the media, politics, and decision-makers. Media are interwoven with democracy and symbolise it. The press informs the public and actors about current events. Individuals, institutions, and political leaders are affected by media groups. PEMRA's censorship and control rules impede controlled media's performance. It gets more criticism because it is not affected by authorities, but it just promotes one-sided views. The study aims to analyze the role of independent media in promoting or preventing good governance. It helps reduce corruption and improve government efficiency as well as civil service. Publications like Panama and Paradise Leaks have effectively exposed corruption, criminality, and power abuse while holding governments accountable globally. Interests drove decisions in Pakistan's civic, feudal, and military domains. Media firms help shape policy. This interest-based approach to governance has failed most democracies. Personal interests have interrupted institutional processes.*

**Key Words:** Governance, Policy, Decision Makers, Media Groups, Agenda-setting

### Introduction

The media has become an important part of any democratic country that they dominate the political process and their policies. Many studies show that media act as a force on the policy process that systematically shows that it affects the public policy in a democratic country. Media always help to set an agenda, and then it has to be acted upon by politicians, policymakers, and other actors. The media can draw attention to the players involved in the policy process and can aid, abet or hinder their cause by highlighting their role in policymaking. Media can also act as a critical mediator between governments and the general public and inform the public about government actions and policies, and help to convey public attitudes toward government officials. Political agenda setting focuses on how media coverage is done on political events and what perspective it will be given to the public, and how it will help policymakers. Decision-makers act upon the policies by keeping in mind that media has a large influence, and decision-makers respond to the

conditions and factors within the governmental organization and outside the organizations.

During political elections, the media plays an important role as it has to educate the public to make the right decisions. In this time, the media has to play a neutral role. During this media has to inform all citizens about all political activities and all campaigns by political parties. In 2016, during the elections of the USA between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, youth used media as a platform to get all information about the elections. Freedom of the media is generally viewed as being an unrestrained ability to create truthful news without fear of government interdiction. The first amendment in the US constitution was the same to give freedom of speech to media and press. This gave the surety to journalists to work and to get coverage of all news events.

During the election campaign of Donald Trump, 62% of US adults get their news on media. Twitter,

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Facebook Instagram are the main leads to give information to adults. Keeping this in mind, candidates choose these platforms to talk about different topics i.e, health, economics, education, affairs etc. it was found that during the presidential campaign, three candidates were on top and their posts were chosen by many people and this led their campaign to be successful during elections. The Trump presidential campaign benefited to get all voters towards itself. Many young voters were influenced by these media campaigns.

During elections in Pakistan, Imran Khan took the initiative to influence the young generation towards itself through campaigns that work best for them. These campaigns lead political parties to make their policies in keeping public demands as well as the media's initiative. The media is the only source to get and give information.

Thus media always play an important role in making policies and decisions of government. Corruption cases in media are the most highlighted issues of any country. They make and change all the images of a country how the media will portray the corruption case. It is a primary duty of any type of government, either democratic or authoritarian, to serve in the favour of the public and perform well at least to avoid any social unrest. To keep the political officials, authorities, and institutions accountable to their citizens, electoral democracy has an edge. Such as the public can punish as well as reward political officials for their actions by having periodic elections. Only elections can ensure to distribute the power equally in a democratic society. In any truly democratic system, important elements are the rule of law, human rights protection, and freedom also constitutional authority. In the recent few years, media has emerged as an influential and powerful tool, and its power cannot be refused in democracy. Now a day, Media personal, media policy, and media content has either direct or indirect impact on the public because they play the political actor role. On the other hand, an independent and diverse media can also help to hold the governments or political officials accountable and transparent to the citizens. And give the edge to the poor by providing them chances to participate through dialogues. By analyzing the role of media to improve governance in Pakistan, a democratic society, the researcher has found that the Pakistani media, even after getting liberalized, doesn't play the role they need to play. They do inform the public, but they cannot expose the power which gives leverage to corruption. International media has played a much better role to

expose corruption and bring awareness among the people and institutions to take action against any illegal activities that harm the country.

## Literature Review

Press freedom plays an important role in democracy as well as the use of independent media helps to make any government accountable in any society, and it works as an instrument to deliver services correctly ([De Jesus & Staveren, 2014](#)).

We cannot bring any change in society unless we give the right to expression to poor people. Free Press is not only an entity to entertain or consider as a luxury. Corruption is considered as the main issue and a single factor that affects development. Both corruption and free press might have a political impact in any society, but they are taken as economic and social issues instead of political ([Wolfensohn, 1999](#))

Former president of World Bank, Wolfensohn argued that "the More we give freedom to press; more we can control the corruption because there is a strong positive link between voice and accountability". According to the World Bank report, "If we need to have stability and peace, and knowledge of the world is required communicators and press leaders". Every country must ensure that their people have free access to the information or facilities to expose any issues as well as the right to voice, and their voices need to listen, which can help to remove hurdles from development and bring some change in the society. [Roy, \(1999\)](#) n her study, analyzed that establishment of more effective and healthy media sectors, can help to make any country politically stable. Any Independent media and better access to the information can help to improve the political risk conditions of those countries that are at high risk.

Kalathil, (2011) described that the media performs many roles in a country such as a watchdog role, to set agendas, informing public about different issues in the society, delivering correct news and holding the government accountable, on the whole, the main factor of good governance any a country is an independent media. The development of independent media in any country supports the goals of governance, including listening to the voices, transparency, and holding the government accountable not only by spreading information, but its existence does help. The focus of governance strategies is to develop independent media that can help to scrutinize and to monitor. It also offers an

opinion about the performance of the government and the corruption. To achieve the goals of accountability and voice, strong independent media plays an essential role. It also provides such an environment in the society that can help to improve many other factors needed for development along with transparency and accountability.

Any kind of media can help to empower and inform the public as well as build an effective and responsive government, which provides an accurate image of public issues and their requirements and necessities. In other words, independent and diverse media sectors are considered keystones of good governance that protect citizens against the misuse of power by governments. If there are no media, people cannot raise their voices against those developmental issues affecting their lives. (Kalathil, 2011)

According to Kalathil Pluristic (2011) and independent media sectors support other essential elements of good governance too, including promoting the voice of the people and accountability of all those in power. It can strengthen the other goals, such as extracting corruption from the society, and help to set agendas for any anti-corruption program to improve and inform citizens about the benefits of a society free of corruption. Media can contribute to fostering informed people in the society, those who demand good governance by its elected government. It can put light on the activities of all-powerful institutions to improve transparency at any level.

Media is an important instrument of good governance. It can contribute some good even some bad when it comes to governance, such as helping to empower citizens and sometimes use them, collapse the governments, or by helping the authorities, it can repress the public. Whereas the expected role of the media is to help in bringing viable change and development in society by considering the prosperity of the citizens ([Ojenike, Adedokun, Odugbemi, Ojenike, 2016](#))

According to a World Bank report( 2007), plural and participatory media set up in any country make the circulation of the information easier and supports its people to get access to that information. It helps to hold institutions or those in power accountable, responsive as well as remove corruption from society (Locksley, 2009)

[Yadav \(2001\)](#) revealed in his work related to the "role of media in promoting good governance" that the judiciary, media, and citizen independence are

considered as vital factors in order to enhance access to the information, transparency as well as accountability of government institutes. According to him, there should be an action related to these rights based on free access to the information also its accountability and ensures quality debates in a democratic society that can provide public about the performances of the performers (actors) and institutes. Rights to the information are linked with the government's accountability for their actions to bring good governance in the state and balance in the market and society. Moreover, the most important task of media is to inform, socialize, communicate and get the people ready for any kind of social change for betterment and good governance.

[Norris \(2006\)](#) analyzed in her study that the free and independent press has the main role in democracy and good governance, which was claimed by the liberal theorist. Any changes in the system (rule) occur, depending upon the news media structure and role of their journalists. A free press does work as of watchdog, civic forum, and agenda-setter, but which role is the most important wasn't explored in the study. The effective role of the press as a watchdog could relate to the elimination of corruption from society, according to the author. It helps to enhance the effectiveness of government while bringing the social issues under their consideration. However, a more accountable as well as responsive government to public necessities may help to eliminate poverty from society, with the improvement in democracy and good governance. Those countries, where many people have access to the free press, are considered as more politically stable, low in corruption, have efficient governments in policymaking and are good at law and order ([Norris, 2006](#)).

[Dunu \(2013\)](#), in his study revealed that in any society, leaders must use their powers as well as systems and procedures all need to be in their places and work responsibly in the best interest of the country and the public, then only they can achieve democracy and good governance. The media has got enough power in developing and developed countries to achieve their benefits. If media does its duty fairly, follows ethical values and become accountable, transparent, patriotic, and objective. Media can contribute to good governance and hold the institutions accountable by applying their rules effectively, as It had already done when the country was trying to achieve democracy and independence.

[Voltmer \(2009\)](#) suggests that there is definitely

an impact of media on the audience but it mainly depends upon the social circumstances as well as individuals. To nurture government and social accountability, media needs to provide quality information by keeping the public interest first, which could be achieved after taking some active measures and implementing structures and normative guidelines.

[Coronel \(2009\)](#) revealed in her study that media does help to bring change in society and provide assistance to create a transparent and accountable government by playing the role of watchdog. Its ability to support good governance is improved. If the press has given its rights and editorial independence, people and journalists have access to the information and are protected from any threats, and follow the professional standards and ethics.

In a democratic society, the dynamic participation of media helps to hold the government accountable, transparent, and ensure good governance. It becomes the voice of the people and represents the interest of society. On the other hand, Paid News culture is a danger to good governance as well as democracy. First, the media has to lose its liberty by following this culture then has to work in the interest of authorities and specific groups. Second, it is another way to cheat the people, press readers, and television viewers who are being tricked by different propaganda techniques which are a threat to democracy. Unbiased and independent media is necessary to ensure good governance, whereas paid news culture is a threat in the way of a fair working environment. Thus media must stay away from any kind of influence or pressure from authorities and must have the power to expose and inform the public with the realities to promote good governance ([Ashraf, 2014](#)).

[Norris and Odugbemi \(2009\)](#) have proposed that any news media can remarkably influence good governance and government accountability if its three ultimate roles are fulfilled effectively i.e. watchdog, agenda-setter and gatekeeper. It helps to monitor those who are in power in the society to expose the corruption and propaganda done by the authorities and institutions and protect the public interest.

Development actors need to support and invest in media because independent media is necessary for some reasons including freedom of expression and important for the working of a democratic society. It helps to improve the citizen and state relationships by enhancing the government accountability i: e-

service delivery and responsiveness of state to the needs of their citizens. It supports the elected government and reduces corruption and helps to improve governance. It provides balanced, reliable and accurate information to the public, increase social consistency and reduces conflicts. It works as a platform to help in achieving the development goals in any country and create demands for different services ([Deane, 2015](#)).

## Objectives

This research article is aimed to explore how independent media helps to bring change in Pakistan, by creating awareness among the public and activating the judiciary to take actions accordingly.

1. To identify its activities to improve the governance in Pakistan.
2. To analyze its role to hold the government accountable to citizens, in terms of service delivery and state responsiveness.
3. To explore its role to minimize corruption or poor governance from a democratic society.
4. To examine how it helps the common public to access the information about the society they live in and those in power.
5. To find out how it enhances government transparency, stability and effectiveness.

## Discussion

We have already mentioned in the literature taken from the existing studies about the importance of the independent media and its role to support the essential functioning of the democratic society. Free and independent media are considered as the keystone to developing a state free of corruption, politically stable, effective, responsive, transparent as well as accountable government to its citizens. It helps the public to access all the accurate information and promote the rule of law by ensuring fair elections. The media in Pakistan is considered independent and liberal since 2003 from President Musharaf era.

Media has given freedom, but still, it doesn't do much to support the democracy in Pakistan. And it is not as effective as it should be. Media in Pakistan has got powers but it doesn't show efficient performance. It is playing the role of watchdog but not provided with enough solutions for the public issues and political instability in the country. To ensure democracy in the country, media institutions needs to be democratic in their functions as well as

accountable for their actions. Media should do their duties responsibly and should not follow any specific agendas of authorities, owners, sponsors, politicians and serve the public without any pressures.

On the other hand, at the international level, Independent media such as Panama leaks, paradise papers, wiki leaks, has performed as a bridge to provide information about the corruption done by the politicians of Pakistan and create awareness among the citizens at every level. To ensure transparent and accountable governments judiciary has to take actions against these corrupt politicians, in response to the public voices. Media is cultivating political awareness among the citizens which will have long term effects and government will have to be accountable for their every action now and in the future.

Panama papers are the leaked documents from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, which has become the source of information for Pakistani society, including the judiciary, about the offshore properties and business dealing of many powerful politicians, authorities, and figures. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has dismissed the prime minister of time Nawaz Sharif and many more involved in the corruption. Nawaz Sharif was the world's second leader who had to resign from his prime minister post and disqualify for life due to leak results.

Panama paper leak create awareness among the public, many other people and opposition leaders petitioned in the court against him. An enquiry was held and many allegations of corruption, money laundering, and contradictory statements by him and his family members become the reason for his dismissal. This case was most publicized in Pakistani history. National and international media has covered it. Leak helped to uncover many other corruption cases and misuse of power and authority by politicians and government. It supported to reveals so many truths and activated judiciary to hold the government accountable and transparent. The nation stood together against all corrupt politicians to ensure democracy and good governance and remove dishonesty from society.

In Pakistan, some publications and channels were issuing statements and news about the victory of the Prime Minister, whereas others were giving news against him and suggestions for the resignation. In to this largest leak, more than 100 new organizations participated, but none of them was from Pakistan to hold the government accountable in the country and ensure good

governance. Domestic news media given the analysis was mostly outsourced from international media. Investigative journalism especially against any political entity is dying in Pakistani society and not appropriate enough to find out and report reality.

If the world hasn't shown any interest in Panama and Paradise papers then there shouldn't be any investigation that could go beyond announcements. The prime minister of Iceland has to resign due to his name appearing in the leak and the same happened to the prime minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif. This was due to the results of these papers, which the whole world took very seriously and considered authentic. EU did investigations against 17 countries and blacklisted them. ICIJ admitted that the proper investigations were done against the prime minister of Pakistan. There were the names of other 436 Pakistani people who were involved in corruption mentioned in Panama papers and 135 in paradise papers, investigations are going on. All the facts and figures related to Panama and paradise papers containing the ICIJ report were published by New York Times, a US newspaper. That is the power of an independent media that the various person came under the investigations and audits have been done on many of the personals and organizations of many countries.

FBME Bank's name was included in the Paradise Papers, and the American government had banned it over the allegations of financing terrorism. The bank was a client of Appleby, and the US financial setup imposed a ban on it last year for financing terrorists and criminal groups, besides supporting Syria's chemical weapons program financially. Tax evasion charges are being probed against Columbian singer Shakira in Spain. She officially moved to Barcelona from the Bahamas in 2015, where she lives with her partner, Barca soccer player Gerard Pique, and the couple's two sons.

According to ICIJ's latest report, the most important incident regarding Panama Papers took place in 2017 when Nawaz Sharif was disqualified as the prime minister of Pakistan in July. Nawaz Sharif's three children's names had appeared in Panama Papers, claiming that they were proprietors of the firms or they were their beneficial owners. Nawaz Sharif's daughter, who's widely believed to be the successor of her father politically, was also mentioned in the leaks as the owner of the firms based in the British Virgin Islands.

Pakistan was the country, which was shaken politically to a high extent than other countries as

the leak was disclosing the many names from Pakistan, including PM and his 3 children, for owing properties and business offshore. Supreme Court had ordered to file corruption cases against all of them in the accountability court. Panama and Paradise papers had disclosed many people including ministers from President Musharraf Era and political personalities that worked as a wakeup call for the nation to save the democracy and hold their government accountable as well transparent. There were indeed no actions taken against the other names included in these papers, but accountability is at its peak, and the nation is clearly aware of the corruption cases. The corrupt institutional mechanism is the real threat to democracy and hurdle on the way of good governance

The purpose of the Paradise papers was not to reveal the tax dodging in actuality but it was aimed at harmful politics and democracy. Supreme Court's decision of inquiring about the leak was a step towards the betterment and growth of a country that is generally considered as corrupt. Media after enjoying independence in 2002, instead of doing well for the country, journalists got involved in sensationalism and lost the quality as well as followed commercialism for their benefits. Liberalism in a competitive environment didn't let the media remember that one of their essential duty is to inform the public and serve best in the interest of democracy.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Education is considered as the key element for the development of media and society. Qualified journalists are needed to dig up the realities. Media institutions should play their role by strengthening democracy instead of earning profits. The general public should have access to the information to hold the government accountable. The greater the access to the information Pakistani people will have, the better they can help to serve the country and contribute to the development. The government will

have to be answerable for every single action to their informed citizens if media do perform their duties with responsibility and the state doesn't pressurize media for their own benefits. Instead of showing one-sided stories or working on specific agendas to enhance their profits, media has to be independent and responsible so that they can serve in the best interest of the country and its people. Media has to be accountable for their actions to hold any government accountable and improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Corrupt or profit-oriented organizations cannot perform well to bring the light on the harmful issues and focus on sensationalism instead of helping the people to be their voice.

Only Pro-active media and society can help to achieve the good governance, transparency and responsiveness of the government institutes. So they only should use law and the rights to disseminate the information to the public. In this age of information, the foremost duty of media is to question and recognize, to not only report the events where every individual living in the state depends upon the information given by media to learn about social and political issues.

Democracy depends upon the working of media as it depends upon the courts and politicians to get strengthened. Investigative journalism especially against any political entity is dying in Pakistani society and not appropriate enough to find out and report reality. There will be a time when humble men can take revenge on the powerful if they can keep their eyes open. Journalists in Pakistan should keep their eyes open and serve in the best interest of the country. Domestic news media analysis about corruption and other cases in Panama and Paradise paper leaks was mostly outsourced from international media. Liberalized media shouldn't only enjoy independence and use their powers to earn profits; instead, they should do the duties that were done by international media.

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