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Media Influence on Public Opinion and the Perceptions of Media Owners and Consumers about its Effects

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Abstract

The study was designed to examine the way media influence the formation of public opinion and the perceptions of local media owners and youth, about its influence, in Karachi. Major objectives of the study were to investigate if the media has really fulfilled its duty in protecting the public from political propaganda, to identify the significance of media effect on public opinion, to understand the views of media owners regarding their duty to be remain objective, and the determine perceptions of young consumers of Karachi about the international media. Keeping in view the findings, it was concluded that media has not fulfilled its duty of protecting the public from political propaganda which has a significant effect on the perceptions of the media consumers and on the public opinion in general. The news media depend on firms for content that is of interest to their audiences, and oftentimes they rely on firms to make revenues from advertising. Furthermore, media owners believe that objectivity is a mirage and it's important for journalists to think about the possible impact of their work on the families and individuals they are reporting about as well as on national security issues. However, eight out of ten journalists felt that the journalists of Pakistan have not performed their job in a just way and there have been instances when they didn't remain objective. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, all 300 were correctly filled. The study revealed that the majority of the youth are regularly in touch with the international media. The results clearly showed that only 15.6 percent of the youth relies on the media completely while the remaining 84.3 percent do not rely on the media in every case. Therefore, the youth perceive international media to be biased and unreliable but it should be noted the more than 50% of the youth of Karachi does not want the international media to be regulated by any international body, despite media discrepancies. They consider that media should do their job without any laws or regulations being imposed upon them. Thus, our first hypothesis was proven to be correct. Furthermore, the chi-square results proved our second hypothesis to be true provided that $\chi^2=0.04$, hence $\chi^2<0.05$. Therefore, the youth of Karachi

have significant differences in their perceptions about the international media. However, the majority of youth find the media to be highly unreliable and that media create unnecessary hype regarding some events.

Keywords: Media Influence, Public Opinion, Perceptions Of Media Owners, Media Consumers

Introduction

Since the introduction of the press, various forms of media ethics, rights and regulations have been debated about. Media is the gateway connecting the common man with the outside world. Media that is diverse, innovative, substantive and independent produces content that is necessary for our culture and democracy. However, today media code of ethics and watchdog mechanism are ignored by the media practitioners because they contradict the prevailing social order and hinder the pursuit of private good (Cooper, 1989). The situation in Muslim countries, or of Muslim media practitioners, is no different from that of the western media (Cooper, 1989). On the one hand, the new information technologies have encouraged communication between individuals, on the other hand, centralized elite group judge the media value, monopolize the information and manipulate it. Peruvian communication theorist (Alfaro, 2006) asserts that: *Today the media constitute a crucial source of civic education and legitimization of democratic power. Political elites legitimize themselves or join dissident discourses through their interactions with newspapers, magazines, television and radio. Notions of political authority, political values and general understanding of the nation's political institutes are consolidated through the daily programs of the mass media and particularly via news. The national and international agenda emerge from daily mass media processes of production and consumption. Both the concept and feeling of the nation and the world are also articulated in the production and consumption of media.*

Media industry is not just like other industries, neither are the media products the same as other consumer products. Because the media produce cultural and political products that have different purposes from many other goods, and also media are citizen resources, not simple consumer goods. In contemporary society, the media are central to processes of deliberation, education, and social integration. Citizens extensively rely on media for information, whether it is news about war or televised presidential debates. Media not only inform the citizens; but also, in varying ways, informally educate them. Therefore, in a democratic society, media, rather than simply supplying consumer goods in a free market context, are expected to serve the public interest.

However, a huge amount of research has demonstrated that the use and content of news media have effects on public opinion (Davison, 1983), (Gunther, 1998). Walter Lippmann in his book Public opinion develops the idea of propaganda, claiming that "In order to conduct propaganda, there must be some barrier between the public and the event" (Lippman, 1922). With this separation, there is the ability of the media to manipulate events or present limited information to the public.

News organizations should encourage questions about the official version of events and should provide an ample supply of information that news consumers can use to make up their minds about what they think their country should do (Seib, 2004). If the news media fails to provide such tools, an imbalance exists that undercuts democracy.

The predominant role of news programming in any country's media policy is evident in the ongoing debates surrounding media ownership regulations. For example, in relaxing the local television multiple ownership rules in 2003 in the US, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assumed that the new, relaxed rules would allow the commonly owned stations to operate more

efficiently by taking advantage of their combined resources, thus increasing local news and public affairs programming in the local market (Napoli & Yan, 2007). However, what it truly resulted in was the monopolies of ownership of media.

Harold Innis (Innis, 1948) warned us of the dangers of such monopolies of knowledge arising from new communication technology. He presented these fears in his book *Minerva's Owl*, where he applied this theory to the historical societies and the way they changed with the arrival of new communication technology. In his book *Minerva's Owl*, Innis states, "The two greatest inventions of the human mind are writing and money—the common language of intelligence and the common language of self-interest" (Innis, 1948). This describes our media and its corporate domination, and the loss of democracy in the delivery of information. It is now the self-interests of the corporation's the media is representing.

Walter Benjamin's (1892–1940) 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' written in 1936 is one of the most important texts in media theory. In the space of a few pages it provides perhaps the first systematic account of the mass cultural effects of the media technologies that emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century (Taylor & Harris, 2008). The Essay particularly focuses upon the way in which the nature of a work of art is irretrievably altered with the arrival of the mass media and it concerns itself with the wider social effects of this fundamental development (Taylor & Harris, 2008).

Many surveys have been conducted to prove how manipulative techniques, such as selective disclosure by the media, resulted in the formation of biased public opinion. In 2004, 41% of the public believed Saddam Hussein had an active role in the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, 38% of the public believed that the hijackers who attacked the World Trade Center were Iraqis, and 37% of the public believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction at the time of the US invasion (Harris interactive, 2009).

Many media gurus feel that media may influence the perceptions of the public drastically. The author in his book *Media Now* states, "media effects are changes in knowledge, attitude, or behavior that result from exposure to the mass media," (Davenport, LaRose, & Straubhaar, 2006).

Now news organizations must decide how to cover the events that are yet to come—the stories leading up to them and their aftermath. Much needs to be done to lift this coverage to the level of excellence that the public deserves (Seib, 2004).

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted on the relationship between media and audiences: how well the media has performed the duty of protecting the public from political propaganda and the perceptions on the media consumers. Our literature review discusses theories that are important in understanding the relationship between the media and the general public and the views of different authors regarding media biases.

Various researches have been carried out to determine how media depends on audiences' and other stakeholders' interests. Media system dependency theory proposes an integral relationship among audiences, the news media and the larger social and economic system. It defines dependency as a relationship in which the satisfaction of needs or the attainment of goals by one party is contingent upon the resources of another party'. Firms, as part of the economic system, depend upon the news media to reach their stakeholders and to foster their reputation among those individuals or groups who contribute to its wealth-creating capacity and activities. Firms depend upon the news

media in particular for the dissemination of such information that cannot be directly experienced through consumption or interaction and that lacks credibility when communicated by the firms themselves. Communication about socially responsible corporate activities is a good example for such information. (Ball-Rokeach, 2001)

The news media, on the other hand, depend on firms for content that is of interest to their audiences, and oftentimes they rely on firms to make revenues from advertising. Media system dependency theory outlines the media dependence of individuals to reach their personal goals (Ball-Rokeach, 2001) It proposes three fundamental goals individuals aim to achieve: understanding (knowing about and interpreting firms' activities), orientation (getting hints on where to buy or work), and play (having fun using a firm's products). (Einwiller, Carroll, & Korn, 2010). Therefore, media firms have a tendency to develop biases for those whom they depend for advertising and other benefits.

According to (Newton, March 2006) the mass media are embedded in our society. The research says: *Implicit in many statements about media effects on society is the idea that somehow the media are quite separate and distinct from society, firing their poison arrows into it from a distance. In fact, the mass media are an integral part of society, sharing many of its values, operating within many of its constraints (organizational, economic, cultural and legal), drawing its journalists from it, and reflecting its concerns to a greater or lesser extent. In other words, the media are deeply embedded in and part of society. They are subject to its influences much like other institutions: journalists and editors do not arrive on earth from Mars or Venus; they are social products like the rest of us, albeit, maybe, rather special ones like many other occupations. This not only makes it difficult to sort out the great entanglement of cause and effect relationships running between the media and society, but suggests caution in making statements about how the media affect society without regard to how the media and its messages are themselves products of society and influenced or determined by it.*

Many studies have been conducted highlighting one of the most ominous problems which are that owners of media firms can experience conflicts of interest. Major American news firms regularly experience political conflicts of interest, which is how they fail to protect the public from political propaganda. According to FAIR, an American media watch group: *Top news executives and celebrity reporters frequently socialize with government officials. The most powerful media companies routinely make large contributions to both major political parties, while receiving millions of dollars in return in the form of payments for running political ads... In this incestuous culture, 'news' is defined chiefly as the actions and statements of people in power. Reporters, dependent on 'access' and leaks provided by official sources, are too often unwilling to risk alienating these sources with truly critical coverage. Nor are corporate media outlets interested in angering the elected and bureaucratic officials who have the power to regulate their businesses* (Karat, 1986).

According to various polls, conducted in America, Europe, etc, media has tried to influence public opinion regarding some issues. In a study of the Gulf War, (B. Gunter, 1993) found a positive relationship between mass media use and support for the war. This means that the public opinion clearly depicts tone of media coverage of the conflict. (Tarchi, 2001) maintains that the events following the attacks of September 11, 2001 were a new form of liberal cultural hegemony of Western countries, one that threatens the freedom of expression upon which democracy is based. He points to a self-censorship of the mass media, particularly television, which reinforces core cultural values (e.g., nationalism, democracy) while squelching dissenting voices (Lin, 2006).

Little had changed since 1914-1917 when *the Times* correspondent Sir Philip Gibbs wrote: "We were our own censors... come of us wrote the truth... apart from the naked realism of horrors and

loses, and criticism of the facts which did not come within the liberty of our pen.” (Miller, 2004). But the role of journalists is not to promote peace or to act as a propaganda tool of their respective governments. Journalists should resist the temptation to become active participants, no matter what they witness (Gunter, 2009).

Chomsky’s (Herman & Chomsky, July 2010) “propaganda model” asserts that powerful elites in society, who control the resources of and access to the media system, can project their capitalist motivated political ideology. This, in turn, facilitates the emergence of a “manufactured consent”—one that can help advance elite capitalistic economic interests—on weighty issues of foreign policy such as war. According to (Zaller, 1994a) this type of public consensus can often surface rather quickly in time of a national crisis, triggered by a stream of well-crafted patriotic rhetoric delivered by the power elites (including politicians) and reported by the media, as an unusually large number of citizens may be tuning into news coverage of such crises. This theory therefore explains why the American government was able to gather the support of the public for its march towards a disastrous Iraq war of 2003 after the 9/11 incident. Therefore, journalists must be prepared to confront powerful voices whose political or economic motives lead them to create their own idiosyncratic standards of impartiality (Gunter, 2009).

Fiske, in his book *Television Culture*, describes as a *claw back* strategy; news is transmitted through a top-to-bottom chain of verbal commentary. Starting from the apparently neutral and objective newsroom anchor who usually does not speak his own thoughts, down to newsroom experts, field reporters, and interviewed eyewitnesses and visual figurations of events are made to conform to the elite-dependent conception of the event. The idea of images is particularly self-defeating when it comes to analyses of television news on terror, since their overwhelming power often renders irrelevant the detailed analysis of narrative verbal couching. News reports embed dominant ideologies through the interrelation of scattered images and their association with carefully selected headline shots. Negative feelings can also be invoked by associating events or persons with phenomena or terms that are considered as dangerous, threatening, extreme, and menace. The semantic coloring of headline shots ideologically characterizes places, event, or people. One of CNN’s recurrent headline shots figures Saddam Hussein in a modern black suit, shot from below, drawing a sword and waving it in the air. This formation in CNN newscasts encodes America’s dominant ideological perception of Hussein as a dangerous (the low-angle shot imparting menace on Saddam) backward barbarian (he waves a sword) in modern appearance (he wears a Western suit). The low-angled shot also encodes a discourse of exposure (‘below’ the modern suit hides a dangerous barbarian). This headline shot ‘semantically’ dominates and groups other available non-dominant scattered images that figure in reports on Iraq (Lin, 2006)

(Lin, 2006) characterizes Fox network’s coverage of the Iraq war as right-leaning, jingoistic and little more than cheerleading for the war effort. A recent (Pew Research Center, 2005) content analysis found that 73% of Iraq coverage aired on Fox in 2004 included opinion from anchors and reporters, compared to only 29% on MSNBC and 2% on CNN.

Television news coverage of terror events cannot be considered irrespective of the ideological framework orientating the selection of the event and the textual forms of its embedding. A closer look shows that while the amount of coverage may confer undue importance on terror, just as it may confer indiscriminate importance on any other event, why and when an event is made important can hardly be viewed in objective telegenic terms (Shaul, 2005). Terror may be telegenic, but not all terror

events are treated equally, since Middle Eastern terrorist acts are given extensive coverage; South American ones are hardly covered at all (Shaul, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

To study the role of media in influencing public opinion, to understand the perceptions of young Karachiites on the biases of international media and to investigate, furthermore, the opinions of local media owners regarding their responsibilities to remain objective.

Objective of the Study

By digging deeper into the subject, we found out the answers to the following questions:

- Has the media really fulfilled its duty of protecting the public from political propaganda?
- How significantly do the media affect the formation of public opinion?
- Do media producers consider it their responsibility to remain objective and protect the public from political propaganda?

Hypothesis

H1: the young consumers of Karachi perceive international media to be biased.

H2: the young consumers of Karachi have differences in opinion depending on their age category.

Methodology of the Study

This research was a quantitative and qualitative text analysis of news stories and transcripts about media influence. The data came from three key sources. The first source was analyzing and summarizing journal articles and books that have been published on the subject. The second was interviews conducted with about ten media gurus/owners of Pakistan. The third one was surveying the youth of Karachi. Sample size for the survey was 300 people lying in the age group of 18 years to 30 years (see appendix A). The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square.

The reason for conducting the research on media was because it was observed that the media of Pakistan and around the globe have failed to serve the public interest. Today's media is more analogous, bogus and reliant on the powerful elites. This has become a growing concern considering the drastic effect media can have over the perceptions of its consumers.

Qualitative Research

Has the media really fulfilled its duty of protecting the public from political propaganda?

I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human condition somewhat as follows. Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets. And do you see, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and

figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

Like us, the prisoners see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave? And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

To them, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images... (Plato, 380 B.C.)

Plato's allegory of cave comes from the book *The Republic* (approx 380 BC). The allegory of cave basically describes the philosophical difficulty of discovering truth in a human world that is inevitably error-strewn. From our contemporary perspective we can easily imagine the shadows projected onto the cave wall as a primitive form of cinema projection and thus Plato's image becomes highly resonant with our own media-saturated society (Taylor & Harris, 2008). Just as the prisoners of the Cave lacked the physical freedom to see the unmediated reality beyond the cave entrance that was causing the shadows on the wall, similarly, in the new mass-media cave, the constraints are all the more insidiously effective for their predominantly irrelevant and frequently voluntary nature (Taylor & Harris, 2008). As Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, "mankind is free yet everywhere he is in chain stores."

An objective news organization must always look beyond the government's priorities and cover matters that policy makers neglect. The news coverage should provide the public with the information needed to evaluate government's performance in a timely way and not lag behind events and scrutinize policy only after decisions have been made and full-blown crises are under way. Furthermore, the full range of technology-enhanced news venues—from print to Web— must be used to provide the public a broad spectrum of information. This is the central theme which is grounded in fundamental principles of journalism and reflects recent developments in the science of delivering the news (Seib, 2004).

Television news occupies an important place in today's vast and complex media landscape. The starring role of television news plays out in several interrelated ways. First, local television news continues to be the primary news source for people around the globe; this fact speaks to the potential influence that local news can have on viewers and society at large (Napoli & Yan, 2007). Local news has been regarded as both the harbinger of the abject state of television news and the bearer of hope for civic, community- centered journalism (Barkin, 2003). Good or bad, the effect of local news is undeniably significant.

Therefore, many social scientists have come up with various theories which explain the ability of media to spread political propaganda.

News coverage of an important political or social issue—and how such coverage can influence audience perception of the issue—have often been analyzed by the concept of agenda-setting (Lin, 2006). Agenda-setting theory states that the news media has the power to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence (McCombs, 2003). In other words, the news media has the ability to set the agenda to seek public's attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion forms.

The principal outlines of this effect were sketched by Walter Lippmann in book *Public Opinion*, where he began with a chapter titled "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads" (Lippman, 1922). As he noted, the news media are a primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is "out of reach, out of sight, out of mind" (McCombs, 2003). Hence, our perceptions about the world and the reality are largely based on what information the media decide to provide us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public; hence elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public mind (McCombs, 2003).

Media dependency theory defines dependency as a relationship in which the satisfaction of needs or the attainment of goals by one party is contingent upon the resources of another party' (Ball-Rokeach, 2001). As a result of the public's dependence on the news media for knowledge about foreign affairs, the news media could exert a particularly strong agenda-setting influence (Lin, 2006).

According to (Mintz & Redd, 2003), President Bush made use of the media "to strategically frame actions and policies to the public in many different ways" that could have bolstered the justifications and public opinion support for the war against Iraq. (Hiebert, 2003) Recounts how U.S. military officials used the term "media war" to describe Bush's campaign to oust Saddam Hussein. He placed this campaign in the context of public relations, the effectiveness of which is contingent upon "a transparency that allows third party scrutiny, thereby gaining credibility, the basis of its power" (2003, p. 244).

(Fuchs, 2005) developed a theory that analyzes the way that news reporting is not only biased based on political, economic and social interests; he also shows how the news affects the way people derive meaning from news reports. He writes: "*The mass media are closely structurally coupled with the economic, political, and technological subsystems of society; they can achieve their goals only by making use of technological, economic, political, and cultural media (p. 3).*"

Indeed, one reason for the persistence of a negativity bias across news genres can be traced to the fact that conflict is what (Gans, 1980) found to be a fundamental news norm, something that journalists look for in defining a story as newsworthy. "Good news" is generally seen as less interesting to viewers than "bad news," especially on television (Aday, 2005). Numerous empirical researches have been conducted to demonstrate that this negativity bias can have a profound influence on public opinion by, for example, emphasizing (or more accurately, hyping) violence committed by social movement organizations and minorities in the news fosters negative attitudes in audiences about those groups (Entman, 1993); exaggerating the incidence of violent crime cultivates an irrational fear of being a victim of crime (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), or at least makes crime a more salient issue to audiences (Gross & Aday, 2003), and a focus on scandal and other superficial aspects of political coverage activates political cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

However, in any democracy, the job of the news media is to provide extensive, independent coverage, even if the government doesn't like it. In a democracy that's the way it's supposed to be. But government elites try to limit and even dictate the coverage, by using their power and support from the media owners and personnel.

As the author, in his book "beyond the front lines" says: *They may cite "national security" as the reason for such constraints, but they are often more concerned about political security. The public can be slow to distinguish between the two and tends to side with government flag-wavers, at least for a time. Reining in the news media becomes the patriotic thing to do.* (Seib, 2004)

The fact that media tries to manipulate the public can be proven from various examples of events that have occurred in the past. During Iraq war, when American troops invaded Iraq and toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Al-Fardus Square, media across the globe covered the event according to their own political/personal interests. Syrian TV, which has followed a distinctly pro-Saddam line in its coverage of the conflict, ignored the event completely, screening instead a program on Islamic architecture (Schechter, 2003). On the other hand, other Arab TV channels such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan chose not to broadcast the event live. Here are the excerpts from how the commentators in the Arab world described the scene:

Abu Dhabi TV: 'This is a moment of history. Baghdad people must be feeling sad at witnessing the fall of their capital... Baghdad has been offered on a silver plate.' "Al Jazeera – Qatar: 'This scene suggests something which does not leave any room for doubt, namely that the rule of the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, has now collapsed in Baghdad ... This is a banner saying "Go home." Despite their obvious welcome of the U.S. troops, they, as Iraqi people, are demanding the departure of these troops, maybe after a short period.'"(Schechter, 2003)

The media channels in the west, conducting their own political propaganda, described the scene in complete opposite way. The New York Times' front page celebrated the victory in Baghdad; the headline said: 'A High Point in 2 Decades of U.S. might.' (Apple, 2003)

Another US channel Fox News network demonstrated an amazing lesson in media hypocrisy. Regarding the Iraq war, Roger Alper writes in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz about the Fox news channel: "The anchors, reporters, and commentators unceasingly emphasize that the war's goal is to free the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein. The frequency, consistency and passion with which they use that lame excuse, and the fact that nearly no other reasons are mentioned shows that this is the network's editorial policy . . ."

(Schechter, 2003) writes in his book that Fox looks like part of the propagandistic campaign of systematic disinformation by the Bush administration, while it accuses the Iraqi regime of disseminating false information about the situation on the battlefield . . . Like CNN, it presents to the globe the face of America and its perception of reality, and it exports its dark side, the infuriating side that inspires so much hostility: the self-righteousness, the brutality, the pretension, hubris, and simplicity, the feverish faith in its moral superiority, the saccharine and infantile patriotism, and the deep self-persuasion that America is not only the most powerful of the nations, but also that the truth is always American... Fox, for whom Israel's enemies are 'the bad guys,' is the perfect alibi for the new fashion of censorship.

In a speech at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, lamented the focus on bad news from Iraq at the expense of good news: *The press presents a skewed picture of Iraq and has focused too much on American deaths rather than political and military progress. We have arrived at a strange time in this country where the worst about America and our military seems to so quickly be taken as truth by the press and reported and spread around the world, often with little context and little scrutiny, let alone correction or accountability after the fact* (Aday, 2005).

Hence the recent military conflicts, in particular the Kosovo conflict of 1999, the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq War, seem to be remarkable because of the number of 'big lies' that have accompanied them (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2005). 'Lies' might seem too strong a word, connoting conscious manipulation of facts and of general opinion, but based on the available evidence, it is difficult to reach any other conclusion (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2005). Watchdog groups

have published extensive reports arguing that media failures aided the Bush administration's march toward a disastrous and costly war in Iraq based on flimsy evidence, superficial analysis, and unwarranted assumptions regarding Iraq's weapons capabilities and ties to international Islamist terrorist organizations; post-invasion political, economic, and security arrangements; and other issues (Hayes & Guardino, 2010).

The nonpartisan Center for Public Integrity, for example, documented 935 false statements (in addition to hundreds more questionable claims) by top administration officials before the war regarding the threat from Iraq (Lewis & Reading-Smith, 2008). The bulk of these assertions, critics have charged, were broadcast widely by U.S. media with little or no investigation of their credibility, and few rebuttals from war skeptics or dissenters (Hayes & Guardino, 2010).

How significantly do the media affect the formation of public opinion?

Ideally news media act as a filter, sifting, and sorting information in a manner that ensures a reliable and accurate source from which citizens can base judgments about war. The news media fell far short of this ideal and exacerbated the spread of misinformation especially about Iraq. But media are not the only protector of the public, education plays vital role in the persuasion process. The diffusion of misinterpretation of Iraq provides a unique opportunity to examine political persuasion. Major television news coverage of Iraq was overwhelmingly pro-war. (Bennett, 2007)

Children's views of the Iraq War are important for several reasons. Firstly, all too frequently it is children who shoulder the burden of modern warfare, since civilians, rather than military personnel, are the principal victims, so that now, some 80–90% of casualties are non-combatants, most of them children and women. In the decade between 1993 and 2003, for example, approximately two million children were killed and a further six million injured or permanently disabled in war zones. Secondly, Iraq is a country with a young population – almost 40% of the country is below 15 years of age (UNDP 2005), and many young people have lost their lives as a result of the invasion. The Iraq Living Conditions Survey (UNDP 2005) found that children below 18 years of age accounted for 12% of the war-related deaths. The same survey reported that 1 in 20 under-fives in the country are currently living in homes damaged by military activity or looting, with up to 62% exposed to the sound of gunfire within the vicinity of their homes several times a week. Finally, from a children's-rights perspective, we contend that young people have a right to voice their opinion on matters that directly concern them and that such views should be included in any broader public debate about such matters (Ron Roberts, 2009)

Studies of children in relation to war have largely adopted one of two approaches –either to concentrate on the psychological damage war (and its consequences) inflicts on children or else to consider children as active agents and interpreters of conflict (either their own direct experience or how they understand the meanings of war and peace). In the first approach a number of studies – conducted in the aftermath of the Balkan wars, Middle East conflicts and Rwanda – have shown that the multiple traumas of war, separation from family, bereavement, direct exposure to war and combat and extreme poverty or deprivation are associated with very high levels of psychological morbidity (notably post-traumatic stress disorder, in some cases as high as 90%) (Ron Roberts, 2009)

From January through September 2003, PIPA/Knowledge Networks conducted seven different polls that dealt with the conflict with Iraq. Among other things, PIPA/KN probed respondents for key perceptions and beliefs as well for their attitudes on what US policy should be. In the course of doing this, it was discovered that a substantial portion of the public had a number of misperceptions that

were demonstrably false, or were at odds with the dominant view in the intelligence community. (KULL, 2003)

In the January poll it was discovered that a majority believed that Iraq played an important role in 9/11 and that a minority even expressed the belief that they had seen “conclusive evidence” of such involvement. The US intelligence community has said that there is not evidence to support the view that Iraq was directly involved in September 11 and there has clearly never been any observable “conclusive evidence.” (KULL, 2003)

In February, by providing more fine-grained response options it became clearer that only about one in five Americans believed that Iraq was directly involved in 9/11, but that a majority did believe that Iraq had given substantial support to al-Qaeda—both propositions unsupported by the US intelligence community. Other polls found even higher numbers responding positively to the idea that Iraq was involved in September 11 or had some type of close involvement with al-Qaeda. These perceptions of Iraq’s involvement with al-Qaeda and 9/11 persisted largely unchanged in numerous PIPA/KN polls through September 2003, despite continued disconfirmation by the intelligence community (KULL, 2003)

More striking, in PIPA/KN polls conducted after the war—in May, July, and August–September—approximately half of the respondents expressed the belief that the US has actually *found evidence* in Iraq that Saddam was working closely with al-Qaeda. While administration figures have talked about a purported meeting in Prague between an al-Qaeda member and an Iraqi official, this does not constitute evidence that Saddam was working closely with al-Qaeda and, in any case, this purported meeting had been discredited by the US intelligence community during the period of these polls (KULL, 2003)

One of the most striking developments in the postwar period was that once US forces arrived in Iraq, they failed to find the weapons of mass destruction that had been a major rationale for going to war with Iraq. Nonetheless, in PIPA/KN polls conducted May through September, a substantial minority of the public said they believed that weapons of mass destruction had been found. A substantial minority even believed that Iraq had used weapons of mass destruction in the war. Polls from other organizations repeated these questions and got similar results (KULL, 2003)

In polls conducted throughout the world before and during the war, a very clear majority of world public opinion opposed the US going to war with Iraq without UN approval (see page 8 for details). However, PIPA/KN found in polls conducted during and after the war that only a minority of Americans were aware of this. A significant minority even believed that a majority of people in the world favored the US going to war with Iraq. Other perceptions of European public opinion and Islamic public opinion also contradicted numerous polls. (KULL, 2003)

These striking findings helped us in realizing that the media surely does play a pivotal role in forming the public opinion around the globe.

Do media producers consider it their responsibility to remain objective and protect the public from political propaganda?

Journalists mostly believe that objectivity is a mirage and it is important for journalists to think about the possible impact of their work on the families and individuals they are reporting about as well as on national security issues. Thus the level of objectivity greatly depends on the kind of argument they are presenting. When they were further questioned into the matter that does this really help and protect the public from political propaganda one of them replied, “No, the Katrina

case and the Iraq war case teach us that certain definitions of objectivity can be dangerous for the news frames. Objectivity should not lead to indexing or only reporting counter-frames when they emerge from elites and those in authority. Public opinion should not be influenced with lies, these will invariably be exposed at some point in the future and have even more devastating effects as people will become cynical and will not be able to rely on the government, opposition or media.”

60 percent of the journalists clearly replied that the largest media groups have been blamed for being associated with political parties of Pakistan and this clearly decreases their credibility. In light of the given circumstances they mentioned that it would not be incorrect to say that often the Pakistani media was unable to do its job of protecting the public from political propaganda. When we inquired that was it even impossible for today’s media to be objective while disseminating the information? 80 percent of the journalists mentioned that objectivity can rather be slippery, it is perhaps better to educate people about the slipperiness of objectivity and help them to realize that humans are by nature biased or subjective and that even figures can be manipulated or can hide essential facts. If people become aware of subjectivity they will be more critical readers of the media.

The power to influence the public opinion depends if any counter-frames do not challenge the message from any other source (which is not possible in the 21st century media landscape) this is when propaganda may work but it would probably have to be supplemented/reinforced by other sources such as teachers in a classroom or clerics in a mosque. And also people in our daily lives that we look up to or respect. Also the idea, according to Aristotle has to hit upon our ethos, pathos and logos in other words it has to be an idea that does not cause cognitive dissonance.

Ninety percent of the journalists clearly embarked upon the notion that the idea of international regulation over media would be impossible. There should be some international standards perhaps, but media literacy and awareness programs may work better (although this latter option needs to be researched for efficacy).

Quantitative Research

Data Analysis, Results and Discussions

The researchers tried to make this study as objective as possible. The data were collected through personal visits to media owners and surveys. Youth of Karachi was very cooperative but the owners showed less cooperation. The data have been presented in the forms of tables and graphs. (Refer to Appendix A for the Questionnaire)

H1: the young consumers of Karachi perceive international media to be biased.

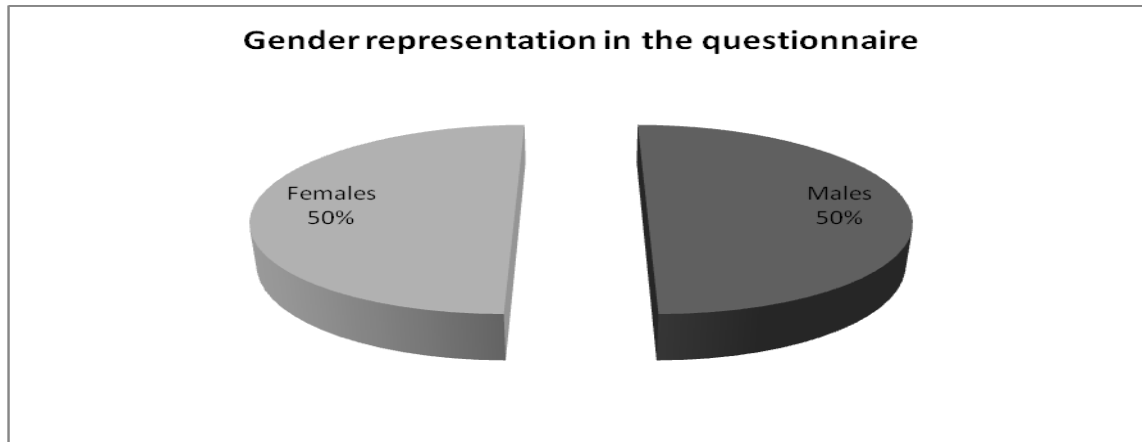


Chart 1.1

A sample of 300 was taken for the questionnaire. There is an equal representation of both males and females so that no biases may be registered for either of the genders.

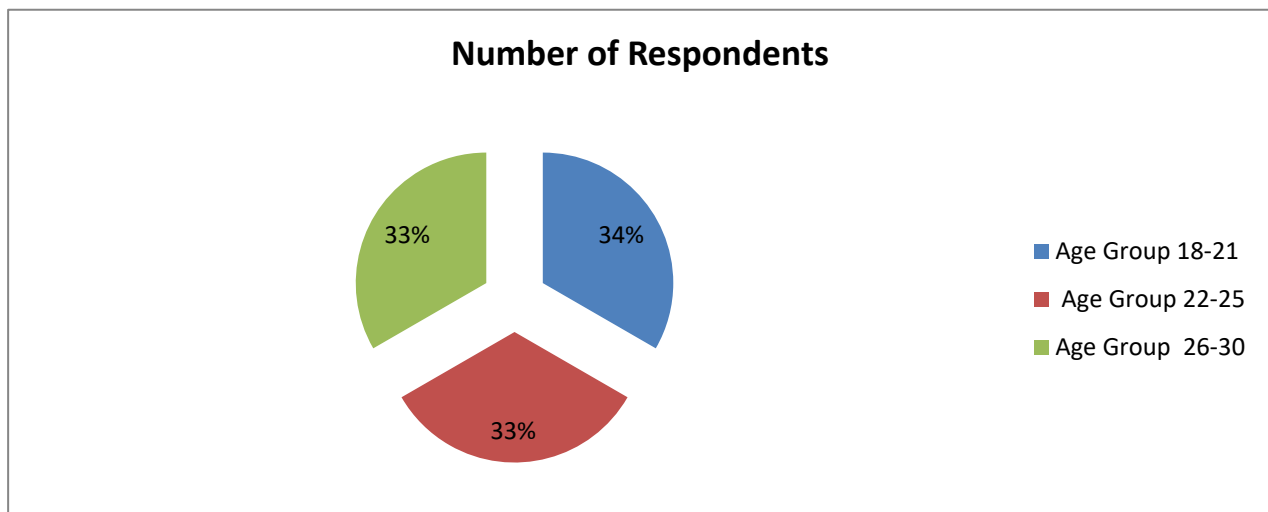


Chart 1.2

This pie chart clearly represents the young respondents of Karachi, who belong to the three defined categories of ages representing the youth of Karachi, Pakistan. An effort was made to give equal representation to the three different age groups in the research being conducted.

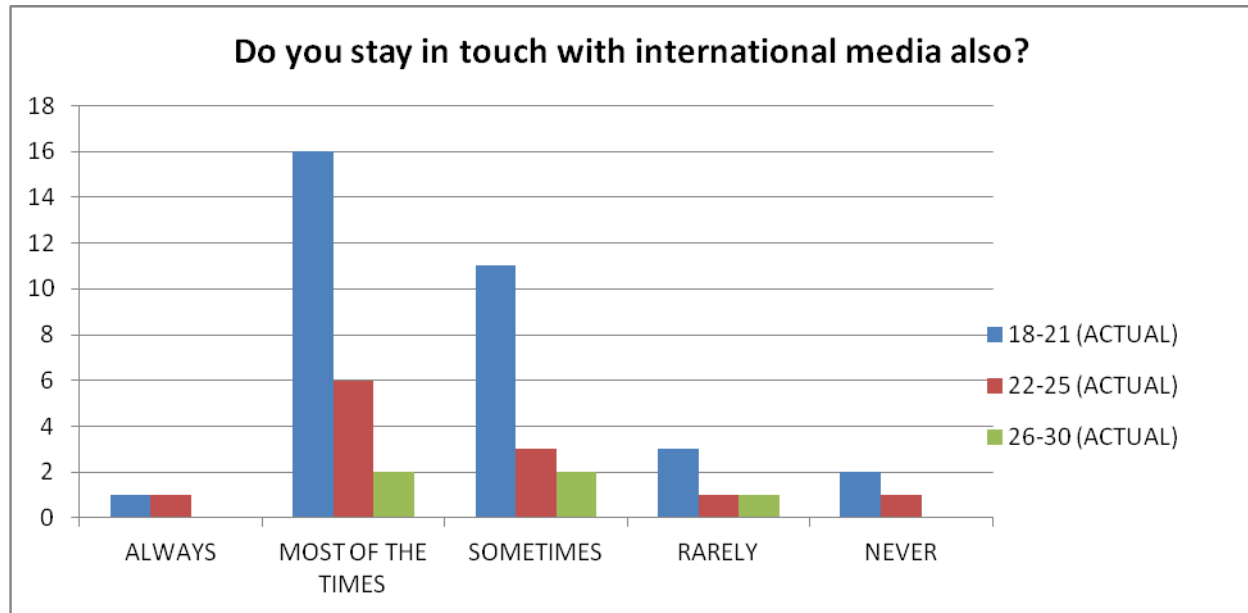


Chart 1.3

This bar chart gives us a clear picture that the youth of Karachi, especially the age group 18-21 years does stay in touch with the international media on a regular basis.

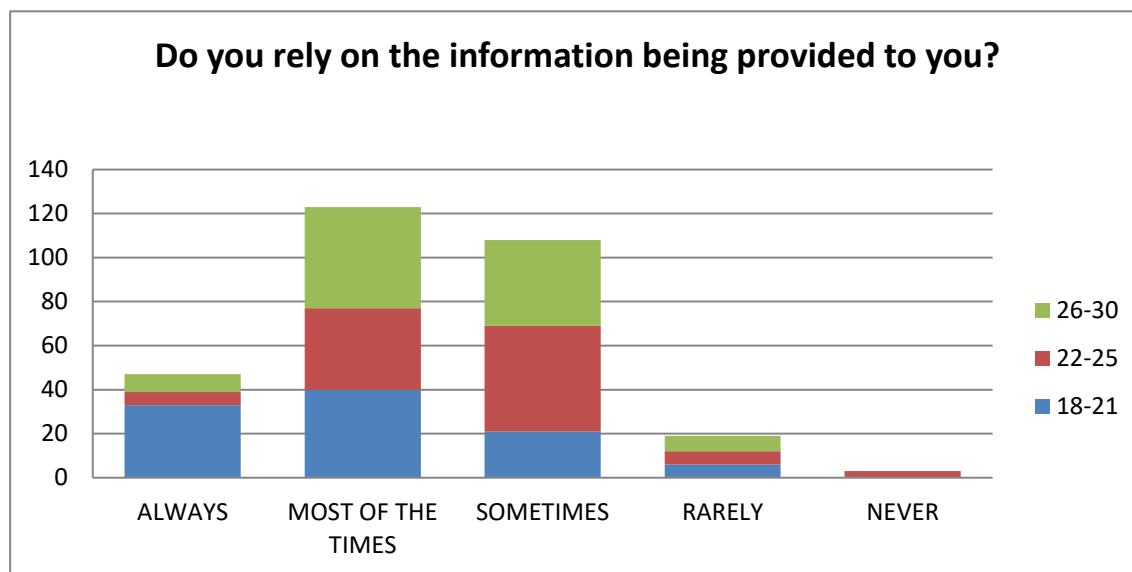


Chart 1.4

It is clearly evident from this bar chart that all the three age categories of the youth of Karachi do consider the information being provided to them as unreliable. The results clearly show that only 15.6 percent of the youth relies on the media completely while the remaining 84.3 percent do not rely on the media all the time. It also clearly reveals the fact that the youth of Karachi still has doubts over the sources and reliability of information being provided to them from different sources.

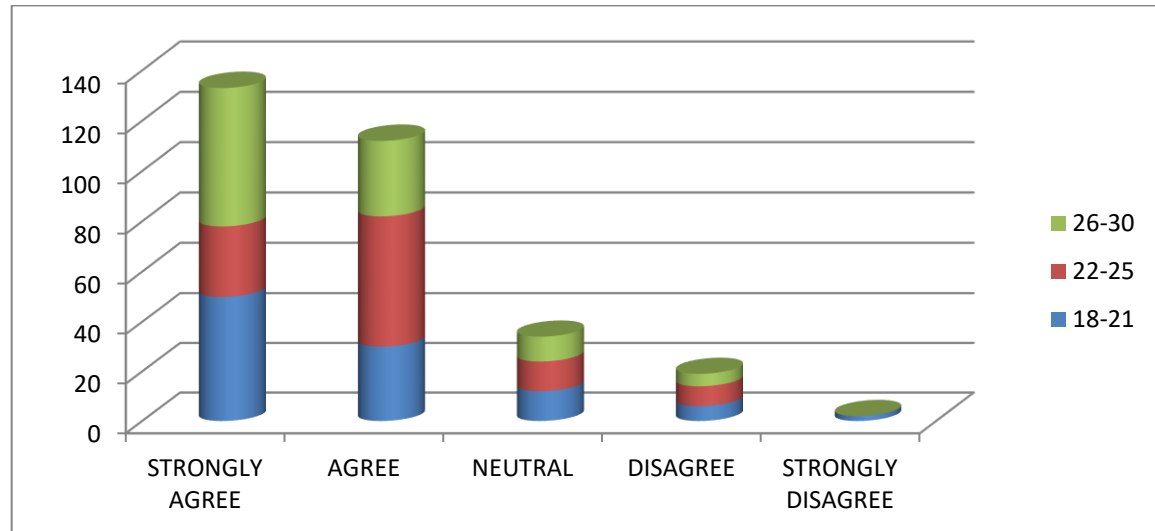


Chart 1.5

This part of the questionnaire aimed at determining the perceptions of the youth about the biases of news agencies regarding some particular events. From the above graph, it is clearly revealed that majority of the youth (in all the three age categories) believe that the news agencies of various kinds do sensationalize and provide one-sided information regarding some particular events. 81.6 percent of the youth thinks that media provides one-sided information and hence is biased.

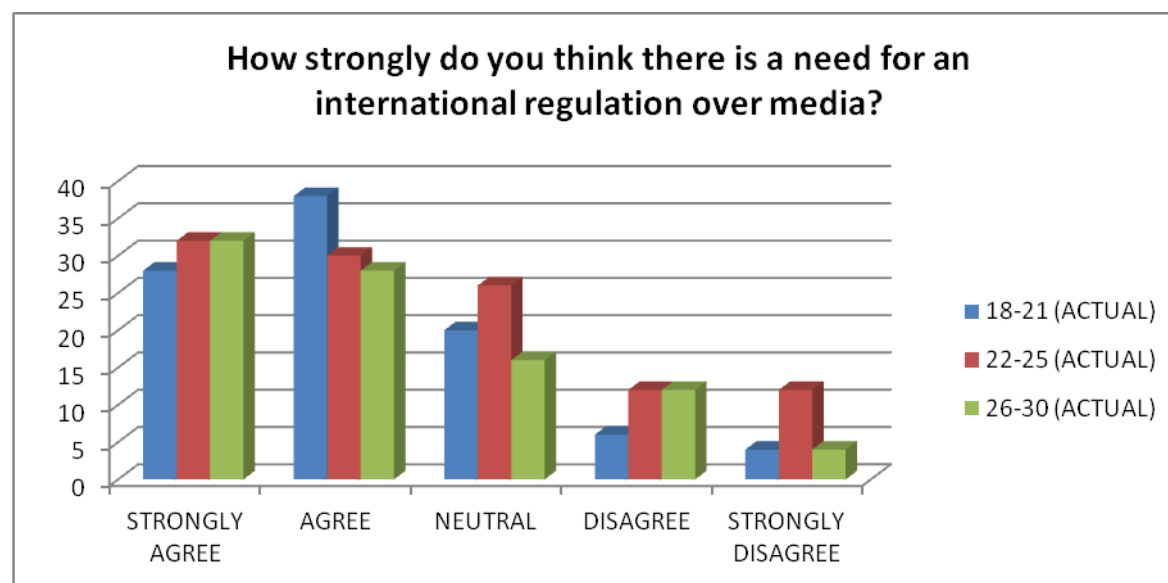


Chart 1.6

There were mixed responses of this question. While the majority of the respondents relied that there is a need for an international regulation but there is relatively large number of respondents also believe that the media should remain unregulated. Thus it would be difficult to give a definite answer as to what the youth of Karachi actually want.

H2: the young consumers of Karachi have differences in opinion depending on their age category.

Part 1: Part 1 of the questionnaire was related to the reliability of the information provided by the international media. The data collected through these items have been presented in the following tables:

Table 1.1. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
AGE * PER1	300	100.0%	0	.0%	300	100.0%

Table 1.2. AGE * PER1 Crosstabulation

		PER1					Total
		Always	Most of the times	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
AGE	18-21	33	40	21	6	0	100
	22-25	6	37	48	6	3	100
	26-30	8	46	39	7	0	100
Total		47	123	108	19	3	300

Table 1.3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.523 ^a	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	45.830	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	13.816	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 3 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.00.

The above table indicates that:

- $X^2_{cal}=0.000$ and $x^2_{tab}=0.05$.
- Using chi-square test, if $X^2_{cal} > x^2_{tab}$; reject H_0 .
- X^2_{cal} is not greater than x^2_{tab} ; therefore, H_0 can not be rejected.
- Therefore, the youth of Karachi, have differences in opinions about the reliability of the international media.

Part 2: Part 2 of the questionnaire was related with the unnecessary hype the media creates regarding some events. The data collected through these items have been presented in the following tables.

Crosstabs

Table 2.1. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
AGE * PER2	300	100.0%	0	.0%	300	100.0%

Table 2.2. AGE * PER2 Cross tabulation

		PER2					Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
AGE	18-21	50	30	11	7	2	100
	22-25	28	52	12	8	0	100
	26-30	55	30	10	5	0	100
Total		133	112	33	20	2	300

Table 2.3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.833 ^a	8	.004
Likelihood Ratio	23.529	8	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.505	1	.220
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 3 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .67.

The above table indicates that:

- $X^2_{cal}=0.004$ and $x^2_{tab}=0.05$.
- Using chi-square test, if $X^2_{cal} > x^2_{tab}$; reject H_0 .
- X^2_{cal} is not greater than x^2_{tab} ; therefore, H_0 can not be rejected.
- Therefore, the youth of Karachi, have differences in opinions about the reliability of the international media.

Part 3: Part 3 of the questionnaire was related with the need for an international regulation over the media. The data collected through these items have been presented in the following tables.

Crosstabs

Table 3.1. Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
AGE * PER3	300	100.0%	0	.0%	300	100.0%

Table 3.2. AGE * PER3 Cross tabulation

		PER3					Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
AGE	18-21	28	39	23	6	4	100
	22-25	30	28	24	10	8	100
	26-30	34	30	18	14	4	100
Total		92	97	65	30	16	300

Table 3.3. Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.886 ^a	8	.352
Likelihood Ratio	8.831	8	.357
Linear-by-Linear Association	.094	1	.760
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

The above table indicates that:

- $X^2_{cal}=0.352$ and $x^2_{tab}=0.05$.
- Using chi-square test, if $X^2_{cal} > x^2_{tab}$; reject H_0 .
- X^2_{cal} is greater than x^2_{tab} ; therefore, H_0 has to be rejected.
- Therefore, the youth of Karachi, have differences in opinions about the reliability of the international media.

Findings

- As mentioned earlier a sample of 300 was taken for the questionnaire.
- An equal representation of both males and females was used as a part of the questionnaire, so that no biases may be registered, for either of the genders.
- The bar graphs and pie charts clearly represent the young respondents of Karachi, who belong to the three defined categories of ages 18-21, 22-25 and 26-30 which represent the youth of Karachi, Pakistan.
- A conscious effort was made to give equal representation to the three different age groups in the research being conducted.
- This bar chart gives us a clear picture that the youth of Karachi, especially the age group 18-21 years does stay in touch with the international media on a regular basis.
- It is clearly evident with the help of bar charts that all the three age categories of the youth of Karachi do consider the information being provided to them as unreliable.
- As, the results clearly show that only 15.6 percent of the youth relies on the media completely while the remaining 84.3 percent do not rely on the media all the time.
- It further shows the fact that the youth of Karachi has some doubts over the sources and reliability of information being provided to them from different sources.
- The questionnaire clearly revealed that majority of the youth (in all the three age categories) believes that the news agencies of various kinds at times provide one-sided information regarding some particular events.
- As, 81.6 percent of the youth thinks that media provides one-sided information and hence is biased.
- While the majority of the respondents replied that there is a need for an international regulation but there is relatively large number of respondents, who also believe that the media should remain unregulated.
- Thus it would be difficult to give a definite answer as to whether the youth of Karachi want the international media to be regulated or not.
- Moving on to our second hypothesis, the youth had differences, depending on their age category, regarding their perceptions about the international media.
- They had differences in perceptions about the reliability of the news media and the unnecessary hype it creates, however, the majority believes, as proven by our first hypothesis, that news media sensationalize the content and provide unreliable information.
- However, no pattern was observed in their response to the need for an international regulation, while the majority of the respondents relied that there is a need for an international regulation but there was also a relatively large number of respondents who believed that the media should remain unregulated.

Conclusions

The effect of media influence and its perceptions, as highlighted in the literature, was examined in this study with empirical test. Our findings show our perceptions about the world and the reality are largely based on what information the media decide to provide us. A striking discovery was that that media strategically frame actions and policies in many different ways to mislead the public. Also, government elites try to limit and even dictate the coverage, by using their power and support from

the media owners and personnel. Another striking discovery was that the majority of the youth perceive international media to be biased and irrational. As, 81.6 percent of the youth thinks that media provides one-sided information. And therefore, 84.3 percent do not rely on the media all the time. The results of this study conclude that the media tries to spread the political propaganda which has significant effect on the public opinion, the media owners agree that often the Pakistani media was unable to do its job of protecting the public from political propaganda. And lastly, the youth of Karachi perceive the international media to be biased, irrational and unreliable.

Future Research Considerations and Limitations

Any conclusions drawn from this research must consider the overall state of the available research. Clearly the volume of relevant research is small. Some studies for secondary data were with very serious methodological maladies and, therefore, were not included on the grounds that the data could easily lead to erroneous conclusions. Other studies may have been overlooked despite the authors' concerted efforts to identify appropriate materials. Many studies located were methodologically strong and make useful additions to the literature. The primary research suffered from the following difficulties, many of which are easy to remedy. The data was gathered manually and with such a large number of sample size the data is prone to human errors. The questionnaire was made by the researchers themselves and it was not approved by any internationally acclaimed and reputable organization thus there may be flaws present in the questionnaire as well. Furthermore, 300 young people were randomly selected; therefore, a larger sample size would bring more accurate results.

Managerial Implications

Through this research, it is now possible to be more prescriptive and to pinpoint areas of vital importance in the media world.

The first step is to recognize the power the media possess in spreading the political propaganda. What the governments and the regulatory bodies around the globe need to understand is the critical role of the journalists while they disseminate the information. Since people rely extensively on the media to gather information, their perceptions are largely based on the information provided by the media. This reliance of the people on the media can be attributed to the power of the media and its ability to influence the public opinion.

The increase in regulation by the PEMRA or any international body such as UN may help stop the powerful elites in one respect by making it possible to punish those who try to manipulate the public.

The quality of information being provided by the media will become even more important in the future than in the past because the role of media is changing. More media firms are growing and thus the competition is increasing. In such a tough competition, more firms must prepare to move towards the media that is diverse, substantive, innovative and independent.

It is important to recognize the interest of the public to handle the coming challenges in regulating the media. Furthermore, this media regulation must be done concurrently with serving the public interest since we live in an era where ignoring the public result can have disastrous consequences. The implication is that the manager's role/regulatory body's role must change. Those who are in key position of monitoring the media must take a longer range view of establishing the

regulation. Essentially, the manager must make three major changes in orientation. The regulatory body manager must:

- (1) Engage in critical analysis of the media content,
- (2) Become a builder of regulations and its progress, and
- (3) Make extensive and just use of the law and regulations to control the media.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Filling this questionnaire is voluntary
 This questionnaire will help us in understanding the perceptions of youth about international media.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age Group

- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-30

3. What forms of media do you prefer using?

- Newspapers
- Television
- Radio
- Internet

4. You use the above specified media for:

- entertainment
- Updates on News and global events
- Connecting with Family with Family and Friends
- If other: please specify

5. Do you rely on the information being provided to you?

- Yes
- no
- sometimes

6. Do you stay in touch with international media also?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

7. If yes, then which of the following do you watch/read?

- CNN
- BBC
- FOX News
- Sky News
- Al-Jazeera

- New York times
- Washington Post
- If other; please specify

8. Rate the following, in terms of presenting biased information (From 1 being strongly unbiased, 5 being strongly biased)

1 2 3 4 5

- CNN
- BBC
- FOX News
- Sky News
- Al-Jazeera
- New York times
- Washington Post
- If other, please specify:

9. Do you think media provides one-sided information regarding some events?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- neutral
- disagree
- Strongly disagree.

10. In which of the following do you think that international media provided one sided information:

- 9/11
- Mumbai Blasts
- Iraq war
- Israel-Palestine Issue
- If other, please specify:

11. How strongly do you think there is a need for an international regulation over media?

- Strongly agree
- agree
- neutral
- disagree
- strongly disagree

Thank you very much for your time.