



Status of Media Freedom: Comparative Study of Musharraf and Imran Khan's Regime

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Abstract

The media reflects how our culture is influenced. The goal of popular culture is to communicate with a large audience, and it currently refers to communication as digital technologies are changing how people behave in unexpected ways. The idea that people should be able to create, evaluate, and share information was the foundation upon which media networks were initially formed, not to influence behavior and societal norms. The current research article addresses the status of media freedom in the regimes of Musharraf and Imran Khan. Researchers examined the situation of media freedom in Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, during the populist administration of Imran Khan and Pervez Musharraf's last years of his regime. The gatekeeping theory has been applied in framing the study criteria. The research is based on a qualitative study that consisted of semi-structured interviews with senior journalists from illustrious newspapers and TV networks around the nation. The participants were able to express their own thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. Twelve Pakistani journalists, most of them with a minimum of ten years' experience in the media, were interviewed for this study. The study includes a comparison to the situation in the rest of the democratic world. The dictatorship successfully restricted free expression because of the limited institutional support for journalists. A thorough perception of the state of the media in Pakistan during the rule of Musharraf and Imran Khan—understanding the complexities of media and how they relate to the Gatekeeping Theory of Communication Studies—is essential for a detailed analysis of the role of media in fostering society. President Musharraf has contributed positively to giving the media freedom and liberty. Additionally, social media is now playing a leading role in giving all residents access to the rest of the world.

Keyword: *Media freedom, dictatorship, regime, democratic, social media, Imran Khan, Musharraf*

Introduction

The term "media" refers to the communication channels or

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platforms that are employed to disseminate or exchange knowledge, concepts, and messages with a broad audience. These means of communication might take the form of traditional media, like books, magazines, and radio, or digital media, such as websites, blogs, podcasts, and social media. The media has a big impact on public opinion, and it also has an impact on social norms and gives people a platform for self-expression. The transmission medium is equally as significant as the information itself, according to Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum, "The medium is the message." The global market for media and entertainment was estimated to be worth \$2.1 trillion in 2020 and is projected to increase to \$2.6 trillion by 2026, according to a Statista analysis. The usage of digital media is growing, and streaming services are becoming more popular. Statista. (2021). In the world we live in today, the media has a significant impact on our views, attitudes, and behaviors. To develop a more thorough understanding of the world around us, it is crucial to be aware of the potential biases and agendas of the media we consume. We should also actively seek out different points of view. The media serve as these organizations most effective gatekeepers to the general public. Organizations pass their information through the selective media filter when conducting campaigns on certain issues, producing reports about specific nations, or making funding appeals. (International Council on Human Rights Policy 2002, p. 36)

Limited media freedom has historically existed in Pakistan, where journalists and media organizations have had to contend with censorship, harassment, intimidation, and violence, among

other issues. Media restriction and control were pervasive during General Ayub Khan's and General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorships in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, respectively. The government utilized a variety of tactics during this time to censor the media, including the closing of newspapers, the implementation of censorship laws, and the incarceration and arrest of journalists. Media independence increased during Benazir Bhutto's democratic rule in the 1990s, and several new private television networks appeared. Yet, there was still some degree of media restriction and control, and state authorities harassed and intimidated journalists.

Various governments and political parties used the censorship of the press and nonpolitical entities on numerous occasions during Pakistan's history. For instance, in 1948, the government imprisoned the editors of three publications and outlawed them. (Hassan, 2002)

Digital media in Pakistan

The PTA Annual Report 2020 says the rise of private digital intermediaries, which threaten the revenue model and control distribution, as well as populists looking to eliminate constraints on their power by undermining media independence, pose many dangers to media freedom at once. Only a renewed focus on positive rights while also paying attention to the procedural aspects of media freedom may simultaneously confront both challenges. (Damian Tambini, 2021)

During the regime of former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) released its annual report for 2019–20. This study claims

that since its founding in 2002, PEMRA has given 106 licenses for satellite channels, of which 30 are for news and current events stations. Pakistan's State of Digital Media Freedoms in 2021 6 news channels in a similar vein; 22 licenses are given for regional language programs and 40 for entertainment. In addition, the regulator has granted licenses to 257 radio stations, 196 of which are commercial and 61 of which are not. 43 international satellite television channels have received landing rights authorization from PEMRA, according to the report. Details about the licenses issued during the reviewed year are also individually provided in the report. In 2020, the regulator reportedly

Objectives of the study are to know the

- Influence of Musharraf and Imran Khan's governments in the development of media
- The media works as a trend-setter.

Literature Review

Siraj and Hussain (2017) critically reviewed the freedom of the press in Pakistan. The study's primary thesis supported the idea that Pakistani journalists lack the freedom to choose the news and information they want to report on. The choice of which news to broadcast depends on how sensitive it is, and editorial management makes that judgment. Gatekeepers work for and serve those in power since Pakistan's modern media is reliant on advertising money. Therefore, political, social, economic, and concentrated ownership are constraints on journalistic sovereignty. Abrar, M. (2014) The 2002 Ordinance establishing the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority is one particular law that controls the nation's airwaves. By maximizing the free

flow of information, the law aims to "raise standards of information, education, and entertainment" and "guarantee accountability, openness, and good government." 6 The Ordinance calls for the creation of a 12-member authority that will include a chairman and be in charge of policing the establishment and operation of all broadcast media and distribution services in Pakistan.

Siddiqui (2015) explains that the start of Musharraf's administration coincided with Pakistan's technological advancement and the growth of communication options. When Musharraf first made liberal gestures, the Pakistani media flourished. Musharraf not only promised to open up the media industry, but he also followed through on his words. The media community now has hope for a new age in Pakistan as a result of these actions. Musharraf pursued policies that not only sent messages of hope in Pakistan but also throughout the world at a time when the leaders of two major political parties, Pakistan's People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), were out of the country. He did this in order to establish plausibility for himself as a leader who attained the position through what is known as a "popular revolution." Shroff and Nehra 2019 Accusing the Chief Justice of misbehaviour in front of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and six other uniformed generals, Pervez Musharraf asked the Chief Justice to step down. The Chief Justice's defiance of the directive ultimately led to his suspension. Musharraf also used the power granted to him by Article 209 of the 1973 Constitution to refer the Chief Justice's claimed abuses of power to the Supreme Judicial Council. The first time a Chief

Justice has been declared "non-functional" in Pakistan's stormy history. A large nonviolent movement for an independent judiciary in Pakistan was launched by Pakistani lawyers in response, drawing thousands of politicians and civil society participants.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2019 Online media were used as an organizing tool during the Lawyer's Movement and protests against President Musharraf in 2007 and 2008. Information about demonstrations was disseminated through e-mail lists, SMS, and YouTube. During devastating floods in 2010, Pakistanis used the Internet and social media to raise funds for victims. Images and videos were posted on YouTube, Facebook, and blogs, and information about the most devastated areas was disseminated online. Najam Sethi, March 2021 The authorities disregarded Imran Khan's illegal behavior because, according to the other columnist, the system was on his side. The columnist goes so far as to assert that the army manipulated the 2013 election in his favor and that the establishment even planned for his sit-in during the election. When the agenda wasn't finished, designating him as a revolutionary leader at the time, the establishment dispatched him to Islamabad to stage sit-ins to overthrow the Nawaz government. In 2014 and 2016, attacks occurred in Sharif, Islamabad. However, he failed because of the people.

According to Reporters Sans Frontiers ([RSF], 2021), Prime Minister Imran Khan severely curtailed the expansion of the media sector after taking office in 2018. Critical media outlets were silenced and forced to lay off independent journalists due to death threats, administrative pressures, and economic strangling.

The RSF (2021) report included Imran Khan on its list of people who are harmful to press freedom because, while he was in power, religious conservatism and populist ideology grew. According to the report, Khan's administration was like previous totalitarian ones in that press freedom had been actively restricted. According to RSF (2021), four journalists were killed in 2020, although not a single murderer was identified (RSF, 2021). The most risky city for journalists in Pakistan is Islamabad, the capital. Furthermore, based on estimates from the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, 3,105 media professionals, primarily in just one year, lost their jobs.

H1. The Musharraf government plays an important role in the development of the media.

H2. Is the media playing a role in the downfall of the Musharraf government?

H3. In comparison to a dictator, democracy is better for the media.

H4. Imran Khan used the internet as a source of information during his reign.

Theoretical Framework

The process by which media gatekeepers filter and choose news and information before disseminating it to the general public is known as gatekeeping theory. In the context of freedom of the media, gatekeeping theory can be used to understand how political regimes control and manipulate the flow of information to influence public opinion and maintain power. Gatekeeping theory can be used to analyze the status of media freedom under the Musharraf and Imran Khan regimes in Pakistan. Both regimes have attempted to control and manipulate the flow of information

to maintain power and control public opinion, but their methods and approaches have differed. A comparative study of the Musharraf and Imran regimes in Pakistan reveals how gatekeeping theory plays out in the context of media freedom. Under Musharraf's regime, the government controlled most of the media through strict censorship laws, shutting down independent media outlets, and controlling the content that was allowed to be published or broadcast. This enabled Musharraf to control the narrative and limit public dissent, ultimately leading to his downfall when he was forced to resign in 2008 due to widespread protests.

In contrast, Imran Khan's regime has taken a more subtle approach to gatekeeping by selectively controlling the flow of information through the use of social media and digital surveillance. While there is still a degree of censorship and control over traditional media outlets, the government has been more willing to tolerate criticism and dissent in the public sphere. However, the government has also been accused of using digital surveillance and social media monitoring to silence dissenters and manipulate public opinion. Under Musharraf's regime, the government controlled most of the media through strict censorship laws, shutting down independent media outlets, and controlling the content that was allowed to be published or broadcast. This led to a highly censored media environment with limited freedom of expression for journalists and media organizations. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Pakistan was one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists during Musharraf's regime, with many journalists

facing threats, harassment, and violence for reporting on sensitive issues (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2007). In contrast, Imran Khan's regime has taken a more subtle approach to gatekeeping by selectively controlling the flow of information through the use of social media and digital surveillance. While there is still a degree of censorship and control over traditional media outlets, the government has been more willing to tolerate criticism and dissent in the public sphere. However, the government has also been accused of using digital surveillance and social media monitoring to silence dissenters and manipulate public opinion. Human Rights Watch reported in 2020 that the Imran Khan government has been increasing its control over the media, including through the use of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority to target and censor news channels (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Methodology

The researchers adopt the qualitative method and a descriptive approach to analyze the data. Data collection: newspapers, articles, books, interviews, speeches. The present research focuses on the qualitative nature of research. It determines the heading of a research project and the structure from the beginning to the last step of composing the research or exploration report. Qualitative/Subjective Research.

The current study used a qualitative research design. The researcher used the method of in-depth interviews for data collection. When the researcher wished to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon, this method was best. The informants thoroughly described the problem throughout the interview. The

participants were able to express their own thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. Twelve Pakistani journalists, most of them with a minimum of ten years' experience in the media, were interviewed for this study. They were experts in the field who provided insightful information (Islam & Rehman, 2016). The study's main goal was to learn more about Pakistan's press freedom conditions. It was important that the informants had experience in their respective fields because of this. The researcher conducted interviews before transcribing the information. The study also took into account the opinions of well-known journalists who had lost their jobs as a result of government pressure on media owners.

All of these interviews were conducted at the respondents' workplaces or homes. The respondents received the questions via email in advance. The three research questions were mostly addressed in the questions. On average, the interviews lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. Every interview started in Urdu and was later translated into English. The final transcripts were printed once the research questions and supplementary questions' key arguments had been determined by consensus.

Interview 01: Gharida Farooqi

During Musharraf's era, there were no social media; there were newspapers and magazines, and broadcast media were non-existent. In the initial era of General Musharraf's flourishing private media, he provided licenses. In his era, the media was divided into two parts: some newspapers and magazines resist him and write against him, some obviously do the same, and some come out in favor of a dictatorship. When Musharraf

introduced private media, they were very good to him. Their relationship was also very good. However, by the end of his reign, his relationship with the media had deteriorated. Private media came to Pakistan to flourish, development started, and the IT industry in Pakistan started during General Musharraf's period. Later, we journalists have also seen the harsh period of General Musharraf, but then we have also seen the period of Imran Khan, and the dynamics in the period of Imran Khan are altogether different. His party is very active on social media, and he has been driving a large part of his media power through social media. This also has an impact, but the meaning of the saying is that since journalists like us have seen the eras of General Musharraf and Imran Khan, when we compare, we see the era of Imran Khan as harder, and it feels more severe for journalists. Even during the era of General Musharraf, journalists were kidnapped, journalists were also killed, restrictions were imposed, and programs were also closed.

During the tenure of Imran Khan, that last window was also closed. It was very suffocating; you could not speak on any channel. In any case, the voice was completely strangled during the tenure of Imran Khan. During Musharraf's era, there was also strictness, but at that time, an entire state operator was not involved in the way that during Imran Khan's era, the state operators were much stricter and more involved in cruelty, and a lot of oppression had taken place. So, Imran Khan's rule was worse for journalists than General Musharraf's.

Interview 02: Syed Talat Hussain

Syed Talat Hussain said that the comparison between Musharraf and Imran Khan is not correct because Musharraf's era was an era of development and Imran Khan's era was a democratic era despite all the difficulties, so what was happening in the Imran Khan era was the system of that era. The standard should be maintained. So, something was happening in his era that was not happening in the leadership of a dictator's era, namely, that you cannot criticize the dictator; you are closed nowadays. If the same opportunity was given during Musharraf's era, it was taken. During Musharraf's era, since the media had opened up, Imran Khan did not know how to do his duty to the state institutions, due to which there was enough space in the media. And there was no legal shame in it.

During Musharraf's tenure, there was a lot of media in this division, and people had different opinions about Chaudhry's personality, but there was no fear that General Musharraf would get censorship. The problem during Imran Khan's era was that he was saying that the style of governance of the democratic era was totally leaning towards fascism, and the owners of the media were put in jails. The social media trolling and cases against journalists are the most painful and torturous ways; the shame and dishonor that have been caused are too much. FIA's response is their statement. The name is called and told what should be done with them. Tayyaba Gul knows how NAB was used. Few were treated without anything. If you judge the Imran Khan era by democratic standards, That is a very bad period, especially for the opponent.

Talat Husain responds to the question, If Musharraf was not an army person, then how can he see him as a ruler? His reply:

If Musharraf was not an army person, then it's not possible for him to become a disgraced president. Musharraf had a more tolerant personality than Imran Khan, perhaps because he doesn't care what anyone says; it doesn't matter to him because he knows he has power. Imran Khan is not brave, as he shows or pretends, and if any question is asked of him that is tough to answer, he gets angry or leaves his seat. In the lawyer movement during Musharraf's governance, the media looked like a party to me because the media has only a part of constitutional law, and if anything goes wrong, the media should stand as a party.

Interview 03: Ather Kazmi

We noticed a huge transformation in the era of Musharraf; as it was seen before him, it was not even imagined. It was an explosion in the electronic media. The growth of electronic media in Pakistan during the Musharraf era could happen in any country around the world. As media grew rapidly, there was a lack of a system to check and balance it, and a set of laws to regulate the media were not observed, so in his era, to regulate the media, he imposed some restrictions on media. In the whole world, no government wants to give freedom to the media; even in developing countries, if they make use of the media, it should be designed to control the media according to their demands.

Interview 04: Matiullah Jan

The Musharraf era was good for business media. He grows private media It was his compulsion because, at that time, India had a lot of media channels on Pakistani cables, and it was allowed to easily excess in media. A change in the PEMRA law allowed media owners to own television stations in addition to

newspaper ownership, which was previously prohibited, but this led to Among the newspaper owners, you have forgotten your owners too. In TV, the acceptance of technical rules is very high, and there is a lot of influence on them. increased monopoly and government. The profit and investment were too high, so indirectly, the government took control of print media.

The steps the Imran government took for the media were very deplorable (shameful): kidnapping, torture bans on journalists and media channels, arrests, raids, and joblessness were observed in the Imran Khan era. He cannot take any good steps for the media if anything is discussed for the safety of journalists; it is just talk and nothing else. He used social media, just as Hitler used media as a propaganda tool. He survives just because social media's main stream media has no worth from Imran Khan's point of view, but in fact, social media's popularity cannot last long.

Everyone uses media to fulfill their purpose, but as Musharraf and Imran Khan use media, it is wrong to be in power. The Musharraf regime effected a lot because of the lawyer movement, but whether it was the beginning or the end, it should be known as the Musharraf era.

Interview 05: Muzamal Suharwardy

According to Muzamal Suharwardy Pervez Musharraf's government, which has more tolerance than any democratic government, we cannot say there was full freedom of speech during Musharraf's tenure. There was also strictness in the media in his era, but his government has a great level of tolerance. Musharraf gives freedom to the media, which is not looking

possible in even a democratic government; this was a bold action by Musharraf. Musharraf's beginning and end of his rule were bad for free media, but the middle was good for media because private media openings had started; at the end of the era, it gets worse. Electronic media has a good legal structure that he should impose, but with some force, he finishes the cross-media ban; if he did not do so, then it will be good because his act of media hegemony gets strong.

Imran Khan's regime was not good for the media. As compared to Imran Khan's government, the Musharraf era was better. He was more tolerant than Imran Khan; he made a lot of strict decisions, but in the Imran Khan era, the opposition had no right to speak against him openly. Imran Khan cannot do anything good for journalists; even during his regime, up to 500 journalists have lost their jobs due to salary cuts. It is not about some specific journalist whose shows get taken off the air. Imran Khan used social media as a negative propaganda weapon because it was not possible to defame anyone in mainstream media, but because social media has no regulations, it is easy to spread untrue information. Social media is a temporary tool.

Interview 06: Nasrullah Malik

The Musharraf era was a time of martial law; it was a time where there was no law, but after some time, electronic media started to grow in his era, which was a big change. In his era, the media grew a lot, but at the end of his government, the media stood against him, so he also took the worst action against the media. Imran Khan's government was an elected democratic government. However, many media people lost their jobs, and the media faced

numerous problems as a result of his actions. Although he targeted the media, the situation changed when the economy recovered. Although he targeted the media, it was a democratic regime. Imran Khan was perplexed because his relationship with the media was not as good. When he failed in any step, he blamed the media and targeted them. Imran Khan's social media team was strong; they aggressively targeted the opposition, and he was always active and focused on social media. He used social media. He critiqued the media but could not deny freedom of speech.

Interview 07: Rauf Klasra

In the era of Musharraf, there were three or four big media groups. They were their owners, so they sat down and threatened them without calling them or making them understand, or, in other words, without advertising them. Because of all these things that did not happen, their problems were also created, so any military government that was away would never allow these two or three things to happen. So even during the era of General Musharraf, these things happened, and there were also difficulties for them. The restoration movement among the judges was run by the media. The media has witnessed all of the difficulties; GEO has been closed. For better or worse, Hamid Mir Sahib's shoes were closed. Other people's shows were closed. See the pain? They lost their jobs, so it was difficult work. There was a problem in the last few days, especially when the emergency was imposed; there were problems even before that, but after the emergency, there was more blackout, so the media has seen difficulties, but the media continued to see difficulties in every era.

Interview 08: Orya Maqbool Jan

The media has been free twice in Pakistan. one during the reign of Yahya Khan and one during the reign of Musharraf, and these two eras were the eras of dictators. There were no democratic eras. The army began to control the media in the Imran Khan era. Imran Khan's government is personally not to blame for this; ISPR has taken over in Pakistan during the periods of Nawaz Sharif and Zardari. And then it turned out to be a terrible monster. In this, Imran Khan was also helpless. It used to work on its own. He used to have a brigadier who used to give guidance to all the channels and all the newspapers of ISPR. PEMPRO's status was no longer there. And they don't need any laws; they do whatever they want. For the journalism community, I think that the welfare works were done during Musharraf's era and not during Imran's. Neither happened during Nawaz Sharif's era nor during Zardari's era. Everyone else is the same, and this was the problem of Zardari and Nawaz Sharif: they were very convinced to give bribes to journalists, and they have given envelopes to many people, from journalists to plotters to many other things, such as their treatment and household needs. Imran Khan has used it correctly on social media. He used it brilliantly. Some of its popularity came from those who liked it. Their access was not through this medium. Other people were in charge of media pay. Then they had no other way but to proceed through social media. As a result, Imran Khan may be absent from social media. Imran Khan may not be away. Imran Khan may not be in favor of Imran Khan, but everyone uses the media for their own purposes.

Interview No. 09: Mujeeb ur Rehman Shami

During the era of Pervez Musharraf, except for the electronic media, what has been there has been free; channels are open because of that, and the media has also grown. Media workers have also benefited. Their salary structure has also improved. But this is when the movement against them started. So, he took many steps. also targeted the channels, and many people have also gone off air. All these things have happened. As a matter of fact, I think that there is a lot of media in it, and it has expanded a lot. You can call it a positive period in this sense. Imran Khan used to criticize journalists. Media houses were also targeted. They also blamed him. There have been such incidents during his time; there have been attacks on our media personnel, but despite this, we cannot say that he was there in that era. In any case, it was a democratic process that was going on. Some of them were confused; they had good relations, but they were not satisfied with the media people. Whatever their failure was, wherever it happened, they attributed it to the media, and if someone wrote against them, they would liken it to envelope journalism. So that was their mindset. The biggest decision of Imran Khan was during his tenure, when the NAB also caught Shakeel ur Rehman and there was no case at all. He was arrested and had to go to jail for several months. And then there were attacks. The law could not reach those responsible. It was a mistake. We did not deny what the rest of journalism is; they used to criticize it. And they used to ask for money, and so on. I heard them by their names, and they told me that the courts are doing their job and providing security. He took action against it. But he said it could have been done in a better way.

Interview 10: Batool Rajpoot

During the era of Pervez Musharraf, except for the electronic media, what has been there has been free; channels are open because of that, and the media has also grown. Media workers have also benefited. Their salary structure has also improved. But eventually, I think that Pakistan has definitely entered a period where the generals are also realizing this. The media played a huge role in demolishing the Musharraf government. Imran Khan used the media very freely to strengthen himself, in a good and bad way, whatever was possible for him, but he did not take any steps for the journalist community; rather, he did Imran Khan's cabinet. They used to make people happy on the call and continued to say that such-and-such should not get a job. An anchor should not be visible, or this anchor should not be visible; it should not get the job. Imran Khan has made record-breaking use of social media during his government and even before that, but at first, our media community was under the spell of Imran Khan.

Interview 11: Nadia Mirza

The beginning of private media, electronic media, definitely happened during the era of Musharraf Sahib, and it has been a history of ours that in the previous periods, we had a dictatorship. No matter how much someone talks about how yes, we have worked hard and journalists have worked hard and made great sacrifices for freedom, the fact is that it is a part of history. Musharraf, even though he was a dictator, worked for the freedom of the private media, and the media we are enjoying today, the electronic media we are working on, is due to Musharraf. There are no two opinions.

During Musharraf's tenure, we were being asked to pull any kind of agenda or that we should do this and not do that. From 2007 onwards, there was a campaign with Chaudhry Iftikhar. From there, problems may arise or be created. He belongs to journalistic organizations; it wasn't from the channel at all. Those instructions came from somewhere else. Channels were used elsewhere, or channels were used. Some anchors now are on the anchors when they stop their programs. Emergency measures were implemented. Everything was good until 2007. The downfall of Musharraf started when he was not expecting that the media to which he gave freedom, gave so much boom, and gave everything would turn against him. Khan's popularity is raised; social media has a very important and vital role in Imran Khan's career and Imran Khan's popularity, which Imran Khan played with great skill and talent, and his government used it very well. Imran Khan used media for its own purposes; there is no doubt about it. Imran Khan used it in the best way, and Musharraf did not use it.

Interview 12: Yashfeen Jamal

The rest of the Musharraf era, whatever it was – a dictatorship – whatever the issues were – from the point of view of the media, it was not a bad tenure; it was good and positive. For the first time, we saw that the media was given a different kind of importance; the financial side of media workers, such as their salaries, had improved, but for the first time, the salaries of columnists and writers were also considered in the reasons for the development of the media at the time, including electronic media. The last time there was a Musharraf regime, there was some time and some

period of time. It can be said that there were some bans, but there are also some journalists who were banned for the first time, including Hamid Mir Sahib and two others. The reason for this may be that this country is finally moving towards democracy. The way Khan Sahib has used social media to gain popularity for his politics, there are no two opinions about it. One of the biggest reasons for using social media is evident if you look at the big social media bloggers of today. There are YouTubers who have influence. They also want to run away and stand with Khan Sahib because their presence with Khan Sahib will help them grow. The attempt to amend the PICA Ordinance could have been very harmful.

Findings

Is the Musharraf government playing an important role in the development of the media?

In the era of Musharraf, there were three or four big media groups. They were their owners, so they sat down and threatened them without calling them or making them understand, or, in other words, without advertising them. The rest of the Musharraf era, whatever it was – a dictatorship – whatever the issues were – from the point of view of the media, it was not a bad tenure; it was good and positive. For the first time, we saw that the media was given a different kind of importance; the financial side of media workers, such as their salaries, had improved, but for the first time, the salaries of columnists and writers were also considered in the reasons for the development of the media at the time, including electronic media.

Is the media playing a role in the downfall of the Musharraf government?

In the lawyer movement, the media looks like a party to me because it has only a part of the constitution, and if anything goes wrong, it should stand as a party. The media was reporting Lal Masjid live. It was live reporting, but after those headlines, an editorial line was contradictory. The media played a crucial role in demolishing the Musharraf government. It's not possible that the media always speak in favor of Musharraf, but we can say the media was merciless. The media took action against Musharraf, saying loudly that he was scratching them. The Musharraf regime was affected a lot because of the lawyer movement, but whether it was the beginning or the end, it should be known as the Musharraf era. Electronic media played a role in demolishing his government; the media, which was established by him, was the reason it caused the fall of the Musharraf government. The media played a crucial role in demolishing the Musharraf government. It's not possible that the media always speak in favor of Musharraf, but we can say the media was merciless. The media took action against Musharraf, saying loudly that he was scratching them.

In comparison to a dictator, democracy is better for the media

During the era of Pervez Musharraf, except for the electronic media, what has been there has been free; channels are open because of that, and the media has also grown. Media workers have also benefited. Their salary structure has also improved. The era of Imran Khan is harder, and it feels more severe for journalists. Even during the era of General Musharraf, journalists were kidnapped and killed, and restrictions were imposed;

programs were also closed. Despite all these restrictions, resistance was maintained during the reign of General Musharraf, and the newspapers were also writing and the anchorpersons of the channels were also speaking, but during the period of Imran Khan, the window was open during the period of General Musharraf. During the tenure of Imran Khan, that last window was also closed. It was very suffocating. You could not speak on any channel. In any case, the voice was completely strangled during the tenure of Imran Khan. Imran Khan's good step was only that he was not tortured more than he did press free to show his performance. The cases, testimonial organizations, and protest officers all testified that Imran Khan is insecure and vulnerable. He needs endorsements and regularly wants praise. If we are going to check the status between Musharraf and Imran Khan, then Musharraf, even a dictator, proves better than Imran Khan.

Imran Khan used the internet as a source of information during his reign

Imran Khan understands the importance of digital media as compared to other politicians. On the other hand, the opposition cannot accept Khan as a politician or digital media as a form of media. Imran Khan used social media as effectively as Hitler used the media as a propaganda tool. He survives just because of social media. Mainstream media has no worth from Imran Khan's point of view, but social media's popularity cannot survive for long. Imran Khan used social media as a negative propaganda weapon because it was not possible to defame anyone, and since social media has no regulation, it is easy to spread untrue information. Social media is a temporary tool. The social media team of Imran

Khan was strong; they targeted the opposition strongly. He was always active on social media and focused on it. He used social media. He criticized the media, but he couldn't deny the freedom of speech of company employees to express themselves freely. Imran Khan is the best user of social media; this was the best example in the history of Imran Khan. He hires teams to run media, other political parties fail to use media, and we have not seen the best social media user until now: Imran Khan, because he was a cricketer, has a fan following, and knows how to grab attention and publicity. Imran Khan has used it correctly on social media, and above all, he has used it brilliantly.

Conclusion

Researchers examined the situation of media freedom in Pakistan from August 2018 to April 2022, during the populist administration of Imran Khan. Semi-structured interviews with senior journalists from illustrious newspapers and TV networks around the nation were done for this reason. The majority of journalists concurred that the Imran Khan administration severely curtailed media freedom in the nation. The journalists noted that there were primarily two methods used to impede the free flow of information: first, by physically attacking, kidnapping, intimidating, and accusing journalists of sedition; and second, by strangling the media outlets' economies by denying them their fair share of advertising. The PTI government's anti-media actions were unprecedented. Senior journalists reported that in the past, even military dictators like Musharraf had not set up such complex controls over the media. Studies in a number of non-Western nations have also shown that

journalists in democratic regimes faced security issues such as imprisonment and death threats. In the light of gatekeeping theory, it is proven that media and social media are used for specific purposes, as gatekeeping is a selection procedure in which every piece of information is categorized according to its value and degree of interest. Occasionally, a single person or small group decides how much of the information is published or broadcast. After categorizing the information in a hierarchy that takes into account their needs, the gatekeeper or gatekeepers decide whether the information is pertinent. Businesses had more resources and thus increased their media control. With the passage of time, they gained control of the media. At the end of Musharraf's legal campaign, some media outlets banned him. Musharraf's regime was good for business, but it was very bad for press freedom. Musharraf's era was a very sad one for journalists who lost their jobs because they were targeted and victimized. But when businesses smell danger from Musharraf, they play the card of resources and start speaking against Musharraf. The media was reporting Lal Masjid live. It was live reporting, but after those headlines, an editorial line was contradictory.

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