

# Social Media: A Threat to Quality Journalism? A Comparative Analysis of the Content from Social Media and Mainstream Media

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## Abstract

The study inquisitively talks about the impact of social media on quality journalism in Pakistan, which poses a threat to objectivity, accuracy, balance and ethical considerations being considered an integral component of any news item. Based on the framing and dependency theories of mass communication, the research qualitatively dealt with the data collected from social media and mainstream media. The researcher selected eight stories from social media, and the same were chosen from the mainstream media. After collecting the data, some news values were taken as a parameter and operationalized in the context of Pakistani media content; that is how issues are framed. These values were investigated after examining the content, and it was found that social media compromised those values and exploited the audience's dependency on it. Social media tried to influence public perception about the selected issues. In contrast, the mainstream media, on the other hand, has tried its best to consider these values while covering the same issues.

**Keywords:** Social Media, News Values, Threat, Quality Journalism, Ethical Standards, Professional Principles

## Introduction

We live in an era of modernization, socialization and contemporary techniques, where social media plays a crucial role. Because through social media, information spreads quickly from down to top and top to down, which we call "information war." In this era/war, almost everybody has become independent in sharing and updating anything from anywhere with a different context. Here the question arises, do social media users, bloggers, content creators and mainstream media impact the quality of journalism? The answer is obviously YES, because the ascent of the internet and versatile mobile applications, as famed passages of information utilization, has significantly changed what comprises journalism (Archer, 2018).

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The intelligent elements of virtual entertainment have changed news coverage into a gathering whose essential capability is trading perspectives. Online journals, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and different stages have become progressively key to news spread. 'Quick' and 'short' being the predominant rationale of the web stages, amount instead of value definitely stands out enough to be noticed. The gigantic inflow of data through informal channels makes news coverage, to a greater degree, a work area work, allowing for hands-on work and examination. With specialized devices close by, columnists produce more and quicker. Accentuation has moved from examination and content to creation and structure. Crowd strengthening has re-imagined its origin to the degree that today columnists and crowds go about as accomplices in news making (Statista, 2022).

According to Greg Burns (2022), research findings reveal that 90.7 percent of respondents said that the job web-based entertainment organizations play in conveying the news results is a more regrettable blend of information. In an examination, 86.5 percent said online entertainment organizations have excess command over the blend of information individuals see. Some 79.3 percent said online entertainment, for the most part, adversely affected the reporting business. A mind-boggling 94.3 percent of respondents faulted web-based entertainment for eliminating the bogus word. More than nine of every ten overview respondents said web-based entertainment organizations convey a "more terrible blend of information" to their clients, as per the web-based review of columnists by Northwestern College's Medill School of Reporting, Media, Coordinated Promoting Correspondences. The review likewise found that almost eight of 10 people expressed provocation of columnists via online entertainment as an "exceptionally large" or "respectably enormous" issue. The current study undertakes the same phenomenon of social media content with special reference to some basic and universally agreed ethics for quality journalism and how these standards are compromised. It also discusses that the content producer for different social media forums intentionally angles the story in a way that can bring more views and likes to them. The study analyzes certain news stories of the Pakistani mainstream media compared to the approach adopted by social media users while covering the same story.

## Statement of the Problem

The emergence of 24/7 television channels has brought revolution and transformation in information dissemination, which has also significantly boosted in the recent two decades in this part of the world. The internet services based on information technology, live streaming and the introduction of the electronic version of the newspapers have proliferated the dynamics of journalism, especially in this part of the world where Pakistan is no exception, which has increased people's dependency on print and electronic media. The consumers of print and electronic media while being attracted by the mechanism of social media have started scanning the media content here, instead of reading the hard copy of the newspaper and watching television. This has switched their priorities of getting their information needs gratified to the online content, which was shorter in length and restricted in content as per the social media requirement.

The introduction of social media websites and applications has accelerated information dissemination on the one hand. However, on the other, the content producers started compromising ethical and professional standards, already set for quality and constructive reporting, as a key ingredient for quality journalism. The audience's dependency has switched from mainstream television and newspaper to social media platforms, and individuals with more followers or subscribers have started penetrating society. They have mainly targeted the youth and people with access to the internet with electronic gadgets while considering them a passive audience. Lack of primary education in media studies on the part of the content producers, sensitization of the moral standards required for quality journalism, training in professional ethics and a run for gaining more public watch hours along with subscribers have supplemented unprofessionalism in the discipline, thus making social media a threat to the quality journalism in Pakistan.

## Literature Review

Kurt Wagner (2017) says in his examination that in the last five years, web-based media, or social media has turned into a prevailing and developing wellspring of information and data for a huge number of individuals all over the planet. Web-based entertainment is sans quick and consistently with you in your pocket, politeness of your cell phone and different devices. This study also claimed that the use of social media is increasing day by day. Because

social media is considered a valuable source of information, and the material or information, it contains has worth; on the other hand, the research in this regard finds that it is emerging as a threat to quality journalism in Pakistan, where certain core professional standards are compromised. This is the reason behind undertaking this study, as usually it has been observed that those producing content for the social media forums in this part of the world, mainly in Pakistan, are least bothered to follow the standards of quality journalism such as objectivity, balance and accuracy.

Kuyucu (2020) explores that social media platforms and the internet are currently barraged with news, and there is a lot of data. It is practically close to difficult to separate phony news from genuine one. In some cases, even phony news by a resident columnist is taken up by an expert and genuine writer and formed into a story that might hamper the writer and his office's endeavours at laying out and keeping up with believability and dependability with the consumers. It also happens that when refuted or contradicted by the concerned quarters, it disappears with no explanation and justification for removal, thus leaving the audience in a dilemma. This study identified that social media harms journalism; it has not just changed how we consume news. It has also changed the way we create news. This study looks into these factors in the context of standardized journalism practices in Pakistan in the global context.

Michel (2020) believes that another issue online entertainment has raised is that there is much information. The crowd cannot necessarily decide the veracity of the news they see via online entertainment. Which news association would it be a good idea for them to trust? Individuals will keep believing the huge news organizations they have consistently trusted; however, what might be said about the future? They will never trust any news associations and could be lost among the phony news. The 2014 Irish Social News-casting Study distributed the insights that 64% of Irish columnists said that data via online entertainment could not be relied upon. The current study is also based on the information, misinformation and disinformation on different social media platforms, which create confusion about trustworthy information or credible journalism. Accordingly, today, journalists face difficulties brought about by new media innovations. Journalism is encountering extensive changes connected to social, social, prudent, and innovative changes. Considering these factors as an integral part of the situation that is getting worst with the expansion of social media, the current study examines how social media forums are victimizing quality journalism

that is mainly based on trends, views, subscribers and the number of comments made by the like-minded audience, but not by active consumers of the content.

### **The Rationale of the Study**

This issue of social media being a threat to mainstream media or having the potential to compromise professional standards has usually been debated in academic and journalistic circles. It needs empirical research with a pragmatic approach to reach a conclusion, which can add to the available knowledge on the subject. This is why the researcher planned this study to examine which ethical and professional standards of quality journalism have been challenged by the social media forums in the name of journalism.

- What is Social media?

Social media is a platform usually considered for freedom of expression, sharing content and connecting with people, and it is comprised of various websites and applications like Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram. The one who creates or generates the content is considered the person with power, which is usually because of the number of followers and subscribers. Social media users are also known as influencers by virtue of their penetration into society through the content liked, followed, trusted and re-shared by their followers.

- What is Quality Journalism?

Quality in journalism is measured both by how much a work engages its audience and enlightens it, along with its impact and contribution in bringing positive changes both in the mind of people as well as the policymakers for the overall uplift of humanity and society. This means journalists must continuously ask what information has the most value to citizens or audiences and in what form people are most likely to assimilate with it. Quality journalism has certain goals and missions, contrary to the practices carried out by most social media users with the sole goal of earning money, getting views and finding subscribers with no substantial benefit for the inhabitants of their locale.

- What is the problem?

According to a recent survey, the problem is that social media platforms have affected the mainstream media industry by contributing to inaccurate and one-sided news accounts by exerting too much control over the mix of news that people see (UNESCO, 2022). Compared to social media, decent journalism always tries to make sense of the chaotic world around us. It interprets, analyses, and strives to give meaning to all the babbling that's going on. In short: in the end, people become confused about trustworthy information and remain indecisive about the authenticity of the content that reaches them.

- How is it a problem?

Journalists can report in a flash by simply utilizing their cell phones, and that is an immense effect which virtual entertainment has on news-casting. Since news is so natural to share and nearly anybody can call themselves as a web-based writer or a resident columnist so far as that is concerned, and at times it tends to be hard to track down genuine news with trustworthy sources and attribution of the equivalent.

- How bigger is the problem?

The problem is big because the internet is overflowed with "false news," and online entertainment stages are the discussions where clients are bound to track down articles like that.

Despite the fact that it is remarkably difficult to stay away from counterfeit news via web-based entertainment stages like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as the content producers, active consumers can check it through alternative sources before they conclude. However, the problem is that the content is glamourized and presented in a way that leaves no room for users to verify it before relying on it.

## **Research Question**

### **Main Research Question**

Is Social Media a threat to Quality Journalism in Pakistan?

- How does social media compromise ethical and professional standards?

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To investigate how social media is a threat to quality journalism.
- To analyze the contents of selected issues that have compromised professional standards.
- To find out which standards of quality journalism have been compromised and how it has been replaced.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study analyzes the impact of social media on quality journalism after defining certain tools that determine the standard of journalism across the globe, with reference to journalism practices in Pakistan. The researcher has used the "framing" theory of mass communication by Gregory Bateson (1972). As a theory of mass communication, framing alludes to how the media bundles and presents data to general society with an aim. As per the hypothesis, the media features a few occasions and puts them inside a specific setting to support or put specific translations down. Along these lines, the media practices a specific impact on how individuals view reality or the truth is displayed to them. The theory is highly relevant to understanding social media's influences on journalism and how they frame their context regarding any news, events or incidents. Besides, for analyzing the audience's perspective regarding quality journalism and investigating why people prefer to go for social media platforms, the dependency theory of mass communication has also been taken into account.

The dependency theory by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur (1976) argues that the more a person becomes dependent on the media to fulfill his/her needs, the media will become more important to that individual. The media will have much influence and power over that individual, and this is how the researcher found it during preliminary research while finding a rationale for this study. This dependency on social media by its users have contributed negatively to the issue of authenticity, balance, objectivity, attribution and, above all, human interest. This practice has left the audience nowhere to differentiate between fake and real news.

## Research Methodology

The researcher has used the qualitative methodology to analyze the eight randomly selected case studies/stories from the Pakistani mainstream media and social media channels like youtube, Facebook, Twitter and vlogs. Since qualitative research is the study of a phenomenon to investigate why something has been observed or not observed in certain cases. Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects non-numerical data that needs interpretation, drawing meaning from the chosen words or phrases that help people understand the contextual meaning of a phenomenon being discussed in the content. Professional standards of quality journalism like honesty, integrity, independence, accuracy, contextual truth, transparency, ethical considerations, objectivity, risks, respect and fairness for people/audiences have been taken as conceptual tools. After selecting the eight selected stories from both social media and mainstream media, the researcher, while using the conceptual tools of defined standards to define quality journalism in the world, these packages have thoroughly been scrutinized how social media has challenged quality journalism. The stories were checked against these standards, and the researcher also tried to find whether the citizen journalist or influencers had taken care of these standards or not. However, there were certain limitations regarding the selection of news stories, as the researcher wanted to specifically talk about issues that affected the quality of journalism instead of going for the generalized approach in the selection of links.

## Analysis

This study has investigated the ethical standard of quality journalism by analyzing eight case studies of different issues and incidents from the Pakistani mainstream media and multiple forums of social media in order to find how quality journalism has been threatened by the approach adopted by those who are not formally trained in doing meaningful journalism in Pakistan. Using the qualitative approach, the study is conducted to compare similar issues in different mediums, with the help of news values, conceptually selected to determine the standard of quality journalism that aims to not only give authentically verified information but serve humanity at large. According to Porlezza, C. (2019), 'Accuracy' assumes an especially significant part in the factuality of the editorial talk, as it powers columnists not exclusively to



ground their covering realities but to check regardless of whether introduced realities are valid or not. Thus maintaining the standard of journalism. Getali Tilak (2020) believes that 'Media Ethics' is concerned with how a person should behave morally and work within the morally defined values of the given society.

Experts believe that the ethics for media are the values like trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, objectivity, balance, truth and self-restraint to be practiced by practitioners attached to the media. Phillips, A. (2010) argues that mentioning relevant and credible sources is a significant piece of composing an uplifting news story. These sources assist writers with acquiring information about occasions, individuals, places and patterns. Sourcing information also helps journalists build trust with the public by gratifying their information needs in a professional manner.

Stamenković, G. (2018) believes that 'Objectivity' in journalism in the broadest sense means real, true, legitimate, and independent of the subject and their opinions. Therefore, the objective is to provide people with a real, true, factual and unbiased account of information that connects them with the event with neutrality. Mukherjee, A. (2022) observes that 'Balance' and 'Fairness' are classic buzzwords of ethics for quality journalism: In objective journalism, stories must be balanced to attempt to present all sides of the story. Moran, R. E. (2021) finds that 'Trust' and 'Authenticity' exist as complicated theoretical constructs which retain the potential to both strengthen and undermine journalism's ability to fulfill its democratic role to spread truthful information and contribute to quality journalism.

### **Operational definition:**

Looking into the issue of quality journalism vis-à-vis the practice usually being observed by social media, these values can be operationally defined as;

### **Objectivity:**

Objectivity is one of the core elements of any news story. Objectivity refers to facts, figures, measurements and numerical or non-numerical data of any incident or event. It is considered one of the key filters while working for mainstream media in Pakistan.

**Accuracy:**

Discussing journalism in the Pakistani context, it is believed that every news story should be accurate because accuracy enhances the quality of news properly. By accuracy, the researcher means disseminating correct information in a story, which gives the news item more worth and raises its overall standard.

**Authenticity:**

The journalist or content producer should ensure that information is correct and real because it is a very imperative factor required for any kind of news report. The quality of being real or truthful matters a lot in any kind of news report, whether it is presented on mainstream media or a social media forum that is meant for public awareness, information and education.

**Source:**

The source plays an important role in every news story. The source could be a person, document, publication, knowledge or audio/video that gives timely information. The source must be related to that particular incident.

**Ethics:**

The event covered by media in Pakistan, both Mainstream and social media, must be reported in a way that is ethically appropriate as per the moral values of Pakistani society. The reporter or content producer consciously tries not to use any vulgar, violent or offensive terms, words and phrases in language, as well as in visuals or photographs.

**Balance:**

It is crucial that story should be balanced. The balance in news content means minimizing personal biases as well as biased angles by the the ones quoted and mentioned as actuality in the report. It is important to note that there are often two or more sides to any news story that help control our biases when accommodated or covered equally and appropriately.

**Table 1.****Case study of the death of cricketer Usman Shinwari**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
Sheryar Khan posted the news regarding the death of International Pakistani Cricketer Usman Khan Shinwari, on his Facebook timeline with a photograph on 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2022.	ARY News reported on 25 <sup>th</sup> September, 2022 that Usman Shinwari lost his life due to a heart attack during the Pakistan Corporate League in Lahore (with a picture of the local player Usman Shinwari)	Accuracy Authenticity Source

The Facebook story says that Usman Shinwari, the international Pakistani cricketer who belongs to Landi Kotal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, died during a cricket match. The social media post also showed a picture of the left-arm fast bowler who represented Pakistan in several international matches. When the news got viral on social media, Usman Shinwari tweeted that he was alive and in good condition, adding that the news about his death was fake. In his tweet, he also requested that content producers for social media to avoid spreading rumours and confirm any news before it gets published.

ARY News, one of the leading Pakistani Television News Channel, reported the same news with the photograph of 46-year-old Usman Shinwari, a local cricketer who died from a heart attack during a cricket match at Chobli Town Cricket Ground Lahore. It also clarified the previously circulated news, thus ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the news and mentioning the credible source. The data confirms that three basic values of new, authenticity, accuracy and credibility of source have been compromised by social media.

**Table 2.****Case study of Flood Incident in Kohistan**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values Challenged
In a Facebook post of August 27, 2022, Kot Chutta says that "five brothers waited for five hours in the flood water, but the helicopter did not come, and the five were flooded.	Bol News reported the same news on August 27, 2022, that "five friends got swept away by flood water in lower Kohistan," the northern part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	Source Ethics Accuracy

According to social media (Facebook), five brothers died after waiting five hours in the Sanagai area of Lower Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the area's residents, the five victims climbed on a rock to save themselves after being surrounded by heavy flooding. They waited for help; however, no rescue team arrived to save them, and eventually, they were swept away by the high-pressure flood water. The locals of the area said that a helicopter could have been reached from Peshawar or Gilgit in an hour if the administration wanted to. The locals tried to save them by pulling with the help of a rope but could not succeed, as only the helicopter could do that.

On the other hand, in the mainstream media, the Bol news channel, four out of five friends lost their lives while one survived after they got stuck in the floods in the Sanagai area of Lower Kohistan district in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The locals of the area said they tried saving them by pulling with the help of a rope; however, they could only save one out of five.

In response to the social media posts, the district administration has issued an official statement deeming the allegations "patently false," as if they have not made any effort to save the victim. The statement clarified that the rescue in those circumstances was "extremely difficult."

Social media have compromised the professional ethics of balance and impartiality by not contacting the concerned authorities after being blamed by locals for not trying to rescue the five persons. Similarly, four persons died,

not five; they were not brothers but friends. Mentioning them as brothers has a different social and psychological impact compared to stating them as friends.

**Table 3.**  
**Case study of Ex-Army Chief Pervez Musharraf's Death**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
Imran TV channel account on YouTube reported on June 10, 2022, that "Parvez Musharraf has died, pray for his forgiveness. He was not feeling well since morning, and finally, he died."	Capital News reported on the same day (June, 10 2022) that "The news regarding the death of former President Parvez Musharraf has been declared as a fake."	Objectivity Accuracy Ethics Authenticity

This case is related to the news item about the death of former Pakistani Martial Law Administrator and President Parvez Musharraf. Social Media reported him as dead, and the news came out from the YouTube Chanel titled Imran TV. However, even the family of Pervez Musharraf termed it fake through a Twitter post. Later on, Capital news, after confirming it from the family sources, clarified that the news about the death of Pervez Musharraf is fake, adding that he was admitted to the hospital due to illness but is alive.

Social media has compromised the authenticity, accuracy, objectivity and professional ethics required for standardized journalism.

**Table 4.****Case study of Minar-i-Pakistan Assault Case**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
YouTube, August 20, 2022. Malick Kamran reported that four hundred boys harassed Miss Ayesha Akram through flying kisses at Minar e Pakistan, Lahore.	Dawn News (TV) reported the same issue on August 19, 2022: "A female tiktoker Ayesha Akram was assaulted by men during independence day celebrations at Minar e Pakistan, Lahore. The incident has shaken the image of Pakistani youth.	Accuracy Ethics Balance

This is the story of a woman, Ayesha Akram, who, according to a youtube report, was assaulted by 400 men at Minar e Pakistan, Lahore, and it was her dress that compelled the youngsters to do so, through flying kisses and getting physical. The Twitter video shows that a lady was groped, harassed and assaulted by men by making her rounds. The perpetrators, while assaulting the girl without any shame, were also making videos of the ongoing violent incident and every man in the mob who had access to any social media platform made sure to upload the videos of the act without censoring or blurring any undesirable part of the body which would affect the girl's position even more in the society. To top it all, a YouTube channel, 'Amazing Hub,' came out with videos which put the entire blame on the girl, saying that she was the one harassing the 400 men by blowing them kisses, and the men then, in return, contested her honour.

Dawn News, the mainstream television channel, reported that the incident took place on Independence Day of Pakistan, and the videos of the assault of a female tiktoker by a crowd consisting mainly of men, have shaken the country's image. Furthermore, the videos of this incident were not reported by most of the news channels, and those who aired it made sure that it was blurred and censored to keep the dignity of the victim intact.

The social media broke the principles of ethics but showed some body parts of the lady, which could have easily been blurred. Similarly, they blamed the lady for her dress and appearance and ensured the video would bring them maximum subscribers and watch hours. Social media compromised the accuracy, balance and ethical aspect of quality journalism.

**Table 5.**

**Kidnappers' gang is termed scaremongering.**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
A YouTube Channel 'Hatmi TV Channel' reported on September 27, 2022, that so far, about 1400 children have been kidnapped from different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces of Pakistan.	ARY News (a television channel), on October 9, 2022, interviewed the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) in Lahore, Athar Ismail, and he strongly rejected the rumours that children are being kidnaped. He clarified that some miscreants spread these rumours for personal gain and terrorize people.	Objectivity Source Authenticity

This is the case study of an event that has been differently reported by the social media and mainstream media of Pakistan. The social media, YouTube, spread rumours that gangsters are kidnapping children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, which created unrest in the society. Likewise, many other social media forums posted videos of such incidents, which were later termed as either old from India or fake. A YouTube video explained how 1400 were kidnapped to date.

Later on, the ARY News Channel reported that after thoroughly investigating this piece of news, the DIG Investigation rejected these reports

and termed them false, misleading, and part of a misinformation campaign for terrorizing the people. He stated that individuals had propagated such information to serve their interests, and these claims have no base. According to Punjab Police, the purpose of sharing such news is to spread fear among people and parents. The police urged the citizens to respond responsibly and asked them not to spread such false news without verification.

The social media forums did not verify the news from the police or any relevant body, thus posing a threat to quality journalism by not following the principles of objectivity, authenticity, verification and attribution.

**Table 6.**

**Case study of Shehbaz Gill's Treatment after Arrest**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
Amna Chaudhry posted on her Facebook on August 18, 2022, that the private body of parts of Mr. Shahbaz Gill had severely been attacked during custody.	GEO TV reported on August 19, 2022, that Shahbaz Gill is making excuses in order to halt the ongoing investigation process. The allegations regarding attacking his private body parts are false.	Authenticity Source objectivity

The case study is about the reports of torture on Shahbaz Gill, the leader of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf, during police custody. The Facebook post of Amna Chaudhry said that the private body parts of Shahbaz Gill were attacked by police, which is inhumane treatment by the government. It further said that he had been admitted to the hospital for treatment of the injuries, and he was in critical condition.

Geo TV reported that the news regarding attacking Shahbaz Gill on private body parts is untrue, and he is making excuses to avoid the investigation process. The TV channel also quoted police and hospital sources,



clarifying that he has been admitted to the hospital for an asthmatic problem and his condition is stable.

The social media posts compromised the authenticity of the news by adding personal feelings for the arrested political workers, besides exaggerating the incident. On the other hand, the mainstream media quoted the concerned officials regarding the health of a person and said that the news being spread on social media is false.

**Table 7.**

**Case study of the News regarding Maryam Nawaz, Importing Machinery from India**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
A Twitter handle @nigarbaloch5 tweeted on September 27, 2022, that "Maryam Nawaz is a corrupt and criminal lady by importing machinery for her son-in-law from India, do not call her a daughter of the nation, as this is an insult to our daughters.	GEO TV reported on September 26, 2022, that the news regarding importing machinery from India by Maryam Nawaz is not true. It added that 60 percent of the power plan had already been imported before 2020.	Objectivity Accuracy

This case study deals with the news regarding Maryam Nawaz, a politician and daughter of former prime minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. It spread on social media after a leaked audio of a conversation between Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the sitting prime minister and a government official. The audio revealed that Maryam Nawaz asked the government to facilitate her son-in-law in importing machinery from India. The social media posts called her a shameless woman and asked people that since she is involved in corrupt practices, she should not call her "daughter of the nation" as it would be an insult to other daughters.

The mainstream media reported that this machinery was imported from India in 2020 when the political party of Maryam Nawaz was not in government. 40 percent of the import was not completed when the government banned all types of imports from India. The television channel also quoted government officials to authenticate its news item.

The social media posts were found to be politically engineered, which challenged the core news values like objectivity and accuracy, while the mainstream media took care of all these while reporting the event.

**Table 8.**  
**Case study of Ishaq Dar as Finance Minister**

Social Media	Mainstream	News values challenged
Musarrat Jameshad Cheema wrote on her Facebook on September 26, 2022, "Ishaq Dar returns home from fugitive to desirable. Will the economy handle or sink?"	Dawn News reported on September 28, 2022, "Senator Ishaq Dar took the oath of senator last day and will take oath as federal minister today."	Authenticity Source Ethics

This is the analysis of a news item related to Ishaq Dar, who was sworn in as Finance Minister just a day after he was sworn in as a member of the Senate, the upper house of the Pakistani Parliament. A Chartered Accountant by profession, Ishaq Dar was given the position after his predecessor, Miftah Ismail, resigned from the office. However, the opposition has attacked the government over Dar's appointment.

The Social Media presented the news of Ishaq Dar's return to Pakistan, to Parliament and as a Finance Minister in a negative way. His return was portrayed as if the recent downfall of Pakistan's economy was solely due to Dar's mismanagement, and as he has assumed the role of the caretaker of the State's economy, Pakistan would be going through another financial black hole. In the news circulating the social media platform, he was titled '*Tarzan*

*of Corruption*' by another, stating, 'This is the Aristotle whose ministry was included in the country's gray list.'

The Mainstream Media, on the other hand, reported it as routine news by informing the audience of Ishaq Dar's return to the country after five years and showed a live scene of President Arif Alvi taking oath from Ishaq Dar, as a Federal Minister of Finance, just a day after he took oath as a senator. The social media posts clearly showed a bias against the basic essence of objective journalism, thus proving that social media poses a threat to quality journalism in Pakistan.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The social media posts were gauged in light of some key values, considered a pre-request for any objective report, in contrast to the mainstream media that tries up to some extent to follow these and incorporate them in news stories. Answering the main research question, the analysis justifies the argument that, Yes, social media is a threat to quality journalism in Pakistan. The research concluded that basic news values like objectivity, accuracy, balance, ethical consideration and attribution of the sources were not considered while reporting for social media. Similarly, the research also revealed that the quality of journalism is compromised since no editorial filter is involved in posting content on social media forums, like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Social media has greatly exploited people's dependency on social media, where they have to rely on the content with no option for verification. The research talked about the findings in the light of the dependency theory of mass communication, thus linking it in a way that the more a person becomes dependent on the media to fulfill his/her needs, the media will become more important to that individual. The media will have much influence and power over that individual, and this is how the researcher found it during preliminary research while finding a rationale for this study. This dependency on social media by its users have contributed negatively to the issue of authenticity, balance, objectivity, attribution and human interest. This practice has left the audience nowhere to differentiate between fake and real news. The research recommends that authorities like the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), in consultation with the Journalists' Unions, Press Clubs and other relevant bodies, should come up with a mechanism where news content can be filtered, or the producer is made morally bound to

take care of basic principles of journalism. However, it should not be applied to sharing personal observations, opinions or content related to self-projection.

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