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## An Empirical Analysis of the Role of Media in Government Accountability in Pakistan

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### Abstract

*This article is aimed to empirically investigate the role of media on governmental accountability in Pakistan. The article employs positivism and quantitative methodology. A survey approach has been adopted to collect primary data from relevant stakeholders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This article intends to find the media's role in fostering government accountability. Furthermore, the mediating role of political parties was also checked through mediation analysis. Primary data analysis reveals that there is a considerable association between media and government accountability. This article concluded that the media revolution has a significant effect on governmental accountability.*

**Key Words:** Conventional Media, New Media, Government Accountability, Political Parties

### Introduction

In the last several decades, the world has seen an extraordinary proliferation of democracy. However, many of the newly developing democracies seem to fall short of some of the fundamental principles and norms that constitute democratic governance, including irregular voting processes, corruption, inefficiency, and dictatorial forms of administration. [Ashraf & Yasir \(2015\)](#) argued that many of the newly emerging democracies, such as Pakistan, are part of the developing world, and inequality and poverty continue to be formidable obstacles to the complete self-determination of the people.

Accountability is one of the essential concerns that require a thorough examination in order to comprehend its limitations and potentials. It is difficult for a progressive, dynamic, developed, and functional society to exist in the absence of a strong foundation of accountability (Monique, 2013). There is a relationship between media and

accountability. Media has enabled every person to have immediate access to political news, events, voter lists, vote numbers, polling booth information, SMS messages from their leaders and party plans, etc. Ahmed, (2014) argued that political parties delegate their spokespeople to appear on cable television talk programmes in order to defend their parties' policy stances, disseminate their messages to the masses for future elections, and cultivate a voter base in remote places where actual peregrination is impossible. Due to signals, television, newspapers, and mobile phones, individuals have access to political information. Due to the role of the media, the government is more responsible for its actions than ever before.

This article seeks to examine the degree to which the media influences changes in Pakistani government accountability. Additionally, to determine public opinion on the link between the media and government accountability. In addition, it

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is essential to comprehend the role of political parties in the media and the accountability of the government. A survey approach, in this connection, has been adopted to collect primary data from 385 teachers of 41 universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

## Conventional Media

### Print Media

One of the most ancient forms of media is print media, which is still a highly valuable medium today. With the introduction of television as a source of information, the majority of people throughout the globe depend on it. However, newspapers are still considered a medium for politically savvy elements of the population. Supporters of print media believe that high-quality print media still plays a significant role in the creation of political norms and values of the people in every democratic system because it highlights burning concerns and labels hot themes. Historically, print media has been seen as a forum for public discourse on many political and social topics. The fundamental reason for the political significance of newspapers is that they are read by society's elite and professionals ([Sinani, 2015](#)).

Print media is the finest source of political information for the general media because it is intimately familiar with the concerns and problems of the region to which it belongs; hence, it is the best source for government accountability ([Robert et al., 2004](#)). Typically, newspapers highlight those elements, political concerns, and social problems that are rarely mentioned or brought up in talk programmes and political conversations. The newspapers and magazines capture the reader's attention by focusing on all political and civic concerns and government performance. (Stromberg, 2004).

Newspaper is the most traditional kind of media in Pakistan. Privately held newspapers in Pakistan often maintain an independent stance toward the government, which is a remarkable quality. Pakistani newspapers were once produced in eleven distinct local, national, and international languages, including Urdu and English. In Pakistan's media, it has been noticed that foreign language publications and national and local newspapers take

diverse positions. There are a great number of Urdu-language newspaper readers in Pakistan ([Azam, 2008](#)). Thus, print media offers the average man with real-time information about government actions. It also assists in training individuals to hold their governments responsible.

## Social Media

Internet and associated technologies have transformed the media by providing information and news in a novel way. It has given old material new meaning, which attracts a significant number of votes. Social media has made it easier for individuals, especially the younger generation, to monitor political events in a more efficient manner ([Ali & Jan, 2013](#)). The introduction of new trends in social media, such as online videos, blogs, and online video conferences, has given individuals the finest chance to express themselves and get rapid and trustworthy information. These communication techniques increase comprehension of political issues. Facebook emerges as the ideal platform for political communication, where individuals can share political films and post their opinions on political problems. Facebook appears to be a crucial instrument for evaluating government performance ([Bastos et al., 2015](#)).

Social media, which is regarded as a powerful tool of communication, is utilised in Pakistan in five different ways, including breaking stories set aside by other media to motivate the masses for social and other deeds; highlighting humanitarian issues and matters; awakening people for social purposes; and facilitating rapid communication between political leaders and masses (Kugelman, 2012). According to a study undertaken by the BBC in 2013, social media is contributing to a more transparent and responsible administration (Shabir et al., 2014).

Nearly every prominent political leader in Pakistan uses social media to communicate with their supporters. Typically, Pakistani politicians utilise Twitter. Imran Khan, chairman of Tehreek-e-Insaf, will have close to 300,000 followers. Nearly 35,000 users follow Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab, and Interior Minister Rehman Malik (Kugelman, 2012). The General Secretary of the

PTI believes that social media is a low-cost and simple campaign tactic. A highly experienced Pakistan People's Party legislator said that the party receives public input on draught legislation through Twitter. A member of the opposition has said that his party used social media to gauge the opinions of the public, for instance, to monitor public opinion on the violence in Karachi (Rehman, 2012).

[Treem \(2015\)](#) performed a case study on the adoption of a social network scheme inside an economic or financial services company; this research explains how workers see social media in terms of a variety of accountability categories. His results suggest that previous to the deployment of the SM scheme, staff members were concerned about the responsibility that SM would involve and that their unwillingness to tackle the accountability connected with communications opened the way for the seldom usage of the different SM components. Commonly referred to be a collection of technologies that includes wikis, journals, social networking networks, and microblogs, in addition to social labelling, SM is sometimes grouped with Web 2.0 in different academic studies ([Koch, 2008](#); [Ullah & Shah, 2018](#)). In fact, in an attempt to clarify institute-based research on SM, this article aims to bring clarification. Against a definitional approach to the SM that categorises technologies based on common technical qualities, there are arguments. To demonstrate the affordances strategy for evaluating technology.

### Accountability

In social science, particularly in political science, the notion of accountability refers to the acceptance of official obligations for a certain function and the presence of punishments for failing to complete assigned tasks and responsibilities. Both the argumentative and informational dimensions of accountability need reliable facts and an effective system of action transparency. In addition to providing explanations for their acts, accountability obligates actors to conduct themselves with decency and propriety. All of this requires institutions, whether formal or informal, to enforce the proper conduct of individuals in order for them to execute the official obligations assigned to them.

In the absence of such a system, these institutions cannot enforce good conduct.

Accountability, whether public, political, or governmental, is within the purview of various players in societies or the individuals who are responsible for holding politicians and government agencies accountable for their acts. Efficient institutions responsible for holding government officials accountable and the government itself identify the official duties of the government's agents, the establishment of a sense of duty in the official agents to perform their tasks, and production of encouragement that inspire government officials to act in the interests of the common people by punishing them when they follow their vested interests and rewarding them when they follow the interests of the people. In addition, it is thought that political accountability, in its truest meaning, entails both the necessity and the capacity to rein in governmental authorities. A number of theorists define political accountability as mere associations in which officials of the government are obligated to respond to those who hold them accountable or answerable and in which those who hold officials of the public accountable or answerable are authorised to impose sanctions. Others observe that government officials are authorised and rewarded for their conduct via either formal institutions or an unwritten system of laws.

The bulk of social and informational diversity in Pakistan has been subjected to Pakistan's accountability procedures. RTI provisions are included in official accountability processes. In addition, the government of Pakistan has created accountability measures through a highly decentralised architecture. Diverse civil society groups have used this significant decentralisation to bring administration and accountability processes closer to the people. In Pakistan, there has been a deliberate effort to encourage local and community interest in guiding principles and to make endeavours in these domains via non-governmental organisations. State-specific additional accountability procedures differ.

To prevent well-known social instability, all regimes, democratic or undemocratic, are obliged to deliver a minimum degree of public benefits; parliamentary democracy provides a solid institutional framework for holding elected officials

responsible to the people. This demonstrates that the government and the people are interconnected in every aspect. The people can only exercise their ability to influence successful governance if they have access to correct information from several media providers. Since the media is the major source of information and a fundamental connection between the people and their government, it is crucial to hold elected officials accountable for their words and actions ([Terngu, 2010](#)). It is believed that the media would provide a forum for people from opposition parties, civil society organisations, and the general public to voice their divergent and opposing viewpoints ([Mcquail, 2003](#); [Votmer, 2007](#)).

Accountability is characterised as one of the core ideals or rules of any politically sustainable and prosperous system ([Hayllar, 2000](#)). In fact, democratic beliefs and goals presuppose that every citizen of a democratic state has identical political rights and benefits from government policy. In a representative government, elected and administrative officials are accountable for their choices, acts, and actions in front of the people, as well as for their delegated authorities and obligations. From the perspective of the public, the absence of certain political principles and norms may undermine the legitimacy and legality of political and democratic systems ([Wang, 2013](#)).

Each element of the democratic political system and government is directly accountable to the people for the powers and duties that they have been granted ([Aucoin & Jarvis, 2000](#)). Due to their desire for a higher and better quality of living, their enthusiastic reaction to state authorities, and their active engagement in the state's political activities, the necessity of accountability has risen ([Milakovich, 2008](#)).

Lastly, it's likely that people's attention would eventually be drawn to issues about elected officials' accountability ([Hayllar, 2000:60](#)). In addition, it is emphasised that maintaining government accountability is essential for progressing and strengthening the public sector and for implementing service rules and regulations controlling their activity. This accountability system

will also play an essential role in promoting and defining the principles and norms of honesty, dignity, and fairness among government employees while deterring their abuse of authority ([Jensen, 2000](#)). The genuine accountability of government officials will unquestionably strengthen the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the general public and the masses, paving the way for the masses' allegiance and adherence to state rules and policies ([Bovens, 2010](#)).

## Methodology

In the study of Political Science and Social Sciences, survey research is an incredibly effective measuring tool. In addition to being exceedingly well-organised and generalisable, well-designed surveys may be exceptionally well-organised. Taking into mind the many options available for equipment and data collecting, the survey study design is adaptable on the whole (Ruel et al., 2016). The questionnaire practice for data collection and observation is very effective in survey methods due to the fact that it permits and enables investigators to collect information and data of any kind to answer questions important to the topic. These procedures have been the standard methodology and practice in the social sciences for a long time since they are thought to be the most effective means of measuring the attitudes and views of individuals about any social or political phenomenon ([Sekaran, 1999](#)). Taking into mind the preceding debate, the researcher used the survey research design in order to uncover facts regarding the key political issue under attention and investigation.

So, by applying the survey design, the researcher determined a sample size of 502 university teachers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. However, 385 questionnaires were collected back with a response rate of 76%.

## Findings of the Study

Hypothesis I was to check the association between conventional and new media (Independent variables) and Government Accountability (Dependent Variable)

## Correlations

**Table 1.** Correlation Results (n=385)

		Conventional Media	New Media	Pol-Parties
	R	.897**	.947**	.944**
Government Accountability	p	.000	.000	.000

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

- According to the data gathered from this sample group, new media have a powerful and optimistic correlation with government accountability.
- The above table is showing that the numerical data obtained from the sample group established that conventional media such as newspapers, television and cable network were also found to be a meaningful, optimistic, and strong association between I.Vs and DV.
- The association is also evident that the political parties are also a factor in the promotion of government accountability; they were found to be associated in an important, constructive, and robust manner.

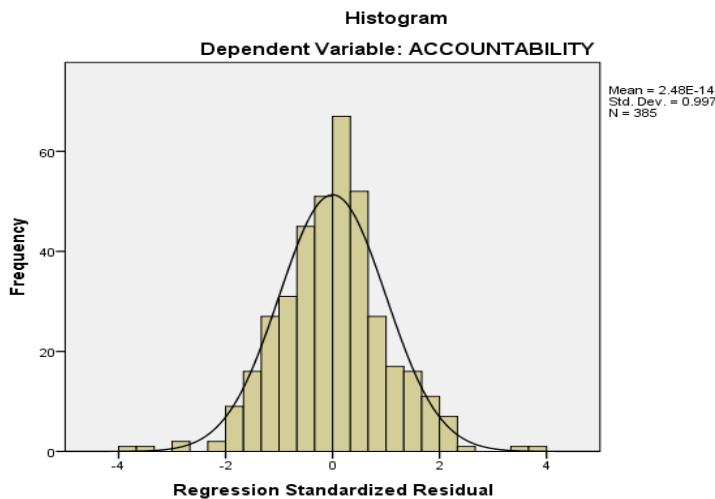
## Regression Results

Hypothesis 2 was about the cause-and-effect relationship between government accountability and media, including conventional and new media.

**Table 2.** Linear Regression

Model	Non-Conventional Media	Conventional Media
$R^2 = 0.961$ , 96.1 % or 96 % contributing in fostering Accountability	0.319 (0.000)**	.673 (0.000)**

\*\**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*



**Figure 1:**

The above graph represented the Histogram, and the data was in good shape.

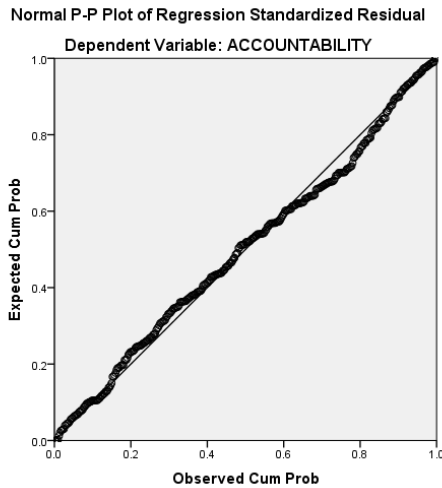


Figure 2:

The above graph showed the Normal P–P Plot, which also showed that the data was in good shape.

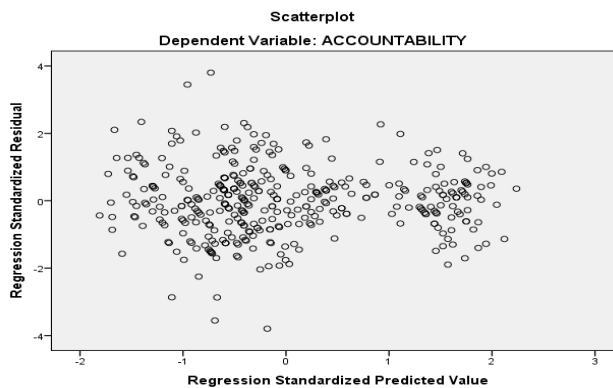


Figure 3:

The Scatterplot displayed above revealed that the numerical data used for the analysis was good enough to generalise results.

The hierarchical regression analysis employed in the above analysis was aimed to assess the possibility of scrutinising the level of the association and contribution of conventional and new media to government accountability. The researcher observes the subsequent facts:

- About 96% of the variation has been found in government accountability due to the combined role of conventional and new media.

- The standardised coefficient beta values revealed that a greater proportion of the difference may be assigned to the difference between Conventional Media ( $\beta = .673; p < .01$ ) than to the New Media ( $\beta = .319; p < .01$ ).

Both conventional and new media are highly predictive of the media's role in promoting government accountability.

### Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis 3 was to check the mediation of political parties in between media and government accountability.

The primary aim of creating a mediation model is to determine whether the hypothesised mediator (Political Parties) modified the direct relationship between the Predictor (Media) and the Criterion variable (Government Accountability).

The strength of the indirect effect is the product of the beta coefficients associated with the Predictor variable (Media) to Mediator (Political Parties) and Mediator (Political Parties) to the Criterion variable (Government Accountability). Here it is equal to  $(0.953) * (0.334)$ , or 0.318 in this case.

The strength of the isolated direct effect is the beta coefficient in the unmediated model (with a value of 0.959), where Media is the single predictor of the Outcome variable (Government Accountability). It can also be calculated as the sum of the indirect effect and the beta coefficient for predictor (Media) predicting Outcome variable (Government Accountability) in the mediated model:  $0.318 + 0.641$ , or 0.959.

The relative strength of the mediated effect is equal to the indirect effect divided by the direct effect. Here it is equal to  $0.318/0.959$ , or 0.331 in this case.

The author concludes that about a third (33.1%) of the effect of Media on Government Accountability is mediated through Political Parties.

### Discussion on Findings

Author categorised media sources as "Conventional Media" and "New Media". Conventional Media refers to any kind of media that existed before the emergence of digital media, such as media, newspapers, radio, books, and magazines. New media includes Social media and its many elements, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram. The criteria variable, Accountability, was subdivided into Political Accountability, Social Accountability, and Accountability. The secondary data prompted the researcher to obtain primary, first-hand data from study participants chosen using probability sampling. A questionnaire was distributed among faculty members of 41 universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

The purpose of this article was to discover answers to several research questions, such as what

is the general consensus on the relationship between the media and government accountability? To address this issue, the primary purpose of this research was to examine the public impression of the relationship between the media and government accountability. For the purpose of answering this question and achieving this aim, primary first-hand knowledge was necessary. The author employed a questionnaire to collect data from study participants from the whole Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province who were recruited using a random sampling method. 385 respondents participated in this survey, and the findings were mostly based on their responses.

The author has used positivism, which allows them to explain the problem using numerical data. In this style of research philosophy, the reality is independent of the observer or researcher, which indicates that the observer or researcher has no effect on the collected data and presents it as is. We applied quantitative methods, such as the Survey technique, to better comprehend this crucial problem. The survey was done over the whole KP. Then, prior to completing the survey, the researcher investigated the qualitative character of the data to get a better understanding of the problem by examining various theories and other data on the role of media in creating accountability. This literature study enables the researcher to develop a theoretical framework to investigate the relationship between the media and government accountability. After a comprehensive analysis of previous studies, the author determined that political parties play a significant role in promoting media as a vehicle for accountability. Therefore, the author employed political parties as a mediator in the function of media in accountability, since in the Pakistani democratic system, political parties play a crucial role in government formation. The Pearson Correlation Moment was used to examine the link between the media and government accountability, whilst the Hierarchical Regression analysis was used to examine the cause and effect relationship between them. Additionally, the mediation analysis was done using mediation analysis.

The findings demonstrated that the media has a vital influence in fostering accountability by raising awareness and performing its beneficial function as

a watchdog. The affirmative indicates that as the media's role grew, so would awareness and execution of government accountability. These findings based on the study are novel, but previous research in other nations has also shown the same universal truths. It was shown via numerical data that the predictor variable may explain 92 per cent of the variance in government accountability. On the other hand, conventional media contributed more than new media, as evidenced by the standardised beta coefficient values.

In addition, the mediation study was undertaken to examine the function of Political Parties as a mediator between the media and government accountability. To test the function of political parties as mediators in media and accountability, the hypothesis was created. The objective of mediation analysis was to get both standardised (beta) and unstandardised (raw score) regression coefficients, in addition to the Standard Errors associated with the unstandardised regression coefficients. Using this information, the author used the Aroian test to determine the statistical significance of the indirect impact (the mediated influence of the predictor variable (Media) operating via the mediator variable (Political Parties) on the outcome variable (Government Accountability)). Using the Freedman–Schatzkin test, the researcher, additionally computes the difference in the path coefficients between the predictor variable (Media) and the outcome variable (Accountability) in the unmediated and mediated models. In the end, the author deduced that about a third (33.1%) of the effect of Media on Accountability is mediated through Political Parties.

The literature analysis and primary data gathered by the author for this article demonstrated that media promotes government accountability in Pakistan. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the media revolution has had a major

effect on the public's perception of the performance of various administrations and their responsibilities to perform for the welfare of society. The media has raised public awareness, which has compelled governments to perform and adhere to the ideals of good governance. The qualitative and quantitative data collected for this article demonstrated that the media has a big role in establishing governmental accountability. It is one of the most important aspects of effective government with transparency and participation. In addition, the statistics suggest that people value the role of political parties in the country's developing democratic system. They felt political parties might strengthen the role of the media in creating accountability.

## Conclusion

There is a major relationship between the media and accountability. It is demonstrated that media accountability is fundamentally rather straightforward and that it constantly happens regardless of whether it is backed by theory or codified procedures. The media are regarded as the fourth pillar of a democratic nation. It serves as an effective instrument for controlling the other parts of government. But this is only significant if the media acts independently and transparently, with qualified and impartial professionals who are conscious of their accountability and the repercussions of their work. Together, these characteristics would strengthen the nation's democratic institution.

The primary and secondary data reveal that the media has a strong association with accountability. The media will make a big prediction about a country's accountability. Political parties can play a critical mediating function in fostering accountability by acting as a conduit between the media and the public.



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