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# Beyond the Western Masses: Demography and Perceptions of the Credibility of Pakistani Media

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Based on a random survey sample, this study examines audience assessments of different media platforms in Pakistan. We found that in the complex Pakistani media landscape, ethnicity is a key indicator in predicting media credibility. Our study's results indicate that minority ethnic groups tend to find domestic television to be less credible, and international television or traditional media to be more credible, than do members of the majority Punjabi group. Media reliance was found to be a significant indicator of media credibility assessment—particularly regarding media such as international television and the Internet—as media reliance hinges on the availability of a media infrastructure, especially in the context of a developing society such as Pakistan.

*Keywords: traditional media credibility, new media credibility, media reliance, media credibility in Pakistan, religiosity, ethnicity*

## The Media Landscape in Pakistan

Pakistan's media system appears highly diverse—more than 1,500 newspapers in the state are affiliated with different ethnic and tribal groups (Akhtar & Akhtar, 2000)—but, in fact, it is dominated by an oligopolistic structure with control over most mainstream news media outlets (Nadadur, 2007). However, the new media boom has created tensions between Pakistan's traditionally upheld national

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ideologies as a Muslim nation within the mainstream media and the liberal modernity of Western influence (Barraclough, 2001) of new social media. Also, subnational movements aiming for autonomy and separatism in certain provincial areas, coupled with ethnolinguistic power struggles in Pakistan, affect the public's media routines (Barraclough, 2001).

Most of all, the new media phenomenon significantly challenges agents of society's status quo—the military/civil bureaucracy, and religious elites, and their respective political forces. The new media phenomenon also has opened a venue for social and political discourse, aiding civic participation by loosening it from tight government censorship and control (Hashmi, 2012). While new media use of regional languages and familiar cultural motifs such as cable/satellite television and social media may appeal to the young, the urban, women, and highly educated middle class (Barraclough, 2001; Murthy, 2010a), many conservatives question the credibility of new media and prefer to rely on traditional media outlets—radio, newspaper, and television (Barraclough, 2001). Taking all these aspects into account, a useful framework that identifies "media credibility" in Pakistan would have to consider its transition from a largely state-regulated media system to a hybrid one operated by state, local, and religious—as well as transnational—players. More particularly, in Pakistan this framework should be examined with a close observation of media ownership and control.

For this study we surveyed a sample of the national population of Pakistan to investigate, in part, how credible they viewed traditional media and other online sources to be. It also explored the degree to which reliance on traditional and online media sources predicted credibility perceptions of each medium after controlling for demographic and political factors. The study builds upon previous scholarship by providing one of the first empirical investigations of media credibility in Pakistan. Our research expands media credibility research beyond the United States via analysis of public opinion survey data regarding media credibility in the politically important Muslim nation of Pakistan. In so doing, we examine the effect of audience-based variables such as ethnicity, age, gender, and religiosity on perceptions of the credibility of traditional and new media in the context of Pakistani society.

Via aerial and cable/satellite connections run by government organizations and private media moguls, television is the most influential and widely accessed medium in Pakistani society. Here, domestic television means any type of television channel run by government or private media companies and serviced through aerial or cable/satellite connections in Pakistan, distinguishable from international television. The latter is available only through cable/satellite connections. State-run PTV is the only terrestrial service widely available, even in rural areas that do not have cable or satellite connections (International Media Support, 2009).

International television channels aired in Pakistan include such channels as CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera. Although international television has far smaller audiences than its national Urdu counterparts, it has great leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community, and the upper strata of society (Murthy, 2010a) and sometimes seems to pose a threat to the Pakistan government. One notable

example can be seen in the case of the blocked anti-Pakistan broadcasting of the BBC World News[2] (BBC, 2011). The BBC's editorial independence was cut short because its views of the Pakistani government were deemed critical, thus generating blunt government intervention in the form of censorship.

Historically, all traditional media from print to radio have played a fundamental and vibrant role in Pakistani society dating back to before partitioning from India. These media have been obvious choices for rural populations due to easier access, and they are now diversely owned by industrialists, large media groups, feudal lords, and politicians. And although the emergence of the Internet has impacted media consumption patterns in Pakistan, its impact is still contained in more populous urban areas, much like in the rest of South Asia.

The Internet became available in Pakistan in 1995, and now provides access to the most popular worldwide social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Skype. However, today only slightly over 10% of the Pakistani population has access to the Internet, although the number of users continues to rise. Regionally, Pakistan ranks 8th on the list of the top 10 Internet consumer countries in Asia (Internet World Stats, n.d.). Of note is that the Internet is used mainly in English, and therefore appeals to and is more available to the younger and the more educated members of Pakistani society.

## Media Credibility

Research on media credibility typically focuses on either the source or the medium (Kiousis, 2001) of the media in question. The medium credibility perspective tends to examine perceptions of the medium through which a message is delivered. Media credibility perceptions in the Arab world generally have been examined in this vein, particularly in terms of local Arab media versus international media. Research shows little difference between each medium except when reliance was considered a factor (Johnson & Fahmy, 2008). Research in Middle East media credibility also has examined the diversity or credentials of sources used in various traditional media while comparing them to perceptions of their online counterparts. In Egypt, for instance, evaluations of media credibility differ between reliance of online media versus traditional media (Hamdy, 2013). Early studies on medium credibility found that broadcast media were rated more highly than print media (Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Major & Atwood, 1997; Newhagen & Nass, 1989; Westley & Severin, 1964). Subsequent analysis identified a different pattern in medium credibility as newspapers were perceived as more credible than television and the Internet (Kiousis, 2001).

The diffusion of satellite television news platforms such as Al Jazeera, Al Arabyia, and Press TV across the Middle East and South Asia reshaped global media ecology, challenging traditionally state-controlled dominant media across this region (Fahmy, Wanta, & Nisbet, 2012). As such, media credibility scholars have moved beyond a U.S.-centric perspective of examining media credibility factors, such as objectivity in Western nations, and have found an increase in perceived media credibility in countries such as Bangladesh (Andaleeb, Rahman, Rajeb, & Akter, 2012) based on factors such as religiosity. Indeed, in

[2] In November 2011, in a two-part BBC documentary, a U.S. source argued that the Pakistan government had acted as the United States' ally in public while secretly training and arming the Taliban in Afghanistan.

other studies conducted in Muslim nations, individual factors such as high use (El-Nawawy, 2006), and religiosity (Golan & Kiousis, 2010), have been found to increase perceived credibility of certain media among Muslim audiences.

Focusing specifically on international news media, the credibility of the medium often depends on the country where the media originates (Fahmy et al., 2012). In particular, media outlets associated with the United States or outlets considered Western are often not seen as credible in non-Western societies (Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2004; Zaharna, 2001), and consumption of Western news media may result in decreased opinions about one's own country (El–Nawawy, 2006). Notably, to Arab audiences, outlets such as Al Jazeera are perceived as more credible than are Western sources (Johnson & Fahmy, 2008). Despite these limitations, the rise of non-Western international news media consumption may suggest a change in perceptions of the credibility of international news media.

In the past two decades, the advent of the Internet and subsequent converged media have led to more research regarding media consumption patterns and medium credibility. Studies have noted that both traditional and new media are similar in the ways they function to affect credibility perceptions (Sundar, 1998, 1999). Payne, Dozier, and Nomai (2001) found that online formats were less believable than print formats regardless the types of news topics. Mashek, McGill, and Powell (1997) found traditional media to be perceived as fairer in political campaign coverage than are their online counterparts. Some scholars (Finberg, Stone, & Lynch, 2002; Kaye & Johnson; 2002) explain that different perceptions of online news credibility compared to their traditional counterparts is a result of people tending to perceive that online content lacks an editorial gatekeeping process, and thus is vulnerable to errors. However, one line of credibility research strongly indicates that medium credibility hinges on users' characteristics and motives. Johnson and Kaye (1998) found that Internet users rated online media as more credible than traditional media, and, in their other study (2004), Internet users rated CNN.com as more credible than CNN-TV.

## Audience-Based Variables and Media Credibility

Research from an audience-based perspective has identified various demographic factors—age, gender, ethnicity, and religiosity—as significant predictors of media credibility perceptions. Indeed, Gunther (1992) has attributed audience credibility perceptions more to individual characteristics than to source characteristics. Our study follows the approach of assessing individual factors influencing media credibility perceptions and specifically considered the ethnopolitical and ethnolinguistic complexity of Pakistan (Barraclough, 2001) and its impacts on Pakistani perceptions of media credibility.

### *Ethnicity*

Pakistan's ethnic makeup largely follows linguistic lines, and various groups use language as a primary marker of ethnic identity (Rahman, 2003). The 1998 census (the most recent official census) placed Punjabi at 44% of the population, followed by Pashtun at 15%, Sindhi at 14%, Saraiki at 10%, Urdu at 7.5%, and Balochi at 3.5% (Pakistan bureau of statistics, 1998). The importance of ethnicity in the Pakistani media landscape stems from the complex and conflicting geopolitics and ethnonationalism of

Pakistan (Fiaz, 2009; Haleem, 2003; Wright, 1991). Punjabis are the elite ruling class in Pakistani society, holding influential positions in the government, civil service, and military. Their language skills include English and Urdu as well as the local Punjabi language. The Punjabi ruling elite support the use of Urdu over the Punjabi language to foster successful social integration and solidify the federation (Rahman, 1995).

On the other hand, other ethnic minorities resent the use of Urdu as the official language (Rahman, 2003; Wright, 1991). The Sindhi, the most influential political rivals of the Punjabi, strive to make their own language an official language along with Urdu (Rahman, 2003). In contrast to the Punjabi province, the successful integration of Muhajir with the natives of the Sindhi area was not possible, and the Sindhi province remains in political strain between the Sindhi and the Muhajir (Gregory & Revill, 2008; Haleem, 2003). In this context, it is notable that the Muhajir group—the initial economic elites in Pakistan who came as Indian Muslim immigrants—follows a linguistic pattern similar to that of the Punjabi, using Urdu and English as well.

Pashtuns live mainly in the North West Frontier Province, the base for Taliban militants (Kemp, 2008). Taliban influence mainly runs between the North West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Area. Also, Pashtuns have strong relations with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and the military (Haleem, 2003; Kemp, 2008), which a BBC documentary later implied was the basis of a relationship between Inter-Services Intelligence and the Taliban.

Baloch is the major ethnic group in Baluchistan, the largest and least populated province in Pakistan (Fiaz, 2009). Although Baluchistan is rich in natural resources—especially natural gas—most Balochi remain poor. Non-Baloch—that is, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashtuns—tend to hold elite positions in political and economic sectors (Fiaz, 2009; Gregory & Revill, 2008; Haleem, 2003), and the Baloch community often agitates for regional autonomy (Fiaz, 2009).

The Saraiki are a linguistic group of diverse ethnicities who migrated from southeastern Pakistan to central Pakistan. They declined to integrate with the Punjabi or Sindhi, striving instead to maintain the collective identity of Saraiki speakers. Saraiki society also underwent a political movement for regional autonomy led by ethnonationalist leaders (Inayatullah, 1988; Mughal, 2013).

Ethnic differences in Pakistani society might indicate a power differential based on political stances regarding federalism and ethnolinguistic group identification. Accordingly, it is of particular interest to examine how ethnicity affects assessments of media credibility in this unique context. Previous studies have not adequately addressed ethnicity and media credibility outside of Western constructs, so we ask one research question regarding ethnicity's role in media credibility evaluations:

*RQ1: How is ethnicity related to assessments of the media credibility of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet?*

### *Age*

Age often indicates the types of new and social media environments a user has experienced and that might shape his or her behavior and attitudes toward a certain medium. Research has indicated that younger generations perceive mass media as more credible than do older generations (Bucy, 2003; Reagan & Zenaty, 1979; Robinson & Kohut, 1988). Yet, often, credibility ratings for traditionally delivered versions of mainstream media actually have declined among the young. In a study by Johnson and Kaye (2010), age was negatively related to the credibility assessment of several online media types. Since past research findings indicate consistency in the relationship between age and media credibility assessment, we assume that different age groups in Pakistan will be related to different types of media credibility assessments; thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*H1: Age is negatively associated with assessments of the media credibility of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet.*

### *Gender*

Scholars also have identified gender as a key determinant of media credibility. Research points to a pattern in which men find the media in general less credible than do women (Choi, Watt, & Lynch, 2006; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Robinson & Kohut, 1998). Eveland and Shah's (2003) study supported this finding as men perceived media to be less credible than did women due to an appearance of bias. Johnson and Kaye (2010) also found that women rated political candidates' online campaign literature as more credible than did men. Gender differences in media credibility in more traditionally patriarchal societies may be explained by the fact that media production is seen as a space dominated by men, and women may perceive themselves to not be a part of the demographic mainstream (Johnson & Kaye, 2004).

Although we have consistent findings of women showing a higher level of perceived media credibility, we can hardly presume this might be the case in Pakistan—a traditionally patriarchal society where women, at times, suffer severe gender discrimination (Salman, 2010). Therefore, we conjecture that adverse treatment of women in Pakistani society relates to Pakistani women's media routines and perceptions of media credibility. Based on the historic role of mass communication outlets in Pakistan as protectors of the status quo, which often disfavors women, one may infer a negative association between gender and perceived media credibility assessments in Pakistan for women. As such, we propose the following hypothesis**:**

*H2: Women will be negatively associated with assessments of the media credibility of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet.*

### *Religiosity*

Religion and religiosity also have been found to be complex and multidirectional predictors of media credibility assessments. Among most Arabs, religion influences a wide range of personal views, including media credibility (Mackay & Lowrey, 2011) Golan and Day's (2010) data analysis revealed that

religiosity positively related to the evaluation of religious online communities and the factuality of Internet news. Even across cultures, religiosity is a predictor of media credibility. Golan and Kiousis (2010) examined the relationship between religiosity and media credibility among young Arabs and found that religiosity positively related to assessments of media credibility for both traditional and satellite television. As such, we ask the following research question regarding the Pakistani population**:**

*RQ2: How is religiosity related to media credibility assessments of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet?*

## Media Reliance and Media Credibility

Past research has revealed that media reliance is a significant predictor of media credibility (Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Johnson & Fahmy, 2009; Johnson & Kaye, 2000, 2010). Media reliance refers to how often people select and use media (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985; Greenberg, 1966; Wanta & Hu, 1994; Westley & Severin, 1964). Despite some inconsistencies in this research tradition, media reliance showed an influence on media credibility because more media use is likely to result in more familiarity with media (Greer, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 1998, 2000). Recent studies focused on the Middle East support this assumption; Johnson and Fahmy (2009) found that Al Jazeera viewers evaluated Al Jazeera as most credible, followed by CNN and BBC, with local media as having the lowest credibility among the channels examined. Especially in the Pakistani media landscape, media reliance is significantly varied according to the level of access to the media technology infrastructure—an access based on education, income, and urbanization. Therefore, media reliance might be a key indicator in determining people's media routines; furthermore, credibility perceptions might be affected by media reliance, which may be a product of available media. Based on these preliminary findings and previous research results, we assume that media reliance affects media credibility perceptions, thus formulating the following hypotheses:

*H3: Reliance on (a) aerial television and (b) cable/satellite television is positively associated with domestic television credibility.*

*H4: Reliance on cable/satellite television is positively associated with international television credibility.*

*H5: Reliance on (a) daily newspapers, (b) magazines, and (c) radio is positively associated with traditional media credibility.*

*H6: Reliance on the Internet is positively associated with Internet credibility.*

## Method

Secondary data were used to examine the research questions and hypotheses proposed. Data from a nationally representative survey in Pakistan with the intent to discern media usage and consumption patterns among the Pakistani population was conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Public

Opinion (www.pipo.com.pk/). The data were collected from fall 2009 to spring 2010. Translation and execution of the survey was conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion. The survey was conducted following the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice. The sampling frame was based on available population statistics.[3] Using a multistage stratified sampling method, more than 80 primary sampling units, comprising villages and urban circles in four provinces, were utilized. A national multistage stratified sample of face-to-face interviews with males and females over age 15 was conducted, with 65% of interviews conducted in Urdu (the Punjabi language). The survey had a sampling error of +/−3% at the 95% confidence level for the sample of 1,108 respondents.

### *Measures*

Independent variables: To test our research questions and hypotheses, we used five independent variables: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) religiosity, (d) ethnicity, and (e) media reliance. Because previous research suggests that gender and age influence the perception of media credibility, we examined gender and age as two control variables (Newhagen & Nass, 1989). Of the respondents ($N$ = 1,108), 598 (54%) were men, and 462 (46%) were women. The mean age was 31.14 ($SD$ = 11.00).

Religiosity was a summative index of the following two items on a four-point scale: (a) "How much guidance does religion provide you within your day-to-day life—a great deal of guidance, quite a bit of guidance, some guidance, or no guidance?" (b) "How important is religion in your life—very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?" The mean value of religiosity (a) was 3.22 ($SD$ = 0.97), and the mean value of religiosity (b) was 3.45 ($SD$ = 0.85). The summative index mean of religiosity was 6.66 ($SD$ = 1.66) with a maximum value of 8, suggesting that religion is very important to most respondents. The reliability of the religiosity index was 0.79 in Cronbach's α.

Ethnicity was measured as a nominal variable identifying whether a participant is Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir, or Saraiki. Respondents closely resemble the ethnic breakdown of the 1998 Pakistani census—Punjabi: 445(41.1%), Pashtun: 197 (17.8%), Muhajir: 155 (14.2%), Sindhi: 115 (10.4%), Saraiki: 97 (8.8%), Baloch: 50 (4.5%). Thus, six ethnicity types make up 96.7% of respondents.

A media reliance index consisted of six variables measuring reliance on news information from aerial television, cable/satellite television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the Internet. Reliance on each medium was measured by an item on a six-point scale ranging from 0 for *none* to 5 for *a lot* (i.e., "Please tell me how much you rely on each of the following media outlets as a source of news information"). The mean of aerial television reliance was $M$ = 3.02 ($SD$ = 1.96), cable/satellite television reliance was $M$ = 2.70 ($SD$ = 2.09), newspaper reliance was $M$ = 1.71 ($SD$ = 1.68), magazine reliance was $M$ = 1.04 ($SD$ = 1.36), radio reliance $M$ = 1.45 ($SD$ = 1.63), and Internet reliance was $M$ = 1.62 ($SD$ = 2.04), with a maximum value of 5, respectively.

[3] The Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) was included in the Federally Administered Tribal Area in the 1998 census), yet treated separately from the Pakistan population in the 1998 census.

Dependent variables: Four dependent variables were used to represent media credibility: domestic television credibility, international television credibility, traditional media credibility, and Internet credibility. Domestic television, international television, and Internet credibility were measured by one item, and traditional media credibility was a summative index of three items including radio, newspaper, and magazine credibility, on a four-point scale (i.e., "Please tell me how credible you find each news source: always, mostly, only sometimes, or never credible") with the maximum value 4 coded as *always credible*.

Media types in the media reliance measurement were classified based upon the type of media technology such as aerial television and cable/satellite television, and media types in the media credibility measurement were classified according to the characteristics of each medium in the Pakistani context.

The mean of domestic television media credibility was *M* = 3.52 with maximum value of 4 (*SD* = 0.79). The mean of international television media credibility was 2.70 with maximum value of 4 (*SD* = 1.05). This study yielded a category of traditional media consisting of newspapers, magazines, and radio. Data yielded an acceptable Cronbach's α of 0.72 with exploratory factor analysis (64.6% variance explained with one component extracted). The mean of traditional media credibility was 2.15 with a maximum value of 4 (*SD* = 0.77). The mean of the Internet credibility was 2.88 with a maximum value of 4 (*SD* = 1.20) (see Table 1).

***Table 1. One-Way Analysis of Variance in Ethnicity on Media Credibility.***

| | *N* | *M* | *SD* | *df* | *f* | *Significance level* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Domestic TV (any types) | | | | 7 | 10.45 | .000 |
| Punjabi | 442 | 3.58 | 0.69 | | | |
| Sindhi | 109 | 3.23 | 0.70 | | | |
| Pashtun | 197 | 3.75 | 0.53 | | | |
| Baloch | 49 | 3.37 | 0.81 | | | |
| Muhajir | 155 | 3.48 | 0.68 | | | |
| Saraiki | 96 | 3.19 | 0.77 | | | |
| Others | 37 | | | | | |
| Total | 1,085 | 3.52 | .70 | | | |
| International TV | | | | 7 | 13.19 | .000 |
| Punjabi | 333 | 1.77 | 0.96 | | | |
| Sindhi | 63 | 2.48 | 0.80 | | | |
| Pashtun | 174 | 2.02 | 1.09 | | | |
| Baloch | 49 | 2.37 | 0.83 | | | |
| Muhajir | 140 | 2.45 | 1.15 | | | |
| Saraiki | 75 | 2.45 | 0.98 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Others | 33 | 1.67 | .81 | | | |
| Total | 867 | 2.07 | 1.05 | | | |
| Traditional media | | | | 7 | 13.71 | .000 |
| Punjabi | 319 | 1.90 | 0.81 | | | |
| Sindhi | 60 | 2.43 | 0.48 | | | |
| Pashtun | 174 | 2.27 | 0.73 | | | |
| Baloch | 49 | 2.72 | 0.57 | | | |
| Muhajir | 101 | 2.28 | 0.75 | | | |
| Saraiki | 57 | 2.36 | 0.54 | | | |
| Others | 31 | 1.97 | 0.64 | | | |
| Total | 791 | 2.15 | 0.77 | | | |
| Internet | | | | 7 | 3.46 | .001 |
| Punjabi | 335 | 2.12 | 1.23 | | | |
| Sindhi | 34 | 2.29 | 1.00 | | | |
| Pashtun | 180 | 2.21 | 1.26 | | | |
| Baloch | 37 | 2.51 | 0.93 | | | |
| Muhajir | 121 | 2.47 | 1.16 | | | |
| Saraiki | 59 | 2.47 | 1.04 | | | |
| Others | 33 | 2.97 | 1.12 | | | |
| Total | 799 | 2.28 | 1.20 | | | |

## Results

### *Descriptive Analysis*

First, media credibility perceptions were assessed among survey respondents. Among four types of media credibility, domestic television credibility ($M$ = 3.52, $SD$ = 0.70) was highest, whereas international television credibility ($M$ = 2.07, $SD$ = 1.05) was lowest. Also, a one-way between-subjects analysis of variance revealed that the media credibility assessment was significantly different according to ethnic difference for all four types of media credibility assessment (see Table 1). Pashtun ($M$ = 3.75, $SD$ = 0.53) and Punjabi ($M$ = 3.58, $SD$ = 0.69) showed a higher level of domestic television credibility assessment than the mean score ($M$ = 3.52, $SD$ = 0.70); in contrast, Sindhi ($M$ = 2.48, $SD$ = 0.53), Muhajir ($M$ = 2.45, $SD$ = 1.15), and Saraiki ($M$ = 2.45, $SD$ = 0.98) showed a higher international television credibility assessment than the mean score ($M$ = 2.07, $SD$ = 1.05). Traditional media credibility was assessed highly by Baloch ($M$ = 2.72, $SD$ = 0.57), Sindhi ($M$ = 2.43, $SD$ = 0.48), and Saraiki ($M$ = 2.36, $SD$ = 0.54). Also, Baloch ($M$ = 2.51, $SD$ = 0.93), Muhajir ($M$ = 2.47, $SD$ = 0.98), and Saraiki ($M$ = 2.47, $SD$ = 1.04) tended to assess Internet credibility more highly than did other ethnicities.

As traditional media are viewed as more credible with marginalized groups, we combined newspapers, radio, and news magazines into a traditional media category and conducted a post hoc analysis with an analysis of variance to determine whether certain traditional media are perceived as more credible. The analysis demonstrated that the Baloch group assessed magazine credibility highly, and the pairwise *t* test showed a statistically significant difference from all the other groups ($p \leq .001$). For newspaper and radio credibility, Baloch, Sindhi, and Saraiki groups demonstrated a high assessment of credibility, while Punjabi, Pashtun, and Muhajir showed a statistically lower assessment of credibility.

### *Regression Analysis*

With each credibility type—domestic television, international television, traditional media (a combined index of newspaper, radio, and magazine based on media characteristics in Pakistan and factor analysis), and the Internet—four hierarchical regressions were performed using each medium as the dependent variable for each regression analysis. Each regression analysis used the same independent variables: age and gender (first block), religiosity (second block), ethnicity (third block), and media reliance (fourth block).

### *Effect of Age and Gender*

*H1: Age is negatively associated with assessments of the media credibility of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet.*

With all other independent variables controlled, age ($B = -.005$, $\beta = -.085$, $SE = 0.00$, $p < .05$) was found to be negatively associated with domestic television credibility (see Table 2). Therefore, H1a was supported. Also, age ($B = -.006$, $\beta = -.064$, $SE = .003$, $p < .05$) was found to be negatively associated with international television credibility (see Table 2). Therefore, H1b was supported (see Table 3).

*H2: Women are negatively associated with assessments of the media credibility of (a) domestic television, (b) international television, (c) traditional media, and (d) the Internet.*

The effect of gender significantly predicts the negative credibility assessment of domestic television ($B = -.005$, $\beta = -.085$, $SE = .002$, $p < .05$) and international television ($B = -.169$, $\beta = -.080$, $SE = .071$*, $p < .05$) and Internet credibility ($B = -.132$, $\beta = -.054$, $SE = .054$, $p < .05$) when all other independent variables are controlled. Thus H2a, H2b, and H2d were supported.

### *Effect of Ethnicity*

The Punjabi group has no association with media credibility. The Sindhi group was found to be significantly associated with positive perceptions of international television credibility ($B = .903$, $\beta = .186$, $SE = .224$, $p < .001$). The Pashtun group was found to positively assess international television credibility ($B = .514$, $\beta = .206$, $SE = .178$, $p < .05$). The Baloch group was found to be significantly related to international media credibility ($B = .429$, $\beta = .087$, $SE = .228$, $p < .05$). Muhajir respondents displayed

significantly higher levels of credibility assessment for international television (*B* = .587, β =.200, *SE* = .187, *p* < .05). The Saraiki group highly assessed the credibility of international television (*B* = .792, β = .186, *SE* = .208, *p* < .001), traditional media (*B* = .983, β = .101, *SE* = .388, *p* < .001), and the Internet (*B* = .507, β = .101, *SE* = .163, *p* < .05).

### *Effect of Religiosity*

Religiosity demonstrated a significant association with international television credibility (*B* = .042, β = .066, *SE* = .020, *p* < .05). However, religiosity showed significant relationships with some types of media credibility only when media reliance was excluded as an independent factor. Religiosity tended to increase the traditional media credibility assessment (*B* = .178, β = .125, *SE* = .053, *p* < .001) in equation 3.

### *Effect of Media Reliance*

*H3: Reliance on (a) aerial television and (b) cable/satellite television is positively associated with domestic television credibility.*

Controlling for demographics, all types of media reliance explained 7.7% of variables in the domestic television credibility assessment. Aerial television reliance was a significant predictor of positive assessment of domestic television credibility (*B* = .095, β = .280, *SE* = .013, *p* < .001), as was cable/satellite television reliance (*B* = .045, β = .140, *SE* = .012, *p* < .001). Thus, both H3a and H3b were supported.

*H4: Reliance on cable/satellite television is positively associated with international television credibility.*

About 20.4% of the variance in international television credibility was increased by all types of media reliance variables. Cable/satellite television reliance predicted positive international television credibility assessment (*B* = .033, β = .066, *SE* = .020, *p* < .001). Therefore, H4 was supported. Of note is that the more people rely on aerial television through which a government-run domestic TV channel is transmitted, the less credibility they give to international television (*B* = –.113, β = .206, *SE* = .020, *p* < .001).

*H5: Reliance on (a) daily newspapers, (b) magazines, and (c) radio is positively associated with traditional media credibility.*

A total of 43.4% of variance in the traditional media credibility assessment was explained by all types of media reliance. Reliance on all three types of traditional media—newspaper (*B* = .505, β = .356, *SE* = .052, *p* < .001), magazine (*B* = .519, β = .293, *SE* = .062, *p* < .001) and radio (*B* = .348, β = .232, *SE* = .048, *p* < .001)—was significantly related to traditional media credibility. Therefore, H5a, H5b, and H5c were all supported.

*H6: Reliance on the Internet is positively associated with Internet credibility.*

All six types of media reliance significantly explain 55.6% of variance in the Internet credibility assessment. Internet reliance was a significant predictor of the positive assessment of Internet credibility ($B$ = .479, β = .827, $SE$ = .014, $p$ < .001). Therefore, H6 was supported.

***Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares–Based Hierarchical Regression: Domestic TV Credibility.***

| | | Equation 1 | | | Equation 2 | | | Equation 3 | | | Equation 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* |
| Block 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Constant | 3.869 | | .009 | 3.997 | | .130 | | 3.997 | .174 | 3.330 | | .191 |
| | Age | −.007 | −.107 | .002** | −.007 | −.107 | .002** | −.007 | −.116 | .002** | −.005 | −.085 | .002* |
| | Gender | −.061 | −.045 | .046 | −.060 | −.044 | .046 | −.048 | −.035 | .045 | −.032 | −.023 | .047 |
| Block 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Religiosity | | | | −.003 | −.007 | .014 | −.016 | −.039 | .014 | −.003 | −.008 | .014 |
| Block 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Punjabi | | | | | | | −.001 | −.001 | .121 | .073 | .053 | .119 |
| | Sindhi | | | | | | | −.326 | −.124 | .143* | −.180 | −.069 | .142 |
| | Pashtun | | | | | | | .171 | .104 | .126 | .206 | .124 | .124 |
| | Baloch | | | | | | | −.161 | −.046 | .163 | −.066 | −.019 | .163 |
| | Muhajir | | | | | | | −.066 | −.033 | .131 | .113 | .058 | .130 |
| | Saraiki | | | | | | | −.245 | −.094 | .143 | −.091 | −.035 | .140 |
| Block 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reliance on aerial TV | | | | | | | | | | .095 | .280 | .013** |
| | Reliance on cable/satellite TV | | | | | | | | | | .045 | .140 | .012** |
| | Reliance on daily newspapers | | | | | | | | | | −.013 | −.033 | .018 |
| | Reliance on magazines | | | | | | | | | | .008 | .015 | .023 |
| | Reliance on radio | | | | | | | | | | −.036 | −.083 | .018* |
| | Reliance on the Internet | | | | | | | | | | .041 | .123 | .013** |

*Note.* More credibility judgment coded high, $N$ = 1,108. Equation 1: $R^2$ = 1.3%. Equation 2: $R^2$ = 1.3%. Equation 3: $R^2$ = 5.4%. Equation 4: $R^2$ = 13.1%.

*$p$ < .05. ***$p$ < .001.

***Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares–Based Hierarchical Regression: International TV Credibility.***

| | | Equation 1 | | | Equation 2 | | | Equation 3 | | | Equation 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* |
| Block 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Constant | 2.934 | | .168 | 3.997 | | .130 | 3.997 | | .174 | 3.330 | | .191 |
| | Age | −.015 | −.153 | .004** | −.016 | −.163 | .004** | −.015 | −.148 | .003** | −.006 | −.064 | .003* |
| | Gender | −.326 | −.153 | .078** | −.343 | −.161 | .078** | −.308 | −.145 | .075** | −.169 | −.080 | .071* |
| Block 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Religiosity | | | | .056 | .087 | .024* | .071 | .112 | .023* | .042 | .066 | .020* |
| Block 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Punjabi | | | | | | | .273 | .126 | .191 | .345 | .160 | .170 |
| | Sindhi | | | | | | | 1.228 | .252 | .246** | .903 | .186 | .224** |
| | Pashtun | | | | | | | .548 | .220 | .197* | .514 | .206 | .178* |
| | Baloch | | | | | | | .878 | .178 | .249** | .429 | .087 | .228* |
| | Muhajir | | | | | | | .972 | .331 | .204** | .587 | .200 | .187* |
| | Saraiki | | | | | | | .762 | .179 | .232** | .792 | .186 | .208** |
| Block 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reliance on aerial TV | | | | | | | | | | −.113 | −.206 | .020** |
| | Reliance on cable/satellite TV | | | | | | | | | | .033 | .066 | .019* |
| | Reliance on daily newspapers | | | | | | | | | | .115 | .183 | .027** |
| | Reliance on magazines | | | | | | | | | | .104 | .131 | .034* |
| | Reliance on radio | | | | | | | | | | .074 | .110 | .026* |
| | Reliance on the Internet | | | | | | | | | | .064 | .125 | .019** |

*Note.* More credibility judgment coded high, $N$ = 1,108. Equation 1: $R^2$ = 4.4%. Equation 2: $R^2$ = 5.1%. Equation 3: $R^2$ = 14.1%. Equation 4: $R^2$ = 34.5%.

*$p$ < .05. ***$p$ < .001.

***Table 4. Ordinary Least Squares-Based Hierarchical Regression: Traditional Media Credibility.***

| | | Equation 1 | | | Equation 2 | | | Equation 3 | | | Equation 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* |
| Block 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Constant | 7.940 | | .398 | 7.151 | | .506 | 5.628 | | .635 | 5.323 | | .515 |
| | Age | -.027 | -.120 | .009 | -.029 | -.129 | .009** | -.027 | -.118 | .008** | -.009 | -.040 | .006 |
| | Gender | -.507 | -.107 | .182 | -.567 | -.119 | .183* | -.374 | -.079 | .176* | -.080 | -.017 | .132 |
| Block 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Religiosity | | | | .137 | .096 | .055* | .178 | .125 | .053** | .029 | .020 | .038 |
| Block 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Punjabi | | | | | | | .136 | .028 | .434 | -.261 | -.054 | .312 |
| | Sindhi | | | | | | | 2.163 | .175 | .601** | -.052 | -.004 | .447 |
| | Pashtun | | | | | | | 1.269 | .231 | .448* | .310 | .056 | .325 |
| | Baloch | | | | | | | 3.038 | .283 | .562** | .697 | .065 | .416 |
| | Muhajir | | | | | | | 1.391 | .197 | .477* | -.030 | -.004 | .352 |
| | Saraiki | | | | | | | 1.395 | .143 | .535* | .983 | .101 | .388* |
| Block 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reliance on aerial TV | | | | | | | | | | -.182 | -.145 | .037** |
| | Reliance on cable/satellite TV | | | | | | | | | | -.059 | -.052 | .036 |
| | Reliance on daily newspapers | | | | | | | | | | .505 | .356 | .052** |
| | Reliance on magazines | | | | | | | | | | .519 | .293 | .062** |
| | Reliance on radio | | | | | | | | | | .348 | .232 | .048** |
| | Reliance on the Internet | | | | | | | | | | -.027 | -.023 | .035 |

*Note.* More credibility judgment coded high, $N$ = 1,108. Equation 1: $R^2$ = 2.4%. Equation 2: $R^2$ = 3.4%. Equation 3: $R^2$ = 14.7%. Equation 4: $R^2$ = 58.1%.

*$p$ < .05. ***$p$ < .001.

***Table 5. Ordinary Least Squares–Based Hierarchical Regression: Internet Credibility.***

| | | Equation 1 | | | Equation 2 | | | Equation 3 | | | Equation 4 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* | *B* | β | *SE* |
| Block 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Constant | 4.067 | .184 | 4.016 | | .236 | | 3.997 | .174 | 3.330 | | .191 | 4.067 |
| | Age | -.035 | .004** | -.035 | -.303 | .004** | -.034 | -.289 | .004** | -.004 | -.035 | .003 | -.035 |
| | Gender | -.512 | .085** | -.516 | -.213 | .086** | -.511 | -.211 | .086** | -.132 | -.054 | .054* | -.512 |
| Block 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Religiosity | | | | .009 | .012 | .026 | .008 | .011 | .026 | .014 | .019 | .016 |
| Block 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Punjabi | | | | | | | -.713 | -.291 | .216** | .016 | .007 | .131 |
| | Sindhi | | | | | | | -.726 | -.120 | .291* | -.138 | -.023 | .181 |
| | Pashtun | | | | | | | -.626 | -.224 | .223* | .061 | .022 | .136 |
| | Baloch | | | | | | | -.469 | -.083 | .284 | .216 | .038 | .177 |
| | Muhajir | | | | | | | -.437 | -.125 | .235 | -.100 | -.029 | .144 |
| | Saraiki | | | | | | | -.533 | -.110 | .268* | .507 | .101 | .163* |
| Block 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reliance on aerial TV | | | | | | | | | | -.033 | -.053 | .015* |
| | Reliance on cable/satellite TV | | | | | | | | | | -.001 | -.001 | .015 |
| | Reliance on daily newspapers | | | | | | | | | | .036 | .050 | .021 |
| | Reliance on magazines | | | | | | | | | | -.023 | -.025 | .026 |
| | Reliance on radio | | | | | | | | | | -.054 | -.071 | .020* |
| | Reliance on the Internet | | | | | | | | | | .479 | .827 | .014** |

*Note.* More credibility judgment coded high $N$ = 1,108. Equation 1: $R^2$ = 12.9%. Equation 2: $R^2$ = 12.9%. Equation 3: $R^2$ = 14.6%. Equation 4: $R^2$ = 70.2%.

*$p$ < .05. ***$p$ < .001.

## Discussion

Answering calls by previous scholars to broaden the investigation of media credibility beyond the United States and Asia (Golan & Kiousis, 2010; Kim & Johnson, 2009), this study advances research on media credibility by providing one of the first studies to examine audience assessments of different media platforms in the Muslim world, and South Asia in particular. Results of our analyses point to several significant associations of key demographic variables with media credibility. Significant effects of age tended to disappear when the media reliance variable was input into the regression model. This result indicates that different degrees of media reliance are affected by age and subsequently are related to media credibility perception. Therefore, the relationship between age and negative perceptions of media credibility echoes previous findings in which younger people tend to find news media more credible than do older people (Bucy, 2003; Reagan & Zenaty, 1979; Robinson & Kohut, 1988).

Women tended to assess international television and the Internet as less credible than did men. This finding is in clear contrast to a consistent pattern in previous research whereby men tended to find news media to be less credible across online and off-line platforms (Eveland & Shah, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Robinson & Kohut, 1998). One possible conjecture about the discrepant result in this study might stem from the gender gap in media representation and attendance in Muslim culture, where women are more restricted than men in social activities. In other words, Middle East societies that international media report on are inherently and socially constructed to pay less attention to women's issues in general. Therefore, such social movements are also not part of the international media agenda for those countries. In addition, limited media attention to women's issues such as rape and domestic violence might have deepened women's distrust of media overall. Although several attempts have been made to increase the visibility of women's rights issues in state-run television, they failed to generate substantial changes in women's rights and social status due to heavy resistance from extreme religious parties and conservative feudal lords (Barraclough, 2001).

Another key finding of our study is the identification of religiosity as a predictor of media credibility. Religiosity is a promising venue for media credibility research and is of particular relevance to cross-national research in such highly religious countries as Pakistan and other Islamic nations. When media reliance was controlled for, religiosity was linked to media credibility for international television and also traditional media. Our results align with previous research, which finds higher levels of religiosity related to assessments of new media credibility (Golan & Day, 2010; Golan & Kiousis, 2010; Mackay & Lowrey, 2011).

Our study also identified ethnicity as a predictor of medium credibility for all types of media in the Pakistani context, where ethnic composition is critical to national politics. Pakistani survey participants rated television as the most credible medium, followed respectively by the Internet, traditional media (consisting of newspapers, radio, and magazines), and international television. The Punjabi group assessed domestic television as more credible and tended to evaluate other media types as less credible, in contrast to evaluations by other ethnic groups. This finding is contrary to most credibility studies in

Arab and South Asian contexts in which local media is deemed less credible. One possible explanation, and something unique to Pakistan, is that the positive evaluation of domestic television credibility may stem from the perception that local television news provides relevant information about the country as a whole, in which the elite status of Punjabi ethnicity is inherently represented. Moreover, the result seems related to the fact that PTV, traditionally the most watched television channel in Pakistan, is governed by the Pakistani media elite, which is dominated by members of their own ethnic group. A high level of domestic television credibility assessment by the Pashtun can also be explained by the solid foothold of the Pashtun group in the political and bureaucratic sector in Pakistan.

On the other hand, the Sindhi group was positively associated with international television credibility perceptions. This result might be understood under the existing rivalry between the Punjabi and Sindhi groups over the political and cultural supremacy of Pakistani society. According to a 2008 BBC survey (cited in Murthy, 2010b), the Sindh province—the most economically advanced province—showed the highest availability of cable or satellite connections, where privately run television stations enjoy more popularity than does state run television. Such a high level of broadcasting infrastructure combined with resentment against the dominance of the majority Punjabi in the television industry might explain why a higher level of international television credibility perception exists among the Sindhi group.

In a similar vein, all other ethnicities tend to evaluate international television as more credible than do the Punjabi group. The multidirectional significance of ethnicity regarding medium credibility can be interpreted only in the context of the social and geopolitical standing of each ethnic group. All ethnic groups have been involved with political rivalry or separatism issues with the ruling Punjabi group; therefore, they tend to value media vehicles that are alternative to Punjabi-dominated domestic television. In some urbanized areas, the popularity of cable/satellite television has surpassed that of aerial television. Moreover, privately run television channels have been shifting the media landscape toward more openness in political public discourse in urban areas. Political parties in opposition to the majority or ruling party cannot gain media exposure on national television PTV; therefore, they try to take advantage of the wider reach and popularity of cable/satellite televisions to win more votes in elections (Barraclough, 2001). This pattern in media politics offers useful background knowledge on why there is a significant association between non-Punjabi ethnic groups and international television credibility assessments.

Ethnically based differences in the assessment of traditional media credibility in Pakistan can be understood in the same international television perceptions context. Marginalized Baloch and Saraiki groups were significantly associated with traditional media credibility, as a post hoc analysis in our analysis of variance found certain traditional media (radio, for instance) to be perceived as more credible. Therefore, it is suggested that traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and magazines can be alternative sources of information to those that are state-run, especially for underdeveloped rural populations who lack access to advanced new media technology.

When comparing media sources, domestic television media credibility was generally higher than international television media credibility. In fact, domestic television news was seen as the most credible in comparison to Internet credibility and the credibility of other forms of traditional news media (e.g., newspapers and magazines). One possible explanation for this is a general assumption that international

news media portray Pakistan negatively in their coverage, creating distrust of those news outlets. Such sentiment has been noted in previous studies (El-Nawawy, 2006), which found that an international news media outlet's credibility depends on perceptions about its home country. Another explanation may be that information presented by the domestic television news source is perceived as more relevant to Pakistani citizens than news from international television stations.

On the other hand, Internet credibility is better explained by media reliance than by ethnic traits. Internet credibility was not perceived uniquely according to ethnic difference, although the Saraiki group tended to show a higher level of credibility in their assessment of the Internet. Considering that most Internet media is presented in English (Michaelsen, 2011) and that rural populations have limited access to Internet technology, rural–urban and educational dichotomies are more significant factors than ethnic differences in determining the level of new media usage and related perceptions of its credibility. In this sense, the next key contribution of our study is consideration of the relationship between reliance and media credibility in international contexts. Previous scholarship points to a significant relationship between the two variables, but that research was conducted almost exclusively in the United States. Our findings indicate that media reliance is a key variable in explaining new media or even specialized/targeted media credibility, which might be affected by the degree of availability of a media technology infrastructure, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Pakistan. Therefore, media reliance—which signifies to what degree one uses and relies on a specific newspaper, radio station, or magazine—might be a key variable to explain media use.

When combined, our key findings add to a broader understanding of the potential of individual demographic impacts on assessments of media credibility. Johnson and Kaye (2004) argued that Internet diffusion has the potential to diminish the influence of audience-based demographic variables on assessments of both state and international media credibility. That potential may still be valid, but the results of our analysis suggest that audience-based demographics still may be a factor in understanding traditional media credibility and media reliance in international news media. In a culturally and economically varied and conflicted society such as Pakistan, audience-based variables could be significant predictors of both state-controlled and privately run media credibility.

## Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of our study should be considered. First, the use of secondary rather than primary data resulted in a limited construct of media credibility. Whereas previous scholarship utilized various multi-item scales to operationalize media credibility (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Kiousis, 2001), our dependent variable was measured through a single-item question regarding each media platform. Also, most recent credibility studies do not treat the Internet as a single unit, but examine elements of the Internet such as online news sites, blogs, and social media. Our study looks only at the Internet as a whole, regardless of the types of Internet media, perhaps a limitation in the study's value.

Finally, this survey omitted questions about both locally and privately owned media outlets in Pakistan. Both play important roles in that complex nation's media environment.

Future studies can build upon our research by investigating the contribution of other audience-based variables—for example, psychographics—to better understand the complex construct of media credibility perceptions across cross-national and cross-cultural perspectives. Also, we hope to collect primary data for future studies to construct more theoretically solid and operationally sensible media categories for credibility assessment, to best represent the media reality of developing countries perhaps similar to Pakistan.

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