



Use Of Constructive Approach In Talk Shows: A Case Of Post Corona Raised Social, Economic And Religious Issues In Pakistan

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Abstract

Constructive approach in journalism emphasizes upon reporting of facts to provide solution oriented information. The use of constructive approach in the coverage of post corona social, economic and religious issues on Television talk shows was expected to inculcate positive thoughts among its viewers to overcome the feeling of fear and uncertainty. This study through content analysis, intends to check the use of constructive approach in television talk shows during the coverage of corona related social, economic and religious issues. For this purpose 114 programs of 5 popular TV talk shows on aired during lockdown period have been selected. Further, through purposive sampling, 33 programs with topic of social, economic and religious issues in the wake of Corona outbreak were scrutinized. These programs were analyzed against constructive coverage index. The dimensions of index include introduction of the show, relevance of the invited guests, presence of different perspectives in discussion, role of anchor person and concluding part of the talk show. The findings reveal that certain ingredients of constructive journalism were missing in talk shows.

Keyword: *Constructive approach, Talk Shows, Corona outbreak*

Introduction

Journalism has the power to transform the beliefs, principles, values, and attitudes of the society. It is the source of freedom of expression and embraces accountability of those who use their authorities. It promotes democracy in the nation by providing a channel between citizen and authorities in power. Unfortunately, this freedom of expression and principles of journalism have

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been misunderstood, as a result negative news reporting overflow the media. Consequently, a distorted image of real world using falsified information portray by the media (Grijalva, 2018). According to experts a sole emphasis on crises and problems in the society by the mainstream news contributes to negativity in audiences, which leads to disappointment and detachment towards public matters (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018).

In the past decades, a lot of efforts have come out to improve the role and responsibility of journalism. In the early 1990s, Public journalism emerged to reinforce the link between journalism and democracy and to encourage the audiences' involvement in civic matters. In the late 1990s, the idea of successful solutions to specific societal issues emerged with solution journalism. After 2000 a similar concept was introduced named citizen journalism (or grass root media) by encouraging community members to involve in journalistic activities (Grijalva, 2018).

In 2001, a renowned journalist name Ulrik Haagerup introduced a key term named Constructive news in response to distorted and negative news. The objective of this term was to elaborate the issues by applying journalism principles with constructive perspective along with its solution. He defines the constructive news as "a mind-set to supplement the traditional criteria" to provide solutions of a problem with positivity, perspective, actions, inspirations, and education. In current literature, constructive journalism defined as a reporting that allows audience to present truth persuasively as a whole to find a

solution, keeping core functions, rigor, and ethics of journalism in mind (Grijalva, 2018).

It is also referred as an umbrella, which covers traditional news practices as a supplement along with positive emotions, complete and balanced coverage of different issues with its solutions. Constructive journalism is based on the principles of positive psychology to produce and report valuable, precise, correct, and engaging news coverage along with core elements of journalism. The aim of constructive journalism is to provide solution of social issues and develop constructive emotions (i.e. progress, optimism, hope, and positivity) in the audience rather than developing a distrust in audience by focusing only on problems and conflicts of society, as it is the basic motive of traditional journalism (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018; Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019; Mast et al., 2019).

Solution oriented approaches discussed as a better approach in literature due to following reasons: it provides knowledge of the problem, develop positive attitude towards topic with solution and engage people with inspiration. In practice of fast journalism, future oriented approach does not go well as it shifts the focus from the problem and its solutions towards future's productive perspective of the problem (Hermans & Drok, 2018). However, it is reported that both solution and future oriented approaches plays vital role in engagement of people to increase their participation in the society, aiming on inclusiveness and variety in data sources and people's perspectives (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019).

A lot of studies have shown that constructive journalism plays an effective role to increase respondent's positive feeling and emotions about the news / topic and decrease the negative (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). It implies that constructive journalism can be very useful to keep people calm during a crisis or disaster like natural calamities, war and pandemics.

By the end of December 2019, Coronavirus outbreak started from the Wuhan city of China and shortly it spread in the entire country. The World Health Organization (WHO) called this virus as "severe acute respiratory tract coronavirus-2" and illness it caused as "COVID-19". Covid-19 considered as third outbreak of Coronavirus which spread all around the world and affected over 209 countries of Europe, Australia, America and Asia including Pakistan. After rapid increase in the rate of new cases globally WHO classified Covid-19 outbreak as pandemic and gave warnings to countries vulnerable of getting COVID-19 (Saqlain et al., 2020; Waris et al., 2020).

In Pakistan, Coronavirus outbreak starts spreading by the end of February 2020. (Saqlain et al., 2020). The government of Pakistan took all the possible actions to control the spread of virus and to protect the citizens, after declaring epidemic in the country. First, a screening system of every passenger who had moved directly or indirectly from china and other affected country was setup by the coordination between federal government and civil aviation authority (Saqlain et al., 2020). Educational institutes and all other non-essential offices and services were closed by the order of government from 13 March, 2020. After closed monitoring of all the circumstances and increase in number of

positive cases, government decided to lockdown the country (Zia, 2020).

The measures taken to control the virus brought many other problems and conflicts in Pakistan. The complete nationwide lockdown that remained more than a month damaged the country's economy and people were victim of financial crisis. The daily wagers were left struggling with hunger during lockdown (Hashim, 2020). Secondly people in Pakistan attached many myths and misunderstanding with this disease and a resistance was found in following SoPs of COVID-19. People have been suffering from fear, feeling of being isolated and mental stress due to negative information available in bulk. Along with it, the restrictions implemented by government in performing religious obligations also generated an unrest and conflicting situation in the country (Javed, Sarwer, Soto, & Mashwani, 2020).

With the entertainment section of the media ongoing without any disruption, there is a general consensus that in this period of anxiety, entertainment is needed but what about the productive role of media to inform people about mental wellness during the COVID-19 pandemic (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). Media campaigns in Pakistan need to address the mental health of the public and there is a great need for special transmissions with health professionals and experts to provide advice and instructions for the public to cope with the current situation (Ali & Gatiti, 2020).

The media can "be an efficient resource for transmitting useful information about health to a large public," said Carole Simpson of ABC News and board member of the International

Women's Media Foundation at the International Conference "Reporting on Women's Healthcare" held in June 1999 in Constanta, Romania. The media are one of the powerful driving forces of modern society. They are not just a source of information for the general public, but also a potential vehicle for educating the public, a vital service especially when it comes to health issues (Bucur, 2000).

Pakistan's electronic media and famous talk shows are covering the news about COVID-19. News disseminate more talks about death and disappointments than about life and hope as it seems that there is a jungle of deaths and more and more deaths are coming soon. Instead of providing encouragement, the media is spreading fear and stress. Current televised transmissions have led the general public to believe the COVID-19 pandemic and the mental health issues are not hot issues for Pakistani media. They can organize campaigns for every festival but not for a pandemic that has the potential to affect almost one-third part of the world population (Bhutta et al., 2020).

The current situation demands that they should play a positive role in this critical condition for the well-being of the general public. Psychologists, psychiatrists and healthcare professionals should be invited in the programs to guide the people about the COVID-19 with the aim to console and advise the general public on how to avoid stress so that they can cope with this deadly condition without affecting their mental health. Special televised campaigns aimed to boost the morale of the public should be given air time (Bhatia, 2018).

McIntyre, Sobel, 2017; Rotmeijer, 2018; and Kovacevic, Perisin, 2018 found that constructive journalism can promote social and economic development, promoting social stability and unity. They said in the time of crisis audience engagement can be regain by using constructive approach. Constructive approach can improve health communication, audience engagement, socially responsible journalism, appropriate context to the stories and make people more news intelligent and less confused (Gyldensted, 2011).

The current paper is expected to further highlight the role of constructive journalism during the crisis period like COVID-19. The practice of constructive journalism has not been so much explored by academicians as well as by media gurus in Pakistan. This paper will help to identify the lacunas in the practice of constructive journalistic approach in television talk shows. The study is expected to bring a realization on the need to incorporate this approach in Pakistani media particularly in dealing with sensitive issues like Corona Pandemic.

Research Questions

RQ 1: Is TV talk shows' coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues constructive?

RQ 2: Was there any difference among the talk shows on the coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues?

RQ 3: Was there any difference among talk shows in the dimensions of constructive coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues?

RQ 4: Was there any difference among talk shows' use of constructive coverage approach on the basis of genre of issues?

Methodology

The study is a content analysis and aims to analyze the presence of constructive journalistic approach in Television talk shows during the coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issue. For this purpose talk shows of 5 leading Pakistan's News Channels were selected. The channels selected were, Geo, Ary News, Dunya News, Dawn News and Hum News. In this regard, the time frame selected is from 1st April, 2020 to 15 May 2020. The sampling technique applied is purposive sampling. Hence 33 programs with the topic of corona related social economic and religious issue telecasted during specified time frame were scrutinized for analysis.

Constructive approach in talk shows was studied through five indicators i.e. Direction of the introduction, Selection of guests in the context of issue or topic, presence of different perspectives during discussion, Role of anchor person as a moderator of the show, Concluding statement of the show. The categories used in the studies were derived from the work of Herman (2018) and Gyldensted (2015). All the five indicators were further assigned categories in the context of constructive journalistic approach (see annexure 1).

Constructive approach index was divided into three categories; highly constructive, moderately constructive and hardly constructive. A total of 15 score was given to Constructive approach index in five major categories (each category with three scores). A score of 3 was given to "Highly Positive: when the score

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was between 11 and 15, a score of 2 was given to moderately positive when score was between 6 and 10, and a score of 1 was given to less positive when the score was between 1 and 5.

Indicators of Constructive coverage in TV talk shows

Five dimensions of Constructive coverage index:

1. Direction of the introduction of talk show
2. Selection of guests in the context of issue or topic
3. Presence of different perspectives on the topic
4. Role of anchor person as a moderator of the show
5. Concluding statement of the show

Constructive coverage index is divided into three categories.

- Highly Constructive 3
- Moderately Constructive 2
- Hardly Constructive 1

Maximum score= 15

1. Selected Programs for Analysis
2. Capital Talk
3. On the Front
4. News Eye
5. Breaking Point with Malik

Results

The constructive coverage score; accumulative and dimension wise of all 33 programs was calculated and presented in tables. Findings are discussed one by one against each research question.

Table 1: *Frequencies of issue*

Talk Shows	Frequencies of issues			%
	Social	Economic	Religious	
Capital Talk	2	1	1	12 %
Off the record	2	2	1	15 %
On the Front	4	3	5	37 %
News Eye	2	3	3	24 %
Breaking Point with Malik	2	1	1	12 %

N= 33

Table 01 shows that among the total 33 programs on aired on the social, economic and religious issues raised post Corona outbreak, On the Front had 12 (37%), News eye 8(24%), Off the Record 5(15%), Breaking Point with Malik 4(12%), and Capital Talk broadcasted 4(12%) programs. As far as the nature of issues are concerned, the accumulative number shows that 12 programs on social issues, 10 on economic issues and 11 programs on religious issues were done. It is clearly visible from table that On the Front on aired maximum programs on all three genres.

RQ 1: Is TV talk shows' coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues constructive?

Table 2: *Constructive approach*

Constructive approach	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Constructive	19	58
Moderately Constructive	14	42
Hardly Constructive	0	0

N= 33

The findings in table 2 show that the coverage of Social, economic and religious issues raised post corona outbreak on popular Television talk shows was mostly constructive 19(58%). The results indicate that the constructive approach was moderately used by 14 (42%) talk shows. None of the program was hardly or not constructive towards the coverage of Corona related issues.

RQ 2: Was there any difference among the talk shows on the coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues?

Table 3

Constructive approach	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly Constructive	100%	75%	25%	50%	100%
Moderately Constructive	0%	25%	75%	50%	0%
Hardly Constructive	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The results in table 3 show that Capital Talk (100%) and Breaking Point with Malik (100%) were found to be highly constructive while covering the Post corona raised social economic and religious issues. The constructive coverage score of

the program Off the record indicate that 75% of its programs were highly constructive whereas News eye (50%) had half of its programs falling in the category of highly constructive. The talk show with least usage of Constructive approach in its programs was On the Front with more programs falling in the category of moderately constructive (75%). However, it is important to mention here that both Capital Talk and Breaking Point with Malik on aired lesser number of shows in comparison to remaining 3 talk shows.

RQ3: Was there any difference among talk shows in the dimensions of constructive coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues?

In order to see the difference among talk shows in the dimension of constructive coverage of post corona raised social, economic and religious issues, all the five indicators of constructive coverage were separately analyzed.

Introduction of Talk Show

Table 4

Constructive Coverage	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly rational	100%	80%	50%	88%	100%
Somewhat rational	0%	20%	50%	12%	0%
Hardly rational	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

The table 4 shows a comparative analysis of all 5 talk shows on the first indicator of constructive coverage i.e. Introduction of Talk Shows. The results indicate that the introduction of Capital Talk (100%) and Breaking Point with Malik (100%) were highly rational and focused with reference to issue under discussion. On

second place, News eye (88%) and then Off the Record (80%) had highly rational introduction in their programs on post corona raised social, economic and religious issues. On the Front (50%) scored minimum in presenting a highly rational beginning of the talk show.

Selection of Guests

Table 5:

Constructive Coverage	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly relevant	75%	60%	25%	50%	100%
Somewhat relevant	25%	40%	17%	12%	0%
Hardly relevant	0%	0%	58%	38%	0%

The table 5 shows a comparative analysis of all 5 talk shows on the second indicator of constructive coverage i.e. Selection of Guests. The results show that Breaking Point with Malik (100%) had called most relevant guests in his shows on Post Corona raised social, economic and religious issues, whereas Capital Talk had most relevant guests in 75% shows, Off the Record in 60% and News Eye in 50% shows had most relevant guests with reference to issue under discussion. On the Front scored minimum on constructive coverage score of this indicator with 58% programs having hardly relevant guests in its shows.

Presence of different Perspectives

Table 6:

Constructive Coverage	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly balanced	75%	60%	25%	38%	50%
Somewhat balanced	25%	40%	42%	12%	50%
Hardly balanced	0%	0%	33%	50%	0%

The table 6 shows a comparative analysis of all 5 talk shows on the third indicator of constructive coverage i.e. Presence of different perspectives. The findings suggest that Capital Talk had given maximum space to variant perspectives on opinions existing on an issue with 75% of its programs falling in highly balanced coverage. Then Off the Record had balanced views in 60% of its shows, Breaking Point with Malik had 50% and On the Front had 25% of programs with a balanced discussion on post Corona raised social, economic and religious issues in Pakistan. However, New Eye had a decreasing trend, with 50% of its shows with hardly balanced or one sided coverage of issues under discussion.

Role of Anchorperson

Table 7:

Constructive Coverage	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly unbiased	25%	100%	58%	100%	50%
Somewhat unbiased	50%	0%	33%	0%	0%
Hardly unbiased	25%	0%	9%	0%	50%

The table 7 shows a comparative analysis of all 5 talk shows on the fourth indicator of constructive coverage i.e. Role of

Anchorperson. The results indicate that the anchor persons of Off The Record and News Eye were highly unbiased in all their programs on post Corona raised social, economic and religious issues. The anchorpersons of On the Front in 58% shows and Breaking Point with Malik in 50% shows were highly unbiased and neutral, whereas the anchor person of Capital Talk was highly unbiased in 25% shows and was hardly unbiased or biased in 25% of its programs.

Concluding Part of the show

Table 8:

Constructive Coverage	Capital Talk	Off the record	On the Front	News Eye	Breaking point
Highly Solution oriented	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Somewhat solution oriented	50%	20%	0%	0%	75%
Hardly solution oriented	50%	80%	100%	100%	25%

The table 8 shows a comparative analysis of all 5 talk shows on the fifth indicator of constructive coverage i.e. Conclusion of the Show. The results indicate an almost absence of solution oriented approach in all 5 talk shows. None of the program had highly solution oriented approach with reference to concluding part of the show. Breaking Point with Malik had somewhat solution oriented approach in 75% of its shows on post Corona raised social, economic and religious issues. Capital Talk had somewhat solution oriented approach in 50% and Off the Record in 20% of its programs. Two talk shows; On the Front (100%) and News Eye (100%) had hardly solution oriented approach in all the programs related to the pandemic.

RQ 4: Was there any difference among talk shows' use of constructive coverage approach on the basis of issues?

Table 9:

Nature of Issue	Frequency	Accumulative Constructive Coverage Score	Percentages
Social	12	137	76%
Economic	10	117	78%
Religious	11	113	68%

Among the 33 programs, 12 were on social issues, 10 on economic and 11 on religious issues raised after the outbreak of Corona in Pakistan. The table 8 shows an accumulative constructive coverage score of all 33 programs segmented on the basis of nature of issue. The results indicate that programs on economic issues got maximum score on constructive coverage index with a percentage of (78%). The Constructive coverage score of social issues also fall in the category of Highly Constructive with a percentage of 76%, whereas the religious issues were covered in least constructive way with a percentage of 68% hence falling in the category of moderately Constructive.

Discussion & Conclusion

Constructive journalism is an effort to inculcate optimism and hope in media while mitigating its biasness. The use of constructive journalism approach in Television talk shows during the crisis period of COVID-19 can contribute a lot in overcoming the fear and feeling of being isolated during this phase. In Pakistan, multiple issues had been raised right after the corona

outbreak. Since people are restricted to their homes so they rely much more on media for information, guidance and for taking positive reinforcements for combating this deadly disease. Hence the use of Constructive journalism approach can decrease negative emotions and can add to the well-being of people (Fredrickson, 2001).

Among the five indicators of constructive coverage index, talk shows in Pakistan lack certain ingredients. The selection of guest is often not made on the basis of program topic instead political rivals are often called to produce a hot conflicting debate. In the absence of relevant guests, it is difficult to produce a balanced and rational discussion during a talk show. A study conducted on an Albanian talk show reveals that the experts and analysts invited in different talk shows are almost same and hence these shows are devoid of diversity of thought (Luku, 2013).

The use of constructive approach implies inclusiveness of opinion and perspectives. The focus is to bring in fore front each and every dimension of an issue. In this regard, the focus should not only be on negative elements and severity of situation instead positive effects of an issue must also be highlighted. Hence news should be comprehensive and proportional (Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014),

The role of anchorperson is central in projecting a balanced show. High responsibility lies on anchor person as a mediator to ensure equal time and importance to each participant and each dimension of topic. Anchor persons questions' subject matter and tone is crucial in making a show biased or neutral. This

is why the impartiality of anchorpersons is a hot debate in Pakistan (Ali, Rehman, 2018).

The final and most important ingredient of constructive journalism is solution oriented approach. The idea is to apply a public oriented approach and look for the possible solution of a problem under discussion. The biggest missing element of constructive approach in talk shows was solution oriented approach. TV talk show pattern in Pakistan usually have a hot political debate and ends up without any concluding statement or important submission regarding topic under discussion (Ali, Rehman, 2018).

With reference to the use of constructive approach among social, economic and religious issues, it was found that shows on economic issues were highly constructive whereas the shows on religious issues were least constructive. One possible reason of it is that peoples' collective approach on religion is very emotional and impulsive hence talk shows create more hype of such issues to gain more ratings and popularity. Since media organization serve mainly to their own interests hence they frame the stories in the way their interests get fulfilled (Bowen, 2015).

Limitations

One of the major limitations of the study is that only the quantitative analysis has been conducted to see major missing ingredients of constructive journalism in TV talk shows. A deep insight into use of constructive journalistic approach can be taken by doing its framing analysis. Then the study was conducted only on five talk shows of leading channels and all channels are not included, the study of other channels may provide more

dimensions on the constructive coverage of post Corona raised social, economic and religious issues. Another limitation of this study is that it only includes the panel based political talk shows; other formats of political talk shows are not included.

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Annexure 1

Measuring Instrument

Constructive coverage Index to measure use of constructive approach in the coverage of social, economic and religious issues raised post corona outbreak

Five dimensions of Constructive coverage index:

1. Direction of the introduction of talk show
2. Selection of guests in the context of issue or topic
3. Presence of different perspectives on the topic
4. Role of anchor person as a moderator of the show
5. Concluding statement of the show

Indicators for direction of talk show

- i. Highly rational
- ii. Somewhat rational
- iii. Hardly rational

Indicators for Selection of guests in the context of issue or topic

- i. Highly relevant
- ii. Somewhat relevant
- iii. Hardly relevant

Indicators for Presence of different perspectives on the topic

- i. Highly balanced
- ii. Somewhat balanced
- iii. Hardly balanced

Indicators for Role of anchor person as a moderator of the show

- i. Highly unbiased
- ii. Somewhat unbiased
- iii. Hardly unbiased

Indicators for concluding statement of the show

- i. Highly Solution oriented
- ii. Somewhat solution oriented
- iii. Hardly solution oriented