



## Public Perceptions of the Representation of Noor Mukadam's Case in Pakistani Mainstream and Digital Media

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### RESEARCH ABSTRACT

The murder of Noor Mukadam received widespread attention across Pakistani mainstream and digital media, generating significant public discussion. This study examines public perceptions of how Noor Mukadam's case was represented in Pakistani media and compares the roles of mainstream and digital media in shaping public understanding of the case. A quantitative survey was conducted among 400 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that while both media platforms serve as important sources of information, digital media was perceived as more active in providing updates and sustaining public engagement. Respondents also believed that social media played a significant role in promoting awareness and supporting demands for justice. The study concludes that digital media has become an influential platform in shaping public opinion and complementing traditional news coverage in Pakistan.

### RESEARCH KEYWORDS

Noor Mukadam, Pakistani Media, Digital Media, Mainstream Media, Public Perception, Media Representation, Social Media, News Framing, Agenda Setting, Gender-Based Violence

### RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

The media plays a significant role in shaping public understanding of social, political, and criminal events. Through the processes of reporting, framing, and agenda setting, media organizations influence how audiences interpret issues and form opinions. In recent years, the rapid growth of digital media has transformed the way information is produced, distributed, and consumed. Unlike traditional mainstream media, digital platforms enable real-time communication, audience participation, and the rapid dissemination of information, making them an increasingly important source of news and public discourse.

The murder of Noor Mukadam in July 2021 became one of the most widely discussed criminal cases in Pakistan. The case attracted extensive coverage across television channels, newspapers, social media platforms, and digital news outlets. Public interest in the case remained high due to the brutality of the crime, the social status of those involved, and the widespread demand for justice. Digital media platforms, particularly social media, played a prominent role in sharing updates, encouraging public discussion, and mobilizing support through campaigns such as #JusticeForNoor.

As a result, the case provides an important opportunity to examine how different forms of media represent high profile criminal incidents and how these representations influence public perceptions. The representation of Noor Mukadam's case varied across mainstream and digital media platforms. While mainstream media generally followed professional and regulatory guidelines, digital media provided more immediate, interactive, and continuous coverage of developments related to the case. These differences may have influenced how audiences interpreted the events, assessed media credibility, and formed opinions regarding justice and accountability. Despite the extensive public attention given to the case, limited research has examined public perceptions of its representation across different media platforms in Pakistan. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how audiences perceive the coverage of Noor Mukadam's case in mainstream and digital media and to identify the influence of these media platforms on public opinion.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on media representation, public perception, and digital journalism in Pakistan. By examining public views regarding the coverage of Noor Mukadam's case, the research provides insights into audience trust, media credibility, and the evolving relationship between mainstream and digital media. The findings may assist media professionals, researchers, and policymakers in understanding the impact of media coverage on public opinion and social discourse. Furthermore, the study highlights the increasing role of digital media in shaping awareness and public engagement regarding issues of justice, gender-based violence, and social accountability in contemporary society.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

To examine public perceptions of the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream and digital media.

1. To assess the extent to which the public relies on mainstream and digital media for information regarding Noor Mukadam's case.
2. To evaluate public perceptions of the credibility and neutrality of mainstream media coverage of Noor Mukadam's case.
3. To examine public perceptions of the credibility and neutrality of digital media coverage of Noor Mukadam's case.
4. To compare the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in mainstream and digital media from the perspective of media audiences.
5. To investigate the role of digital media in raising public awareness and promoting discussions related to justice and gender-based violence.
6. To determine whether public opinion perceives digital media as having contributed to the pursuit of justice in Noor Mukadam's case.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing perceptions of social, political, and criminal events. Through news selection, framing, and agenda-setting processes, media organizations determine which issues receive public attention and how those issues are interpreted by audiences (Coleman et al., 2009). As a result, media representation has become a significant area of study within communication research, particularly in relation to high-profile criminal cases and issues involving social justice. The reporting of violence against women has received considerable attention from media scholars. Previous studies have shown that media coverage influences public understanding of gender-based violence and can affect societal attitudes toward victims and perpetrators (Ahmed, 2014). Researchers have argued that media organizations often sensationalize crimes involving women and may unintentionally reinforce stereotypes through their reporting practices (Yasmin, Sohail, & Mangrio, 2015). Responsible and balanced reporting is therefore essential for promoting public awareness and encouraging discussions regarding justice, gender equality, and human rights. The emergence of digital media has transformed traditional patterns of news consumption and information dissemination. Social media platforms, online news portals, and digital communication channels enable audiences to access information instantly and participate actively in public discussions. Lewis and Molyneux (2018) noted that digital media has expanded opportunities for audience engagement and altered the relationship between journalists and the public. Unlike mainstream media, digital platforms provide greater opportunities for citizen participation and the sharing of diverse perspectives.

Mainstream media continues to serve as an important source of information because of its professional standards, editorial oversight, and established credibility. However, concerns have been raised regarding political influence, commercial interests, and institutional pressures that may affect the presentation of news (Carpentier et al., 2009). In Pakistan, public debates regarding media independence and journalistic objectivity have intensified with the expansion of digital communication technologies (Saeed et al., 2021). Consequently, many audiences now rely on multiple media sources to verify information and develop informed opinions.

The murder of Noor Mukadam became one of the most widely discussed criminal cases in Pakistan and generated extensive media attention. Following her murder in July 2021, mainstream and digital media actively covered the investigation, legal proceedings, and public reactions. Social media platforms played a particularly important role in disseminating information and mobilizing public support through campaigns such as #JusticeForNoor (Maryam, 2021). The widespread public engagement demonstrated the growing influence of digital media in shaping discourse on issues related to crime, justice, and violence against women. Agenda Setting Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how media organizations influence public priorities. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), the media may not determine what people think, but it significantly influences what people think about by selecting and emphasizing specific issues. Through repeated coverage of particular events, media outlets increase public awareness and direct public attention toward certain topics. In the context of Noor Mukadam's case, extensive media coverage contributed to maintaining public interest and encouraging discussions regarding justice and accountability.

Framing Theory further explains how media influences audience perceptions by presenting information within particular interpretive frameworks. Goffman's framing concept, later expanded within media studies, suggests that journalists select certain aspects of reality and emphasize specific details while minimizing others (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). De Vreese (2005) argued that media frames shape how audiences understand events, assign responsibility, and evaluate social issues. Different media platforms may frame the same event differently, leading to variations in public interpretation and opinion.

Existing literature highlights the growing importance of digital media alongside traditional news outlets in shaping public understanding of significant events. While mainstream media continues to provide structured and professionally produced content, digital media offers immediacy, interactivity, and broader public participation (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). The Noor Mukadam case provides an important context for examining these dynamics and understanding how audiences perceive media representations across different platforms. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exploring public perceptions of the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream and digital media.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream media?
2. What are public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani digital media?
3. How do audiences compare the credibility and neutrality of mainstream and digital media coverage of Noor Mukadam's case?
4. What role did digital media play in shaping public awareness and discussions regarding Noor Mukadam's case?
5. To what extent do audiences believe that digital media contributed to public demands for justice in Noor Mukadam's case?

The research questions were developed to examine public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream and digital media. These questions focus on understanding audience views on media credibility, neutrality, and the role of different media platforms in shaping public awareness and opinion. By addressing these questions, the study seeks to identify how media coverage influenced public discourse surrounding the case and to explore the growing significance of digital media in reporting issues related to justice, accountability, and gender-based violence in Pakistan. The findings are expected to contribute to media studies literature by providing insights into audience perceptions of media performance during a high-profile criminal case.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream and digital media. Quantitative research was selected because it enables the collection and analysis of numerical data from a large population, allowing researchers to identify trends, patterns, and relationships among variables. The survey method was adopted to gather opinions and perceptions from respondents regarding media coverage, credibility, and the role of media in shaping public awareness of the case.

### **Study Population**

The study population consisted of social media users and news consumers across Pakistan who were familiar with Noor Mukadam's case. Individuals who regularly accessed information through mainstream media platforms, including television news channels, as well as digital media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and online news portals, were considered suitable participants for the study. The selected population provided diverse perspectives regarding media representation and public opinion.

### **Sampling Technique**

A convenience sampling technique was employed for data collection. Respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey. The questionnaire was distributed through various online platforms, including social media networks and digital communities. A total of 400 respondents participated in the study, providing sufficient data to examine public perceptions regarding the media coverage of Noor Mukadam's case.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of close-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed to gather information regarding respondents' media consumption habits, perceptions of mainstream and digital media coverage, views on media credibility and neutrality, and opinions regarding the role of media in seeking justice for Noor Mukadam. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured consistency in data collection and facilitated quantitative analysis.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to summarize respondents' answers and identify major trends within the data. The findings were presented through tables and graphical illustrations to provide a clear understanding of public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani media. The analysis focused on comparing audience perceptions of mainstream and digital media platforms.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were ensured, and no personal identifying

information was collected or disclosed. The data obtained from respondents were used solely for academic purposes and were handled in accordance with accepted research ethics standards.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The demographic analysis was conducted to understand the characteristics of the study participants. A total of 400 respondents participated in the survey, representing diverse backgrounds and levels of media exposure. The demographic profile provided insights into the composition of the sample and ensured that the study captured a broad range of public opinions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani media.

### Media Usage Patterns

The findings indicate that both mainstream and digital media are widely used sources of news and information among respondents. While a large proportion of participants reported relying on mainstream media, an even greater percentage indicated regular use of digital media platforms. The results suggest that digital media has become an increasingly important source of information, allowing users to access real-time updates and engage with news content more actively.

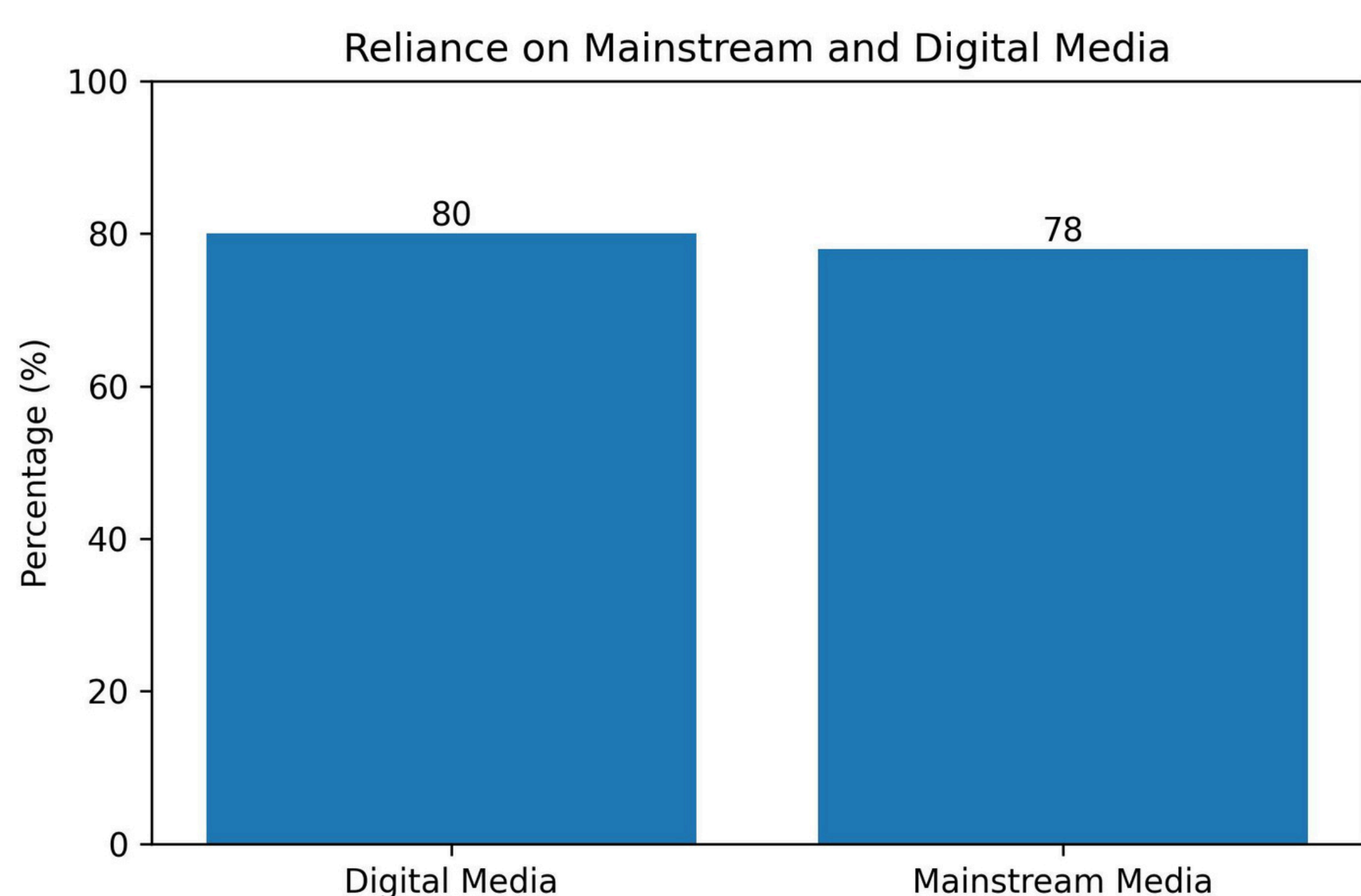


Figure 1. Comparison of respondents' reliance on mainstream and digital media for news information. The findings indicate that 80% of respondents use digital media as a source of news and information, while 78% rely on mainstream media. The results suggest that both platforms remain important sources of information; however, digital media demonstrates a slightly higher level of audience engagement and usage.

The results demonstrate the growing significance of digital media in contemporary news consumption. Although mainstream media continues to maintain a strong audience base, digital platforms have emerged as a preferred source of information due to their accessibility, speed, and interactive nature.

### Perceptions of Mainstream Media Coverage

Respondents were asked to evaluate the coverage of *Noor Mukadam's case by mainstream media*. The findings reveal that a majority of participants considered mainstream media an important source of information regarding the case. However, opinions varied regarding the neutrality and objectivity of mainstream media coverage.

Some respondents believed that mainstream media provided balanced reporting, while others expressed concerns regarding possible limitations and biases in news presentation.

## **Perceptions of Digital Media Coverage**

Digital media was generally perceived more positively by respondents in terms of accessibility, frequency of updates, and public engagement. Most participants agreed that digital media platforms actively followed developments related to Noor Mukadam's case and provided continuous information to the public. The findings suggest that digital media played a significant role in maintaining public attention and facilitating discussions regarding the case.

## **Perceived Role of Social Media in Seeking Justice**

One of the key findings of the study was the perceived influence of social media in promoting public awareness and supporting demands for justice. A substantial proportion of respondents believed that social media contributed to keeping Noor Mukadam's case in the public spotlight and encouraged greater accountability from relevant institutions. Public campaigns and online discussions were viewed as important factors in sustaining national attention on the case.

## **Reliability of News Sources**

The survey also examined public perceptions regarding the reliability of information provided by different media platforms. The findings indicate that respondents generally considered both mainstream and digital media useful sources of information. However, digital media was viewed as more effective in providing timely updates, while mainstream media was often associated with professional journalism and editorial oversight. This demonstrates that audiences increasingly utilize multiple sources to verify information and develop informed opinions.

## **6.7 Comparative Analysis of Mainstream and Digital Media**

The comparative analysis reveals notable differences between mainstream and digital media in the representation of Noor Mukadam's case. While mainstream media provided structured and professionally edited coverage, digital media offered greater immediacy, interactivity, and public participation. Respondents perceived digital media as playing a more active role in shaping public discourse and maintaining awareness regarding the case. These findings highlight the growing influence of digital platforms in contemporary journalism and their ability to complement traditional forms of news reporting.

## **RESEARCH DISCUSSION**

### **Representation of Noor Mukadam's Case in Mainstream Media**

The findings indicate that mainstream media remained an important source of information regarding Noor Mukadam's case. A majority of respondents reported using television news channels and other traditional media platforms to follow developments related to the case. Mainstream media played a significant role in disseminating information to the public and maintaining awareness of the legal proceedings. However, some respondents expressed concerns regarding the neutrality and completeness of mainstream media coverage. These concerns may be linked to perceptions of institutional limitations, editorial policies, and external influences that can affect the presentation of news. Despite these concerns, mainstream media continued to serve as a trusted source of information for a substantial portion of the population.

## **Representation of Noor Mukadam's Case in Digital Media**

The study found that digital media played a highly active role in the representation of Noor Mukadam's case. Respondents generally perceived social media platforms, online news portals, and digital journalism channels as effective sources of timely information and continuous updates. Digital media facilitated public participation by allowing individuals to share opinions, engage in discussions, and support campaigns demanding justice. The findings suggest that digital platforms contributed significantly to maintaining public attention on the case and encouraging broader conversations regarding gender-based violence and accountability. As a result, digital media emerged as a powerful complement to traditional news reporting.

## **Public Trust and Media Credibility**

Public trust is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of media communication. The findings reveal that respondents relied on both mainstream and digital media for information; however, perceptions of credibility varied across platforms. Mainstream media was often associated with professional journalism and editorial oversight, while digital media was valued for its speed, accessibility, and diversity of viewpoints. Many respondents indicated that they consulted multiple sources to verify information before forming opinions. This demonstrates an increasingly critical and informed audience that seeks information from a variety of channels to ensure accuracy and reliability.

## **Comparison with Previous Studies**

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that highlights the growing influence of digital media in shaping public opinion and facilitating civic engagement. Lewis and Molyneux (2018) argued that social media has transformed the relationship between journalists and audiences by increasing public participation in the communication process. Similarly, Maryam (2021) observed that social media played a significant role in mobilizing public support and maintaining attention on Noor Mukadam's case. The findings also support Ahmed (2014), who emphasized the importance of responsible media reporting in cases involving violence against women. Furthermore, the study aligns with Agenda Setting Theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which suggests that extensive media coverage increases public attention toward specific issues.

## **Implications for Media Practice**

The findings of this study have important implications for media organizations and journalists. As digital media continues to expand, media professionals must ensure that information is reported accurately, ethically, and responsibly across all platforms. Journalists should prioritize balanced reporting and avoid sensationalism, particularly when covering cases involving violence against women. Media organizations should also recognize the growing role of digital platforms in public communication and develop strategies that encourage transparency, credibility, and audience engagement. Strengthening ethical journalism practices can enhance public trust while contributing positively to informed public discourse and social accountability.

## RESERCH CONCLUSION

This study examined public perceptions regarding the representation of Noor Mukadam's case in Pakistani mainstream and digital media. The findings reveal that both media platforms played an important role in informing the public; however, digital media was perceived as more active in providing timely updates and sustaining public engagement. Respondents generally viewed digital media as an effective platform for raising awareness, encouraging public discussion, and supporting demands for justice.

The study further found that audiences perceived differences in the way mainstream and digital media represented the case. While mainstream media was recognized for its professional structure and editorial oversight, digital media was valued for its accessibility, immediacy, and interactive nature. These characteristics enabled digital platforms to maintain public attention on the case and facilitate widespread discussions regarding justice, accountability, and gender-based violence.

The findings highlight the growing influence of digital media in contemporary journalism and its ability to complement traditional news coverage. The study contributes to media and communication research by providing insights into audience perceptions of media performance during a high profile criminal case. It also emphasizes the importance of responsible, ethical, and balanced reporting practices across all media platforms.

Based on the findings, media organizations should strengthen professional standards, enhance transparency, and promote accurate reporting to maintain public trust. Future research may explore media representation of other high profile criminal cases and examine the long-term influence of digital media on public opinion and social justice movements in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that media representation plays a critical role in shaping public understanding of criminal cases and influencing public discourse. The extensive attention given to Noor Mukadam's case illustrates how media coverage can transform an individual incident into a national conversation about justice, women's safety, and social accountability. Through continuous reporting and public engagement, media platforms contributed to keeping the issue relevant and visible within society.

Another important finding is the increasing reliance of audiences on multiple media sources to obtain and verify information. Rather than depending solely on traditional news outlets, many respondents reported consulting digital media platforms to access additional perspectives and real-time updates. This trend reflects the evolving media landscape in Pakistan, where audiences are becoming more active participants in the communication process and are increasingly involved in evaluating the credibility of information. The study also highlights the role of digital media in amplifying public voices and facilitating civic participation. Social media platforms enabled users to express opinions, share information, and support campaigns related to Noor Mukadam's case. This level of engagement demonstrates how digital communication technologies can strengthen public awareness and encourage collective action on issues of social importance. The findings suggest that digital media has become a significant force in promoting transparency and accountability within society.

In addition, the results indicate that audience perceptions of media credibility are closely linked to the quality and consistency of reporting. Media organizations that maintain accuracy, fairness, and ethical standards are more likely to gain public trust. Therefore, journalists and media institutions should continue to prioritize responsible reporting practices, particularly when covering sensitive issues involving violence, crime, and human rights. Overall, the study underscores the changing relationship between media and society in the digital age. While mainstream media continues to play a valuable role in providing verified information, digital media has emerged as a powerful platform for public engagement and discussion. The combined influence of these platforms has reshaped the way people consume information, form opinions, and participate in public debates. As media technologies continue to evolve, understanding their impact on public perception will remain an important area of research within media and communication studies. The findings of this study also have broader implications for understanding the relationship between media coverage and public accountability. The extensive public attention generated through media reporting demonstrates how communication platforms can influence social awareness and encourage institutions to respond to issues of public concern. In the case of Noor Mukadam, sustained media coverage contributed to keeping the legal proceedings within public view and reinforced demands for transparency and justice. This suggests that both mainstream and digital media can serve as important mechanisms for promoting civic awareness and strengthening democratic engagement. As media environments continue to evolve, their role in shaping public expectations regarding justice, governance, and social responsibility is likely to become increasingly significant.

**PLAGIARISM 5%** According to the Turnitin report, the paper shows a 5% similarity index: 2% from internet sources, 2% from publications, and 1% from student papers.

The research paper titled **“Public Perceptions of the Representation of Noor Mukadam’s Case in Pakistani Mainstream and Digital Media”** examines how audiences perceive the coverage of Noor Mukadam’s case across different media platforms in Pakistan. Using a quantitative research approach supported by a review of relevant literature and survey data collected from 400 respondents, the study investigates public views regarding media credibility, neutrality, and the role of media in shaping awareness and public opinion. The findings reveal that both mainstream and digital media served as important sources of information; however, digital media was perceived as more active in providing timely updates, facilitating public engagement, and sustaining discussions related to the case. The study further indicates that social media played a significant role in promoting awareness, encouraging public participation, and supporting demands for justice. The findings highlight notable differences in the representation of the case between mainstream and digital media, reflecting the evolving nature of news consumption in Pakistan. The paper concludes that digital media has emerged as a powerful complement to traditional journalism, contributing significantly to public discourse, social accountability, and awareness of gender-based violence. This paper contributes to media and communication research by providing insights into audience perceptions of media performance during one of Pakistan’s most prominent criminal cases. This paper has been accepted for publication in the *Jadetimes Journal of Universal Studies* (E-ISSN 3066-9421).

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