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**Influence of News Media on Voters Behavior During Election 2013 in Pakistan.**

**Abstract**

Media can disseminate unity among masses by highlighting their problem and issues. News media informed with updates. For political information voters rely media. Elections are considered back bone for a democratic political process. Elections are central instrument to get people's representative in democratic states. Voters get information and political knowledge through media and make their perception regarding voting behavior. Media is the initial source of information and knowledge about politics and current affairs. Political knowledge and information gained from news media serves as a basis of individuals' voting behavior and decisions. Political news exposure is a key variable to effect on voter's behavior and attitudes For this descriptive study data is collected through cross sectional survey method in Lahore Division. Multistage purposive sampling technique was used for taking the sample of voters. Findings of the study provide an understanding of relationship between news exposure and voting behavior regarding political issues awareness in general election in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Political News, Elections, Political Parties, Voting Behavior, Political News Exposure

**Introduction**

For many people, Mass media are the initial source of information and knowledge about politics and current affairs. News media

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organizations gather news and information and disseminate it to masses by virtue of a wide information network and broadcasting system.

Graber (1988) noted regarding the importance of mass media as an original source of political information, "When people know about current happenings that are remote from their daily experiences, there normally is no likely source, other than the mass media, that could have supplied the information". With the advent of diversified news channels along with innovations of internet technology and mobile devices audiences' access to news becomes even easier. Political knowledge and information gained from news media serves as a basis of individuals' voting behavior and decisions.

**Political News and Voting Behavior**

Putnam (2000) noted that television use substituted for cooperative activities in individuals' leisure time. In addition to that, many empirical researches have explored the effects of general media use on political outcomes found no significant influence (Moy, Scheufele, & Holbert, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Empirical studies that focused on informational media use have generally found a positive association among mass media use and voters' political participation (McLeod & McDonald and McLeod, 1985; McLeod et al., 1999; Smith, 2001; Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; Cho et al., 2009;). Thus, it is suggested that informational media use, such as

news consumption, yields the normative outcomes while sheer use of mass media may not. For this reason, media effects research should manifest finer nuances of media use and focus on specific content. This study will discuss the role of news media use.

Book on topic “Effects of Mass Communication” (1960) noted that political news affect the voting behavior ,it also has indirect impacts (Klapper, 1960). Klapper in his article “brink of hope” brought up a new direction in the research over effects of news media and worked on a shift of approach from hypodermic’ to ‘situational’ or phenomenistic. This approach regarded news media as one of influences, working among other influences, in an overall situation instead of essential and adequate source of audience effect. Klapper also established the indirect impact of news media by citing the researches which focused on how some of the factors which effect people.

This indirect effects paradigm is different from the minimal effects paradigm, which hypothesizes “powerful,” not “minimal,” total effects of media. It is possible that political news exposure can directly lead to voters’ political behaviors when individuals obtain procedural information. However, in most cases, the influence of news media on political participation takes place through enhancing psychological engagement in politics, such as political knowledge, interest, attitudes, and so forth (Moy et al., 2005; Scheufele et al., 2003; Shah & Scheufele, 2006; Wang, 2007; Cho et al., 2009;). In other words, the pieces of information about politics gathered from TV, radio, social media and newspapers serve as a basis of voters’ opinions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding political events. For example, while exposed to news media, voters perceive political issues that are prominent in news media, which in turn serve as criteria for forming evaluative attitudes toward politicians (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Voters’ behavior toward objects (e.g., political issues and public affairs) become crystallized as they think about political issues that are activated as a result of frequent news exposure (Kiousis & McCombs, 2004). News media use stimulates political discussion, which significantly increases political interest and knowledge (Eveland, 2004) and participation (Cho et al., 2009). The increased political knowledge enhances voting behavior, which in turn facilitates political participation regarding vote casting (Scheufele et al., 2003). In this sense, news media, as a dominant source of political orientation, play a central role in forming voters’ political behavior by indirectly influencing the process of mediation through domography, disposition and political news exposure.

Noelle Neumann, a German scientist noted influence of political news exposure on voters’ voting behavior in her theory spiral of silence which she presented in (1984) in which she studied that because of biased reporting of news caster Christian democratic Party lost the elections. Jennifer Jerit and Jason Barabasin their work “Surveillance Knowledge and the Mass Media” strive to estimate effects of political news on voters’ knowledge, with the hypothesis that citizens need not to have encyclopedic knowledge and information for performing their basic duties like vote casting. This was the earlier study being discussed for measuring political news on recent political developments knowledge held by voters. For this purpose audience knowledge and information regarding issues which were given low and high attention by news media was compared. By the analysis of 20 national surveys, covering more than a decade it was revealed that news media attention and public learning are directly proportional i.e. with the increase in news media exposure there is an increase in public knowledge (Barabas & Jerit, 2005). Noella Neumann, presented “The spiral of silence” a theory that explains how in a society the majority’s opinion prevails over the opinion of minority, as the minority stays silent, due to the perceived fear of isolation and climate of opinion. People avoid expressing themselves, supposing that their view might not enjoy ample support. Whether their perceptions are right or they are made to believe that but the impact of this assumption is definite over their behavior. Noelle suggested that the news media affects the public opinion by selective exposure. She believes that media accelerates the spiral of silence and anyone who wants to lead the public opinion must be able to command media attention. She analyzed the 1980’s US presidential election in which the Republican Party candidate Ronald Reagan defeated Democratic Party candidate Jimmy Carter. In her view the elections were affected by the biased political news campaigns. Hence political news exposure can make a majority look like a minority and can deceive them about their status.

Ahmad (2008) in his research examined the voting behavior on the biradari basis (clan, tribe, caste). His research figures out that ideology and biradari factors has deep influence on voters’ behavior in Punjab. Local bodies’ election also played their role to increase this trend. Caste and biradri system is considered very important factor whole over in Pakistan during elections and it influences elections. This study suggests that effects of ethnicity and racism on the political process became minimized because of awareness of news media for last ten years. In this study ethnic belief have been added as a predisposition along with past affiliation and family inclination.

Shahwar, D. & Asim (2012) in their study suggested that media is one factor in shaping voting behavior. They examined voting behavior of voters in District Faisalabad. Dr. Mughees and Fozia Naseem suggested in “Social system influences political system: A comparative study of sub-continent” (Ahmad & Naseem, 2004).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Individuals' political orientations can be seen partially as outcomes of social media use. Literature suggests that individuals' behaviors regarding particular political events are generated and developed in response to the relevant messages dealing with those objects (Petty et al., 2002). Thus, the amount of messages received and the way in which they are processed should be considered as main factors that produce psychological as well as behavioral outcomes (McLeod et al., 1999)

It is generally agreed that news media use has a positive influence on voters' participation in political gathering and vote casting, but how it facilitates voters' political engagement has yet to be explored. Research suggests that the mechanisms of news media effects are rather complicated. Recent communication research on political participation turns to the indirect effects paradigm ( Cho et al., 2009).

Mutz found that political discussion between citizens with competing political views attenuated levels of political participation. From this finding, Mutz concluded that deliberative democracy, which is realized by political discussion with heterogeneous others, might not coexist with participatory democracy.

**RQ1:** *Does news media matter on voter's behavior for political issues awareness?*

Study of "Information and Public Choice; From Media Markets to Policy Making" revealed the contents of news media has impact on voters' choice.(Roumeen Islam.,2008). Her work suggested that news coverage and promotion by media can affect the behavior in political sphere as it strives to update voters with the leader's vision, actions and the outcomes of their actions, support or oppose political, economic or social issues which ultimately influence voting behavior.

**H1.** Political news exposure will influence voter's behavior regarding political issues awareness.

Jack Vowels (2004) in "Voters' veto: The 2002 Election in New Zealand and the consolidation of Minority Government" dedicated a whole chapter on 'impact through media campaign'. He analyses the influence of news media and in particular the way anchors enliven the otherwise boring election campaign with an invincible victory of Labor party of New-Zealand. Vowels suggested that Media changes the way people see the world and concluded in this study that it affected the voters' behavior by a series of "attack journalism" focused on the major party heads and multiparty debates

### **Method and Measures**

Survey was conducted both in Urdu and English language for easiness of respondents.

For this descriptive study data is collected through cross sectional survey method in Lahore Division. Multistage purposive sampling technique was used for taking the sample of voters. Findings of the study provide an understanding of relationship between social media news exposure and voters' behavior in general election in Pakistan.

643 primary school teachers were selected in selected schools of Lahore.

### **Variables**

**Political News by TV**

**Political News by Radio**

**Political News by Newspapers**

**Political News by Social Media**

News media exposure for political news was measured by asking questions from respondent. Responses were collected from six-point measuring scale, from very often to don't know.

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**Table : Correlation Analysis of Relationship of Political News Exposure and Political Issues' Awareness**

	At what level TV provide you political news in election 2013?	At what level Radio provide you political news in election 2013 ?	At what level newspapers provide you political news in election 2013?	At what level social media provide you political news in election 2013?	At what level peers provide you political news in election 2013?	At what level media highlight load shedding?	At what level news media highlight Unemployment?	At what level news media highlight economic crisis?	At what level news media highlight terrorism?	At what level news media highlight education?	At what level news media highlight corruption?	At what level news media highlight Health?	At what level news media highlight Environment?	At what level news media highlight Agriculture?
At what level TV provide you political news in election 2013?	1	.151**	.000	.303*	.324**	.394**	.270*	.289**	.298**	.307**	.212**	.167**	.139**	.140**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level Radio provide you political news in election 2013 ?	.151**	1	.316**	.490**	.351**	.139**	.091*	.124**	.088*	.117**	.132**	.118**	.167**	.148**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level newspapers provide you political news in election 2013?	.504**	.316**	1	.368**	.492**	.264**	.206**	.258**	.264**	.354**	.239**	.196**	.098*	.100*
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level social media provide you political news in election 2013?	.303**	.490**	.316**	1	.338**	.185**	.100*	.160**	.147**	.145**	.172**	.131**	.106**	.060
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level peers provide you political news in election 2013?	.324**	.351**	.492**	.338**	1	.093*	.075	.108**	.098*	.265**	.163**	.143**	.137**	.156**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level media highlight load shedding?	.394**	.139**	.264**	.185**	.093*	1	.669**	.708**	.596**	.502**	.383**	.335**	.304**	.268**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight Unemployment?	.270**	.091*	.206**	.100*	.075	.669**	1	.808**	.678**	.566**	.473**	.428**	.366**	.319**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight economic crisis?	.289**	.124**	.258**	.160**	.108**	.708**	.808**	1	.750**	.628**	.470**	.447**	.397**	.329**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight terrorism?	.298**	.088*	.264**	.147**	.098*	.596**	.678**	.750**	1	.603**	.438**	.378**	.316**	.276**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight education?	.307**	.117**	.354**	.145**	.265**	.502**	.566**	.628**	.603**	1	.460**	.438**	.327**	.282**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight corruption ?	.212**	.132**	.239**	.172**	.163**	.383**	.473**	.470**	.438**	.460**	1	.835**	.713**	.665**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight Health?	.167**	.118**	.196**	.131**	.143**	.335**	.428**	.447**	.378**	.438**	.835**	1	.799**	.717**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight Environment?	.139**	.167**	.098*	.106**	.137**	.304**	.366**	.397**	.316**	.327**	.713**	.799**	1	.865**
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643
At what level news media highlight Agriculture?	.140**	.148**	.100*	.060	.156**	.268**	.319**	.329**	.276**	.282**	.665**	.717**	.865**	1
	Pearson													
	Sig. (2-tailed)													
	N	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643	643

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

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### **Correlation Analysis of Relationship of Political News Exposure and Political Issues' Awareness**

The above table shows a correlation matrix. As shown in Table the respondent's perception regarding TV provides political news during election was significantly correlated with respondents regarding frequent political news provided by Radio ( $r = 0.151$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), Newspapers ( $r = 0.504$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), Social media ( $r = 0.303$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) and family relatives ( $r = 0.334$  and  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, the respondent's perception regarding radio provides political news during election was significantly correlated with respondents regarding frequent political news provided by watching TV ( $r = 0.151$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), Newspapers ( $r = 0.316$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), Social media ( $r = 0.49$  and  $p < 0.05$ ) and family relatives ( $r = 0.351$  and  $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, perception regarding load shedding was positively correlated with perception regarding Unemployment ( $r = 0.669$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), news media on Inflation ( $r = 0.708$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), media on corruption ( $r = 0.596$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), media stance on education ( $r = 0.383$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), media stance on health ( $r = 0.335$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), media stance on environment ( $r = 0.304$  and  $p < 0.05$ ), and on food and agriculture ( $r = 0.268$  and  $p < 0.05$ ). It is pertinent to mention that the respondents' perceptions regarding political issues awareness on corruption, load shedding and issues mentioned and described in above table are significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) positively correlated with each other.

### **Findings and Discussion**

To answer **H1** It is pertinent to mention that the respondents' perceptions regarding news media provide political issues awareness are significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) positively correlated with each other.

We found that political news exposure will influence voters behavior regarding political issues awareness.

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