
Influence of News Media and Political Participation: Descriptive Patterns of Political News Exposure during General Election 2018 in Pakistan

_____ Rana Umair Nadeem

===== Hafiz Ejaz Bashir

Voters get information and update regarding politics through news. News about politics informs citizens regarding policies of political parties and opinions on certain political issues. Voters rely on political news exposure on Television, Radio, Social media and newspapers to get updates and information about politics that pave the way to make their perception for participation in political activities and gathering. This research intends to explore the patterns of political news consumption during elections in Pakistan. This study will observe the relationships between voter's exposure to political news on Television, Newspaper, Radio, Social Media and their political participation in rallies, gathering, corner meetings etc. The survey from voters belonging to Lahore city will be administered by using well-designed questionnaire. The required data will be collected through simple random sampling.

Keywords: Voters, radio, television, social media, newspapers, politics, Lahore

Dr. Rana Umair

Centre for Media and Communication Studies,
University of Gujrat, Gujrat

Hafiz Ejaz Bashir

Senior Reporter,
Associated Press of Pakistan Corporation (APPC)

In USA and Europe, contemporary deliberative theorist believe that interpersonal political talk and discussion can also result in political judgements (Fishkin, 2009; Luskin, Fishkin, & Jowell, 2002), civic changes (Jacobs, Cook, & DelliCarpini, 2009), and information about political happenings (Huckfeldt et al., 2004). Parallel to political news, discussion could provide a comparison of best predictor of political behavior. The results of previous studies in USA showed that the discussion predicted political behavior with more strength than that of Political news and other antecedents. This study also aims to verify these results in Pakistani setting where Political discussion is very much prevalent.

American media sociologist Schudson (2008) argues that historically Journalism emerged from different systems of colonial powers. Uses and effects of political news depend on media system as well as political systems of countries. Democratic culture of Pakistan emerged from the British colonialism and the democracy here is still in the transitional phase. Free media is also in the nascent phase in Pakistan. This dissertation suggests that the difference of developing democratic system and free media in Pakistan provides a context in which voters' individual level and nature of political news exposure and its effects on voting behaviors should be checked.

Political News and Agenda Setting

Dominant elites of Pakistan were not in favor of liberal democracy. Jan(2010) argues that since 1947 the country has made three constitutions in 1956, 1962 and 1973. Weak democracy, military martial law, rigged election, weak political structure and lack of rule of laws did not let the democracy to thrive in Pakistan (Rizvi, 2002; Junejo, 2010).

Rizvi(2002) argues that Prospects of democracy faces different challenges in Pakistan. BBC correspondent has stressed that in Pakistan there is a dire need to correct the system of education, democratic procedures, and party's internal structure for strengthening the democracy. In spite of all these challenges and problems, some scholars believe that Pakistan is striving to establish a strong political system (Jan, 2010; Schofield, 2009). Held (1996) argues that USA and European democracies achieved strong democracy after passing through episodes of fragility and vulnerability.

Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani (2013) in "First Ten General Elections of Pakistan" recalls 2002 General Elections as "a regression from oversight to military rule". Despite dictator's era the one must admire change showered by a military ruler was the establishment of regulatory authority PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) for electronic media in 2002 and the independence of Media which sowed the seeds to launch free broadcasting and welcomed a spate of private channels. This blessing of free broadcasting turned out as the major contributing factor to tremble the military rule and nurture the roots of Democracy.

This period empowered the Mass Media quite enough to convince, inform and mobilize the public which endowed them with the ability to not just pursue the two way flow of communication between rulers and being ruled but also their own agenda which keeps mounting.

Unfortunately in Pakistan, people witnessed only 11 General Elections since 1947 to 2018, with no distinction of being fair or unfair. Military martial laws and intervention ruled for long time in political history of Pakistan. Debacle of east Pakistan occurred as a result of 1970's transparent election. Government established as a result of 2002 election completed its tenure but election results were accused of engineering.

The cherished parliament established as a result of ninth General Elections of 2008 completed full five years tenure that is considered to be an important step towards Democracy. During this era too the Mass Media with rare and temporary restrictions from government kept boosting its influence among masses. From the competitive election campaigning to the coalition talks, from main adversaries to coalition partners everything about the shifting nature of relations and changing political scenarios were facilitated and broadcasted by Media. Though embedded with the allegations of corruption and conspiracies this government term is received as "a transition to Democracy and the rule of law" by Dr. Ijaz Gilani.

Every political party publicized their achievements and highlighted the failures of others from television channels, radio, social media and newspapers. People were encouraged to cast their vote as every single vote is critical to change their fate. Media played a crucial role to mobilize voters by inducing among them political awareness. Envisioned the scope and influence of mass media several scholars in their researches incorporated it among the various factors impacting voter's choices. The assumption regarding media's influence strengthened after finding a positive correlation between political news and voting patterns.

Some critics of Pakistani media are of the view that these channels are not meeting expectations to mobilize people to support democracy at the grassroots level. So, this media background also provides a context to check the level and effects of political news exposure on voting behavior in Pakistan.

During election campaign political parties straggle a lot to compete for the media coverage of their party activities and issues taken by their party. These attempts of the political parties have been termed as the diffusion of information by the parties (West 1997; Norris et al. 1999). The information diffused by the parties is presented through the media in its news coverage (West 1997; Norris et al. 1999). After receiving this diffused information presented by the media how it is adopted by the audience during election campaign (Zhao and Chaffee 1995; Zaller 1991; Just et al. 199). On the basis of these three components, approaches that have been incorporated are: Agenda setting of the political parties, Media agenda, priming, framing and persuasion, Knowledge gap, selective exposure, cognitive dissonance. This research will be based on the theoretical underpinning rooted in the media role in political agenda setting and political parties.

Joseph Klapper in the “Effects of Mass Communication” (1996) suggested that Media affects the voting behavior more through a nexus of various factors and influences than directly but in specific situations it also has direct impacts (Klapper, 1960). In his article “brink of hope” Klapper brought up a new direction in the research over effects of Media and worked on a shift of approach from hypodermic’ to ‘situational’ or phenomenistic. This approach regarded Media as one of influences, working among other influences, in an overall situation instead of essential and adequate source of audience effect. He further established the indirect impact of Media by citing the researches which focused on how some of the factors which effect people e.g. taste in McPhee research and sorts of children in Maccoby work are influenced by Media.

Theoretical Framework

In Pakistani society, it has been noticed that because of social media in Pakistan the deliberative quality of media has increased. Pakistans’ mainstream media is analyzing and discussing on different political issues. Keeping in view above mediated discussion of deliberation, it may be expected that for strengthening the democracy in Pakistan media professionals should move forward towards deliberation. This dissertation provides a platform to gauge whether Pakistani media is deliberative or not. So, the deliberative democratic theory may be observed by placing the news media in middle of public and media professionals.

Page & Shapiro, 1992; Habermas, 2006; discussed process of voters based upon the discussion of the media professionals. For rational thinking of voters, media discussions quality should fulfill the key features of mediated deliberation (Gastil, 2008,) and it paved the way for the right voting decisions and choices of voters (Habermas, 2006).

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)

Agenda setting is continuously evolving from one dimension to another (McCombs et al., 2000). Agenda building is one of them. On the contrary to agenda setting, agenda building seeks to answer, who sets media agenda? Agenda building refers to the process by which news organizations and journalists feature, emphasize, and/or select certain events, issues, or sources to cover over others (Nisbet, 2010).

RQ1: *Does media matter on voter’s behavior for politica participation ?*

Apart from the transfer of issue or object salience to the public, scholars have studied influences on news media agendas, (Seltzer&Dittmore, 2009; Sciarini&Tresch, 2014).

H1. *Political news will influence voter's behavior for participation in political gathering and rallies.*

Political deliberation and mediation is major part of present study which argues that interpersonal discussion process with peers and relatives regarding political issues is considered very important. Several scientific studies (Scheufele& Moy, 1999; Mutz&Mondak, 2006; Smith & Zipp, 1983) have reported that public discuss about politics to colleagues, friends and families at home and work places. During elections these discussions mediate with political news that affect voters' behavior regarding knowledge about political issues, interest in political activities, and participation in vote casting process. With the facilitation of news media exposure the process of deliberation and political discussion can be elaborated by analyzing the media content and surveying the audience. (Waldman ,2000)

Methods

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. Simple random sampling was used for taking the sample of voters. Findings of the study provide an understanding of relationship between political news exposure and voters' participation in political gatherings in general election in Pakistan. 100 respondent were selected through simple random sampling in 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.

1. Null and alternative hypothesis:-

H_0 = There is no association between political news and vote casting

H_A = There is association between political news and vote casting.

2. Level of significance:-

$$\alpha = 10\%$$

3. Test Statistic:-

$$\chi^2 = \sum \left(\frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} \right)$$

Where, $\chi^2 \sim \chi^2_{(r-1)(c-1), 0.10}$

4. Computation:-

Political News and Political Participation Cross Tabulation					
			Political Participation		Total
			yes	no	
political News viewers	Strongly agree	Count	29	6	35
		Expected Count	25.5	9.5	35
	Agree	Count	16	9	25
		Expected Count	16.5	8.5	25
	Neutral	Count	3	2	5
		Expected Count	3.5	1.5	5
	Disagree	Count	12	6	18
		Expected Count	12.6	6.4	18
	Strongly disagree	Count	10	7	17
		Expected Count	11.9	5.1	17
	Total	Count	70	30	100
		Expected Count	70	30	100.0

$$\chi^2_{(cal)} = 7.90$$

5. Critical Region:-

Reject H_0 when $\chi^2_{(cal)} > \chi^2_{4,0.10}$

$$\chi^2_{(cal)} > 7.70$$

6. Conclusion:-

As, $7.90 > 7.70$

So, we reject our null hypothesis and it is concluded that there is association between political news and political participation.

Findings and Discussion

We found that political news exposure will influence political discussion of people in general election 2018 in Pakistan.

End Notes and Bibliography

Carpini, M.D., Cook, F.L., & Jacobs, L.R. (2004). Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature. *Annual Review Political Science*, 7, 315–44. Doi: 10.1146/Annurev.Polisci.7. 121003.091630

Gastil, J. (2008). *Political communication and deliberation*. Sage.

Gastil, J., Black, L. W., Deess, E. P., & Leichter, J. (2008). From group member to democratic citizen: How deliberating with fellow jurors reshapes civic attitudes. *Human communication research*, 34(1), 137-169.

Jan, F. (2010). Pakistan: A Struggling Nation-State, Democracy and Security, 6(3), 237-255, DOI: 10.1080/17419166.2010.521058

Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communications*. Oxford, England: Free Press of Glencoe.

Luskin, R. C. (2003). The Heavenly Public: What Would a Fully Informed Citizenry Be Like? In M. MacKuen & G. Rabinowitz (Eds.), *Electoral democracy* (pp. 238-261). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

McLeod, J. M., Scheufele, D. A., & Moy, P. (1999). Community, Communication, and Participation: The Role of Mass Media and Interpersonal Discussion in Local Political Participation. *Political Communication*, 16, 315–336.

Habermas, J. (2006). Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication theory*, 16(4), 411-426.

Norris, P. (2000). Television and Civic Malaise.' In Susan J. Pharr and Robert D. Putnam (Eds.). *What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Page, B. I. (1996). *Who deliberates? Mass media in modern democracy*. University of Chicago Press.

Rizvi H.A. (2002) 'Democracy in Pakistan' Lokniti (Programme of Comparative Democracy), Centre, for the Study of Developing Societies,

- Delhi retrieved from <http://www.democracy-asia.org/qa/pakistan/Hasan%20Askari.pdf>
- Jan, F. (2010). Pakistan: A struggling nation-state. *Democracy and Security*, 6(3), 237-255.
- Schudson, M. (2008). *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press*. USA: Polity Press.
- Sears, D. O., & Freedman, J. L. (1967). Selective exposure to information: A critical review. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 31(2), 194-213.
- McComb, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda setting function of media effects. *Public Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.
- Schofield, V. (2009). Can Democracy Work in Pakistan?. *Asian Affairs*, 40(2), 243-251.
- Held, D.(1996). *Models of Democracy* (2nd Edition). Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.1-10, p119
- Waldman, P. A. (2000). Deliberation in practice: Deliberative theory, news media, and political conversation. *Dissertations available from ProQuest*. AAI9989668. <https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9989668>
- Smith, J., & Zipp, J. F. (1983). The party official next door: Some consequences of friendship for political involvement. *The Journal of Politics*, 45(4), 958-978.
- Mutz, D. C., & Mondak, J. J. (2006). The workplace as a context for cross-cutting political discourse. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(1), 140-155.
- Moy, P., Scheufele, D. A., & Holbert, R. L. (1999). Television use and social capital: Testing Putnam's time displacement hypothesis. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2(1-2), 27-45.
- Schofield, V. (2009). Can Democracy Work in Pakistan?. *Asian Affairs*, 40(2), 243-251.
- Rizvi H.A. (2002) 'Democracy in Pakistan' Lokniti (Programme of Comparative Democracy), Centre, for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi retrieved from <http://www.democracy-asia.org/qa/pakistan/Hasan%20Askari.pdf>

Rizvi, H. A (2013) In The First Ten General Elections of Pakistan a story of Pakistan's transition from Democracy Above Rule of Law to Democracy Under Rule of Law: 1970-2013 (Part-1). Retrieved from <https://pildat.org/electoral-reforms1/the-first-10-general-elections-of-pakistan-2>

Rizvi, H. A. (2011). Democracy in Pakistan. *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs* is a series of occasional papers published by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's "Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia/Singapore".