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Article:	Role of Electronic Media in Politics of Punjab, Pakistan: A Case Study of Lahore
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Abstract

Electronic media had been the most important forum in exchanging different ideas and political awareness, therefore shaping the political opinion and getting change in political steup of Punjab. Researcher aims at measuring how educated people are persuaded by political talk shows about national issues. About 200 respondents of this study were the students belong to Colleges and Universities of Lahore, Pakistan. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used for data collection where questionnaires were as a primary tool of data collection. The findings indicated that viewers of talk shows have greater influence on youth and played important role in giving political awareness. Typically most of people showing their great interest and time in watching talk shows during prime time hours. Basic purpose was to identify how electronic media affected the political perception and mobilization among people of Pakistan. The aim was also to measure show talk shows influenced the political perception over different issues. The results of the present study were based survey method conducted from people of punjab, which belong to different age groups, gender, education level and profession. Findings revealed a significant correlation among variables. In this research paper the majority of respondents thought that Talk shows guide the people to comprehend political issues and these talk shows are most credible source of information.

KEY Words: Electronic Media, Pakistani Politics, talk shows, opinion shaping, political issues

Introduction

Today, News channels have got considerable importance among people. News channels give authority and supportive documents to people to gossip explicitly against corrupt politicians and social evils. In present days, media especially electronic media has become the mouth organ of the people. Media has the power to become the voice of poor people in time when they are deprived from their basic rights. It provides its different functions to the heterogeneous audience and offers rapid and most modern information about political issues and growth in society. On the other hand electronic media has also advantages and disadvantages in society. If the media is liberated, it will give freedom to democracy in any society.

Present research study indicates that the impact of electronic media on political issues and on other fields is a subject, where its direction depends on a variety of indicators. Such indicators highlight a large number of issue qualities, media uniqueness and political party characteristics. After the year 2008, the concept of talk shows were introduced by private TV channels in Pakistan which showed diversity in their contents and largely viewed by people in Pakistan. These channels have large access through cable television in both urban and rural regions. This is why, talk shows of private channels are creating a silent revolution among the large audience in Pakistan. These Television shows have utilized a similar pattern by inviting both members of opposition and from ruling parties to discuss the significant political issues where the host of program plays a role of mediator. Most of the people in Pakistan believe that this is very good style to engage in meaningful discussion over important public and political issues where political personalities and experts provide their analysis and possible solutions over the issues (Ahmed, 2010).

Electronic Media in Pakistan: Independent Reporting or Pursuit of Agendas?

After independence Pakistan took some seventeen years to enter in the age of video. The first television centre was launched in Lahore on 26 November 1964. Pakistan Television (PTV) maintained its monopoly for a long time. Actually the basic purpose to introduce television in Pakistan was to strengthen the country in all spheres especially in culture and social values. Pakistan was a newly state and government of the Pakistan considered that television could play its important role in developing the country by providing standard information, knowledge, education and awareness among people. Television centre was established with the assistance of UNESCO, Colombo Plan and Japan Government and commercial telecast was also permitted to meet the expenditure of television broadcasting (Zia, 2003, p. 11).

Mass media provide a forum to large number of people having their different political backgrounds like politicians and their candidates who always try to get the confidence of their voters right before the elections or during the time of elections. However, there is no forthcoming election or political shows that can clarify to masses by screening plentiful viewpoints on the important political issues. Mass media can also make the public figures or officials accountable as watchdog role and evading them from flouting confidence of people (Lyangar & McGrady, 2007, 17).

Per research centre published a report in 2000 on primary information sources of youngsters in America throughout the period of elections. The report affirmed that 34% of people having age from 18 to 29 years got maximum information regarding political matters from prime time television political programs. Television talk shows and newspapers highlighted their reports and portrayed different stories and comments about situation the late night programs which played their major role in providing political information among youth in America (Young & Tisinger, 2006).

Electronic Media and Political Awareness

Majority of the people consume their prime time in watching TV political programs, public discussions on these shows. Talk shows affect the decision making process about the political scenario of the world and societal issues. This is why we are kept informed by the updated news and changing political scenario in the country. The literacy rate in Pakistan is not too high, that why the people even cannot read newspaper. Therefore they consume their time in watching television to keep themselves informed about political situation in the country. Current research studies illustrate that television is simply accessible to all the people and almost 50 million masses are using television as a primary source of information. (Abercrombie, 1996).

As indicated by (2004) Ryan, the key part of media is cultivating the occasions relating to the terrorism which outline special character and shape to such occasions. Entman (2007) explained the confining as the selection prioritization and highlighting some measurement of the news stories when contrasted with the others cultivating also clarifies and interprets these measurements.

Statement of the Problem

What the role played by electronic media in politics of Pakistan? Whether the role and influence of media on different political issues is differentiated on the basis of agenda by different mainstream channels on different issues? What is the relationship between agenda of electronic media on national issues and public agenda?

Significance of the study

Electronic media played a insignificant role in shaping the agenda of their news and current affair programs. Private television channels started new and different programs especially political talk shows that present bunch of political material larger segment of society and due to this reasons greater part of the people spent much time in watching the

television. So, the popularity and reliability of TV channels increased in the eyes of common people. The officials of these political parties fend the policies of their relevant parties by using the platform of television (Zehra, 2005).

Objectives of the study

The main objective of present study is to discover the role of electronic media in politics of Pakistan and its effects on the general public of Pakistan. Current study is designed to explore the following objectives;

1. To measure the role of Electronic media in politics of Pakistan.
2. To find out viewing of political talk shows and how much electronic media channels have an effect on the perception of people on national issues.
3. To determine the time given on political scenario by news and current affair programs of mainstream television channels of Pakistan.

Research questions:

- To what extent the talk show's agenda influences the public's agenda on significant national issues in pakistan?
- To what extent private television programs are providing political information among viewers?
- Do these talk shows are influencing public opinion among the general public?
- To what extent talk shows motivate their viewers to participate in political process during elections

Literature Review

The current affair programs of TV are the product of the twentieth century. The electronic media background in Britain moved from dictatorial to more democratic process in the 1960s (Scannell 1991). The talk show got momentum and went through a similar development. Martínez (2003) indicated that the talk show is the medium between the host

and a celebrity to a show where there was more room for audience discussion. In the 1980s, a consequent development surfaced: the talk show hosts became more familiar of the potential of the ‘chat’ on a talk show and “the talk show attained new momentum of complexity, both in Britain and the USA” (Tolson 2001: 181).

The participation of the audience in current affair programs and the move towards a mixing of genres has directed to diversification. This is one of the reasons why there has been small research work on current affair talk shows. Certainly, Tolson indicates that “much academic discussion regarding talk shows has been very widespread and frequently highly tentative” (Tolson 2001: 4).

Another research work done by Walker (1990) the constructive or destructive effects of talk shows are impact of public awareness during election, the researcher indicated that all medium has positive and very important role in the lives of people and also creates awareness among them.

According to Mcquail (2005) television as a medium provides its diverse functions in providing information, Education and Entertainment. It also plays its significant role in shaping public perception about different issues. It acts as main source of news & information for all kinds of individuals and also a significant channel of communication which has linkage with political personalities and their possible voters, especially during the time of elections. The television has always been influential and reliable medium in its role of public informer (p. 35).

Electronic media specially TV is playing an important role in getting change in political scenario and constructing the political institutions and activating the public on different political issues (Kensicki, 2000). Pakistan has a vigorous media background, which affords all the political pressures and direct bans on their periodicals from the different governments, despite of all the pressures, it enjoys its maximum freedom. After PEMRA and

private channels started from 2002, electronic media in Pakistan enjoyed its absolute freedom and appeared as an active and changing agent.

New media have dramatically changed the traditional ways of working not only in politics but also in almost all walks of life. Now-a-days, thanks to websites, blogs and other political information links, the concept of 'electric democracy' or 'e-democracy' has become very common. However, mainstream media organizations are regarded as a reliable source of political news (Negrine, 2008).

Technological media plays a key role in bringing about change in the political arena and in organizing political institutions and mobilizing the public on various political aspects (Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Pakistan has a strong media base, which apart from political pressures and occasional direct sanctions depends on the government; enjoy its freedom to the full. In 2002, the Pakistani telecommunications industry was liberated and was seen as a change.

Drew and Weaver (2006) cite some of the key factors in determining how people vote in the US presidential election. According to their findings Radio, TV and the Internet as well as social media and demographics are also important factors in determining the validity of the U.S. voter decision. But another important aspect is discussed that broadcast medium is largely used device in the U.S for conveying political information voting and voter opinion is determined indirectly by the media. Some of the other aspects that make people's ideologies about politics similar to the good and bad schemes, social and human characteristics (Kosicki, Becker and Fredin, 1994).

According to Gitlin (1980) the surrounding has an indispensable part for the interpretation of the events and making the psyches or building the assessment of the viewers rather than real occasions. As indicated by the authoritative requests of the media persons outline the events and the stories. As indicated by Weimann and Winn (2004) said that

media expanded their information circle during their time of crisis and their viewers frequently rely on different media to get information and keep them informed all the time. The basic reason behind this dependency are that media clients can't watch the terrorism events as the eye witness.

Methodology

This research paper is based on quantitative analysis of the results of survey research which is conducted for the doctoral thesis of the author. The targeted population selected for current study was the registered voters of Punjab, Pakistan that were watching talk shows of three private channels. The survey was conducted during January-April 2015 from district Lahore, Punjab to examine the role of electronic media especially TV talk shows on major issues of Pakistan. The sample was purposive by, gender, education, and the location. The sample for the current study was designed in such a way that could present as representative of Punjab.

The respondents of different gender and educational level based in region of the Punjab i.e. Lahore were surveyed. A total of 200 respondents were the sample from province of Punjab. The massive data was collected for this study and analysed by using the latest statistical tool SPSS.

The questionnaire was based on two different parts. The first parts provided the demographic information of the respondents such as Gender, Education, and location of the respondents. While the second part of the questionnaire was a set of close-ended questions to get the response of respondents concerning the role of electronic media on different political issues of Pakistan.

Although having narrower scope when comparing with doctoral thesis, this research paper does not cover the results of whole questionnaire designed for the thesis, but the researcher of the study decided to limit it in six relevant questions for the study. The

questions examine which one is the credible source of information, and which news channel do you prefer to watch. The questionnaire also gathers opinion of the respondents about spending of time on watching TV talk shows, the level of satisfaction with the coverage of private news channels on national issues. It also determines the preferences of different channels for information of national issues. Finally, it examines the rank of different national issues by the respondent from up to down.

Findings

This part of research paper presents the findings of survey research that was aimed to determine the role of Talk shows in highlighting the national issues by setting their agenda. The survey demonstrates constructive insights to understand the public opinion about national issues which is portrayed by private TV Talk shows and also examining the media agenda over nation issues.

The findings regarding six questions asked from the respondents are discussed in this section;

Q-1 Credible Source of information

During the survey research 35.5% respondents told that PTV national TV is the credible source of information While 64.5% respondents were of the view that private TV channels are the most credible source of information. The major reason can be the largest access of cable television throughout the country and the dependency of people on media channels to get the news and information around the world.

Table 1: which one is the most credible source of information?

Source	Frequency	Percent
PTV	38	35.5
Private news channels	162	64.5
Data is evaluated in (%)		(n=200)

Q-2 Preference of Channels

The target populations of my research study were those respondents who watch at least one of the below stated private News Channels. The findings of the study indicated that 29.5 % students like to watch ARY News and 43.5% respondents are highest in percentage regarding watching of GEO News while 27.5 % students prefer to watch SAMAA News. Here the findings showed that large amount of people watch urdu news channels regarding the results of the survey research showed in Table 2.

Table 2: Which News channel do you prefer to watch?

Channel	Frequency	Percent
ARY	58	29.5
GEO	85	43.5
SAMAA	55	27.5
Data is evaluated in (%)		(n=200)

Q-3 Spending Time on watching TV Channels

The findings of the study during survey shows that how much average time you spend per day on watching TV talk shows 59% respondents stated that they consume almost up to 30 minutes daily on watching talk shows. While 33.5% students said they watch talk shows one hour. Only 07.5% respondents prefer to watch talks on Private TV network more than 2 hours. Here, again the results are demonstrating the significance that most of the respondents spend up to 30 minutes to watch television, it can be concluded that they will prefer to watch only selected programs which they have interest (Table 3).

Table 3: Approximately how much average time per day you spend on watching daily Talk Shows?

Time	Frequency	Percent
Up to 1/2 Hour	99.0	59.0
1 Hour	86.0	33.5
Two or more than Two Hours	15.0	07.5
Data is evaluated in (%)		(n=200)

Q-4 Viewers' Satisfaction at Coverage of National Issues by Talk Shows

By asking the question of satisfaction with the reporting of talk shows on national issues, more than 32% respondents are satisfied to very much with the coverage of national issues, 36% were satisfied with the coverage of issue. On the other hand 21.0% respondents said that they are somewhat satisfied with the coverage of talk shows and not at all, 10% said that they are totally not satisfied with the converge of TV talk shows on national issues (Table 4). The findings were significant and gave the maximum support to the study as respondents of the survey said that they are much and very much satisfied with the coverage of TV talk show.

Table 4: To what extent you are satisfied with the coverage of Private News Channels on national issues in Pakistan?

	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	65	32.5
Much	72	36.0
Somewhat	43	21.5
Not at all	20	10

Data is evaluated in (%)

(n=200)

Q-5 Viewers of Daily Talk shows

During the research study, the result revealed that 33.0% viewers very much like to watch GEO Television which is highest majority among all while on other hand 14.5% respondents were of the view that they vey much like to watch ARY News which comes at second position while SAMAA TV comes at the third and last stage in term of watching which is 8% very much respectively (Table 5). Overall findings on this question revealed the similar responses of the respondents in case of ARY and SAMAA News.

Table 5: How Much do you prefer to expose the following channels for information of national issues?

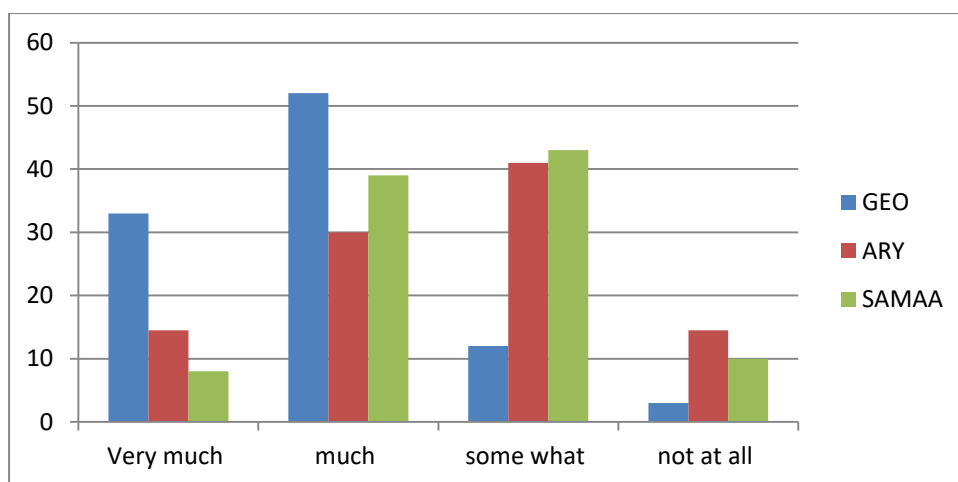
	GEO	ARY	SAMAA
Very Much	33.0	14.5	08.0
Much	52.0	30.0	39.0
Somewhat	12.0	41.0	43.0

Not at all 03.0 14.5 10.0

Data is evaluated in (%) (n=200)

A large amount of the viewers showed in their responses that they like to watch at least one of the above mentioned channels on daily basis. Here the findings revealed that viewers watch one the selected news channels of the study.

Figure-1



Q-6 Ranking of National Issues by Public

In order to determine the public agenda on selected issues, the following question was asked ' please rank and write down at least three important issues of the followings according to your opinion'. These important issues should be in descending order of priority, Terrorism, Corruption, political instability, health issues, international interference, Unemployment, poverty, Education, and economic crisis'. The data is presented in cumulative order in ranking of issues, first', second, and 'third rank. After its ranking the cumulative ranks orders are compared with each other in results and then given their positions. The following (Table 2.6) of the study showed the public agenda on national issues of three selected Private talk shows of News Channels.

Overall, the 25.06% viewers of the three mainstream talk shows were of the view that issue of 'terrorism' got the priority among viewers and list of other issues, while 18.96%

respondents said that ‘energy crisis’ is the most significant issues among viewers, on issue of ‘Corruption’ 8.86% respondents thought the most important issues among them, ‘Pak-Indo Relations’ got 7.76% order of priorities among viewers & considered the most significant issue of the country among them,

Whereas the issue of ‘Health’ got 8.16% significant issues among viewers which is almost similar as in ‘Corruption’, the ranking order of ‘international interference’ issue showed that 6.23% respondents considered the most important issues among others, the issue of ‘unemployment’ got 5.8% importance level among respondents, only 4.7% viewers proposed the importance level about issue of ‘poverty’ among them, while 5.06% viewers said that ‘Education’ is the most significant issue among them but the issue of ‘economic’ crisis got 10.09% level of importance among viewers which is the third position among all the significant issues of Pakistan (Shehata, 2010).

Table 6: Ranking of National Issues by Public

Issues	First*	Second*	Third*	Cumulative Rank*
Terrorism	30.5	19.0	25.7	25.06
Energy Crisis	20.5	18.7	17.7	18.96
Corruption	10.0	09.3	07.3	08.86
Pak-Indo Relation	10.5	04.3	08.5	07.76
Health	04.5	10.0	10.0	08.16
International interference	07.0	07.7	04.0	06.23
Unemployment	04.0	06.7	06.7	05.8
Poverty	03.5	04.0	05.1	04.7
Education	04.5	08.0	03.0	05.16
Economic crisis	05.0	12.03	12.0	9.76

*Data is evaluated in (%)

(n=200)

Conclusion

Based upon the results of the present study, this paper investigates the opinion of the people about role of TV talk shows in discussing national issues of Pakistan. The argument is based on the quantitative analysis of a survey of opinion of people in Punjab. The survey involved a close-ended questionnaire to gather the opinion by a carefully designed

representative sample. The findings of the survey seem to recommend that the electronic media especially talk shows has accomplished great importance in the discussing the political issues in Pakistan.

Over the years Pakistani media has seen many ups and down in its growth and progress but the media boom in the beginning of 21st century has unfolded tremendous opportunities and challenges to it. The private electronic media has played an important and effective role in national politics.

Electronic media should be presented the actual picture of our politics and politicians. The findings revealed the immense usage of talk shows for gaining political information and awareness. The survey suggests that prime time talk shows are viewed mostly by the public to get political information and satisfaction about the coverage of national issues by talk shows of private channels. The majority of the respondents uses private news channels and finds some time to watch talk shows on daily basis. It is worth mentioning that the plentiful respondents argue while ranking the ten national issues from up to down that terrorism, energy crisis and corruption are the main issues of Pakistan during the survey conducted from January- April, 2015. After analysis the findings of present study, the researcher found a positive strong correlation on ten national issues, while it was found a moderate correlation between electronic media agenda and public agenda on four issues out of ten important issues. This is why only six issues of the study are strongly correlated in comparing the public agenda and electronic media agenda. So the results about the ten selected issues are strongly supported the correlations between media agenda and public agenda while only few of the issues which found slightly difference among them in term of comparison between media agenda and public agenda. It clearly indicates that viewers of all talk shows follow the same agenda as the Television talk shows present on selected national issues.

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