



## Television and Political Awareness: Measuring the Impact of Political Talk Shows on Political Participation of Students of Lahore

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### Abstract

This study explores the impact of television political talk shows on political awareness and political participation of the students of Lahore, Pakistan. For this quantitative research data was collected through a cross sectional survey using the instrument of questionnaire from 12 private and four public sector universities (n=400) through multistage sampling technique. The study measured the relationship between students' level of TV political talk shows viewing and their political knowledge, political awareness and political participation. The statistical tests of regression analysis and mediation were performed using process in SPSS. While testing the hypothesis, it was confirmed that greater exposure to TV talk shows lead to enhanced political knowledge, political awareness and political participation. The study also found that a mediation of political awareness exists between political participation and watching political talk shows.

**Keyword:** *Political Talk Shows, Political Participation, Political Knowledge, Political Awareness, Social Learning Theory*

### Introduction

The mass media are considered as one of the biggest player in democratic societies as they play vigorously in developing the effective electoral system, having eye on parliament and judiciary proceedings and on other state actors, and even on civil society while protecting their democratic rights and performance. (McQuail, 2000). Das (2011) asserted that the media are more powerful than common people as they are organized and have a wide reach to masses. Media make society enable in

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than common people as they are organized and reach to masses. Media make society enable in monitoring the activities of government and officials and to apply their information in casting vote. So they have very strong influence on the modern life of people (Craig, 2004). Media furnish a link between the society and politicians by drawing out public issues. They arouse political understanding and help the users to see and know more about the current political consequences (Wolf, 2010).

Since the beginning of 21st century, the Pakistan broadcast media have turned into the most powerful and prevalent source of information, education and entertainment. They play significant role in determining, shaping, figuring and reshaping the citizen's perception, opinion, behavior and attitudes (Yousaf, 2012). The significant force of media encourages democratic behaviors by promoting tolerance, defending human rights, educating voters and guaranteeing that governments are accountable, however, similarly it can also contribute in public cynicism and democratic decay (Coronel, 2002). Media and politics both have a composite relationship and both these two elements have deep impact in nation's building and country progression.

Television has become the main source of storytelling in the Pakistan society, while political talk shows are the main content which are telecasted on a prime time and largely watched by Pakistani society. People consider TV as a credible source because they can hear people speak and see people act (Gallup, 2014; Craig, 2004). In Pakistan, private media industry is flourishing rapidly. Most of private media groups are related to

news channels. Media researchers and scholars agree that television influence the society politically by disseminating the information (Jones, 2010).

The studies on media effects largely discovered that media influenced, shaped and established worldviews, social perceptions, behaviors and attitudes in different composite ways (Nichole, Shamil & Mahnaz, 2009). Katz (1957) believed that the content of the media set the agenda of public debate and as people are more politicize than ever but very little attention had been paid that the political discussions, political participations and political efficacy activities are increased due to the political TV Talk Shows or not. Meanwhile, the students of universities are considered as educated persons who are influential on the process of social change in any developing society (Biersteadt, 1957). So researcher has been encouraged to study on the students of Lahore's universities and their dependency on the political TV talk shows to check the correlation between political participation and viewing political TV Talk shows.

The researchers' interest was carried on from here because TV as a mass medium is an undoubtedly popular tool and political TV talk shows are largely viewed in Pakistani society.

#### Objective

The study is aimed at exploring the relationship between political talk shows and university students' level of political awareness in the capital city of largest populated Punjab province of Pakistan. The research objectives are to:

- Examine why students watch TV talk shows

- To estimate the relationship of political knowledge & awareness level of the students who watch political talk shows televised by private media news channel. It also
- Aim to evaluate the degree of influence of talk shows on students' political participation

### **Literature Review**

The all forms of communication channels affect the society's learning and living standard significantly but the impact of TV is more challenging while its access to every class of the society is increasing day by day (Srygley, 1978). The trend of political talk shows has become the main item of these news channels and these shows defines and redefines the opinion, attitude and perception of people about politics. Qadir and Riaz (2015) maintained that the primary objective of the talk shows was to take more attention on the issues which were politically hot. People are mainly affected by the news and news talk shows that are on aired on different news channel of Pakistan around the clock (Ahmed, 2010).

Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova, and Shleifer (2003) have verified that the privately owned media is correlated with improving social behavior; while on the other side, where the media are controlled by the state and censor political information to make unaware from political happenings and promote typical government agenda. Newton (1999) clarified that there is a clear evidence of strong association in Britain survey between watching a lot of TV news and higher level of political information, understanding and mobilization. Javaid and Elahi (2014) maintained that the media's influence in urban areas can be seen

in the General Elections of 2008 and 2013 where it played its full role.

Political knowledge is a “cornerstone construct in research on political behavior” (Mondak, 2001, 238), influenced citizens’ political beliefs regarding voting choice to the candidate (Barabas, Jerit, Pollock & Rainey, 2014). Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 10) described political knowledge as “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory.” There are different components related to knowledge, the ability (possess enough cognitive skills), the opportunity (chance to get information) and motivation (ability and wish to learn). The most important role in the variation of gaining political knowledge depends upon media coverage (Luskin, Robert & Bullock, 2011). Nabila et. al (2014) also confirmed the hypothesis that greater the tendency for watching talk shows, increased the awareness among youth. Yousaf (2012) maintained that TV talk shows were growing political awareness by playing very informative role in Pakistan and concluded with the research work that TV talk shows presented informatory evidence and generated political awareness against status quo. (Abedin, 2015) aimed to study the awareness level of society after watching political talk shows, and these shows were creating positive contribution in the development of the country.

#### Social Learning Theory

Bandura indicates that people gain knowledge of great deal merely by observing the behaviors of others in social situation (O’Rorke, 2006). Bandura (1977, p. 22) explained that “Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention

hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.”

Social Learning Theory stresses the relationship among social traits of the environment and how they are sensed and how the society takes action in reproducing that particular behaviors what it view around it. It emphasized that people not only gain knowledge or learn from their own experiences, but also by detecting and observing the activities of other people and the results of those activities (Singhal et al., 2000). The theory obviously demonstrates that the media play significant role in socialization process. The proposed model in the light of social learning theory is represented in figure 1. In which, the impact of consumption of political talk shows on political knowledge, political awareness and political participation has been investigated.

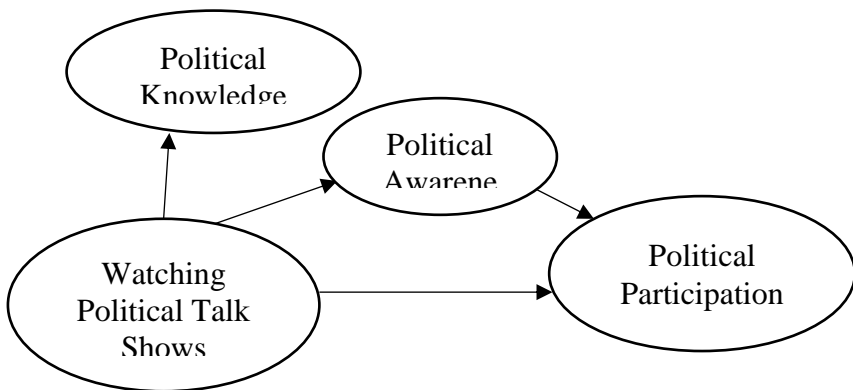


Figure 1: *Impact of Watching Political talk shows on Political awareness, political participation and political knowledge*

**Research Questions**

RQ 1. What is the relationship between the university students level of political knowledge and their political TV talk shows watching habit?

RQ 2. What is the relationship between level of political awareness and watching political talk shows in TV among students in Lahore?

RQ 3. What is the relationship between level of political activities and watching political talk shows among students?

RQ 4. What is the relationship between level of political activities and political awareness among students?

**Method and Material**

Research population were students of different private and government universities of Lahore, Pakistan offering both social sciences and natural sciences programs. The data was collected during the months of September and October 2018 soon after as the July 25 General Election of Pakistan.

Sample size was obtained by using Cochran approach of sample size determination in which at 5% level of significance at least 386 respondents were taken but the questionnaire was filled from 450 students to avoid the invalid, wrong or incomplete responses. Multistage sampling technique was used to get the desire sample size. In the first stage four public sector and 12 private sector universities were selected with 200 each sample from the private sector and public sector universities of the city. Each university was further divided according to social sciences and natural sciences programs. In next stage, different department were randomly selected from these selected

programs and in the last according to the proportion allocation desire sample of students (250) were selected. Thus total sample of 450 respondents was taken.

#### Instrumentation

The questionnaire was carefully formed in order to answer the different constructs. It comprised the list of the questions having demographic and other adapted items from already built scales. It included 30 close ended questions. Moreover, researchers themselves carried the paper base survey in which respondent did not take more than eight minutes to fill the questionnaire.

#### Measuring Procedure

In the study Political Talk Shows Consumption was taken as independent variable while Political Knowledge, Political Awareness and Political Participation were taken as dependent variable. Political Knowledge includes four items adapted from (Carpini et al., 1993) and corrected answer is measured as one while incorrect answer is measured as 0. Construct was further scale as light, moderate and high knowledge in terms score 4, 3 and less than 2 respectively. Political Awareness includes 12 items measured on Likert Scale according to the current issues ( $M=3.27$ ,  $SD=0.47$ ,  $\alpha=0.843$ ). Similarly, Political Participation variable have 10 items adapted from the McLeod et al. (2013) scale of political participation ( $M=2.3$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ,  $\alpha=0.869$ ) as per Table 1.

#### Results



**Table 1:** *Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
<b>Political Awareness</b>	How much you heard about . . .	3.27	0.47	0.843
	President Mamnoon Hussain			
	Mian Nawaz Sharif			
	Ayaz Sadiq			
	Imran Khan			
	Asif Ali Zardari			
	Chairman Senate Raza Rabbani			
	Altaf Hussain			
	Karachi Operation			
	Zarb e Azab			
	Local body representative			
	PTI & PAT sit-ins			
Dr. Asim				
<b>Political Participation</b>	How much you involve in these activities . .	2.3	0.49	0.869
	Worn a Party Shirt, cap, muffler , dopata			
	Displayed a badge or sticker			
	Attended a political rally			
	Worked on a political campaign			
	Attended a political debate or forum			
	Engaged in discussions regarding political events (i.e. Others, parents, grandparents, Siblings etc.)			
	Share political discussion with friends			
	Give money to a candidate or political party			
	Attended a public meeting			
	Cast vote on social website polls regarding political parties' activities			
	Index	2.23	1.23	
<b>Political Knowledge</b>	What do you think, is government run by for benefit of all or for few people?			
	Who is responsible for determining a new law?			
	Which party has chairman of Senate?			
	Which party has the most members in the parliament after the general election 2018?			
<b>Talk Shows Consumption</b>	Index	1.8	0.8	
	How many hours average do you watch TV political talk shows?			

**Table 1: Correlations**

	1	2	3
1. Watching Political Talk Shows	—		
2. Political Knowledge	.367**	—	
3. Political Participation	.371**	.221**	—
4. Political Awareness	.254**	.371**	.269**

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

**Table 3: Why students watch talk shows**

	Frequency	Percent
Entertainment	38	9.5
Education and Guidance	68	17.0
Pastime	44	11.0
News & Information	150	37.5
Sit and Watch with family	38	9.5
To know more about political affairs	48	12.0
Political party affiliation	6	1.5
Other	8	2.0
Total	400	100.0

**Table 4: Estimated Direct and Indirect Effects**

Relationships	B	P	R <sup>2</sup>
1. WPTS->PK	0.570**	0.001	0.14
2. WPTS->PA	0.248**	0.000	0.07
3. WPTS->PP	0.516**	0.000	0.14
4. WPTS-> PA->PP	0.052**	0.000	0.18
5. PA->PP	0.570**	0.001	0.07

\*\* Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

WPTS=Watching Political Talk Shows; PK=Political Knowledge; PP= Political Participation, PA= Political Awareness

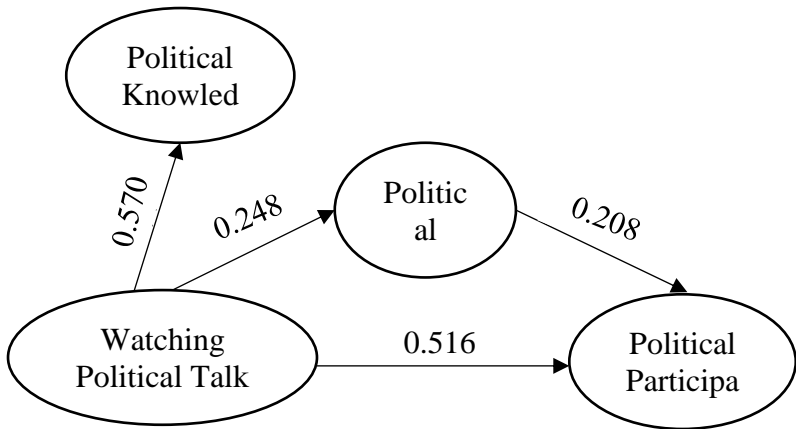


Figure 4: Research model with path values

The results showed that 37.5% of the students watched talk shows for new and information and after that they watched for education and guidance, while there were only 1.5% of the students who watch for political party affiliation. (Table 2). All the concerning variable, watching political talk shows, political knowledge, political awareness and political participation have a positive significant correlation Table 3).

Table 4 clearly shows the evidence that watching political talk shows significantly predicts the political knowledge ( $b=0.570$ ,  $t=7.881$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), which represents that the in every unit change of watching political talk shows influence in increasing the political knowledge. Meanwhile, the path (direct effect) from watching political talk shows to political awareness is positive and statistically significant ( $b=0.2477$ ,  $t=5.24$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). Similarly, the path (direct effect) from watching political talk shows to political participation is positive and significant ( $b=0.516$ ,  $t=6.8371$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), indicates that respondents spending more

time on watching political talk shows are more likely to active in politics. The direct effect of political awareness on political participation is also positive and significant ( $b=0.2082$ ,  $t=3.9454$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ), indicates that the people who are politically well aware are more likely to participate in politics. The indirect effect is tested which is also statistical significant ( $IE= 0.0516$ ): 95% CI (0.0182, 0.0917), hence political awareness mediates between watching political talk shows and political participation.

### **Discussion**

The study has attempted to investigate the role of exposure to political talk shows and its impact on political participation, political knowledge and political awareness. Another objective was also to check the mediation of political awareness between political talk shows and political participation. First, the political talk shows have significantly predicted the political knowledge which supported the studies (Lee, & Cappella, 2001; Prior, 2005), however, this study was performed on the educated youth who were studying in the universities of Lahore.

Secondly, political talk shows had a significant positive effect on political awareness. As with the higher exposure to the political talk shows the level of political awareness increased. Social Learning Theory relates to the learning process and social behavior which believes that new behaviors is developed by observing others (Bandura, 1977). So, watching talk shows confirms the positive relationship with political awareness. The results also confirmed by the study of Yaseen, Mamdani &

Siddiqui (2018) that political talk shows promote the political awareness.

Third, Political talk shows put significantly positive impact on political participation. The study (Zuniga, Diehl & Ardevol, 2017) confirms that a usage of news significantly positive predict the political participation and similarly political discussion also mediates between news consumption and political participation. Katsipis & Carla (2017) also found that political participation significantly depended on political awareness although people who have better living style are more likely to actively participate in politics. Fourth, it has also observed that political awareness also significantly encourages the respondents for political participation. It confirms the different research work. Hobolt (2005) also maintained that the political information which lead to the political awareness enhance the ability to participate politically.

#### Conclusion

The study found that there was a significant influence of TV talk shows watching on political awareness, political knowledge and political participation. Similarly, there was also strong positive association between political awareness and political participation and ultimately political awareness mediated between TV talk shows consumption and political participation. Moreover, it was also found that majority students watch talk shows for news, information, education and guidance. As R-square was small, reflecting that other factors also influenced the level of political participation. So, in future studies

other independent variable should also consider i.e. social media, FM radio etc.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

This study only considered the students of the different universities of the Lahore. In Lahore, a large part of the population is under matric or illiterate so it is recommended that this study can be replicated on all the sections of the society. Also, this study measured only the impact of television political talk shows, future study may involve the usage of social media and its influence on the dependent variable of this study.

### **Funding and Ethical Considerations**

This study solely based on the efforts from the authors and did not receive any funding from any institution. Formal permission was taken from the universities' authorities before getting students responses during traditional pencil survey on the campus premises. It was make sure that the identity of the respondents remained anonymous to avoid potential harm to the respondents.

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