

Political Awareness and Media's Consumption Patterns among Students-A Case Study of University of Gujrat, Pakistan

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Abstract

This research examines the role of different media outlets in creating political awareness among students. This study shows that students of University of Gujrat consume mass media for both entertainment and political information. However, Television considered the best source of political information. Through this study agenda and framing theory used which revealed that media has an effect on its target audience. While, survey method has used to gauge the media consumption among university students. Mass media is considered a source of information that has the power to change choice of people. Media present issues to its audience with an effect that public forms opinion according to media's emphasis on issue.

Keywords: Mass Media, Consumption Pattern, Political Awareness, Media Agenda, Media Framing,

Introduction

This research is an attempt to study the role of media in creating political awareness among University of Gujrat's students. As communicating with the masses has evolved over time. Mass media play an important role in shaping our attitudes which affect our society. The distinctive features of the mass media all companies are the dissemination of information and ideas to the public, or they're part of (Bulmler, & Katz, 1974). The mass media mean communication to the public at large. Public influences of the media through their viewership, listenership or readership or collectively. According to some studies media are essential providers of political information. The media provide political decision on which voters base their decision on. Media effects are often important, but they vary depending on media type and outcome (Chaffee and Frank, 1996; John Halpern, and Morris, 2002, McLeod et al, 1968). Furthermore, media plays a significant role in shaping public perception on political issues such as election campaign is going on in Media spaces. Media are central to politics today due to immediate and instant dissemination of political issues.

However, the consumption patterns of media depend on public what they like to consume. The New York Times is reporting on a new study of American media consumption that says the average person spends 8.5 hours every day in some sort of media screen (television, computer, cell phone etc.). That is a huge portion of time. The need of youth in politics means involving today's young in tomorrow's democracy. Political participation by citizens is considered a pre-requisite for successful democratic society. So youngsters need to assume their responsibility as participating citizen. The study is an effort to estimate the University of Gujrat student's consumption patterns of electronic, print and electronic media for political issues. Political issues and usage of different media, is the debatable issue now-a-days.

Youth is considered a strong pillar of any society because it is involved in making changes and processes of any country. Youth raise their voices in the public sphere. Their participation makes changes in the political activities and takes notice. By comparing the relative influence of channels of mass communication and interpersonal skills, increases in political involvement in the life course, but lower levels of youth starting offset increases in older cohorts (Miller, 1992). They are sensitive and can understand political situations very well. In a society change can be brought through new political ideas, participation, affiliation and awareness. The need of youth in politics means involving today's young in tomorrow's democracy. So youngsters need to assume their responsibility as participating citizen. The study is an effort to estimate the University of Gujrat student's consumption patterns of electronic, print, for political issues.

As the political issues is one of the burning issues of today's society. This means the collective idea of many people. The purpose of the study political issue for research is to realize the media's role towards it. As the political issues in Pakistan has increased and the current situation of these issues has affected the whole society. It leads to political instability. This study will help to know how much affiliation and interest do university students have towards political issues and what are their preferences who seek this information.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the media's consumption patterns among University of Gujrat students.
- To find out the Preference of the media outlet for consumption of political information.

To explain if the medium for political information gratifying the needs of students
To understand whether students discuss political issues and if yes from where they are taking points.

Research Hypothesis

Whether consumption patterns of media affects the political awareness of University of Gujrat students or not?
Does the relationship exist between the media's political contents and political awareness?

Literature Review

McComb and Shaw (1972) refer to the idea that media coverage of an idea that makes people think it's an important issue. The media have begun to influence and change public opinion. Media began to raise questions in a way that created the sensationalism with its formulation in the public mind. The new way to express, so to speak as a politician in the political debates and discussion programs showed the behaviour of the people of this country. The media should adopt such means in which they could publicly recognize no negative impact on their minds. Mass media is seen as the thinking of the whole society. And communicate to the masses has evolved over time. Studies have shown that mass media play an important role in shaping our attitudes that affect our society.

Since the media play a war of words and highlighting political issues with exaggeration to improve his hearing. News media in this case seem more progressive working primarily coverage is given to political discussions. Policy issues to create sensationalism in the audience. And this happens because of constant media coverage and discussion on an issue. The public has an exposure to different media and the bombardment of media on political matters creates awareness to what extent and biasness media. Some studies of the media play a significant role in shaping public perception of political issues especially during the days of election campaign gives media spaces. The media are at the heart of politics today because of the instantaneous and immediate release of political issues. Studies show that the influence of public media through their viewers, listeners or readers or collectively. Cohen (1963) believes that the media cannot tell the public to think they can have a major impact on what the public thinks.

The theory of agenda setting used to draw important issue that is established among policy makers, the media and the public (and Roger Dearing, 1996; Ku, Kaid, & Pfau, 2003) must be considered in the context of development policy. The mass media mould public opinion and public forces to think about it is they want to listen or not. The mass media creates an image in the minds of people in general on political issues. It is the awareness of public policy. Biasness media often shows the political party where he sees his interest. Media often take sides of the political party because of its ownership structure. It must be impartial so that he can see the true picture of politics and society too. Young people can make a change in the development of a nation. If our media shows and promotes biasness and show only one side of a story and awareness in a real sense cannot be possible because political participation is a prerequisite of any society. While youth need to be involved in political issues so they should know which person should be chosen as a leader and it may be possible with the help of the media.

Pratt and Stromberg (2005) study revealed that television increases their level of political knowledge and participation than others. Television offers voters many things during the election year. It televised the debates which educate the public about an issue. It provides in-depth coverage on political issues and also highlights political process to the people by providing minute to minute information. On the other hand theoretical framework in which both framing and agenda setting theories put stress on the importance of different aspects of the subject. Framing theory is more concerned with presentation issues whereas the agenda setting deals with the importance of the issue. Agenda setting refers essentially to the idea that the media focus on certain issues. And framing refers to how an issue is presented and how it influences the public.

The idea behind this study is to know the relationship between the information needs of people and their media choices means that media usage is mainly consumed by students at the University of Gujrat. People seek information when they know or when they are more interested in one question. What is regarded as valid in the eyes of the public and how the message is taken or collected by them and with what impact? People search for information using different policies according to various media that information, knowledge or news they want knowledge and they are interested in. It is possible to link the knowledge of those present and the goals knowledge of a problem through the information needs recognized and the media are preferred by the people. Cook (1998) believes that the relationship between the media of governments, political parties, debates, campaigns and voters, etc. provides an opportunity for public communication. However, the media are not only conveying corporate politicians will communicate messages to voters. They are also active participants in the creation of political messages. According to the findings of some studies most of the media time are not the initiators on the messages they have a significant impact on what is communicated in the public interest and knowledge and what is not included and then the agenda of political debate.

Methodology

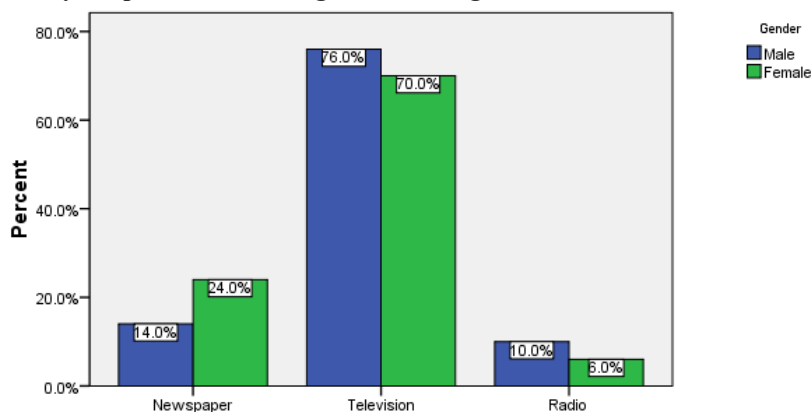
As the study enhances guiding towards the audience who are consuming media for political awareness to gauge the impact survey will be conducted. Survey research method will help to collect data from each sample. According to Kraemer (1991) Survey research quantitatively is use to describe certain aspects of a given population. These aspects typically include the examination of the relationship between variables. Second, survey data needed for research, therefore, are relative gathered from people. Finally the research results of the survey can be returned to the general population from which a selected portion of the population uses. Survey method is selected as it is well planned. It can be generalized and can be statistically analysed. To meet the requirement of the study Two-way stratification sampling was adopted for data collection from the target population. The study divided the target population into two parts natural science department and social science department and then total two hundred respondents equally consisting males and females were selected randomly from them.

Variables of the Study

In this research the key variables that will be used are Independent variable and Dependent variable. The independent variable is Consumption of Media whereas dependent variable is Political Awareness. **Consumption of media;** Television includes (news bulletin and breaking news, political news bulletin and breaking news, political affairs and political conflicts, political talk shows. Radio includes Political discussion program and Radio political news. The newspaper includes Editorials, Columns and political news. **Political Awareness;** Knowledge gaining through political news, reading editorials and columns, and also watching and listening political programs and political talk shows.

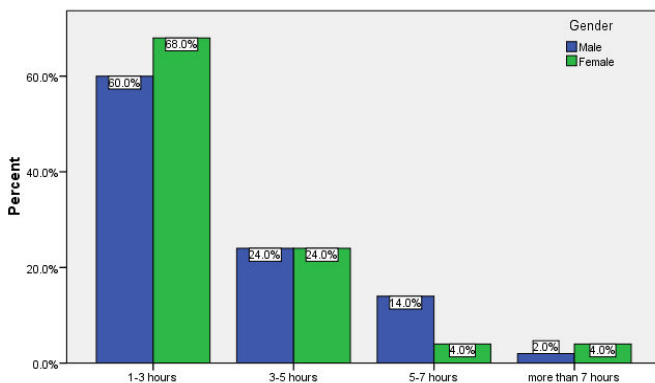
Analysis:

What is your preference among the following media outlets?



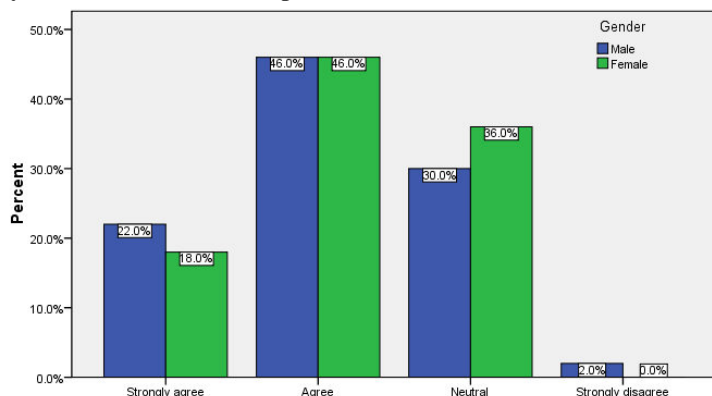
Graph .1 shows that 14% males and 24% females prefer to read newspaper among the different media outlets. 76% males and 70 % females prefer to watch television. While, radio listeners are lower in figure than these to medium users.

For how many hours do you consume on media?



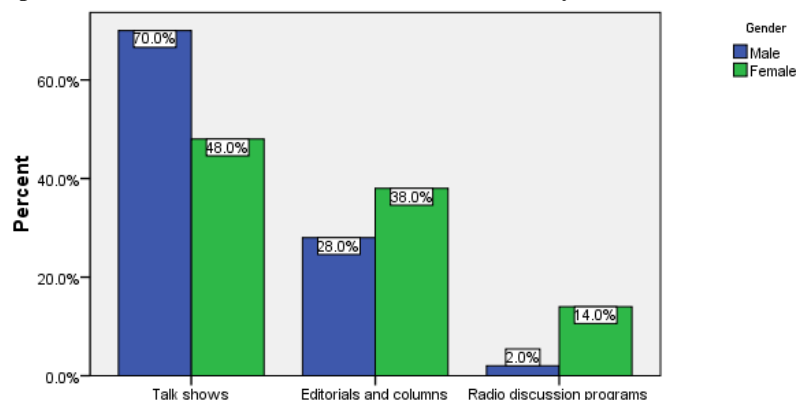
Graph .2 shows that 60% males and 68% females like to consume media for 1 to 3 hours which is high figure of media consumers and 24% males and 24% females like to consume media for 3 to 5 hours that is significant figure.

Do you consume media for political information?



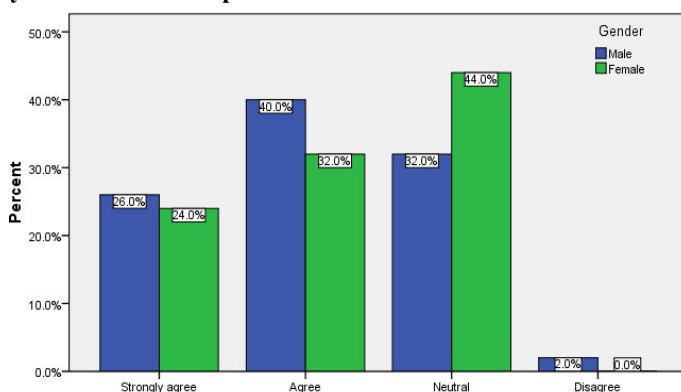
Graph .3 shows the percentage of target population who consume media for political information. 22% males and 18% females consume more media for political information. 46% both males and females less consume media as compare to more media consumers for political information. 30% males and 36% females consume media to some extent for political information.

For political information which format of media do you like to consume?



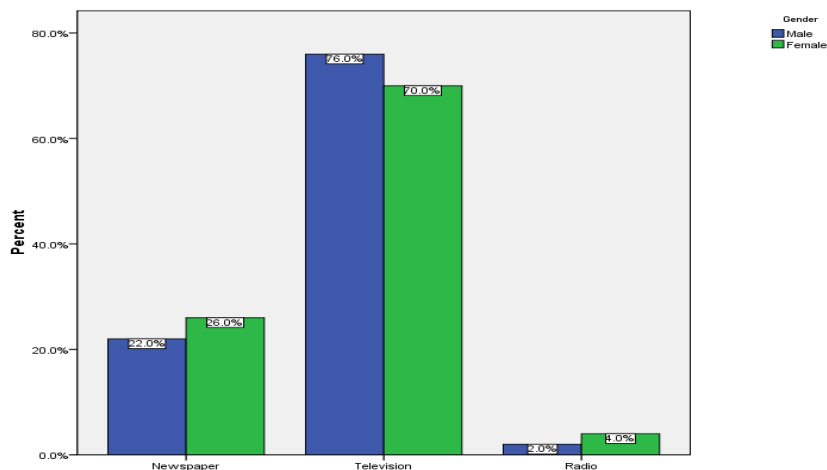
Graph .4 gives information about different formats of political programs that is consumed for political information. 70% males and 48% females like talk shows for political information. 28 % males and 38 % females like to read editorials and columns for political information. 14% males like to listen radio discussion programs.

Do you like to discuss political issues with others?



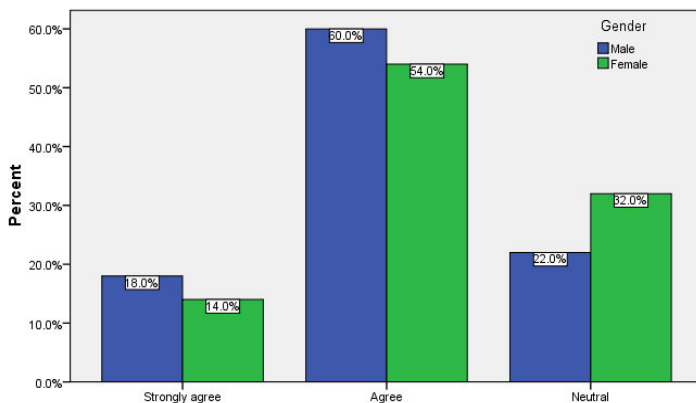
Graph .5 shows the discussion of political issues with others. According to this graph 26 % male and 24 % females like to discuss political issues with others. 40 % males and 32 % females like to discuss less as compare to the above mentioned respondents. And 32 % males and 44 % of females like to discuss political information with others to some extent.

From where do you take points for discussion?



Graph .6 is about the points that are taken while discussion of political issues with others. 22% males and 26 % females take points from newspapers for discussion. 76% males and 70 % females take points from television for their discussion. And 2 % males and 4% females take points from radio for their discussion.

Do these points represent the programs of media?



Graph .7 is about the reference of points that are taken from the program of media. 18% males and 14 % females more like to refer the programs of media. 60 % males and 54 % females also like to refer the programs of media but less as compare to above mentioned. And 22 % males and 32 % of females to some extent refer the programs of media.

Discussion & Conclusion

The findings suggest that Mass Media plays a powerful and influencing role in creating political awareness among University of Gujrat students. The existing evidence supports that “Consumption patterns of media affect the political awareness in students.” While the other hypothesis is rejected that is “Consumption patterns of media does not affect Political awareness in students.” Katherine Cramer Walsh puts stress that political discussions are important elements to judge the citizen’s political knowledge. This study highlighted that consumption of media is deeply linked in creating political awareness. Political interests are defined by political discussions and also by exposition to the media. This study revealed that students of University of Gujrat like to consume different media outlets. Most students consume media for 1-3 hours. Most prefer to watch television but some students also like to read newspaper’s columns and editorials for political information.

In fact, television is more popular for creating political information in creating awareness. Political talk shows are more popular among other political formats for political information and the target population like to watch them for the purpose of information. Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz believed that media content sets the agenda for public discussion (Wilcox, et al, 2003, p.213). Media set the agenda for political issues of media. News channels are in competition and the main competition is between political talk shows. This is why media set agenda for political issues and discussion programs. The reasons for setting agenda on political talk shows are because of analyst opinion and presence of different political personalities during the talk show. Due to which students rely on television. However, students like to discuss political issues with others and for political discussions they mostly take points from talk shows. This is because political talk shows set the minds of their

audience and then audience discuss and perceive information in the way media want them within the structure of the frame.

In conclusion, study analyses and examines that students of University of Gujrat are politically aware and television is most popular medium for political information among most of the target population of University of Gujrat. They rely and depend on talk shows for the political information within the frame and the agenda set by the news media.

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