

Portrayal of the President Asif Ali Zardari in Editorials: A Study of Pre and Post Presidential Election Coverage.

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Abstract

This research explores the image of ex-President Asif Ali Zardari in elite press before and after presidential election by comparing the coverage of daily “The Nation” and “Dawn”. For this study the time period has been chosen from June to 6th December 2008. For this empirical study the researcher explored the editorials of daily Nation and Dawn. In this empirical study the content analysis of the Nation and Dawn editorials have been analyzed. The editorials have been placed into 6 categories and it is linked with public opinion theory. This study help to unbderstand that how the media organization also in some cases disseminate their opinion during the high times of political events

1. Introduction

Media is a major source of information in a society. It bears high influence on the people in different ways. The media persuades the people in different ways and also plays an effective role to change the public opinion. An eminent social psychologist assesses past and potential contributionsof psychology to an understanding of public opinion, and emphasizes the need for psychologists to join forces with sociologists and political scientists in order "to understand how the opinionsof individuals articulate to become a politically effectiveforce"(Smith, 1971)

In a democratic society, the function of the press is to serves the people by providing information about one segment of society to other and about the activities of government to the people. The idea of democratic society is one where all citizens have equal access to information about the society much of this information is provided by the press. Therefore, research information will not dead to manipulation and control, unless the public does not have access to such information to provide this access, more source of information with different points of views are needed.

The mass media are generally unsuccessful in persuading; however, they not only are eminently successful in informing, but on many topics and for most people they are also the sole source of information. This is the underlying principle of the agenda- setting model that is being used in much current research on the effects of mass communication. The mass media not only tell people what to think about, but they are a powerful determinant of the relative importance of the issues they choose to discuss. In this regard, newspapers appear to have an edge over television.

The editorial page of a newspaper is an opinion on any certain topic. Articles appearing on a newspaper's editorial pages represent the views of the newspaper's editor and/or its editorial board. For this empirical study the researcher explores the editorial coverage of Daily “The Nation” and “Dawn” about the portrayal of President Asif Ali Zardari Pre & Post Presidential election. In this study the researcher attempt to check out which newspaper gives greater coverage to positive negative & neutral image of Mr. Zardari in editorials.

Portrayal define as a word picture of a person's appearance and character or acting the part of a character on stage; dramatically representing the character by speech and action and gesture or a brief characterization.

2. Back ground

Asif Ali Zardari is the 11th and current President of Pakistan and the Co-Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party. Zardari is the widower of Benazir Bhutto, who twice served as Prime Minister of Pakistan. When his wife was assassinated in December 2007, he became the leader of the Pakistan People's Party. Early Life and Education of Asif Ali Zardari belongs to the Zardari Clan, a Baloch tribe that is mostly settled in Sindh. Asif is from the town of Nawabshah in Sindh. He is the son of Hakim Ali Zardari, a Pakistani cinema owner, a politician in Pakistani Politics since the 1970s and the leader of the Zardari Clan.

Co-Chairman of the PPP: Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on 27 December 2007, shortly after returning to Pakistan from exile. On 30 December 2007, Asif Ali Zardari became the Co-Chairman of the PPP, along with his son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who is currently studying at Oxford. Bilawal is intended to fully assume the post when he completes his education. Pakistan's Election Commission on 22 August announced that a presidential election would be held on 6th September, and the nomination papers could be filed from 26 August.

President of Pakistan: Zardari was elected President of Pakistan on 6 September 2008, as Chief election

commissioner Qazi Mohammad Farooq announced that "Asif Ali Zardari secured 281 votes out of the 426 valid votes polled in the parliament," In Sindh, Zardari had 62 of the 65 electoral votes while his two main opponents got zero votes; in North West Frontier Province Zardari got 56 votes against 5 by Siddiqui and one by Hussain; in Balochistan, 59 votes while Siddiqui and Hussain got 2 each. However, Zardari did not win the majority in The Nation's biggest province, Punjab, where the PML-N's Siddiqui got a clear majority. BBC reported that Zardari "won 481 votes, far more than the 352 votes that would have guaranteed him victory. **Editorials**

Editorials are generally printed other on their own page of a newspaper or in a clearly marked-off column and are always labeled as editorials (To avoid confusion with news coverage). They often address current events or Public controversies. Generally, editorials fall into four broad types: News, Policy, Social, and special. When covering controversial topics such as election issue, some opinion page editors will run "Dueling" editorials, with each staking out a respective side of the issue.

The research particularly studies how the Pakistani newspapers portray Mr. Zardari image in Editorials. The research is emphasis on the coverage of editorials which were published before & after Presidential election 2008.

Objectives of the study

These are following objectives of the study.

1. The portrayal of Mr. Zardari image by Daily "The Nation" Editorials in the context of pre & post Presidential election.
2. The portrayal of Mr. Zardari image by Daily "Dawn" editorials in the context of pre & post Presidential election.
3. To explore the difference between the portrayals of Mr. Zardari image by both the selected newspaper editorials in the context of pre and post presidential election 2008.

Significance Of The Study

Mr. Zardari has become most controversial personality after the assassination of BenazirBhatto. Because in the past Mr. Zardari was involve in many corruption cases. Mr. Zardari has an always image problem of a lingering reputation of corruption despite not having been convicted of any wrongdoing. The general public as potrayeled in the media have distaste for him; despite the fact that he's never been convicted of anything he is guilty in the courts. After the assassination of Bennazir Bhutto, the newspaper gives great coverage to Mr. Zardari. Because the print media persuade the people in different ways and play an effective role to change the public opinion. Consequently, study attempts to find out the number of editorials and alongside with the treatement given by the newspapers rather in positive, negative or neutral in editorial before and after presidential election.

Research Methodology

The two leading Pakistani Newspaper of English language daily "The Nation" Lahore and Daily Dawn" Lahore were selected for this research project. This study explored the editorial coverage of daily "The Nation" & Daily "Dawn" about the portrayal of president Asif Ali Zardari Pre & Post Presidential election. For thisparticular study content analysis was chosen as a research design. Keeping in mind the nature of the topic, primarily technique of content analysis was applied in order to accomplish the research study. "Content analysis is a method of study and analyzing communication I a systematic objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables"(Kerlinger,1986). The study utilizes both the quantitative and qualitative method of research for analyzing data. Quantitative research is generally concerned with how often a variable is presented and the amount can be communicated in numbers, which allows great precision in reporting the results. The method used to analyze the data is in two ways one is to measure the number of editorials. The researchers in the quantitative study measure the additional also according to his quantitative categories. Qualitative analysis of the content is used to explain a quantitative data and to interpret direction of the content. Thecoder put the editorials in relevant categories according to the nature of the editorials. The qualitative categories will be designed by the researcher to check the directions of editorial, so the researcher adopted both the research techniques in this study. This study considered contents of two Pakistanis English newspapers "The Nation" & the daily "Dawn".

All editorials of "The Nation" and the daily "Dawn" before Presidential election and after Presidential election from pre-election (6 June to 6 Sept 2008) & Post election (6 Sept to 6 December). This study considered 6 month sample from the two major English newspapers, Dawn and The Nation. Three month before Presidential election (6 June to 6 Sept 2008) & three month after Presidential election (6 Sept to 6 December 2008). The unit of analysis and unit for the coding is the "Editorials" Published in two major English elite Newspapers "The Nation" & "Dawn" from 6 June to 6th December 2008. Editorials are regarded as the official opinion of a newspaper according to Henry and Tator (2002) that editorial study is always essential for analyzing the ideological role of news media. The population for this research study included all editorials using the world "Mr. Zardari" in the headline or lead paragraph in the selected newspaper from 6 June to 6 December 2008. The

total population comprises of 61 editorials in “The Nation” and 18 editorials in Daily “Dawn”. The total number is 79 editorials.

In the particular study headline and leading paragraph was the coding unit for identifying the topic. The expression of the entire editorial was taken as a coding unit. The positive some good leader, good personality, give priority to Zardari was coded as favorable slant. The categories which are coded as negative are negative stance character assassination, propagandist, squabbling Politician. All editorial that did not depict favorable or unfavorable code as neutral. The main focus of the research is to investigate the positive, negative and neutral coverage of news editorials by keeping in view the likelihood of their portrayal of positive, negative or neutral coverage portrayal of President Zardari image in Pakistani English newspapers.

Operationalize the categories

Negative categories

*A; Character Assassination

Sentences which highlight Mr. Zardari is accused person or discussed about his past character negatively highlights stereotype image or victimized him.

*B; Propagandist

Such editorials which show Mr. Zardari is a Planner, or highlight as a corrupt person or portray him as a loose character, or discuss his policies which proved him a propagandist. Pate the Editorials

*C; Squabbling Politician

Such Editorials which overall showsthat Mr. Zardari is not a good leader or not good Politician or critically discussed about him or analyzed him, Sentence which highlights him as a squabbling politician.

Positive Categories

*D; Good personality:

The editorials which give importance to Mr. Zardari and overall editorials which discuss Mr. Zardari positively, a sentence which proved him that he has good personality.

*E; Give priority as a good leader or as a President:

The editorial in which discussion is aboutpositive role of Mr. Zardari or a sentence which highlight that his policies are good or appreciate his policies. A sentence which gives the priority to Mr. Zardari as a President and overall editorial discuss on Mr. Zardari his personality, his visits, and discuss his policies and planning, or a sentence that shows he will prove a good president.

Neutral

*F; Represent the neutral category: The editorials or sentence that did not depict favorable or unfavorable code as neutral.

Analysis and Results

The bellow figure illustrates that Daily “The Nation” published total 16 editorials on portray of Mr. Zardari the mentioned period. The editorial which was published on 4 in category *F with the space of 30Ccm, the editorial published on 2 fall in the category *E with the space of 16Ccm, the editorial which published on 1 fall in the category *C with the space of 20.5Ccm. Similarly 5 editorial also fall in category *A with the space of 28.5 Ccm, 3 editorial fall in category *B with the space of 28.5 Ccm.

Table 1 Nation before presidential election.

Month	Negative			Positive		Neutral
	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*
June	2	2	0	0	1	1
July	0	0	0	0	0	2
August	4	3	1	0	2	4
Total	6	3	1	0	2	4

Negative

*A Character assassination

*B Propagandist

*C Squabbling person

Positive

*D Good personality

*E Give priority as a good leader or as a president

Neutral

*F

The bellow figure illustrates that Dawn published total 7 editorials on portray of Mr. Zardari during the mentioned period. The editorial which was published on 1 in category *F with, the editorial published on 3 fall in the category *E with, the editorial which published on 1 fall in the category *C. Similarly 2 editorial also fall in category *A

Table 1 Dawn before presidential election.

Month	Negative			Positive		Neutral
	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*
June	1	0	0	0	1	0
July	0	0	0	0	2	0
August	1	0	1	0	0	1
Total	2	0	1	0	3	1

The bellow figure illustrates that Daily “The Nation” published total 3 editorials on portray of Mr. Zardari during the mentioned period. The editorial which was published on 2 in category *A and 1 fall in the category *C.

Table 1 Nation after presidential election.

Month	Negative			Positive		Neutral
	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*
Sep	1	0	0	0	0	0
Oct	1	0	1	0	0	0
Nov	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2	0	1	0	0	0

The bellow figure illustrates that Daily “The Nation” published total 4 editorials on portray of Mr. Zardari during the mentioned period. The editorial which was published on 1 in category *C, 1 fall in the category *E and 2 in the *F.

Table 1 Dawn after presidential election.

Month	Negative			Positive		Neutral
	A*	B*	C*	D*	E*	F*
Sep	0	0	0	0	0	2
Oct	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nov	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	0	0	1	0	1	2

Discussion

Overall Analysis reveals that the Nation disseminated more negative editorials about the Zardari during the said period in contrast with the Dawn. The opinion page of the newspaper always has the importance in developing the opinions about the political leadership. Additionally, the editorials can influence the public agenda as it is already investigated in many previous studies. Although the presidential election in the Pakistan is not directly related with the voting behavior of the general public however, the party image can be distorted by dissemination of such items. The editorial readers are also considered as the serious audience therefore, some factual details can give them more weightage over the other contents. Therefore, editorials have more credibility in a sense therefore, can be effective tool of the opinion change. This study is just the exploratory in nature to find out the portrayal of one of the popular leader of the Pakistan that how media organization policy makers think about that specific figure. However, the results might be differ in terms of the audience if the future studies may explain it by conducting survey research on the specific issue or related issues.

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