

**Role of Television Talk Shows in Creating Political
Awareness among TV Viewers**

THESIS OF MA MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of Private TV talk shows in creating political awareness, testing their effects on people's political behaviour, attitude, beliefs and perceptions. In the present study data was collected by conducting a survey of 200 respondents in urban and rural areas. The study highlights the importance of Private TV talk shows for educating people politically. In other words the common beliefs and views of critics- that political talk shows are merely entertainment programs and people watch these shows just for having fun where they analyze who won and who lost ... were not supported by the empirical data. The study presents evidence demonstrating that private TV talk shows are creating more political awareness than magazine and newspaper. A huge percentage of the respondents agreed to the effectiveness of talk shows in creating political awareness, making public opinion towards different political issues, bringing people close to the political process, playing considerable role in conflict resolution and helping youngsters to support! affiliate with any political party or leader. Interestingly this study rejects this notion-that media have more impact on urban areas as compare to rural ones by supporting the significance of two variables *motivation to seek information* and *access to information* of Knowledge Gap research because a great majority of respondents from urban and rural population use TV as their main source of political information. On the other hand, a dimension of powerful media effects i.e., Priming is also supported by this study. Private TV talk shows are playing a significant role in bringing change and awareness in our society.

Keywords: Talk shows, political awareness, opinion formation, conflict resolution, media impact, knowledge gap

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Topic	Page
	Acknowledgement	
	Abstract	
1.	Introduction	1
	• Rationale of the Study	2
	• Rationale for Selecting political talk shows	3
	• Rationale for selecting private political talk shows	4
	• Rationale for Time period	5
	• Research Questions and Hypothesis	6
	• Operational Definition of the Main Concept	8
2.	Electronic Media In Pakistan	9
	• Leading News Channel in Pakistan	13
	• Popular Political talk shows	15
	• Famous talk shows	19
	Anchors	19
3.	Literature Review	22
	• Politics and role of Media	24
	• Pakistani News channels talk shows & political awareness	24
4.	Methodology	25
	• Survey	
	• Data Collection and Interpretation	

5. Discussion and Analysis	51
• Hypothesis	51
6. Conclusion	54
7. Appendix	56
• Questionnaire	58
8. References	65

INTRODUCTION

Now a day we can not find even a single house without television. Like wise radio, Newspaper, internet and other media also have become a part of our life. These are all the instruments of information and are playing a very important role in the modern society.

The most important thing which media is doing, it is creating awareness among people by giving them latest information about what is happening around the world, making them aware about their rights, creating awareness against evils in the society, exposing corrupt politicians and criminals by investigative reporting. In this age of information, media indeed has become the biggest tool for bringing awareness and for molding a good society.

Much of what Pakistani knows about their political leaders, government and other political affairs is indebted to media. People come to know about the activities of political personalities and the policies of government through media. This makes easy for them to have their own opinion about government policies and the working of other politicians. In this way media do not only satisfy their curiosity to know about politicians and political life but also establishes a link between government and people which is an important feature of a democratic state.

As is the case with democracy in Pakistan, the country's media is growing rapidly which has made easy for us to get far more information today as compare to the past. In recent years Pakistani broadcast journalists have taken the lead in framing political issues, (the chief justice issue being the most spectacular example), changing opinion (as on the Haddood Ordinance) and reinforcing shifts in the public mood (as for example in support for the military operation in Swat). They have also exposed abuses in society that would not have otherwise surfaced.

The media revolution has created new avenues for free expression and democratic politics. There has also been the unseemly aspect of media sensationalism and speculation that has sometimes supplanted real news, but some of this is to be expected in an early phase of growth. This will nonetheless need to be checked to maintain media credibility. On balance, the electronic media has created new public space and strengthened the process of democratic accountability.

It has provided the public a powerful means of leverage over the state. The television screen has seen more substantive debate than the floor of the house. Talk shows attract more members of parliament than the proceedings of the legislature. The participation of political leaders and parliamentary members in television programs has contributed to the reinvigorating effects of these debates on democracy. Pitching these political conversations to a mass audience has helped promote participatory politics, renew trust in politics and improve the democratic process.

This dissertation will analyze whether the Private TV talk shows are creating political awareness in Pakistan by discussing major political issues and what is their role in conflict resolution and in the formation of public opinion regarding different controversial political issues and how they bring people close to political process.

All the considerations are based on the theoretical perspective of the "Knowledge Gap Hypothesis and Priming Concept" taken from the strips of the "media effects approach". Survey will be used as the methodology to explore the role of talk shows for answering the research questions and to test the tentative statements called the 'hypothesis'.

The researcher will summarize and present data in tabulation form and then analyze that data to answer the 'Research Questions and 'Hypothesis'.

Graphs will also be used to present the summary of data in an easy understandable way. Finally the 'conclusion' will round off the results.

Rationale of the Study

"In recent years Pakistani media has created a new concept of political talk shows which are now being religiously followed by the common masses. Also due to the accessibility of channels in rural and urban areas, these talk shows are creating a silent revolution in Pakistan which some proponents say. Some also say that it is encouraging to have dialogue between various political entities and which will eventually lead into a consensus on major issues faced by the country.