



Effects of Media on General Elections Turn-out in Pakistan

Hamayun Masood *

Ali Hassan †

Abstract *This research is a struggle to explore the role of media in election turn-out. In history a state was based on free judiciary, legislature and executive power but in 21st century 4th pillar of the state was appeared and this is media (free media). As time passed media turn into more and more influential and significant. This research was conducted in Bahawalpur City that was titled the princely state in history and now became a major city of southern Punjab. Using survey method, data has been collected from 500 respondents as sample technique of available and convenient, selected 250 respondents from urban areas and 250 from rural areas. Respondent's age is 26 years to onwards for both male and female. Questionnaire was based on 23 close ended questions. Current research conducted in the light of "Agenda Setting Theory" and "Gate Keeping Theory" which conclude that media has played an important role in enhancing the turn-out in general election 2013. In general election of 2013, media aware public to cast vote for their country and for the progress and to strengthen the democracy in Pakistan. People of urban areas especially educated people attract more to media for political awareness as compare to rural area's people. Moreover, talk shows during electioneering period and live transmission during elections appeal to the people for vote casting. Research also concludes that biradriism, peer group, political party policy and opinion leaders also plays positive role to enhance the turn-out in general election of 2013.*

Key Words: Media, Democracy, General Election, Agenda Setting, Gate keeping, Political Awareness, Voting Process, Political Opinion

Introduction

Elections are a main part of the democratic structure and highlight the basic features of formation of a government and political structuring of a specific state (Shively, 2003). Elections play a role of bridge among people and political leaders. Moreover, elections play the role of an instrument of political socialization and involvement (Palmer, 1975: 1). In democratic cultures media considered as a representative of society. In development of society, media plays an important role. In formation of public opinion media plays a vital role, give awareness to the community about the Government strategies and highlight the public issues. By scattering the information and new thoughts media is reshaping the societies. Media presented the new ideas to aware the people. Media facilitate the viewers to educating about the political structure of their government' (Christians et al., 2009: 158). In short,

media delivers the education and information to the people, which is the main intention of promotion of democracy.

Media refers to technologies and institutions that play different role. The term 'mass media' means that 'systematized way of communication which is spread in short period of time to masses' (McQuail, 2005: 17). In this era politics have existed almost in all over the world. Politics deals with accountability, performance, justice, governance, democratic matters and daily life of public. The meaning of Politics is authority and power, division and shaping power (Dahl, 1976: 2-3). Main purpose of politics is production and scattering of resources to the society. Politics describe the power and control which influence its distribution. Political process is not about governments, it's about

* PhD Scholar, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: hamayunmasood1@gmail.com

† Lecturer, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan.

'transformative capacity' of society and social workers (held, 1995: 247). Pakistan is a country where every citizen has right to vote and through the power of vote can elect the government. People have their own political opinion in shape of vote. Definition of vote by human rights is as "every citizen who has eighteen years old had the right of vote. Voting process confirms that rights of the public are preserved." (HRCP, 2008) "Voting is a method of expression of views for a party or contestant which has extra favorite then others (Blais, et al, 2006)". So, it is essential to know that in Pakistan general elections (2013) whichever media play a significant role in increasing turn-out or not.

In Pakistan, personality politics is more popular than political parties. Though personality influence still exists but in last era Pakistani media become very influential and now play very important role in politics. People in Pakistan prefer to vote elite class families, gaddinashen and land lords etc. people do not match the performance and skill and the result of this behavior, dominant political culture overcomes in Pakistan. Media should free to make inquiries and get responses about elections transparency, if there is something wrong then media should tell the public about that so it can be solving. Mass Media play a dynamic part to provide the chance to political parties to dialogue on Political parties' candidates use many approaches and introduced different campaigns to influence the voter (Bike, 2012). Political parties' candidates use many approaches and introduced different campaigns to influence the voter (Bike, 2012). Media's role in political affairs cannot be deniable. National or international organization of democratic politics depends on media; generally, without media there is no way to address the public issues (McQuail 2005).

For the first time, in general election 2013 a new party (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf) dared the two party's monopoly system. Media played very vital role in popularity of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf especially social media like Facebook and twitter. Though the monopoly has still existing as Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz won the election and got (14794188) votes but Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf got the second highest vote (7563504) in general election 2013, General election 2013 voting turn-out was 55.02% and this is the highest since 1970 general election, in 2008 general election voting turn-out was 43.07%, in 2002 general election voting turn-out was 41.08%, in 1997 general election voting turn-out was 35.42%, in 1993 general election voting turn-out was 40.28% and in 1990

general election voting turn-out was 45.46% so there is the turn-out of last 5 general elections of Pakistan and 2013 general election have the most voting turn-out, the highest voting turn-out was recorded in NA-191 (Bahawalnagar) and the lowest in NA-42 (South Waziristan), This was the first time in Pakistan history that in 2013 a political party hands over the government to other political party (Election Commission of Pakistan).

Objective of the Study

- 1: To know that what was the voting trend in general election of 2013.
- 2: To know what was the media's essential role in enhancing the voting turn-out.
- 3: To know that what is the correlation of media and public regarding the political attitude and contribution.
- 4: To know that which tool was more effective than any other in shaping the voting behavior in election of 2013.
- 5: To know that what is the history of general elections in Pakistan.

Scope of the Study

This study will find out new ways for the researchers in this area that in future they will be able to conduct more researches. This research will also find out the role of media in voting turn-out of general election 2013 and explore the influence of media as compare to political parties, political leaders, biradriism and peer group etc. This research also defines the role of media to make sure that in future, participation of more people in political system. In this field, this research serves as a basic platform for the future researchers.

Literature Review

According to Gerbner & Gross (1976) media is not only report to people about routine concerns but also predict all incoming possibilities and clarify this to the public. So in democratic system media is not only performing the role to inform the people but also play a vital role in shaping the political views of people.

Hendriks et al., (2004) conducted the research on "Political knowledge and media use in the Netherlands" explain that political knowledge came from strong and consistent media. Many researches focused on the role of media as only giving information to the people and many other clarifies the role of media in changing the public opinion and

behavior of people. Some explain that effects may be several on the base of difference in demographic features and some say that it would be different regarding the media channels environment.

Held (2006) explain in his book “Models of democracy” chapter “deliberative democracy” that why people partaking is required for the democracy. Held raise a question that media performs for government or the civil society? He assesses the ways of democracy in the world and also criticizes the several theories of democracy. He explains the nature of connection among media, government and civil society.

Shawar & Asim (2012) conducted a study on “Voting behavior of people towards different political parties in district Faisalabad, Pakistan”. Polling is a basic portion to take part in development of democratic procedure. Research examine the relation of voting by inside amendment of party, Voter’s contract, baradariism, education and cause about voting procedure to realize the realities of political association. The research concludes that people like to vote to the party as compare to baradriism. Because solid and good image of a political party aware public to cast vote for that party.

According to Loveless (2009) Democracy circulate through media comprises on idea that cultural appearance must be put in the transmission data. Now in this technique of broadcasting, communal values and normative political affairs are communicated from one nation to the targeted nation thus using this technique the targeted nation people powerfully attach to these values.

According to Mancini (1993) the connection among political figure and political parties on one finger and the journalism and mass media on the other finger works with mutual approach of achieve benefits and attachment of these parties’ lies among mistrust and trust.

Anwar & Jan (2010) conducted the research on “Role of media in political socialization: The case of Pakistan”. Main purpose of this research was to discover the effects of media in making of public views and new developments of political promotion in mass media to know the political socialization and observe the outcome of media on voting attitude of people. This research matures skeleton of political socialization in Pakistan. Research draws a sketch of political socialization of people in Pakistan through media. This study examines, discovers and explains political socialization of people. Political

communication connects political process and media at national and international level. In democratic process those are not participating in election, can give opinion by vote casting. This research is about the role of media in creating public opinion, changing voting behavior of people and election campaign.

Theoretical Framework

In those countries where media is free and private, media want to get business and income through advertisements from those who have authority. Media Channels voluntarily make different attractive slogans and make special TV programs to tell the people about their power of vote. Another reason is that to influence the opinion of voters during election campaign, political parties used media for advertisements; on other hand media broadcast news of that political party which spends more cash for advertisement in their media group. Most suitable theories for this research are agenda setting and gate keeping, that how media sets the agenda for the people and gatekeeping the data that which should be public or not. Media depend on data providing by business, experts funded and government which are called agents of authority. Thus, both essentials power and wealth are used in elections. After filtration, media broadcasted impartial news stories.

Hypotheses

H1: It is more likely that high exposure to media positively effect on voting turn-out in general election 2013.

H2: It is more likely that voting turn-out of urban voters are more influence by media than rural voters.

Research Methodology

As the research was survey-based so to collect the data the quantitative research design was used. All participants from Bahawalpur were choose as the population, whereas 500 (250 urban area residence and 250 rural area residence) (250 females and 250 male) aged from 26 were selected as the sample of the study through a multi-stage random sampling technique. A self-made questionnaire by researcher consist of different factors was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was consisting of 23 statements with the categorization of different variables. Respondents were asked to choose the priority of their area on a different point scale ranging from least to highest priority and collected data was analyzed through SPSS.

Data Analysis

Following findings were drawn based on data analysis

Table 1. Distribution of sample according to demographic variables of respondents

| | Gender | Urban Residence | | Rural Residence | |
|--------|--------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Gender | Male | 250 | 50.0 | 500 | 50.0 |
| | Female | 250 | 50.0 | 500 | 50.0 |

The above table showing the distribution of overall sample from rural and urban localities separately according to their gender (male or female).

Table 2. Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Testing for H1.

H1: It is more likely that high exposure to media positively effect on voting turnout in general election 2013.

| Options | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | 51 | 21 | 22 | 21 | 4 |
| Agree | 28 | 39 | 28 | 27 | 5 |
| Neutral | 5 | 39 | 22 | 24 | 3 |
| Disagree | 22 | 23 | 22 | 22 | 3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 9 | 25 | 11 | 13 | 11 |
| Total | 115 | 147 | 105 | 107 | 26 |

For the value of Chi-Square

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{(O_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} \right) \text{ and under Ho } \chi^2 \sim \chi^2_{\alpha, (c-1)(r-1)}$$

Chi-Square = 70.25

P-value = 0.000

The above cross tabulation shows association among the attributes of hypothesis (H1) mentioned above for the target population. The value of Chi-Square is 70.25 and the P-value for the test is 0.000

shows there is significant association among the attributes at 5% level of significance and our hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Cross Tabulation and Chi-Square Testing for H3.

H2: It is more likely that Voting Turnout of Urban Voters is more Influence by Media than Rural Voters

| Options | Political Leader | Peer group | Political party policy | Media campaign | Biradrism | Total |
|-------------------|------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Strongly Agree | 18 | 26 | 29 | 51 | 48 | 172 |
| Agree | 9 | 21 | 13 | 42 | 17 | 102 |
| Neutral | 12 | 11 | 12 | 26 | 13 | 74 |
| Disagree | 15 | 36 | 22 | 37 | 16 | 126 |
| Strongly Disagree | 6 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 26 |
| Total | 60 | 97 | 80 | 162 | 101 | 500 |

For the value of Chi-Square

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{(O_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} \right) \text{ and under Ho } \chi^2 \sim \chi^2_{\alpha, (c-1)(r-1)}$$

Chi-Square = 28.75

P-value = 0.026

The above cross tabulation shows association among the attributes of hypothesis (H3) mentioned

above for the target population. The value of Chi-Square is 28.75 and the P-value for the test is 0.026

shows there is significant association among the attributes at 5% level of significance and our hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

Research was lead to be familiar with the opinions of people of bahawalpur about role of media in election turn-out. On the basis of available and convenience method, sample size of 500 respondents was chosen. 250 respondents from urban and 250 respondents from rural areas of bahawalpur. Respondents aged from 26 to onwards, only the sample of those people was chosen those were also able to cast vote in general election of 2008. Outcomes show that most of the respondents were educated. Questionnaires comprise on 23 close ended questions. Respondent answer attentively to all the questions that proved very helpful. Bahawalpur is situated in southeastern punjab. Local language of bahawalpur is saraiki. Population of bahawalpur district was 2,433,091 regarding to the survey of 1998 and 27.01% of the residents were urban. District bahawalpur has 5 tehsils named bahawalpur, khairpur tamewali, hasilpur, yazman and ahmedpur east. Bahawalpur is a well-established city of southeastern punjab. Basic purpose of this study was to see the involvement of people in voting process and views of people about role of media in election turn-out. Media is backbone of democracy now a day. In last era, pakistani media has quickly promoted and all the credit goes to general parvaiz musharaf. Now a day media is definitely easily reached in all areas of pakistan. Television is a major source for people to know about any latest political or social news and updates. Due to liberty of media, it is concluded that pakistani media is a pro-democratic media as it high spot any issue in well way that update political parties and also the public as well. Mostly respondents believed that democratic system is not complete without media. Free media is a symbol of good democracy.

Hypothesis No 1: It is more likely that high exposure to media positively effect on voting turn-out in general election 2013.

Present research explores the role of media in general election of 2013 among the people of Bahawalpur. Now a day's people mostly get political information and news from media like radio, print media, television and social media etc. researcher asked most suitable question to examine the hypothesis "What do you think that media has played an important role in increasing turn-out of general

election 2013" result shows that 23% are strongly agree and 29.4% are agree that media has played an important role in increasing turn-out of general election 2013. 21% have a neutral opinion on this question. 21.4% respondents disagree and 5.2% strongly disagree to this statement. Another related question asked by researcher is that "Did you cast vote in general election 2008 and 2013" basic cause to ask this question to the respondents is that to know the ratio of people who did not cast vote in 2008 but cast vote in 2013, to know the comparison of vote casting by respondents in 2008 and then in 2013 election. So the result conclude that 30.4% respondents cast vote in 2008 election and in 2013 election 75.8% respondents cast vote, a higher number of respondents cast vote in election 2013 as compared to 2008 election. One more related question is about media's role in shaping voting trend is asked by the researcher is that "Do you believe that media is performing a considerable role in shaping the voting trend" outcome shows that 28.8% people are strongly agree and 20.4% people are agree that media is performing a considerable role in shaping voting trends, 23.4% people are uncertain, 22.8% people are disagree and other 4.6% people are strongly disagree with statement. Another related question asks to respondents is that "Do you impressed by the political campaign showed by media" result shows that 23.8% people are strongly agree and 25.4% people are agree that they are impressed by the political campaign showed by media, 18.6% people are neutral, 18.4% people are disagree, and the other 13.8% people are strongly disagree with the statement. Mostly respondents answered positively to all these questions that media has positively effect on voting turn-out in election 2013. The value of Chi-Square is 70.25 and the P-value for the test is 0.000 shows there is significant association among the attributes at 5% level of significance and hypothesis is accepted. Above discussion on this hypothesis "It is more likely that high exposure to media positively effect on voting turn-out in general election 2013" is true.

Hypothesis No 02: It is more likely that voting turn-out of urban voters are more influence by media than rural voters.

Current study explores the role of media in general election of 2013 among people of Bahawalpur. In Pakistan, mostly people lives in rural areas where education rate is low and people rely on local political leader like nambardar also. Media is available but not as much as in urban areas, in rural areas people use

PTV for information and entertainment and rely on radio also on other hand in urban areas people are educated and they can understand the current political condition of country through different mediums of media like TV, Newspaper, Radio, Magazines and social media etc. they have a lot of choice in TV like they have cable TV and Dish TV where they have the choice of lot of TV channels. Researcher asked most suitable question to examine this hypothesis "Do you think media's campaign about election was much effective in urban areas rather than rural areas" result shows that 34.4% people are strongly agree and 20.4% people are agree that media's campaign about election was much effective in urban areas rather than rural areas, 14.8% people are neutral or uncertain, 25.2% people are disagree, and other 5.2% people are strongly disagree. Another related question is that "Who motivate you to cast the vote" result shows that 12% people said that they are motivated by the political leaders to cast their votes, 19.4% people said that Peer groups motivate them to cast their votes, 16% people said political party policy motivate them to cast vote, 32.4% people said that they are motivated by media campaign, and other 20.2% people said that biradriism motivate them to cast their votes. Mostly people choose media campaign as a main factor. Another related question is that "Did media provide you guideline in making

political opinion" result shows that 16.8% people are strongly agree and 32% are agree that media provide them guideline in making political opinion during election 2013, 13% people are neutral, 18.4% persons are disagree and the other 19.8% respondents are strongly disagree. Mostly respondents answered positively to all these questions that media has a powerful influence in urban areas as compare to rural areas. The value of Chi-Square is 28.75 and the P-value for the test is 0.026 shows there is significant association among the attributes at 5% level of significance and hypothesis is accepted. Above discussion on this hypothesis "It is more likely that voting turn-out of urban voters are more influence by media then rural voters" is true.

Recommendations For Future Research

Media and political parties make friendly atmosphere so both can help each other and together works for the development of democracy and country. Media have to play careful role so that in case of biased journalism it can be bad for the image of Pakistan. Media have not support any specific political party or person for personal interest. Yellow journalism method should not be used. Professional training should be necessary for all journalists and media organizations.

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