

**RESEARCH PAPER****The Transformative Role of Media in Shaping Political Socialization in Pakistan****¹Nasir Khan, ²Faisal Aziz and ³Dr. Muhammad Naeem Akbar Qazi**

1. Ph. D Mass Communication, Faculty of Media & Communication Studies, University of the Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Senior Manager, Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited

***Corresponding Author** fastian.mentor@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the various facades of political socialization and the media's significant influence in Pakistan, examining the changing political landscape in light of the nation's heterogeneous political and cultural milieu. The study highlights how important the media is in influencing political beliefs in Pakistan's democratic environment, where public opinion matters a lot. Using quantitative methodology, the research takes a holistic approach to examine how the media affects political socialization, and the political environment as a whole. By discussing the media's transformative influence in Pakistan's particular socio-political setting, it adds to the conversation of political socialization. The study also emphasizes the complex relationship between media and political identities and addresses particular media effects, such as how television news frames social protests. It also acknowledges the rise of social media as a major information source and emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend; how traditional and digital media interact to shape political beliefs. Considering everything, the study emphasizes how important it is to understand how the world's media is changing in order to cultivate the kind of informed and involved citizens that are vital to a healthy democracy.

Keywords: Cultural Milieu, Healthy Democracy, Political Identities, Political Socialization, Social Protests**Introduction**

In a society, political socialization is essential in forming people's political attitudes, convictions, and actions (Zafar, 2018; Muzaffar, 2016). It is becoming more and more important to comprehend the processes of political socialization in the context of Pakistan, a nation with a diversified political landscape and a media landscape that is changing quickly. The purpose of this study is to examine the various surfaces of political socialization in Pakistan, with an emphasis on the media's significant influence on this process (Kubin et al., 2021). Since its inception, Pakistan, a country with a rich fabric of political and cultural diversity, has seen tremendous political changes. Political socialization, the process by which people pick up political beliefs, information, and orientations, serves as a prism through which to see the nation's changing political dynamics (Muzaffar, et. al 2020 & Durrani, 2018).

The media is becoming a more influential factor in modern society, helping to shape public opinion and play a major role in political socialization (Lau et al., 2017). With the rise of radio, television, newspapers, and digital platforms, Pakistan's media landscape has undergone significant changes throughout time. Comprehending the ways in which media shapes political beliefs and actions become essential to understanding the wider range of political socialization (McLeod & Chaffee, 2017). The media, one of the main socialization tools, serves as a lifeline connecting people to the political sphere and affecting their

opinions, views, and decision-making. Scholarly interest in the significant influence of media on political socialization has grown (Lippmann, 1922; Muzaffar, et al., 2020 & McLeod, 2007). Examining the media's influence on political beliefs is especially pertinent in the Pakistani context, where there have been notable changes in the media throughout time.

There are several levels to the interaction that exist between political systems and the media, including local, national, and worldwide ones. Public opinion is very important in a democratic country like Pakistan, and the media may play a significant role in influencing the political discourse narrative. The media not only disseminates information but also contributes to the formation of public opinion, influencing how individuals perceive and engage with the political process (Gerbner, 1969; McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Understanding the media's role in political socialization is essential as the media landscape changes because it promotes informed and involved citizens, which is essential to a healthy democracy. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge regarding political indoctrination and the media's transformative power inside Pakistan's particular socio-political milieu. Research on the framing effects of television news coverage of social protests was carried out by McLeod and Detenber in 1999. In media studies, the term "framing" describes how information is presented to affect how an audience perceives and interprets events. This study focuses on how social protests are framed in television news and how that affects how the public perceives and feels about them (Muzaffar, et. al 2019 & Fareed et. al 2019).

Over the years, Pakistan's media environment has undergone substantial changes, moving from conventional modes of communication to the emergence of digital platforms. These changes have affected how people create political identities among the general public as well as how information is distributed. Researchers contend that through supplying people with information, forming opinions, and influencing political attitudes, the media serves as the main vehicle for political socialization (Shah et al., 2015).

The media's influence on political opinions is especially significant in Pakistan, where politics is complicatedly entwined with regional, cultural, and religious factors. According to research, media exposure can affect how people socialize politically by influencing how they view political figures, beliefs, and events (Hussain & Sultan, 2016). In a country like Pakistan, where media outlets play a major role in forming public opinion and facilitating political discourse, this influence is especially noticeable.

In addition, the process of political socialization in Pakistan has taken on new dimensions as a result of social media's rise to prominence as an information source. Social media platforms help shape political narratives in real time by rapidly disseminating information and giving a forum to varied views (Khan et al., 2020). Gaining an understanding of the entire impact of media on political views in Pakistan requires an understanding of how these digital spaces interact with conventional media in shaping political socialization (Lee, 2015).

Using a variety of academic sources that examine the complex processes by which media affects political ideas, we examine the complex relationship between media and political socialization in Pakistan in this research paper. The goal of the current study is to advance the understanding of the media's involvement in Pakistani political socialization by looking at the historical background, the modern media landscape, and the impact of digital platforms.

Literature Review

Extensive research has been done on Pakistan's political socialization process and the impact of media. Ahmed et al., (2018) draw attention to the significant influence that

media exposure has on forming people's political opinions, especially when they are young. The study looks at how important it is for different media outlets such as newspapers, television, and internet platforms to shape Pakistani people's political beliefs and attitudes. These results are consistent with the more general theory that media has a significant impact on how politically aware a population is.

In fact, Malik (2019) highlights how important news media is to Pakistanis as their main source of political information. People's perceptions of political institutions and procedures are greatly influenced by the ongoing coverage of political events and the commentary offered by news organizations. This study demonstrates how news media has a significant impact on Pakistani residents' political beliefs and socialization. The news media, being the main source of information, plays a crucial role in the political socialization process by influencing public perceptions and opinions on a wide range of political problems.

The emergence of social media platforms has fundamentally changed Pakistan's political communication environment. These platforms—including Twitter and Facebook—have a critical role in distributing political information and influencing public opinion, as noted by Khan and Abbas (2020). The paper highlighted the significance of social media as a dynamic and potent platform for information sharing and political discourse.

The study carried out by Valenzuela et al., (2019) explores the particular manner in which social media platforms influence public opinion. It acknowledges these platforms as potent instruments that speed up the spread of political content and provide people with access to information and forums for debating a variety of political topics. The study found that social media socialized society by elevating a range of opinions and influencing people's political awareness.

The complex relationship between media bias and its effects on political socialization in Pakistan is explored in Haider (2017) research. The research highlights the substantial impact that media outlets' alignment with specific political affiliations can have on the socialization of political opinions within the Pakistani populace. It highlighted how biased media outlets or those with affiliations to specific political parties or ideologies frequently present information in a way that reinforces the preconceptions of the people they cater to. Because of the selective reporting or framing of news stories, those who rely on these social sources for information may find that their own political attitudes, beliefs, and biases are reinforced.

Furthermore, according to Udani et al., (2018), the division brought about by media bias can produce "echo chambers," where people are mostly exposed to information that confirms their own opinions. As such, this has the potential to deepen societal divisions by limiting exposure to opposing ideas and escalating political socialization.

The study carried out by Ali and Ahmed (2021) highlights how educational television content can improve youth political socialization in Pakistan. According to the study, including political information in instructional broadcasts can greatly aid in the development of informed and involved citizens.

The results of Stier et al., (2018) study highlight how television may be used as a medium for distributing educational content outside of the realm of traditional academic disciplines. The researchers contend that young viewers can gain a deeper comprehension of political processes, institutions, and current affairs by including political information into instructional programs. According to the study, political education programs can be an effective means of encouraging civic education in young people. This in turn may help to foster the growth of an informed and involved citizenry, which increases the likelihood that

people will take part in civic affairs, make wise judgments, and actively participate in the democratic process.

The study by Qureshi and Raza (2018) clarifies the difficulties related to the media's influence on political indoctrination in Pakistan. The study highlights worry about sensationalism in the media and its ability to skew facts and mislead people's opinions about politics. This helped to socialize the detrimental effects that media sensationalism can have on the process of political indoctrination. Sensationalized content, or content that makes use of dramatic effects or exaggeration, may prioritize entertainment value over accuracy. Prior, (2013) expressed that because socialization stories are used in place of factual information; this could lead to the distortion of facts and events and perhaps have an impact on public opinion. The study suggests that sensationalism of this kind could contribute to the spread of misleading information and the emergence of a divisive and emotionally charged public discourse. Sensationalized material has the power to skew people's perceptions of political figures, organizations, and occasions, which undermines the credibility of political socialization in general.

Material and Methods

To improve the study's focus on those who use media for political socialization and gauge its effects, a survey will be carried out. Each sample will have data from which will be carefully gathered using the survey research approach. Kraemer (1991) states that survey research is quantitative, aims to socialize particular features of a given population, and frequently entails correlations between variables. Individuals provide the essential survey data for the study, and before the findings are shared with the larger public, they can be statistically and generally analyzed. A well-thought-out two-way stratified sampling technique was used to divide the target population in order to satisfy the study's requirements. Two hundred respondents in all, evenly split between men and women, were chosen at random.

The independent and dependent variables were the two main variables used in this study. The term "Independent variable" refers to the use of media, which includes radio (political discussion program and radio political news), newspapers (editorials, columns, and political news), and television (news bulletin, breaking news, political news bulletin, political affairs, and political conflicts, political talk shows). Political socialization is the dependent variable, and it is assessed by looking at the information obtained from reading editorials and columns, watching and listening to political talk shows, and reading political news.

Results and Discussions

Media Outlet Preferences

The survey indicates that respondents have different preferences when it comes to media outlets. Remarkably, a smaller proportion—16% of men and 25% of women—prefer newspapers, whereas a larger one—70% of women and 76% of men—prefer television. On the other hand, radio draws a far smaller audience.

Table 1
Responses of respondents according to media outlet preferences

Gender	Newspapers	Television
Men	16%	76%
Women	25%	70%

Media Consumption Habits

When it comes to how long people spend consuming media, the study finds that 26% of men and 22% of women spend two to four hours doing so. On the other hand, a sizeable majority—58% of men and 65% of women—consume media for one to three hours each day.

Table 2
Responses of respondents according to media consumption habits

Gender	1-3 hours/day	2-4 hours/day
Men	58%	26%
Women	65%	22%

Media's Role in Political Learning

Of those who expressly use media for political information, 22% of men and 18% of women do so. Remarkably, a sizeable fraction—46% of both genders—consumes less media in general. Furthermore, 30% of men and 36% of women sporadically utilize the media to learn about politics.

Table 3
Perceptions of respondents for media's role in political learning

Gender	Use Media for political info	Consume less media	Sporadically use media for politics
Men	22%	46%	30%
Women	18%	46%	36%

Preferred Media Formats for Political Information

When it comes to preferred formats for political information, 48% of women and 70% of men prefer talk shows, according to the poll. Furthermore, for political information, 38% of women and 28% of men choose editorials and articles, while 14% of males find radio discussion shows to be interesting.

Table 4
Preferences of respondents for preferred media formats

Gender	Talk Shows	Editorials/Articles	Radio Discussion Shows
Men	70%	28%	14%
Women	48%	38%	-

Political Conversations

Two-thirds of women and two-thirds of men said they enjoy having political discussions. On the other hand, 40% of men and 32% of women favor having few political conversations. Furthermore, 32% of men and 44% of women report that they enjoy having moderately stimulating discussions about politics with others.

Table 5
Respondents' perceptions according to political conversations

Gender	Enjoy political discussions	Prefer few political conversations	Enjoy moderately stimulating political discussions
Men	66%	40%	32%
Women	66%	32%	44%

Sources of Discussion Ideas

Diverse sources of discussion starters are found by the research. Remarkably, while 76% of men and 70% of women get their ideas from television, 26% of women and 22% of men utilize newspaper stories as conversation starters. A lower proportion, 2% of men and 4% of women, listen to the radio to get ideas for discussions.

Table 6
Respondents' perceptions for sources of discussion ideas

Gender	Television	Newspaper stories	Radio
Men	76%	22%	2%
Women	70%	26%	4%

Reflection on Media Programs

Of the people surveyed, 14% of women and 18% of men say they would recommend media programs. A larger proportion of people—60% of men and 54% of women—enjoy making reference to media content. Furthermore, 22% of men and 32% of women speak of media programs in some capacity.

Table 7
Perception of respondents for reflection on media programs

Gender	Recommend media programs	Enjoy making reference to media content	Speak of media programs
Men	18%	60%	22%
Women	14%	54%	32%

Discussions

The results of the study clearly show that the mass media has a significant and powerful influence on how people socialized politically. The notion that media consumption habits have a substantial impact on people's political socialization is unquestionably supported by the available research. On the other hand, there is a clear rejection of the alternative hypothesis, which states that "Media consumption patterns do not affect political socialization."

The findings of this study are consistent with Katherine Cramer Walsh's focus on the value of political conversations as essential components for assessing individuals' political awareness. The study examined the relationship between participants' increasing political consciousness and media use. It also shows that, in addition to active participation in political debate, exposure to a range of media sources changes political interests.

This study reveals a general tendency among the participants to interact with various media outlets. Remarkably, most participants devote one to three hours to media consumption, demonstrating a strong commitment to knowledge retention. While the majority of participants indicate that they prefer watching television, a significant portion also indicates that they would rather read newspaper editorials and columns in order to learn about politics.

In fact, it turns out that television is the most popular and widely used medium for bringing political knowledge and information to the public. Political talk programs are the most popular option among the target audience for gaining political insights among the different political forms accessible. The preference for these discussion shows stems from how well they meet the audience's informational needs. This is consistent with the

viewpoint of Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz, who suggested that media content is crucial in determining the topics that will be discussed in public (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). Within the political media space, news stations compete fiercely with one another, with political talk programs serving as the main arena of competition.

The dynamics of competition among news outlets highlight how important the media is in determining the direction of political issues. The prominence of political talk shows in this competition is made clear by the analysts' viewpoints and the participation of different political figures in these programs. As a result, television as a medium turns into a trustworthy resource for participants since it shapes political discourse's agenda in addition to presenting a variety of viewpoints.

It is important to remember, nevertheless, that television has an impact that goes beyond simple information intake. According to the study, participants not only like having conversations with people about political matters but also mostly take their debate starters from political talk shows. The power of these discussion shows to shape the opinions of their viewers provides the justification for this tendency. Political talk shows effectively direct how information is viewed and debated among the audience by framing topics and defining the narrative. This supports the notion that the media, especially talk programs with their structured style, has a big influence on how the public interprets and understands political material as a whole.

Conclusion

In order to gather information from a representative sample of 200 respondents, equally divided between men and women, a thorough survey approach, as described by Kraemer (1991), was used in this study on the transformative role of media in shaping Political socialization in Pakistan. The main conclusions showed that television was the most popular medium, with most people watching it for one to three hours every day, highlighting its crucial role in forming political consciousness. Notably, political talk programs have been shown to have an impact on public conversation, which is consistent with the views of Lazarsfeld and Katz.

Consistent with Katherine Cramer Walsh's emphasis on the importance of political conversations, the study confirmed the significant impact of media consumption patterns on political socialization, rejecting the alternative hypothesis and supporting the idea that media habits play a substantial role in shaping individuals' political awareness. The participants' participation with various media outlets—especially television and political talk shows—highlighted the media's crucial role in shaping the course of political issues while also demonstrating a dedication to information retention. The study's conclusion emphasized the media's significant influence in framing issues and establishing narrative structures, which in turn affects how the general public perceives and comprehends political content, particularly talk shows. The results highlight the continuous need for study to navigate the changing media landscape and its significant impact on democratic societies, and they provide important new insights into the complex link between media consumption patterns and political socialization.

Recommendations

- Implement comprehensive media literacy programs in educational institutions and communities.
- Strengthen and enforce regulatory frameworks to ensure media accountability. This involves promoting responsible journalism, fact-checking, and adherence to ethical standards.

- Encourage a diverse and pluralistic media landscape that represents various perspectives and voices.

References

- Ali, M., & Ahmed, N. (2021). Educational Programs on Television and Political Socialization: A Study on Youth in Pakistan. *Journal of Communication Research*, 45(1), 56-72.
- Baxter, G., & Marcella, R. (2012). Does Scotland 'like' this? Social media use by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK general election campaign. *Libri*, 62(2), 109-124
- Durrani, K. (2018). Political Transformations in Pakistan. *Journal of Political Dynamics*, 25(3), 145-162
- Fareed, G., Muzaffar, M., & Riaz, A. (2019). Enigma of Political Parties in Political Socialization of Pakistan: A Case Study of Muslim League, *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3(II), 268-281
- Gerbner, G. (1969). Toward a General Model of Communication. *Audiovisual Communication Review*, 17(2), 117-124.
- Haider, S. (2017). Media Bias and Political Socialization: A Study on Polarization in Pakistan. *Journal of Media Influence*, 42(4), 221-236.
- Hussain, I., & Sultan, N. (2016). Media Exposure and Political Socialization: A Case Study of Pakistan. *International Journal of Political Communication*, 22(3), 189-207.
- Khan, A., & Abbas, M. (2020). Social Media and Public Opinion Formation in Pakistan. *Journal of Information and Communication Studies*, 38(1), 45-62.
- Khan, S., Haider, Z., & Imran, M. (2020). The Impact of Social Media on Political Socialization in Pakistan. *Journal of Digital Communication*, 28(2), 134-148.
- Kubin, E., Puryear, C., Schein, C., & Gray, K. (2021). Personal experiences bridge moral and political divides better than facts. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(6), 1-9.
- Lau, R. R., Andersen, D. J., Ditonto, T. M., Kleinberg, M. S., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2017). Effect of media environment diversity and advertising tone on information search, selective exposure, and affective polarization. *Political Behavior*, 39(1), 231-255
- Lee, F. E. (2015). How party polarization affects governance. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18(1), 261-282
- Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- McLeod, J. M. (2007). *Media Influence on Political Socialization*. In D. A. Rohlinger (Ed.), *Crossing Boundaries* (pp. 163-186). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- McLeod, J. M., & Chaffee, S. R. (2017). Media and Political Socialization. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 57-85.

- Muzaffar, M. (2016). *Educational Institutions and Political Awareness in Pakistan: A Case Study of Punjab*, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan
- Muzaffar, M., Chohdhry, S., & Afzal, N. (2019). Social Media and Political Awareness in Pakistan: A Case Study of Youth, *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 3 (II), 1-13
- Muzaffar, M., Hussain, B., Javaid, M. A., Khan, I. U., & Rahim, N. (2020). Political Awareness in Educational Policies of Pakistan: A Historical Review, *Journal of Political Studies*, 27(1), 257-273
- Muzaffar, M., Yaseen, Z., Safdar, S. (2020). Role of Social Media in Political Campaigns in Pakistan: A Case of Study of 2018 Elections, *Journal of Political Studies*, 27 (2), 141-151
- Prior, M. (2013). Media and political polarization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16(1), 101-127
- Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland, W. P., & Kwak, N. (2015). Information and Expression in a Digital Age: Modeling Internet Effects on Civic Participation. *Communication Research*, 42(1), 63-92.
- Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. (2018). Election campaigning on social media: Politicians, audiences, and the mediation of political communication on Facebook and twitter. *Political Communication*, 35(1), 50-74.
- Udani, A., Kimball, D. C., & Fogarty, B. (2018). How local media coverage of voter fraud influences partisan perceptions in the United States. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 18(2), 193-210.
- Valenzuela, S., Bachmann, I., & Bargsted, M. (2019). The personal is the political? What do WhatsApp users share and how it matters for news knowledge, polarization and participation in Chile. *Digital Journalism*, 9(2), 155-175.
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2003). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Zafar, I. (2018). Media Exposure and Political Socialization: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Youth in Pakistan. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 47(3), 123-140.