



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Analyzing the Cultivating Impact of Political Awareness on the Political Participation and Efficacy of Pakistani Youth**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study investigates the cultivation effect of media on political efficacy and political participation of Pakistani youth. In democracies like Pakistan, Politics being the instrument of elites provides public an opportunity to take part in the process of government formation. Meanwhile, by using various forms of media for political awareness, Political communication holds the essential position to indulge the public. In developing countries where political instability is much evident, the influx of information on media adds to the political chaos creating distress in audience minds. A sample of 600 Pakistani youngsters (n=300) is selected through convenient sampling and then surveyed through a questionnaire developed on 5 points Likert scale. The results indicated a strong effect of political awareness provided by Pakistani media on the political participation and efficacy of youth.

**Keywords:** Cultivation, Efficacy, Participation, Political Communication, Political Instability

**Introduction**

Media is dramatically changed over the last few years. The invention of the internet and its connection services has provided users with the opportunity of revolutionary access. Currently, the media has become a fundamental part of our lives. Media has the tendency to shape different aspects of society (Santos, 2022). Media is a source of better communication on a mass level. It is a powerful institution that influences the opinions of masses. Now the role of the media is bigger than ever. Media transmits reality and underlying facts of happenings. Media has a very important responsibility in providing factual coverage (Muzaffar, et. al. 2019; Susan, 2015; Saud, 2022).

Media has a major effect in shaping public education and individuals' thinking. Curiosity is part of human nature. His nature makes him eager to know about society and surroundings. This thirst of human nature is fulfilled by various forms. Media as watch-dogs of the society play an important role in democratic systems (Bukhari, Bokhari, Asghar & Shams, 2022). So, people must be aware of the facts prevailing in society. In this regard, the media plays a crucial role as a provider of basic knowledge and information essential for rational debate (Carey, 1993). Media also has the authority to act as a "checking function" for the elected candidates and also they uphold their oaths to work for the betterment of the country (Muzaffar, et. al. 2020).

A healthy democracy is based on better electoral choices and the quality of information being delivered to the public. The stability of the political environment is crucially related to the independent and developed media. Stable and healthy democracy ensures rights of citizens, fair and free elections, protection of individual rights and freedom of press (Roy, 2014). In political communication, the impactful role of mass media technology in developing democratic strength of government, the formation of trends of political attitudes and participation are great matters of concern.

Free media is necessary because it uncovers the truth. If the accountability aspect of media is restricted then many entities can benefit and truth will remain hidden, including governments. The acts like censorship and repression of the media, results in disruption of the whole political scenarios. Democracies only thrive when voters are well informed. Without the freedom of press, voters would be simply at the mercy of politicians and interest groups that uphold specific agenda to win elections and promote specific legislation (Roy, 2019). It is widely accepted that there is a definite link between political instability and the economy of the country. Unstable political conditions have a drastic impact on the economy. In this era of fast information influx, political instability affects the external and internal conditions of the country. It also results in national disintegration and can have sensitive outcomes.

The trends of political participation have changed due to political instability. In current times, social media has become the most accessed platform for youth to get involved in politics and share their opinions publicly (Fareed et. al. 2020). Youth is considered as the major asset of a nation. Youth is the backbone of Pakistan with 64% of the whole nation. There is a lack of awareness, opportunities and training to formally take part in politics (Ahmed, et. al. 2015; Aisen, 2011).

Pakistan is a developing country with weak democracy since its birth. Role of free media is very important in democracy. The creation of awareness is media's one of the most important objective (Hussain 2012) Pakistan has faced political instability in past. Even in the current scenario, the political system is very unstable. This study is aimed to find out the trends of political participation and political efficacy of youth after watching current political chaos through media.

### **Literature Review**

Media has the power and tendency to shape the political, economic, social and environmental values of an individual as well as for the whole of the society. Media is a powerful institution in any state or country (Alkuino, 2017). It is considered as a powerful tool to maintain the balance in the society. So we can make sure that society is in the hands of well-informed people. So, the media acts as a transparent mirror through which one can see the reflection of society and its practices. Media has both positive and negative aspects. In a positive way, it provides us valuable information, updates and entertainment but manipulation, inaccuracy of content, loss of privacy and agenda settings are some negative aspects of media (Taufiq, 2019).

As the Media is considered as the mirror and molder of society, it crucially influences the opinions of the public. General public gets the basic framework from the content shown by the media and they shape their opinions accordingly (Falcone, 2018). With the easy and wide access of social media, the public is able to keep a track of any incident happening across the boundaries. Now every happening is a public issue. For example, earlier the elections were treated as a contest among the politicians but nowadays these elections and political campaigns are considered as personal tussles between members of the parties concerned (Gaur, 2021).

Media and especially the press are considered as the eyes and ears of the public. Traditional modes of media played an important role in framing the political scenarios in different states during past centuries. A free press basically serves four important functions that include accountability of the government, highlighting the public and social issues, educating people with valuable information and helps in building a connection among people (Thompson, 2018). Free and balanced media promotes transparency during the electoral process. New forms of media are providing more opportunities for participatory citizenship. Even the Americans get their news and updates from cable and social media rather than relying on hard news. Media has so much power that it can portray whatever it

wants. People who follow the media blindly are being manipulated in a similar way (Mintz, 2022).

There are examples of an argument that free media is necessary for democratic development (Shams, Asghar, Bukhari, & Bokhari, 2022). Scholars have focused on a number of personal level factors that affect people's political choice such as consumption of media, education, socio-economic status, age, gender, associational membership, caste system especially in under-developed countries (Younus, 2021). Media development is connected as a crucial part with the broader political liberalizations. According to instrumental variable analyses, vast radio exposure in Uganda is associated with greater levels of political participation in the year 2000. Another example is from Africa that according to an afroberometer survey, people who listened to FM radio with greater frequencies had more knowledge about politics (Conroy-Krutz, 2018).

It is important to note that free media and access to information has a significant impact on politically unstable countries. It is seen that by working on the effectiveness of media results in stabilizing the political risk of the countries. Simply the development and strengthening of the media sector proves to be an important strategy for political stability (Roy, 2014).

This world is now a global village and through digital media people are connected like a family. Digital media can play a significant role in promising democracy. It allows people the mobilization of information and exchange of opinion quickly without expending a considerable time, money and physical effort (Chen, 2014) Online political activities play a vital role in political awareness and real life political participation. Social media has a significant impact on the individual's offline political participation on social media consumers (Taufiq, 2019).

Pakistan is a developing country with weak democracy since its birth. Role of free media is very important in democracy. The creation of awareness is media's one of the most important objective (Hussain, 2012) Pakistan has faced political instability in past. Even in the current scenario, the political system is very unstable. This study is aimed to find out the trends of political participation and political efficacy of youth after watching current political chaos through media. Previous studies have been based on the relationships between free media and political participation or political instability individually. But those studies were conducted in other countries like Germany, Japan, South Africa and China etc. (Han, 2019). Studies based in Pakistan were merely based on impact of political instability on the economy and growth of the country. For this purpose, this study is an effort to fulfill this gap in the past studies. It is focused on the co-relative impact of political instability on political behaviors of youth after consuming the content of media.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H1: There is a significant correlation between media exposure and awareness regarding political instability.

H2: There is a significant correlation between media exposure and political efficacy.

H3: There is a significant correlation between media exposure and political participation.

### **Material and Methods**

For this study quantitative method i.e. cross-sectional survey method was applied. For the sake of survey, a questionnaire was developed after extensive literature review based on the idea. The responses of the survey questionnaire were based on a close-ended structure using 5 points Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' as 1 to the 'Strongly Agree' as 5. The details about the survey were shared with the respondents. Completion of

the survey was taken as a form of consent to participate. The tool used for the study is adopted by previous studies such as the variable of Media Exposure is adopted by (Kaniz, 2020), then political instability (Dimitraki, 2011), Political Participation (Casteltrionie, 2015) and Political Efficacy (Liu, 2017). After doing the pilot study the reliability and validity of the tool was checked using Chronbach's Alpha using SPSS software and all the constructs showed good reliability values (between 0.7 to 0.9). The value was 0.85 which is considered as a very good value.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The current study aims at analyzing the data collected from the youth studying at intermediate, bachelors and masters level with in public and private institutions in Lahore. The results of survey were empirically analyzed with the help of SPSS software. The close ended questions were coded in the data file after collecting the overall responses from Google questionnaire in the form of excel file. The result was measured to check the correlation and differences in the approaches of youth as the stakeholders. Data Analysis is the process to clean the data and transform it into a useful information providing base for a decision making (Johnson, 2022). In this study, SPSS software was used for data analysis and Spearman's Test was applied.

### Population and Sample

For this study youth from Lahore was considered as the population. Out of which, by using convenient sampling the data was collected from a sample of 300 people. So, the Sample size of this research study is (n=300). The data is being collected by the online Google survey. Both male and female participants were selected from 18 till 30 years of age. The demographic details are given below in the table 1.

### Results and Discussion

**Table 1**  
**Demographics of the respondents**

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	125	41.5
	Female	175	58.5
<b>Age</b>	18-21	142	47.2
	22-25	140	46.8
	24-26	18	6.0
<b>Education</b>	Intermediate	25	8.3
	Bachelors	198	66.1
	Masters	77	25.6
<b>Political Affiliation</b>	PTI	199	66.1
	PML(N)	47	15.6
	PPP	05	2
	Others	49	16.3

**Table 2**  
**Co-relation b/w media exposure & awareness of political instability**

		Media Exposure	Awareness regarding Political Instability
Spearman's rho	Media exposure	1.000	.192**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
		N	300

Awareness regarding Political Instability	Correlation Coefficient	.192**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
	N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is evident from the result that there is a significant correlation between media exposure and awareness regarding political instability. Spearman's correlation was used to analyze if the media exposure has a significant correlation with awareness regarding political instability. The value of correlation coefficient R is .192. The results suggested that there is a significant correlation found as the P value is .004. This finding suggested that the taken hypothesis is approved. Consequently it is certain that there is a significant relationship between exposure of media and the awareness regarding political instability. This indicates who use more media are more aware of political instability.

**Table 3**  
**Co-relation B/W media exposure & political efficacy**

			Media Exposure	Political Efficacy
Spearman's rho	Media Exposure	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.316**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	300	300
	Political Efficacy	Correlation Coefficient	.316**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is evident from the result that there is a significant correlation between media exposure and political efficacy. Spearman's correlation was used to analyze if the media exposure has a significant correlation with political efficacy. The value of Correlation coefficient R is .316. The results suggested that there is a significant correlation found as the P value is .000 which is less than .005. This finding suggested that the taken hypothesis is approved. Consequently it is certain that there is a significant relationship between exposure of media and the political efficacy of youth. This indicates who use more media are having more politically efficacy.

**Table 4**  
**Co-relation B/W media exposure & political participation**

			Media Exposure	Political Participation
Spearman's rho	Media Exposure	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.533**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	300	300
	Political Participation	Correlation Coefficient	.533**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It is evident from the result that there is a significant correlation between media exposure and political participation. Spearman's correlation was used to analyze if the media exposure has a significant correlation with political participation. The value of Correlation coefficient R is .316. The results suggested that there is a significant correlation found as the P value is .000 which is less than .005. This finding suggested that the taken hypothesis is approved. Consequently it is certain that there is a significant relationship between exposure of media and the political participation of youth. This indicates that participants who use more media are having more political participation.

## Discussions

This study aims to investigate the relationship between media exposure and awareness of political instability and political participation and political efficacy respectively=y. This survey based study analyses how media exposure, political instability, political participation and political efficacy co-relate with each other. The four dimensions are previously studied by scholars in the past (Louisa Ha, 2012; Finkel, 1985).

For this current study, 300 participants responded to the questionnaire via online survey platform Google Forms. The research goal was to test how media exposure impacts different political phenomena like awareness regarding instability, political participation and political efficacy. The first phase was to study how media exposure is linked with the awareness regarding political instability (Choudhry, et. al. 20160). The finding of the study tells that more than 95% people love to use social media. This study has proven that there is a significant relationship between media exposure and the awareness regarding political instability by the results of hypothesis showing P value of .004. The result suggested that it is certain that if exposure of media increases it would definitely enhance the awareness regarding political instability prevailing in the country (Feldman, 1991; Younus 2021).

It indicates that people who use more media are more aware of the political scenarios whether it is any distress or any political campaign. The cultivation theory also suggests that public is affected by the content of media (Morgan, 2010). If the media would be showing that there is political instability in the country then a consumer would develop a sense of awareness. According to the survey, a question was asked that do you think media mold opinion about politics, 37.2% respondents strongly agreed to this statement. If a person spends most of his/her time on using any kind of media definitely he/she consumes more content that is being shown on different media channels.

Media depicts the political conditions of the country. If the country is facing political instability, then a person consuming that content of media would definitely be aware of what is going on in the politics and country. If a person does not spend his major time using any media platform then he/she will be less aware politically. More consumption of media means more collection of facts and figures that provides a solid foundation to generate argument.

The second phase was aimed to investigate the relationship of media exposure and political participation. A significant co-relation is found as P value of 0.000 between media exposure and political participation

Media exposure enhances a person's knowledge about the political condition of the country (Krutz, 2018). 41.9% people believe that their incline towards politics has changed over time due to media. Also 40.2% people think that their vote (direct participation in the political system) is individually going to make a difference. Our youth spend most of their time on different media platforms especially on social media. They have easy access to the content of media as a whole. Facebook posts, YouTube videos and memes provide a vast arena to have political knowledge and to know the incline of public (Zaheer, 2012).

Based on Cultivation theory, their reactions and comments explain their inclination towards the prevailing political situations and their political affiliation towards their favorite party or leader. It also becomes very convenient for people to show their political thoughts by sharing any post, idea or video through their social media accounts. In this way, their enhanced use of media increases their political participation.

The third dimension studied in the current study was media content impacting the political efficacy. There is also a significant co-relation between media exposure and political efficacy because P value is .000. It is proven that there is certain relationship between exposure of media content and the political efficacy whether it's internal or external. Findings of the research study shows that 65% young adults think media provide them enough knowledge about politics. People who consume more media have more politically efficacy. When there is more consumption of media then a person will automatically have the knowledge of the current situations. He/she will become politically aware. He/she would be having enough knowledge of what's going on in the politics.

Media acts as watch dogs of the society. Media has the power to make every institution answerable about their frameworks of authority and duties as well. Media questions all the institutions of the country about their working and progress. If their working will be satisfactory, it will generate a sense of trust in the public (Sajid, 2015). But if the progress of any institution won't be satisfactory then definitely people won't trust that institution. If the government and institution will work for the betterment of the country then definitely public will trust that government. But the central responsibility lies on the shoulder of media (Aknabi, 2019).

People usually trust that what is shown on the media. If government won't act upon its duties then media channels will highlights theses aspects and people will be aware and they won't trust the government and its policies anymore. The theoretical framework also provides a base that trust is being inbuilt by the content of media. Therefore, it is proven that people who use media become more aware of the right and wrong. This thing impacts the ratio of politically efficacy widely.

The correlation of Political participation and Political efficacy was the fourth dimension of the study. The phenomenon of political efficacy has also significant co-relation with political participation because this study has proven it by P value of .000. When a person have sufficient knowledge of the political scenarios and the working of political institutes then it would result in its trust or distrust in the government (Prats, 2021). According to the findings of question that does casting vote is a civil responsibility, 54.6% people strongly agreed to this statement. When a person would totally understand the political efficacy, then he/she will be able to decide whether he/she should participate in the politics or not. The political efficacy results into political participation of youth (McCluskey, 2004). The results approved that youth of Pakistan is politically aware. Due to the consumption of media, the youth of Pakistan has the sense of political efficacy. Also, they want to participate in the political system of Pakistan.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that media exposure creates awareness regarding political instability of the country and it increases the level of political participation and political efficacy in the youth. This study focuses on analyzing the relationship among media exposure, awareness of political instability, political efficacy and political participation. This study is designed to find out the phenomena of which political instability shown on media impacts the behaviors of youth in terms of political participation and political efficacy. The main purpose is to find out the relationship between media exposure and political phenomena. Based on above findings, this study provides some implications of previous academic researchers. However this study revealed that media exposure has a significant

co-relation with the awareness about political instability, political participation and political efficacy. It has also found out the significant co-relation of political participation and political efficacy (Baker, 1973). Politics is the backbone of any country for its proper functioning. Media is among the main characters of political communication. The trends of consuming the content of media and the reliance of public on it have dramatically changed over the past two decades (Bouchrike, 2021). Media is the main source to communicate at larger levels. It also acts as watchdogs of the society. In a healthy democracy, independent media works as lifeblood. It has an authority as “checking function” over the government institutions.

This study used “Cultivation theory of Media” as the basic framework to analyze the political participation and political efficacy. In addition, the demographic results of this study also contribute to the theoretical framework in the political research realm. This study confirms the understanding of media exposure on the minds of young adults. This study has also revealed that social media is now the main source of news, information and entertainment as well. This study has also some practical implications for the flow of politics and government. Government officials and journalists can use the study findings to know about the dimensions of political system and use of media. This study also provides implications for the youth of the country to understand how content of media shapes the political choices and political behaviors.

The results suggested that the media exposure has significant correlation with awareness of political instability, political participation and political efficacy. Political participation has significant co-relation with political efficacy. It is also proven that awareness of political instability has significant co-relation with political efficacy. Although this study has multiple implications for academic and practical realms but also have some limitations.

### **Recommendations**

The avenues and areas for future research are vast for individuals that are interested in thoughts and perceptions of young adults, exposure of media, unstable political conditions, trends of political participation and political efficacy. Future studies can be made to analyze the impact of internal and external political efficacy on the political participation. Also the analysis regarding the impact of unstable political conditions on the choice of vote can be done for better understanding of the phenomenon.



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