



Presentation of Politicians in Comedy TV Shows: Relationship among Public Perception, Education and TV Viewing Behavior

Dr. Muhammad Riaz, Lecturer, Riphah Institute of Media Sciences, Riphah International University, Pakistan

Dr. Beenish Zaheen, Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, the Women University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan
(Corresponding Author)

Dr. Aasima Safdar, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies Department, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan,

Abstract- The present study aims to explore how Pakistani private channels presented the image of our national politicians in their comedy programs. Such programs influenced the opinion of common man regarding their voting decision. By employing the cultivation theoretical framework, the researcher conducted survey from the residents of Islamabad. It was found that the people who were highly educated, were less influenced by the comedy TV shows however, less educated people were more likely to be influenced by the comic depiction of politicians and formed their opinion accordingly. Likewise, the viewers who spent more time in watching comedy TV shows, their opinion was more affected by the TV content, on the other hand, the less exposure to the TV programs had limited impact on the perception of viewers regarding politicians.

Key words: Cultivation, Pakistani TV programs, Comedy, heavy and light viewers, quantitative analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Through this research article, the researcher has made a scientific attempt to find out how our private television comedy programs portrayed our national politicians. Their style, their mannerisms and their character, etc., because after seeing all this, a common man forms his opinion about them and then decides whether to vote for them or not in the light of that opinion. There was a time when television drama was very popular in our country but with the advent of private television channels, political talk shows and especially comedy programs like *Ham Sab Ummeed Say Hain*, *Hasb e Haal*, *Mazak Raat*, and *Khabarnaak* have taken its place. Our national politicians are ridiculed in these comedy television shows. Their statements, their speeches, their briefings and their style are copied in such a way that people are forced to laugh out loud. The funny and interesting thing is that this ridicule is done in a way that not only people enjoy but they even form a specific opinion about them. In addition, the researcher sought to understand how education, literacy, and television viewing behavior affect their opinion formation or perception. It is very clear that our literacy rate is very low and the common man mostly forms his opinion through the mass media. Because of television comedy shows, viewers perceive the image of politicians in the same way that private television channels do. And this offer needs to be looked at in particular because, as voters, they are an important part of this political system. According to Francis (2012), today, in almost every society in the world, politicians often express their views and feelings through various mass media, especially television, and sometimes their irresponsible statements, conversations, speeches and briefings misrepresent them. Baum (2003), Moy & Pfau (2000) and Prior (2003) studied the influences and effects of political satire shows of television deeply to investigate its relationship with politics, politicians, political culture, voting trends and behaviors especially. Satirical shows of different private television channels have sufficient potential to influence and impact on political behaviors and attitude of targeted audience. One of the virtues of these comedy shows is that they are creating a political awareness among the general public. Not only are the people fully aware of the political issues but their political awareness is also increasing which is very good for our country as a whole. It is this political awareness and political wisdom that further influences their voting tendencies going forward. There is a clear change in their political behaviors and attitudes which is very positive.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

- i. To understand the difference in the views of educated and less educated viewers of comedy shows regarding politicians
- ii. To examine the difference in views of heavy viewers and light viewers of comedy shows regarding democracy portrayed by TV comedy programs

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Lee and Cook (2014) highlighted how comedy television shows on different channels can evoke negative emotions and can be an inspiring and encouraging basis for active participation in the current political process. Hoon Lee (2012) examined the effectiveness of political comedy shows is nearly alike to daily current affairs and news programs associated to politicians and politics. In his research he adopted the survey technique with a sample of seven hundred respondents. Lee studied that a large number of respondents have tendency to share the contents of political satire programs on different social and digital platforms for communication and sharing of different ideas also. If we look at our daily life, it becomes very clear that we like some politicians and dislike some of them; there may be various reasons for this, such as political ideologies, their character, their education, etc. Now, in these comedy shows, if our unpopular politicians are ridiculed, we not only make it a topic of discussion but also share it on different social media platforms.

Mcquail and Curran (2002) studied that different mass mediums and especially television has become an important part of our life today. Audiences consumed the contents of different mediums that formed their certain perception. It is no secret that the involvement of television in our lives has increased so much that it is in a way our family member. Although all the programs presented on television are important in terms of their impact, but comedy programs have a special significance.

According to Davis & Owen (1998), satirical shows often used as a major and crucial tool for some specific objective and program. A large number of comedy television contents mislead and misrepresent the portrayal of political leader who is also a candidate. Schutz (1977) studied that comedy programs of many TV channels were highlighted on the blunders, mistakes and slip ups of the politicians. It seems that politicians have been ridiculed in these comedy shows for some time now in an organized manner and under an agenda. It could be a very important study for some researchers to work on how politicians representing a particular political party are presented in these comedy programs in a special way on election days.

Niven et al (2003) argued that political satire shows of television channels are not subject and issue oriented. Researchers discussed that ninety percent or more than ninety percent of the funny contents are about mistakes and blunders of political leaders and a small number, less than ten percent left over are about the other issues. The opinion of these researchers is absolutely correct because we often see that in these comedy programs, issues and topics of public interest are not discussed but the fumbles of politicians and their mistakes are made the subject of discussion.

The terminology of the “frame” and the theme of “framing effect” were primarily pointed out by Erving Goffman in 1974 as “a sociological paradigm. Some examples regarding framing studies are here; a very useful research work has explored media framing of “Negros” by Downing and Husband (2005); Entman (1992); Giroux (1996), framing of youngsters by Frazer (1987); Best and Kellner (1998), framing of people that are aged by Healey and Ross (2002); Robinson and Skill (1995), framing of the poor people by Clawson and Trice (2000). All of these investigations suggest that the representation and depiction of different groups, communities and people are important and key apprehensions for the procedure in which they understand the television viewers.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: What is the difference in the opinions of less educated viewers and highly educated viewers regarding the image of politicians?

H1: It is highly likely that less educated viewers of comedy programs are more in favor of the concept that comedy shows are presenting real picture of politicians as compared to the highly educated viewers.

RQ2: What is the difference in the opinions of light viewers and heavy viewers of comedy shows regarding democracy?

H2: It is highly likely that the light viewers of comedy programs are more in disagreement with the concept that comedy shows are presenting a positive image of democracy as compared to the heavy viewers

CULTIVATION THEORY

Cultivation Theory is an important theory that emphasizes the perception of audiences who spent most of their time in front of television screens. Professor Gerbner describes this as a on-screen world and introduces a term “not a window on or reflection of the world, but a world in itself” (Curran, 2012). Scholars of Cultivation theory discuss TV as important in terms of its long-term effects and influence. This is an important area of research how general public form their opinions based on it. That’s why the researcher focused to apply Dr Gerbners Cultivation Theory to find out the public perception about the framing of politicians in this present research.

III. METHODOLOGY

The current research is conducted to explore how differently TV comedy shows cultivate images and ideas related to politicians and democracy in the minds of viewers having varied educational background and amount of time they spend in front of television. The researcher has employed Survey technique to collect the data from the registered voters living in the city of Islamabad. As Islamabad is a capital city of the country and a large number of people who are living and performing their duties here belong to different provinces of Pakistan, this is why it is the best area for research. The survey method is considered to be a very good and effective way to gathered people's opinions, trends and attitudes. That is why the researcher has adopted the same methodology

In Islamabad there are three constituencies of the National Assembly of Pakistan such as

(1) NA 52

(2) NA 53

(3) NA 54.

In 2018 general elections, ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan) divided this beautiful city into fourteen charges, details are given below:

Table: 1 Constituency and their range

Constituency	The extent of the constituency
NA 52 Islamabad I	Some areas of Charge No.1, Charge No. 2
NA 53 Islamabad II	Some areas of Charge No.1, Charge No. 6~ 12
NA 54 Islamabad III	Charge No. 3~5, Charge. No. 13~14

The researcher has employed the even and odd number technique and selected the Charge Number 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13 at the first stage.

POPULATION OF THE RESEARCH

The universe of the present research consists of all registered voters of federal capital city of Pakistan. Details are given below:

Table: 2 Registered Voters of Islamabad

Voters (Male)	Voters (Female)	Total Registered Voters
407463	357885	765348

SAMPLE SIZE

The researchers have used Morgan table to find out the sample size for the current research project and following sample is selected for research from the capital city of Islamabad

(1) Male registered voters = 387

(2) Female registered voters = 387

Total registered voters = 774

RELIABILITY

Cronbach's Alpha is used to measure the reliability of survey questionnaire. The acceptable values should be more than 0.7. Cronbach Alpha is employed on different section of survey questionnaire .The alpha value obtained was 0.76. This value indicates the high ratio of reliability of a questionnaire for the survey.

MEASUREMENT

The data was collected with the help of questionnaire and analyzed and investigated by using IBM's SPSS 21.

TESTING HYPOTHESES:

H1: It is highly likely that less educated viewers of comedy programmes are more in favour of the concept that comedy shows are presenting real picture of politicians as compared to the educated viewers.

Table 3: Responses of Highly Qualified and Less Qualified Respondents regarding True Picture of Politicians

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	
Qualification	Under Matric	12	42	13	12	4	83
	Matric	17	52	24	27	5	125
	Intermediate	20	48	18	22	4	112
	Graduation	51	150	44	32	6	283
	Post-Graduation	3	16	65	71	16	171

Total	103	308	164	164	35	774
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Table 4: Chi-Square Tests Qualification and True Picture of Politicians

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169.714 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	186.499	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	30.490	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	774		

Chi Square Value = 169.71

P-Value = 0.000

The result is significant at $p < 0.05$

The empirical result clearly shows that there is a significant difference between the responses of less qualified and highly qualified respondents. As the obtained P-value is less than 0.05, it shows that the research hypothesis is supported. So it can be inferred on the basis of obtained results that less educated viewers are more significantly in favour of the concept that TV comedy shows are presenting real image of politicians as compared to the viewers who are highly educated.

H2: It is highly likely that the light viewers of comedy programmes are more in disagreement with the concept that comedy shows are presenting a positive image of democracy as compared to the heavy viewers

Table 5: Responses of Heavy viewers & Light Viewers regarding democracy

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Heavy	Less than 1 hour	0	0	0	3	0	3
	and 1-2 hours	18	78	58	173	23	350
Light Viewers	3-4 hours	15	105	48	151	25	344
	5 hours and more	0	32	14	27	4	77
Total		33	215	120	354	52	774

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests Heavy & Light Viewers and Positive Image of Politicians

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.277 ^a	12	.035
Likelihood Ratio	26.359	12	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.137	1	.023
N of Valid Cases	774		

Chi Square Value = 22.27

P-Value = 0.03

The result is significant at $p < 0.05$

The statistical analysis of the above hypothesis reveals that there is significant difference between the views of light viewers and heavy viewers regarding presentation of democracy by TV shows. As the obtained P-value is less than 0.05, so the research hypothesis is supported. And in the light of these obtained results, it can be inferred that light viewers are more significantly in disagreement with the concept that comedy shows are presenting positive image of democracy.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Politics and politicians have a profound effect on our daily lives. Because after being elected by our votes, they hold various positions, public offices and perform their duties in different fields. If we vote for a worthy and intelligent politician, it is much better not only for us but also for our country and nation. We vote for a politician only after being influenced by many things and the most important of them is public opinion which is made by various mass media and especially television. Although all TV programs are very important in terms of public opinion or opinion formation but the role of comedy programs is very important in this regard. In these comedy shows, public opinion is being formed in a special way, about some politicians, as a result of which they sometimes lose or win elections.

This research paper tried to find out the perceptions of general public about the framing of our mainstream political leaders in a scientific way, in the mirror of comedy television shows of Pakistan. After conducting this research, the researcher has come to the conclusion that satirical programmes of different television channels have a lot of potential and effects that can shape and mold the views and opinions of the viewers. Television comedy shows are extremely popular among the general public.

People watch them with interest and are greatly influenced by them. The results of this research article also showed that there is a correlation between political process, political socialization and satirical shows of different television channels.

The results show that education, literacy, awareness and television viewing behaviors play a vital role in formation of perception and public opinion. Highly educated people think very differently from less educated people and this is evident from their answers. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there is a clear difference in the thinking of those who watch less television and those who spend more time in front of the television screens.

Results of present study showed that well-educated people are less likely to be influenced by comedy television content because education strengthens their political awareness, political beliefs and political behaviors. While on the other hand less educated people are more likely to be influenced by comedy television content and form their opinions accordingly. The results clearly show that cultivation easily takes place among less educated people. Less qualified people lack critical ability to differentiate the difference between the images and beliefs presented by the virtual world and the reality that exists in real world situation. They can easily become the victim of false consciousness and start believing that the behaviors and images shown by TV to be true and real.

Furthermore, the empirical findings also reveal that people who spend a lot of time in front of the television screen are more affected by comedy television content. On the other hand, people who spend less time in front of TV are less likely to be affected by comedy TV content. This shows that due to heavy viewership and mainstreaming the minds of heavy viewers' start thinking in the same pattern in which TV reflects different images, symbols and ideas.

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