

## Media's Projection Of Democratic Process: A Comparative Analysis Of Three Leading Pakistani Political Parties During Election 2018 In National Dailies

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*The democratic continuity strengthens the public institutions and triggers the glimmer of hope for public prosperity. The current research focuses on the association between the print media and political parties in Pakistan. The basic purpose of this analysis is to examine that how the Pakistani dailies portray three of Pakistan's parliamentary parties in their substances during the electoral process of 2018. Media has an abundant worth during the voting process because of its aptitude to frame the image of political parties, headship and affect the reader's point of view. So the media and political affairs liaison become more multifaceted during the polling process. Media depends on political parties for an update while political leaders follow the media for profile-raising. Pakistan had its polling day to elect its 15th National assembly on 25th July, 2018. What remains to be studied is the contribution of print media in raising mass awareness, deep understanding, mass participation in the voting process and worth of democratic continuity? Did it initiate to sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting, critical thinking about present political parties manifestos and their earlier enactment? Did the depiction of electoral competition only relate to the portrayal of political party leaders, their clashes among each other or did it go beyond and drafted any opportunities and remedies to improve civic issues? The researcher has discoursed this multi-faced rapport by analyzing the treatment of mainstream political parties (PML-N, PPP, and PTI) in Pakistani leading dailies (Jang, Nawa-e-Waqt, Dawn and The News) by applying qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques. The frequency, position and tilt of news stories regarding political parties published on the front page of the selected newspapers from 25th June 2018 to 25th August 2018 is studied, and editorials of the nominated dailies were qualitatively examined through framing.*

**Keywords:** Democracy; Election 2018; content analysis; Print media; Framing.

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### INTRODUCTION

The media played a markedly role while providing a platform for diversified political discourses. Hope, positive visions, peace, prosperity and equality are directly connected to successive democratic transition. The democratic system cannot work and flourish in the absence of political parties (Akhtar, 2011). Like many other institutions of society, political groups are the quite vibrant groups but in Pakistani society this particular segment of society mostly manure by other powerful segments like military, bureaucracy and judiciary (Hussain & Kokab, 2013). People dependence at media enhance before polling; for getting news about political candidates and during polling. it's the media that updated the masses about security condition, polling booth situation, tabulation as well as voters trend. The vital ingredient making democracy conceivable is the continuity of information. Consequently, national dailies have remained a leading substance of electioneering of major political parties and their supporters. Numerous scholars pointed out the strong association between democracies and the political parties (Muller & Strom, 1999; Strom, Muller & Bergman, 2006 as cited in Mushtaq, Baig & Mushtaq, 2018). Media is, clearly, of seriously significant in all the processes of engineering the thinking patterns. It also plays its part in sensitizing the masses about the worth to vote; those which most thoroughly align with their concerns, "ideology" and standards, "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, 2001, pp85-127). Sovereign

judiciary, vibrant establishment, proactive media are the essential tools to flourish an operational democracy (Laohakosol & Walsh, 2011).

### THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

The Agenda-setting theory offers the foundation for the current study. Donald Shah, Maxwell McComb, LittleJohn and Foss (2008) explained the variables of theory in these words; "The ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking---has been labelled the Agenda setting function of mass communication. Briefly, the mass media not be successful in telling us what to think but they are stunningly successful in telling what to think about" (293). This explicates the influence of media to set the trends "agenda" and elevate issues of mass importance. McComb and Shaw (1972) as quoted in Wogu (2008) narrated about the community fellows "audience not only learn about public issues through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it".

### LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS

The strength of association between media and democratic practice can be comprehended through the lens of Obot and Batta

(2012) “it is quite awkward to have democratic society without an efficient media. In the absence of free and responsible media, the fair political representation of masses would might be a malnourished and still-birth political contraption” (p.165). The democratic society media always contributed in raising mass awareness, deep understanding, mass participation in the voting process. The worth of democratic continuity; initiate to sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting, critical thinking about present political parties manifestos and their earlier enactment? It's also the primary function of media to go beyond and drafted any opportunities and remedies to improve civic issues (Curran & Gurevitch, 1991; McNair, 2002; Obot, 2013; Wolfesohn, 2002).

Besley, Burgess and prat (2002) assert that “a free or non-captured media can affect political outcomes through three routes, namely: sorting, discipline and policy salience” (p.49). In the process of engineering democratic setup, it's essential to provide valid and appropriate information to the electorates for taking accurate decision to select most appropriate political representative (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This researcher further narrated their opinion in these words: “policy makers need accurate information about citizens, to respond to public concerns, to deliver effective services meeting real human needs, and also, in democracies to maximize popular electoral support to be returned to office. (p.118).The researcher has selected the news items; front page news and editorials because dailies are still basic instrument of mass communication. “At the beginning, print media (newspaper) was society's primary instrument of mass communication and till today it is the log book of human affairs more than any other means of communication”. (Hynds as cited in Daramola, 2003, p. 120).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Did Pakistani dailies give more prominence to scandalized news about political parties compared to other issues?
2. Is there any variance in the treatment in the English and Urdu newspapers?
3. Whether dailies gave progressive coverage about democratic process with suggestive stages or just critically analyzed the issues without asserting any solution?

## METHODOLOGY

The current research considers all front page news and editorials published in the four leading English and Urdu dailies i.e., *Dawn* and *The News* (two English language dailies), *Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* (two Urdu dailies) from June 25<sup>th</sup> 2018, to 25<sup>th</sup> August, 2018, a time period of one month before and after general Election 2018 in Pakistan. The researcher used purposive sampling.

## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CATEGORIES

The concerns were divided into five categories: significance of democracy; awareness about participating in voting process; performance of election commission of Pakistan, accountability process and coverage of main stream three political parties. All news contents( front page news and editorials) associated to primary concept of democratic society, freedom to choose the political representatives and facilities masses enjoy at democratic, progressive liberal society for ‘significance of democracy’ category. Content such as equal right to vote, highlight gender discrimination regarding vote casting or political participation, tabulation, information about their polling areas, was put in the category ‘awareness about participating in voting process such as equal’

The reporting of General Election 2018 and framing of mainstream political parties is studied in three techniques: frequency, eminence, and trend. Frequency was measured as number of time news appeared which related to democratic process. Prominence is measured within

news items into three techniques, the page, location on the page and photographs. If the news was placed on the upper half of the page a score of four and if on the lower half a score of three was given. If any photograph was positioned with the news, a score of one otherwise, no score was given. Index mark of extreme eminence was considered to be five and of least eminence was considered to be one. Hence, if a score was greater than three it was being measured as high eminence and if less than two then of less eminence. tendency of content were scaled in editorials, on two-point scale positive and negative. Any editorial that pointed out about enlightened dealings taken to address the issues of the democratic practice with suggestive steps to resolve the problems being faced by voters in Pakistan was labeled as positive. However, any editorial, which only pointed towards the issues democratic practice of without stating any definite remedy was measured as negative.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** English and Urdu Language Newspaper-Wise Frequency and Percentage of News on front page

| Types of dailies | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------|-----------|------------|
| English          | 245       | 37.86%     |
| Urdu             | 402       | 62.1%      |

N=647

Table 1 indicates that out of total of 647 Front page news, in the leading English dialectal newspapers 245 (37.86%) and in the national language (Urdu) newspapers 402 (62.1%) news were printed.

**Table 2:** Issue-wise Frequency and Percentage of Democratic process

| Issues of Mainstream political parties              | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Portrayal of political party leaders                | 326       | 50.38%  |
| Apprehensions about pre and post poll ragging       | 112       | 17.31%  |
| Political parties faced biased victimization        | 125       | 19.3%   |
| Sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting    | 50        | 7.73%   |
| Report the party manifesto and previous performance | 34        | 5.25%   |

Table 2 points out that out of the total 647 news published in leading newspapers from 25th June 2018 to 25th August 2018 about general election in Pakistan, 326 (50.38%) news were printed on issue “Portrayal of political party leaders” which is highest compared to all other categories. The “Apprehensions about pre and post poll ragging” issue is the second most covered issue with 112 (17.3%) news. 125 (19.3%) news were published on the issue of “Political parties faced biased victimization, 50 (7.7%) news were published on “Sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting” and least covered issue was “Report the party manifesto and previous performance” with 34(5.25%) news items.

**Table 3:** Newspaper-Wise Frequency and Percentage of Editorials

| Types of dailies | Frequency<br>Positive/negative | Percentage |
|------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Dawn             | 32 ( 19/13)                    | 28.57%     |
| Jang             | 33 (17/4)                      | 29.46%     |
| The News         | 24 (17/7)                      | 21.42%     |
| The Naw-i-waqt   | 23 (18/5)                      | 20.53%     |

N=112

Table 3 indicates that 112 editorials were published on the issues; out of 112, 32(28.57%) were published in *Dawn*; most of them positive, suggestive and appreciating the voters to choose the political candidates with their free will. 21(17.8%) editorials were printed in *Jang*, most of them neutral, providing information as a commentary

and suggestive stance for all including NAB, ECP and care taker government to play their fair and transparent role. 39(33%) editorials published in *Naw-i-Waqt*, most of them highlighted the political victimization of PMLN, biased attitude of NAB, pre and post poll ragging issues as well as problems faced by duty officers at counting and at time of delivery of results. 26(22%) editorials were published at *The Nation*, most of them highlighted the unfairness of judiciary, care-taker government and pointed out the systematic marginalization of leading political parties previous civic development projects by media and other segments of society.

**Table 4: Issue-wise Analysis of English and Urdu Newspapers**

|         | Portrayal of political parties | Apprehension about pre and post ragging | Biased victimization | Sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting | Report the party manifesto and previous performance |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| English | 133(39.5%)                     | 42(40.7%)                               | 57(47%)              | 13(41%)                                          | 7(31.8%)                                            |
| Urdu    | 163(56.9%)                     | 61(60.3%)                               | 64(53%)              | 18(58%)                                          | 15(68.2%)                                           |
| Total   | 286                            | 103                                     | 121                  | 31                                               | 22                                                  |

N1=252 English dailies N2=311 Urdu dailies

The results of table 4 gives a comparison of Urdu and English dailies treatment to the issues about democratic process of 2018. Out of 252 news stories covered by English national dailies, 133(39.5%) news were on issue of "portrayal of political leaders", 42 (40.7%) were available on issue of "apprehensions about pre and post poll ragging", 57 (47%) news were printed on "biased victimization", 13 (41.0%) were about "sensitize the citizens about the worth of reporting" and only 7(31.8%) front page news stories were issued on "political parties manifesto and previous performance" issue while contrary among total of 311 news covered by Urdu newspapers, 163(41.5%) news were on issue of "portrayal of political leaders", 61 (60.3%) were available on issue of "apprehensions about pre and post poll ragging", 64(53%) news were printed on "biased victimization", 18 (59.0%) were about "sensitize the citizens about the worth of reporting" and only 15(68.2%) front page news stories were issued on "political parties manifesto and previous performance".

The results show that media gave the maximum coverage to the politician-oriented narrative, in which some of politicians repeatedly blamed each other without evidence even at highly sensitive issue as *The Nation* wrote "Without the shred of evidence, that the PMLN government "to please western power" had deliberately weakened the pledge on the finality of prophet hood, in exchange of hiding his corruption. Imran Khan actively fanning the flames".

Very interesting findings were shared by *Dawn* by mentioning that Balochistan seemed missing in the national political engineering (3-7-18 *Dawn*) because the leading political parties least focused at arranging their corner meeting, political power shows and the most significantly sharing any prominent agenda to address Balochistan issues at priorities. *Dawn* also observed and penned the key issue "The countries major political parties are so dominated by personalities who appear to be a permanent part of the political landscape is certainly disappointing from a democratic perspective".

## CONCLUSION

Peace, prosperity, fair and equal rights are normally connected to transparent democratic process in every nation. Unfortunately in Pakistan, the engineering of democratic practice is not much bright. To deeply comprehend them fully very critical administrative and

systematic transformations are essentials to implement. International democratic organizations emphasize that media has a leading role in gauging mass awareness for civil rights to equally participate in polling process. Media can perform a very significant character in spreading information that can endow readers to take an independent decision to select a responsible political candidate and then take an action; to cast a vote at polling day. If the media executes its act as fair, unbiased and responsible role of enlightening and reporting the democratic process it can be quite focal in bringing social transformation for the rights of masses.

The aim of current study was to categorize the role of Pakistani print media about issues of democratic process in Pakistan. The consequences pinpoint that framing on the issues of democratic process in both English and Urdu newspapers were quite insignificant. The newspapers did not have any vibrant agenda and position to raise awareness about the violations of Citizen's rights; incompetent caretaker government, pressures at voters to cast the vote to the alleged favorite political party. It is not performing any part in influencing mass opinion as well as affecting the lawmaking. To endorse the citizen's rights agenda in the country, media has the features to work effectively in manipulating community and political agenda. Prerequisite is to cultivate and implement a planning that assimilates media in endorsing the rights of the masses about voting and address the entrenched perspectives of manipulation of an individual's right during the whole polling process. As *Dawn* very truly quoted, "PMLN, PPP, PTI are the largest parties, voters should cast the vote for the sake of change" Media is anticipated to play a more publicly accountable role toward this main segment of the society and as an influential body of society may serve to draw consideration to this issue by highlighting the issues of citizen's rights to transform their current position more prominence.

Additionally, it is Suggested that to meet the necessities and services of the Pakistani citizens, and to guard them from any further mistreatment, certain moral values be maintained while reporting about the political parties involvement in any moral or financial corruption. Its true for every state, the democratic continuity strengthens the public institutions and trigger the glimmer of hope for public prosperity. The current research emphasizes on the association between the print media and political parties in Pakistan. The basic purpose of this study was to examine that how the Pakistani newspapers exposed three of Pakistan's parliamentary parties in their substances during the electoral process of 2018. Media has an abundant worth during the voting process because of its aptitude to frame the image of political parties, headship and affect the reader's point of view. So the media and political affairs liaison become more multifaceted during the polling process.

Media depends on political parties for an update while political leaders follow the media for profile-raising. Pakistan had its polling day to elect its 15th National assembly on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. The results show the insignificant contribution of print media in raising mass awareness, deep understanding, mass participation in the voting process and worth of democratic continuity in its news stories as well as in their editorials. Very few writings initiated to sensitize the citizens about the worth of voting, critical thinking about present political parties manifestos and their earlier enactment. The depiction of electoral competition unfortunately overwhelmingly relate to the portrayal of political party leaders, their clashes (moral, financial, family, intra-party conflicts) among each other. Very few writing proactively write at the limitations of party manifesto and insisted that political parties should be drafted any opportunities and remedies to improve civic genuine issues; health facilities, free education, public transport, drinkable water, jobs, clean environment, etc. The researcher has discoursed this multi-faced rapport by analyzing the treatment of mainstream political parties (PML-N, PPP, and PTI) in Pakistani leading dailies (*Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, *Dawn* and *The News*).

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