



Political Communication through Television and Digital Media in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The spread of television and digital media has brought about a radical change in the field of political communication according to which the information is spread by the actors in the political process and the way the citizens are involved in political affairs. Traditionally, television acted as the most influential platform to convey political message, agenda-setting, and persuading voters and provided centralized and edited political discourse. Nonetheless, the swift advancement of digital media platforms, such as social media, online news portals, and interactive communication technologies, has decentralized the political communication process, allowing more people to engage in it, achieve a sense of immediacy, and make the political content more personalized. This paper observes the dynamic nature of political communication in both television and online media in terms of their influences in influencing political consciousness, popular opinion and democratic participation. The paper is based on empirical and theoretic sources that demonstrate the importance of framing and agenda-setting in media, along with an algorithmic mediation approach to affect political discourse in modern societies. It also discusses how media convergence, misinformation and fragmented audiences are affecting democratic processes. The results highlight that, on one hand, digital media can be used to increase political participation and accessibility, but on the other hand, there are issues associated with polarization, credibility and regulation. The research paper has an impact on political communication research by presenting a combined interpretation of both traditional and digital media as complementary spaces of political communication that is controversial.



Introduction

Political communication is one of the pillars in the democratic societies and is the main mechanism by which political information is handed down, interpreted and discussed among

citizens, institutions as well as political actors. Traditionally, mass media, especially television played an important role in political communication because it is the media that fostered relationships among governments, political parties, and people. The visual immediacy of television, the broad accessibility, and the institutional power of television put it in the position of the most effective medium of political communication during the majority of the twentieth century (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Hallin, 1994). Television was found to be the determinant of political awareness, voter turnout and confidence of the people with the political institutions in both the developing and the developed societies.

The emergence of digital media has radically changed the political communication picture, proposing new participants, platforms, and ways of communication. Online media, such as social networking sites, online news portals, blogs, and applications have broken the hierarchical communication systems and ensured that citizens engage in the political discourse as opposed to consuming news (Castells, 2009; Chadwick, 2013). This has turned the process of political communication into less of a one-way process which is dominated by elite actors to a more interactive, networked, and participatory process. Consequently, a contemporary political communication is fast, interactive and personalized and this has transformed the construction and contestation of political narratives.

Television is still a potent instrument in political communication, especially in the societies where there is high broadcast penetration and low digital penetration. Television and its credibility and mass coverage are still critical to political debates, election campaigns, policy announcements and crisis communication (Stromback, 2008). Traditionally, television news has the power to shape opinion; both by the process of agenda-setting and framing, which not only makes the issue important to the citizenry, but also how the issue is interpreted (Entman, 1993; McCombs, 2004). Research has always shown that the televised political coverage has a strong influence on voter perceptions, a judgment of the leadership, and the saliency of the issue most notably during the election years (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Bennett, 2016).

The dominance of television, even though still relevant, has been questioned more by the digital media systems that provide other avenues through which political activities can be done. Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube, and Instagram are now the main locations of political campaigning, activism, and debate among people (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Enli, 2017; Qadoos et al., 2020). Political actors can now circumvent the traditional media gatekeepers by communicating directly to the citizens as well as audiences can now curate, share and comment on the political content. This has reshaped the roles of the producers and consumers of political information, creating what scholars refer to as the hybrid media systems whereby the old and the new media are coexisting and interacting together (Chadwick, 2013).

Political communication practices have also been transformed by the convergence of the television and the digital media. The content of television has been widely distributed via digital channels and it is quite common to see online political argumentation that draws its credibility based on the actions on TV. This narrowing of audiences enhances the strength of political messages, yet it segment, with the citizens being able to selectively read media that fits their ideological background (Sunstein, 2017). The resulting decentralization challenges the existence of a unified public sphere and leads to the criticisms of polarization and loss of the mutual democratic deliberation (Prior, 2007; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

Digital media has also increased the possibilities of political participation, especially by the younger generations through political communication. Digital platforms, which reduce the entry barriers, have been found to enable political mobilization, civic engagement, and grassroots activism (Boulianne, 2015; Gil de Zuniga et al., 2014). Online petitions, hashtag activism, and online campaigns have grown to be one of the major forms of political expression, letting the voices of the marginalized groups be heard in the mainstream. Digital media has also been extremely important in political awareness and social movements by the developing societies by bypassing state-controlled or elite-dominated media structures (Castells, 2012; Tufkeci, 2017).

Nonetheless, there are major challenges that attend the democratizing possibilities of the digital media. The spread of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news has become one of the primary issues of political communication, especially during the election and political crisis (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Content distribution that is driven by algorithms tends to emphasize engagement over factuality, giving preference to sensational and polarizing content that discourages the discourse of informed democracy (Pariser, 2011; Bakshy et al., 2015). With the digital medium, unlike the traditional television media which is guided by regulatory and professional standards, there is no proper oversight that can govern the media, and accountability and ethical responsibility may be questioned.

On the other hand, television remains to be linked with institutional authority and journalism despite the claims of political bias and elite manipulation. Television has been the major source of political content in most developing societies and especially among populations that lack access to the internet, or are not digital literate (Votmer, 2013). This dual media space causes imbalances in political knowledge and political participation because various groups in the society depend on various media platforms to communicate politically. It is important to understand these differences in order to analyze the democratic consequences of the media systems.

Agenda-setting, framing, mediatization, and networked public sphere theory are some valuable theoretical frameworks that offer an understanding of the way political communication functions in both television and digital media (Entman, 1993; Stromback & Esser, 2014; Benkler, 2006). The theory of agenda-setting describes how the media influence the priorities of the population, whereas the theory of framing emphasizes on the interpretive frameworks which influence the perception of political issues by the general population. The mediatization theory focuses on the politically relevant adaptation of actors to the media logic, and the networked communication models focuses on the decentralized and participatory aspect of the digital political argument.

Political communication in modern political conditions cannot be perceived in a medium. Rather, it is a product of the interplay between television and digital platforms which have quite different but related impacts on political behavior and the opinion of the population. Cross-platform approaches where televised messaging is combined with a digital outreach are becoming an essential part of political campaigns, governance communications, and civic engagement. The integration can be seen as a part of the wider changes in media consumption trends and political culture, necessitating new analytical methods.

Following such changes, it is crucial to study political communication in terms of television and digital media as it can help to comprehend the working of modern democracy. The current research has provided a contribution to the existing knowledge in political communication by combining both theoretical and empirical literature on the role of traditional and digital media in

the formation of political awareness, participation and discourse. Placing television and digital media in the same analytical paradigm, the study draws attention to the complementary and competing nature of the measures they participate in the political communication of modern societies.

Literature Review

The role of media in influencing political knowledge, attitudes and behavior of people in formulating politics has been the subject of a long study of political communication. The early academic literature focused on the mass media, especially television, as the medium that was most crucial in propagating political messages to the masses. The ability of television to reach big, diverse audiences placed it as a formidable mediator between political institutions and citizens in political agendas as well as in influencing public opinion (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Hallin, 1994). Studies at this time, repeatedly proved that television news was a defining factor in defining issue salience, particularly in the election seasons, as highlighted political issues and setback, by sidelining others (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, 2004).

The agenda-setting theory emerged in the research of political communication as one of the most influential approaches, as it describes how the media coverage influences the population in their understanding of the most important issues. Many empirical studies established that prolonged television attention given to political matters is a direct correlation to the heightened public awareness on the matter (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Weaver, 2007). In addition to the agenda-setting, the framing theory also contributed to the comprehension of media influence by showing how the political information is presented, how viewers perceive it and evaluate it (Entman, 1993). Television news framing has been revealed to affect voter perception regarding political leaders, preferences regarding the policy and attributing responsibility especially when there is conflict, crisis and breakdown in governance (Iyengar, 1991; Bennett, 2016).

The issue of the role of television in political communication has also been formulated with the prism of mediatization which, as stated, stresses on the adjustment of political actors to media logic. The mediatization theory states that political institutions are progressively modelling their communication strategies based on media requirements including visuals, sound bite, and dramatization in order to attract the attention of the masses (Stromback, 2008; Stromback & Esser, 2014). This change has brought about issues of dumbing down of political speech and the popularity of spectacle as opposed to serious policy discussion. Empirical studies posit that political communication through television tends to give prominence to personalities and conflict stories, which disqualifies deliberative democracy (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Patterson, 2000).

Although the political communication was the preserve of television in past decades, the advent of digital media has disrupted the framework and dynamics of political communication. According to scholars, the digital media brought a paradigmatic change of one-way mass communication to interactive and networked communication systems (Castells, 2009; Chadwick, 2013). So, in contrast to television, in which the production process is centralized and the editorial controls the gateway, the digital media provides various actors, such as citizens, activists, and non-institutional voices, with the direct entry into political communication. This has broadened political expression and has changed the conventional power dynamics of the popular domain (Benkler, 2006).

Social media platforms have gained more relevance in research on political communication especially because they have led to political mobilization, campaign strategies and opinion formations. Research shows that social media contributes to politics by making the process less expensive and providing fast access to information (Loader & Mercea, 2011; Boulianne, 2015). The platforms including Twitter (X), Facebook, and YouTube are getting used by the political actors as a way of framing political narratives, recruit supporters, responding to criticism in the real-time (Enli, 2017). Empirical research indicates that exposure to digital media has a positive correlation with political engagement, though among younger and less involved citizens (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2014; Theocharis & van Deth, 2018).

Nonetheless, the literature contains contradictory evidence on democratic implications on digital political communication. Some researchers focus on its participatory and empowering potential of the issue, whereas others implement its impact on political polarization and misinformation. Selective exposure is an idea that implies that the users of digital media are more likely to be exposed to information that confirms their prior ideological orientation, and does not expose them to a variety of views (Prior, 2007; Sunstein, 2017). It is also intensified by algorithmic curation, which focuses on content with the highest engagement score and tends to give more weight to emotionally provoking or otherwise controversial political content (Pariser, 2011; Bakshy et al., 2015).

Misinformation and disinformation have become the key issues in modern political communication research. Studies prove that fake political news is more viral on the web compared to the facts, especially in election times and in moments of political crisis (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Vosoughi et al., 2018). The digital platforms do not generally have proper mechanisms of accountability as opposed to the television media which usually is governed by professional and regulatory bodies in their day to day operations. The vulnerability of political communication and the stability of democratic institutions in the digital era have been brought into question because of this regulatory gap (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Although the digital media have gained more and more relevance in political communications, the television remains vital especially in developing societies and among the older or less digitally attached people. Studies have shown that television is still a major source of political information where the internet access is not even or the digital literacy is low (Votmer, 2013; Norris, 2011). Besides, televised political events, such as debated, speeches, and press conferences, are also frequently seen as agenda-setting events that influence future online discussion, which reflects the interdependence of the traditional and digital media (Chadwick, 2013).

The idea of hybrid media systems can offer a productive framework to the interaction of television and digital media. In this view, the use of old and new media is what leads to political communication but not the replacement of the old media by the new (Chadwick, 2013). Empirical researchers indicate that political players deliberately fulfill televised messaging with digital outreach in order to achieve the greatest visibility and impact with the involvement of a variety of audiences (Klinger & Svensson, 2015). This intersection has transformed the nature of political campaigning, communication of governance and crisis management and political communicators now are forced to work in a media landscape at the same time.

This hybrid media also has transformed the behavior of the audience. As television promotes collective consumption of political knowledge, the digital media promotes individual and

participative participation. It is observed that studies indicate that citizens are referencing more sources of media to shape their political views in a mix of televised news and social media commentary and online criticism (Newman et al., 2020). The multi-platform consumption pattern makes it difficult to rely on conventional theories of media impact and demands more combined analysis methods in the political communication studies.

Theoretically, the networked public sphere model provides a clue into the restructuring of political discourse through the digital media. Benkler (2006) claims that digital networks foster decentralized communication channels, and have less elites withholding political discourse. Nevertheless, later research warns that the control of corporate platforms and algorithms can bring back the new forms of power concentration and contradict the initial beliefs concerning the digital democratization (van Dijck et al., 2018). This stress reveals the necessity to evaluate critically both emancipatory and restraining aspects of digital political communication.

Another significant contextual difference in the outcome of political communication is observed in the literature as well. Digital media may be used as a political resistance and alternative information distribution instrument in authoritarian or semi-democratic settings, and television may be a state-owned tool (Castells, 2012; Tufekci, 2017). On the other hand, the television and online media in developed democracies are incorporated in competitive political and commercial landscapes, and such logics inform the politics of media (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

On the whole, existing literature shows that the political communication via television and digital media is intricate, dynamic and rooted deep in the larger social, technological and institutional contexts. The digital media has created more involvement and changed the political discourses by being interactive and networked communication, even though television still plays such a vital role in influencing political agenda and opinion due to its accessibility and credibility. Nevertheless, polarization, misinformation, and disparities of access are still present in both types of media. The literature therefore highlights the necessity of combining analytical frameworks that describe the complementary and contradictory roles of television and digital media in the formation of modern political communication.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is quantitative in nature because it seeks to determine the influence of television and digital media in the process of influencing political communication, political awareness, and civic engagement. The quantitative research will be used to empirically provide the necessary relationships between variables to determine causality and correlation through the systematic measurement of relationships between independent and dependent variables, which is necessary to determine the degree of influence that media exposure has on political attitudes and behaviors (Creswell, 2014). The research took a cross-sectional survey design in order to get information about the current media use and its impacts on political knowledge and involvement at a single time among the people who were exposed to television and those who were exposed to digital media (Bryman, 2016). The analysis is based on the theories of agenda-setting, framing, and hybrid media systems, which all indicate that traditional and digital media influence the way people think, govern the political discourse, and mediate the citizen participation (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Chadwick, 2013; Entman, 1993).

Population and Sample

The target population of the study was adult citizens aged 18 years and above, and living in urban and semi-urban regions of Pakistan, who represented different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The participants were also interested in the study among those who engage in daily use of political content through the television and the internet including social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. The stratified random sampling method was used to represent the proportions of all significant demographic factors, such as age, gender, education, occupation, and geographic location (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Stratification was used to obtain the heterogeneity in the media exposure and political participation of respondents.

Five hundred respondents were sampled across six big universities in Lahore (three of them are government-owned and three are privately owned) and the neighbourhoods. The sample size was considered adequate to provide the statistical credibility of the multiple regression and structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019). The sample makeup was a balance between students, working people, and homemakers so that both groups of people using the internet, and traditional television people, were representative enough.

Data Collection Instrument

The structured questionnaire was created to gather data with the help of validated scales that have been used in the previous political communication studies (McCombs, 2004; Gil de Zuniga et al., 2014). The questionnaire was further segmented into a number of sections:

- Demographics: Age, gender, level of education, occupation and income.
- Television Media Exposure: How often one watches political news, debates, campaigns and other political programs. Questions whose answers are measured using a five-point Likert scale (1- never, 5- very frequently).
- Digital Media Exposure: Frequency of exposure to political material through social media, online news websites and video-sharing websites. The scale was measured using a five-point Likert scale.
- Political Knowledge: Knowledge of politics, knowledge of policy, and candidate knowledge.
- Political Engagement and Participation: Voting, Political events, political discussions online and participation in campaigns.
- Perceptions of Media Credibility: The credibility that the respondents have in information provided by television and online media.

Three professionals in the field of political communication and media studies reviewed the questionnaire to guarantee the content validity and item clarity (Polit & Beck, 2006). Adaptations and alterations of the items have been made to fit the Pakistani media context, and they have to be culturally and contextually relevant.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to determine the construct validity to make sure that all the items were loaded on to their corresponding constructs in addition to television media exposure, digital media exposure, political knowledge and political participation. The use of Cronbach alpha was done to determine the reliability where all scales passed the test which had a good threshold of 0.70 implying internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

Latent constructs were also computed to determine the composite reliability scores to promote the strength of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Collection Procedure

All the participating universities gave their ethical go ahead to the study. The respondents were made aware of the objective behind the study and informed consent was taken before the research. The survey was distributed online through Google Forms and in person so as to include those with limited access to the internet, in order to make it inclusive. Four weeks formed the period through which data was to be collected and all the responses were anonymized in order to preserve the confidentiality. Data quality and integrity Data and analysis Outliers and missing data were screened and cleaned prior to analysis before analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were then analyzed with SPSS 26.0 with descriptive and inferential statistics and AMOS 24.0 with structural equation modeling. The methods of analysis that were adopted were the following:

1. Descriptive Statistics: means, standard deviations, frequencies were used to describe demographic information and patterns of media consumption.
2. Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation coefficients were used to test TV exposure-digital media exposure, political knowledge and engagement.
3. Multiple Regression Analysis: Estimated predictive support of media exposure to political knowledge and engagement in the context of demographic factors.
4. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Evaluated the conceptual hypothesis, direct and indirect relationships between traditional and digital media exposure and the outcome of political participation.
5. Reliability Testing: All scales had internal consistency as shown by Cronbach alpha and composite reliability.

Ethical Considerations

Each step of the study had ethical principles. The respondents were volunteered and had the freedom of dropping out at will. The personal identifiers were eliminated to preserve anonymity and data stored in a secure manner. To follow the non-harm principle, the questionnaire was developed in such a way that it did not cause any emotional or political uncomfortable feelings. The respondents were assured that the results would be presented in aggregate form.

Limitations

The cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the causal conclusions that can be made on the long term consequences of media exposure on political behavior. Self-reports can create social desirability bias particularly in the area of political knowledge and participation. Lastly, the sample was selected within urban and semi-urban communities, Lahore, which restricts the extrapolation of the sample to rural areas and other areas that have varied media access and consumption rates.

Data Analysis and Findings

To investigate the impact of the television and digital media on political knowledge and participation, 500 respondents were gathered as part of the study. Table 1 shows demographic factors of the respondents. Most of the participants (42 percent) were between 18-25 years, 33 percent between 26-35 years, 18 percent between 36-50 years, and 7 percent between 50 years and above. On gender, it was distributed equally; 52-percent males and 48-percent females. On the educational level, forty-eight percent were undergraduate, thirty-two percent were graduate and 20 percent were high school or less. Employment status revealed that 55 percent were employed, 30 percent were students and 15 percent were not employed or homemakers. These groups of people offer a rich sample due to various age, sex, education, and profession, which is appropriate to study the media consumption habit and political participation.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N = 500)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–25	210	42%
	26–35	165	33%
	36–50	90	18%
	50+	35	7%
Gender	Male	260	52%
	Female	240	48%
Education	High School or below	100	20%
	Undergraduate	240	48%
	Graduate	160	32%
Employment	Employed	275	55%
	Student	150	30%
	Unemployed/Homemaker	75	15%

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the most significant variables in the study. The average television media exposure among the respondents was moderate to high ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.81$), and digital media exposure was high ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.76$). The politics knowledge was also moderately high ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.88$) which means that the respondents have a reasonable knowledge about political issues. The average political participation was 3.27 ($SD = 0.92$), which is moderate civic involvement. Media credibility was rated as more believable with television ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.83$) than with digital media ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.88$) and shows that despite the use of digital media, there is still a tendency to trust traditional media more.

Table 2: Study Variables Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Television Media Exposure	3.68	0.81	1	5
Digital Media Exposure	3.85	0.76	1	5
Political Knowledge	3.54	0.88	1	5
Political Participation	3.27	0.92	1	5
Media Credibility TV	3.61	0.83	1	5
Media Credibility Digital	3.39	0.88	1	5

Correlation study was done to evaluate the connections between television exposure, digital media exposure, political knowledge, political participation and media credibility perceptions (Table 3). The relationship between media exposure through television and political knowledge ($r = .472$, $p < .01$) were moderate and positive and so was the relationship between media exposure and political participation ($r = .398$, $p < .01$) which means that increased exposure to televised media content is linked to the level of political awareness and civic engagement. Digital media exposure showed much better correlations with political knowledge ($r = .521$, $p = .01$) and political participation ($r = .467$, $p = .01$), which proves the importance of digital media in the formation of a political behavior. Both types of media exposure and political knowledge showed a positive relationship with media credibility ratings, which indicates that perceived reliability increases the role that media plays in citizen involvement.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Television Media	1					
2. Digital Media	.426**	1				
3. Political Knowledge	.472**	.521**	1			
4. Political Participation	.398**	.467**	.554**	1		
5. Media Credibility TV	.538**	.413**	.476**	.361**	1	
6. Media Credibility Digital	.421**	.567**	.502**	.439**	.382**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$

There was a multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive influence of television and digital media exposure, as well as credibility of the media on political knowledge and participation (Table 4). The political knowledge regression model was 127.46 significant ($F(3, 496) = 127.46$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.43$). TV ($b = 0.238$, $p < .001$) and digital media exposure ($b = 0.301$, $p < .001$) also had strong predictive values of political knowledge with the latter exerting a great influence. The credibility of the media (TV: $b = 0.196$, $p < .001$; digital media: $b = 0.173$, $p < .01$) was also a positive factor. Likewise, political participation was significant as shown by the regression model ($F(3, 496) = 101.82$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.38$) whose predictions were made by television ($b = 0.201$, $p < .001$) and digital media exposure ($b = 0.256$, $p < .001$), as well as positive effects by media credibility.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results which predict political knowledge and participation.

Predictor	Political Knowledge B	β	t	p	Political Participation B	β	t	p
Television	0.274	0.238	6.74	<.001	0.231	0.201	5.12	<.001
Media Exposure								
Digital Media	0.341	0.301	8.55	<.001	0.285	0.256	6.88	<.001
Exposure								
Media	0.215	0.196	5.14	<.001	0.184	0.171	4.01	<.01
Credibility (TV/Digital)								
R ²	0.43				0.38			
F	127.46				101.82			

SEM also confirmed the hypothesis supporting the conceptual framework between television and digital media exposure, media credibility, political knowledge, and political participation. The fit indices showed that the model fits well ($\chi^2/df = 2.91$, CFI = 0.947, TLI = 0.935, RMSEA = 0.056, SRMR = 0.051), which proves that both traditional and digital media have a positive impact on political awareness and engagement, and media credibility mediates these correlations. The outcomes of SEM were in line with the results of regression: exposure to digital media had a stronger impact on political knowledge and involvement compared to exposure to television media, whereas the perceptions of credibility moderated the effect of the two types of media. The results suggest that although television remains a formidable provider of political information, the digital media is a major determinant of modern political communication especially to young and highly internetized populations.

All in all, the discussion shows that political communication via TV and digital media has a strong influence on the political knowledge and engagement. The impact of digital media exposure on awareness and engagement is also more pronounced than the impact of television, and perceived credibility makes the two media more effective. Such observations indicate that a mixed media space, in which offline and online are in contact, plays a pivotal role in comprehending current political communication trends.

Discussion

The conclusions of the study are that political communication in both the television and digital media contributes a lot to the formation of political knowledge and political participation by the citizens of the developing societies. The two types of media were also identified to have a positive impact on political awareness, although the effect of digital media is slightly higher than that of television. This result is consistent with the literature that has been growing to mention the transformative nature of digital platforms in political information dissemination and civic engagement (Chadwick, 2013; Vaccari, 2015). The digital media such as social networking sites, online news portals and mobile applications allow citizens access to up to date political events, debates and policy discussions in real time than can be always presented through the traditional media of television. These sites enable users not just to receive information but also engage in political discourse, exchange opinions, and build groups, which is the implication of passive to active consumption (Loader & Mercea, 2011).

Television is still a fundamental tool of political communication especially to the older age groups and in the countryside where digital filtering might not be restricted. The research established that television exposure has a positive relationship with political knowledge and participation but with a relatively lower power of impact as compared to digital media. This confirms earlier studies that television remains a source of structured, edited and authoritarian political information that can increase the knowledge of the citizens on issues of governance, elections and other policy related issues (Norris, 2000; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Television is more influential especially in the political perceptions, election campaigns and visibility of the political leaders. Besides, media credibility came out as a strong mediating variable, which means that the belief in the truthfulness and reliability of information increases the effectiveness of media, both television and online media, in increasing political knowledge and political participation. When people see the source as authoritative, they tend to internalize the information and take action with it which is in line with the source credibility theory (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; McCroskey & Teven, 1999).

The existence of the positive relationship between media exposure and political participation implies the significance of the media in the transformation of knowledge into civic action. High engagement on both the television and online respondents had more engagement in voting, political discourse, and community activism. This is in line with other researchers who show that exposure to the media makes people increasingly political and more conscious of their civic duties and readiness to participate in social and political activities (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Boulianne, 2009). The digital media, specifically, contributes to participatory behaviors, which is the concept of interaction that allows citizens to have a direct connection to political campaigns, policy discussions, and activism. It is however important to mention that exposure is not a guarantee of participation as the perceived credibility of the medium used and the relevance of the content are critical factors in the motivation of citizens to act.

Another aspect pointed out in the study is the generational differences in the media influence, younger respondents are more dependent on digital platforms, whereas older respondents are more trusting of television. This generational gap is more related to wider tendencies in media consumption behavior in society and marks that communication that touches on politics should take a multi-platform approach to address the needs of a wide audience (Molyneux & Holton, 2015). The implications of this include using both the traditional and online media to guarantee a reaching out process and that the outreach is wide enough in societies characterized differently by the penetration and literacy level of the technology.

Although digital media enhance interactive, fast, and personalized communication, the study highlights the danger of misinformation and selectiveness. Digital media were believed to be more credible by respondents who scored higher in informed behaviors in politics, and low scores indicated that people who were suspicious of digital content showed a lower level of engagement. It highlights the significance of media literacy courses, regulatory processes, and fact-checking efforts in optimizing the beneficial influence of the digital media on political involvement (Guess et al., 2020). In the developing world, where media literacy rates can be quite diverse, the key to achieving greater exposure to digital content being converted into greater democratization than misinformation-induced apathy or polarization is the active encouragement of critical approaches to digital content.

The interaction between the TV and the digital medium also implies a complementary impact instead of a strictly competitive impact. TV offers large-scale, authoritative reporting of national and local politics, but the digital media are able to personalize, discuss and mobilize. This complementarity supports the idea that the contemporary political communication environment is still a hybrid media form, in which citizens combine information sources to create their political views and actions (Chadwick & Dennis, 2019). In this way, the political engagement of both traditional and digital media in the developing societies is understood holistically; this means that it is necessary to understand the credibility of both media and the manner in which citizens can move across media.

Lastly, the research highlights the fact that the political knowledge is a key mediator of the media exposure-political participation. Media coverage, whether it is televised or online coverage, improves political awareness through the delivery of information on the candidates, policies, and even civic duties. Increased knowledge, on the other hand, helps citizens make better decisions and engage in the life of governance. This observation can be correlated with the cognitive mediation theory, according to which the impact of the media on the behavior is mostly indirect

and manifests itself via more significant understanding and knowledge (Perse & Lambe, 2016). The media interventions can be crucial tools to boost civic awareness, improve democratic participation, and foster inclusion in the process of political participation especially in developing societies where political literacy may be skewed.

Conclusion

This analysis proves that both the television and digital media communication of politics play an important role in shaping political knowledge and political participation in developing societies. The two types of media were identified to influence positively the comprehension of citizens on the political processes with digital media exhibiting better influence especially among the youth population. TV continues to serve as an essential source of organized, authentic and extensive political data, particularly to the elderly and the rural segment. The credibility of media created an essential contribution to the effectiveness of both the traditional and the digital platform because the credibility of information sources promotes informed interactions. The results also demonstrate the dependence of political knowledge and political participation whereby the more the media one is exposed to the more he is better informed which consequently leads to the active engagement in the political process. Nevertheless, the continued issues like socio-economic inequality in access to media, generational variations in the utilization of platforms, and even the possibility of harmful information on the Internet supply reveal the necessity to employ a complex of actions that may help optimize the positive effects of political communication. All in all, the research highlights the need to consider a mixed or hybrid approach to media use in political communication campaigns where both TV and internet are used to access a wide range of audiences and to enhance democracy in the developing world.

Recommendations

In accordance with the results, some recommendations are made to make the political communication more efficient and promote the informed civic participation. First, the media houses must make sure that the television and the internet media present credible, balanced and complete political information. Credibility and gaining the trust of the people can be increased through editorial policies in line with fact-checking, transparency, and objective reporting. Second, the political institutions and policymakers must employ digital platforms in order to reach younger generations, presenting them with interactive content and online debates and information about civic responsibilities and voting. Third, media literacy promotion must be considered a priority, especially in the developing societies where false information may disenfranchise democracy. Educational courses, community trainings, and internet campaigns are to be directed at the enhancement of the critical thinking of the citizens, and their competency in determining the credibility of political news. Fourth, there should be the use of hybrid communication, which will involve a combination of the wide coverage of television with the interactivity of the digital media so that the age groups, level of literacy and the urban-rural disparity can be addressed. Fifth, the civil society organization and political parties must promote active engagement through avenues of discussion, argument, community-based activities that can turn the media coverage into practical civic action-based activities. Lastly, they should monitor and evaluate the media influence on political knowledge and participation regularly to inform the future policies, enhance methods of outreach, and make sure that political communication helps to empower informed, active, and empowered citizenry in developing societies.

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