

EFFECT OF CONTENTS PRESENTED ON MEDIA ON THE VOTING BEHAVIOR OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN PAKISTAN

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**EFFECT OF CONTENTS PRESENTED ON MEDIA ON THE
VOTING BEHAVIOR OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT:

Today, a great emphasis has been established in the understanding the voting behavior of the people and religion is a strong segment of person's voting behavior. It is the most important aspect for a voter in the way of thinking about specific issues such as ideology, construction of personality, economics and society. Therefore, religion has a significant impact on the behavior of an individual when voting in elections is concerned. In democratic countries like Pakistan media has gained more importance in this regard. The present study focuses on effects of the contents presented in media on the voting behavior of religious people voting for religious parties in general elections 2013, local bodies' elections 2015 and general elections 2018.

KEYWORDS: Islamic Microfinance, Akhuwat, Qarz-e-Hasna, Poverty alleviation.

INTRODUCTION:

Media has been an important tool in elections and democratic elections cannot be carried out without media's contribution. The free and fair elections are not only a concern for freedom of voting and knowledge of how to cast the vote, but also a participation process in which voters engage themselves in public debates. They have reasonable information about political parties (religious and non-religious), politicians, candidates and electoral process. Moreover, the media act as key guardians of the elections and safeguard the transparency in the process. Most importantly,

a democratic election without media freedom would be a contradiction in terms. It plays an important role in keeping citizens in line with current scenario which results in raising awareness about various issues within society which creates a significant effect on the public opinion and ideology. Media are main means through which public opinion is formed and sometimes manipulated. If this is the role of media, in the normal course of events, it becomes even more important in exceptional times, one of which is the electoral process, when media become a special player. Elections are a main challenge for media which will show their impartiality and objectivity. Important aspect while considering the voting behavior is the ideology/religion of people who votes for the particular candidate or party. The ideology/religion of the person show which thing is essential for them whether it includes religious influence, gender, race or any other aspect. Chressanthis et al. (1991)¹ looked at the ideology and voting evidence of US senators on the issues of abortion which shows how ideology has influence on voting behavior. Chressanthis et al. (1991) found that senators were often influenced by their own beliefs on the issue. Chressanthis et al. (1991) proposed in their study that ideology plays a key role in making the policy of social issues.² Fox and Richardson (2001) also found in their study that the only significant variable that constantly allowed forecasting of voting behavior is the religious association of people with their religious parties. Fox and Richardson

¹ G.A. Chressanthis, K.S. Gilbert, and Paul Grimes, "Ideology, Constituent Interests, and Senatorial Voting: The Case of Abortion," *Social Science Quarterly* 72 (September 1, 1991): 588–600.

² James T. Richardson and Sandie Wightman Fox, "Religion and Voting on Abortion Reform: A Follow-up Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 14, no. 2 (1975): 159–64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1384738>.

(2001) concluded from their research study that religious affiliation has been found the significant factor. Although few religious affiliated groups have a stronger position than others on specific issue like abortion, those who have a religious affiliation voted in opposition to abortion than those without a religious affiliation (Fox and Richardson, 2001).

Media has been an important element to understand the meaning of political, socio-economic, religious and strategic stability. The mass media influences political perceptions and pre determines the voting behavior of the people (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008;³ Pabjan & Pekalski, 2008⁴; Schmitt-Beck & Mackenrodt, 2010)⁵. Number of the election studies provided this evidence that the significance of the media in political campaigning by claiming agenda-setting theory effects (Campus, Pasquino & Vaccari, 2008⁶; Dunn,⁷ 2009; Balmas, & Sheaffer, T, 2010; Nesbitt-Larking, 2010⁸). This explains that the media have a strong

³ Donatella Campus, Gianfranco Pasquino, and Cristian Vaccari, "Social Networks, Political Discussion, and Voting in Italy: A Study of the 2006 Election," *Political Communication* 25 (October 1, 2008): 423–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600802427039>.

⁴ Barbara Pabjan and Andrzej Pekalski, "Model of Opinion Forming and Voting," *Physica A: Statistical Mechanics and Its Applications* 387 (October 1, 2008): 6183–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physa.2008.07.003>.

⁵ Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Christian Mackenrodt, "Social Networks and Mass Media as Mobilizers and Demobilizers: A Study of Turnout at a German Local Election," *Electoral Studies* 29 (September 1, 2010): 392–404, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2010.03.011>.

⁶ Meital Balmas and Tamir Sheaffer, "Candidate Image in Election Campaigns: Attribute Agenda Setting, Affective Priming, and Voting Intentions," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22 (June 4, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edq009>.

⁷ Scott Dunn, "Candidate and Media Agenda Setting in the 2005 Virginia Gubernatorial Election," *Journal of Communication* 59 (September 28, 2009): 635–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01442.x>.

⁸ Paul W. Nesbitt-Larking, "The Role of the Media in Electoral Behaviour: A Canadian Perspective," *Policy and Society*, MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: RECENT EXPERIENCES FROM CANADA AND MEXICO, 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 53–64, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2009.11.005>.

influence on people by their choices of which stories and important and newsworthy. Religion plays an effective role as one of the most important dynamics of social life, not only in traditional life in previous periods, but also in today's modern life. It is a well-known fact that the media not only have an important contribution to the individual's configuration, but also to the development of society. It must be remembered that the media have some prejudices about religion.

Digital media and its implications for religious life have been a growing research area since 1995 (Campbell, 2011).⁹ While the first wave of studies focused mainly on speculation on how the promises (and dangers) of new information technologies and cyberspace culture radically change the religious experience, identity and community. After the 1970s, more and more researchers became interested in political communication and the number of studies grew rapidly. Studies have begun to show the connections between the various components of the communication process and the effects on the public. The studies focused mainly on two types of media content related to political communication: political advertising and news (Gitlin, 1978).¹⁰ Dart and Allen (2000) in their book "Bridging the Gap: Religion and News Media" stated that the media always complain about association with religious parties. It is a big question if, in these circumstances, the media have no effect on religious peoples in any area of life. Many newspapers are giving more space to

⁹ Heidi Campbell and Mia Loevheim, "Introduction: Rethinking the Online-Offline Connection in the Study of Religion Online," *Information Communication and Society* 14 (December 1, 2011): 1083–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.597416>.

¹⁰ Todd Gitlin, "Media Sociology," *Theory and Society* 6 (September 1, 1978): 205–53, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01681751>.

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religious news, not only in weekly editions but also on one page of the newspaper. The developing number of religious writers and publishers also reflects this trend.¹¹

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

This study will look for the role of the media in shaping the electoral behavior of religious voters. General Elections 2013; local bodies' elections 2015 and general elections 2018 will be used. The purpose of the study to find out the media's effects on the minds of individuals in society, especially religious voters, who always have doubts about the media. Given the nature of the study, it was considered that the survey methodology was an appropriate procedure to analyze the effects and social changes introduced by the media. A sample of 1000 voters were selected from the voter list in general elections 2013, local bodies election 2015 and general election 2018. Age of the voters range from 18-65 above years. Two stage area sampling was used. In the first stage, area of the unit was drawn and at the second stage sample of voters were selected. A structured questionnaire was filled by the voters to obtain the response and it was tried best to avoid any pressure over the respondent so that he may express his views independently. There are 18.7% of the respondents who are the age of 18. 19-26 years of the respondents are 26.23%. and mostly the percentage of the voters age between 26-31 in our sample. In table 2, there are 74% of the voters who think they are religious in the sense that they follow it and there are 25.6% of the respondents are not religious. So

¹¹ John Dart and Jimmy Raymond Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media* (Nashville, TN: Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, 2000).

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there will be two categories when applying the binary logistic regression that those who vote for the religious parties and other category of the voters who do not cast their vote in the favor of religious parties.

Table 1: Age of the voters expressed in percentage

Age of the voters	Percent
18	18.7%
19-25	26.23%
26-31	33.23%
32-37	14.20%
37 and above	8.44%

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the people who are religious

	Number	Percent
Yes	744	74.4
No	256	25.6
Total	1000	100.0

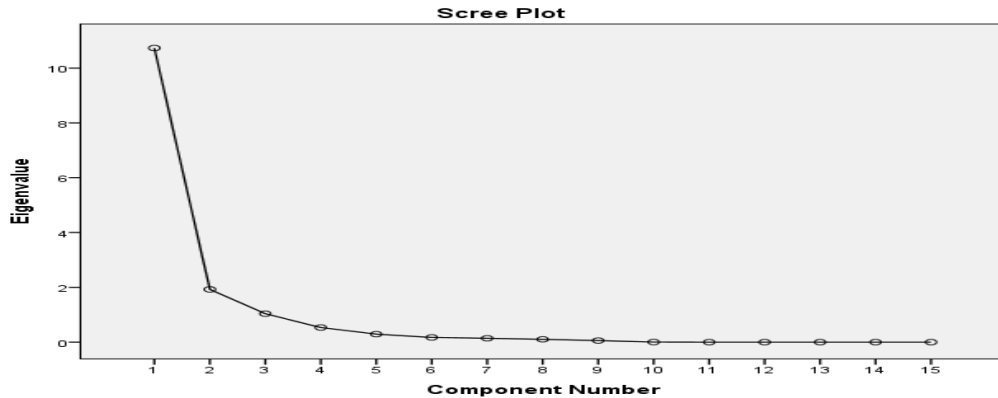
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE VARIABLES

Factor analysis aims to find independent latent variables. The theory behind factor analytic methods is that the information gained about the correlation between variables which can be used to reduce the set of variables in a dataset. It has been widely used technique in the field of social research for the data reduction and looking for the significant factors. It has been used to look for those factors which is explaining the maximum variation of the data. Varimax rotation has been utilized and

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method of extraction of the factors used is principle component analysis (PCA). According to the Scree plot in figure 1, three factors have been extracted.

Figure 1: Scree plot of the factors



In table 3, there are three factors and highlighted values are loadings of variables which are included in particular factor. The whole study has been categorized into three factors shown in table 3. The factor loadings tables present three factors which include variables with the highest loadings which depends upon their correlation. The loadings greater than 0.5 has been considered to be the significant loading. Factor 1 includes eight variables, second factor includes six variables and the third factor includes only one variable which is the voting behavior influenced by the content presented on the magazines or newspapers. It is supported by the fact proposed by Dart and Allen (2000) in their book "Bridging the Gap: Religion and News Media that many newspapers are giving more space to religious news, not only in weekly editions but also on one page of the newspaper. The response variable (People voted for religious parties in 2013 and 2015) is having two values, 0 indicating 'yes', while 1 indicating 'no'.

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Table 3: Factors and their Loadings

Variables	Loadings of the factors		
	1	2	3
My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life	.841	.412	.137
How much your voting decision is dependent on political content presented on T.V?	.821	.345	-.038
How much your voting decision is dependent on political content presented on Radio?	.858	.419	.085
I enjoy working in the activities of my religious affiliation	.853	.352	.038
How much your voting decision is dependent on political content presented on Newspaper/magazines?	.036	.077	.961
How much your voting decision is dependent on political content presented on Social Media?	.699	.053	-.322
How much your voting decision is dependent on Interpersonal Channel e.g. Family, Spouse, Biradari(groups in society), Friends etc?	.381	.872	.054
In your opinion, "personality" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	.350	.932	.029
In your opinion, "Political Party" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	.350	.932	.029
In your opinion, "ideology" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	.350	.932	.029

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In your opinion, "manifesto" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	.350	.932	.029
In your opinion, "Religion" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	.327	.898	.089
I make financial contributions to my religious organization	.882	.429	.086
I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith	.882	.429	.086
Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life	.882	.429	.086

loadings greater than 0.65 is considered to be significant loading

In table 4, the test of model coefficients shows that the explanatory variables included show better prediction of the outcome. The significance value of model is statistically significant. So the variables included in the model are better. Table 5 shows that R^2 value is 0.585 showing that 58% of variation is well explained by the model. Model is adequately describing the reasonable amount of variation in the data.

Table 4: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

	Chi-square	Degree of Freedom	p-value
Step	69.398	5	0.004
Block	69.398	5	0.004
Model	69.398	5	0.004

Table 5: Summary of the Model

-2	Log Cox & Snell R	Nagelkerke R
likelihood	Square	Square
187.64	0.383	0.585

The values mentioned in the table 6 given in the column named 'B', are for the logistic regression equation for the prediction of the dependent variable from the independent variable. They are in log-odds units. Also the significant factors are given by their p-values.

Table 6: Variables and their significance

Effects	B	Wald-Statistic	p-value
In your opinion, "ideology" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	0.247	31.084	0.002***
In your opinion, "Religion" factor presented on media influence your voting behavior?	0.123	26.021	0.005***

I make financial contributions to my religious organization	0.316	25.131	0.008***
My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life	0.051	22.003	0.004***
How much your voting decision is dependent on Interpersonal Channel e.g. Family, Spouse, Biradari, Friends etc?	0.129	21.334	0.003***
How much your voting decision is dependent on political content presented on T.V?	0.04	26.546	0.002***
Constant	1.422	23.218	0.001***

*** Highly significant

CONCLUSIONS:

The voting behavior of the religious minded people who voted religious parties in 2013 2015 and 2018 are strongly associated with the contents presented on media particularly on television and inter personal channels. Media especially T.V strongly effects the voting decision of the religious

people with the p-value 0.002***. Social factors were also found significant which are ideology and religion. People also make financial contribution to their religion parties and their lives are mostly affected by their religion. It is significantly affected by the content presented on the media related to the ideology of the religious people with the p-value 0.002***. Religion factor was also observed significant while giving votes to the religious parties with the p-value 0.005***. People who voted for the religious parties also make financial contribution to the religious organization and this factor was highly significant at 5 % level of significance with the p-value 0.008***. The people whose religious beliefs lie behind their whole life also casted vote for the religious parties with the p-value 0.0516*. So overall picture of the voting behavior of the religious people are affected by the content presented on media particularly T.V and newspaper.



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