

# Exploring the Impact of TV Talk Shows on Political and Social Information

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim of the Study:** The current study aimed at investigating the perceptions of a professional adult regarding TV talk shows and their impact on acquiring political and social information.

**Methodology:** An extensive interview with the participant was conducted using a qualitative methodology in order to get informative data.

**Findings:** The participant displayed regular viewing of TV discussion shows and expressed a higher level of awareness regarding them. The study revealed that the participant regarded these shows as highly significant for learning about political and social issues. These findings highlight the participant's conscious engagement with TV talk shows and their recognition of the importance of these shows in their pursuit of political and social knowledge.

**Conclusion:** The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how professionals perceive and utilize TV talk shows as a means of information gathering and continuous learning. The knowledge gathered from this study could help researchers, policymakers, and media professionals create and provide TV talk show material that efficiently satisfies the informational requirements of experts and a wider audience.

**Keyword:** Talk Shows, Television, Political Issues, Social Issues, Programs.

## Introduction

The news talk shows are increasingly diversifying the media landscape. They provide an engaging background for research. Even though the concept is not new, the talk shows have been a staple of television since the 1950s. The variety of discussion shows that provide public affairs content has increased in recent years (Baym, 2013; Hoffman, 2013). There is a prevalent belief that people who watch television debate programs learn more about political issues and have a better understanding of politics. (Iftikhar et al., 2021).

Television is the primary source of political knowledge in Pakistan for majority of the people. TV talk programs frequently function as a discussion starter in social situations (Iftikhar and Akbar, 2015 and Iftikhar et al., 2020). There is discussion about whether these programs reflect a democratization of the media due to this emotional or personal component, audience engagement, and the fact that average people are the ones who discuss the themes (Kay, 2015; Bignell, 2013; Masciarotte, 2004).

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Late-night talk shows are regarded as somewhat significant to politics since they frequently cover public and current issues, particularly during various campaigns (Benoit et al., 2003; Ekström & Tolson, 2013; Parkin, 2010). It has been observed that fusing comedy with news content might have unfavourable or no consequences. Humor in news broadcasting can operate as a distraction when it comes to cognitive processing of information, lessening the amount of effortful processing and argument analysis (Young, 2008). It is pertinent to mention here that the talk show has been localised in a number of nations, and each adaptation has unique characteristics based on the broadcasting dynamics of each country (Vallet et al., 2011).

Pakistani television often airs political discussion shows. Such programs contribute significantly to the bulk of Pakistani residents' interest in the news. The idea of news engagement is thought to entail cognitive and motivational aspects of news intake, going beyond casual news reading (Livingstone & Markham, 2008). The adults in Pakistan are aware of the current political climate as well as the many phases that are periodically visible with the transmission through the media. Some problems that are of public interest may now be easily tested through conversation shows on public affairs TV networks. It is very important to know the function of these talk shows and what information they are disseminating in our society.

As many of the private channels are devoted to the news and current affairs programs, opening additional channels for viewers who want more access to recent and trustworthy information about significant events taking place both locally and globally. The aim of the current study was to examine the perception of professionals towards TV talk shows. It also helped to analyze the extent to which professionals perceived these shows as a platform for sharing knowledge and information.

## **Methodology**

In this study, a qualitative approach was used through an interview technique. In interviews, two or more people exchange information through a series of questions and responses. Interviews are a sort of data collection utilized in the social sciences. The researcher created the questions to extract information about a particular topic or topics from the interview participant (Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). The respondent was highly qualified professional and worked at public hospital located in Lahore, Pakistan. The interview took place at his residence in a very friendly atmosphere to investigate his perceptions and thoughts about TV talk shows. The following questions were asked from the respondent and his responses were noted down.

## **Results**

**Question:** How often you watch talk shows on current affairs?

**Response:** I watch these shows almost every day, after having my night meal. I hardly get time to watch any TV show because of my busy schedule but always try to watch one or two odd current affair shows.

**Question:** What makes you watch these TV shows?

**Response:** You know the deteriorating condition of our country. With each passing day we face increasing number of problems. In such conditions these shows are very informative. These TV shows not only highlight the problems we face today but also give an extensive review on these problems. Different views are heard on different issues. They are very helpful to understand what's happening around us, why is it happening, is it good or bad happening and who are responsible for these issues? E. g. it is our right to know about the current politics in our Pakistan. These TV shows let us know about the legality of most of the issues.

**Question:** Why you prefer watching such talk shows rather than entertainment shows?

**Response:** Knowing that the current situation of our country is very pathetic, we must stay informed. Today everyone has a busy routine; People really do not get enough time to read newspapers. These

shows are a very good alternative; they pinpoint the core issues and give a comprehensive analysis. Therefore, knowing about something important is more valuable time pass instead of getting amused by substandard dramas or other entertainment shows. I feel really amused when our politicians are exposed in the live TV shows and how they react and keep on telling lies as if all the listeners and viewers are senseless.

**Question:** Do you think these TV shows really depict the true picture of current situation of our country?

**Response:** Yes, these shows really highlight the core issues we face today as a nation, as a country and as a Muslim Uma. To develop an attraction for such programs, TV anchors invariably choose very latest and hot topics. These shows expose the real culprits. They recommend far reaching solutions to these problems.

**Question:** Do you think implementing the conclusions of TV shows will stabilize our country?

**Response:** Well, most of the time these analyses really provide us practical, constitutionally legal, morally acceptable and implementable solutions. Look, if some find these analyses do not provide us the exact answers to our questions then at least we can work out a path that can lead us to a solution in the light of these conclusions. The conclusion of the show is just not the view of the anchor but a collective analysis of the guests in the show. We get to know the views of experts and views of those who really matter.

**Question:** Have you ever contributed to the system in the light of conclusions of these shows?

**Response:** Personally, I tend to adopt good things for example switch off the unnecessary lights and things like that. I also tell my family members to adopt such good habits that can be of some benefit to the country. Look, the matters that are taken up in the talk shows are not the matters

of individuals. Sometimes we infer from the conclusion. Don't you think you get to know too much about irrelevant incidents, incidents not related to the common man?

Not really! At times there are discussions that are not related to the common man directly. For example, in the recent past we have faced some serious economic and financial issues and when the experts and anchors talk about the technical terms and the consequences of such problems, we as common person and really do not get what they are talking about. We just get a sense that this problem should not be neglected.

**Question:** Does TV shows affect your efficiency in your daily routine?

**Response:** Yes indeed! We do not think about a million things which we get to know from TV. Being a doctor, I am never interested in what is happening in our stock exchange, but I do get to know that recently our stock exchange has not done really good. There have been some stock exchange scams. So, these things really make you think why it is all happening. These shows have made me think a lot more than I used to. So, when we think more about such crisis in the country, we get more depressed thus our working efficiency naturally decreases.

## **Findings and Discussion**

From his answers it seems that he was much fond of TV talk shows on current affairs. Respondent seemed quite concerned about the country's current situation. His body language also coincides with his verbal views. The raising eyebrows and worried face quite explicitly expressed his patriotism. The rise and fall in his tone and changing facial expressions express his deep-rooted emotions about whatever he talked. His deep interest in the country's deteriorating condition led him to watch current affairs shows. Talk shows have been proven to increase viewers' political knowledge and socialization, Despite being aware of these shows, respondents do not engage in politics. It demonstrated how politically apathetic young people are. Talk programs on Pakistani TV stations now feature a fun contest between two political parties rather than a resolution to many problems or demands from the public. Late-night talk shows are a

source for political comprehension. The young individuals who believed celebrities and entertainment elites to be credible and compelling showed the strongest correlation between watching late-night talk shows and voting likely (Sarkar & Bosri, 2017). Experts, lawmakers, and activists usually discuss and share the relevant knowledge on political and social issues with a large audience on TV discussion shows. They provide viewers with an easy way to get news, analysis, and various viewpoints on crucial and current subjects.

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) conducted research on fictional news show that ridiculed politicians. The study revealed that when presidential candidates get criticism on talk programs, talk show viewers have a poor perception of them. This study also showed that viewers' perceptions of politics and politicians are negatively impacted by the high conflict content of the program. However, Yousuf (2012) asserted that talk programs in Pakistan are raising political knowledge. Researchers found that the electronic media in Pakistan is more educational. Talk shows have a significant impact on how people become aware. The survey discovered that chat shows are consistently watched by TV viewers, who also see them as educational programs. The vast majority (96%) of viewers agreed that discussion shows can educate the public about politics and raise awareness.

The political relevance of entertainment media among adults is anticipated given their high usage of this genre of media as well as their generally low levels of political interest. According to research, people who do not follow political concerns are most influenced by exposure to entertainment-focused media sites, or "soft news," as the author referred to them (Baum, 2003).

Lack of political interest is, in fact, one of the distinguishing political traits of young adults. According to research, 42% of young adults have little to no interest in politics and about half of them do not pay attention to the news (Patterson, 2000). Additionally, they are less likely than older adults to participate in politics in a variety of ways. Young people may now place more weight on entertainment media than in the past given the widening interest gap between younger and older generations in following public issues (Graber, 2001). Some researchers claim that younger generations are more receptive to modern media, including cable TV, unofficial news shows, and television news magazines (Mushtaq and Baig, 2015). Another study reveals that young people are watching television comedies and late-night discussion shows for amusement and to learn about politics (Center, 2004).

The respondent watches current affairs shows almost every day. Although he has very busy schedule but try to watch one or two episodes of these shows which he come across as interesting and informative. He explained that these shows not only highlight the problems faced by our nation but also give an extensive review on these problems. If one can't find any other source, then these shows can be an ultimate guide for knowing about what's going on around in the country.

The respondent elaborated that as a nation, we must remain informed that how pitifully bad the situation is in our country right now. People today definitely don't have enough time to read newspapers because of their hectic schedules. These shows are an excellent substitute since they focus on the important themes and provide in-depth examination. Therefore, learning something useful is a more worthwhile use of time than being entertained by poor plays or other entertainment programs. When our politicians are caught on live TV broadcasts, it is really amusing to see how they respond and continue to utter lies as if all the listeners and viewers are illiterate. TV hosts frequently select the hottest and most recent issues. These programs uncover the actual offenders. They suggest comprehensive remedies to these issues. The show's conclusion is a communal appraisal of the guests, not simply the anchor's point of view. These shows give us an opportunity to learn about the opinions of experts and people whose opinions count for the betterment of our country. According to Backhaus (2019) transmission of current knowledge and transfer systems may result in larger societal improvement with programs for social transformation. For instance, in recent times, we have had some significant economic and financial challenges, and when experts and anchors discuss the technical words and effects of such situations, the average person truly does not understand what they are talking about. The listeners just have the impression that this issue cannot be

ignored. Therefore, when the audience reflect more on the national issue, they get more depressed, which naturally reduces their work efficiency. TV talk shows contribute to stabilizing a country in the context of social, economic, and political issues. These shows have the potential to raise awareness about current topics. Talk shows can increase public confidence in the nation's democratic institutions and processes by disseminating accurate information, encouraging frank and balanced debate, and giving a forum for accountability.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study shed light on the perceptions of a professional adult regarding TV talk shows and their significance in acquiring political and social information. The participant's conscious engagement with these shows and recognition of their importance for learning demonstrates the potential impact of TV talk shows in the professional realm. However, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations of this study. Firstly, the research focused on a single participant, which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the study relied solely on self-reported perceptions, and factors such as social desirability bias or individual preferences might have influenced the participant's responses. To address these limitations, future research could employ a larger and more diverse sample of professionals, allowing for a broader understanding of perceptions regarding TV talk shows. Additionally, incorporating other research methods, such as surveys or content analysis, could provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of TV talk shows on professionals.

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