



## FRAMING OF POLITICIANS IN PAKISTANI COMEDY TV SHOWS: AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*This article aimed to conduct a systematic analysis of how private Pakistani TV comedy shows are framing politicians and to investigate the Islamic perspective on the use of humor in political discourse, in order to shed light on the ethical and moral implications of such portrayals. A survey of 774 respondents was administered in Islamabad city by utilizing the probability sampling method. The results showed that education, literacy, awareness, and television viewing play a vital role in the formation of perception and public opinion. Highly educated people think very differently from less educated people and this is evident from their answers. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there is a clear difference in the thinking of those who watch less television and those who spend more time in front of the television. As we have seen in the light of the Qur'an and Hadith, it is not permissible to mimic or ridicules anyone, and the findings of this research paper have also proved this.*

**Keywords:** Framing of politicians, public perception, Islamic perspective on satire, comedy TV shows



## **Introduction**

This article aimed to deeply watch systematically how private Pakistani television comedy shows are framing our politicians, how the common man perceives the image of them from these comedy television shows and what is the Islamic perspective in this regard.

The media people consume, including comedy TV shows on private channels, can affect how they perceive the image of politicians. This perception can influence their voting behaviors and decisions, making it crucial for voters to be aware of the information presented to them. Voters play a significant role in the political system, and their opinions can impact the democratic process. Therefore, it's important for individuals to assess the information they receive through various media sources carefully and make informed decisions based on reliable and diverse information.

According to Francis (2012), politicians now a day in almost every society of the world continuously appear in and express their views on television and different media, and in this regard sometimes they can misrepresent themselves through irresponsible statements, talks, and briefings. Baum (2003), Moy & Pfau (2000), and Prior (2003) studied the impacts and effects of comedy TV shows in-depth to examine their association with political awareness, political socialization, voting behavior, and perception especially. Comedy TV satire has been found to possess significant potential to influence the political attitudes and behavior of the general public. The satirical nature of comedy TV shows provides an opportunity to present political issues and topics in a light-hearted and entertaining way.

This approach can capture the attention of a wide audience and allow them to engage with political issues that they may have otherwise ignored or found uninteresting. As a result, comedy TV satire can shape the public's opinions and beliefs about politics, politicians, and the political process itself. The use of humor and satire can also make it easier for individuals to process and understand complex political issues, and to critically analyze the behavior of politicians. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the potential impact of comedy TV satire on political attitudes and behavior and to consider the ethical and moral implications of its use in political discourse.

Lee and Kwak's (2014) research delved into the idea that political satire has the potential to elicit negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction. These negative emotions, in turn, can inspire individuals to become more actively involved in the political process. The researchers argue that political satire can serve as a catalyst for political engagement, particularly among those who may have previously been disengaged or disinterested in politics. By provoking strong emotional reactions, political satire can motivate individuals to take action and participate in political activities such as voting, attending rallies, and engaging in online activism. Thus, this study highlighted the potential



for political satire to inspire and stimulate individuals to become more actively engaged in the political process, ultimately leading to a more informed and participatory electorate.

Hoon Lee's (2012) suggested that satirical programs are just as effective as daily news and current affairs segments in informing people about political issues. In his study, which involved a sample of 700 respondents, Lee found that individuals have a strong tendency to share the contents of comedy TV shows on social media platforms. This sharing is often driven by a desire to engage in discussion and exchange ideas with others about political issues. This finding underscored the potential for satirical programs to serve as a platform for political discourse and engagement. Satirical programs can be an effective tool for fostering public discussion and encouraging the exchange of ideas about politics and other social issues.

McQuail and Curran (2002) argued that mass media, including television, have become an integral and indispensable part of people's daily lives. The media industry has expanded rapidly in recent years, providing viewers with an endless stream of content that shapes their perceptions and attitudes toward various issues, including politics. As a result, the media has a significant influence on public opinion and can play a critical role in shaping the social and political landscape. In the context of comedy television shows, the content that is broadcasted has a profound impact on viewers' perceptions and beliefs. Television programs shape the public's perception of political events and issues, influencing their understanding of important topics and ultimately impacting their behavior and decision-making. This underscored the significance of mass media as a tool for shaping public opinion and shaping social and political discourse.

Davis and Owen (1998) argued that comedy is often used as a powerful tool to achieve particular aims and agendas. They noted that many satirical programs have a tendency to distort or demolish the image of politicians, especially those who are in competition with each other. This can be seen in the way that satirical programs often highlight the flaws, mistakes, and fumbles of political candidates, often using humor and ridicule to make their points.

Similarly, Schutz (1977) also highlighted the ways in which satirical programs on television often focus on the faults and foibles of political candidates. He noted that the humor and wit of satirical programs can be effective in highlighting the shortcomings of political figures, but also warned that these programs can be used to manipulate public opinion and skew perceptions of candidates.

Taken together, these perspectives suggested that while satirical programs can be a powerful tool for critiquing political figures and highlighting their flaws, they can also be used to manipulate public opinion and shape political discourse. It is important for viewers to be aware of the potential biases and agendas of satirical programs, and to approach them critically in order to better understand the nuances and complexities of political discourse.



Niven, D., Lichter, S.R., & Amundson, D. (2003), analyzed that comedy television programs tend to focus more on political satire than public policy as a source of humor. In fact, their findings indicate that over 90 percent of humorous content and jokes on different TV channels are related to the flaws and mistakes of politicians, while less than 10 percent are related to public policy. This suggests that comedy television programs may prioritize political figures as a source of humor over policy issues. However, it is important to note that this statement should be interpreted with caution and further research may be needed to confirm these findings.

The idea of the “frame” and the concept of “framing effect” was initially introduced by Erving Goffman in 1974 as “a sociological paradigm. Here are some examples, Downing and Husband (2005), Entman (1992), Giroux (1996) observed media framing of “Negros”. Frazer (1987), Best and Kellner (1998) examined the framing of youngsters. Healey and Ross (2002), Robinson and Skill (1995) explored the framing of people that are aged. Clawson and Trice (2000) conducted the study about the framing of the poor people. These researchers propose that the portrayal and presentation of different people, groups, and communities have significant and key concerns for the technique in which they are perceived by the target audience.

## **ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

Islamic principles placed a great emphasis on ethical behavior and moral conduct in all aspects of life, including daily interactions with others. The Qur'an and Hadith, which are the primary sources of Islamic guidance, contain numerous teachings regarding the importance of conducting oneself with nobility and decency while avoiding harm and humiliation toward others. Islam teaches that making fun of someone and calling them by derogatory names is not appropriate or justifiable, as it goes against the fundamental values of respect and kindness towards others. In fact, the Qur'an specifically instructs believers not to ridicule or defame one another, and to avoid offensive nicknames.

### **Allah the Almighty says in the holy Qur'an:**

“O believers! Do not let some ‘men’ ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let ‘some’ women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the ‘true’ wrongdoers” (Holy Qur'an). In light of this verse, it is clear that making fun of someone and calling someone by a bad title is not appropriate and justifiable at all.

Additionally, the teachings of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) also emphasize the importance of avoiding harm to others with one's words and actions. According to one narration, the Prophet (PBUH) stated that the best Muslim is one who avoids harming others with their tongue and hands. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: Narrated Abu Musa: Some people



asked Allah's Messenger (PBUH), "Whose Islam is the best? i.e. (Who is a very good Muslim?)" He replied, "One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands" (Sahih Bukhari). Therefore, as Muslims, it is our duty to conduct ourselves with ethical behavior and moral conduct towards others, avoiding any actions or words that may cause harm or humiliation. We should strive to maintain positive relationships with those around us, including our friends, neighbors, and co-workers, and treat everyone with respect and kindness.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

1. To examine the public perception of the politicians and the Islamic perspective in this regard.

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

**H1:** The lesser-educated respondents would more likely to be agreed that comedy TV shows are presenting a true picture of our politicians as compared to highly educated respondents.

**H2:** The light TV viewers would more likely to disagreed that Comedy TV shows are portraying a positive image of democracy as compared to the heavy TV viewers.

### **CULTIVATION THEORY**

Cultivation Theory, developed by Dr. Gerbner, focuses on the impact of television on the perceptions of heavy viewers. According to Gerbner, television is not just a window to the world but rather creates its own world. This theory suggests that heavy television viewers may begin to perceive the world in ways that align with what they see on their screens. McQuail, D., & Windahl, S. (1993). Experts who supported Cultivation Theory argued that television has a long-term influence on viewers and their perceptions of the world. The theory suggests that the more time someone spends watching television, the more likely they are to adopt the attitudes and beliefs portrayed on screen.

The present research intended to apply Cultivation Theory to explore public perception of the framing of politicians. By using Cultivation Theory as a guide, researchers can examine how heavy television viewers perceive political figures and the impact of media framing on those perceptions. This research aims to provide insight into the potential long-term effects of media coverage on public opinion and attitudes toward politicians.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The Method of the survey was employed as a technique to collect data from the respondents in order to analyze and discuss their responses for this research. By utilizing this method, researchers can gather information from a large number of individuals, allowing for a broader understanding of the topic being studied.



## **STUDY AREA**

To explore the public perception the current research project is conducted in Islamabad, the capital of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. As there is a large number of people working in this city, from all areas of Pakistan, that's why this city is considered as mini Pakistan. Islamabad was distributed in three constituencies and 14 'Charges' by the Election Commission of Pakistan in 2018 general election. The researcher selected the Charge Number 1, Charge Number 3, Charge Number 5, Charge Number 7, Charge Number 9, Charge Number 11 and Charge Number 13 with the help of even and odd technique at the first stage. The details are as under:

Table: 1 Constituency and their extent

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>The extent of the constituency</b>
NA 52, ICT-I	Charge No.2, Charge No. 1 (Some areas)
NA 53, ICT-II	Charge No. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and some areas of Charge No. 1
NA 54, ICT-III	Charge No. 3, 4, 5, 13 and Charge No. 14

## **POPULATION FOR THE STUDY**

The population of this research consists of all registered voters of Islamabad. Details are as under:

Table: 2 Registered Voters of Islamabad

<b>Male Voters of Islamabad</b>	<b>Female Voters of Islamabad</b>	<b>Total Voters of Islamabad</b>
407463	357885	765348

## **SAMPLE OF THE STUDY**

According to Morgan table, and for the better strength of sample, the sample details are as under:

1. Male respondents sample = 387
2. Female respondents sample = 387
3. Total sample = 774

## **RELIABILITY**

Cronbach's Alpha should be more than 0.7, in this research; the value of Cronbach's Alpha was measured as 0.76. This value indicates the high ratio of reliability of a questionnaire for the survey.



## MEASUREMENT

The collected data was investigated by using IBM's SPSS 21.

## TESTING HYPOTHESES

### H No. 1

**The lesser educated respondents would more likely to be agreed that comedy TV shows are presenting a true picture of our politicians as compared to highly educated respondents.**

The statistical analysis of the above said hypothesis clearly shows that there is significant difference between under matric/matric respondents and post graduate respondent, as P-value is less than 0.05. So the research hypothesis is accepted.

Table: Qualification and True Picture of Politicians

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Qualification	Under Matric	12	42	13	12	4	83
	Matric	17	52	24	27	5	125
	Intermediate	20	48	18	22	4	112
	Graduation	51	150	44	32	6	283
	Post-Graduation	3	16	65	71	16	171
Total		103	308	164	164	35	774

Table: Chi-Square Tests Qualification and True Picture of Politicians

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

Chi Square Value = 169.71

P-Value = 0.000

The result is significant at  $p < 0.05$

### H No. 2

**The light TV viewers would more likely to disagreed that Comedy TV shows are portraying a positive image of democracy as compared to the heavy TV viewers.**





The statistical analysis of the above said hypothesis clearly shows that there is significant difference between light TV viewers and heavy TV viewers, as P-value is less than 0.05. So the research hypothesis is accepted.

**Table: Heavy & Light Viewers and Positive Image of Politicians**

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

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

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

Chi Square Value = 22.27

P-Value = 0.03

The result is significant at  $p < 0.05$

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The core objective of this research was to investigate the public's perception of how politicians are portrayed and presented in comedy TV shows, and what is the Islamic perspective regarding this particular issue.

The study sought to determine whether exposure to comedy TV shows could have an impact on viewers' opinions and beliefs. The research findings indicate that comedy TV shows have a significant potential to shape viewers' opinions, and there is a strong correlation between exposure to these shows and political socialization.

The study also found that education, literacy, awareness, and television viewing habits all play a crucial role in shaping public perception and opinions. The findings suggest that highly educated individuals tend to have different opinions compared to those with lower levels of





education. Additionally, individuals who watch less television tend to have different opinions than those who spend more time in front of the television.

The research paper also examined the Islamic perspective on this issue. The study found that according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, it is not permissible to mimic or ridicule anyone. The research findings suggest that more educated individuals tend to be more familiar with Islamic injunctions and, therefore, do not view the mimicry of politicians and their ridicule as entertainment. Similarly, individuals who spend more time watching television tend to have more information and a better understanding of the Islamic point of view.

This research highlights the potential impact of comedy TV shows on public perception and the importance of considering the Islamic perspective on this issue. It also emphasizes the need for individuals to be well-informed and educated in order to make informed decisions and opinions about political issues.



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