

Impact of News Channels on Youth: A Comparative Qualitative Study

Shahana Naz¹, Aftab Asif², and Muhammad Shoaib Zafar³

¹(MS Clinical Psychology) Government College University, Lahore,
PhD Scholar (Punjab University, Lahore),
Research Coordinator & Clinical Psychologist,
Department of Psychiatry, Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan

²MRCPsych (UK),
Head of Department of Psychiatry,
King Edward Medical University/Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan

³MBBS,
Medical Officer/Post Graduate Resident, Registrar of Department of Psychiatry,
Mayo Hospital, Lahore, Pakistan

Copyright © 2015 ISSR Journals. This is an open access article distributed under the *Creative Commons Attribution License*, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT: The role media plays to formulate, influence and consequently mould the public perception about various issues is unprecedented. There are serious implications for both the media and the youth in a society increasingly influenced and managed through the news channels. The profound impact of news channels on Pakistani society has been an interesting subject of research in the recent past. However, the impact of new found freedom of expression in the face of censorship and other means of control on media qualifies further in-depth research. The present study focuses on the impact of media, particularly news channels on the youth in Lahore, Pakistan. Two groups were separately studied: One who watched news channels daily and the other who watched headlines of news channels on weekends only. The convenient sampling method was adopted. The samples included cohorts of both the genders aging 20-25 years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate their experiences of being affected by watching news channels on daily basis, and headlines on weekends, separately. Moreover, what factors they considered affective on their perception. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was applied as a research method. Five categories emerged from first group after coding the data, namely: Perception of News Channels, Perception of Political Systems, Stressful Experiences, Effects of News Channels on One's Life, and Effects of News Channels on Society as a whole. Four categories emerged from second group, namely: Intentional Avoidance of News Channels, Perception of News Channels, Perception of Political Systems and Effects of News Channels on Society. The results clearly suggested that those who were more exposed to the news channels got more influenced consequently.

KEYWORDS: media, youth, interpretative phenomenological analysis, categories.

1 INTRODUCTION

The social diffusion of electronic and digital technologies has made instantaneous communication possible, rendered many border checks and controls over information ineffective, and exposed an enormous consistency to diverse cultural outputs and values.¹ Media and transmission of culture are interrelated factors. Media is a strong carrier of cultural values and norms.² Mass media always had been an important means of communication. Over a period of time it has passed through various changes and has gradually acquired a new significance and importance in the present times. Earlier it used to be small in size and in the strict control of the authoritarian governments to "Control Public Mind".³ Now it is helping

democracies and promoting globalization. It is fast transforming itself, and in turn is becoming an agent of transforming the society as well.

It is impossible to escape the pervading influence of mass media.⁴ A large proportion of individuals had high amounts of media exposure more in men than in women.⁵ In developing countries like Pakistan, high media exposure has a statistically significant negative effect on body image dissatisfaction of young university students.⁶

Today, everyone is spending more leisure time in watching TV news channels. The programmes on the news channels influence our decision process, and shape our perceptions for the world.⁷ Besides the positive fact that we are better informed and in touch with the latest news, we should be aware that accepting this enormous flow of information and allowing it to make our mind can be dangerous.⁸ The television infiltrates into our personal lives, guiding us even what we are supposed to wear, how we are supposed to look and act.⁹

The main aim of this study is to explore the impact of news channels on youth and compare two groups who watched news channels on daily basis and headlines only on weekends.

2 METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

The data were derived from interviews with twenty participants including 10 male and 10 female from different universities in Lahore by using convenient sampling. 5 males and 5 females in one group who used to watch news channels daily, and 5 males and 5 females in another group who used to watch headlines of news channels only on weekends. The sample size was guided by Smith.¹⁰ Participant information is provided in Table 1. All individuals resided in Lahore, the metropolitan city of Pakistan. In the following accounts, names of the participants and their places have been changed to preserve anonymity.

INSTRUMENT

Semi-structured interview was used as an information-gathering tool to investigate the impact of leading news channels on the youth. It may add up to the existing literature.

PROCEDURE

Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with participants that lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each, and tape-recorded for later transcription. Written informed consent for the study was given by participants prior to the interviews. Participants were reimbursed for their time. The interviews were conducted with discussion focusing on four principal areas:

- The individual’s life history.
- Personal experience resulting from watching news channels daily as well as weekends. These included questions as to why the interviewee had watched or not watched news channels and how their life had changed.
- Social understanding of the issue, and how it is contextualized within their life. Questions were presented with a dual focus. First, how people of society with this ‘issue’ are viewed by interviewee and second, how the interviewee personally feels he/she is viewed by him/her. Moreover, the issues of selective disclosure and underlying rationales were raised.
- Reflection on the impact the issue has had on their life. Questions were focused on self-perception, identification and putative ramifications for the future.

Table 1. Participants’ information

Group 1			Group 2		
Gender	Male	5	Gender	Male	5
	Female	5		Female	5
Age in years	Range	20-25	Age in years	Range	20-25
	Mean	23		Mean	23
Watching time in hour	Daily basis	3-4	Watching time in hour	Weekends	½ headlines

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using IPA, using the procedures outlined by Smith.¹⁰ The aim was to create a comprehensive account of themes which have significance within the original texts. Thus, connections were made from the dialogue, rather than from a pre-existing theoretical position.

Initially interviews were transcribed twice, independently by the principal researcher in order to verify dialogue. Transcripts were analyzed individually in sequence, by marking relevant items, identifying emerging themes, noting connections and ordering these into preliminary lists. These themes were then grouped into associated clusters. Master lists of themes were then compiled for each interview, which incorporated these clusters. On completion of individual analysis, master lists of themes were compared in all interviews, and assembled together as sub-themes within higher order categories entitled as super ordinate themes.

At all stages of the analytical process, constant reflection and re-examination of the verbatim transcripts was utilized to ensure that themes and connections were related to the primary source material with certain themes being dropped and others expanded. All themes were represented by extracts from the original text, but were not chosen purely for their prevalence. Other factors, including the richness of the particular passages which highlighted the themes, and how the theme helped illuminate other aspects of the account, were also taken into account.¹⁰ The primary analysis was contingent upon the interpretation of the principal researcher, and an independent researcher experienced in IPA methodology conducted external reliability of analysis. This confirmed the suitability of connections made between text and themes, appropriate clustering, and representation of the original content within final categories.

The five categories for group watching news channels daily given in Figure 1 and four categories for group watching headlines on weekends emerged are given in Figure 2.

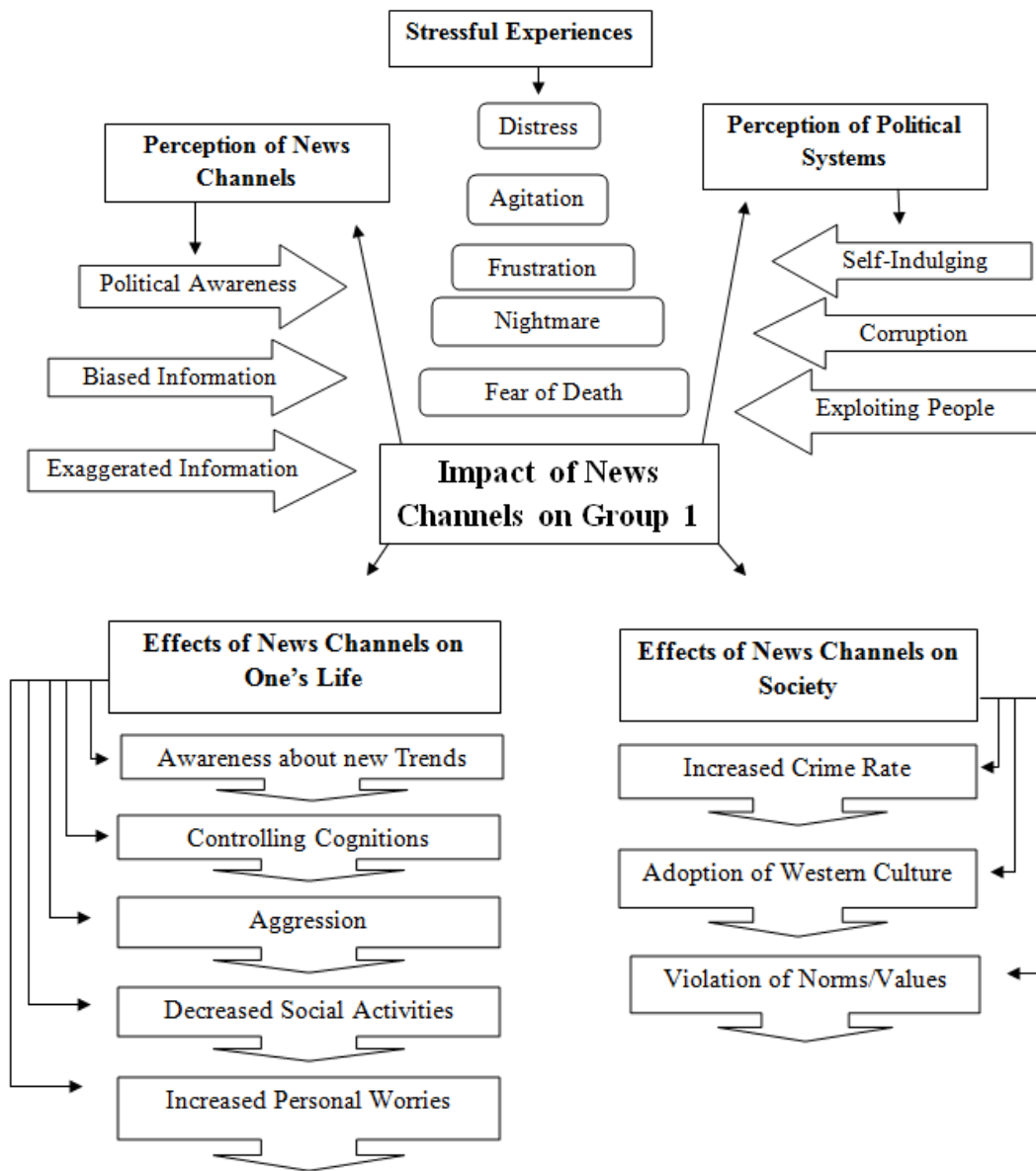


Figure 1. Categories emerged from IPA of impact of news channels on youth group 1

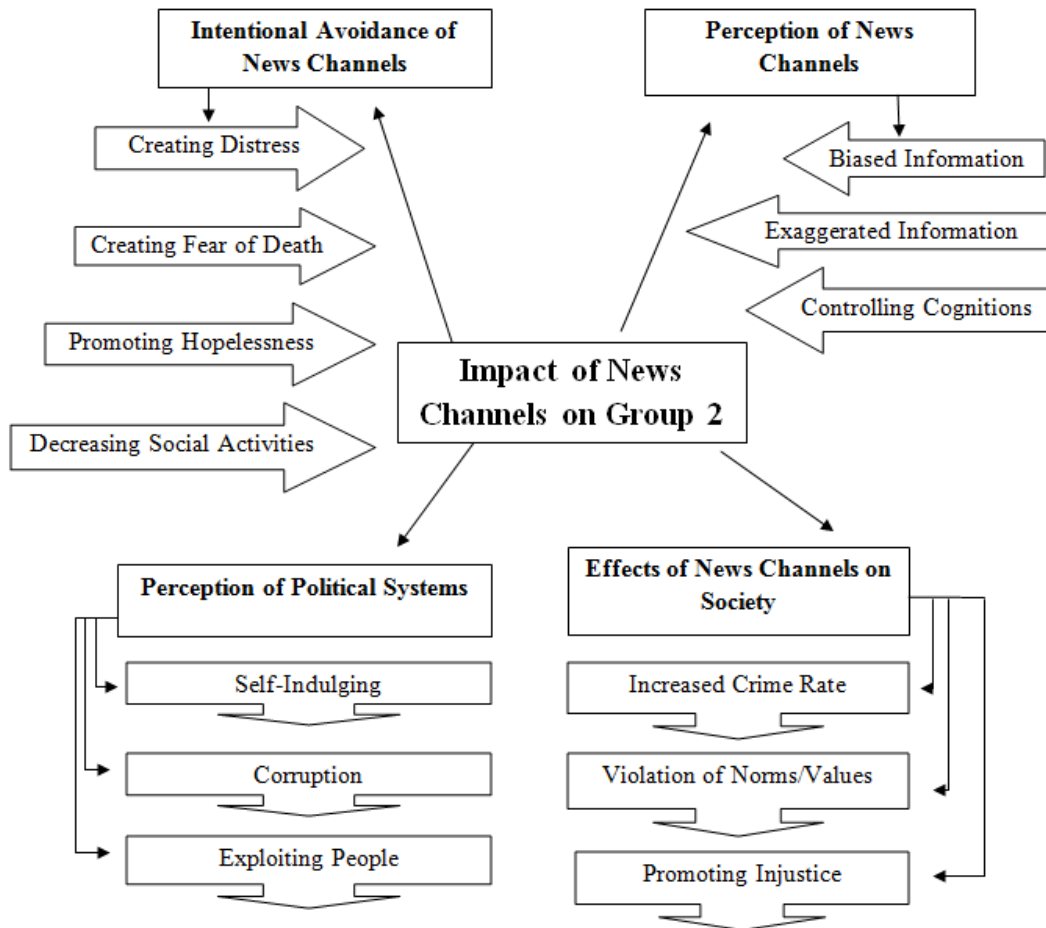


Figure 2. Categories emerged from IPA of impact of news channels on youth group 2

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Five super-ordinate themes from group 1 were drawn from the analysis. That group watched news channels daily. The themes were primarily phenomenological in composition, namely:

- (i) Perception of News Channels
- (ii) Perception of Political Systems
- (iii) Stressful Experiences
- (iv) Effects of News Channels on One’s Life
- (v) Effects of News Channels on Society (See figure 1).

Four super-ordinate analytical themes from group 2 who watched news channels on weekends were:

- (i) Intentional Avoidance of News Channels
- (ii) Perception of News Channels
- (iii) Perception of Political Systems
- (iv) Effects of News Channels on Society (See figure 2).

PERCEPTION OF NEWS CHANNELS

The super-ordinate theme of Perception of News Channels emerged from the anticipated and actualized reactions that participants encountered from both the groups. Responses were congruent with a social cognitive perspective. To watch news channels excessively has an obvious impact on the minds of the youth. A previous study reported that the shows on the news channels influence our decision process, shaping our perceptions for the world.⁷ As the interviewees stated:

“News channels play important role in controlling minds of the people because they broadcast news repeatedly. And they break the news every time with some additions that support one party to the disadvantage of opposite party”

Another study reported a different notion as to what explains different perceptions of bias in the media were found by Niven.¹¹ It suggests that the issue of media bias is more complex and rooted in interpersonal factors and beliefs. Hence, media is a strong tool for making mass public perceptions.

PERCEPTION OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Media and politics are intermingled. Politics is discussed on the news channels, virtually all the time. Every news is political news. News content can have a significant effect on political attitudes and voting behavior as documented in one study^{12, 13}. In this study, both groups have same perception about political system as self indulging, corrupt and exploiting people. As they reported *“Every political party is fighting for its own personal benefit as it is not concerned for people’s security and benefits. The politicians spend a luxurious life, while the people are deprived from basic needs.”* News channels also influence the public by providing them political information which can play important role for opinion formation. They influence the public through their viewership, listenership or readership¹⁴. This observation suggests that media certainly affect political perception whether its exposure is large or small. It is because political issues are discussed again and again.

STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES

This insight is surprising in light of experimental evidence suggesting that television viewing in general can provoke temporary changes in mood or affect,^{15,16} and that pictorial images can elicit the same psychological and physiological effects as actual exposure to certain stimuli.¹⁷ Numerous studies indicate that the advent of 24-hour live coverage, in conjunction with increasingly competitive economic forces, greatly increased the sensationalism. The ubiquitous nature of news coverage of such negative or disturbing events is the source of stress in the audience.^{18,19} In this study, watching headlines does not create any stress but watching news channels daily for consecutive hours negatively affect the minds of individuals; for instance the complains about having Distress, Agitation, Frustration, Nightmare and fear of Death. As, the interviewees stated, *“by watching news channels’ negative horrible events and pictures, they started to have the feeling of fear, distress and even fearful dreams about horrible events.* This means that the more the media exposure, the more the stressful news and the more the stress in personal life.

IMPACT OF NEWS CHANNELS ON ONE’S LIFE

One of the most important functions of media is shaping, reshaping and transforming the societies at micro and macro level. Media is also significant in term of bringing changes in human lives²⁰. In this study, the interviewees stated, *“Watching painful news negatively affects our mood as we have started to behave aggressively. By watching this painful news, we have started to remember and feel more about our own personal worries. This situation does not allow us to go outside and we have started to live alone”*

According to one Survey, 50% of the teenagers significantly relate to these television series and have a strong tendency to imitate how these series characters behave and act¹⁴. Some surprising facts were observed that fashion and new patterns of life, new trends and approaches toward daily life have been inculcated by continuous media exposure. People’s mind and thought is controlled. Social inhibition is raised to an alarming level. In sum, all these trends in personal life are directly proportional to the exposure of time to news channel.

IMPACT OF NEWS CHANNELS ON SOCIETY

For better or for worse, the mass media are having an enormous impact on our values, beliefs, and behaviors. Research evidence has accumulated over many years that exposure to violence on news channels increases the risk of violent behavior in the viewers. It is just as growing up in an environment filled with real violence increases the risk of violent behavior.²¹

The study reported that news channels are increasing crime and violets norms and values. Moreover, the news channels are promoting western culture and consumerism by spreading glamour of western fashion in our culture. Those people who just watched news channels on weekends reported that the news channels also promote injustice in society.

As they reported, “news channels show documentary based on criminal activities as murder and rape. People who remained frustrated started to follow these criminal activities”. Media, in this sense, is the voice of the society as a whole and it reaches to the ears of every individual. Hence, social impact of media has been profoundly observed.

INTENTIONAL AVOIDANCE OF NEWS CHANNELS

People avoid news channels because they complain that they spread stress due to negative reporting. For news to be “big news”, there is need of huge deviance from the normal. Always Reporting on anomalies and aberrations produces stress. Hence, News channels are source of stress. The main difference between the results of both groups under this head is revealing. Those who watch news weekly intentionally do so. These people intentionally avoid news channels because they reported that these create fear, sadness, hopelessness, nightmare and fear of death. For the purpose of maintaining peace in their life, they avoid to watch news channels and just watch headlines on weekends for necessary information. As an interviewee stated “*whenever I watched news channels I felt agitation and fear. Even I started to have fear of death and hopelessness about my life that’s why I don’t like to watch news channels because it’s a source of stress and destroy peace in my life*”. Hence, it can be said that news exposure and media avoidance seem to be positively related.

4 CONCLUSION

The study was done to see the impact of news channels on youth. From the interviews, it is clear that news channels both negatively and positively affect the perception of youth. These themes demonstrated that how watching news channels on daily basis can cause stressful experiences in one’s life. On the other side, watching headlines on weekends does not create stressful experiences along with no effect on personal life as well.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The sample size of the study is small. A study with a large sample size can be done and cultural differences can also be taken into account to explore the impact of news channels on youth because it varies from culture to culture. Participants from others cities can be selected to generalize the results.

REFERENCES

- [1] Yousaf, Z. (2012). Private news channels: altering the political perception of Pakistani people. *Academic Research International*, 3, pp. 426-439.
- [2] Felson, R.B. (1996). Mass Media Effects on Violent Behaviour. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, pp. 103-128.
- [3] Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V.L. (2011). We’re all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons*, 54, pp.265-273.
- [4] Mackey, W.D., & Hess, D.J. (1982). Attention structure and stereotypy of gender on television: An empirical monograph. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 106, pp. 199-215.
- [5] Rosenwasser, S.M., Lingenfelter, M., & Harrington, A.F. (1989). Non-traditional gender role portrayals on television and children's gender role perceptions. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 10, pp. 97-105.
- [6] Khan, A.N., Khalid, S., Khan, H.I., & Jabeen, M. (2011). Impact of today's media on university student's body image in Pakistan: a conservative, developing country's perspective. *BMC Public Health*, 11, pp.379-387.
- [7] Waters, R.D., Tindall, N.T.J., & Morton, T.S. (2011). Dropping the ball on media Inquiries: The role of deadlines in media catching. *Public Relations Review*, 37, pp. 151-156.
- [8] Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L.A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37, pp. 90-92.
- [9] Diga, M., & Kelleher, T. (2009). Social media use, perceptions of decision-making power, and public relations roles. *Public Relations Review*, 35, pp. 440-442.
- [10] Smith, J.A., Jarman, M. & Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (eds), *Qualitative Health Psychology, Theories and Methods*, pp. 218 – 240.
- [11] Niven, D. (2002). *Tilt? The search for Media Bias*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

- [12] Mutz, D.C., & Paul, S.M. (2001). "Facilitating Communication Across Lines of Political Difference: The Role of Mass Media." *American Political Science Review*, 95(1), pp. 97–114.
- [13] Gentzkow, M.A., & Jesse, M.S. (2004). "Media, Education and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18, pp. 117-33.
- [14] Iyengar, S., & Kyu, S.H. (2009). "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), pp. 19–39.
- [15] Philippot, P. (1993). Inducing and assessing differentiated emotion-feeling states in the laboratory. *Cognition and Emotion*, 7, pp. 171-193.
- [16] Gerrards_Hesse, A., Spies, K. & Hesse, F. W. (1994). Experimental inductions of emotional states and their effectiveness: A review. *British Journal of Psychology*, 35, pp. 55-78.
- [17] Newhagen, J.E. (1992). The evening's bad news: effects of compelling negative television news images on memory. *Journal of Communication*, 42, pp. 25-41.
- [18] Schuster, M.A., Stein, B.D., Jaycox, L.H., Collins, R.L., Marshall, G.N., Elliott, M.N., Zhou, et al. (2001). A national survey of stress reactions after the September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 345, pp. 1507-1512.
- [19] Gil, S., & Caspi, Y. (2006). Personality traits, coping style, and perceived threat as predictors of posttraumatic stress disorder after exposure to a terrorist attack: A prospective study. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 68, pp. 904-909.
- [20] Moy, P., & John, G. (2006). "Predicting Deliberative Conversations: The Impact of Discussion Networks, Media Use, and Political Cognitions." *Political Communication*, 23(4), pp.443–60.
- [21] Slater M.D., Henry K.L., Swaim R.C., & Anderson L.L. (2003). Violent media content and aggressiveness in adolescents: a downward spiral model. *Commun. Res.* 30 pp. 713–36.