

## Public Affinity for Political Discourse in Pakistan

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### Abstract

Television political comedy shows have gained popularity in Pakistan. This study examines and pinpoints the factors that influence the people to watch such shows. For the purpose, survey method has been employed. The data has been collected from respondents (N=300) belonging to various demographic backgrounds. It has been inferred from the study that an affinity for political humor (AFPH) drives people to watch political comedy shows. In this regard, age has come across as the only significant factor, which has a meaningful positive relationship with AFPH. Moreover, the study also discovers that monthly income is a significant positive predictor of political comedy show viewership. Besides, various types of media and genres of TV program have also been found as strong predictors of the political comedy shows. The study concludes that political comedy shows should not be taken as a mere entertainment product, rather they can prove to be an important source for political communication and creation of political awareness. In a country like Pakistan where literacy rates are on the lower side, informal and humorous political communication may raise political awareness amongst people. Lastly, it has been recommended that future researchers may study the direct behavioral and political effects of political comedy shows aired on Pakistani television channels.

**Keywords:** Political information, Political humor, Political comedy shows, Affinity for Political Humor (AFPH), Political comedy shows in Pakistan

### Introduction

Various academics consider that entertainment oriented expressions (i.e. television shows and texts) may contribute towards the political atmosphere (Feldman & Young, 2008). In the same context, political comedy shows are the latest approach towards influencing public perception towards politicians, politics and political issues. Especially, late-night political comedy shows have gained popularity and are considered very influential towards opinion forming. For the very reason, political scientists and communication scholars have allocated much consideration towards such programs (Fox, Koloen, & Sahin, 2007; Holbert et al., 2007; LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam, 2009; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2006; Young 2004; Young & Tisinger 2006).

The rise in popularity of satirical comedy shows is a recent phenomenon. One reason attributed to this rising popularity is that people tend to pay attention to political information obtained from non-traditional sources (Castronovo, 2007). Like the general masses, political leaders also tend to lean towards getting political information from “softer” sources (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). Humor enables people to “laugh

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off” their anxiety and could be one more way in which people have come to gain an affinity for political humor. Remarkably, Lee (2012) argued that political comedy shows promote political engagement of people by indirectly eliciting public anger and worries. Similarly, these shows stimulate political participation and engagement to presenting politics in an entertaining manner and subsequently make people consider politics as an enjoyable thing (Cao & Brewer, 2008). Additionally, in controlled media environments and dictatorial regimes, these non-traditional sources of political information may contribute significantly towards spreading political awareness and advance political argument in a covert manner.

Laughing at the follies of others may perhaps allow some people to feel secure about their own beliefs, even remove or reduce insecurities about preferred political groups or points of view (Hmielowski, Holbert, & Lee, 2011). In this way, it may be said that political humor shapes or reshapes a sense of belonging amongst its consumers (Holbert et al., 2013) and also tends to create a robust bond with the people of similar ideological views (Hmielowski et al., 2011).

However, parallel to that, a remarkable aspect of these types of shows is that they influence their viewers to accept unacceptable thoughts and tolerate intolerant behavior. In the same context, Meyer (2000) argues that laughing at others is an approach for society to recognize (and accept) intolerable and undesirable behavior. Hariman (2008; p. 248) has rightly pointed out that, “political humor and particularly its core modality of parody are essential for an engaged, sustainable, and democratic public culture”.

Various scholars observed the implications of entertainment-based “soft news” towards politics and found that, under certain conditions, political comedy may contribute towards democratic politics (Cao & Brewer, 2008). Observations from various research studies conclude that the notable contributions of political satirical programs towards politics found these sort of shows having possible influence upon public attention (Baum, 2002), political knowledge (Baum, 2003; Prior, 2003), perception (Matsa, 2010), political efficacy (Becker, 2014), political opinion (Baum, 2003; Young, 2004; Moy et al., 2006; Matsa, 2010), political participation (Moy et al., 2005; Hoffman & Young, 2011; Cao & Brewer, 2008) and political engagement (Lee, 2012).

Furthermore, observations reveal certain factors that have relation to exposure to political comedy shows (especially late night shows); for instance, Hmielowski et al (2011) found that age, affinity for political humor (AFPH), cable news programming are important predictors of political television satire exposure, however, they are also of the opinion that gender and education are not significant predictors in this regard. In another research study, Young and Tisinger (2006) found age as a significant predictor of viewing late night political comedy shows. Likewise, Hollander (2005) discovered demographics like age, income and types of media amongst top predictors of political comedy shows. Research conducted by Eva Matsa (2010) affirmed gender as strong predictor of political comedy shows exposure.

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The level of political involvement amongst political comedy shows viewers is similarly influenced by demographic factors; for instance, Lee (2012) argued that the level of education might effect the political participation of people. Increased political participation can be observed in highly educated individuals versus declining/discouraging political participation in less educated viewers. Similarly, highly educated people have a higher tendency to gain political knowledge from political comedy shows as compared to less educated people (Cao, 2008). Age has also been observed as having a relation to exposure; researchers found that the relationship between comedy viewing and news attention is stronger amongst youngsters as compared to older individuals (Feldman & Young, 2008; Landreville, Holbert, & LaMarre, 2010).

### **Political Comedy shows in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, political humor is a longstanding phenomenon, dating back to times of political satirical writings published in Urdu language print media. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and Chiragh Hasan Hasrat were popular political satirists before Pakistan came into being. Subsequently, Ibn-e-Insha and Atta-ul-Haq Qasmi are also examples of political humor writers. For decades, a regular piece of political satirical expression has been published in daily Nawa-i-Waqt, one of the oldest dailies of the country, with the title of Sar-e-Rahay. Besides, caricatures produced by Maxim, Javed Iqbal and Feica may also be related to political satirical communication. After the inception of Pakistan television (PTV), Pakistan's first television channel, programs like "Fifty-Fifty", Puppet show with character of Uncle Sargam, and various shows of Anwer Maqsood and Moin Akhter were performances that fall under the realm of political satirical shows.

Recent times have seen an escalation of political comedy shows on News channels across Pakistan. With the aim of capturing more viewership, almost all private television channels produce these sorts of shows. The trend was set by Dunya TV channel wherein journalist Aftab Iqbal conceived the idea for his program Hasb-e-Haal. It is pertinent to mention here that Aftab Iqbal used to regularly write a satirical column in daily Nawa-i-Waqt. Political comedy-show Hasb-e-Haal was a new format for television channels in Pakistan and it proved to be a super hit within days. Subsequently, considering the huge viewership and business drawn by Hasb-e-Haal, almost all private television channels launched similar themed political comedy shows, quickly becoming essential for all prominent news channels in the country. Until now, the viewership of political comedy shows is on the rise, which is why big media groups perceptively allocate big budgets to such shows.

Since the primary purpose of these comedy shows is to create awareness amongst the general masses about various states of affairs, Pakistani political comedy shows are performing this role quite effectively (Nadeem, Akram, & Mehmaan, 2012). People watch these programs for getting themselves aware of prevailing happenings (Ashfaq, 2013) and for gratifying their needs for entertainment (Ashfaq, 2013; Yousaf &

Bajwa, 2013). It has especially been found that these shows strongly influence the political perception of viewers (Yousaf & Bajwa, 2013). Unlike political comedy shows in the United States of America, which are heavily centered on president and presidential contenders (Niven, Lichter, & Amundson, 2003), Pakistani shows focus on almost all prominent politicians and contemporary political issues.

Recent popular political satirical shows in Pakistani News channels include Khabarnak, Khabardaar, Mazaqraat, Hum sub umeed say hain, and Siasi theatre. These programs discourse current political issues of national and international level in an entertaining and humorous manner. It is frequently argued that viewership of these shows is driven by the need for comic relief and preference to obtain political information instead of watching hard-core political talk shows. It is also reasoned that people watch these “soft news” to avoid the consequential anxiety they have to experience from watching hard-core political shows.

Whatever the reason for viewership is, these satirical shows are highly ranked and highly watched in most of the television channels (Yusaf, 2015) and earn huge revenue for their media group(s). Since the popularity of these political comedy shows is on the rise in Pakistan, the study intends to explore the factors that compel people to watch these shows and lead them to feel affinity for political comedy shows. Besides, it is examined whether demographic factors (i.e. age, gender, education and income) relate to affinity for humorous shows. Rationale for examining the affinity is that the only way to get the better understanding of the influences, political comedy shows or satirical shows cast on public, is to first have the knowledge as to what leads people to watch such humorous shows (Holbert et al., 2013). The researcher has deep interest to explore the influences of political comedy shows and as a first step, intends to investigate the factors related to feeling affinity with these shows. Insofar as theoretical underpinning is concerned, the study has been conducted within the theoretical structure of Uses and Gratification theory of mass communication. Considering the above-discoursed argument, following are the hypotheses set for the study.

H1: A significant relationship exists between exposure to political comedy shows and affinity for political humor (AFPH)

H2: A significant relationship exists between demographic factors (i.e. age, gender, income and education) and affinity for political humor (AFPH)

H3: Exposure to political comedy shows, affinity for political humor (AFPH), types of media, genres of TV programs, and demographic factors have significant relationship with each other

## **Methodology**

In order to examine the hypotheses of the study, survey method has been employed. The data has been collected from 300 respondents belonging to various areas of Lahore city. The questionnaire was designed in English and Urdu language so that

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people with various educational backgrounds and social status could respond conveniently. The response rate was 99.6%.

Variables and Scale development: In this study, political comedy shows exposure has been taken as dependent variable, however, rest of the variables are independent.

Political comedy shows exposure: In order to examine the exposure to political comedy shows, the respondents have been asked to report the intensity of watching various political comedy shows comprising Hasb- e-Haal (sometimes= 27.4%, M= 2.84, SD= 1.272), Khabar Daar (often= 26.4%, M= 2.94, SD= 1.233), Mazaq Raat (often= 30.1%, M= 3.51, SD= 1.257), Khabar Naak, (sometimes= 31.1%, M= 2.78, SD= 1.152) Siasi Theater (never= 25.5%, M= 2.59, SD= 1.152), Hum Sub Umeed sy hain (sometimes= 27.1%, M=2.94, SD= 1.262). So as to get appropriate responses, a 5-point Likert-type scale has been used i.e. never (coded as 1), rarely (coded as 2), sometimes (coded as 3), often (coded as 4) and always (coded as 5).

Affinity for political humor (AFPH): In order to measure the affinity for political comedy shows, a scale developed by Hmielowski et al in 2011 has been adopted. Later on in 2013, Holbert et al assessed the reliability of the AFPH scale and found strong internal consistency amongst 11-items of the scale. Becker (2014) also employed this scale in his research study meant for examining the relationship between exposure to partisan political parody, affinity for political humor and political efficacy.

Prior to employing this scale to the current study, minor changes have been made into the scale ( $\alpha = .795$ ), in order to make it consistent with the situation in Pakistan. Respondents have been asked as to why he/she watches political comedy shows. The items include, because it reveals the weaknesses of political leaders and institutions (agree= 49.8%, M= 3.52, SD= 1.270), it makes me feel more knowledgeable about politics (agree= 53.5%, M= 3.64, SD= 1.086), it aids in reinforcing political beliefs (agree= 49.8%, M= 3.59, SD= 1.049), it makes me aware that our political system is dysfunctional (agree= 60.9%, M= 3.73, SD= .981), it helps express political opinions (agree= 48.2%, M= 3.58, SD= 1.118), it reduces the anxiety I feel toward politics (agree= 40.8%, M= 3.27, SD= 1.137), it helps make better sense of why our political system is dysfunctional (agree= 48.9%, M= 3.27, SD= 1.058), it helps me effectively criticize politics and politicians (agree= 47.5%, M= 3.63, SD= 1.081), it allows me to be friendly with people who hold political views that are different from my own (agree= 38.8%, M= 3.42, SD= 1.208), it allows me to form stronger bonds with people who hold similar political views as my own (agree = 40.5%, M = 3.45, SD = 1.187), it helps me to decrease the stress of hard-core political talk-shows (agree = 46.5%, M= 3.48, SD= 1.168).

In order to obtain appropriate responses, a 5-point Likert-type scale has been used i.e. strongly disagree (coded as 1), disagree (coded as 2), neutral (coded as 3), agree (coded as 4) and strongly agree (coded as 5).

Demographic factors: Four basic demographic variables have been included in the study i.e. gender (68.9% male, M= 1.31, SD= .463), age (M= 29.9, SD= 9.270), monthly income (M=3.20, SD=0.92) and education (M= 4.46, SD= 1.464). It is

pertinent to mention that age ranges from 18 to 65 years, and education has been added with the options of Primary (N= 12, 4 % of sample), Middle (N= 21, 7% of sample), Matriculation (N= 42, 14% of sample), Intermediate (N= 55, 18.4% of sample), Graduation (N=96, 32.1% of sample), Master (N= 57, 19.1% of sample), and above Master (N= 16, 5.4% of sample).

Types of media: Respondents have been asked to report their level of watching various types of media for obtaining political information. Selected media include daily newspapers (rarely= 25.1%, M= 273, SD= 1.367), state news television, PTV (rarely= 33.8, M= 2.26, SD= 1.065), private news channels (often= 30.3%, M= 3.51, SD= 1.254), Radio Pakistan (never= 47.1% M= 195, SD= 1.099), Weekly/ monthly news magazines (never= 37.5%, M= 2.51, SD= 1.471), and online /Internet news (often= 25.1%, M= 3.13, SD= 1.445). Responses range from never (coded as 1) to always (coded as 5).

Genres of TV programs: Insofar as types of programs are concerned, respondents have been asked to report the intensity of watching various genres of television programs for obtaining political information. The genres include news bulletins (M= 3.69, SD= 1.251), morning news shows (never= 35.1%, M= 2.30, SD= 1.266), political talk shows (often= 27.4%, M= 2.98, SD= 1.207), political comedy shows (sometimes= 38.1%, M= 3.36, SD= 1.085). In this regard, responses range from never (coded as 1) to always (coded as 5).

## Findings

In order to examine first hypothesis (M1) i.e. relationship between political comedy shows and affinity for political humor (AFPH), Pearson Chi-Square has been employed to data. Statistical analysis exposes that a significant relationship (Chi-Square value = 843.420a, df = 748,  $p < 0.05$ ) exists between both variables i.e. political comedy shows and affinity for political humor.

Hence, the results support the first hypothesis (H1) of the study and indicate that a strong relationship is present between the political comedy shows and affinity for political humor (AFPH) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relationship between political comedy shows and affinity for political humor (AFPH)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	843.420 <sup>a</sup>	748	.009
Likelihood Ratio	531.590	748	.100
Linear-by-Linear Association	24.051	1	.000

a. 805 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

With the purpose of examining the second hypothesis (H2) of the study i.e. relationship between demographic factors and affinity for political humor (AFPH), correlation has been applied. Since two variables (i.e. gender and education) are

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categorical in nature, Spearman rank correlation has been applied to them, while, for other variables (i.e. income and age) Pearson's correlation has been employed. Table 2 shows a correlation matrix of the demographic variables and affinity for political humor (AFPH).

It has been found that gender ( $\rho = -.101$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), education ( $\rho = -.022$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and income ( $r = -.069$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) don't retain any significant correlation with affinity for political humor (AFPH). However, age ( $r = .198$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has been found to maintain strong correlation with Affinity for Political humor (AFPH) (see Table 2).

Hence, statistical analysis demonstrates that only age has significant relationship with affinity for political humor (AFPH), however, rest of the factors i.e. income, education and gender, don't hold any direct relationship with the AFPH. Therefore, the findings do not fully confirm the H2 rather partial support for the hypothesis has been found.

Table 2. Relationship of demographic factors with affinity for political humor (AFPH)

		AFPH
Gender	Spearman Correlation	-.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.081
Education	Spearman Correlation	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.707
Age	Pearson Correlation	.198**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01
Income	Pearson Correlation	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In order to examine third hypothesis (H3) of the study, hierarchical regression has been applied to data. In matrix of hierarchical regression, exposure to political comedy shows has been inserted as dependent variable and subsequently independent variables (i.e. demographic factors, types of media, TV program genres and AFPH) have been included by following enter method.

First of all, demographic variables (i.e. age, gender, income and education,) have been entered and subsequent R-square value is recorded 2.5 % for this model. In second phase, wherein types of media used for getting political information (i.e. Newspaper, State Television (PTV), Private news channels, Radio Pakistan, Weekly/monthly news magazines, Online/Internet news) has been entered and R-square value has been found 10.5 %. In third phase, next variable, genres of television programs (i.e. Morning news shows, political talk shows and news bulletin), have been entered and R-square value has been noted 22.2 %. Finally, AFPH has been added and its R-square value is recorded 23.6 %.

It has been found that exposure to certain types of media (i.e. newspapers, state television (PTV), private news channels, radio Pakistan, weekly/monthly news magazines, online/internet news), bring change in R-square value. In other words, it means that exposure to these media causes significant change in dependent variable (i.e. political comedy shows exposure). Similarly, use of certain genres of television

programs (i.e. morning news shows, political talk shows and news bulletin) and affinity for political humor (AFPH), bring change in R-square value and subsequently significant change is caused in exposure to political satire shows.

In every phase of the model, significance value remains constant ( $p < 0.001$ ) which indicates that the model is appropriate to measure the relationship among variables and it has accurately measured that other independent variables cause change in exposure to political comedy shows. Contrary to that, first model (M1) indicates insignificant value ( $p > 0.05$ ) which signifies that variables in model 1 don't trigger change in exposure to political comedy shows.

Insofar as beta score is concerned, it reveals that income ( $\beta = .146, p < 0.05$ ), newspapers ( $\beta = .137, p < 0.05$ ), radio ( $\beta = .110, p < 0.05$ ), private news channels ( $\beta = .149, p < 0.05$ ), morning news shows ( $\beta = .117, p < 0.05$ ), political talk shows ( $\beta = .201, p < 0.05$ ), and news bulletins ( $\beta = .250, p < 0.05$ ) and AFPH ( $\beta = .139, p < 0.05$ ) are significant predictors of political comedy shows. It means that people who read newspapers, listen to the radio, watch private news channels and follow political talk shows, morning news shows and news bulletins are more interested and inclined to political comedy shows.

Contrarily, age ( $\beta = .005, p > 0.05$ ), gender ( $\beta = .072, p > 0.05$ ), education ( $\beta = .010, p > 0.05$ ), state television (PTV) ( $\beta = .064, p > 0.05$ ), weekly/monthly news magazines ( $\beta = -.091, p > 0.05$ ), and online/internet news ( $\beta = -.008, p > 0.05$ ) are not significant predictors of political comedy shows and consequently produce no influence on inclination in people to watch political comedy shows.

Finally, it has been found that AFPH retains a statistically significant, positive relationship with political comedy shows exposure, as AFPH accounts for a statistically significant amount of variance ( $R^2 = 23.6\%, p < .001$ ), and AFPH ( $\beta = .139, p = .02$ ) is a significant predictor of political comedy shows. In simple words, it may be concluded that AFPH has significant effect to exposure to political comedy shows (see Table 3).

	$\beta$	t	Sig	F	Sig
1 (Constant)		11.662	.000	1.848	.120 <sup>b</sup>
Gender	.072	-1.189	.236		
Age	.005	.088	.930		
Income	.146	2.405	.017		
Education	.010	.167	.867		
R <sup>2</sup> %	2.5%				
2 (Constant)		7.577	.000	3.363	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Gender	-.031	-.526	.599		
Age	-.017	-.269	.788		
Income	.105	1.758	.080		
Education	-.074	-1.134	.258		
Newspapers	.137	2.076	.039		
State news channel (PTV)	.064	1.081	.281		



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	Private news channels	.149	2.234	.026		
	Radio Pakistan	.110	1.793	.074		
	Weekly/monthly news magazines	.091	1.444	.150		
	Online/Internet news	-.008	-.123	.902		
	R <sup>2</sup> %					
3	(Constant)		6.715	.000	6.251	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Gender	-.023	-.400	.690		
	Age	-.078	-1.331	.184		
	Income	.064	1.140	.255		
	Education	-.057	-.920	.358		
	Newspapers	.050	.773	.440		
	State news channel PTV	.009	.168	.866		
	Private news channels	.051	.821	.413		
	Radio Pakistan	.099	1.715	.087		
	Weekly/monthly news magazines	.055	.906	.366		
	Online/Internet news	-.093	-1.538	.125		
	Morning News Shows	.117	1.963	.051		
	Political Talk Shows	.201	3.318	.001		
	News bulletins	.250	4.356	.000		
	R <sup>2</sup> %					
4	(Constant)		4.372	.000	6.278	.000 <sup>e</sup>
	Gender	-.025	-.447	.655		
	Age	-.099	-1.673	.095		
	Income	.087	1.535	.126		
	Education	-.042	-.673	.502		
	Newspapers	.040	.619	.536		
	State news channel (PTV)	.011	.188	.851		
	Private news channels	.045	.726	.468		
	Radio Pakistan	.110	1.909	.057		
	Weekly/monthly news magazines	.059	.988	.324		
	Online/Internet news	-.113	-1.863	.063		
	Morning news shows	.097	1.622	.106		
	Political talk shows	.175	2.856	.005		
	News bulletins	.223	3.824	.000		
	AFPH	.139	2.320	.021		
	R <sup>2</sup> %					
			23.6%			

a. Dependent Variable: Political comedy shows exposure

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- b. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Age, Gender, Income
- c. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Age, Gender, Income, State news channel (PTV), Weekly/monthly news magazines, Private news channels, Radio Pakistan, Online/Internet news, Newspapers
- d. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Age, Gender, Income, State news channel (PTV), Weekly/monthly news magazines, Private news channels, Radio Pakistan, Online/Internet news, Newspapers, News bulletins, Morning news shows, Political talk shows
- e. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Age, Gender, Income, State news channel (PTV), Weekly/monthly news magazines, Private news channels, Radio Pakistan, Online/Internet news, Newspapers, News bulletins, Morning news shows, Political talk shows, AFPH

Additionally, findings of the study show that most of people use private news channels ( $M= 3.51$ ,  $SD= 1.254$ ), online/internet ( $M= 3.13$ ,  $SD= 1.445$ ), and newspapers ( $M= 2.73$ ,  $SD= 1.367$ ) for getting political information. While rare use of Pakistan television (PTV) ( $M= 2.26$ ,  $SD= 1.065$ ) and radio ( $M= 1.95$ ,  $SD= 1.099$ ) have been considered for getting political information. Insofar as genres of programs for getting political information are concerned, news bulletins ( $M= 3.69$ ,  $SD= 1.251$ ) and political comedy shows ( $M= 3.36$ ,  $SD= 1.085$ ) have been found popular sources among people followed by political talk shows ( $M= 2.98$ ,  $SD= 1.207$ ).

As far as political comedy shows are concerned, Mazaq Raat ( $M= 3.51$ ,  $SD= 1.257$ ) has been found most watched program, followed by Hum Sub Umeed sy Hein ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD= 1.262$ ) and Khabar Daar ( $M= 2.94$ ,  $SD= 1.233$ ). However, Siasi Theater is found amongst least watched political comedy show ( $M= 2.59$ ,  $SD= 1.152$ ).

### Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to examine and determine what drives Pakistani people to watch political comedy shows, and pinpoint the factors that influence their inclination towards such shows. It has been inferred from the study that an affinity towards political humor drives people to watch political comedy shows. As far as a relationship between demographic factors and affinity for political humor (AFPH) is concerned, various researchers have found a direct or indirect relation, however, in this study, age has come across as the only significant factor which has a significant positive relationship with affinity. It means that older people watch more political comedy shows as compared to younger people. Conversely, rest of the selected demographic factors (i.e. gender, education and income), are not found to have a direct relation with affinity.

The study also explores the predictors to watching political comedy shows and discovers that monthly income is a significant positive predictor of political comedy show viewership, which means that people with high income tend to watch political comedy shows more as compared to people with low income. Besides, various types of media and genres of TV programs have been found as strong predictors of the political comedy shows. Insofar as types of media are concerned, findings depict that newspapers, private news channels and radio predict exposure to political comedy shows– leading to the conclusion that newspaper readers, private news viewers and radio listeners retain a tendency to watch political comedy shows. Likewise, people

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who watch political talk shows, morning news shows and news bulletins for getting political information tend to watch political comedy shows as well. Moreover, the study finds an affinity for political humor (AFPH) to be a significant predictor to political comedy shows exposure.

Contrarily, this study does not indicate age, gender and education as predictors to viewing political comedy shows unlike previous researches. Additionally, using/viewing state television (PTV), weekly/monthly news magazines, and online/internet news does not incline their consumers/viewers to watch political comedy shows.

Additionally, the study reveals that motivation towards acquisition of political information is mostly inclined towards private news channel, internet/ online news and newspapers, while the use of PTV and radio for the same purpose has been very limited. As far as various types of programs are concerned, news bulletin and political comedy shows, followed by political talk shows, are found to be the preferable sources for getting political information.

Insofar as most popular and highly watched political comedy shows are concerned, respondents reported that Mazaq Raat (of Dunya News) as most watched, followed by Hum Sub Umeed sy Hein and Khabar Daar. Contrarily, Siasi Theater (of Express News) is described as least-watched political comedy show of Pakistani news channels.

Towards the end, it may be concluded that although political comedy shows are watched for getting entertainment and amusement but people also tend to obtain political information from these comedy shows. These political comedy shows should not be taken as a mere entertainment product, rather they can prove to be an important source for political communication and creation of political awareness. In a country like Pakistan where literacy rates are on the lower side, informal and humorous political communication may raise political awareness amongst people.

It may also be a matter of concern for media channels and anchors of hard-core political talk shows that respondents reported a preference towards political comedy over political talk shows for getting political information. Most of the respondents reported that they watch political comedy shows in order to reduce stress they face as a result of watching hard-core political shows. Although, this may be due to the limitation of the data which was gathered from a limited population of Lahore city, but the findings suggest that respondents draw an obvious line between hard-core political programs and political comedy shows. Although, it is a general impression that credibility and reliability of current affairs based political shows in Pakistani television channels are decreasing rapidly due to indulgence in futile political bickering and political bias, however, the fact remains that these shows are still considered influential and persuasive. Finally, it is recommended that future researchers may study the direct behavioral and political effects of political comedy shows aired on Pakistani television channels. Moreover, a comparative analysis may also be conducted to examine the effects of both types of programs (i.e. hard and soft news shows).

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