

# Exploring Political Participation and News Media Consumption on Communicative Culture in Pakistan

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## Abstract

This article is taking a conceptual approach to test the influence of Family, School and Peer group communicative culture on political participation through news media use. Although the concept of news media effect on political participation is not new. Yet there is scarcity in empirical antecedents which motivate youth behavior of consuming news. Moreover, Situated Learning Theory will underpin the study to understand the consequences of lack of political participation. Lastly, this paper offered a framework to guide researchers, policymakers and Election Commission of Pakistan on what factor is more influential to intersect youth towards the political domain and how to engender political participation of Pakistani youth.

**Keywords:** Family, School and Peer Communicative Culture, Media, Political Participation

## A. Introduction

Rising concerns about political participation and its implications for the proper functioning of democracy have encouraged scholars and policy makers to explore what weakens or encourages people to engage in political world. Increasingly, scholars examined the cause and consequences of political participation have focused on youth. This is because, youth are found to be apathetic to political world (Putnam, 2000). Recently, PEW (2014) cross-national study investigations showed young people are significantly less likely to vote than old age group. 21 out of 30 countries youth people are reluctant to participate in political activities. Lack of participation phenomena is true across the globe. However, having the great attainment of democratic forms of government, advanced communication and technological environment to the youth than older people still these generational gaps have not been declined. In fact, Norris (2003) indicates youth people are now more active in cause oriented politics. Such as demonstrations, boycotting or buying product for political cause. Yet, it postures worry of not understanding the significance of choosing the representatives and not participating in governmental policies.

Conversely, media and communication studies pointed out that compared to previous youth cohorts, today's young peoples are less knowledgeable about the substance of politics (Delli Carpini, 2000; Mushtaq, Abiodullah, & Akber, 2011). Also, this age group is less likely to consume public affairs news than their older counterparts. Consequently, scholarly concerns have grown up on the basis of generational replacement (Putnam, 1995). Therefore, it is necessary to refocus academic efforts on the study of the political socialization through cultural perspective (Hively, & Eveland, 2009). Rather than only investigating the media use, which only can help to examine knowledge level, however, what motivates youth's news consumption is more necessary (York & Scholl, 2015). Hence, it is regarding empirical antecedents to, or causes of not consuming news.

Previous studies claimed that family, peers, school are the main antecedents' to media consumption and the political outcomes (York, & Scholl, 2015). These are actually agents of political socialization, which make young people more or less inclined toward the political world through communicative culture. Hence, this gap in media use may translate into increasing changes in political participation through investigating the antecedents. Since most research suggests that family communicative culture, school communicative culture and peer groups communicative culture has positive effects on media use and political participation. Therefore, this study will model the relationship between

political socialization agents (Family, school and Peers), mediating role of media (online and offline), and political participation among Pakistani youth.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. Family Communicative Culture**

Generally, Family plays a significant role in this endeavor for a range of reasons. Most prominently is that it exposes youth to social and political values and norms hence providing a tool for participation. Additionally, it transforms the political structure and identities which help youth to understand the political world. For instance, if parents vote for the same party regularly, their children will ultimately make identity that “I am a member of X party” (Michael et al., 2004). Evidently, numerous researches revealed that there is a high level of uniformity in party choice, political preference, and attitude and behavior amongst parents and their offspring (Sani & Quaranta, 2015; Cicognani, Zani, Fournier, Gavray, & Born, 2012).

By the large, family discussion culture found a key factor of political socialization. Actually there are two factors under the family communicative culture, first is concept-oriented and second is socio-oriented, latter suggests about harmonious environment through escapism and overt disagreement on topic. In contrast, former suggests open conversational environment where children are encourage to express their concerns, ideas as well as share views on controversial topic (Shah, Rojas, & Cho, 2009). We expect concept-oriented where parents encourage youth to give opinion on an issue and where youth feel free to express their concerns, ideas and argue on controversial issues. Such democratic culture foster youth civic and political skills, search for more information for future discussions, as a result, increase knowledge and political participation (Shulman & DeAndrea, 2014). A Family communicative culture based on concept orientation is claimed to be “key to civic socialization, because it opens young people to the exploration of opposing perspectives and rewards discussion as a norm” (Lee, Shah, & McLeod, 2013, p. 673). Therefore, we conceptualize concept-oriented as family communicative culture and hypothesize as:

**H1** Family communicative culture significantly influences on political participation through media use in Pakistan.

### **2. Peer Groups Communicative Culture**

Friendships and integration into the peer-group do have beneficial impacts on political participation. The associates of which have common interests, social position, and age are essential for the social capital (Lee et al., 2013). In fact, association with peer, having different opinions and backgrounds is thought to foster political and civic skills as well as uplift civic and political zeal (Harell, Stolle, & Quintelier, 2008). Similarly, Mutz and Mondak (2006) suggested that for the distribution of information and political mobilization, Informal networks of friends and acquaintances have been highlighted as mainly advantageous. To date the likelihood that youth’s political attitude and political and civic participation are affected by their peers is to largely unexplored (Amnå, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009). Yet, in some studies there are contrasting conclusions (Quintelier, Stolle, & Harell, 2011). For instance, Kuhn (2004) analyzed Brandenburg Youth Panel Study of Political Socialization and demonstrates that young people adopt deviant behavior in peer community, such as vote for extremist party, willing to use violence in political actions. On other hand, Pattie and Johnston (2009) found that individuals follow their peer’s political affiliations and participate in political activities accordingly.

Given these points, Scheufele, Hardy, Brossard, Waismel-Manor, and Nisbet (2006) review and assess the conflicting scholarship on peer group’s political participation and assert methodological errors linked to an inadequate theoretical conceptualization. Rejecting the notion of discouraging influence of peer group, they emphasize peers hold different background and opinion, promotes joint deliberation, such joint deliberation creates the communicative culture which demands youth

to consume media. Hence, in such communicative culture peer are being challenged by non-likeminded which constrains them to reconsider and refine their social and political matter stances (Harell et al., 2008). Thus it makes them more competent and active for news consumption for future discussion and of course for political participation. Therefore we hypothesize:

**H2** Peer group communicative culture significantly influences on political participation through media use in Pakistan.

### **3. School Communicative Culture**

School plays vital role for preparing the students with the important skills and resources needed for political participation (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Brady, 1995). Identically, reviews of investigations have recognized that more years of schooling is connected with political cognition hence greater political participation (Langton, 1967; Scheufele, 2002; Youniss, 2011). Moreover, while differentiating the college attended and without college experienced youth, Flanagan, Levine, and Settersten, (2009) found that voter's participation among college or school graduate was three to four times higher than the non-college. They further indicate majority of American 2008 general election's voters were college students or graduated from colleges. This is because of the culture of university or school is political stimulation that reduces the cost of voting and gives normative support for political participation (Jong, 1981; Misa et al., 2005).

Conversely, Torney-Purta (2002) discussed 8-years study of International Association for the Evolution of Education Achievement (IEA) in 30 countries' results and indicates that schools can be beneficial in preparing students for participation in civil society as well as in political activities by ensuring an openness climate for the discussion of issues, underlining the significance of voting and elections, debate on current issue and teaching structure of government. Thus such learning culture asks students more information, in the result they use online and offline media (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). Therefore, we believe that communicative culture in school creates an effective political learning rather than one way teaching strategy. Hence, we expect that school communicative culture is fundament to make youth competent and active participant in political world through demanding media consumption. Thus we hypothesize as:

**H3** School communicative culture significantly influences on political participation through media use in Pakistan.

### **4. News Media Use**

The incorporation of media use into family, school, and among peer groups communicative culture point out the centrality of public affairs media for developing youth in important communication skills. While, media use is widely known to increase institutional (voting and contacting public official) and non-institutional (demonstration or protest) forms of political participation (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy 1999; Corrigan-Brown & Wilkes 2014). Media use is vital foundation of democracy, functioning as the intermediating mechanism through which youth learn about substance of politics and engage in democratic process (Zhang & Chia, 2006). Moreover, theoretical news media use influence directly and indirectly to youth people. To explain, in terms of direct influence it educate youth about political process (e.g., how to vote), however indirectly it changes the attitude of youth such as trust on government and its institutions (Yoon 2001) create a feelings of efficacy (Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006) also encourage political engagement (Lee et al., 2013).

However, many studies conducted to know why and how media specific content influences youth's attitude and behavior towards the political world. This is because; previous results were not consistent with regard to positive effect of media. Also, there were concerns about credibility of media. For example, with regard to broadcasting mediums (TV & Radio) there were challenging the idea on the role of media as neutral (Corrigan-Brown & Wilkes, 2014). TV was claimed for

cultivating the extra cynical viewpoints of people to the political world hence labeled as malaise (Patterson, 1999 as cited in Hooghe, 2002). Moreover, increasing use of TV was blamed for diminishing social capital and civic participation (Putnam, 1995). Hence, Norris (1996) article 'reply to Putnam' in which she rejected the argument of Putnam and assert that various media and content may influence differently. Therefore, McLeod (2000) examined the form of media and specified that textual medium more specifically reading public affairs positively and strongly influence on political learning and participation. Similarly, by analyzing cross-sectional survey data Hooghe (2002) content that moderate time spending on watching television does not appear to decrease participation, and compare with watching news programs; entertainment programs have negative effect on political and civic attitudes.

Equally, TV social dramas that portray controversies in connection to real life were observed to be positively linked with social and political engagement (Shah, 1998). Additionally, televised debates have strong influence on political knowledge and participation (Valenzuela, 2011). Besides this, late-night comedy show found to increase internal political efficacy which in turn increase civic and political participation (Hoffman, & Thomson, 2009). Hence, most of studies are referring news viewing predicting strongly positive influence on political interest, political knowledge and participation of citizens (McLeod et al., 1999; Shah, 1998; Valenzuela, 2011), because it delivers information as it occurs.

Moreover, by comparing newspapers and television Peer, Malthouse and Calder (2003) underlined that television slightly influence on voting behavior on other hand newspaper strongly influence on voting behavior of youth people. However, it indicating that both medium can play significant role in enhancing the communication competencies of youth. To explain, television delivers information as it happens however newspaper gives in-depth information (McLeod et al., 1999). Thus, it can be concluded that newspaper and television are fairly dependable predictor of knowledge and political participation (Pasek, et al., 2006).

However, despite of having advantageous to youth political learning and participation, textual medium face crisis of declining readership (Corrigall-Browna & Wilkes, 2014). This is because; sometimes youth people are frustrated with the coverage of print and television news therefore they may access to online media to know alternative views and opinions of other people (Memon & Pahore, 2015; Tolbert & McNeal, 2003). Also, through online news, youth people have more choice about what they want to consume (Memon & Pahore, 2014). While, rapid growth of online media was thought as a risk to communicative culture of political world (Möller, 2013). Hence, scholars now concentrate on its opportunities to intersect youth in political domain (Coleman, 2008). In this case, Kwon, Wilcox, and Shah (2014) and Lee et al (2013) suggested that information-oriented use of new media such as obtaining social and political information through online newspaper, online news TV offers users with opportunities for civic recruitment and further encourage political participation.

By the large, it can be concluded that TV, Newspapers and online newspapers can serve as an agent to educate youth about issues, policy and process of government. More specifically, if youth consume news whether through online (online newspapers) or through traditional (TV and printed newspaper) can dramatically influence on behavior and attitude of youth people. News use enhances political learning which found to be positively related to participation in political activities. Under this review we hypothesize as:

**H4** News media use positively influences the Pakistanis youth's political participation.

### **C. Theoretical Framework**

In this section, firstly we proposed framework for current study, after that underpinning theory is discussed.

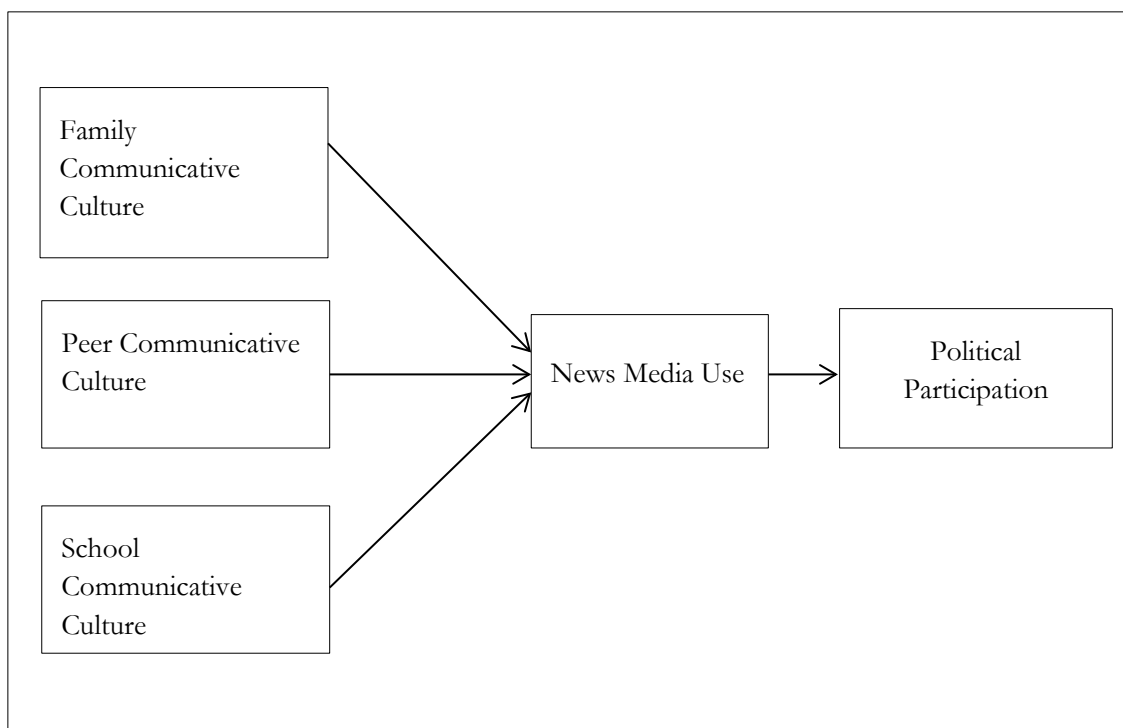


Figure: 1 Proposed Framework

For this study, Situated Learning Theory (SLT) will be used as theoretical underpinning. SLT was proposed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991. SLT posits that learning squarely in the process of coparticipation not an individual heads. Learning is by talking and experiencing, not by listening (McIntosh & Younis, 2010). In addition, SLT propose youth learn political values through the membership in community; such communities can be school, peer group and family. Such communities of practices composed of collaborative, participatory, dialogue-rich learning environment that captures the individual within a concrete social situation of political learning and development. Similarly, literature suggests family communicative culture, school communicative culture and peer communicative culture, where youth are free to express their views on political or social issue thus such communicative culture enhance political leaning and increases political participation. Moreover, STL proposes that these communities provide tools and recreational media to support, extend and recognize mental function (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.82). Hence it is in line with the previous literature therefore it is suitable for current study.

#### D. Conclusion

The study will contribute to the literature on political participation and news media consumption through exploring the communicative culture of family, school and peer group among Pakistani youth. Also this study will extend the situated learning theory by applying and testing it in the context of media and communication research. The above proposed framework will provide important implication to researchers, policymakers and Election Commission of Pakistan on what factor is more influential to intersect youth towards the political domain and how to engender political participation of Pakistani youth. Thus framework will offer guideline of resolving issue of lack of political participation of youth and improving media consumption behavior of youth people.

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