

## AGENDA SETTING OF PRESS AND POLICY MAKING: THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND PUBLIC AGENDA IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTH PUNJAB

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### Abstract

*In Pakistan, the argument over the creation of new provinces and the provincial structure has taken center stage. Unfortunately, political point-scoring has often distorted this argument and prevented it from being acknowledged as one of the most important economic, political, social, and administrative issues in Pakistan. So, this study was conducted to compare the media and public agenda on the issue of establishment of new province in Punjab. In order to compare the media and public agenda, mix method technique was applied. Firstly, Content analysis of four daily newspapers; two Urdu and two English newspapers was done and after that to measure the perception of the public a survey of two hundred responded from the three major district of south Punjab was conducted through the purpose sampling technique. The results of the study revealed that Urdu newspapers, Daily Jang, and Nawa I Waqt had a significantly higher frequency of covering these issues compared to English newspapers. Moreover, the effect of media agenda regarding creation of new province in Punjab made a significant contribution in explaining the dependent variable, public opinion about establishment of new province.*

**Keywords:** Agenda Setting, Press, Media agenda, Public agenda, Policy making, South Punjab

### INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is a federal state as defined by its constitution, a situation where the federal central government and the constituent parts of the federation share authority. The federal structure that Pakistan adopted from British India has been used throughout its constitutional history. Unfortunately, federalism's genuine essence was unable to be realized. There is mistrust and a lack of cooperation between the federal government and the provinces on the allocation of funding and resources. The federal government and the provincial governments are tense because of this circumstance. Many issues and problems in the form of language, resources, allocation, low development in underdeveloped areas, fewer representations in governments and powers, ethnicity and identity politics and other factors emerged as a result of different political parties and civil military governments being given it, as well as poor policies. The speed of the movement for new provinces was set by backwardness, disregard for priorities and the use of finances in other projects. In addition to asking the Punjab Assembly to take the required steps and measures in this respect, the National Assembly issued a resolution in support of the creation of a South Punjab. Punjab Assembly on its component sections. (Qadir, 2021)

According to the constitution, the provincial legislature must have a two-thirds majority before it may be divided. A measure to modify the Constitution that would change the boundaries of a province is prohibited from being submitted to the President for assent under subsection 4 of Article 239 unless it has received the support of at least two-thirds of the members of the provincial assembly. There are several perspectives on the development of new provinces in Pakistan; one viewpoint is in support of this (Ahmad, 2020). According to their interpretation of the static study, Pakistan's population of over 22 crore is comparable to that of Nigeria, which has 36 states, Brazil, which has 26 states, and Indonesia, which has 34 states.

Yet, Pakistan's land area is roughly same to that of Tanzania, which has 31 regions, Nigeria, which has 36 states, Venezuela, which has 23 states, and Mozambique, which has 10 provinces. Pakistan could have more units if all of those nations had about the same territory and population as it did and operated well on an administrative level. Another viewpoint uses China, India, Iran, and Afghanistan as examples to study in a regional context. Each of the nations has more than 30 units. Individuals who hold this way of thinking assert that social stability and economic progress are necessary in order to address the legitimate problems of the people. There is a need for additional provinces since there is an unequal allocation of resources and vast provinces are harder to mechanize (Ahmad, 2020).

In Pakistan, the argument over the creation of new provinces and the provincial structure has taken center stage. Unfortunately, political point-scoring has often distorted this argument and prevented it from being acknowledged as one of the most important economic, political, social, and administrative issues in Pakistan. While it contributes around "50% to Pakistan's total economy and has a good economic and infrastructural basis," Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan, has a number of obstacles in terms of administrative efficiency in governance and administration of provincial affairs. Regional differences within the province are where these efficiency issues are most visibly seen. In sharp contrast to central and northern Punjab, Southern Punjab does poorly on a variety of socioeconomic measures. A policy option that has the most potential for correcting this geographical discrepancy in the province is the creation of a new province based largely on administrative borders. Politics, ethnicity, linguistics, and other reasons have all been discussed as potential bases for the creation of new provinces. This essay will focus on the possibility, likelihood, and primary challenges associated with creating the new province on an administrative basis (Khan, 2022).

Now, Punjab, Pakistan's biggest province, seems to have conceptually divided into two pieces. One is the more powerful and in charge portion of the whole province, whilst the other is the less powerful and impoverished portion that makes up the majority of the province's and the nation's agricultural output. The centre and northern parts of Punjab are the most powerful, whereas the southern and western (ahmad, 2021).

The media is seen as a reflection of society and plays a significant role in the modern social structure. To record and convey these news events to the public on time, media outlets and their staff are on their toes. The news media selects which news items from dozens of ongoing topics are important enough to be published or broadcast while also indicating which ones shouldn't. Without the media, individuals would not be able to learn firsthand about war and conflict zones or even be aware of an event that occurred in their own town. The media provides its viewers with the most recent news, updates, video, and documentaries 24 hours a day. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972) the purpose of the press is to give us perspectives on "the world outside" so that we can create "pictures in our heads." Without the media, we would not be able to learn about local and global events. Moreover, those who rely on the media more than those who do not are more influenced by it. The Mass Media's Role in Setting Agendas Quote from Jan et al. (2013) "From the early 1970s, the view that mass communication is a strong force has gained momentum," writes Michel (2011), "in part because studies show a correlation between the amount of media coverage an issue gets and the level of public concern about the problem." From its inception in 1972, agenda-setting has been the theory that has been used and used the most. The theory has a wide application in the area of political communication since the majority of media communication in today's society is based on political communication.

According to Tuchman (1978) Media workers will undoubtedly interpret reality in a way that is similar to how they see and experience it. Also, the ideology of the workforce, institutional procedures, and rules all affect how news is produced and disseminated. In the current era of "info-polity," when politics plays a significant role in journalism, media organizations' ability to shape and influence public opinion in order to further their own goals is seen as an integral component of a new social order. According to Cohen, (1963) and McCombs & Shaw, (1972) "the people hearing the message will perceive this issue to be essential when mass media emphasizes a topic." The mass media "create the agenda for each political campaign, altering the salience of views toward the political problems," according to

McCombs and Shaw (1972). People have seen a number of instances in recent years when the mainstream news media in Pakistan has adopted an agenda-setting method heavily. For instance, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), a relatively young political party in Pakistani politics, received substantial attention from the mainstream media. Two prominent English newspapers reported the political activities of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf significantly differently, according to Jan et al (2013)'s investigation. Daily In contrast to The Dawn, PTI received extensive attention in The News. During the two-month research period, The News published 61 items on PTI whereas The Dawn only published 14. The media may occasionally make an issue more salient in the public's consciousness by exaggerating it and giving it less publicity than it deserves.

According to faisal (2019). on "issue-wise coverage" in the media, politics and topics connected to it make up a significant amount of the news networks' daily coverage. In addition to the aforementioned comment, we can state that Pakistani media, particularly since the inclusion of press in the mainstream media, has greatly increased its function as a watchdog. People still find it difficult to interpret news stories in light of ancillary events and media intentions on a certain topic. As opposed to literate audiences, media illiterate audiences (also known as "silent ducks") find it difficult to distinguish between news stories that have been "framed" and those that have not, making them easy targets for media manipulation. The people who set the agenda see them as easy prey to sway, so they focus on certain concerns while ignoring others. There is agreement among studies about the agenda-setting effects on both literate and illiterate audiences; but, depending on several other factors, the impacts may vary in severity and character. When it comes to emphasizing and framing news stories, electronic media has certain benefits over print media since it may supplement images with written or spoken news information, increasing the news item's credibility. the media is regarded as the primary tool for political awareness and campaigning in the modern era. In order to inform the large public on the performance of political institutions like assemblies and parliament, political parties use the media as a conduit between the public and the public. These pursuits bring individuals into direct contact with the nation's political climate.

So, the primary goal is to examine the relationship between the press agenda and the public agenda in Pakistan. Moreover, it will also be examined how the media shape's public opinion on the issue of establishment of new province.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objects of the studies are:

- To investigate how media frame stories to shape media and public agenda
- To analyze the importance given to the different challenges to shape public agenda
- To analyze the role of media agenda in shaping the public perception regarding the establishment of new province

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Mass media's role in setting political agendas Political communication is the foundation of agenda-setting theory. There is a sense that political problems account for more than 50% of coverage in the mainstream media if we assess the entire day of transmission, especially prime time. Political communication has had a significant role in the overall output of media organizations. By deploying applications that establish the agenda, media have a lot of room to skew the news content.

The political scientists also stated that "agenda setting research in political science focuses mainly on endogenous political factors: The presence of issues on the agenda of a particular political actor (for example, congress) is attributed to the influence of another political actor (for example, the president) or to issues on the same agenda in a preceding period - incrementalism" (Walgrave and Aelst) (2006). Although media researchers are generally quite taken with the press's ability to set the agenda, many scholars of conventional political institutions appear less taken, according to Bartels (1996). Despite the results of communication and political ideas being incompatible, academics did not start a discussion on the reasons why. There is a prevalent belief that the study of politics and the media is still in its infancy. The

researchers believe they are still unable to respond to the fundamental question of whether the political agenda is determined by the media, or more specifically, under what specific conditions the media may increase political attention for topics (Walgrave and Aelst) (2006).

The proponents of an alternative viewpoint believed that powerful media influences may have an impact on political agenda. Another flaw in the media, according to Kingdon (1984), is its propensity to focus on astonishing, sensational, and sensitive topics that may otherwise occur towards the conclusion of the policy-making process (Walgrave and Aelst, 2006). "The media may also play a very important role in raising problems to the systemic agenda and boosting their prospects of gaining attention on institutional agendas (Cobb & Elder, 1971).

**Agenda-setting Techniques:** According to Moazma et al. (2010), media presentations of political material do have an impact on the public's views, priorities, and rankings. The media plays a crucial role in spotlighting certain characteristics of issues and forms, reshapes, mends, and molds the public's attitude toward critical topics. Media gatekeepers such as editors, news editors, cameramen, owners, sources, translators, interpreters, and other journalists do have a crucial part in altering and occasionally establishing the media agenda, which in turn becomes the public agenda through media discussions. According to the aforementioned observations, media does a wonderful job of raising political and social consciousness among state-controlled media's passive audiences.

The editors and journalists spend their efforts on choosing and presenting news articles that will influence the public's perceptions on the current hot subjects. Reporters structure their news stories in this manner. Via media, our viewpoint is molded and improved. This is known as the media's agenda-setting function (Riaz, 2008). The relevant literature suggests that maintaining a strong press can encourage information on societal political issues. It would boost the general public's involvement in politics. The amount of corruption in society would decline (Nielsen et al., 2016).

The press holds a divisive position. It mostly affects how people perceive things. This is a result of the in-depth reporting and analyses of financial and political issues, events, and choices (Halbrook, 2017). There is no overarching or specific theory that explains how public opinion is formed. Nevertheless, it is thought that one aspect of political life is the public's perception. One of the elements of a civilized society is it. Examples of such traits include being unexpected, complicated, and changeable. Note that political development initiatives cannot be communicated without the aid of the media (Massart, 2010). Several elements can affect how the public perceives something. These variables include, for example, internal and external causes. Nowadays, it is believed that the press has the most influence on popular culture. Aiming to confront and investigate political and social issues, the press is placed at top in this area. As a result, it has the power to affect and mold public opinion (Qader, 2015).

The general population utilizes media salience indicators to plan their calendars and select the subjects, people, or other issues that are most important so this research study examine how selected press frame the stories and influence public opinion among the general public.

### **Research Questions**

**RQ2.** How Media framed stories regarding the establishment of new province to manipulate public opinion to build public agenda?

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In accordance with Theories of Communication, the agenda-setting hypothesis comprises two levels. The common concerns that are the most essential are accepted at the first level of agenda-setting, and the second level determines which aspects of the issues are crucial (McCombs, 2008). On these two levels of the notion, he continued by quoting Rogers and Dearing (1996), who stated that "the first component of the process is the importance of the topics that are going to be covered in the media. Second, the public agenda refers to how the problems covered by the media affect how the public thinks. Wanta and Ghanem (2007) discovered that research ranging from.05 to.967 and remaining as mean around.358 showed a substantial link between public and media objectives (Massart, 2010).

According to Riaz (2008), the following are some of the scholars' perspectives on longitudinal studies and their effects on audiences: Two researchers, Winter and Eyal (1981), discovered a significant correlation between how civil rights were portrayed in the media from 1954 to 1976 and the weight audiences gave to the issue. The agenda-setting theory gained a new dimension of "contingent circumstances" as a result of this work. Via a Gallup Pak Poll, Eaton (1989) examined three national newscasts, five newspapers, and three magazines over a three-year period. He learned that the topics that continued to dominate news coverage also had a prominent position on the public's agenda. While some researches have demonstrated the agenda-setting impacts on long-term exposure, others disagree with the idea. The agenda-setting impacts, however, are more substantial at the local level than at the international one. McCombs (1972) asserts that "shaping the focus of public attention is a strong function, but, perhaps, influencing the agenda of qualities for an issue or political figure is the ultimate in political power.

#### **Hypothesis of the Study:**

**H1.** The greater the coverage of an issue regarding the establishment of new province in the newspaper, the greater will be its importance for the public and vice versa.

**H2.** The greater the coverage of challenges regarding establishment of news province in newspapers, the greater change in public opinion

### **METHODOLOGY**

To examine the connection between media and public agenda, this method of research study requires the use of both content analysis and survey research.

#### **Content Analysis**

This chapter explains how the researcher conducted a content analysis of four newspapers in Punjab, namely Daily THE NEWS, Daily THE NATION, Daily JANG Multan Edition, and NAWA I WAQT Multan Edition, over a period of two years and nearly three months, from 7th June 2017 to 19th August 2019. The selected newspapers are widely circulated in Punjab and have a strong reputation for their professional coverage of important issues locally and globally. The study's time frame encompasses the last year of the PMLN government, a period of the interim government, and the first year of the PTI government in Punjab. The study examines the frequency, length, slant, framing, and placement of news stories on the front and back pages of the newspapers, focusing on specific issues that dominated the Pakistani print media throughout the research study period. The analysis is conducted on alternate days, and the data collected is analyzed using statistical techniques to draw conclusions about the newspapers' coverage of the issues of interest.

#### **Survey Research**

A survey of Two hundred (200) print media associated persons was conducted in each city of South Punjab named Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur to carried public opinion regarding media agenda greater extent, the sample of the study represents the newspaper readership of the whole Punjab. . This survey investigation uncovered popular perception, point of view, and broad public opinion and strategy on the planned new Punjab province. Residents of three southern Punjabi districts Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur are the population of study. Purposive sampling was used to collect the sample. The researcher developed an instrument on the subject in order to gather data, and is being studied from all angles, including public awareness of the issue. The public under investigation was then given this questionnaire so that data could be analyzed.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Analysis of English and Urdu Newspapers**

News outlets, including English and Urdu newspapers, have a crucial role in the dissemination of information and the formation of public opinion. The analysis of news coverage is a critical component in understanding the role of media in shaping public discourse. In this cumulative analysis, researcher examined the coverage of the issue of the new province of South Punjab in both English and Urdu newspapers, focusing on the slant, framing, placement, and length of news articles. The analysis covers the tenures of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN),

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interim government, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to identify any patterns or trends in news coverage.

Table 5.1 Mean Avg Slant of English and Urdu Newspaper regarding New Province South Punjab

Tenure	English News Paper			Urdu Newspaper		
	F	UF	N	F	UF	N
PMLN	72%	15%	13%	68%	14%	18%
Interim	71%	14%	15%	61%	14%	25%
PTI	63%	23%	14%	66%	12%	22%

This table represents the slant or bias of English and Urdu newspapers towards political parties during three different tenures: PMLN, Interim, and PTI, regarding the issue of creating a new province in South Punjab. The three columns represent favorable towards the issue, unfavorable for the issue, and neutral (no clear bias) stances of the newspapers. The table shows that during the PMLN tenure, both English and Urdu newspapers had a slightly favorable, with 72% and (68%) of their news coverage, respectively. During the Interim period, the Urdu newspapers had a higher percentage of neutral coverage (25%), while English newspapers remained mostly favorable. During the PTI tenure, both English and Urdu newspapers had a slightly favorable bias, with 63% and 66% of their news coverage, respectively. This table indicates that English and Urdu newspapers have a slightly favorable, particularly during the PMLN and PTI tenures, while remaining relatively neutral during the Interim period.

Table 5.2 Framing of English & Urdu Newspaper

Tenure	The Nation			The News			Daily Nawa I Waqt			Daily Jang		
	PM LN Tenure	Interim	PTI Tenure	PM LN Tenure	Interim	PTI Tenure	PM LN Tenure	Interim	PTI Tenure	PM LN Tenure	Interim	PTI Tenure
Pro Government	67%	46%	51%	52%	80%	50%	71%	47%	54%	71%	47%	54%
Anti-Government	20%	8%	21%	21%	10%	30%	13%	7%	28%	13%	7%	28%
Neutral	12%	46%	29%	26%	10%	20%	16%	47%	18%	16%	47%	18%

This table presents a cumulative analysis of the slant of English and Urdu newspapers, namely The Nation, The News, Daily Nawa I Waqt, and Daily Jang, during the PMLN, interim, and PTI tenures. The table shows the percentage of news articles framed as pro-government, anti-government, and neutral in each newspaper during each tenure. The issue being analyzed is the proposal for a new province in South Punjab. The table reveals that, the newspapers were more likely to frame news articles as pro-government during the PMLN and PTI tenures, with the exception of The News during the PTI tenure. During the interim period, the newspapers were more likely to frame news as neutral, with The Nation having the highest percentage of neutral news articles. On the other hand, the newspapers were more likely to frame news articles as anti-government during the interim period in Daily Jang and during the PTI tenure in Nawa I Waqt. When it comes to the issue of the proposed new province in South Punjab, the newspapers varied in their framing of news articles. The Nation and Daily Jang were more likely to frame news as pro-government, while The News and Nawa I Waqt were more likely

to frame news as neutral. The exception was The Nation during the interim period, which had a high percentage of neutral news articles on the issue. This table suggests that the newspapers had varying degrees of bias towards the government during the different tenures, and that they also had different tendencies when it came to framing news articles on the issue of the new province in South Punjab. The table highlights the importance of media analysis in understanding how news is presented to the public and how it can influence public opinion.

**SURVEY RESULTS**

In order to test hypothesis ‘The greater the coverage of an issue regarding establishment of news province in the newspaper, the greater will be its importance for the public and vice versa’ regression analysis will be applied on the collected the data

**Table No: 1**

**Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.271 <sup>a</sup>	.074	.069	1.493		
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	5.335	.557		9.242	.000
MA	.097	.024	.271	3.964	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PA

Table No 1 Shows the effect of media agenda on public agenda regarding establishment of new province in Punjab. The R<sup>2</sup> value of .074 shows independent variable 0.7% variance in the outcome variable. The effect of media agenda regarding creation of new province in Punjab made a significant contribution in explaining the dependent variable, public agenda. As indicated that the beta value is .271 which means that the change in media agenda by one unit will bring about a change in the public agenda by 2.7%. Means by greater the coverage of an issue in the newspaper, greater the public will consider the issue important.

In order to test the second hypothesis of the study ‘The greater the coverage of challenges regarding establishment of news province in newspapers, the greater change in public opinion’ regression analysis will be applied on the collected the data

**Table No: 2**

**Model Summary**

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.271 <sup>a</sup>	.073	.069	3.673		
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	17.114	1.420		12.073	.000
MA	.237	.060	.271	3.955	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CIPO

In comparison to other areas of Punjab, the people of south Punjab believe they are not getting their fair share of resources and development initiatives. Many locals feel that the provincial government has neglected the area, which has led to a lack of funding for infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other vital services. Table .....Shows the effect of media agenda on public opinion regarding establishment of new province in Punjab. The R<sup>2</sup>

value of .073 shows independent variable 0.7% variance in the outcome variable. The effect of media agenda regarding creation of new province in Punjab made a significant contribution in explaining the dependent variable, public opinion about establishment of new province. As indicated that the beta value is .271 which means that the change in media agenda by one unit will bring about a change in the public opinion by 2.7%. Means by greater the coverage of an issue in the newspaper, greater the change in public opinion.

### DISCUSSIONS

To find any patterns or trends in the news coverage, the analysis takes into account the terms of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN), the interim administration, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Both English and Urdu newspapers during the PTI's rule had a marginally favorable bias, with 63% and 66% of their news coverage, respectively. According to this table, English and Urdu newspapers tend to be slightly more favorable, especially during the PMLN and PTI administrations, while remaining largely neutral during the interim period. A comprehensive examination of the editorial stances taken by The Nation, The News, Daily Nawa I Waqt, and Daily Jang during the PMLN, interim, and PTI administrations. The percentage of news stories that were neutral, pro-government, and anti-government during each tenure are represented in the table for each newspaper. The proposal for a new province in South Punjab is the subject of the analysis. The table shows that, with the exception of The News during the PTI administration, newspapers were more likely to frame news articles as pro-government during the PMLN and PTI administrations. The newspapers were more likely to present news as neutral during the interim period, with The Nation having the highest proportion of neutral news articles. On the other hand, during the interim period in Daily Jang and the PTI administration in Nawa I Waqt, the newspapers were more likely to portray news articles as being anti-government. The way the newspapers framed their news articles about the proposed new province in South Punjab varied.

In light of the findings survey results, the researcher came to the following conclusion: "The people of Southern Punjab are very enthusiastic about the desire for a new province in the Punjab and they want the province on administrative foundation as opposed to linguistic or geographical considerations. They are also disillusioned and unsatisfied with the function that political parties play. Results indicate that, in contrast to political parties, the media is the sole channel that has the potential to influence public opinion. Yet, political parties may also act as a pressure group because of their widespread popular support. The sole source that influences public opinion and sets the public's agenda is the media.

While though content analysis and public opinion both support the creation of a new province in Southern Punjab, there is still disagreement on the province's name, and this topic is currently being discussed in Pakistani and Punjabi political forums.

The following recommendations are made to the government, media outlets, communication scholars, and the general public in light of the study.

Press plays vital role in opinion formation of the people in establishment of new province in the Punjab, so the government and other stakeholder could use the press in more better way to form public consensus on the subject matter. The government should immediately engage with the public and solicit their wants, notice their issues, and ensure that solutions are found. A referendum might be a useful instrument for gauging public sentiment regarding the need for a new province. Using this technique within the bounds of the constitution is advised. Government should engage in communication with all state stakeholders, including the opposition party, local parties, nationalist leaders, and media organizations, in order to come to a consensus. The government should use the media to publicize its policies and gather feedback from the general public on the issue of a new province. In this context, people from Southern Punjab can also express their opinions. By sending its message to the mass level, the government must establish some patterns and standards, and the media's role should also be impartial.



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