

## **Deliberative Democracy: Effect of News Media and Interpersonal Conversation on Quality of Public Opinion**

**Ifra Iftikhar**

*Leads University, Lahore.*

**Raza Ullah**

*University of the Punjab, Lahore.*

**Naveeda Naureen**

*University of the Punjab, Lahore*

**Hussain Ali**

*University of the Punjab, Lahore*

### **ABSTRACT**

Issues are debated on media and then redistributed into society through interpersonal conversation. Public deliberations lead to formation of public opinion on the issues of public concern. Public opinion refers to the views held by those who participate in public discourse. Quality of public opinion is based on quality of the discourse and quantity of the participation. The main objective of the study is to analyze the effects of the media on quality of the public opinion. A sample of 338 respondents was selected from various sections of the society, i.e. semi and unskilled labor, government employees, professionals, students, and housewives from the provincial capitals of Pakistan. A questionnaire consisting of 48 items (Kim et al, 1999) regarding conversation patterns was adapted to use in Pakistani context. According to the results of the study when an issue was frequently discussed in talk shows on TV channels, people discussed it in their interpersonal conversation. Increase in quantity of information from different perspectives enhanced quality of public opinion.

**Key Words:** Deliberative Democracy, News Media, Interpersonal conversation, Public sphere, Pakistan opinionatedness

### **Introduction**

Historically, democracy thrives in societies that have robust public sphere. Informal public discourse is essential for a strong democracy as it engages citizens in political discussions and debates that enables the formation of rational public opinion and guide and influence political system (Benhabib, 1996; Bohman, 2004; Dryzek, 2000; Young, 2000). In modern nation states with higher populations, it is difficult to gather people at one point and engage them in a meaningful discourse. Nonetheless, communication technologies help to cross the barriers of time and

space and form a public sphere.

The concept of public sphere involves the relation between democratic politics, communication, and the media. Public sphere is a metaphorical term used to describe the virtual space where people can interact, exchange ideas and discuss issues, in order to reach agreement about 'matters of general interest' (Habermas J. , 1997, p. 105). It is a place where information and point of views are processed, filtered, synthesized and, political opinion is formed (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff, & Virk, 2012; Dahlgren, 1995; Fraser N. , 1990). While, in academic writings the term 'public sphere' is used to describe the virtual space where communication about public issues takes place; in everyday discourse it is referred as 'the media' (McKee A. , 2005). The two terms are often used interchangeably as synonyms, but conceptually public sphere is a bigger thing than media. Media is a part of public sphere. The information about the issues is disseminated by media. It is the media where issues are debated and contested. Ultimately the information is processed by the individuals and institutions in their own private realms by means of interpersonal communication and then redistributed in the society until some kind of consensus is build on the issue (Wetters, 2008). In a sense it is not exactly "a place but an occurrence, a process, an event, something that arises when people interact with each on some issue and try in the presence of others to make sense of and reorient their common world" (McAfee, 2008). Habermas conceived public sphere as a social space for the 'rational-critical debate about public issues conducted by private persons willing to let arguments and not status determine decisions' (Calhoun ,1992, p. 1). Habermas (1984) describes the emergence of civil society of citizens as bourgeois gathering in the salons and coffee houses of the eighteenth century, and spreading their ideas through political pamphlets published by small press, formed a public, which, though did not possess the power to govern, but had the capacity to criticize government and formulate recommendations to guide and influence the exercise of political power.

Public sphere is 'a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed' (Habermas J. , 1984, p. 49). He advocates equal access for all citizens as 'a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body' (1984, p. 49). The 'public body' is formed when citizens "confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest" (Habermas, 1984, p. 49; Barnett, 2003; Bantas, 2010).

Public opinion here does not mean "mere opinion" (or arbitrary views) of isolated individuals taken in the aggregate' (Calhoun C. , 1992, p. 17) as expressed in opinion polls rather it 'comes to refer more positively to the views held by those who join in rational-critical debate on an issue' (p. 17).

The vitality and authenticity of public sphere depends upon both the quality of discourse and the quantity of participation. That is, not only should discussion be constituted 'around rational critical argument' (Calhoun C. , 1992, p. 2) but 'the

more people participate as citizens in politics, the closer one comes to the ideal of a public sphere' (Schudson, 1992, p. 147). As long as the communication flow is inclusive and fair, the public debate automatically filters out the "views that cannot withstand critical scrutiny" and "assure the legitimacy" of the rational discourse (Fraser N. , 2007, p. 7).

## **Media in Pakistan**

The Pakistani electronic media has become the most powerful medium as it becomes the dominant medium of information, education and entertainment. It plays an important role in shaping and reshaping public opinion, attitudes and perceptions (S.M.Shahid, 2006; Nawaz, 2006; Craig, 2007). In Pakistan the private TV channels news coverage is mostly focused on political and social issues involving conflicts (Alam, 2007). Scholars agree that television influence the public opinion by providing them political information (Jones, 2010; Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Abu-Lughod, 2008). People consider TV as credible source because they can hear people speak and see people act (Craig, 2007).

On March 9, 2007, the Chief Justice of Pakistan was made a 'non functional' by the President of Pakistan. Within few minutes the news was flashed around the country by private TV channels evoking a nationwide popular reaction against the suspension. Judicial issue remained the most covered topic in the newly emerged 24/7 television news channels engaging citizens in political conversations regarding the issue. The political talk at homes, offices and in streets about the judicial crisis defied the traditional military-enforced and aggressively promoted culture of 'political discussion prohibited' depicting the first signs of change in the political attitudes and behavior of the people. Lawyers and civil society protested and demanded restoration of Chief Justice. A mass protest movement led by lawyers, known as the Lawyers' Movement started which eventually culminated with the Pakistan Long March. Consensus was seen among the majority about the restoration of the Chief Justice. In the general elections 2008 restoration of the Chief Justice was among the top issues on the agenda of the popular parties. Finally, the Chief Justice was restored by the government.

The way people were engaged in the judicial issue by the electronic media and willfully remained attentive to the following events was unprecedented. Media and political parties after exhaustive debates and discussions about the issue managed to bring people to a common agreement of restoration of judiciary. The decision seemed so unanimous that no need was felt for referendum even. Deliberation theorists deem it as the ideal outcome of the public deliberations. Can this be interpreted as an incidence of deliberative democracy? Were the Pakistani people going through the process of public deliberations by being attentive to the debates and discussions regarding the judicial issue on television news channels and discussing it with others? And to what extent these deliberations have enhanced the opinion quality regarding judicial issue? Moreover, what extent this experience motivated people for political participation. Therefore, this research is an attempt

to answer these questions by analyzing the empirical evidence collected by survey especially designed for this research. This research focuses on the role of television news channels in general including the state owned PTV and all other private channels. The rationale behind taking all the television news channels is guided by the theories of public sphere which insist on the publicity of perspectives and positions of all the parties.

## Results

### Effects of News Media and Political Conversation on Quality of Opinion

One of the basic premise of deliberative democracy that exposure to reasoned debates and discussions will automatically increase the quality of opinion was checked. Quality of opinion was analyzed for three dimensions: consistency, opiniatedness, and considerateness.

#### Opiniatedness

Opinionatedness means the ability to have definite unambiguous opinions. Obviously, those who are unable to come up with unambiguous responses against a question are the ones who are either unsure of their beliefs or incapable of sorting ideas in line to their beliefs and have “sit on the fence” attitude. To assess this quality to decide and have an opinion a scale, named ‘opinionatedness’ was constructed (see table 1) simply by adding up the five dichotomized scales; it has values ranging from 0 (for those who failed to answer to all of the four items) to 5 (for those who successfully answered all of them). The five items are the three judicial issue items, one item about the PCO judges, and one identifying ideology. In ideology item there was no option for “don’t know” but the respondents who had no clear opinion about it did not answer it. Those were the missing cases. These were included in the category of “don’t know” and given the lowest value = 0. All other responses were considered as having some opinion and given value 1. The distribution of the frequencies of the opiniatedness scale is rather skewed: 0=1, 1=12, 2 = 47, 3=39, 4=80, and 5 = 160 or 0.3%, 3.6%, 13.9%, 11.5%, 23.7%, and 47.3% respectively.

Table 1. Responses regarding Opiniatedness

	Opiniated	Unsure
About Ideology	97.6%	2.4%
About illegal & unconstitutional act	73.4%	26.6%
About undoing the illegal and unconstitutional	70.7%	29.3%
About eh restoration of Iftikhar Chaudary	73.7%	26.3%
About PCO judges	82%	18.0%

In other words the respondents who failed to answer the question about

ideology (2.4%), and other judicial issue items: about illegal and unconstitutional act those who said “don’t know” or did not answer were 26.6%; about undoing the illegal and unconstitutional act the percentage of the unsure one was 29.3%; and for the most extensively discussed issue about the restoration of the Chief Justice those unable to decide were 26.3%. The respondents could not make up their minds on PCO item were 18%.

**Consistency**

As mentioned in the methodology “consistency” is assumed here as an agreement between ones beliefs and choices. Two aspects of the consistency of opinion were measured. The first was based on the assumption that responses can be predicted if the respondent is consistent in his beliefs and choices. The choices made in the three judicial items express the consistency in opting for legal or illegal choice each time. Inability to respond in a predictable manner means lack of consistency. For measuring consistency, scale was constructed from the items related to the judicial issue. The scale for this consistency measure was constructed with three items on judicial issue (see table 2). It was named as ‘Within-Item (WI) consistency’. This scale was based on the assumption that the three items are related to the same thing: the legal consciousness or believe in the supremacy of law. The answer to these questions was dichotomized depending on the respondents’ replies. The reliability score (Cronbach’s alpha) among the three items is 0 .802.

The distribution of responses the questions are as follows: (1) ‘Was the imposition of emergency and removal of judges on 3<sup>rd</sup>November, 2007 an unconstitutional and illegal act?’, yes = 67.3%, no 5.6%, and don’t know = 26.6%;(2) ‘Do you think that the democratic government should have repealed the unconstitutional and illegal acts immediately after taking over?’, yes 66.3%, no4.4%, and don’t know = 29.3%; (3) ‘Since the personality of Chief Justice (CJ) has become controversial, do you think it is in the best interest of the country to reinstate him?’, yes = 62.7%, no = 10.9%, and don’t know = 26.3%. The results show overall 62.7% consistency of opinions among the respondents.

The reliability score between the first two items was high (0.859), but the reliability with the third item related to Chief Justice was relatively low with both the other items that is .66 and .63 with the first and the second item respectively.

**Table 2. Responses for PCO judges**

PCO Judges item	New Channel viewers (N=192)	Others Channel Viewers (N=146)
	Yes	Yes
Let them continue	31.6	28.4
Should be removed	52.9	48.9
Don’t know	15.5%	22.7%

The second consistency scale constructed was principle-policy consistency.

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Judicial issue items were used in this analysis. The correlation between the two items was .42 ( $p < .001$ ). Three judicial items and one PCO item were dichotomized: the highest score = 4 were given to those who showed consistency between the four items; and the lower scores for those who showed inconsistency, least 0. All of the four items were added together to form single variable named 'principle-policy consistency'. The frequencies of principle policy consistency turned out as: 0 = 142, 1 = 4, 2 = 12, 3 = 59, and 4 = 121 or 42%, 1.2%, 3.6%, 17.5%, and 35.8% respectively.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Opinion Quality Measures**

Variable	Scale	M	SD	N
Consistency 1. Within Judicial issue items (WI) JUD-C	Reliability (Chronbach's alpha) Less discussed (.797, N=90) Moderately discussed (.792, N=184) Highly discussed (.713, N=63) 0=least, 2=always			
2. Ideology-PCO (PCO-I)	0=least, 2=most	1.21	.44	323
3. Principle-Policy (PP)	0=least, 1=most	.63	.48	338
Opinionatedness	0=least, 5=most	4.12	1.20	338
Considerateness	0=least, 6=most	4.25	1.85	338

## Considerateness

The quality of considerateness (see table 4) which is referred as the enlarged mindedness and impartiality was conceptualized as the ability to consider an issue in a broader perspective instead of its immediate effects by weighing pros and cons. The set of six statements following the question "What do you think of the lawyer's movement?" was given to assess the respondent's considerateness.

**Table 4. Responses regarding lawyers' movement**

Statements	No	Yes
"It is waste of time and money".	69.5%	30.5%
"It an impediment to smooth governance".	67.8%	32.2%
"It has restored the Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudary"	19.8%	80.2%
"Proved people's power against a dictator."	30.5%	69.5%
"It has awakened political consciousness among the people"	32.0%	68.0%
"It has made independent judiciary possible in Pakistan"	29.3%	70.7%

The responses to these statements which were already dichotomous agree or disagree. Those respondents who agreed only to the two statements related to the immediately felt effect i.e.: "It is wastage of time and money" and "It an impediment to smooth governance" were given lower score = 0. Those who agreed to the two statements related to the proclaimed goals of the movement as well, "It has restored the Chief Justice and "Proved people's power against a dictator"; were given score = 1, and those who agreed also to the two statements related to

the long term effect of the movement were given the highest score 2. All of the six statements were added to form single variable of ‘considerateness. The frequencies of considerateness turned Out as 0 = 55, 1 = 54, and 2 = 229 or 16.3%, 16.0%, and 67.8% respectively.

### **Bivariate Relationships**

To examine relationships among the four opinion quality measures, news media use, and the conversation variables a partial correlation analysis was performed. The demographic variables (age, gender, education, and income) were controlled to minimize their interference. The results are summarized in table 5. Principle—Policy consistency is strongly positively related to all the variables used. These results imply that consistency in opinion is manifestation of another dimension of the opinion structure, different from the other two opinion quality elements — opinionatedness and considerateness.

The opinionatedness has positive and highly significant relation with the news media use and conversation variables. Considerateness appears to be the result of strong and significant correlation with talk shows, political television programmes, and political conversation.

In short, it can be inferred that opinionatedness and considerateness represent one dimension of the opinion while consistency is entirely different aspect. Presence of former does not ensure the later.

**Table 5 Partial Correlation Coefficients of Opinion Quality Measures and Talk Variables.**

	Consistency	Opiniatedness	Consideredness
Consistency			
Opiniatedness	.872***		
Consideredness	.223***	.249***	
News Channels	.270***	.289***	.136
News	.258***	.351***	.050
Talk shows	.278***	.337***	.094
Political TV Programmes	.278***	.337***	.226***
Judicial Issue Talk	.268***	.308***	.241***
Political Talk	.252***	.294***	.254***
Personal Talk	.212***	.227***	.302***

Note: Consistency here refers to Principle-Policy Consistency

### **The Main Effects**

Outcome from the multivariate regressions shows that the effect of demographic variables is not the same on every opinion quality measures.

For Principle-Policy consistency (see table 6) all the demographic variables show negative relationship. Age and gender are negative, predictors of principle-policy consistency throughout, though not significant. Education and income show

the same negative association but are marginally significant. These findings appear similar to that of SnidenTian, Brody, and Tetlock, who summed up their findings in these words; “Common sense would suggest the relation between principle and policy to be strongest among the most sophisticated. Not so: It is as strong among the least educated” (1991, p.677). Rather, in this case, less education and low income appear as predictors of principle-policy consistency.

**Table 6. Logistic Regression Models for Principle-Policy Consistency**

	Eq.1	Eq.2	Eq.3	Eq.
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	-.183	-.250	-.178	-.195
Gender	-.209	-.154	-.206	-.275
Education	-.090	-.198	-.239	-.275*
Income	-.059	-.264*	-.312*	-.301*
<b>News Media Use</b>				
News Channel		.389**	.382**	.388**
News		.219	.230	.135
Talk shows		.390*	.269	.653*
Political Programmes		.358*	.096	.028
<b>Political Conversation</b>				
Discussed Judicial Issue			.369*	.497
Political Talk			.341	.875
Personal Talk			-.010	-.116
<b>Interaction Terms</b>				
News X Political Talk				.738
News X Discussion				-.378
Talk shows X Political Talk				-1.365*
Talk Shows X Discussion				.209
Model chi-square	3.82	57.63***	69.16***	76.19***
(improvement)	62.0 %	73.0 %	73.9 %	74.5 %
Correctly classified				

**Note:** Table cell entries are coefficients from logistic regressions, estimated using maximum likelihood methods. The dependent variable takes the value 0 = Inconsistent and 1 = Consistent.

**For easier comparison of results across equations, all the independent variables were standardized.**

The difference between 2log (likelihood) for the regression model and - 2log(likelihood) for a null model or previous equations) is distributed as a chi-square with degrees of freedom equal to the number of (newly entered) predictors.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01;\*\*\*p<.001.

For opiniatedness (see table7), demographic variable appeared to have negative association. Following the similar pattern as seen in principle and policy consistency, education and income, though negative, show moderately significant



relationship with opinionatedness.

Considerateness, unlike other opinion quality measures, showed positive association with education, though not significantly. Age and income appeared to have negative but significant association with considerateness. Young, educated females having relatively less income were the most considerate.

The four news media variables also contribute differently to each of the opinion quality measures. For principle- policy consistency news channels appear as strong predictors. News viewing does not contribute to the principle- policy consistency at all. Talk shows and political programmes are modestly significant predictors of P-P consistency. Overall news media variables contribute quite significantly to the model fitness.

For opinionatedness, news media variables significantly increase the model fitness. News channels are significant predictor for opinionatedness. In addition to that only political and public affair programmes contribute significantly and news and talk shows are positive contributors though insignificantly.

For considerateness, it appears that news media variables contribute little; contribution of news channels appears positive but not significant. News contributes significantly only in the presence of talk and interaction variables. Talk shows appear rather negative predictors; political programmes have mostly negative contribution. They do not effect significantly to the model improvement either.

After controlling for the demographics and news media variables, the three talk variables were entered.

In case of principle- policy consistency, talk variables strongly and significantly increases the explanation power of the model. Individually, only judicial issue talk appears as moderately significant predictor of P-P consistency.

For Opinionatedness, judicial issue discussion and political talk turned out as significant predictors. But personal talk is negative predictor for opinionatedness. The significance of talk shows and political programmes appear to diminish with the addition of talk variables. Overall the talk variables contribute strongly and significantly to the model fitness.

Considerateness does not appear to be affected by talk variables very much. Except issue discussion seems modestly significant predictor of considerateness. Talk variables do not significantly contribute to the model fitness.

So far, it is found that, news channels in general and talk shows and political affair programmes contribute in enhancing the quality of opinionatedness and consistency between principles and policies while news have positive and significant role in improving considerateness. Political talk besides being increasing opinionatedness contributes little the models. There is no significant role of personal talk in improving any of the opinion quality. It. short, news channels have only contributed in enabling people to have their definite opinions on matters but does not necessarily improve their intrinsic quality.

Therefore, the results do not fully support the opinion quality hypothesis that news media use and political conversation will increase consistency and

considerateness in the opinions; though it supports the hypothesis that news channels and issue discussion help in having clear and definite opinions.

### **The Interaction Effects**

After having examined main effects of the explaining variables independently their combined effect was examined. Deliberative democracy theories suggest that there is an interaction effect of news media and political conversation. For this purpose two news media variables (news and talk shows) and two talk variables (political talk and judicial issue talk or discussion), four interaction terms were constructed and entered to the regression models, after controlling all other independent variables. It was assumed that “talk shows viewing” (during the judicial crisis) and “judicial issue talk” are issue-oriented behaviors, while “news viewing” and “political talk” are general topic — oriented behaviors.

In the Principle-Policy consistency models (see table 6), the coefficient for the interaction of talk shows and political talk is negative and marginally significant. Interestingly, it turned out that the coefficients for news viewing and judicial issue talk are positive but, the interaction term “news x judicial issue talk” appears negative. In other words, when judicial issue is discussed with the facts obtained by news they tend to work the opposite way to the principle-policy consistency. “Talk shows X Political Talk” also shows the same consequence that it reduces principle- policy consistency. “Talk shows x judicial issue talk” and “News X Political Talk” seem to contribute positively to the P-P consistency, however insignificantly. These findings indicate without that considering the interaction terms, the simple main effect model would have been incomplete. The interaction effect adds to the explanatory power of the model significantly.

In the model for opinionatedness (see table 5.20), when interaction terms were entered the independent negative effects of talk shows, judicial issue talk, and political talk become positive. The coefficient of news viewing is negative. The interaction of news with political talk shows negative effect whereas interaction of news with judicial issue talk appears positive. This implies that people when discuss issue with reference to the news they have clearer opinions. Interaction of talk shows with news and judicial issue talk contributes negatively to the opinionatedness but at the same time increase the explanatory power of the model.

In the model of considerateness (see table 8), when interaction terms were entered the news viewing becomes significant. The judicial issue talk which was significantly negative before became positive. It is found that significantly positive news in interaction with political talk is negative and interaction with judicial issue talk appears even significantly negative.

Interactions of news with talk shows (which show negative effect independently) appear positive (.009). Talk shows and judicial issue talk is also positive (.047) indicating that positive effect of judicial issue talk attenuates for the negative effect of talk shows.

These findings give new insights about the effects of news media and political conversation on opinion quality aspects. Judicial issue talk when looked at independently contributes negatively to the consistency but when combined with news it contributes positively to the ideology-issue consistency. This implies that when people discuss issues without having required relevant information their consistency drops; and if people only talk politics without using news media, their consistency drops even more.

In the model of opinionatedness, when interaction terms were entered the values of negative coefficients of news media channels though remained negative but dropped clearly. Similarly, the coefficients of judicial issue talk and political talk which were negative before become positive and gained high values from -.237 and -.452 to .554 and 1.109 respectively. Interaction of news and issue discussion helps people to examine the issue clearly and reach to some definite opinion; but news x political talk contributes negatively to the opinionatedness. Interaction of talk shows with news and judicial issue talk appear to contribute negatively in having clearer opinions, rather talk show x judicial issue talk seem to contribute significantly negatively for opinionatedness. Terms of interaction greatly enhance the explanatory power of the model.

**Table 7. Logistic Regression Models for Opinionatedness**

	Eq.1	Eq.2	Eq.3	Eq.
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	.424*	.423*	.317	.339
Gender	-.327	-.339	-.314	-.409
Education	-.152	-.050	-.061	-.148
Income	-.192	-.085	-.072	-.161
<b>News Media Use</b>				
News Channel		-.183	-.152	-.140
News		-.480*	-.520**	-.368
Talk shows		-.651*	-.502*	.162
Political Programmes		-.587**	-.336	-.182
<b>Political Conversation</b>				
Discussed Judicial Issue			-.237	.554
Political Talk			-.452	1.109
Personal Talk			-.087	-.073
<b>Interaction Terms</b>				
News X Political Talk				-1.462
News X Discussion				.079
Talk shows X Political Talk				-1.830
Talk Shows X Discussion				-1.995*
Model chi-square (improvement)	18.54 **	77.60***	83.57***	102.29***
Correctly classified	83.1 %	87.0 %	84.6 %	86.9 %

**Note:** Table cell entries are coefficients from logistic regressions, estimated using maximum likelihood methods. The dependent variable takes the value 0 = Inconsistent and 1 = Consistent.

**For easier comparison of results across equations, all the independent variables were standardized.**

The difference between 2log (likelihood) for the regression model and -2log(likelihood) for a null model or previous equations) is distributed as a chi-square with degrees of freedom equal to the number of (newly entered) predictors.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01;\*\*\*p<.001.

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In the model of considerateness (see table 8), the role of news is enhanced significantly on entering the interaction terms. The coefficient of judicial issue talk which was significantly negative also became positive. Interestingly the interaction terms of news with talk variables show negative contribution towards considerateness, whereas the talk shows which showed negative contribution when seen independently, show positive contribution towards enhancing considerateness in the opinions. Interaction effect contributes tremendously to the model fitness.

In sum, it is found that for improving the consistency in the opinion contribution of the interaction of general media and talk variables (news and political talk) and issue specific media and talk variables (talk shows and Judicial Issue talk) is visible; however, independently news media and talk variables, either issue specific or general, do not contribute much. For opinionatedness, interaction terms do not seem to contribute anything, but independently issue specific media use (talk shows) and general talk (political talk) enhance opinionatedness. It appears that considerateness increases most by having the factual knowledge of the issue in general (as acquired by news) and issue specific discussion (talk shows x judicial issue talk).

Therefore, these models suggest that combination of the both kinds of behavior contribute in refining opinion quality. Moreover, it implies that without examining interaction effect the whole effect of news media and political talk is not possible rather it would misrepresents their real effect.

**Table 8 Linear Regression Models for Considerateness**

	Eq.1	Eq.2	Eq.3	Eq.
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	.068***	-.020	-.034*	-.036*
Gender	-.016	-.037*	-.033*	-.041*
Education	-.040*	-.014	-.013	-.013
Income	-.015	.010	.010	.012
<b>News Media Use</b>				
News Channel		.007	.011	.008
News		.026	.024	.085**
Talk shows		-.017	-.005	-.032
Political Programmes		-.018	.011	.008
<b>Political Conversation</b>				
Discussed Judicial Issue			-.032*	.027
Political Talk			-.009	-.010
Personal Talk			-.042	-.037
<b>Interaction Terms</b>				
News X Political Talk				-.006
News X Discussion				-.127**
Talk shows X Political Talk				.009
Talk Shows X Discussion				.047
Model Fit (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	.009	.010	.047	.070

Note: Table variables have e cell entries are standardized coefficients from linear regressions

## Discussion and conclusion

As results have shown that sometimes, independently, news media use and political talk variables affect opinion quality in a different manner as compared to

their interaction effect. One of the possible explanations of such manifested effect lies in the fact, that when people form their opinion regarding some issue they reflect on their idea elements about the issue, that is they search their memory base. Sometimes, getting information or talking about an issue alone can increase complexity in opinion making them inconsistent and ambiguous. But if a new element is introduced like a new piece of information, a new perspective, a new schema, etc., it can affect the whole opinion structure, which might appear as more clearer, consistent and considerate opinion or become more complex, inconsistent, and ambiguous. Therefore, the introduction of new element, either in the form of more information or varied perspectives and point of views change to the memory base can change the consequent opinion thereby either refining the opinion quality or creating more confusion. The results in this study seemed to support the argument that news and judicial issue talk in the talk shows or other political programmes provide people a chance to construct their opinions not on their random thoughts and ideas but in the light of all relevant information and point of views.

The second hypothesis and the related research question of the study which is a fundamental assumption of the deliberative democracy theory that exposure to information and reasoned debates and discussions tend to enhance the quality of opinion of the citizens is supported by the findings. It implies that when an issue is frequently discussed on media and people talk about it frequently it is more likely that after getting exposed to greater information and diverse viewpoints they are better able to sort out their ideas and form more rational and considered opinions. The findings of the study are broadly consistent with previous studies (S.M.Shahid, 2006; Nawaz, 2006; Craig, 2007). The opinion quality measures with respect to judicial issue were measured. The three measures used: opinionatedness ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ; Scale 0-5), consistency ( $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 1.8$ ; Scale 0-4) and considerateness ( $M = 2.5$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ; Scale 0-3) turned out to be quite encouraging. This level of quality in opinions supports the hypothesis and also positively answered the second research question that news channels viewing and frequent judicial issue discussion tended to improve quality of opinion with respect judicial issue.

Regression analysis revealed that the effect of news media variables and conversation variables on opinion quality of the people was quite different when their interaction effect was analyzed; in fact, without analyzing the interaction effects of the different variable the results could be misleading. In case of principle-policy consistency, the interaction of general media and talk variables specifically (news X) and issue specific media and talk variables (talk shows X political talk) was quite considerable. Whereas, opinionatedness was not affected much by interaction terms, but seemed to be enhanced by issue specific media use (talk shows) and general talk (political talk) independently. Considerateness appeared to increase most by having the factual knowledge of the issue in general (as acquired by news) and issue specific discussion (talk shows x discussion). It implied that, merely news media use without having interpersonal conversations

could increase opinion quality or interpersonal discussions alone without media use could not produce better opinions. Rather it is a combined effect of news media use and interpersonal conversations which in due time refined opinions of the people. This supports the argument that news and discussion about the issues in television programmes together with interpersonal political talk provide people a chance to construct their opinions not on their muddled thoughts but in the light of all relevant information and point of views. It is concluded that television news channels viewing and political conversation are significant contributors to opinion quality. The results are in line with previous studies (Jones, 2010; Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Abu-Lughod, 2008).

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## Biographical Note

**Ifra Iftikharis** working in Lahore Leads University, Lahore, Pakistan.

**Dr. Raza Ullahis** Assistant Professor at Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

**Naveeda Naureen**is Ph.D candidate at Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

**Hussain Aliis** Ph.D candidate at Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.