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Examining Readers' Perception of Newspaper Cartoons and Political Attitudes

Muhammad Rizwan Tahir

M.Phil Scholar,

Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

Rizwantahir332@gmail.com

Dr. Asad Munir

Lecture,

Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

Asad.munir@aiou.edu.pk

Syed Ali Abid Naqvi

M.Phil Scholar,

Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

Aliabidnaqvi@gmail.com

Abstract

Newspaper cartoons have been an integral part of editorial stories, further giving birth to a whole new realm of Comic Journalism. The current study aimed at exploring how different demographic fragments consume the comic contents of a newspaper exploring their perception of the awareness and attitudinal change if any. A thorough survey based on quantitative methodologies was carried out covering the population very carefully through random sampling. Findings revealed that the majority of the respondents enjoyed reading newspaper cartoons and were able to understand them. They believed that newspaper cartoons highlight layman's political concerns help highlight political issues and provide insight into political matters. The majority of newspaper readers in Islamabad Capital Territory perceive that exposure to political cartoons can cause a change in



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political beliefs. Cartoons can create or distort readers' image of favorite politicians/parties. Respondents believe that this frequent exposure may lead to cause a change in political behaviors such as voting.

Keywords: Newspaper Cartoons, Comic Journalism in Pakistan, Political Attitudes, Perception of Newspaper Readers

Introduction

Political cartoons are an essential part of daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or every newspaper. Cartoons are a diagram-type medium that helps the audience know the social, political & economic picture in the countryside and all over the world. These cartoons in the recent past have acquired importance in the medium of newspaper. Newspaper cartoons are necessary for any newspaper to locate a viewpoint which perhaps differs from its viewpoint. Political cartoons can assist to know the atmosphere of the countryside. Newspaper cartoon creation is motivated by the conditions of observation by cartoon artists. The cartoon artists are needed to create a powerful depiction in their cartoons that comes out on a coming day (Lawate, 2012).

Khevaria (2017) pointed out that the word "cartoon" originates from the Italian language "cartone," which has the meaning of the big paper and



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referred to sketch made on a piece of paper as a full meaning regarding that artwork. The “caricature” word that comes out from the Italian language is “caricare”, to exaggerate a sketch drawing that offers power to the major events for the effectiveness.

An idea of comic newspaper journalism is a unique kind of journalism that was around long before the arrival of photography. Also known as graphics journalism, it broadens the capacity of a story by presenting it in the form of cartoons or images and continues to develop as a storytelling approach in graphic medium. Whereas the editorial cartoons have been a journalistic clip, the confusion that often relates it with comics’ journalism requires some explanation. The editorial cartoons are mostly a single panel image that offers a point of view on the topic which is in contrast to what cartoon makers try to portray. Their approach is to assemble all of the information and research regarding the story (Harvey, 2018).

In contrast to the caricatures or cartoons printed in newspapers, the comic journalism is commonly not engaged with the latest news. Furthermore, cartoons are not published on every day in magazines or newspapers but existing topics are often printed in the shape of the news report. Even, if the newspaper reporting is an art like sketch making. The handmade images and cartoons artist only identify the problems with the



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both regions and produce the script along with the drawings (Schlichting, 2016).

Over the years, the cartoons have turned into a key element of magazines and newspaper content. The panoramic study would tell that many of the weekly magazines and daily newspapers print a variety of drawings and cartoons. A few cartoons have become very famous that few magazines and newspapers are required by few readers because of their comics and sketches. The political cartoons are often humorous in their meaning and castigate the common errors, views, sayings or meetings with great celebrities. The cartoons are an essential tool created by the newspaper artist for its role of watchdog in the social community. The graphic diagram or drawing and the commentaries or in the sketches on social and political problems are not only planned to make fun and entertainment for the newspaper or magazine audiences but they should also ginger common sense to think into helpful and encouraging changes in political affairs (Onakpa, 2014).

The political / newspaper cartoons are similar to picture editorials that serve visual comments on political proceedings. They present slight criticism which is smartly related with fun and humor to the area that the criticized does not get poisoned. The middle of 19th century, in several other countries the leading political newspapers made cartoons commenting on



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the current political affairs. In the city of New York a German born American Political Cartoonist Thomas Nast explained that how German cartoons realistic drawing procedures could redefine the American cartoons drawing. The political cartoons can be satirical or humorous, sometimes with acute effects.

In Pakistan, newspaper cartoons used to propagate the themes, ideas and thoughts. These newspaper comics became a medium to express information and change. A several freedom fighters and unions using this policy to express their ideas not for only liberty but for also post-independence efforts as well.

The interest given to sketch is bigger than written text. The current study is important as it investigated the effects of newspaper cartoons/comics and examined whether they tend to shape the political attitudes of the readers. No comprehensive study has been done with focus to Islamabad till date. The study adds to the existing knowledge on the subject and will help revising policies by the government and media institutions.



Objectives

1-To examine the awareness on political issues through newspaper cartoons.

2-To explore the perceptions regarding attitudinal change caused by exposure to newspaper cartoons.

Statement of the Problem

This research work was planned to gauge the political awareness of the readers through newspaper cartoons, seeking further insight in the prospect effects of newspaper cartoons on political beliefs and attitudes.

Review of the Literature

According to Swoboda (2003) cartoon artists are not jokers or comedians in nature. Cartoonists are the journalists who build the difference in the society or community. Cartoons are introduced the population of newspaper readers to drawing style of expressing the issues of community and the philosophic quires of humankind. (As cited in Lester, 2005).

Newspaper cartoons are an influential communicative tool or weapon. They can divert funny story but can also give societal comments on key aspects of realism. Even though but not forever acknowledged, newspaper cartoon sketches are the main component of political message or communication. Newspaper cartoons are usually a speaking skill to



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entertain with funny jokes about political personalities. At the similar moment, Medurst and DeSousa in (1982) declared that newspaper cartoon sketches give readers with a special type of mental purging and catharsis that trims down the social irritation. These cartoons are symbolic and artistic drawings making a jokey point having comments on societal problems, political personalities or events. The document illustrates a better understanding of the role of newspaper cartoons in setting social agenda and also demonstrates how newspaper cartoons are used to create reality of issues and political cartoon also leads to better understanding of political situations. (Mateus, 2016).

Cartoon journalism is one step beyond New Journalism in conditions of engaging readers into the story because newspaper readers can easily recognize themselves with cartoons characters. Scott McCloud declares that ‘when you seem at a photograph or realistic sketch of a face, you see that photograph, the face of any other person but while you went into the global of the political cartoon you will see yourself’. I consider, it is the most important cause of our childhood attraction with cartoons though other factors such as simplicity, universal identification and the childish features of several cartoon characters also play a part. The newspaper cartoons are a vacuum into which our character, identity and awareness are pulled (Kocak, 2017).



The cartoonist is something like a wizard with his pencil, ability, imagination and talent and he also have the ability to change the attention of readers towards the political personality by creating or abusing his party. He can perform tricks on anything which he likes, with having no expensive investment engineers for computed drawing. Interestingly, this economical chance to imagine things that do not actually exist is also useful for cartoons or graphics journalism (Pollmann, 2013).

Newspaper cartoons have now developed into an essential element of the political activities because public takes pleasure in dreaming the entire story by just seeing a little image or drawing. Newspaper cartoon is an enjoyment based events rely on the artistic ability of the cartoons artists who are from their professional stream. The study of signs and symbols are the science of realizing the symbolic art and graphic. The study of signs and symbols has meanings. Firstly, their study is fixed in connotation (symbolic) and secondly, denotation (factual) meanings. Both of the methods are established by drawing explicit and implicit scheme in the collected test sample. Skills disguised by cartoon artists make sure the initial guess which studies that all of the political work and events can be enclosed in newspaper cartoons. The disability cheats and their double faces of politician personalities are cartooned. Analogy, irony, exaggeration and labeling are used to emphasize any specific move are the techniques of symbolism.



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Instead of usual cartoons sketch album from the weeklies, dailies or other newspapers, a few pages are created on twitter and face book with different political cartoon sketches posts and an article they are also seen on the official websites including entire story telling cartoon sketches. The occurrence of political cartoon explain how this type is getting fame due to its official and social acknowledgment which supports second tentative status of newspaper cartoon sketches on both of the official and social stage (Nazra, Rukhsana, & Najeeb, 2016).

1. Main visual codes of newspaper cartoons are as under;

Caricature. (Exaggeration)

The cartoon artists deliberately portray personalities with bodily elements that are superior to natural. Cartoonist's in order to do for making a point. Generally, the special point is used to highlight something the character of the individual. For example, if the man or woman is sketched with the big toothy grin this could be the symbol that they having evil intentions and are not to be trusted.

Labeling

To help out their readers recognize what every individual representing in their sketches, cartoon artists often write an identified on the principal diagram. General names encompass popular political personalities or



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countries. So, when you understand the cartoon diagrams, seem for labels.

Symbolisms

The cartoon artists draw symbols or easy matter that common public should familiar with it. These signs and symbol were used for signifying the essential perceptions or schemes. For example, the usage of the ‘skull and crossbones’ have to characterize for danger or death. While decoding a diagram of cartoon, spick out any symbol and strive for effort what thinking the photograph is meant to characterize.

Knieper (2007) said that the newspaper cartoon sketches serve as an ability of political and social explanation and address the troubles which are sheltered in the domestic and worldwide news. The actual spirit of newspaper cartoons sketches are the exaggeration of its fabric and not like satire. Political cartoons can also be used to criticize to political personality in lighter mode. Newspapers cartoon does not create use of artificial realism the place only unique small printed are being declared.

Ashfaq (2014) said that the newspaper cartoons are regarded as quick communication which gives clearness and entertainment as properly as an immediate message in spite of viable twist from such exaggeration or simplification. Shortly, newspaper cartoon drawings are sketched out with meaningful message having lengthy fascinated audiences with the mixture of realism, humorous pictures and cartoons regularly crammed with parody,



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picture outrage and still obvious biased. Generally, the cartoon opinions characterize political manners via visible satire. Newspaper cartoon drawings are commonly understood as observable and imagery oral political jokes portrayed by using simple words over exaggerated points of characters and graph like easy sketches containing of one or fewer panels but readers also admire that these newspaper cartoons have ability to show the real picture of society so, in Pakistani society these newspaper cartoons also show the real face of political personalities and parties. Newspaper cartoons usually address cutting edge troubles and proceedings. They also represent a well-known celebrity in a manner that represents a precise attitude. It is no longer essential that newspaper cartoon drawings are always entertaining however they do commonly tackle the problems in a satirical way.

According to Baba (2008) the political or editorial cartoon sketches are the shape of expressions. Editorial cartoon expresses lot of meanings in fewer words. Political cartoon drawings add extraordinary worth to the newspapers. That's why, in spite of advances in animation and photography technologies; political cartoons nonetheless rules their personal position in the newspapers. Political cartoon deals with visual medium that connects to the readers to recognize and understand the social and political cartoons that can help them to temper of the newspaper readers. Inspiration of political



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cartooning is deals with the help of the conditions round the cartoon artist, he creates what he believes and sees are represented through the design.

According to Ponnappa (2019), political cartoon drawings have always long-term impact on the brains of newspaper audiences and such valuable speakers that are in some words. However, cartoonists are yet to get their due, said chairman of Karnataka Media Academy. Ponnappa gave some examples, that how some cartoon sketches exists in same community are misunderstood or even nonsense in other public. The political cool animated film is regularly sarcastic in nature and blasts the social offenses, adages, perspectives or activities that have to do with profoundly put characters.

According to Hussein (2013) political system is the central location of newspaper cartoon diagrams therefore frequently the opinions are visualized happening of political society. Now the days the political system can be measured as a recreation and various have the interest to know about who are with whom? Approximately six billion populations are suffering from poverty, climate change, meals crisis, inflation and injustice, load shedding of electricity and gas, climate change, judiciary and health problems. All these troubles are a cause of corrupt and dishonest politics. Therefore, this is the demand of society to notice the politics and politicians in the silly behavior. Politician's sense satisfied themselves when voices of



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their own are in the formation of laughter and highlighted through newspaper cartoons.

According to Adnan (2013) In Pakistan, cool animated film or cartoon animated communication had not the new phenomenon but in 2005 the people of public began to show interest after a controversy of cartooning blasphemy when a Danish newspaper publish almost 12 sketches against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). But, now this is observed that editorial cartoon drawings can play an important role as the propaganda in the Danish newspaper used that platform to condemn the Holy Beliefs of Muslims and provoked the Muslims the world over as they can never tolerate this. Editorial cartoonist sets agenda according to private interests, news editors, media owners and stress groups. Furthermore, there are assumption that community takes this platform as only for exciting and entertainment to create audience snigger except of any programs or agendas. The majority of the researches on editorial cartooning are aimed to boost up the purposes and nature.

Research Questions

1. Whether and to what extent is the awareness on political issues through newspaper cartoons?
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2. What are the perceptions of readers regarding attitudinal change caused by exposure to newspaper cartoons?

Methodology

The present study was quantitative in nature and survey method was used as a technique of data collection and well-structured questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection.

The population of the present study work was residents of Islamabad Capital Territory. In the present study, the target population was newspaper readers of Islamabad Capital Territory. The elements of the present study were male and female of age interval of 18-60 years and above who were regular newspaper readers residing in Islamabad Capital Territory. A well-structured questionnaire was used as a tool of data collection.

In the first phase of sampling, stratified sampling techniques were used. In the later stage, census approach was adopted. The researcher collected a list of hawkers from Akhbar Market (Newspaper Market) of Islamabad Capital Territory and selected 10 hawkers according to the distribution of different regions of Islamabad Capital Territory (i.e. sector E, sector F, sector G, Sector H, Sector I, Bhara Kahu, Faizabad, Khana pul, Lehtrar Road Sultana Foundation, Neelor Factory etc.) to access the maximum number of newspaper readers. Then the individual list of



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customers was obtained from every hawkker which contained average number of 200 customers and from the said lists got addresses of their 2355 customers. The total number of 2355 questionnaire distributed through the same hawkkers as per lists of newspaper customers. After two weeks, the researcher repeated the same exercise as a reminder to the customers with the request to send back the same after filling up all the necessary information through the hawkkers. At the end of this activity 303 questionnaires were received back out of total number of 2355 circulated questionnaires. This number was adequate enough to statistically analyze the data.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected the data through questionnaire and data was typed in SPSS after adequate coding. Cross tabulation technique of descriptive analysis was used to represent the data in tabular form.

Major Findings

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING EXPOSURE

Majority of the respondents who had master's level of education agreed that they read newspaper cartoons. Majority of the respondents were agreed with the master's level of education that they enjoyed reading newspaper cartoons. Majority of the respondents with the education



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level of bachelor's agreed that they were able to understand newspaper cartoon stories. Majority of the respondents with the education level of bachelor's remained neutral when asked whether they read newspaper cartoons frequently. Majority of the respondents with the education level of intermediate agreed that they read newspaper cartoons attentively. Similarly, majority of the respondents with the education level of bachelor's agreed that cartoons are essential for newspapers. Most of the respondents with the education level of bachelor believed that newspaper cartoons are equally important as other news stories or opinion.

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING AWARENESS

Majority of the respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceived that newspaper cartoons often depict political situations. Respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceived that newspaper cartoons highlight layman's political concerns. Majority of the respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceived that newspaper cartoons are helpful in highlighting political issues. Most of the respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceived that newspaper cartoons provide an insight to the political matters. Majority of the respondents from the age group of 26 to 33 years perceived that



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newspaper cartoons help sensitize the readers on political matters. Respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceived that newspaper cartoons are often thought provoking. They also perceived that newspaper cartoons often represent the real picture of our political society. Respondents from same age group perceived that newspaper cartoons are effective in providing awareness on political issues while majority of the respondents from the age group of 26 to 33 years perceived that newspaper cartoons are effective way of political criticism. Respondents with bachelor's level of education perceived that newspaper cartoons are often depicting political situations truly. Majority with bachelor's level of education perceived that newspaper cartoons are helpful in highlighting political issues. They also perceived that newspaper cartoons provide an insight to the political matters. They further believed that newspaper cartoons highlight layman's political concerns. Respondents with the bachelor's level of education perceived that newspaper cartoons help sensitize the readers on political matters. Majority of the respondents with the bachelor's level of education perceived that newspaper cartoons are often thought provoking. They also believed that newspaper cartoons are effective in providing awareness on political issues and newspaper cartoons often represent the



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real picture of our political society. Same respondents perceived that newspaper cartoons are effective way of political criticism.

PERCEPTIONS REGARDING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Majority of the respondents who remained neutral were from the age group of 34 to 41 years perceiving that newspaper cartoons are an effective communication channel. They also perceived that newspaper cartoons help to develop awareness on political matters in readers. The same respondents perceived that exposure to newspaper cartoons leads to better understanding of political situations and agreed that exposure to political cartoons can cause change in political beliefs. Majority of the respondents from the age group of 28 to 33 years perceived that exposure to political cartoons can create or distort readers' image of favorite politicians/parties while respondents from the age group of 34 to 41 years seem more agreed that frequent exposure to political cartoons can cause change in readers' personal/party affiliation. They also perceived that exposure to newspaper cartoons can cause change in previously held political attitudes. They believed that frequent exposure to political cartoons may also lead to cause change in political behaviors such as voting. Respondents with bachelor's level of education perceived that newspaper cartoons are an effective communication



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channel and believed that cartoons help to develop awareness on political matters in readers. Majority of the respondents were agreed with the bachelor's level of education that exposure to newspaper cartoons leads to better understanding of political situations. They agreed that exposure to political cartoons can cause change in political beliefs. They further agreed that exposure to political cartoons can create or distort readers' image of favorite politicians/parties and frequent exposure to political cartoons can cause change in readers' personal/party affiliation. They strongly agreed that exposure to newspaper cartoons can cause change in previously held political attitudes. They were convinced that political cartoons may also lead to cause change in political behaviors such as voting.

Conclusion

The study revealed that majority of the respondents enjoyed reading newspaper cartoons and were able to understand them. They believed that newspaper cartoons are equally important as other news stories and opinion. They perceived that newspaper cartoons highlight layman's political concerns help highlighting political issues and provide insight to political matters. Respondents believe that newspaper cartoons help sensitize the



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readers on political matters by providing real picture of our political society.

This is an effective way of political criticism.

The data revealed that the majority of newspaper readers in Islamabad Capital Territory perceive that exposure to political cartoons can cause change in political beliefs. Cartoons can create or distort readers' image of favorite politicians/parties. Frequent exposure to political cartoons can cause change in readers' personal/party affiliation and also can cause change in previously held political attitudes. Respondents believe that this frequent exposure may lead to cause change in political behaviors such as voting. Exposure to political cartoons can create or distort readers' image of favorite politicians/parties.

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