
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating the Impact of TOLONews TV Political and News Programs on the Political Participation of the Afghan People

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| ABSTRACT

This scientific study has explored the significant impact of TOLONews TV political and news programs on the political participation of the Afghan population. The research demonstrates the crucial role of media in influencing political landscapes and aims to investigate how TOLONews TV specifically contributes to increased political engagement among Afghans. The study has conducted semi-structured interviews with participants using a qualitative research approach. Drawing on cultivation theory and grounded theory as theoretical frameworks, the data was analyzed using MAXQDA software for content and discourse analysis. The findings reveal that TOLONews TV political news coverage has been instrumental in promoting political involvement within Afghan society. The study underscores the importance of media, particularly news and political content, in fostering political participation among the populace. Additionally, it stresses the significance of TOLONews TV in upholding Islamic values cherished by Afghans. It recommends avoiding content that may incite discord among the diverse ethnic groups in Afghan society. By following this approach, TOLONews TV can promote unity and harmony while respecting the Islamic principles valued by the Afghan people.

| KEYWORDS

TOLONews TV, News and Political Programs, Political Participation, and People of Afghanistan.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The private media industry in Afghanistan has made notable advancements, bolstering the country's radio and television networks. Through integration into the South Asian media landscape, Afghanistan has gained access to a diverse array of multi-channel television, FM radio, and new media platforms. This expanded media environment has played a pivotal role in fostering awareness and facilitating societal progress across the political, economic, and cultural domains within the nation. Additionally, numerous government-operated intelligence agencies have been established in Afghanistan alongside privately-owned television networks. Consequently, the growth of television networks and media autonomy has experienced a substantial increase (Bahaduri, Rezaee, & Abed, 2023).

Sarukhani (2005) argues in his book, *Sociology of Communication*, that every organization that arises within society has a responsibility to fulfill and play specific roles in serving the community. To effectively serve society as a cohesive entity, these organizations must be well-adapted and coordinated (Aria, 2023). The media plays a crucial role in this regard. Political media literacy plays a significant role in fostering a deeper comprehension of the political process, thereby enhancing individuals' awareness of current events and improving their efficiency in political participation (Mohammadi & Kazemi, 2020). The catalyst behind this scientific inquiry lies in the paramount significance of television networks in fostering political engagement among the populace of Afghanistan. Consequently, it becomes imperative for television channels in Afghanistan to generate and disseminate a greater number of political programs on this matter, with the aim of captivating audiences nationwide. Such endeavors would

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ultimately culminate in the active political involvement of the Afghan people. Regrettably, despite the existence of certain media outlets that broadcast political programs within the country, they have, alas, failed to rouse the essential political cognizance among the masses. Hence, this research endeavors to delve into these discussions with scientific rigor and comprehensiveness. Recently, the rise of fake news and other forms of deliberate misinformation, associated mostly with a lack of regulation on social media, has threatened the right to access information. Information explosion is daunting and can be a menace (Jovita & E, 2021). Furthermore, the Afghan Mass Media Act and the Law on Access to Information mandate the government to furnish its citizens with information unless the confidentiality of the subject matter necessitates otherwise (Tawhidi & Rahmani, 2010).

TOLONews TV, as a prominent member of the esteemed Moby Group outlets, has successfully captivated a vast audience through its diverse range of captivating programs. This scholarly research delves into the qualitative analysis of the impact of TOLONews TV news and political programs on the political participation of people in Afghanistan. The online presence of this TV conglomerate makes it effortlessly accessible, with active pages on popular social networking platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram, and others (Nijat, Karimi, & Monib, 2022). The importance of this study resides in the fact that the government also assesses the prevailing public sentiment within the community. This is due to the inherent tendency of the most influential political entity or organization in each society to endeavor to maintain societal harmony through either coercive measures or effective persuasion (Ullah, Aria & Akhter, 2020). The significance of this scientific research lies in emphasizing the pivotal role of the media, particularly TOLONews political programs, in influencing the political engagement of individuals in Afghanistan. The media has effectively bridged the gap between the government and the public by disseminating political information from public institutions to governmental bodies. By showcasing engaging television talk shows to viewers, the evolution and influence of mass media have captured the researchers' interest in their profound impact and contribution to society and viewers (Al Mamori & Syed Inam Ur Raman, 2017). Afghanistan, a nation nestled in the heart of Asia, assumes a pivotal and illustrious position as the epitome of strategic prowess and political finesse. It orchestrates the grand symphony of the Political Championships, ensuring that the Afghan media, particularly Tolo News, assumes a resplendent role in fostering the growth and political engagement of the Afghan populace (Aria, Tayeb & Khpalwak Zazai, 2023). The significant impact of mass media, specifically television, in promoting unity, peace, and civic participation in Afghanistan has been the central focus of this study. The primary goals of this academic research involve exploring the complex operations of private TV channels in the country and connecting them to the desires of the people and the authorities. Distinguished scholars engaged in this intellectual pursuit have suggested that the political broadcasts and shows featured on Tolonews TV have had a substantial influence on the engagement of Afghan residents in the political sphere.

1.1 Background

The subject and field of research indicated that this study was entirely innovative, with no previous investigations conducted on it, as discovered by the researchers.

The background of this study can be summarized as follows: In recent years, there has been a growing interest in examining the role of media in shaping political landscapes, particularly in countries undergoing democratic transitions. Afghanistan, with its unique political history, ongoing conflicts, and evolving democratic processes, provides an intriguing context for such an investigation. Since the establishment of a new state in 2002, the media landscape in Afghanistan has undergone significant transformations. Notably, TOLONews, a prominent news TV channel launched in 2010, has emerged as a key player in the country's media landscape. Offering round-the-clock coverage of political events, news, and analysis, TOLONews has become an influential media outlet capable of shaping public opinion and political discourse. Its extensive reach, spanning both urban and rural areas, positions it as a crucial source of information for a diverse audience. Consequently, it is crucial to examine the impact of TOLONews political and news programs on the political participation of Afghan citizens, making this study both timely and indispensable.

1.2 Political participation

The topic of participation holds significant importance in the realms of science and political philosophy. Extensive literature exists on the impact of television channels on political and citizen participation. Scholars in political science and mass communication have extensively researched the influence and understanding of mass media, particularly television, in the context of political participation. Additionally, development theories emphasize participation as a crucial indicator of progress (Sehrish & Baig, 2015). An examination of advanced nations reveals that the citizens in these communities are actively engaged and invested in shaping their political and social future (Mokhtari, 2009).

Communication and political participation play a crucial role in obtaining political advantages or providing support, either directly or indirectly, for individuals, groups, and communities in formulating, selecting, endorsing, and advancing political objectives and strategies. Political participation, in its broadest sense, refers to the involvement of individuals in political affairs. It entails being informed about one's citizenship rights and engaging in the decision-making processes, thereby exercising the right to participate in self-governance. Throughout the political participation process, citizens who hold rights are engaged in determining and organizing the structure of governance.

Political participation is an inclusive and widespread process that involves all individuals, and any forms of exclusion and discrimination fundamentally undermine participation. Political participation is typically categorized into two forms: direct and indirect participation (Boroumand, Zahra, Sakaki & Seyed Mehdi, 2010). Direct engagement represents the epitome of choice and decision-making within the political realm of a nation, while indirect involvement signifies the harmonious interaction between citizens and the governing authority.

The active participation of individuals in communication channels serves as a fundamental pillar in the realization of an Islamic political system. Providing aid and support to the populace is not only a religious obligation but also a national entitlement for Islamic leaders, as they hold the responsibility of empowering their people. The exemplary conduct of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the righteous caliphs of Rashidin, who acknowledged and respected the rights and freedoms of the people in the political and social spheres, serves as an indisputable testament to the indispensability and legitimacy of such participation within the Islamic political framework. The numerous instances of consultation and consensus-building during their bright reigns further exemplify their unwavering commitment to this principle (Khaniki, 2002).

1.3 Moby Group

The media landscape in Afghanistan has undergone a significant transformation due to the emergence of the private radio and television industry. Over the past two decades, the country has witnessed the establishment of numerous TV networks, radio stations, newspapers, and magazines.

Moby Group, the leading private media organization in Afghanistan, encompasses various broadcast media outlets such as Arakozia FM, Radio Arman, Tolo TV, Tolo News, Lemar, Kaboora Production, and Lapis. As part of Moby Group, Tolonews TV provides 24-hour coverage on a wide range of topics through satellite broadcasting. The network has gained popularity by offering diverse publications, analyses, and commentary in its news and political programs. Tolonews has effectively captured the attention of the youth audience in Afghanistan through its news and political content, including the highly watched six o'clock news, beyond the news, in line with events, one issue and different points of view, and other popular programs (TOLONews.com).

2. Research Method

The methodology employed in this study is rooted in qualitative research. As defined by Ashley Crossman (2020), qualitative research involves gathering and analyzing non-numerical data to derive meaning and gain insights into social phenomena within specific populations or locations. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of social dynamics and human behavior, making it a valuable tool in research (Crossman, 2020). One crucial qualitative research technique to take into account is grounded theory, created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. This methodology focuses on exploring the significance of individuals' interactions, social behaviors, and experiences. Essentially, the conclusions drawn from grounded theory are based on the interpretations offered by the participants. Consequently, grounded theory has become widely acknowledged and utilized in the fields of humanities and social sciences (Mansourian, 2012).

The research findings primarily focus on addressing the research questions by employing various methodologies such as data collection, summarization, and classification. These methodologies involve conducting interviews and analyzing discourse to gather specific details that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, the research aims to explore the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. One commonly utilized qualitative research method in this scientific investigation is the semi-structured interview. This method allows for flexibility and depth in gathering information. Furthermore, content analysis serves as a valuable tool to uncover different aspects of messages, perspectives, ideas, and their effects. Content analysis involves examining various sources such as books, articles, audiovisual materials, and other forms of communication. The goal of employing these methods is to gain insights into the behavior and perception of the target audience regarding a specific topic (Ezzati, 2004).

The art of discourse analysis, elegantly rendered in Persian as speech analysis, epitomizes a sophisticated interdisciplinary academic pursuit. Swiftly embraced as an exquisite qualitative research methodology, this trend illuminates the intricacies of audience behavior and perception through a meticulous examination of various subjects (Farkloff, 1941, decent translation by Piran and others: 7).

This study utilizes the interview method to gather qualitative data that allows for in-depth exploration and understanding of the research topic. The content analysis method was employed to analyze the collected data using the advanced MAXQDA software. This software facilitated a systematic and efficient examination of the data, enabling the researchers to extract meaningful insights. The theoretical foundations of this study are firmly supported by the cultivation theory proposed by George Gerbner (August 8, 1919 – December 24, 2005), a professor of communication and the founder of cultivation theory. Gerbner was a professor at Temple University, Villanova University, and the University of Pennsylvania, and he was an expert researcher in the field, having

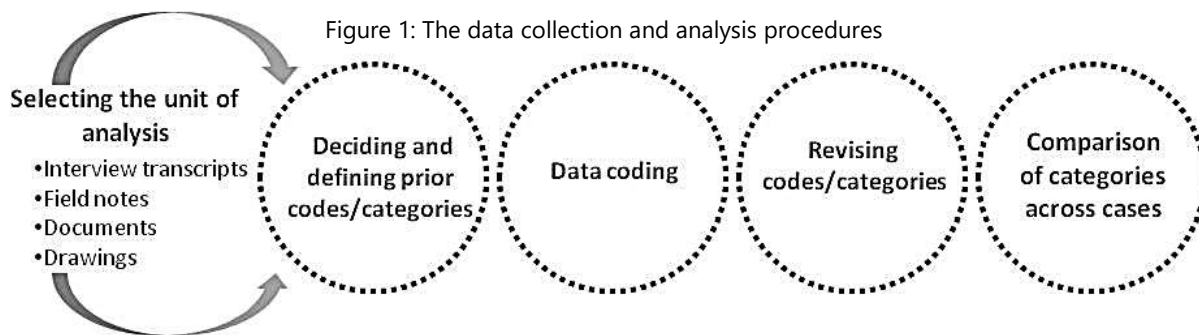
extensively studied the complex relationship between media and its profound effects on society. The cultivation theory proposes three pivotal assumptions that underpin this study.

Firstly, television is seen as distinctively different from other forms of mass media. The unique characteristics of television, such as its audiovisual nature and its ability to reach a wide audience, make it a powerful medium for shaping individuals' perceptions and understanding of the world.

Secondly, the cultivation theory posits that television molds our cognition and our connection with society. Through repeated exposure to specific portrayals and narratives, television contributes to the construction of our social realities and our understanding of social norms, values, and behaviors.

Lastly, the theory acknowledges that the impact of television is not unlimited but rather confined. It suggests that television influence may not be immediately noticeable or drastic. Instead, its effects accumulate over time through limited yet persistent exposure.

Political communication is now much more central to politics than it was in the past (Lloyd & Toogood, 2015). In the contemporary era, where individuals rely heavily on intermediaries for knowledge and insights, television and other media outlets play an instrumental role in shaping how we perceive and comprehend the world around us. The cultivation theory highlights the importance of understanding these media influences to gain a comprehensive understanding of society. The conceptual framework employed in this study serves as a conduit to elucidate the essential concepts and variables, as well as the intricate interplay between them. This framework allows for comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data collected in the study, ensuring a thorough exploration of the research topic.



3. Finding

In this study, journalists and experts in the field of media and politics conducted a semi-structured interview with their consent to document this study as much as possible. The main concepts obtained from the interviewees' answers under the umbrella of two goals are to summarize: access, use, and satisfaction of Tolonews TV news and political programs, as well as the second part of the impact on the political participation of the Afghan people, each of which is listed below.

Alam (2024) believes that TOLONews TV news and political programs play an important and acceptable role in the development and expansion of the political participation of the Afghan people (Alam, 2024).

Bayan (2024), a journalist working with the radio Nedai-e-Haqiqat in Afghanistan, who has a critical view, states that there is no such thing as the political participation of the people in Afghanistan at present, given the atmosphere of the country's press; Because the mass media law is not established and the support of the media support institutions is not helped, the widespread political development and participation of the people in Afghanistan will not be formed (Bayan, 2024). The second topic delves into the varying perspectives of experts regarding the impact of Tolonews political programs on the development and political engagement of the Afghan people.

Akbari (2024) asserts that ensuring all ethnic groups in Afghanistan have equal access to their basic rights could lead to increased political participation among the population. To maintain power in various aspects, governments must consider public sentiment for their longevity (Akbari, 2024).

Lotfi (2024) asserts that TOLONews's political programs play a crucial and impactful role in enhancing the political engagement of the Afghan populace. In addition, the constitution is highlighted as essential, serving as the optimal framework for facilitating citizen involvement in political matters (Lotfi 2024).

Qadri (2024) argues that TOLONews political programs provide valuable insights and analysis on current political affairs, helping to educate and inform the public on important issues. By allowing media access to information, the government can promote transparency and accountability, as well as foster a more informed and engaged citizenry. Qaderi believes that a valid and vibrant media landscape is essential for a functioning civil society and that the government should actively support and facilitate the work of journalists in reporting on political events. Ultimately, he sees TOLONews TV political programs as an important tool for promoting democratic values and principles in Afghanistan.

The results of the above interviews can be found in the following table.

Table 1: Analyzed coding from semi-structured interviews

Row	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selected Coding
1	Managerial Weakness.	Intra - Organizational	Creating an Interactive
2	Lake of Budget.	Factors.	Condition Between
3	Self-Censorship.		People and Officials.
4	Lake of Professional Staff.		Using Reliable Resources.
5	Lake of The NGO's Support for Free Media Outlets.	External - Organizational Factors.	Enhancing The Situation for Negotiations Among
6	Pressure Groups.		Experts for the Exchange
7	Lake of Media Literacy.		of Views.
8	Orientation to social media.		Access to Media Use and
9	Problems in the Information Access Law.		Audience Satisfaction.
10	Local Frictions Towards Media.		

4. Discussion

Media plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and political practices of citizens, and this holds for Afghanistan as well. Over the past two decades, the country has witnessed a proliferation of private radio and television channels, with Moby Group being a prominent name in this regard. Among these media outlets, Tolonews, a private TV network, is significant in providing news and political coverage of events in Afghanistan. As a reputable news and political network, Tolonews plays a vital role in informing the Afghan people and influencing their political participation. Through its programs and news networks, Tolonews has a substantial impact on Afghanistan's political processes by delivering political news and analysis.

Grounded theory analysis suggests that the content of TOLONews TV political and news programs has gradually shaped the beliefs and attitudes of its audience toward politics and political participation. Moreover, this theory highlights the significance of key concepts such as raising political awareness, fostering a sense of belonging, and building trust in political institutions, which have been instrumental in influencing political participation. Given TOLONews TV's reputation as a reliable source of information and political analysis, its role in the political participation of the Afghan people cannot be understated. By providing news and political analysis, these programs contribute to shaping diverse perspectives and enhancing people's political awareness. However, it is worth noting that some critics argue that Tolonews and its political programs may be influenced by specific political currents, potentially leading to biased information and alternative viewpoints. TOLO TV and Moby Group television have faced several official complaints over the past two decades, ranging from members of parliament to religious organizations (Cary, 2012). The diverse range of criticisms and ideologies surrounding TOLONews TV news and political programs in Afghanistan creates a captivating debate that has far-reaching implications for political engagement in the country.

TOLONews TV, as one of the leading media outlets in Afghanistan, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. However, the significance of its news and political programs in fostering political engagement is a subject of intense scrutiny and disagreement. One of the key criticisms leveled against Tolonews is its alleged bias and lack of objectivity. Some argue that the channel reporting is influenced by political and commercial interests, leading to a distortion of facts and a manipulation of public opinion. This criticism suggests that Tolonews may not be fulfilling its role as an impartial and reliable source of information, thereby hindering political engagement by providing a skewed narrative. On the other hand, proponents of Tolonews argue that the channel has been instrumental in promoting political awareness and encouraging citizen participation. They contend that Tolonews has played a crucial role in democratizing the media landscape in Afghanistan, providing a platform

for diverse voices and perspectives. By covering a wide range of political issues and hosting debates, Tolonews has created a space for dialogue and discussion, fostering political engagement among the Afghan population.

The significance of TOLONews TV news and political programs in fostering political engagement in Afghanistan is not only a matter of public opinion but also has tangible consequences for the country's political accomplishments and overarching objectives. A well-informed and politically engaged citizenry is essential for the functioning of a democratic society. If Tolonews fails to fulfill its role as an impartial and reliable source of information, it may contribute to a lack of trust in the media and a decline in political participation. To address these concerns and enhance political participation in Afghanistan, suitable remedies need to be identified. This could involve strengthening media regulations and ensuring the independence of media outlets from political and commercial influences. Additionally, promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills among the Afghan population can help citizens navigate the complex media landscape and make informed political decisions.

Finally, the captivating debate surrounding the significance of TOLONews TV and political programs in fostering political engagement in Afghanistan has far-reaching implications. The outcome of this debate has the potential to shape the political accomplishments and overarching objectives of the media within Afghan society. By addressing the criticisms and identifying suitable remedies, it is possible to enhance political participation and create a more informed and engaged citizenry in Afghanistan (Aria & Li, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The study findings indicate that TOLONews TV political and news programs have significantly contributed to enhancing the political participation of the Afghan people. Mass media can determine what is deemed significant and effectively communicate it through news broadcasts. Television networks have successfully raised citizens' political consciousness and motivated them to actively engage in political processes by delivering trustworthy and unbiased news coverage and analysis. TOLONews TV dialogue programs have further facilitated broader citizen involvement by offering platforms for discussions on political matters. As one of Afghanistan's most influential and independent media outlets, Tolonews has played a crucial role in promoting political participation among its populace. Research demonstrates that this media entity has achieved the following:

1. Elevated citizens' political awareness and encouraged their active involvement in political affairs through the provision of impartial and reliable news coverage and analysis.
2. Through its discussion-based programs, it has fostered a conducive environment for deliberations on political topics, thereby fostering increased public engagement.
3. Overall, by serving as an independent and reputable media source, TOLONews TV has significantly contributed to nurturing a culture of political participation in Afghanistan. TOLONews has effectively taken measures to boost the political engagement of the Afghan populace. Based on the study results, it is recommended that the Afghan government extend support to Tolonews and other independent media outlets, ensuring a safe and secure environment for their operations.

Tolonews TV is strongly recommended to exhibit the utmost respect for the revered Islamic principles cherished by the esteemed Afghan citizens. It is of paramount importance for them to avoid any content that could unintentionally provoke disagreement and disharmony among the various ethnic groups that make up this honorable nation. By adhering to this approach, Tolonews TV can cultivate a sense of solidarity and harmony, guaranteeing that their broadcasts align with the collective essence of the Afghan people, all while upholding the sanctity of their Holy Islamic principles.

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