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2016

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Media effects can be analyzed in term of "Powerful Effects", "limited Effects", and "Moderate Effects". Which effect model is applicable in Pakistan; explain with the examples from Pakistani media and society quoting relevant theories.

1. Introduction

"Media shapes not only what people think about but also how they think" said Mc Combs. Pakistan's media reflects three model of effects - powerful, limited, and moderate - but in contemporary practices, the moderate effect model emerges as the most applicable. Neither overpowering nor negligible, media in Pakistan conditionally cultivates attitudes, frames debates, and sets agendas. Its role is most visible in politics, society, and cultural transitions where public perception is gradually shaped by repeated and narrative framing.

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2. Understanding the Three Models of Media Effects

(a) Powerful Effects

Magic Bullet / HYPODERMIC Needle



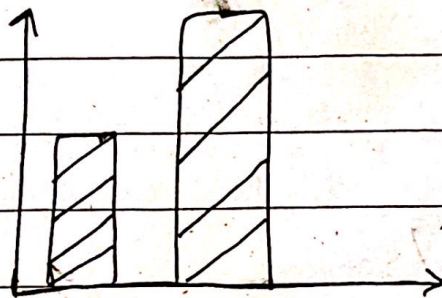
1960s - 1980s PTV



Passive Audience



State Propaganda (1965 War)



100 absorption

Definition:

The Powerful Effects Model assumes media as direct, immediate, and

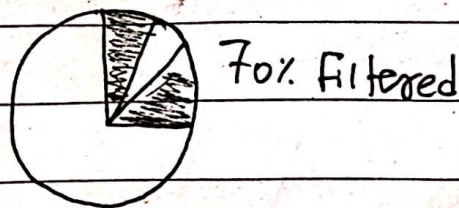
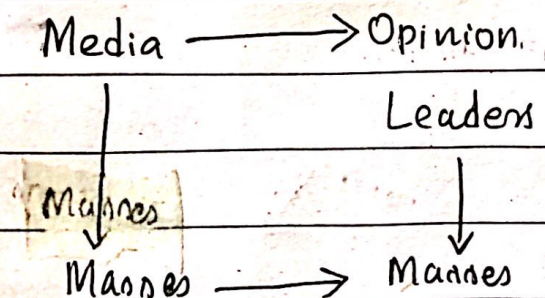
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Strong influence on passive audiences.
People are seen as vulnerable receivers
who absorb messages without resistance.

Proponents:

Harold Lasswell (1927) → Media as propaganda tool

(b) Limited Effects Model



Definition:

The Limited Effects Model argues media influence is not absolute; its effects are filtered by social groups, personal relationships, and opinion leaders before reaching individuals.

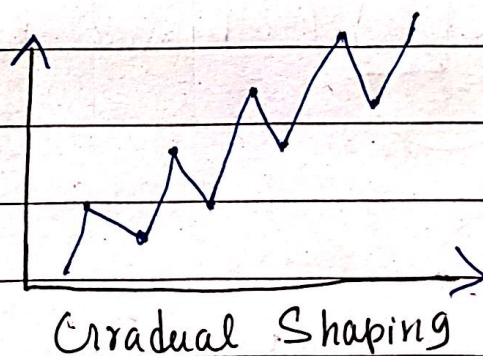
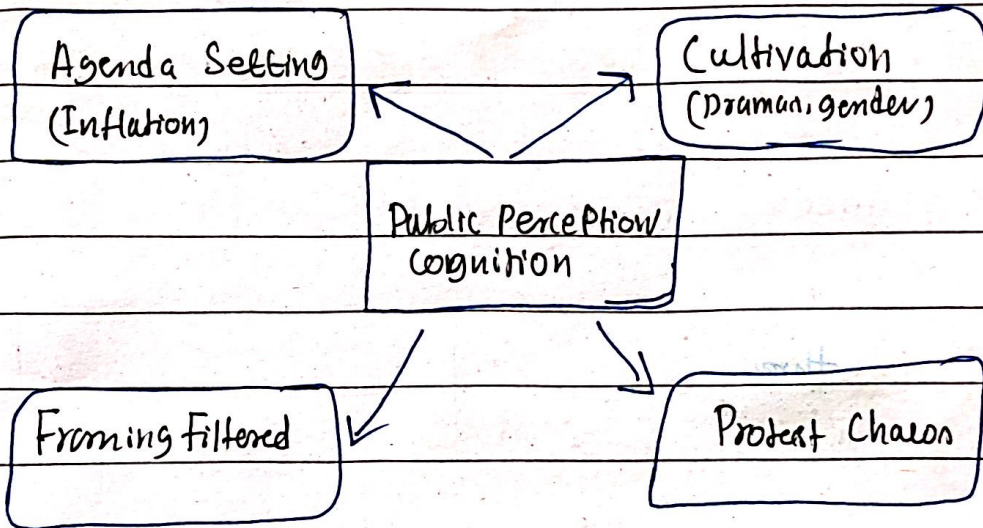
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Proponents:

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz (1940s)

(c) Moderate Effects Model

Post-2000s Pakistan



Definition:

The Moderate Effects Model

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Suggests media as significant but not all powerful influence. It sets agendas, frames issues, and gradually cultivates perceptions, but effects vary with context, culture, and politics.

Proponents:

① Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972)

↳ Agenda Setting theory.

② George Gerbner (1976-98) → cultivation Theory

③ Erving Goffman (1974) → framing Theory

3. Applicability of the Moderate

Effects Model in Pakistan

Private Media

Agenda Setting Theory

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Cultivation Theory

Framing Theory

Spiral of Silence

Humanitarian Campaign

Social Media

Selective Exposure

Gender Representation

Democratic Awareness

(a) Transition from State Propaganda to private media pluralism

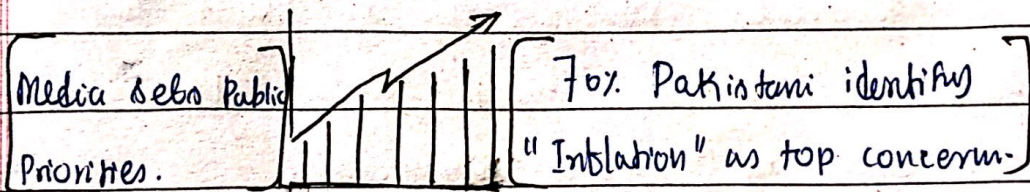
Since Private channels' growth after 2002, audiences gained choices, weakening powerful effects. Media now operates within pluralistic dynamics, reflecting

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moderate effects where influence is contextual, negotiated, and socially filtered.

(b) Agenda-Setting Theory and Public focus on inflation

Continuous coverage of inflation by GEO and ARY shaped economic discourse. McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory explains how salience of "mehnagai" became Pakistan's most discussed societal and political concern.



(c) Cultivation Theory in Pakistan Television dramas

Cerber's Cultivation Theory applies in dramas like "Udan" and "Meri Zaat Zame-e-Benishan", which gradually reshaped debates on child abuse, women's

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agency, and social justice through repeated televised narratives.

Gradual Norm Shift: → "Udari" drama watched by 15M, contributed to 25% ~~rise~~
 ~~in~~ Child Abuse awareness.

(d) Framing Theory in Political movements and marches

Entman's Framing Theory clarifies coverage of PTI's long marches. Some media framed protests as democratic struggle, other as chaos. This selective framing steered citizens' discussions and influenced political alignments.

(e) Spiral of Silence in Blasphemy-related issues

Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence explains Pakistan's silence on blasphemy debates. Citizens fear isolation; media reinforces conformity.

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-an example of moderate conditional shaping.

f) Humanitarian Campaigns during floods and earthquakes

During 2022 floods, Pakistani TV and digital platforms mobilized relief. Impact varied with exposure, belief, and trust. Conditional response reinforced the moderate affect model's practical relevance in humanitarian crises.

g) Social Media and Youth Political Participation

Twitter, TikTok, and Youtube empowered youth during elections. Uses and Gratifications Theory shows Pakistani youth actively choose political, entertainment, and activist content, reflecting interactive yet moderate influence patterns.

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(b) Selective exposure and polarization in news consumptions

Selective Exposure Theory

explain partisan preferences. PTI supporters watch ~~Any~~ ARV; PML-N supporters prefer GEO. Polarization emerges not from domination but from conditional choices, affirming the moderate model's validity.

(i) Gender representation and gradual Social transformation

Pakistani dramas introduced progressive portrayals of women. Over time, they challenged stereotypes. This aligns with cultivation and framing effects, showing media's slow but meaningful role in cultural transformation.

(ii) Media's role in strengthening democratic awareness

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Moderate effects dominate democratic transitions. Television debates on accountability and corruption foster informed voting choices. Media sets agendas but does not dictate absolute outcomes in Pakistan's democratic framework.

Conclusion:

To encapsulate the whole discussion, Pakistan's media landscape affirms the moderate effects model as most applicable. Through Agenda-Setting, Cultivation, Framing, and Spiral of Silence, it subtly but significantly shapes societal attitudes. While powerful and limited effects existed in history, present dynamics reveal conditional influence. Media, therefore, acts as measured yet decisive force, gradually molding Pakistan's socio-political consciousness.