

# **Sociological Analysis of Mass Media Role in Promotion of Mob Violence**

## **(A Case Study of Two Selected Cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)**

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### **Abstract**

The study examines the role of mass media in promotion of mob violence in cities. Data was collected from a sample of 384 respondents from two major urban cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through a structured interview schedule based on Likert Scale. A Chi-Square test was applied to ascertain association between mass media and mob violence. The non-identification of mob violent perpetrator by mass media was found significantly associated ( $p=.016$ ) with mob violence while emphasis of media on sensitive issue has shown a non-significant association ( $p=.080$ ) with mob violence. Mass media can both; positively and negatively, influence the intensity of mob violence. Media should play its positive role of investigative journalism in the prevention of mob violence in the society.

### **Keywords**

Mob Violence, Mass Media, Violence, Riots, Society

### **Introduction**

Violence is a hot media issue now a day. The wider spread of mass media in our societal surrounding brought many changes to our environment such as the radio set, TV, shows, videos, video games, and social networking gaining an influencing role in our society. In one way or the other, the mass media is having a significant influence on our values, attitudes, and outlooks (Puddephatt, 2006). Many theorists have reported association of the mass media with violence. Violence generally secured by standard news media incorporates socially endorsed brutality (composed prizefighting, police movements) or brutality between and around social orders (Meadow, 2009). The impacts of one particular factor of the mass communication disclosure has predominantly unfavorable effects on viewers' and others' well-being (Puddephatt, 2006).

Meadow (2009) argues about numerous types of violence that are found in our society such as domestic violence, criminal acts and daily interpersonal conflicts. Most of violent acts happen in private, with no media coverage as these acts are eccentric, undetectable, irregular, or not subject to crowds. Media mostly report those incidents of violence which are open to access such as acts of terrorism, political violence and mob violence in urban areas. Mob violence is a very common phenomena today especially in underdeveloped world. According to oxford dictionary (2013), "mob mean, large crowd of people, especially one that is

disorderly arranged and intent on causing trouble or violence”. Mob behaviour can be defined as the unique behavioural characteristic in which people act differently in a large group than they usually would as an individual or in a smaller group (Barnkart, 2008). Mob violence is “A disturbance of the peace by several persons, assembled and acting with a common aim in executing a lawful or unlawful enterprise in a violent and turbulent manner”. The accurate quantification of human losses due to mob violence is impossible (Puddephatt, 2006). Mob violence is a crime against the communal harmony and stability, rather than an abuse of the privileges and rights of a particular person.

Mass media has an influence upon behaviour of the people. Norman (2010) elucidated that media violence is visual depictions of actions of physical violence by one human being against another. This meaning of media violence does not incorporate off-screen poisonings that could be intimated, but instead it alludes to outwardly depicted physically combative acts by one individual against an alternate. Movies and programs on television depicting ferocity of this type were common during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and they are common now: *Dirty Harry*, *Mad Max*, *Cliffhanger*, *True Lies*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Kill Bill*, etc. with an unending list. Few measures also damage society's insight and public demonstrates for their rights. Mass media due to its few programs creates violence in the people. Violent behaviour denotes an action planned to harm or aggravate another individual. Such actions could be material or nonmaterial. This contains several types of acts that do not appear to shape the generally agreed sense of violence. Norman (2010) said that hurling insults and dispersing injurious rumours fit the classification. Obviously, the violent behaviours of utmost unease to society obviously involve material antagonism (Strasburger, 2009). The Guardian (2010) reported that "Western businesses burn in Pakistan riots".

Numerous studies have been conducted on media and violence but very limited literature is available on the role of media in the promotion and prevention of mob violence. In order to contribute towards filling existing gaps in literature on media role in mob violence, this study attempt to measure the association between mass media related factors with mob violence in cities.

## **Review of Literature**

Today in every part of the world mass media plays a major role in the promotion of mob violence. During the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> and in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, a huge expansion occurred in mass media through various discoveries such as the television set, the videocassette player and the digital computers eternally changed the way people get various kinds of information about the world, containing information regarding how aggressive the humanity is (Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson, 2001). Strasburger (2009) argued that the relationship of

mass media with violence is quite obvious. People in young age learn various attitudes about violence which are not easy to be changed later (Anderson et al, 2003; Bushman & Huesmann, 2006). It is projected that 10% of real-life violence is caused by media. Even though it's not the major reason but a harmful reason of promoting violence (Strasburger et al, 2009; Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). Nielsen media research company (2010) discovered that social media accounts for 22 percent of time spent on the Internet, and even among people age 65 and older—who are not generally considered prime users of new technologies—one in four people are now active on a social media website.

Different categories of media i.e. comic books, dime novels, rock and roll, various computer games, TV, internet (by computer or cell phone), movies, and several others have attracted speculations that clients of such categories of media might be converted into more violent, aggressive and morally wrong persons. Such types of situations are leading the world towards a mass media based conflicts and violence (Gauntlett, 1995; Trend, 2007; Kutner & Olson, 2008). Provenzo (1991) argued that more than 85% of the video games are violent. Many violent video games also influencing the children in their very young age. Since many years that exposure to violence in video games and on television leads to the development of violent attitudes and aggression in viewers. Due to this factor the threat of violent behaviour increases among people in society.

Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson (2001) commented that the present society is facing a huge quantity of media violence. Such conditions affect the whole humanity. Two major explosions occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century i.e. increase in violent crimes and explosions in mass media. Strange & Leung (1999) and Jordan & Page (1992) argued that public opinion and public policies are greatly affected by the news reports presented in print and electronic media.

Comstock (1991) stated that three to four hours duration on daily basis is spend by the children in the United States watching television. Violent and aggressive behaviour is also increases by television violence. More aggression and violence is found in youngsters who watch violent clips and movies as compared to those who do watch non-violent movies. Violence in video games also increases violence and aggression in children (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson et.al, 2005).

Norman (2010) argued that mob violence might occur due to inappropriate living or working [HYPERLINK http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality\\_of\\_life](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quality_of_life) conditions, conscription or taxation, governmental oppression, hurting of religious sentiments, lack of food supply and various conflicts among ethnic groups. In the modern world, mass media play a key role in promotion of conflicts and violence. The role of mass media can take two dissimilar and oppose forms as

Brophy (2002) stated that “either the media takes an active part in the conflict and has responsibility for increased violence, or stays independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence”. Mass media can be used to prevent, respond, and inspect violence. It is important to have pre-established channels of social media communication. Mass media agencies should use experienced intelligence officers to determine the value of social media information and tips. Mass media agencies must work to get accurate information out to the public as mob violence often occurs in reaction to a perceived grievance or out of dissent, seen on media (Huesmann, 2005).

### **Methodology**

Data was collected from potential respondents, who have information regarding mob violence such as teachers, police men, lawyers, political activists and university students of two major city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e. Peshawar and Kohat. These are more mob violence prone cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and witnessed high number of mob violence incidents than other cities of the province. The sample size of 384 respondents was determined through Sikaran table of sample size derivation and online survey system software, which also gave the same result. A structured interview schedule based on Likert scale was used for data collection. Data was entered and analyzed on SPSS version 16. The Chi Square test was applied to ascertain association between the different media related factors and mob violence in the cities.

### **Results And Discussons**

This study regarding the role of mass media in mob violence was carried out in two major cities of Khyber Pakhtukhwa i.e. Peshawar and Kohat. A total of 384 respondents were interviewed through a structured interview schedule. Majority of the respondents were students (30%), followed by Lawyers (18%), Political Activists (17%) member of Law enforcement agencies (17%) and teachers (18%). Most of the respondents (93%) showed that they have had knowledge regarding mob violence, among which 38.5% opined that they have heard about mob violence, 38.3% reported that they have seen mob violence, 6.8% viewed they have taken part in mob violence and 8.9% showed no awareness regarding mob violence.

This study aimed to ascertain the mass media related contributing factors in mob violence. It was found that media education on the consequences of mob violence has a non-significant ( $p=.541$ ) relationship with mob violence. Likewise, Media cannot access mob violators because of lack of advance equipment in Pakistan was also found having no relationship ( $p=.212$ ) with mob violence. It is in consonance with the views of Meadow (2009) who wrote that in recent years, the slight mini cameras and satellite uplinks made it possible for orthodox media to on

air the election ferocity and broadcasted violent images from all over the world. On the other hand, a significant association ( $p=.001$ ) was found between media men do not risk their lives for reporting mob violence perpetrator with mob violence. In contrast the promotion of action and violent movies on the media inspire youth to imitate the same in mob has a non-significant association ( $p=.411$ ) with mob violence. Despite the fact that numerous specialists reported that different sorts of media, for example dime novels, funny stories, computer amusements, TV, motion pictures, web (by workstation or cell) and numerous others have pulled in theory that shoppers of such media might come to be more forceful, resistant or unethical (Gauntlett, 1995; Trend, 2007; Kutner & Olson, 2008). Provenzo (1991) found that 85% of the most prevalent video games were brutal and even junior kids are laid open to numerous fierce film diversions. Television roughness makes an expansion in fierce and combative conduct. The individuals who watch the brutal clips have a tendency to carry on more aggressively than do the individuals who view nonviolent clips (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson et.al, 2005). But the study could not find any evidence of all these things associated directly with mob violence. A significant association was reported between media is not properly identifying the violators/perpetrator ( $p=.016$ ) and mob violence. Although Meadow (2009) stated that there is no shortage of examples of violence in election captured in the broad communication but in mob the catching of individual pictures may be troublesome because of increased crowd and violence for photo journalists. Moreover, distinct demonstrations of brutality frequently go unmeasured, with the exception of on account of death (Meadow, 2009). People in mob incline to violence because they have seen mob violence on media and media repeated reporting of mob violence has no association ( $P=.407$  and  $P=.248$ ) with mob violence respectively. Although Anderson et al. (2003) and Bushman & Huesmann (2006) stated that media shapes minds of the youngster about violence and once an aggressive attitude formed, then that is very difficult to change in later on. Conventional approximations are that violence on television may cause 10% of actual violence (Strasburger et al, 2009; Comstock & Strasburger, 1990). It could be said that the portrayal of violent characters and images by media may contribute to violence but this factor does not directly aid in promotion of mob violence. Wrong reports/misinformation of media is a causative factor behind mob violence was found significantly associated ( $p=.019$ ) with increased violence. Mass media can be used to prevent, respond to, and investigate riots. It is important to have pre-established channels of media communication. Media agencies should use experienced intelligence officers to determine the value of media information and tips. Media agencies must work to get accurate information out to the public (Huesmann, 2005). Media sometime exaggerate sensitive issues was found non-significantly associated ( $p=.136$ ) with increased mob violence and similarly a non-significant ( $p=.080$ ) relation was found

on highlighting of sensitive issues i.e. Ethnic, Religious, Governmental with mob violence. Similarly, Chappell et al. (1991) writing about the impact of sports violence on spectator by quoting that there is no empirical evidence that spectators of violence in sports are more prone to violence although it is deep rooted in public consciousness. So there may be other socio-political causes of violence in mob than media reporting of sensitive issues as many mobs or rallies have been conducted peacefully.

## **Conclusions**

It can be concluded that although mass media do not have a direct contributing role in the promotion of mob violence but its effect cannot be ignored as certain media related factors has shown strong association with mob violence in society. Mass Media can still play a positive role in the prevention of violence in mob through proper reporting and identification of the violent perpetrators. While reporting incidence of violence in mob there is a risk to the lives of journalists and they could not properly visualize the perpetrators of violence in mob on the screen. Misinformation and wrong reporting of issues in media mislead the people to organize rallies which may turn violent, causing destruction of public and private properties.

## **Recommendations**

The mass media role in promotion and prevention of violence is very important. Mass media institution should play a positive role in prevention of mob violence by improving investigative journalism. Mass media should critically report the violence by highlighting the perpetrators of violence. There should be a proper coordination mechanism between law enforcement agencies and mass media institutions for information sharing related to security issues. Media institution must ensure proper security arrangement and provision of advance technology to its personnel for reporting during mob and riots. Mass media personnel should be critical in reporting of sensitive issue which could create violent protests and rallies within the society. Training should be provided to journalists and camera men how to report mob violence perpetrators.

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