



RESEARCH PAPER

Flow of Development through PPFC Award: Media Projection on Key Public Issues of Peripheral Punjab (Pakistan)

Mudassar Hussain Shah¹ Saima Kausar² Saqib Riaz³

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Chairman, Department of Mass Communication, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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Corresponding

Author:

mudassar.hussain
@uos.edu.pk

PML (N) regime in Punjab announced its first Punjab Provincial Finance Commission (PPFC) Award keeping in view the demand of their districts in remote peripheries. Present study finds the nature of development (horizontal or vertical) in peripheral Punjab considering public demands or issues set on media. For this purpose triangulation technique of research is employed on study. This study evaluates the public perception over seven vital issues i.e. education, health, terrorism, unemployment, corruption, economic crisis and energy deficiency. The data is collected from two districts in peripheral Punjab *Jhang* and *Mianwali* from a random sample of 60 respondents. Media agenda is analyzed through content analysis of two leading Urdu national dailies i.e. *Jang* and *Express* during the period year of November, 2017 to January, 2018. The findings of the study reveal that significant positive relationship between public perception and media agenda on the issues of the study ($r = +0.96$). This study has policy and strategic implication.

Introduction

Punjab is densely populated province of Pakistan with the estimated population of 103 millions in which 70 million people are living in rural areas. The areas far from central Punjab are deprived from basic necessities of life. This is all because the population density in Punjab that is 484 people per kilometers which are amongst highest population concentration in South Asia (Govt. of Punjab, 2017). The government is focusing more on the regions where they can influence their voters on the basis of development they made. Punjab got highest

significance in the politics of Pakistan since the conception year 1947 because of its agriculture, human and political resources.

The politics of Pakistan remain troubling because of development focus toward certain areas in Pakistan that caused the separation of East Pakistan into a new State in 1971. Adeney (2012) argues that federal structure of Pakistan always remain divisive because of the nature of flow of resources within the districts and between the provinces. This vertical and horizontal flow of development became the reason of restructuring of constitutional amendments; it also concentrates on *ethno-lingual* conflicts between regions. Similar ethno lingual conflict prevails between peripheral and Central Punjab, where in peripheral Punjab majority of people speak local dialect of Punjabi that is called *Saraiki*. In 2010, such constitutional amendments were made with significant consent of the parliament labeled 18th amendments. The prime purpose of this amendment was to restore constitution of Pakistan in its original form.

During all totalitarian regimes, several changes were made in a way that deliberation of political and economic power would remain in the hand of an individual. This concentration affects the diversity and pluralism in Pakistan which weaken the federalism in the country. Shah (2012) finds that through 18th amendment there are two fold of governance; one is the federalism of provinces and second federalism of local governments. He asserts that there is the need of vital reforms that can bring fiscal decentralization, evaluation based accountability on services, elimination of mobility and trade barriers and foremost need to gauge *unaccountable governance* of the 'empowered provinces' that can potentially influence the nation building as an adverse effect. This article looks into the issue of federalism from the perspective of fiscal decentralization which takes on after the 18th amendment situation of Punjab Provincial Financial Commission (PPFC) on the following basis:

- a. How they fix the development related issues so the ethnic lingual conflict of peripheral Punjab is accommodated through the flow of development from vertical to horizontal strategies of allocation of budgets?
- b. Exploring the media agenda of the leading Urdu language newspapers of peripheral Punjab (Express and Jang) and how it is perceived on the basis of issues concerning to the public?
- c. Is there any correlation between media agenda and the issues perceived Important by the people of peripheral Punjab?

Focusing on the above, a triangulation research method is opted for the investigation of newspaper content and evaluation of the public perception from the respondents of Jhang and Mianwali. This study also have strategic and policy implication for the development in peripheral Punjab of Pakistan.

Federalism and 18th amendment in Pakistan

The conceptual definition of federalism is explained as “the distribution of power in an organization (such as a government) between a central authority and the constituent units” (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2017). Federalism is synonym as the structure of the governance in a state where democratic regimes functions in line to the charter, believed on the transparent services to its people following the constitutional ingredients of political, institutional, economic, intergovernmental and decentralized principles (Bukhari and Faisal, 2013). Federalism is based on the features of social justice among all units of federation with democratic characteristics. But unfortunately since the inception of this country, democracy always remained on stake and the concept of federalism in Pakistan can't flourish enough. The esteemed documents of federation, the constitution of Pakistan was always alerted by every powerful regime without the consent of all ethno-lingual units, provinces, Institutions, political parties and cultural and social elites, ensuing it creates differences among micro and macro units of federation.

On the long standing demands of restoration of constitution in its original form by the democratic powers, 18th constitutional amendment made into law in April 2010 that reinstate constitution on its parliamentary essence. The provinces and smaller units of federation restore its autonomy over the fiscal decentralization and powers to spend on the unprivileged areas. Moreover, through 18th amendment all democratic forces set an agenda of institutionalization of the federation.

Ethno Lingual Conflict of Peripheral Punjab

Peripheral Punjab is far from central Punjab and it was long standing demands of peripheral that their region should also be included in the mainstream development. Before the independence of Pakistan, the region consisting on peripheral Punjab was an Independent state run through Princely status and significant population comprised on the *Saraiki* speakers. It ideally consisting on three divisions Multan, Bahawalpur and DeraGazi Khan and these divisions are further having 22 large area districts.

The majority of the people of peripheral Punjab are associated with livestock and agriculture and basic infrastructure of communication, health, and education is not up to mark. For the purpose of prime needs, the people of this region are dependent on the central Punjab. This realization provoked several political leaders to initiate activism for the independent province of peripheral Punjab as *Saraikistan*. The government of Pakistan People's Party raised this initiative because they have considerable voters in this region and were intended to divide Punjab into two parts (The Nation, 2012). Ganguly (1993) argues that South Asia is the hotspot of ethnic and religious conflict; Punjab and Kashmir are potential points of this ethno-lingual and religious conflict. He considers the partition of India, Bangladesh inline to this ethno-lingual and religious conflict.

However, political mobilization of ethno lingual groups on the basis of their economic and social disparity create their ethnic identities at first stage, realization of institutional collapse on second stage and finally inter-ethnic security dilemma. This ethno lingual drive of Pakistan Peoples' Party in peripheral Punjab is on first stage which mobilizes masses of peripheral Punjab for the creation of their ethnic identity. After taking over the charge of government in center and Punjab by the Pakistan Muslim League (N) in 2013, government of the Punjab realized the ethnic identity of peripheral Punjab and reflected their commitment of civil and basic infrastructure development in the region.

Punjab Provincial Finance Commission

Government of the Punjab initiated Punjab provincial finance commission (PPFC) award to address the inequalities in the different districts of Punjab. Based on the long standing demands of the deprived people, they are now focusing on fiscal decentralization. The significant proportion of accumulative budget of local governments set for the fiscal year 2017-2018 and earlier which covers the consolidated fund shift to the development of different regions. The allocation of fund based on the horizontal distribution of resources significantly population density formula (punjab.gov.pk). However, while setting the PPFC award, the other indicators i.e. poverty in the district, expenditure needs and services delivery that can equalize the districts of peripheral Punjab also considered in the allocation of funds. Moreover, the Southern regions of Punjab also allocated additional resources that help them improve their state of education, health and municipality infrastructure. The vertical share of funds allocated on the basis of their needs, and considering equal development in the rural areas of the Punjab.

Agenda Setting of the Media

Agenda setting of the media express that audience of the media choose those issues that are significantly covered in media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Baumgartner & Jones, 1995). In the agenda setting of media, it gives significance to the issues that have relevance to the elite of society. In other words, media directly influence our perception process and motivate its consumer to think on the issue that are frequently broadcast and publish.

There are number of studies that have been conducted worldwide on the media trends of agenda setting and examine how political elite and media itself have the power to influence the perception of the media audience. There are three levels in the agenda setting of media i.e. attention, prominence and valence, the potential power of media can identified by these factors (McCombs, 2005). Attention refers that how many times a news publish or broadcast, prominence is the priority given to the story and valence is the treatment of news in the form of positive, negative or neutral coverage. In the meta-analysis of 90 countries conducted by Wanta and Ghanem (2007), found significant positive relationship (+.528) between media agenda and public perception. The agenda setting role of

media is different on different age groups. Coleman & McCombs (2007) find the role of agenda setting on two age groups. The findings of the study correlate media agenda with the agenda of young people whereas it finds deviation with older people. The theory states that media do not reflect reality rather the reality is filtered and shaped by the media and media highlight some specific issues and people start believing that those issues are of prime importance. In other words media agenda is transferred to the public agenda and this process is so subtle and gradual. Thus mass media influence on audience is significant and media effects are powerful in shaping public perception about the salience of the issue. It is pertinent to mention that all types of media do not have the same potential to affect the audience rather agenda setting potential of all types of media vary.

There is no support that media have powerful effect in public agenda setting in case of personal agenda and salience issues (Brubaker, 2008)

Important and Unimportant Issues

Important issues are the issues that most significantly affecting the agenda setting theory. It is the ability of the individual's experience that how many times he encounter to an issue. Winter & Eyal (1981) argue that media have limited influence on shaping of the perception of the individual who has firsthand experience on the same issues that media broadcast or publish i.e. unemployment and literacy is obtrusive issue whereas any issue related to international politics is an un-obtrusive issue. So, individual's experience dominates over the content of the media when individuals of the society went through their first-hand experience. Shafi (2016) analyzes the obtrusiveness as condition of agenda setting and finds that in the developing countries personal experience salience affect of obtrusiveness than the media exposure. When the agenda of the media is declared then there are insignificant chances of its influence on the public perception. Cheng (2016) finds that media agenda have significantly correlated with the embedded public agenda. The issues that are declared sometimes find poor association.

Material and Methods

The present study explores the nature of development in peripheral Punjab either it is in vertical or in horizontal flow based on the people's perception and agenda setting of the political elite through newspapers. For this purpose, a triangulation research method is used to find the relationship between the elite's/media view and public perception. Agenda of the elite/media is evaluated on the basis of news stories published in two leading Urdu newspapers *Jhmag* and *Express* in the year 2017-2018 because the Punjab Provincial Financial Commission is set on the basis of political commitments of PML (N) in election 2013 about South Punjab. All-important news stories are considered into broader categories of issues i.e. health, education, unemployment, corruption, energy crisis, financial crisis and terrorism. The data is collected through well-structured coding sheet.

The data for public perception is collected through simplified random sample from 600 college and university students of districts *Jhnaag* and *Minawali* with equal representation of male and female. The College students are selected because of their ability of understanding the issues appear in the form of news stories in newspapers. Their responses taken on the multi-items scale and reliability of the instrument is $\alpha = 0.71$.

Results and Discussion

Findings of Content Analysis

During research period 130 news stories are published on the issue of terrorism with length covered 3543 column cm whereas 126 news items covered energy crisis (2835 column cm). Health issue has given 54 (718 cm column), corruption and financial embezzlement scored 47 news items with the length of 906 column cm. Economic crisis issue got 26 news items (564 column cm), education issue received 05 news (64 column cm), and the issue of being without a job people was given less coverage and received only 04 news gets coverage of 65 cm. However, $n = 392$ news stories analyzed during the given period of study. The frequencies of the news stories and space given to each category have a relationship. (Fig. 1)

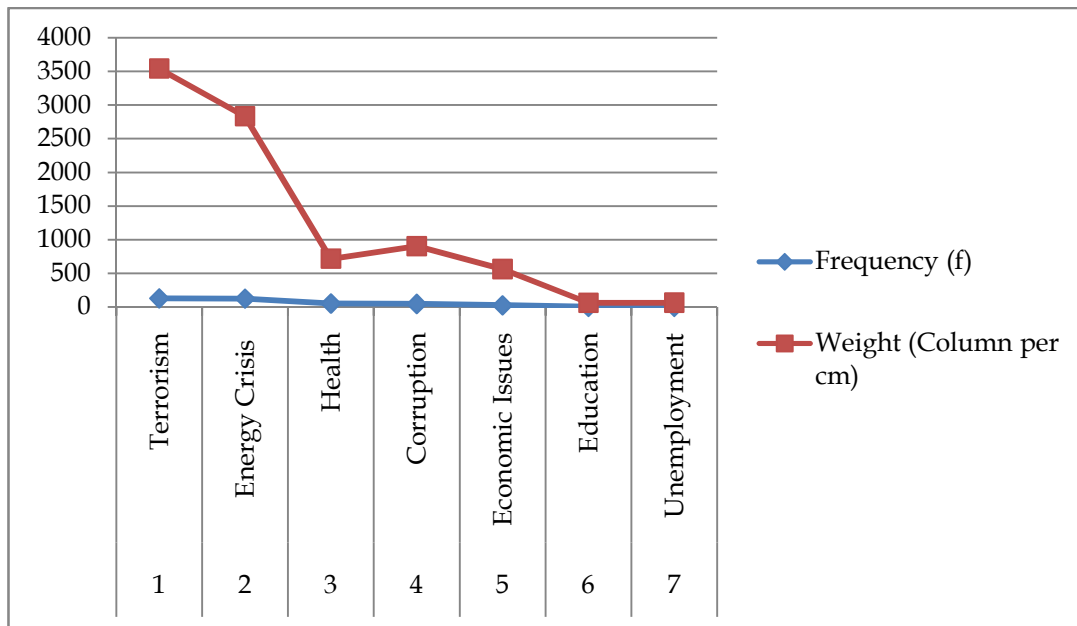


Fig. 1. Significance of the issues set according to the agenda of newspapers

The Fig.2 indicates the treatment is given by the newspaper to the above mentioned issues. First five issues (terrorism, energy crisis, health and corruption) treated as negative whereas last two issues (education and unemployment) are

treated very significantly positive. However, the issues of economic crisis have deviation in treatment.

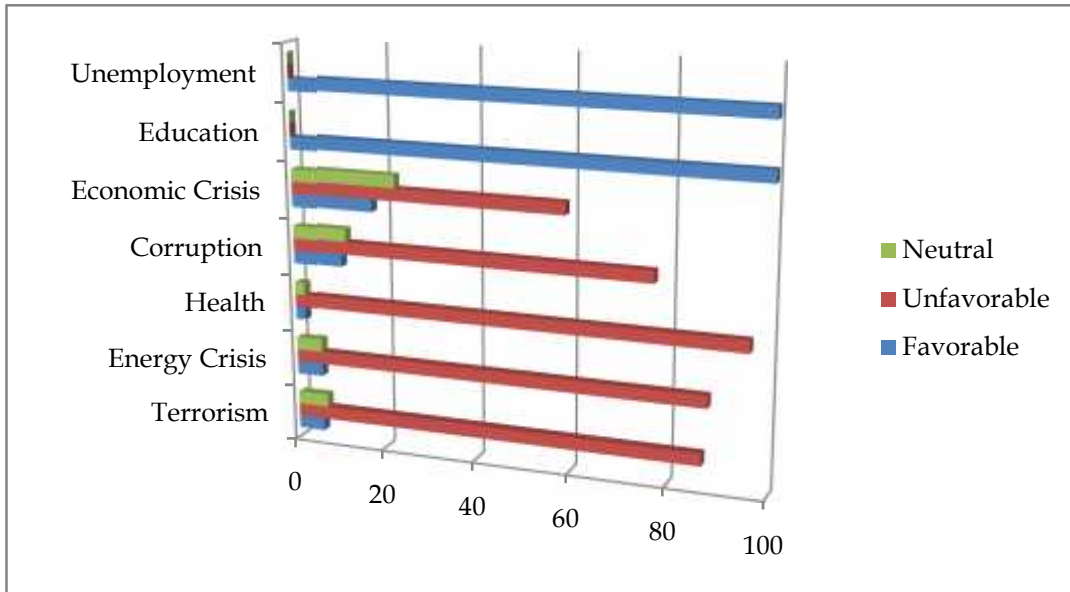


Fig. 2. Treatment of news items on different issues

The placement of the news stories reflects the significance of the issue according to the nature, significance and how it is taken politically. Front page is usually designated for the politics and the highly significant events and highly significant news stories appear on this page whereas the back page covers the stories of social importance, statements of stakeholders of society and all relevant events that are not important than the state functionaries.

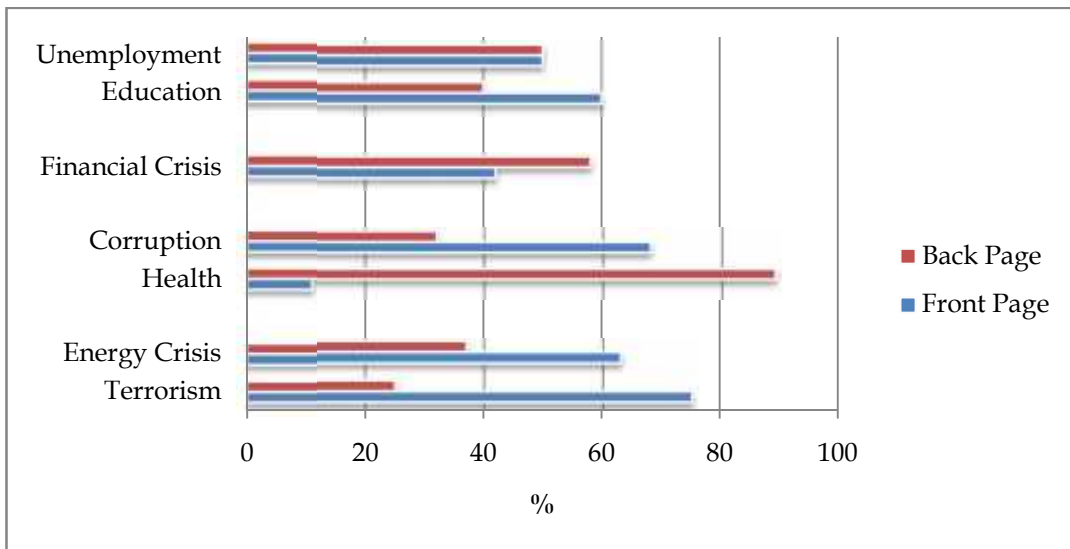


Figure 3. Significance of the issue according to news stories placement

Figure 3 depicts that how different issues covered on front and back pages of the selected newspapers. Significant coverage (75%) given at front page to the terrorism and (25%) on the back page, similarly, (63%) energy crisis at front page and (36.9%) coverage on the back pages. Health issue is not considered as an important issue for the front page, It got (11%) coverage at front pages whereas (89%) coverage on back pages. Corruption issue is very significant issue newspapers given it coverage of (68%) on front pages whereas (31.9%) on back pages. The economic crisis is the core reason of difference between Peripheral and Central Punjab. The coverage given by newspapers at their back page is (58%) and on front page (42%). Education issue is given (60.1%) front page coverage and (39.9%) back pages coverage. However, unemployment issue received (49.9%) coverage at front and equal coverage i.e. (50.1%) at back pages of the *Jang* and *Express* newspapers.

Findings of Survey Research

For the evaluation of public perception, the data of (N = 600) respondents analyzed with equal participation of male and female from the respondents of cities Jhang and *Mianwali*.

Figure 4 reflects the significance of the important issues in public eye that appear in daily newspapers. According to the rank order of the responses (21%) rank terrorism the most significant issue, (19.1%) ranked energy crisis as important issue, (4.8%) consider health as most major issue of the country. However, (11.4%) respondents gave importance to corruption issue, (6.80%) consider that economic crisis' serious attention, and (11.2%) consider education related issues and illiteracy most important issue whereas (15.13%) rank unemployment as an important issue of their region.

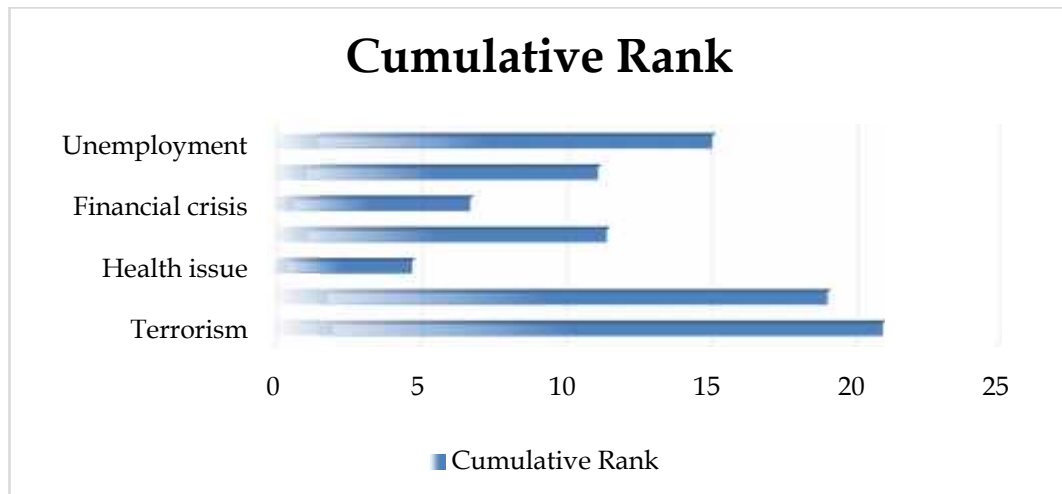


Fig 4. Cumulative rank order of public perception about issues

On individual issues preference, the respondents ranked the responses on 1st, 2nd and 3rd category according to the following table. (See Table 1).

Table 1
Ranking of issues according to the responses of survey

Issues	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Terrorism	37.1	14.2	11.6
Energy shortfall	23.0	23.8	10.6
Health issue	03.8	04.2	06.4
Corruption	07.6	14.1	12.7
Financial crisis	05.1	08.6	06.6
Education	12.6	10.1	11.7
Unemployment	03.6	12.0	29.6

On the issue of how to settle the terrorism, (5%) respondents are in line to the U.S. government policies. However, significant respondents (72%) find opposing US on this issue. Whereas, (23%) recommends another option to defeat terrorism in the country. The (62.7%) respondents find energy crisis the negligence of government whereas (25.3%) respondents are agree that scarcity of energy resources resultant of energy crisis in Pakistan. However, (12%) consider any other factor may behind this energy deficiency in the country. Whereas, health issues significantly influence the responses that health facilities need to be improved a lot (85.34%), contrary to it (12.66%) participants of the survey consider health facilities are enough in Pakistan.

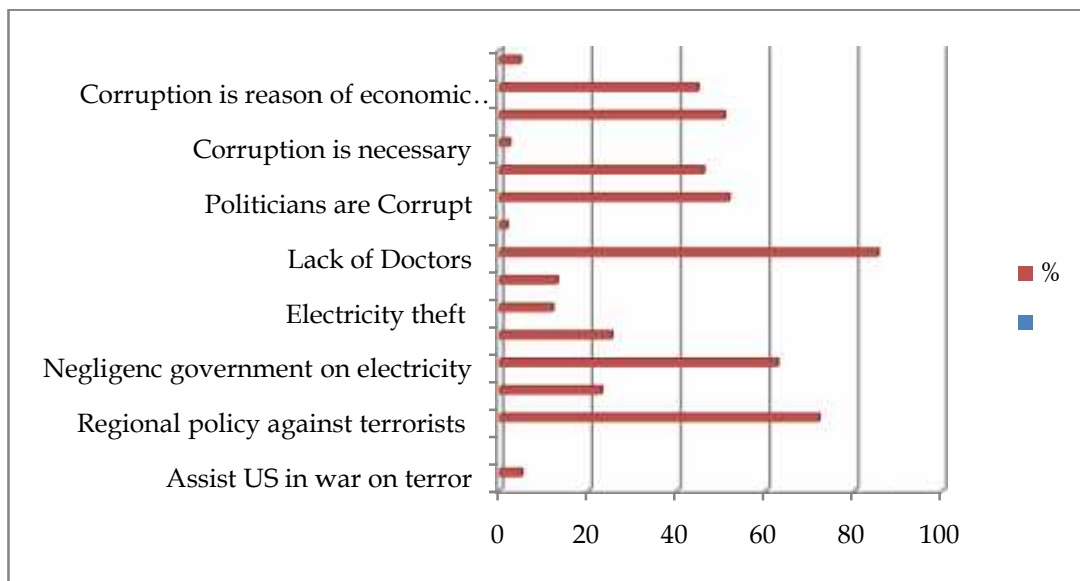


Figure 5. Reasons of major issues in Pakistan

Fig. 5 reflect the issue corruption in the country; significant respondents consider politician, businessmen and bureaucrats corrupt (51.7%) said while (46%)

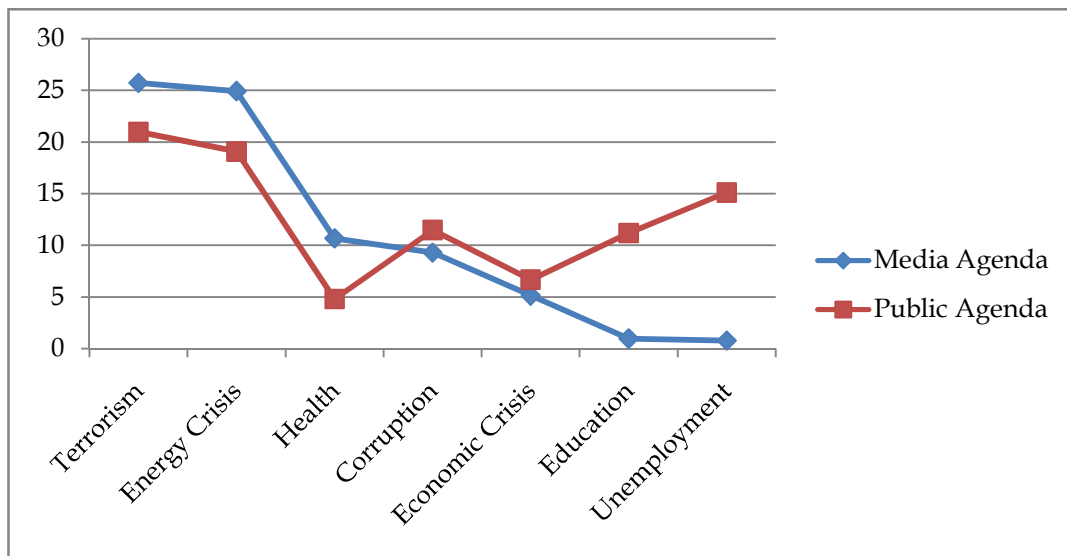
held responsible themselves because of corruption culture in the country and (2.3%) other reason of corruption.

On the issue economic crisis (50.7%) considers terrorism the major factors of while (44.73%) participants consider that corruption and corrupt practices are the main reasons of this problem in the country. However, (3.67%) respondents believed that any other factor also responsible for this economic problem in the country.

Relationship between public and agenda media agenda

In the relationship between media agenda and public agenda there are seven issues that find reasonable relationship ($r = +0.58$) at $p < 0.05$ between the public perception and agenda triggered by the elite of the society through newspapers.

While considering the agenda setting role of media, the researchers are inquisitively find that there is significant positive relationship between public agenda and media agenda on following 04 important issues of public important i.e. terrorism, energy and economic crisis and corruption. The findings of the study indicate significantly high positive correlations within media agenda and public agenda ($r = +0.997$) at $p < 0.01$ see fig 6.



* $p > .05$

Figure 6. Comparison of public perception and media agenda

Conclusion

The findings of study reveal the correlation among the agenda of the media set by the political elite of society and media with the perception of the people of Peripheral Punjab on significant issues. There are seven issues taken in this study in which 04 problems terrorism, energy deficiency, corruption and economic issue have high correlation compare to the other issues. These findings are in line to McCombs & Shaw(1972) and Baumgartner & Jones, (1995). These issues link to the instability in the country, resultant government shift its major resources to counter these serious issues in the country. The government of the Punjab develops vertical financial strategy when it dealt with these issues. Grievances of the people of Peripheral Punjab prevail on the issues related to economic development in the region. The study here is in line with Adeney (2012) which argues that nature of flow of resources with the regions of Pakistan influence the federal structure of the government of Pakistan. However, when people felt that political regimes are not giving the rights clearly stated in the constitution and believed that there are corrupt practices in the services delivery to them and not following the intergovernmental and decentralized principles then federalism in the country is on stake (Bukhari and Faisal, 2013). This economic and social unjust in Peripheral Punjab drives political parties to create ethno-lingual identities through political mobilization. This drive can further extend by general elections if the horizontal strategy of development will not opt for peripheral Punjab.

There are three issues unemployment, education and health that don't have significant correlation with the media agenda. The rationale of this deviation is obtrusive issues of unemployment and education. The findings are in line with (Winter & Eyal, 1981 and Shafi, 2016). The people of Peripheral Punjab are lacking urban and education infrastructure. Therefore, the unemployment in the region is higher than central Punjab. Micro finance strategies in allocation of budgets can resolve the issue of unemployment whereas beyond the population formula in PPFC 2017-2018, an additional allocation of funds to unprivileged region will uplift the standards of life. Hence, following is concluding:

- a. Flow of development in Punjab is vertical based and focusing on population formula. Although, budget is fix for the development in the districts but no visible change communicated through media agenda observed by the respondents of this study. So, it is assumed that in upcoming general elections, political parties will politically mobiles people on the basis of ethno lingual differences between peripheral and Central Punjab.
- b. There are top three agendas of media i.e. terrorism, energy crisis and corruption whereas the top three agenda of people of peripheral Punjab are unemployment, education and corruption. Media's focus on the public issues will foster development in the region.

- c. There is correlation of public perception and media agenda but considerable relationship exist among 04 issues terrorism, energy crisis, corruption and economic crisis.

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