



The Political Dynamics of the Public Sphere: The Case of Local Pakistani Talk Show

Tabassum Saba*, Nadia Anwar**

ABSTRACT: *This study contextualizes Jurgen Habermas' notion of public sphere in the presentation of political talk show on a private news channel in Pakistan. Private news channels in Pakistan, although seemingly independent and objective, reek of hidden agenda establishing their affiliations with some particular political party through their programs. They, no doubt, offer a platform to public to participate in discussions directly or indirectly but at the same time they are reluctant to violate those rules and regulations which are affirmed or imposed by the state. This research focuses on a single talk show from a private news channel which is internationally recognized and scrutinizes the extent to which the principles essential for public sphere such as inclusion, deliberation and opinion formation are followed through it. The study utilizes a mixed method approach. Conversation analysis has been employed to evaluate how the afore-mentioned principles in the said talk show promote or obstruct the idea of public sphere. It has been observed that different conversational strategies like turn-taking, interruption and overlapping are adopted by the participants to support or challenge the state point of view. The research evaluates the communicative density of the space created for the people to share their views and exercise the freedom of speech.*

Keywords: Public-sphere, talk-shows, inclusion, opinion-formation, deliberation

Introduction

The idea of public sphere, proposed by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1989), refers to the concept of a public space created to generate and trigger discourses regarding various socio-political issues in society. It reflects that particular “realm of our social life” where “access is guaranteed to all citizens” (Habermas, 1989, p. 49). Public sphere provides individuals with the opportunity to participate in a debate and thus enables them to negotiate, converse and articulate ideas and thoughts about different problems they are faced with. In this regard, television talk shows can be taken as an apparatus to promote the notion of public sphere. This paper discusses the role of public sphere to critically evaluate the social media in terms of its instigative function. It investigates whether the public sphere

*PhD Research Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Management and Technology Labore, Pakistan

**Assistant Professor, Department of English and Literature, University of Management and Technology Labore, Pakistan

principles of deliberation, inclusion and opinion formation are sustained and promoted in the political talk shows or not.

In the past few years, talk shows have achieved widespread popularity. They can be considered as the instruments to advance the possibility of public sphere and offer a domain where their different ramifications, e.g. opinion formation and ideologies, are explained and consulted in relation to society. These talk shows, on the one hand, provide the TV channels with a platform where masses can raise their voices against particular issues and, on the other hand, manipulate the ideologies of people or perpetuate their own ideologies. Besides, they project the affiliation of these channels with a certain political ideology/party through debates and discussions which apparently give off a sense of bias.

As a student of Frankfurt School of Social Research, Jurgen Habermas advanced Marxist criticism of capitalism and its drawbacks and produced "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1989) to evaluate the status of public stance in the practice of democratic government especially in the Western Europe. To him an ideal "public sphere" is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state" (1989, p. 176). The term does not reflect a state authority with power rather it refers to a common man's legitimate right to project power.

Habermas, while dealing with the critique of the structural transformation of public sphere, however, ignores the contribution of the mass media to provide an outlet to the public voice through a platform where matters of grave importance can be raised and discussed. His work, nevertheless, initiated an avalanche of debates and discussions about "normative' conception of the contemporary public sphere as a neutral space within society" which is not governed by "state and corporate" and in which the role of the media is that of an informer who pioneers "a free, open and reasoned public dialogue" (Curran, 2000, p. 135).

The present study aims to scrutinize the motives behind the role played by media in the promotion or demotion of public sphere. It will be interesting to note how what started at Paris saloons and coffee houses evolved into vibrant, yet subversive spaces pushing the public into accepting the rule of the third state, i.e., the media. Electronic media was considered a platform for the people to affirm or challenge the rule of the state during early nineties, a time when the idea of public sphere was at its peak. The current study attempts to explore how effectively this concept plays its role in today's world or if it has become a mere tool in the hands of political parties. A political talk show from a private channel is selected for analysis. Because of the ethical concerns, the name of the channel and selected talk

show has not been mentioned. However, since the discussion has the potential to be generalized to many other cases, the readers may formulate their own hypothesis about it and may to some extent be able to catch the cues. This research has encompassed a political talk show to examine whether the participants belonging to different school of thoughts, i.e. politics, media and education, are on the same page or not; to what extent they endorse each other's point of view? It strives to check the degree of freedom given to each participant to discuss his/her point of view and whether the discussion only affirms the state point of view or it possesses the capacity to challenge it as well. The research has focused on one main and one sub question.

1. How much the idea of public sphere promoted or demoted through political talk shows?

1.1. Do our electronic media conform to the idea of public sphere where everybody is listened to without the fear of persecution?

The present study is significant as it underscores the contribution of the mass media to improve deliberation by offering a platform to the masses for political discussions. For this purpose, Habermas' concept of public sphere is adopted along with conversation analysis to see how political talk shows in the context of Pakistan are organized, planned and how they manipulate the state performance.

Literature Review

In the 18th century, with the disintegration of feudal system and fall of the church's rule, alongside the expansion of coffee houses, literary societies and other associations, a public sphere emerged on the globe for the political growth of the bourgeois. However, it flourished in the early 19th century to mid-19th century and ensured all citizens an open access to it while offering a transition from imposed domination to open democracy. Habermas (1984) has perceived the media as generating a society of private and split individuals for whom it is tough to form the public opinion which could challenge the established power. He has criticized the media for producing a fake public sphere which constrains the masses from political action.

The public sphere depends both on the quality of discourse and amount of participation. It emphasizes organized discussions "around rational critical argument" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 2) and "the more people participate as citizens in politics, the closer one comes to the ideal of a public sphere" (Schudson, 1992, p. 147). Before analyzing a political talk show with regard to Habermasian notion of public sphere, it is important to understand the difference between public and private spheres which is by and large

referred to as “public/private dichotomy” (Geuss, 2001; Butt & Landridge, 2003; Ossewaarde, 2007).

Habermas (1989) has drawn a clear line between public and private spheres. He has regarded the former as an “open interaction between free citizens in the political realm” and the later as “hidden interactions between free individuals in the domestic realm”. Henceforth, just as in a public sphere the freedom of people rests on their private independence as rulers of their domestic sphere, the independence of rulers in the domestic environment strengthens their liberty in the public sphere. The distinction between public and private has been the distinction reflected in “society versus individual”, “visibility versus concealment” and “openness versus closure” (Susen, 2011, pp. 39-40).

Livingstone and Lunt have discussed the participation of the mass media in political affairs and relate it with the “notion of citizenship” which conceptually approximates the notion of “public sphere”. The discussions and communications in the mass media have projected the public sphere as a place “where the relations between established power and the citizenry take place” (1992, p. 10). But the critics have also reproved it for excluding the working class, and women and children from the discussions. They have suggested two positions to be included in the public sphere: those which were gained through social consensus and those which were based on contest and opinion formation (Livingstone & Lunt, 1992, p. 23).

Many digital media genres like television, radio and internet have the ability to intercede engagement along with critical discussions and debates regarding issues which are of public interest. Various studies (Benkler, 2006; Brandenburg, 2006, Dahlberg, 2001; Becker and Wehner, 2001; Bauman, 1992) have scrutinized the capacity of the internet to sustain public deliberation. They have explored how different blogs and internet forums have supported the public sphere at local, national and international level by providing individuals a platform for opinion formation. Internet, as Ubayasiri (2006) has asserted, has promoted a new concept of public sphere, i.e., “global public sphere” which has provided each individual a direct access to a global platform where they can share their views, opinions and apprehensions without the feeling of being checked or censored (p. 4). He has been of the view that although mass media has not gained much success in maintaining an ideal public sphere, still, at times, it plays a vital role in retaining democratic values by raising its voice (Ubayasiri, 2006, p. 14). Similarly, Rasmussen has affirmed that with the advent of internet, people have got more freedom to share their viewpoints and “mass-mediated public sphere [has become] more in tune” with the concept of globalization (2013, p. 98).

Jirattikorn (2016) argues that although public sphere has allowed citizens to express their views, still it has excluded some marginal groups which may consist of “transnational migrant populations” (p. 99). He has categorized migrants’ public sphere, which in this case consists of radio programs, into three types, i.e., cultural, social, and mass-mediated. For him, the idea of public has remained confined within the boundaries of the nation-state, and only those citizens are clearly discussed whose rights have been a part of the public (Jirattikorn, 2016, p. 101). He considers “the participation of ordinary citizens and media autonomy” as the two basic pillars for the emergence of the public sphere (Jirattikorn, 2016, p. 108). This very concept provides the basis for the current study which affirms Habermas’ stance (1984) that an unrestrained public communication is an ideal communication which can produce the critical consensus required for participation by masses in autonomous political progressions.

A research held by Luku (2013) in Albania on morning talk shows has not only analyzed their formats but has also evaluated the viewers’ participation and discussion critically. The media, according to the research, also takes part in political events and so plays a vital role in the decision making process at the political level. In this way, while upholding Habermas, Luku argues that “the public sphere in the talk show has indicated the quality of the democracy in a country” (2013, pp. 575-76) which can only be maintained through effective and quality participation of the public in question.

Habermas has emphasized the role of bourgeoisie in the realm of public sphere and the same notion has been reinforced in a research by Lunt and Livingstone in which they have considered the bourgeoisie a reason for the emergence of a new political subjectivity. They have referred to the destructive role of the media as discussed by Habermas, i.e., “a vehicle for established power” and consider Habermas’ diversion from optimism to pessimism, from oppression to freedom “fruitful for late 20th century media studies” since globalization has bundled up culture, media and polity (Lunt & Livingstone, 2013, p. 89).

Research Methodology

The parameters of Public Sphere, as defined by Habermas, provide the framework for this research which is both qualitative and quantitative in its nature. It evaluates how public opinion is taken as the shared understanding of a particular issue. It reflects how rational people come to a consensus through discussion in political talk shows in the Pakistani context. The term ‘public sphere’ carries different interpretations for different scholars. For Habermas (1989) it refers to that domain of our social life which is easily accessible to all and helps each individual to form and share

her/his viewpoint. Driven by Habermas' theory, Dahlberg (2001) has proposed six elements which are mandatory for a 'public sphere' concept. These elements also form the backbone of this research. They include, but are not limited to, autonomy from state and economic control, reasoned and shared critique of standardizing positions, evaluative socio-cultural stance, respect for other's opinion, and open sharing of interests and needs by all participants that must be based on sincerity.

For the success of the public sphere, Habermas (1989) emphasizes the need of maintaining a balance, a stability between formal political structures and informal public sphere. Curran indicates that Habermas' theory ignores the way power is implemented by capitalists and male members within society (1991, p. 29). He also insists that the media should be considered as an apparatus to promote state ideologies and sustain the reigning order (Curran, 1991, p. 36). The political talk shows, no doubt, generate enough revenues and so cannot be considered unplanned and adrift. Television is regarded as a hypocrisy as it sells pre-planned programs as spontaneous and more 'spontaneous conversations' take more time from the director to increase their face value (Luku, 2013).

The data for this study consists of a single political talk show, of 43 minutes duration, from a private news channel which is popularly considered as the proponent of state ideologies. The participants in this program are three experts from different spheres of life. The first expert (E1) belongs to the ruling party, the second (E2) is a nationally famed singer, an intellectual and a political activist whose political activities are reflected through his singing only. The third expert (E3) is the vice chancellor of a federal public sector university. Along with the experts, an audience is also a part of the program. The study evaluates whether all the invited experts are given a fair chance to participate in the discussion or not. It also scrutinizes whether the audience is provided enough chance to challenge or affirm the state orders. The program takes place at a state run University in Islamabad, termed mini Pakistan, as students from all over the country are admitted here according to the specific quota system allocated for each province. Habermas' public sphere provides theoretical background to the study which evaluates how the principles of 'inclusion', 'deliberation' and 'opinion formation' are fulfilled in the selected political talk show. These principles also provide basis to examine whether the media is playing its role effectively or it has become a mere tool in the hands of political parties.

Conversation analysis

To observe whether the aforementioned elements are fulfilled or not to promote the exigencies of 'public sphere', Conversation Analysis has been integrated with the theoretical framework. This approach has helped in

analyzing how turn-taking, interruption and overlapping are handled by the participants to support or challenge different views or arguments. It also underscores the topic introduced by the host and the way he gets responses from the speakers. Turn-taking is necessary for the smooth flow of communication whereas interruption and overlapping reflect the authority on the part of the speaker who adopts them. For Olutayo and Grace, turn-taking is a phenomenon which “refers to turn switches where speaker B takes over after speaker A relinquishes the floor, overlaps, backchannels and interrupts” (2013, p. 68). The research focuses how the participants take turns or make interruptions to make their presence felt and to be heard. In a public sphere, since the nomination of bourgeois is obligatory, the study also takes into account the social class of all the participants.

Quantitative data analysis

The three principles of public sphere, i.e. inclusion, deliberation, and opinion formation have been given a tabular representation through mean value to illustrate how much they can be/ have been followed by the Host, three Experts and the Audience in their participation and discussions. The time taken by each participant has been also been recorded to measure their engagement in the public sphere.

Ethical Considerations

Since research refers to a wide range of activities, to determine whether what one is researching includes in the personal or the public sphere of the participants, voluntary or involuntary, is difficult. The Social Research Association mentions that “there can be no reasonable guarantee of privacy in ‘public’ settings since anyone from journalists to ordinary members of the public may constitute ‘observers’ of such human behaviour and any data collected thereby would remain, in any case, beyond the control of the subjects observed” (SRA, 2003, p. 33). Spicker (2007) also asserts that “where information is public, it is available to researchers without any necessity to obtain individual consent”. Therefore, taking the cue, the researchers used the data available in the form of public talk show.

Data Analysis

The talk show began with the description of the actual setting of the talk show. The reason for situating the program at a federal public university was to evaluate how the youth of Pakistan had made progress in 2016 and envisage their future in 2017. The Host emphasized the assumption that the university was appropriately called “mini Pakistan” for its being the representative of all Pakistan. All the three experts, during their introductory conversation, presented a positive and optimistic image of Pakistan. They

affirmed the notion of 'inclusion' as they were all from different fields and were given equal chance to participate in the program.

The first expert (E1) belonged to the ruling party and on being asked about Panama Fever, he diverted the topic by appreciating and encouraging the youth, and then went on discussing the progress made by the government. Completely ignoring Panama Leaks, he discussed three big fevers which prevailed in 2013. This referred to the principle of deliberation as the speaker felt free to share his views even if he had to divert from the topic.

- *“2013 mein Pakistan mein teen baray fever thay jinbon nay isay bobat buri tarah apni girift mein lia hua tha. Sab say bara fever load shedding ka tha jo 18 say 20 ghantay ka marz tha jis nay economy ko cripple kia hua tha”*. (In 2013, there were three major fevers in Pakistan which had grappled it very badly. The greatest of these fevers was load-shedding which was like a disease which lasted from 18 to 20 hours and which had crippled the economy).

Quite surprisingly, regardless of these realities based on severe power outages, the state representative did not face any opposition from the audience or from his fellow speakers which questioned the freedom of speech given to the participants. E1 continued with his diversion and pointed out the other two big fevers:

- *“doosra fever jis nay hamein buri tarah cripple kia hua tha wo maeeshat ki zubunhali”*. (Second fever which had crippled us badly was the economic instability.) Then he discussed the last fever, still ignoring the question he was asked.

- *“teesra fever aur jo aik bobat bara azab tha, dehsbatgardi”*. (The third fever, which was a great curse, was terrorism).

E1 presented a comparison of 2013 image of Pakistan with the 2016 image in which Pakistan is supposedly seen as an “emerging economy”. He also referred to “News Week” to support his arguments. As he shared the improvement regarding the electricity crisis, he was interrupted by the Host to take on the issue of gas load-shedding:

- *“lekin lamb-e-mojood mein aam log gas ki load-shedding ka shikar hain”*. (But currently common people are suffering from gas load-shedding).

How E1 replied, again seemed irrelevant:

- *“Pichlay 20 salon mein Pakistan mein hamaray infrastructure mein khatir khwa sarmayakari nahi hui”*. (In the last 20 years in Pakistan there was not sufficient investment in our infrastructure.)

As E1 went on discussing the progress and development of his government, no one dared to oppose him since offending the state might result in the stoppage of funds for the channel. The only topic discussed by the E1 in response to all question was the progress made in the field of electricity though it also appeared to be exaggerated as discussed earlier. It seemed as if the state representative wanted the audience to form their opinions in the light of the information provided by the state.

It was noticeable that the talk show ran smoothly up to this point as there was no over-lapping or interruption by any of the participants and so turn-taking occurred as per accepted rules. With the inclusion of the second expert (E2), the topic moved from Panama fever and electricity to ‘new Pakistan’. The host questioned:

- “*naya Pakistan ubhar raha hai, ittefaq kertay hain aap iss say?*” (New Pakistan is emerging. Do you agree with it?)

- E2 replies: “*ye bhi statistics hai ke dunya ke jo 100 ameertareen log hain [...]*”, “*ager hum India ki missal lain [...]*”. (It is also statistics that the hundred richest people of the world [...] “if we take India’s example [...]”).

It was obvious that E2 too evaded the original question and gave a pointless reply. Instead of commenting on the current development scenario of Pakistan he started talking about accumulation of wealth and capitalism at international level. The reason might be that either he did not want to comment against government policies or he did not want to negate the opinion forwarded by E1 who carried a ministerial position. E2 merely beat around the bush and made prevaricating excuses.

Then an interruption occurred from E1 as he took the floor by saying:

- “*ye*” (this) (E2) “*jo*” (that) *baat kar rahay hain*” ([E1] is talking about)

Then E2 completed his words and turn-taking occurred smoothly as the Host addressed the third expert (E3) and asked:

- “*log to Pakistan chhor ke bahir jatay hain aap bahir say sab kuch chor chor Pakistan a gaey ye experience kaisa raha*”. (People go abroad leaving Pakistan behind, you have come back to Pakistan leaving everything behind, how was your experience?)

For the first time E3 was given a chance to respond:

- “*mein smajhta hun ke ye experience bobat positive raha hai*”. (I consider this experience very positive.)

The reason for this direct response might be that the question was about the expert’s personal experience and not about some political issue so

he was not reluctant to share his views. He talked to the point and avoided extra information.

The host again attended E1 with his second question:

- “2017 mein aap inn (pointing to the audience), inn students ke, Pakistan ki nae nasal kay kon say baray masael hal krain gay”. (In 2017 which major problems of these students, this new generation of Pakistan, will you resolve?)

Once again E1 gave a very long answer to avoid the question. He exemplified China, Malaysia and Korea for consistent development and attributed the low economic growth rate of Pakistan with “siyasi adm-e-istehkaam” (political instability). Being a representative of the government E1 nevertheless alleged the past interventions of army for this state of affairs, which according to him had destabilized the democratic governments and had attenuated the efficacy of the state institutes. To remain objective and to give an impression of being a useful participant of ‘an ideal public sphere’, E1 not only gave positive gestures during the conversation of E2 but also referred to his comments while talking about economic development:

- “economy ko mazeed agay lay kay jaen gay jiski [E2] nay baatki”. (We shall further improve the economy about which [E2] has just talked about.)

However E1 again got interrupted when he was talking about more authority with provincial governments and less with federal institutes:

- “wafaqi hakoomat bhi is muamlay ka bobat ehsas rakhti hai”. (Federal government also takes much care of this issue). The host interrupted with a striking question at that point:

- “lekin jis university mein aaj hum baithay huey hain ye bhi wafaq mein hai iss ki sainkron acre zameen per land mafia ka qabza hai jis ka zimmdar koi aur nahi wafaqi hakoomat hai”. (But the university in which we are sitting today is also a part of the federal government and its hundreds of acres lands is occupied by land mafia and the responsibility lies with no one else but the federal government).

This interruption, on the one hand, showed the authority of federal government which the government representative was denying and, on the other hand, provided the Host an opportunity to discuss an issue which might otherwise be overlooked. But E1 did not take the federal government to be solely responsible for this illegal control and blamed:

- “university ki intizamia jinhon nay ye kaam honay dia”. (The university administration which let it happen).

E1 shifted the responsibility from federal government to university management and again got interrupted by the host who supported the university management for not being responsible at all.

- “*University ka aik marla bhi koi land mafia qabza nahi kar sakta [sir kiya hua hai (mein apko) (mein apko)]*”. “Not even a single *marla* of university can be occupied by any land mafia [sir it is (occupied)] (I want you to) (I want you to)”].

There was interruption and overlapping as both of them seemed to prove themselves right. Reaching on an agreement, the host moved to E2 and asked:

- “*nae nasal kay liye sab say bara challenge kia hai?*” (What is the biggest challenge for the new generation?)

By replying “poverty” to the question, E2 averted the topic and talked about “poverty of feelings”, a completely different take on the issue raised. The Host also referred to Donald Trump to show the intellectual poverty of the Americans. It was notable that E3 was not involved in this discussion. He was not asked to share his views about economic development and even when the Host and the government representative talked about illegal control of land mafia over the university land, E3, although the vice chancellor was not asked to share the university stance about the issue.

The focus, then, shifted from experts to the audience with the initiation of question-answer session. The first question was asked by a girl:

- “*koi platform hona chahiye youth ke liye where we should go and put our effort aur wo effort fruitfully deliver ho*”. (There should be some platform for the youth where we should go and put our effort and this effort should be fruitfully delivered.)

In response to the audience question, a completely irrelevant topic was taken up by E2:

- “*Ye saray middle class ke log hain... kitnay log haina apmein say jo politics mein ja ke leader ban saktay hain*”. (All these people belong to the middle class... how many of these can become a leader after joining politics).

When few from the audience raised their hands E2 responds:

- “*ye to unka khayal hai na jab wo jaen gay to pata chalay ga*”. (This is what they think, when they will join, they will get to know.)

This statement meant that they could not test the water until they put their feet in it. It suggested the absence of an ideal public sphere which was accessible to all. The host knew that most of the students belonged to the

middle class to whom the access of public space was denied. On the other hand, E2 felt free to share his views about political affairs implying that he had got freedom of speech to convey his opinion on certain matters as long as it did not threaten the program format. He again rejected the notion of capitalist democracy by asserting:

- “*ager 80% mazdoor kisan hain to 80% parliament mein bhi baithay hon wo apnay liye qanoonsazi krain*”. (If 80% are laborers and farmers, 80% should be in the parliament as well who could make law for themselves.)

This gave a clear indication of the absence of public sphere in state affairs which demanded the representation of the middle class (see Sec. 2).

Further questions related to CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), the provision of health facilities, development at provincial level and education system, were all answered by E1. Being the representative of the government, he was neither supported nor opposed, and so controlled most of the discussion.

The students asked questions related to their respective provinces as well. In the first question-answer session there was little participation from E2 and not a single comment from E3. Most of the questions were directed to the state representative. Some of them, although, appeared quite offensive, they were being dealt with patiently and tactfully. The program apparently ended with an optimistic song by E2 as a result of which a new slogan for the youth emerged:

- “*Nojawan badlain gay... Pakistan*”. (The youth will transform Pakistan.)

But the fact was that this slogan seemed to be a diversion from grave problems to superficial solutions and, in fact, this empty sloganization affected the process of real democratization.

Findings

The theme or the topic for the talk show under discussion is the importance or impact of year 2017 on the youth of Pakistan. The guest speakers belong to different fields, i.e. political, social and educational, while the student participants represent the youth from all provinces of the country. This discussion focuses on the three essentials of the public sphere.

Principle of Inclusion

In Habermas’ writings, the element of inclusion posits that “access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens” (1997). Consequently, this study takes into consideration whether the participants represent a particular group or class or they belong to different groups. The participants

also consist of two categories, i.e. experts and audience, and the study has focused both to represent different fields.

The setting of the program does conform to the notion of ‘inclusion’ since the university where the talk show is conducted is known as “Mini Pakistan” welcoming participation from different parts of the country belonging to various social classes mainly the middle class. This federal public university offers 40+ scholarships on merit and need bases, which makes it accessible to all citizens. The first principle of public sphere is to provide a platform which is accessible to all and this program fulfils this first condition. But it is also significant that although there is representation from different departments, the participation from E3 is almost non-existent. Except for his introductory conversation with the Host, he neither opposes any argument nor drops any comment. Not even a single word is spoken by him after the first few lines even when the university problems are discussed.

Principle of Deliberation

The formation and reformation of public sphere depends upon discussion and deliberation. The latter deals with the “freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly and association etc.” (Habermas, 1989, p. 83). The present study focuses on the extent of freedom the participants are given to express their opinion about the topics discussed. It also keenly observes the format of the program to know if it changes with the changing situation or remains the same.

For an informed debate, the speakers in the public sphere should have access to political information. Although the participants put forth many questions about health, educational and economic development of the country, yet they seem unable to present any fact and figure to support their arguments. The program though appears to offer a good platform to the people to share their views and to raise voices against prevailing issues, there seems to be an unseen panoptic surveillance at work which hampers their full participation or otherwise it could be due to the lack of access to political information. Only that part of information is shared with the masses which is either harmless to state policies or less offensive to the state.

Principle of Opinion-formation

According to Habermas the public sphere ensures the formation of public opinion in our social life (1997, p. 105). The social actors participating in the public sphere carry out rational and cogent debate, and so, possess the ability to offer critical opinions on those matters which are publicly important. By having exposure to ideas, participants share opinions, which when considered collectively, amounts to the articulation of public opinion.

Public sphere offers people a platform where they cannot only evaluate the state policies but can also challenge them and form their opinions. Seemingly, this program also offers such a platform but, as discussed earlier, such TV programs have to follow a policy strictly imposed by the state demanding them to abide by certain rules and regulations. The TV channel, which conducts this talk show, had to be shut down by a particular government when it refused to budge (2007). So, as far as this 'budging' or 'opinion formation' is concerned, there is no such freedom of speech offered to the media by the state. This is truly reflected through this talk show where no one could dare to challenge the state policy or form his/her opinion.

The conversation, however, runs smoothly as there is very less interruption or over-lapping by the participants. Over-lapping and interruptions are the essence of public space whereby the participants ease out their differences and conflicts through open, direct and sometimes heated debates. Turn-taking also goes on smoothly without affecting the flow. In fact, the floor is taken mainly by the state representative and due to the above-mentioned reason, he does not have to face any opposition from the co-participants or from the audience. The interruptions are made by the Host and that too in a very implicit way, not challenging the state policies.

Quantitative Representation

Principles	Host	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Audience
Inclusion	45.2%	26%	12 %	3.15%	7.36 %
Deliberation	39.5%	68.5 %	58 %	Nil	57 %
Opinion Formation	4 %	8 %	8%	Nil	Nil
Time Marking	18 %	40 %	11 %	2 %	7 %

The analysis of the political talk show with the perspective of Habermas' public sphere makes it obvious that the principles required for the maintenance of this public sphere, i.e. inclusion, deliberation and opinion formation have not been fulfilled in that particular program due to some implicit or unsaid reasons. The projection of these principles has been made obvious through quantitative analysis as well to reflect objectivity and nonpartisanship in the research procedure.

This tabular representation reflected that being the chair of that particular talk show, maximum **inclusion** had been made by the Host as he was responsible not only to initiate the discussion but also to maintain the discussion process without disturbing the turn-taking principle. E1, the state representative had been given more chances as his presence serves to support and justify the state affairs. E2, apparently a neutral expert, did not raise voice against the state affairs, however, he tried to convey his messages in the favor of the masses and against feudal system in an implicit way. The least participation on the part of E3, almost a silent entity, became meaningful as neither was he asked any question except the introductory one, nor did he try to share his opinion to exert influence. His silence appeared deliberate and strategic because being the vice chancellor of the university, where the talk-show was held, he might have been trying to avoid any conflict which could jeopardize the smooth running of his university.

Deliberation had also been a prominent part of this program since it provided the participants a platform where they could at least share their views, problems and apprehensions in an implicit or less offensive way. Only E1 and the Host could approach the third principle; the state representative because of his authority and the Host in successfully mitigating the impact of partiality or supporting the state affairs. The time taken by the participants as revealed in the aforementioned table also makes it obvious that the notion of public sphere has also lost its true face in the context of mass media. Most of the time in the talk show was taken by the E1 who was the state representative and the other participants and the audience were given less chances to share their views.

Conclusion

Habermas' theory offers astute awareness about the normative structures and constitutional transformation of the public sphere in this modern epoch. The theory of 'public sphere', irrespective of all its apparently unreal features, is a marvelous contribution to human society. It encourages common people to actively engage in the procedure of deliberation as it guarantees access to all. People are considered equal and so they are respected. They are supposed and believed to behave selflessly for the common welfare. It also considers the authority answerable in front of the public since it diffuses the power from state to bourgeois so that they could work together in a harmony.

This study has its limitations since it has focused on just one talk show from one particular private news channel for the analysis and can be extended to more programs of the same talk show. Another comparative study may include a program by a state-owned channel. Likewise, such comparative analysis may take into consideration some other programs not

from other local channels only but also from international channels to see the difference in their patterns and strategies.

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