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**SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT OF TELEVISION CHANNELS OF PAKISTAN ON VIEWERS OF
INDIAN ADMINISTERED KASHMIR**

MUBASHIR AHMAD GANIE

MASS COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM
RESEARCH SCHOLAR

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION, DAVV, INDORE
GOLDEN LIFE SCHOOL, AZADNAGAR, INDORE, MADHYA PRADESH.

PROF. (DR.) M. S. PARMAR

VICE CHANCELLOR

KUSHABHAU THAKRE PATRAKARITA AVAM JANSANCHAR
VISHWAVIDYALAYA, RAIPUR, CHATTISGARH

Abstract

The study examines the impact of the television channels of Pakistan on socio-political perceptions and attitudes of people of Kashmir. In order to understand the impact, the cross border media watching habits of people of the valley and their perception on how socio-polity of Kashmir is represented in the cross border channels was also observed. Sampling survey was conducted to investigate the perceived portrayal of socio politics of Kashmir in cross border TV channels and its impact on their socio-political beliefs and attitudes. The empirical evidence found a significant association between the Pakistan TV viewers in Kashmir, who watch them during protests and in the month of Ramadan, with their religious and social bondage with Pakistan. The abstention of people from voting to mainstream politics and support for separatist parties is closely associated with the influence of cross border media.

Key Words: Impact, Kashmir, Pakistan, Television, Socio-political.

1. Cross Border Media in Kashmir

Oftentimes, neighbouring countries share a language or a language group. This is particularly likely for countries that formerly belonged to one larger entity. Citizens of these countries, and especially those who live close to the border, are exposed to the media of their neighbours because radio and television waves travel across political boundaries. The exposure to cross-border media can be particularly important when the media outlets have nationalistic content and when the two nations have a history of conflict.

Kashmir is no exception. The media gets squeezed into a tight spot, is subjected to different pulls of political arm twisting and often offers a divisive discourse rather than playing the bridging role.¹ Before cable television boom in 1990's, Doordarshan was the only source of news for the people of Kashmir along with radio. That time PTV was much more accessible in the border areas



of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. To get a clear reception from television centres across the border, Kashmiri people raised antennas as high as forty feet. To be crazy about improving reception of PTV was not a new phenomenon, in fifties and early sixties people used to be equally enthusiastic about improving reception of Radio Azad Kashmir and Radio Pakistan. With the emergence of satellite channels in India the cross border channels in the region also grew in number.²

In Kashmir 44.5% people access cross border media while 41.4 per cent of them access cross border television channels. The Pakistani television channels, which are free to air, are beamed by the local cable operators to their subscribers in Kashmir. They are very popular in Kashmir and widely accessed. Apart from Pakistan based television channels, Qatar based Al Jazeera and UAE based Peace TV are also widely accessed.³ Pakistan Channels including PTV National (News) and Radio Pakistan are accessed by 32% of the youth and a few of them also watch their private channels such as the QTV and Geo TV.⁴

The cross border television channels are blamed for spreading hate and venom among the people of the Kashmir to alter the public opinion and to influence the people of the state. The State Government of Jammu and Kashmir also accuses Pakistani media for spreading false propaganda and anti-India sentiments among the people of Kashmir.⁵

The Pakistan media coverage of the freedom movement in Kashmir, as well as the constant reporting of martyrdom and the focus on pan-Islamism, casts the Kashmir issue only in communalist identity terms, with jingoist language positioning Kashmir as the jugular vein of Pakistan. This explains the enemy thesis and resentment towards India, and is the focus of most programs aired on television. In most entertainment programming, the Indians are demonized without relief, while the Kashmiri is victimized, and the Pakistani in the trio is the absolute saviour.⁶

Concerning over the PTV's anti India campaign over internal matters including Jammu and Kashmir, in 2008 Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry of India directed ban on airing Pakistani television channels in Kashmir. Following the directions, the local cable operators stopped airing Pakistani television channels including PTV, Geo television, ARY and Aaj.⁷ But the government could not sustain with the ban and had to lift it soon after criticism from All Party Hurriyat Conference, which called it cultural aggression and popular pressure from the people of the Valley.^{8,9}

Since media sets agendas and people start thinking what the media shows them and there is no doubt impact on the people regarding whatever they see on television. So due to the rising popularity of Pakistani television channels in Indian administered Kashmir, a region undergoing through severe social problems and political alienation since 1947, it becomes pertinent to understand, beside vast variety of availability of mainstream media of India particularly television channels, why and when the people of the region watch the cross border TV channels and what impact the content of the imported channels have on socio-political perceptions and attitudes of viewers.



Literature Review

Television is not simply an entertainment medium; it also has the ability to communicate the norms, rules and values of a society.¹⁰ Several theoretical formulations have been suggested to explain the cultivations effects of television on social-political perceptions and attitudes.

Cultivation theory developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross in 1976 is one of the most important and widely applied theories addressing the effects of media on beliefs and values. The basic hypothesis of cultivation analysis is that the more time one spends living in the world of television, the more likely one is to report conceptions of social reality that can be traced to television portrayals.¹¹ Television viewers might differ in their demographic characteristics, the amount of television viewing can make a difference in terms of their conceptions of social reality.¹²

There has been a wide variety of measurements for cultivation studies. Some items require respondents to offer an estimate, some ask for a perception, others focus on a belief, attitude, or value. Using standard techniques of survey methodology, the questions are posed to samples (national probability, regional, convenience) of adults, adolescents, or children. Findings from systematic analyses of television's message systems are used to formulate questions about the potential "lessons" of viewing concerning people's conceptions of social-political reality. Some of the questions are semi-projective, and others simply measure beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or behaviours.¹³

Since the first results of cultivation analysis were published (Gerbner and Gross, 1976), literally hundreds of studies have explored, enhanced, questioned, critiqued, dismissed or defended the conceptual assumptions and methodological procedures of cultivation analysis.^{14, 15, and 16}

Cultivation analysis is well suited to multinational and cross-cultural comparative study.^{17, 18& 19} In fact, such study is the best test of system wide similarities and differences across national boundaries, and of the actual significance of national cultural policies. Every country's television system reflects the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts within which it has developed.²⁰

Pingree and Hawkins²¹ (1981) found significant relation of exposure to U.S. programs to Australian students' scores on "Mean World" and "Violence in Society" indices concerning Australia, but not the United States. Viewing Australian programs was unrelated to these conceptions, but those who watched more U.S. programs were more likely to see Australia as dangerous and mean.

Elasmar and Hunter²² (1996) in their meta-analysis found a weak, positive correlation between exposure to foreign TV and local viewers' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours. They found that exposure to foreign TV increases the tendency of audience members to hold values similar to those present in the country producing the foreign message.



Sanders and Norris²³ (1997) found that voters' views about the political parties can be swayed quite markedly by the content of television news. In particular, the analysis indicates that "positive" news images exert far more powerful effects on voters' perceptions than "negative" news.

Cohen and Tsfat²⁴ (2009) also observed strong association between media and voting behaviour and those seriously considering their voting decisions tend to use media more reflexively.

Zixuan²⁵ (2011) found that values of the Chinese College Students were hard to change by American television. While knowledge, attitude and behaviour were relatively influenced easily by the American TV exposure.

Vu and Lee²⁶ (2013) demonstrated the connection between the consumption of South Korean soap operas with the transnational marriage attitude among Vietnamese women. As Vietnamese women avail themselves of more South Korean soap operas, surging of transnational marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men is observed. This result signifies a powerful real world implication of the cultivation theory, that programme type affects people's perceptions and even actual performances.

The researchers pointed out that foreign media can have substantial cross-border effects in countries characterized by post-conflict ethnic tensions. These findings are likely to apply more generally to areas of past conflict with similar languages and overlapping media markets. This suggests that peaceful relations between neighbouring countries depend in part on the content of media programming, and the extent of media overlap.

Altogether, cultivation theory has been studied to measure a number of different effects. For this study, cultivation theory was used as the guiding theory to determine how and when Pakistani television channels may have impacted socio-political beliefs and attitudes of its audiences in Kashmir. So far majority of cultivation researchers' have studied the impact of by categorising the television audiences into light viewers, medium viewers and heavy viewers. However, the present study will be the first cultivation analysis of its kind to have studies television viewing relationship with the circumstances/situations when audiences watch the medium.

2. Study Objectives

1. To study the cross border television watching habits of people of Indian Administered Kashmir.
2. To study the perceptions of people about how they feel the socio-political of Kashmir are portrayed in Pakistani television channels.
3. To study socio-political attitudes and beliefs of people cultivated by television content of neighbouring country.



4. Methodology

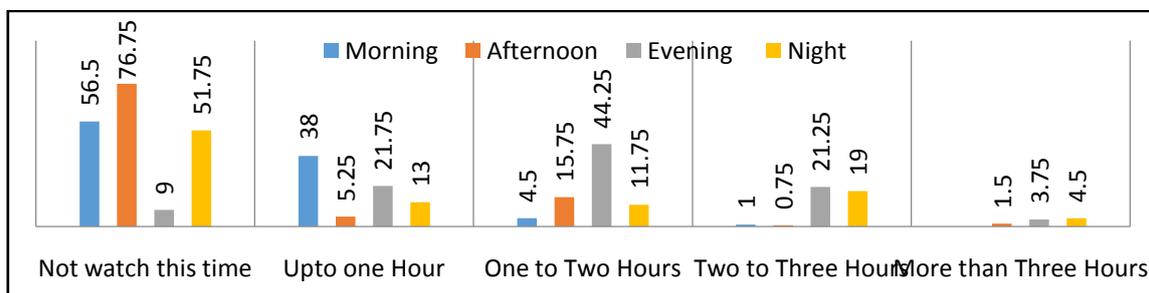
In order to fulfil the above-mentioned objectives survey method was adopted, with Interview schedule as the tool for data collection. A sample of 400 viewers of Pakistani television channels were selected purposively from five districts as representative population of Indian Administered Kashmir. Out of the total of ten districts, five districts having uppermost percentage of television households as per 2011 were chosen. The samples were drawn from the following demographic characteristics- gender, age, education and designation. Twenty percent respondents, consisting of seventy percent male and the rest thirty percent female, were taken from each district. Efforts were made to choose respondents from almost all educational backgrounds including illiterates and professions who met the age criteria of 20 or above.

5. Findings

5.1. Media Habits:

The cross tabulation between amount of time spent on watching television and four sessions of a day revealed that 19.5 percent of the respondents watch television up to one hour in a day, 19.06 percent watch one to two hours. Two to three hours and more than three hours of time spending on watching television is by 10.5 and 2.43 percent respondents respectively. (See figure 5.1.1)

Figure 5.1.1. Television Watching Habits

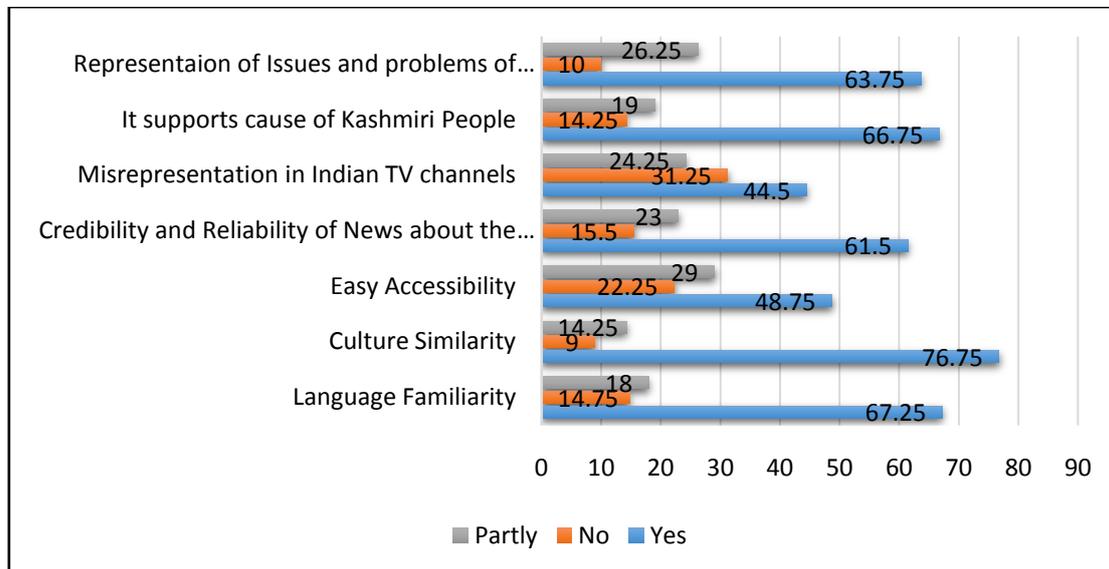


Source: Field Survey

To understand the dependency of the people of Kashmir on cross border media, the respondents were asked for the reasons for watching the cross border television. Cultural similarity of Kashmir with Pakistan followed by the familiarity of Urdu language to respondents, and the support of television of Pakistan to Kashmir freedom movement and representation to issues and problems of Kashmir in the cross border media accordingly emerged to be the causes for exposure to cross border media (see figure, 5.1.2).



Figure 5.1.2. Reasons for Watching Cross Border TV channels



Source: Field Survey

The data also discovered that 59 percent respondents prefer to watch Urdu television channels, while 24 percent prefer to watch English language TV channels. 32.75 per cent of respondents watch news based programmes mostly, however 29.5% 28% and 9.75% mostly prefer to watch 'sports and reality shows', 'Religious programmes' and 'serials and movies' respectively.

From the cross border television channels Geo News (47.75%), ARY Zindagi (14.5%), QTV, ARY Digital and ARY News are respectively the most favoured channels among Kashmiris. The channels are mostly watched at the times of protests in the Valley by 33 percent and 26 per cent of respondents watch the channels during Ramadan (Month of fasting among Muslims).

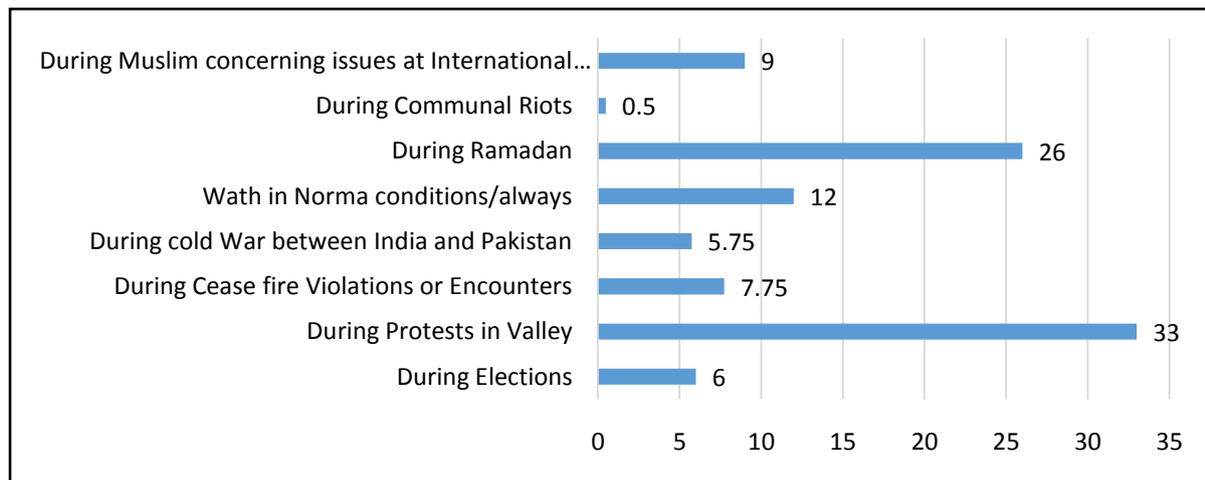


Figure 5.1.3. Occasions of watch the Cross Border TV

Source: Field Survey

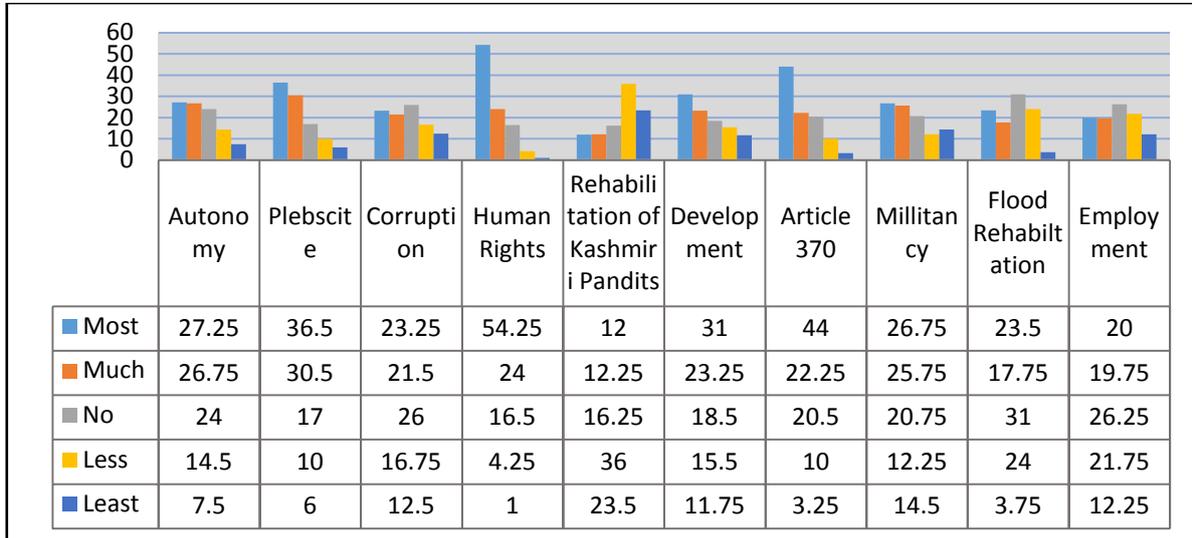
5.2. Portrayal of Kashmir in Cross Border Television

The viewership of any television channel extensively depends on how it portrays the values of the society. The majority of the respondents feel that cross border television upholds the values of the culture of Kashmir by providing modest content.

On the basis of certain core issues concerning the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the respondents were asked about how much importance, depending upon the frequency, the issues are given in cross border television channels. The results show that human rights are given more prominence followed by Article 370, plebiscite, development, autonomy and militancy respectively. Based on a five point scale, –‘extremely demotes uprising to extremely promoting uprising’, the majority held the belief that Pakistani television channels promote uprising in valley (see figure, 5.2.1).



Figure 5.2.1. Prominence given to Kashmiri issues in Cross Border TV



Source: Field Work

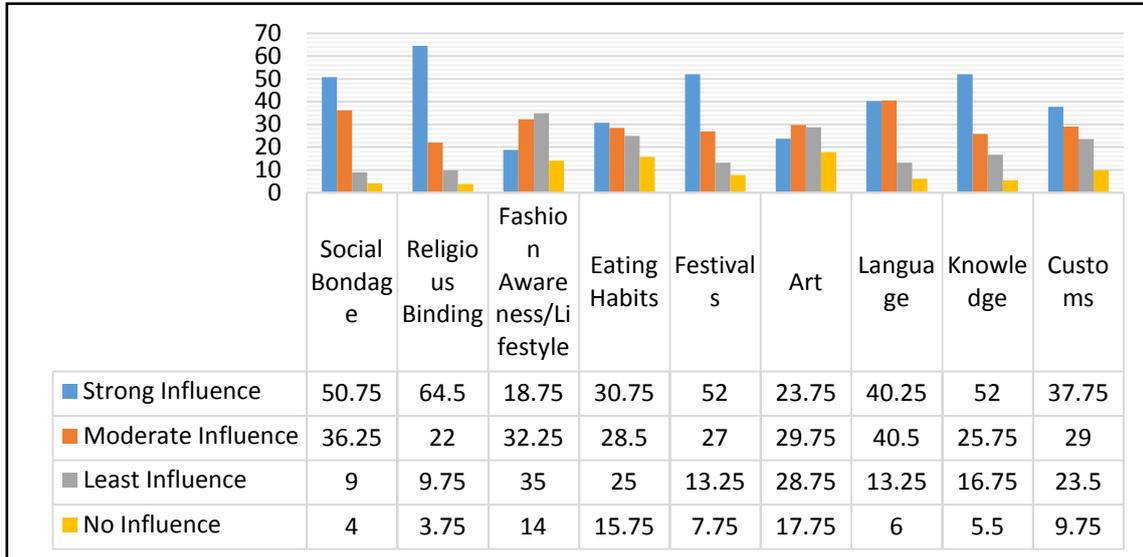
Hurriyat G (Geelani) is perceived to be the most debated party in the cross border television surprisingly followed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Mainstream political parties, both regional and national, are believed to be demonised, whereas separatist parties, mainly Hurriyat (G) and (M), are understood to be promoted in the cross border media.

5.3. Impact of cross border television

Based on several social-cultural indicators, it was found that religious perceptions of 64.5 percent of respondents are stimulated by the cross border television. 50.75% respondents believe that after watching the cross border media they are socially attracted towards Pakistan. The festivals are observed to be celebrated as portrayed in television channels from across the border. The respondents also realise that the media influences their language. Social customs in the valley are believed to be the by-product of the media (see 5.3.1).



Figure 5.3.1. Socio-cultural Impact of cross border Television

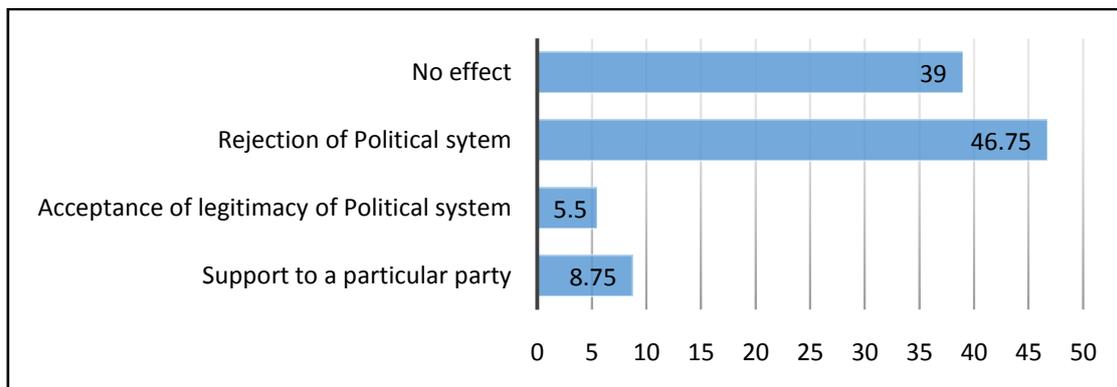


Source: Field Survey

The less but significant influenced indicators appeared to be eating habits, fashion awareness and art. The respondents who watch the channels mostly at times of protest and during Ramadan tends to more social attachment with Pakistan and religious insight. Religious leaders were found most inspiring personalities to respondents followed by Social and human rights activists. Journalists were found to be more influential than separatists and main stream politicians.

The nature of the impact of the cross border medium on political decisions was also interpreted. The data revealed that 46.75 percent reject the mainstream political system under the influence. 39% of respondents are not affected by the medium for their political decisions (see figure 5.3.2).

Figure 5.3.2. Impact of cross border TV on Political perceptions

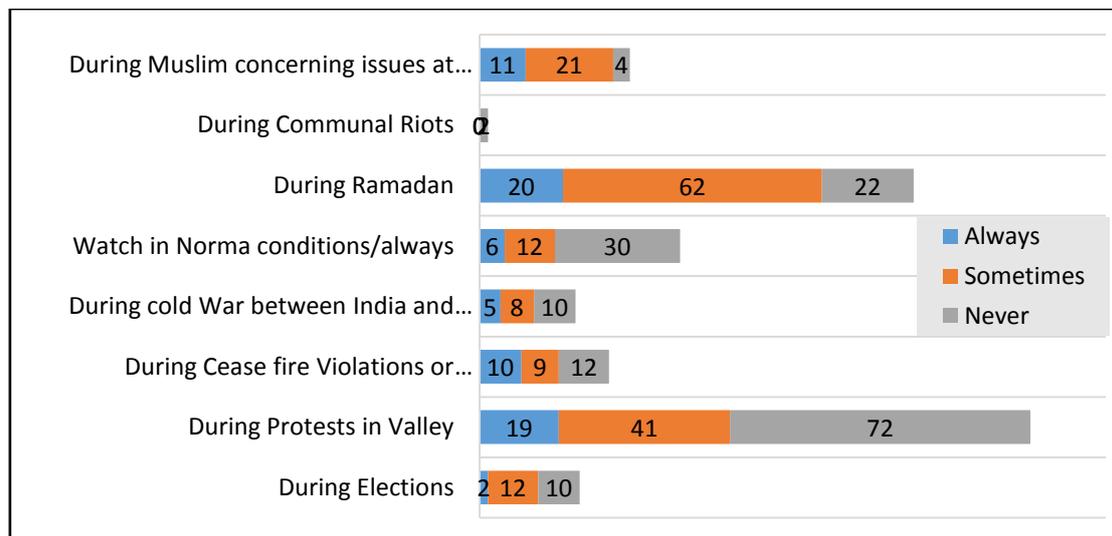


Source: Field Survey



As for as the impact of the cross border television on voting behaviour is concerned, the data revealed that the voting behaviour of 18.25 per cent of respondents always change, voting decisions of 41.25 percent changes sometimes, however the voting behaviour of 40.5 per cent never gets altered under cross border media influence. The voting decisions majority of the respondent who watch the channels at times of protests doesn't always changes but changes sometimes. Same is the case with those who watch those channels mostly in the month of Ramadan. Therefore the ratio of influence on voting behaviour is 60:40 approximately whereby 60 percent are sometimes or always influenced and the rest 40% never gets influenced (See figure 5.3.3). 62 percent of respondents support the promoted political or separatist parties, while other 38 percent does not support them.

Figure 5.3.3. Impact of cross border TV on Voting Behaviour



Source: Field Survey

In comparison to regional and national mainstream media of India, cross border television, based on five point scale, was widely rated for its impact on socio-political perceptions. 34.75 per cent respondents are very much influenced, 35 per cent are much influenced and the rest are not or never influenced, for their social and political beliefs cultivated by cross border television.

6. Conclusion

Television is the most preferred medium among Kashmiris for serving the interests of news, sports, reality shows and religious programmes. The people of Kashmir are dependent on cross border television on grounds of cultural similarity of the region with the neighbouring country, the familiarity and understanding of the broadcasting language channels, the representation of issues and problems of the region media along the support of the media to the mass movement of Kashmir for self-determination and the modesty of the content of the channels. The television



channels of Pakistan, which are banned for broadcasting in India by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of Govt. of India, are availed to the people of the Valley by local cable operators. The most popular television channels in Kashmir are Geo News, ARY Zindagi, QTV, ARY Digital and ARY News respectively. The channels are mostly watched at times of mass uprising in the valley and during the month of Ramadan.

The cross border television gives hype to issues of Kashmir including- human rights violations, Article 370, underdevelopment and autonomy of the state as well as promotes uprising and militancy. Hurrriyat Conference and BJP most debated parties in cross border television over Kashmiri. However, the ideology of separatist parties mainly Hurrriyat Conference lead by Syed Ali Shah Geelani is promoted meanwhile mainstream politics in the state including regional- Peoples Democratic Party and National Conference and national- Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress are demonized.

Significant association between the Pakistan TV viewing and the social and religious perceptions and attitudes was found with audiences who watch it during protests and in the month of Ramadan. The voting behaviour of audiences of Pakistan television channels in Kashmir are extremely influenced, resulting them to abstain from voting and refusing the main stream politics.

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