

The Effect of Visual Media to Promote Awareness of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The researchers shed light on the ability of visual media to raise awareness that contributes to change within governments or major decisions in the countries. It also discusses the media's state of being able to reach directly to the citizens and if there is any need to have an intermediary that is required to work alongside the media such as political elites and political parties. In addition, this study attempts to find out the media's effectiveness in raising awareness of the issue of Palestine to groups of university students in countries surrounding Palestine and how it contributes to Israel's fate and being threatened for being involved with Palestinians.

Keywords: *visual media, awareness, Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian territories have been occupied by the Israeli occupation since 1948 and that was a crucial reason for a shift in the Palestinians' lives at the economical, social, and political level. Some of them fled out of the country, another group are in the jail, others were killed and the rest are suffering from injustice and oppression and have a cruel life (Amer, 2011).

Israel tended to sign a treaty of peace with the neighbouring countries after fighting the three wars in 1948, 1967 and 1973 and

it has succeeded in signing two agreements, Camp David Accords with Egypt and Wadi Araba Treaty with Jordan. This was accepted only by the government, whereas people rejected those agreements and considered Israel as an enemy. Meanwhile, the interests of the governments' people in Egypt and Jordan made them agree to these accords, which were really unfair for Palestinians (Yahya, 2010). As the technology, videos and visual media revolution has erupted, the capability of media emerged to change, reject any decision, and to freely express. In addition, it led to the fall of some regimes and governments and that was obviously reflected in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. There is no doubt that the visual media and other means had their own significant role to build up a situation of full awareness and a way to express and to change for a group of young people that have had a prominent role in the revolutions. In this study, the researcher sheds light on the ability of visual media to raise awareness that contributes to change governments or big decisions in the countries. It also discusses the media's state of being able to reach directly to the citizens and if there is any need to have an intermediary who ought to be working with the media like political elite and parties. Besides, this study attempts to find out the media's effectiveness in raising awareness of the issue of Palestine to some groups of university students in countries surrounding Palestine and how it contributes to Israel's fettering and have it threatened for being brutally tyrannical with Palestinians.

In this case, the media have once again played a very important role in the formation of political awareness by providing the viewers with the news of the actual happenings and that too from the perspective of the oppressed and not from the point of view of the oppressor. In this regard, it may be noted that the information policy also contributes to the formation and changed their mind, as well as their willingness to work and support for the Palestinians (Abdurrahman, 2009).

This study shows the remodelling of all the events in the Palestine-Israel conflict into a much simpler and easier model before analysing it. There will be two levels of analysis on the effect of visual media about the Palestine-Israel conflict based on the agenda setting theory. The first level of the media coverage will be focused on the common issues which are most significant and the following level of analysis will breakdown into the sections of the most important issues. The

first and the second level of agenda setting analysis will provide an understanding of the function of subject matter, which is the news portrayal by visual media about the Palestine-Israel conflict (Caballero, 2010). This subject or any other subject in the media reporting will be regarded as a process that is distributed into three different sections based on the suggestion provided by Rogers and Dearing in their book *Agenda Setting Research*. The initial part of the suggested process is the significance issues of the Palestine-Israel conflict that are reported in the visual media. Next will be the issues reported by the channel in the channel that have an effect over the perception of the public and this is mentioned as public agenda in the analysis. And the third part of the analysis process is the impact of the issue on the policy agenda (McQuail & Windahl, 1993).

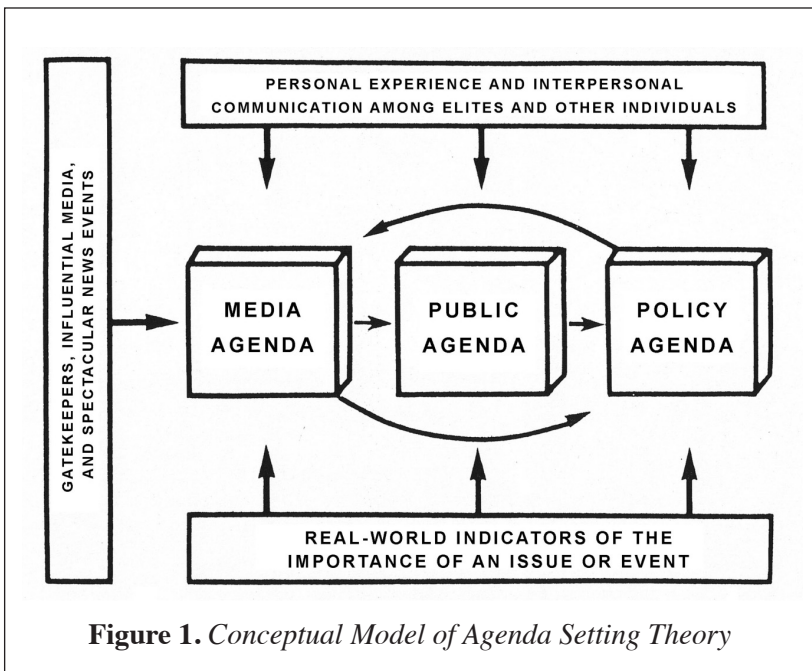
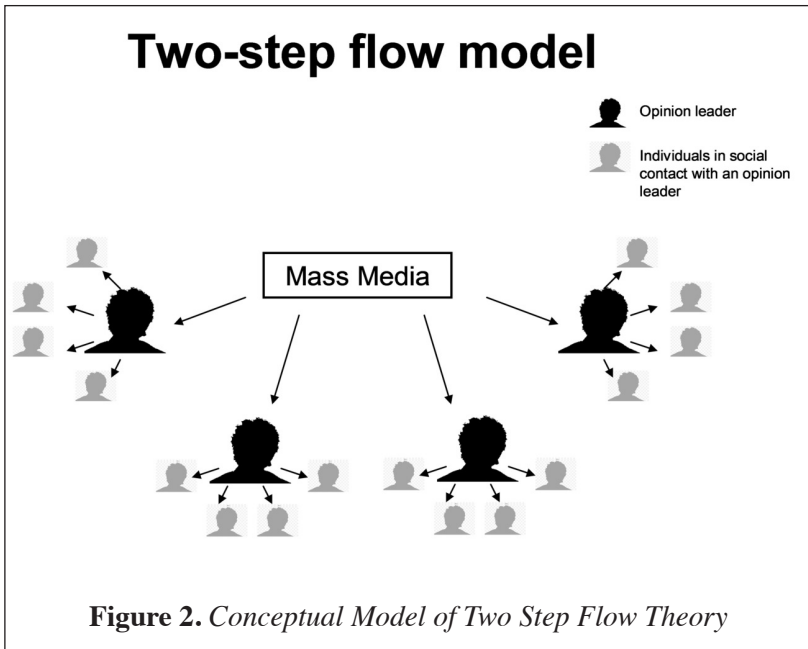


Figure 1. *Conceptual Model of Agenda Setting Theory*

Source: McQuail & Windahl (1993, p.62)

The second theory which will be used in the analysis of the Palestine-Israel conflict reported by visual media is the Two Step Follow theory. The conceptual model which will be adapted for this analysis is shown in Figure 2.



Source: Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955, p.27)

Using this theory the researcher intends to assert the audience that what is reported from the visual media will flow in two different levels. First level is opinion from leading individuals who pay close attention to the mass media and its messages and receive the information. Defined as opinion leaders, their interpretations of the media reporting and the messages from the media will be used in the qualitative analysis of this research. The opinion leaders can be from various groups; occupational, social or community. For this research, the polymorphic type of opinion leaders is preferred because polymorphic types of opinion leaders are influential on various types of issues. Then these individuals pass on their own interpretations in addition to the actual media reporting from visual media and also the messages conveyed by the news coverage to opinion seekers or receivers. The public acts as the opinion receiver in this two-step theory application.

The term 'personal influence' was coined to refer to the process intervening between the media's direct message that is interpreted by the opinion leaders and the audience's ultimate reaction to that

message (Caplan, 2011). It is important to note that the individuals in this analysis are quite influential in getting people to change their attitudes and behaviours and are quite similar to those they influence (Ohmae, 1989). Applying the two-step flow theory in this research analysis will be done in a way to understand of how the channel influence decision making. The theory is applied to refine the ability to predict the influence of messages conveyed by visual media on audience reaction, and it helps to explain why few media campaigns may have not succeeded to alter audience perception about a conflict (Odwan, 2003). The application of the two-step theory also creates an assumption the report from the visual media will not have direct influence of the public's perception about the conflict between Palestine and Israel but rather the influence actually happens through the interpretation of a knowledgeable individual who acts as the opinion leader.

Both the Agenda Setting and the Two-step Flow theories are used in the right proportion to analyse the effects of the reports from visual media about the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Questions of the Research

1. How does the portrayal of news through visual media generate interest among Arab university students?
2. How do the programs and news regarding the Palestinian – Israel conflict generate interest among Arab university students?
3. How do programs portraying the Palestinian-Israel conflict influence participatory action to support the Palestinian people?

Research Aims

1. To identify the way news portrayed by visual media generate interest among Arab university students.
2. To investigate how the programs and news related to Palestine-Israel conflict generates interest among Arab University students.
3. To identify how the programs related to Palestine-Israel conflict influence participatory action to support the Palestinian people.

Scope of Research

Thus the study focuses on the achievements of visual media in broadcasting the news of the strife between Israel and Palestine and that the impact it has created in terms of awareness as well as knowledge among the masses with special reference to the university students of the Arab universities. Moreover, the various findings of researchers also point out to the conditions that subsist as well as what are the ways in which the situation can be improved and that the visual media with special reference to the visual media has been noted to be among those few media that has been helpful in creating a greater level of knowledge among the educated population of the area.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Tools

The interview protocol for this study consisted of two parts. The first part consists of closed-ended questions about the respondents' demographic information and the background of the interviewees. The second part of the interview consists of open-ended questions, which requires explanation or description of respondents to answer the questions.

Thirty-two student leaders were selected to answer the questions that probed whether the leaders watch the programs of visual media; are those programs interesting for them in terms of increasing their knowledge; to what extent their knowledge increased and to what extent this will help them in influencing the attitudes and behaviour of their ultimate audience.

FINDINGS

The initial question that was asked is that whether the informants have interest in politics or not. This question is asked in order to check the validity of the sample taken and to ensure the active participation and interest in politics. This question resides the fact that some people shows their interests in anything due to some certain reasons behind

their likes and dislikes. The behaviour shown on this question by the student leaders indicates the preparation and motivation regarding this topic, and at the beginning, all of them do not show their interest in policies, but later agreed that they will start taking when they entered their college life. It was found that all the student leaders also agreed on the fact that a student leader should be updated with the world events, so as to improve the strategic condition of the country. Thus, it can be concluded that this stimulates the strength of awareness of the correct information, which provides a demonstration to why the students take interest in policies more probably when they enter in college than before.

As the first question ensures the interest of student leaders in policies, the next question that was asked surely was about their interest about the media. This question is asked in order to make sure that the selected sample has interest regarding to our topic. It will also be helpful in collecting correct information. Through the discussion, 82% of the student leaders shown their interest in media, and the remaining 18% of the entire student leaders did not their interest in media. Thus, it was found that the majority of the sample selected is interested in media.

As it is found from the responses of the second question that there is diversity in the interest of the student leader towards media, the next question is asked to determine what factors are included in this variance. This question was seem to be useful in assessing the effectiveness of the news channel and also determining whether the management of the channel needs to focus on the strategies of picturing of the facts and figures. It was found that 80% out of 81 % of the interested student leaders spoke of their access to news. But, they revealed that they know very well about the misrepresentation of all the information, but still they believe it as a source of information for them regarding the happening of any event across the globe, on which they merely believe or trust. The rest of 1 % student leaders have shown their interest in media as they did have interest in knowing the point of views of others. The other 18 % student leaders preferred that they do not take interest because they know about the false presentation of information regarding to the conflict. Thus, it has shown the ultimate failures of the news channels in capturing the desired attention of the target audience and leads to a crucial need of revision their strategies extensively.

As by the end of third question, the view and thinking of the student leader generally about the media has become clear, so the next question should emphasize upon the awareness and knowledge of the student leaders about the Israel-Palestine conflict. It was helpful in determining to what extent the student leader know about this conflict and what do they actually know about it, especially about its history. It was found that on average, all the student leaders had more than 80% knowledge about the conflict. When calculated numerically, it is seen that the 32 student leaders have almost 92% knowledge about the Palestine-Israel conflict. When the history of this conflict has been discussed with the student leaders, they come out with the same story line, as discussed by the media personnel. They all discussed about the Israel occupation and the military control over Gaza and West Bank, and about the exile of Palestinian refugees from their country. This ensures that all the people living in Palestine have the same information regarding the history of this conflict.

After acknowledging the views of the student leaders about the history of Israel-Palestine conflict, the next question should emphasize upon the source of information of the discussed history. It was seem helpful because when both the media personnel and the student leaders have the same information regarding the history, there may be a possibility that the student leaders get this information from the news channel information. But it was surprise to find that their source of this information was their elders, the Internet websites and books. 78 % of the student leaders speak of the elders, as well as the Internet sources and the books. While, the remaining of 22 % of the student leaders speak of the internet sources and the books, as they have never able to get a chance to meet their elders. Thus, we can conclude that none of them finds media as trustworthily source, as they did not give credit to the information (news) presented on TV or radio. Some part of this non-consideration is the mistrust of the student leaders, but other part may include continuously media talks about the current issues and happenings rather than taking into account the importance to the past.

Mostly the media is considered as a source of information, but surprisingly, the source of information of the student leaders was found to be their elders, the interest website and the books, but not the media. So, the next question should emphasize upon whether the news has anything to capture the attention of their target audience.

This was seemed helpful in determining the quantitative value of the extent to which the news captures their interest. It was found that only 46 % of the student leaders agreed on the fact that the news captured their interest, and the rest of 54 % of them did not agreed on this fact. The reason behind this is that the news on TV is only recap of what they have already seen by themselves. However, the student leader who ever were induce to see the information of the news thoughtfully were those who did not living in that region. So, one can easily this awareness as an internal building painful feeling against the shown helplessness of the people. Thus, we can conclude that this is leading only towards the intendency of arising aggressive behaviour in Palestinian and Israeli, then nothing and as a result, none of the leaders captured their attention after watching news on visual media.

As the above question reveals that the content of the news and information spread on the news media did not captured the attention of the target audience, that is, the student leaders, so it is important to take the views of the student leader, that what they feels that what type of information was presented on the news media. This question was seem to be important in determining the diversity or gap in stated demands and actual demands and needs of the target audience of the news channel. This can help them in improving their strategies and effectiveness of the channel. It was found that the student leaders only know about the news showing the violence on their people. None of the TV or radio programs includes the information regarding the history of this conflict. So, they cannot focus on such type of the news that was creating awareness of what they actually see in reality. Thus, the response of the leaders clearly defines the usefulness and effectiveness of the background information developed by the leaders themselves through the use of books and Internet, and even their elders, over that information developed by these news channels. Thus, the gap between the information from two different sources can clearly be seen, which identifies the failure of the mission and visions of these visual media, including visual media.

As it is derived from the result of the answers of the above question that the news media is only spreading aggressive behavioural technique, the next question should be the extent to which the news portrayed in the visual media influence the student leaders. This question, consists

of two parts, has headed towards the main topic and the main purpose and aim of conducting this research. It was helpful in obtaining a quantities value to what extent the students leaders have get influence from the news portrayed in the visual media, and in determining what factors are useful in doing so. It was found that majority of the student leaders are not influenced to a great deal by the visual media. The reason told by the student leader is again the attribute of low level of trust shown in the visual media.

When the detail discussion is made on this topic, they themselves did not blame the media personnel. According to them, both these nations, Israel and Palestine, are equal in terms of economic condition. They both have the President and Prime Minister, and even have a Minister of Telecommunications and a Minister of Tourism. They both need the permission of the other side to become able to operate. But, still the news channel of Israel has more effectiveness than that of Palestine, because of difference in the power of the government. Another fact that the student leaders are not influenced by the visual media is the statements by Palestinian officials, which directs people to think that the Palestinians are equal to the Israelis. Also, the highlights presented in the newspaper and the news channels are the meaningless speeches by their leaders, and they did not get any reality and portrait of the leaders. Thus, all these factors did not create any influence on the student leaders by the visual media.

After taking views of the student leader on the research topic in general, now the next question should be focused particularly on the selected news channel, that is, visual media. It was asked that how often the student leaders watch visual media to stay updated on the conflict. It is useful to ask this question because it is observed that the student leaders does not considered the visual media, including visual media, so whether they stay connected with the news channels in accord to stay updated in accord to seek the information which is presented by them. The student leaders maintained their own information source, so this question is important to be asked that how frequently they watch this particular media channel. A set of time grid, consisting of the options of more than twice a day, daily, every few days and rarely is presented in front of the student leaders for this purpose. It was found that 15% of the student leaders chosen the more than twice a day option, 7% of them chosen daily option, 47 % of them chosen

every few days option, and 31 % of them chosen rarely option. This shows that a majority of them selected the “Ever Few Days” options, which clearly shows the failures of the mission and visions of visual media. In other words, neither they influence their target audience, nor they capture their attention.

As similar to the previous question, the next question should also focus particularly on the performance of visual media with another perspective, that whether their historical knowledge about the conflict has increased by watching the programs portraying the Palestine-Israel conflict on visual media. As it was seen in case of the whole news media that the student leaders determined their source of information i.e. the elders, internet sources, and the books and did not trust the news from the visual media, so it is important to ask that whether visual media portraying the news about the Palestine-Israel conflict has increased their historical knowledge or not. It was found that 78 % of the student leaders agreed that visual media portraying the news about the Palestine-Israel conflict has not increased their historical knowledge, while only 22 % of them agreed that it does. So, a huge majority of them did not have any positive impression about the visual media. The reason behind this is that again they lack in trust in believing that news, but an important factor that comes out in the discussion is that the student leaders did believe that the channel itself did not offer a vast variety of programs aimed at enhancing the historical knowledge of the people, about the Palestine- Israel conflict. It was also come out that the media presented the basic fact wrongly which relates to the Israel. Such a distraction formed the basic reason why the student leaders do not use visual media as a tool to enhance their knowledge of the historical events regarding the conflict.

Another perspective of the Israel – Palestine Conflict is to influence the Palestinian or Israeli through the use of media’ (Edwards, 2009). In this perspective, it is found that the student leaders reject this factor also, and told that they believe that they only get a certain sort of pain from them. So, now it was important to ask that whether they have the same belief about the visual media particularly. The first part of this question was to obtain a quantitative value about the extent to which they think that visual media portrayed the reality. It was found that the student leaders place only a little trust in the broadcasting of, which was not found in the entire visual media channel. It was also

found that a few of the student leaders were not particularly content with what is presented on the channel. They did have a belief that both the Israel and Palestinian news media put the blame on their opposition and that this disagreement merely calls for “concessions” on both sides. The leaders asserted that they would be uninformed that the Palestinians have, for approximately 39 years, been denied their freedom and would also have been ignorant of the fact that for more than five decades, they have been driven out of their land. It was also found that the student leaders have a great knowledge about the autonomous studies carried out in the United States and Europe, outside their country. According to them, these studies have proved that it was the Palestinians occupying Israel. So it was found that these are the aspect, which the student leaders obtained from their searches and are not portrayed on the visual media. But visual media do have some strategies for including some TV programs about these to, this can easily capture the attention of their target audience and can influence only the student leaders and the other viewers of them, such as the international communities and even the western media reporter who presents the issue in favour of Israel.

As it was found and proved with the fact that visual media did not present any sort of reality, but their news includes twist to make them neutral in sense. So, it is known that such type of news cannot have any possibility to influence upon their target audience. It is also important to ask because the student leaders are the representatives of a large population, so it was seemed to be helpful to get the views of the entire population, as a whole, as if they think anything differently their leaders. The first part of this question was to obtain a quantitative value about the extent to which the entire population gets influence from the information presented on the visual media. It was found that 31 % of the student leaders agreed with the fact that they get influence from the information presented on the visual media, while the remaining 69 % did not agreed with it. The second part of this question was to ask about the reasons, which was found as the same reason that they witnessed such terror, torture and bloodshed in their everyday lives, that the visual media and its presentations had lost its importance.

After all the discussion regarding the various aspects of the mission and vision of media, especially visual media, the last two question

should focus on the conclusion that how the management can change their strategies in order to make them useful to influence and in inducing them for any type of the participatory actions.

The answers to these questions have told the strategies or factors that should be presented on the news channels for improving their effectiveness and efficiency among the important visual media news channel. It was found that initially the student leaders focused on the discussions on the TV channel, which they thought that these are a few programs that capture their attention and somehow, they got influence their thinking style. These discussions include different train of thoughts of the political leaders, which had not crossed the minds of the student leaders before. It was found that a few of them believe that somehow, the videos shared on the channel, especially of the children being hit and injured, has affected them deeply which gives them the strength to continue their struggle to save the future generations.

When it was asked how many of them got the same belief, it was found that only 47 % agreed with this fact and the remaining of 53 % of student leaders deny it. It was found that they have one more reason behind their belief is that coming across all the students, they know many of them who were influenced by the programs related to Palestine-Israel conflict and provided the evidence that their participatory action had been influenced by the channel. Here, it was found that the student leaders also spoke and judged all the questions during the discussions on behalf of the students they represented.

So, it was found from the overall discussions that as the senior managers said that they were succeeded in achieving their mission and vision to some extent, it has proved here that the beliefs of the management of the news channel of Palestine is true. But the important thing noticed in these findings is that the management does not able to achieve this mission as they think they do. They thought of the direct factors, which have influenced them, but these factors have influenced their target audience in indirect manner. It was also noticed that the management of the news channel is unable to state the demands and needs of their target audience. Even though they do able to state them properly, they are unable to present it completely and effectively. Both the management and the student leaders know the reasons behind

them, but it was found that they both are not able to remove these gaps as there are many factors that influenced on their strategies and the material to be presented on the news media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings discussed above, it can be concluded that participatory actions are not always the solution to conflicts. In case of Israel and Palestine conflict the negotiations are one of the best possible solutions. The media needs to focus on the strategies that can ease the process of negotiations, not on influencing people towards the aggressive participatory actions, which may escalate violence.

The results also suggests that communicating with media institutions to make the Palestinian issue a part of the priorities and interests of the channel as a specific goal of the plan and basic in the strategic area will yield positive results. This also should cover activation of the guidance aspect for those who are working in the preparing and presenting programs in media institution in order to make the Palestinian issue in all its aspects, cultural, religious and life presented in the programs.

Themes that emerged also include the need to take steps forward towards training working teams in significant ways, especially produce content such as reporters, editors, photographers, and the director. They also need to emphasize speech among class community leaders and heads of political parties and public figures due to their influence at the community level.

Media outlets also need to focus on the suffering among the Palestinian people as well as emphasize the damage caused to the Israelis from their use of violence against the Palestinians. They need to focus on media content using participatory methods and response mechanisms to convert the cognitive and emotional dimension among university viewers.

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