

PM Modi: Media Effect on Performance Rating

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the effect of media exposure and perceived bias on performance rating of the Modi government that was elected in 2014 in India. A sample of Coimbatoreans (N = 210) was chosen for the survey. Results showed that media exposure had a positive and direct effect on performance rating, while bias had a significant but negative effect. Such perceived media bias also had an ability to alter the political affiliation of the people, which in turn affected the performance rating, positively. Political participation of the people also exerted a direct effect on public perception about media bias towards the ruling Modi government.

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Introduction

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) witnessed an unforeseen victory in the 2014 Indian Parliamentary elections, securing 282 of the total 543 Lok Sabha seats. The incumbent Indian National Congress party managed just a meagre 44. After the massive electoral win, expectations abounded about the performance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi government among the Indian masses. In this context, we analyse the potential effects that variables like media exposure and perceived bias could exert on the performance rating of the Modi government.

Several studies had touched upon this subject, exploring the relationship between media exposure and performance rating. Mass media channels like newspapers and television are thriving in India, playing crucial political roles, and shaping public opinion about political figures. While the traditional mass media industry is dwindling in the West, India is bucking the global trend and recording a positive graph. For instance, the circulation of Indian publications increased from 40.5 crore in 2012-13 to 45.05 crore in 2013-14 (RNI, 2014). Similarly, the number of television users in India increased from 12.7% at the end of 2013 to 16.2% at 2018.

Media Bias and Effect

Media effect or influence is a widely studied area of communication research. Several past studies have observed that public performance rating of the government is dependent on the levels of media exposure. For instance, Pan and Kosicki (1997) performed a media content analysis, conducted opinion polls, and observed media effects on voters' evaluations of US President George Bush during 1990-92. Several researchers like McLeod and McDonald (1985), Bartels (1993), Fernandes (2000), Gerber, et al., (2006), Arceneaux, et al., (2015) and Feldman, et al., (2015) have studied the political impact of mass media. Dimitrova, et al., (2011) studied, the digital media effect on political participation and knowledge, their result found that the weak effect of digital media use on political learning and significant effect on political participation on

digital media use. Miller and Krosnick (1996) studied agenda priming of the news media and found that the media impacts the ingredients of presidential evaluations.

Andrea and Vincenzo Memoli (2015) analyzed the perspective of news media and political attitudes of citizens, that media exposure affects confidence in political institutions. Freedman and Goldstein (1999) measured the effects of media exposure on the impact of negative campaign advertisements. De Vreese (2004) also observed that exposure to news media outlets that offered negative evaluations of political leaders boosted the decline in the overall performance rating of political leaders by politically less involved respondents. The digital media literacy education has been associated with online political engagement and increased exposure to diverse perspectives. Kahne, et al., (2012) Susanna Dilliplane (2011) proposed that exposure to news slanted toward one's own partisan views increases political participation, while exposure to news with the opposite partisan slant depresses participation. Exposure to political news slanted toward one's own partisan views reduces prejudice among television viewers (Goldman, 2012). Although newspaper reporting was primarily neutral or positive, readers of highly critical papers were more distrustful of the government; but the impact of criticism on the more stable attitude of political efficacy was modest, Miller, et al., (1979) observed, adding that exposure to national news interacted with critical news content primarily to affect feelings of trust and not efficacy. Exposure to news with high levels of political content (such as public television news and broadsheet newspapers) contributed the most to knowledge gains and increased the propensity to turn out to vote (De Vreese, et al., 2006). Tolbert, et al., (2003), in their research, found that exposure to ballot initiatives increased the probability of voting, stimulated campaign contributions to interest groups, and enhanced political knowledge. Internet access and online exposure to information about the presidential campaign are significantly associated with political associations (Kenski, et al., 2006).

Exposure to media content and interpersonal political discussions affect political mass behaviour. However, assessment of the relationship between media and discussion has complicated due to the difficulty in establishing the causal order of that relationship, noted Mondak (1995). These studies have produced crucial evidence suggesting credible political effects of mass media. Winter (1987) observed that presidential appeal, defined in terms of electoral success, significantly correlated with the congruence or match between the president's motive profile and that of his contemporary society.

In contrast, presidential greatness, as rated by historians, as well as several important outcomes involving war and peace are associated with certain of the president's motives by themselves, but not with president-society congruence. Perceptions about a leader's political skill are associated with the leader's effectiveness ratings after controlling for demographic variables (Ammeter and Douglas, 2004). The idea that the modern mass media have a strong and malign effect on many aspects of social and political life is wide and strongly held.

Newton (2006) assessed a politics-centered theory that focuses on the performance of government and the economy. The researcher examined a combination of aggregate cross-national comparative data and detailed case studies of four countries that had suffered exceptional decline of political support for politicians, political institutions and the systems of government. While cross-national comparative evidence about a large and diverse number of nations supported social capital theory, an in-depth study of four countries that had experienced substantial decline of political support did not. The erosion of support coincided in all four with poor economic and/or political performance.

Reviewing past studies, it can be assumed that biased media coverage could impact the public performance rating of governments.

At times, media is biased—that is, their political coverage exhibits an observable slant favouring a section of the political class or a party. Media bias has been empirically examined and its effects on other variables have been widely studied (Iyengar, 1990, DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2006; Entman, 2010; Chiang and Knight, 2011; Durante and Knight, 2012; Baum and Yuri M. Zhukov, 2015). Morris (2007) observed the popular television news influence to the U.S audience during the 2004 president election campaign period and found that televisions was biased towards the party. Bernhardt, et al., (2008) examined that political polarization, the median ideology is a centrist and centrist voters gain access to unbiased news, media bias can generate excessive cross-over voting, which, in turn, can lead to the election of the wrong candidate. Prior (2013) observed that the partisan media has contributed to political polarization and newer media outlets have added more partisan messages to a continuing supply of mostly centrist news. Endersby (2011) examined the newspaper readership has associated with the partisan preferences and found that press bias has effect on newsreaders. Smith (2010) estimated the political elite's news coverage and the news media increased for perception of media bias.

Barclay, et al., (2014) examined the political orientations of the top four English newspapers published from India during the 2014 Lok Sabha, election campaign period and found that each of those four newspapers was biased towards a certain political party in its overall election coverage. Barclay,

et al., (2014 A) in their study, observed that media content and bias have a direct and positive effect on public opinion and mass political preference.

Political Participation

Generally, political participation is defined as any activity that shapes, affects or involves the political sphere. Political participation ranges from voting to attending a rally to sending a letter to a public representative. Going by De Vreese (2004), the levels of political participation of the people have an effect on their evaluations of political leaders. Brouer, et al., (2013) assessed the leader political skills affect the leader and the follower effectiveness. Lee (2015) performed a content analyses of president performance rating also examined the effect of speech pattern on their performance rating in the following years. Bush (1989 – 1992), Clinton (1993 - 2000), G.W. Bush (2001 – 2008), and Obama (2009 – 2011) and tested survey results from 1989 to 2010 and found that the speech patterns has a high effect on their Performance Rating. Treadway, et al., (2013) studied bullies can achieve the higher ratings of performance through successful navigation of social and political organizational environment. Goel (1976) studied the impact of socio-demographic factors like area of residence, education, occupation, income and age on political interest and participation in India.

Tolbert and McNeal (2003) and Woodly (2008) studied the impact of online political participation and voting preference. Mcleod, et al., (1999) had studied the impact of television news on political participation. Political alienation and low participation was related to the consumption of entrainment content in television and the popular press (Holtz-Bacha, 1990). Gentzkow, et al., (2009) observed the newspaper effects on political participation, party vote shares and electoral competitiveness and they found that the newspaper have a positive effect on political participation. Entman (1989) has observed that political news reports considerably altered the political attitudes of the readers. Political interest was found to moderate the relationship between digital media use and traditional forms of political participation. While mass media are found to affect political participation of their users, they also play a major role bridging the gap between the people and politicians. Analysing online social media, Hyuna and Kimb (2015) found that political participation and conversation shared a differential and interactive relationship. The relationships between political participation and several other variables like self-transcendence (Pacheco and Owena, 2015) and personal values (Schwartz, 1992) have also been tested. Bimber, et al., (2015) estimated political interest using factors like political conversation and levels of seeking political information in the media. Political participation in general but not voting was greater among heavy television news consumers and avid newspaper readers than poor consumers (Eveland Jr, et al., 2000).

Wong (2000) studied the effects of political exposure on the development of political partisanship. The researcher also found an association between age and political exposure, attitudes and partisanship. Goerres (2007) observed that older people participated differently from younger people in politics. Varnalia and Vehbi Gorgulu (2014) studied online political participation and examined the social determinants of action that drive expressive political participation on Twitter. Bodea and Kajsa E. Dalrymple (2014) found that more the Twitter users are interested in and engage in politics in general, less trusting they are of the mainstream media.

On the other hand, Baek (2015) observed that the online social networking websites are contributing to an increase in political participation, while discussing media mobilization and its effect. Several other studies had focussed on democratic participation through the Internet (Holt, et al., [2013] and Kim [2015]). Examining these past studies, it can be assumed that media exposure, perceived bias, political participation and affiliation are inter-related. Performance Rating, in the present study, is defined as people's rating on the performance of the Narendra Modi-led Central government ruling the country. On the other hand, Political Participation of the people, their level of Media Exposure, perceived Media Bias and their Political Affiliation are estimated with the help of a questionnaire.

Using these variables, a path model is proposed (Fig. 1).

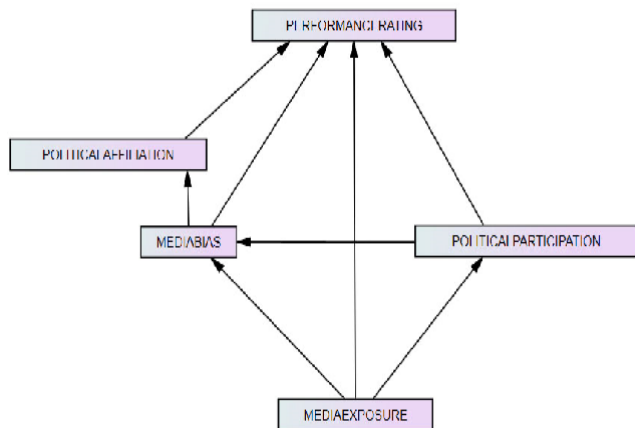


Fig 1. Initial model

In this model, the variable Performance Rating is regressed on Political Participation of the people (De Vreese, 2004; Tolbert and McNeal, 2003; and Woodly, 2008) and Media Exposure (Pan and Kosicki, 1997; McLeod and McDonald, 1985; Bartels, 1993; Fernandes, 2000; Gerber, et al., 2006; Arceneaux, et al., 2015; and Feldman, et al., 2015). It is also assumed that Political Affiliation and perceived Media Bias could have a direct influence on Performance Rating, while Political Participation and Media Exposure could affect perceptions of Media Bias.

Based on this model, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- 1)Media Exposure has a direct effect on Performance Rating (H1)
- 2)Media Exposure has a positive direct effect on Political Participation.(H2)
- 3)Media Exposure has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Political Participation.(H3)
- 4)Political Participation has a direct effect on Media Bias.(H4)
- 5)Political Participation has a direct effect on Performance Rating.(H5)
- 6)Political Participation has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Media Bias.(H6)
- 7)Media Bias has a direct effect on Performance Rating.(H7)
- 8)Media Bias has a direct effect on Political Affiliation.(H8)
- 9)Media Bias has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Political Affiliation.(H9)
- 10)Political Affiliation has a direct effect on Performance Rating.(H10)

Research Design

The aim of the present study is to analyse the direct and indirect effects of several potential factors on the dependent variable public Performance Rating of the ruling BJP

government in India. Based on a pool of past studies on the subject, the following set of variables was chosen.

- Political Participation
- Media Exposure
- Performance Rating
- Media Bias

An instrument was developed to evaluate these factors with 62 items. The final set of items for the variables was reduced to 27 employing a factor analysis using the Principal Components method without rotation. A sample of 210 respondents was chosen from Coimbatore—a district in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu—using a multi-stage stratified sampling technique. To estimate reliability measures, a pilot study was conducted with 50 respondents and a split-half correlation using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula was performed. The reliability co-efficient was estimated to be .682—authenticating the instrument.

Apart from these, socio-demographic variables—age, gender, educational qualifications, occupational status, monthly family income and area of residence of the respondents—were chosen to be the independent variables and were evaluated by the questionnaire.

On the data gathered through the survey, statistical analyses were performing to investigate the relationships among the independent and dependent variables.

Factor Analysis

A factor analysis was conducted to extract the four variables. For the variable Political Participation, 14 items were subjected to Principal Components analysis without rotation and 8 items were finally chosen. And, the regression value was saved for the variable. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the sample was just factorable (KMO=.500) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 788.029$, $p < .005$). The result of factor analysis showed that a single factor contributed to 50.655% of the variance in the items.

Similarly, for Media Exposure, 16 items were used for analysis and finally five item were chosen. Bartlett's test of sphericity was positive ($\chi^2 = 277.802$, $p < .005$) and a single factor contributed to 50.896% of the variance in the items chosen. For Performance Rating, 21 of the 36 items were chosen. Bartlett's test of sphericity was positive ($\chi^2 = 37.895$, $p < .005$) and a single factor contributed to 70.428% of the variance. For, Media Bias, five items were chosen. Bartlett's test was positive ($\chi^2 = 237.003$, $p < .005$) and factor contribution was 51.705%.

Finding and Discussion

Before the factorial model built with the variables Political Participation, Media exposure, Media Bias and Performance Rating is tested, the association between the socio-demographic variables Age, Gender, Educational qualification, Family income, Occupation, Area of residence and Political affiliation and the aforementioned dependent variables is tested. A one-way Anova was conducted when the independent variable had more than two groups and T-Test was used to check the relationships between these variables and the results are presented in Table 1.

One-way Anova test results showed that there was a statistically significant association between Political Affiliation and Performance Rating ($F(2, 207) = 8.691$, $p = .000$).

Table 1. One-way Anova and T-test results

Variables	Political Participation	Media Exposure	Performance Rating	Media Bias
Gender	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Age	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Educational qualification	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Occupation	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Family income	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Area of Residence	Non-Sig	Sig	Non-Sig	Non-Sig
Political affiliation	Non-Sig	Non-Sig	Sig	Non-Sig

Similarly, a statistically significant association was observe between Area and Media Exposure ($F(1, 208) = 2.618, p = .009$). Association between the rests of the variables was not statistically significant. Before moving on to path analysis, relationships between the variables Political Participation, Media exposure, Media Bias and Performance Rating are tested and the test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between variables

		Political Participation	Media Exposure	Media Bias	Performance Rating
Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.284**	.115	-.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.098	.135
	N	210	210	210	210
Media Exposure	Pearson Correlation	.284**	1	-.133	.195**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.054	.004
	N	210	210	210	210
Media Bias	Pearson Correlation	.115	-.133	1	-.279**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	.054		.000
	N	210	210	210	210
Performance Rating	Pearson Correlation	-.103	.195**	-.279**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.135	.004	.000	
	N	210	210	210	210

**-. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson’s product-moment correlation analysis was performed on the variables. There was a positive and statistically-significant positive correlation between Political Participation and Media Exposure ($r = .284, n = 210, p < .0005$) and between Media Exposure and Performance Rating ($r = .195, n = 210, p = .004$), while a negative correlation was observed between Media Bias and Performance Rating ($r = -.279, n = 210, p < .0005$). Between the other chosen variables, the correlation was not statistically significant.

Model and Hypothesis Testing

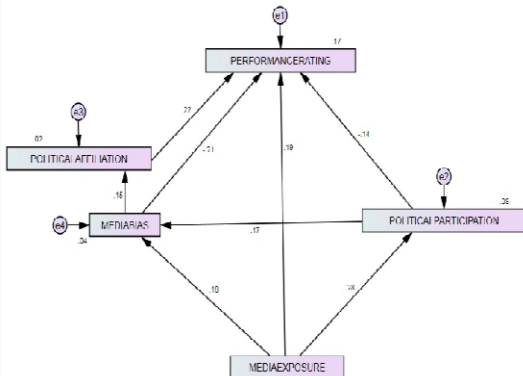


Fig 2. Final path model

The path model proposed in this study is tested using SPSS Amos. Using modification indices and after trying out a considerable set of alternatives, the final refined model (presented in Fig. 2) is derived and the SEM analysis results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. SEM analysis results

Result (Default model)

Minimum was achieved

Chi-square = 1.199

Degrees of freedom = 2

Probability level = .549

Model Fit Summary

CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1	1.107	0

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E	C.R	P	Label
Political Participation	<---	Media Exposure	0.285	0.066	4.285	***	par_6
Media Bias	<---	Political Participation	0.165	0.070	2.352	0.019	par_1
Media Bias	<---	Media Exposure	-0.180	0.070	-2.559	0.010	par_2
Political Affiliation	<---	Media Bias	-0.103	0.048	-2.137	0.033	par_8
Performance Rating	<---	Political Affiliation	0.531	0.151	3.510	***	par_3
Performance Rating	<---	Media Exposure	0.313	0.111	2.807	0.005	par_4
Performance Rating	<---	Media Bias	-0.344	0.109	-3.150	0.002	par_5
Performance Rating	<---	Political Participation	-0.232	0.111	-2.088	0.037	par_7

Standardized Total Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Media Exposure	Political Participation	Media Bias	Political Affiliation
Political Participation	0.284	0.000	0.000	0.000
Media Bias	-0.133	0.166	0.000	0.000
Political Affiliation	0.020	-0.024	-0.146	0.000
Performance Rating	0.180	-0.179	-0.238	0.224

Standardized Direct Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Media Exposure	Political Participation	Media Bias	Political Affiliation
Political Participation	0.284	0.000	0.000	0.000
Media Bias	-0.181	0.166	0.000	0.000
Political Affiliation	0.000	0.000	-0.146	0.000
Performance Rating	0.188	-0.139	-0.206	0.224

Standardized Indirect Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Media Exposure	Political Participation	Media Bias	Political Affiliation
Political Participation	0.284	0.000	0.000	0.000
Media Bias	-0.133	0.166	0.000	0.000
Political Affiliation	0.020	-0.024	-0.146	0.000
Performance Rating	0.180	-0.179	-0.238	0.224

This model was identified with an excellent fit (refer Table 3).

As per the model, Media Exposure ($R = 0.188, p = 0.005$), Media Bias ($R = -0.206, p = 0.002$), Political Affiliation ($R = 0.224, p < 0.01$) and Political participation ($R = -0.139, p =$

0.037) were observed to have a statistically significant direct effect on Performance Rating.

Standardized Direct Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Media Exposure	Political Participation	Media Bias	Political Affiliation
Political Participation	0.284	0.000	0.000	0.000
Media Bias	-0.181	0.166	0.000	0.000
Political Affiliation	0.000	0.000	-0.146	0.000
Performance Rating	0.188	-0.139	-0.206	0.224

Standardized Indirect Effects (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Media Exposure	Political Participation	Media Bias	Political Affiliation
Political Participation	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Media Bias	0.047	0.000	0.000	0.000
Political Affiliation	0.020	-0.024	0.000	0.000
Performance Rating	-0.008	-0.04	-0.033	0.000

Similarly, Media Exposure had a statistically significant direct effect on Political Participation ($R= 0.284, p < 0.01$) and Media Bias ($R= -0.181, p = 0.01$). Political Participation had a direct effect on Media Bias ($R= 0.166, p = 0.019$).

Similarly, the variables Media Exposure, Political Participation and Media Bias have significant indirect effects on Performance Rating.

Hence, the alternative hypotheses that Media Exposure has a direct effect on Performance Rating (H1); Media Exposure has a positive direct effect on Political Participation (H2); Media Exposure has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Political Participation (H3); Political Participation has a direct effect on Media Bias (H4); Political Participation has a direct effect on Performance Rating (H5); Political Participation has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Media Bias (H6); Media Bias has a direct effect on Performance Rating (H7); Media Bias has a direct effect on Political Affiliation (H8); Media Bias has an indirect effect on Performance Rating mediated through Political Affiliation (H9); Political Affiliation has a direct effect on Performance Rating (H10) are accepted.

Discussion

Mass media turns out to be an important factor affecting the political perceptions of the people. According to the study results, media exposure has a positive effect on the performance rating of the government as prophesied by theoreticians like Pan and Kosicki (1997), McLeod and McDonald (1985), Bartels (1993), Fernandes (2000), Gerber, et al., (2006), Arceneaux, et al., (2015) and Feldman, et al., (2015). Miller and Krosnick (1996) had also found an association between media exposure and presidential evaluations. Media exposure was also observed to have a positive effect on political participation of the people (Dimitrova, et al., 2011).

However, the impact of mass media on perceived bias was negative in the present study. That is, as the levels of media exposure increased, the users felt less of bias. These findings draw attention to the political role that the mass media play in the Indian setting.

That the mass media play an important political role is well documented in the present study as in the cases of several past studies [Andrea and Vincenzo Memoli (2015); Freedman and Goldstein (1999); De Vreese (2004); Kahne, et al., (2012);

Susanna Dilliplane (2011) and Goldman (2012)]. This study also shows that the general perception about mass media is that they are biased and this perception about bias reduces with an increase in media exposure.

Perceive media bias is also observed to have a negative effect on performance rating. This apart, media exposure was also found to have a direct positive effect on the performance rating of the people on the Modi government. This could be as a result of media coverage favourable to the Modi government after its historic win in the general elections.

Similarly, political participation was found to have effects on perceived media bias and the performance rating of the people (Miller, et al., 1979 and Tolbert, et al., 2003).

Barclay, et al., (2014) examined the political orientations of the top four English newspapers published from India during the 2014 Lok Sabha, election campaign period and found that each of those four newspapers was bias towards a party in its overall election coverage. Towards the end of the election and after it, the media coverage became highly in favour of the BJP as the victory of that party was imminent. This study reinstates the importance of the mass media in the Indian setting and their political implications.

Conclusion

As the study results show, it can be cautiously assumed that media exposure has direct and indirect effects on the performance rating of the people on the government. Evidence supporting this theory has been provided with path analysis after a communication model was built and tested successfully. While media exposure is also directly related to perceived media bias and political participation, the latter also mediate the effect of media exposure on the performance rating. Political participation was also found to have a direct and positive effect on perceived media bias. However, the effects that media exposure has on perceived media bias and that media bias has on the performance rating are both negative, while the direct effect that media exposure has on the performance rating is positive. This study also found a relationship between political affiliation of the people and their performance rating of the government.

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