

SATIRISTS AND COMMUNICATION OF RESISTANCE: THE CRAFT OF
POLITICAL HUMOR AND SATIRE IN PAKISTAN

by

Mahrukh Maqsood

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication Studies

Charlotte

2023

Approved by:

Dr. Daniel Grano

Dr. Min Jiang

Dr. Camille Endacott

ABSTRACT

MAHRUKH MAQSOOD. *Satirists and Communication of Resistance: The Craft of Political Humor and Satire in Pakistan.* (Under the direction of DR. DANIEL GRANO)

Political Satire and humor have emerged as significant components of Pakistan's infotainment industry. This study explores the satire and Political humor industry in Pakistan, focusing on how satirists use their craft for dissenting and speaking truth to those in power. It also provides insight into their lived experiences and motivations while being associated with the craft. The research was conducted using qualitative research methodology that involved semi-structured interviews of famous satirists and satire producers in Pakistan. Following thematic analysis, the thesis identifies several major themes, including the definition of satire, satire as a form of dissent, satire for satirists themselves, the production of satire, and more. This study also contains a chronological history of satire and humor in Pakistan providing perspective into contemporary satire and tracing its roots from the pre-colonial times to the modern placement in the industry. Overall, this thesis project contributes to a better understanding of the craft of political humor and satire in Pakistan as it offers insight into the production of satire. The significance of this research cannot be overstated, as there is an evident lack of literature on the subject and this study will set the groundwork for future scholarship in this field, making it a crucial undertaking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I reflect on my academic journey, an overwhelming sense of gratitude floods me for the individuals who made this moment possible. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my thesis committee members and loving family for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this challenging yet fulfilling expedition.

To my esteemed committee members, Dr. Grano, Dr. Jiang, and Dr. Endacott, your dedication to your craft and commitment to my success have been truly inspiring. Your constructive feedback, valuable insights, and thought-provoking discussions have pushed me beyond my limits and inspired me to attain academic excellence. I am grateful for your mentorship, guidance, and willingness to share your expertise with me, as your contributions were instrumental in shaping the outcome of my research.

To Hanif, my loving husband, and greatest supporter, you have been my rock throughout this journey. Your unwavering belief in me, endless patience, and unrelenting encouragement have sustained me through long hours, sleepless nights, and endless revisions. Those cups of tea in the middle of a long night fueled my soul and kept me going.

This achievement fills me with a sense of pride, gratitude, and humility. I am proud of what I have accomplished, grateful for the people who have supported me, and humbled by the realization that I could not have done this alone. Thank you, all of you, for your unwavering support, constant encouragement, and enduring love. I am truly blessed to have you in my life.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
Glossary	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
The Global Literature	4
History of Satire in Pakistan.....	7
Pakistan’s Contemporary Literature in Satire	13
Chapter 3: Research Design	16
Research Context.....	16
Researcher’s Positionality	16
Sample Selection	16
Data Collection.....	17
Data Analysis.....	17
Strategies for Quality.....	18
Research Questions	18
Chapter 4: Findings	19
Q1. What Is a Pakistani Satirist's Understanding of Satire and How Do They Perceive Its Normative Value?	19
Satire is an Effective Tool in Simplifying News for Easy Comprehension	20
Satire as a Continuing Tradition.....	21
Satire as a Mirror	23
Q2. What Motivations and Role Orientations Guide Pakistani Satirists in Their Work?	25
Satire as Continuous Reinvention	25
Using Satire as a Tool to Entertain and Educate Audiences	27
Satire Versus Journalism	28
Q3. How Do Satirists Perceive Their Role in Creating or Fostering Resistance Within Pakistan’s Particular Socio-Political Climate?.....	30
Satire as An Instrument of Dissent.....	30
Satire for Satirists	32
Q4. What Internal and External Factors Do Pakistani Satirists Perceive as Influencing their Work?	34
Production of Satire.....	34
Editorial Policy as an Impact on the Content of Satire	36

Chapter Five: Discussion.....	38
Limitations.....	40
Chapter 6: Conclusion	42
References	45
Appendix A: Participants	50
Ali Aftab Saeed	50
Ayesha Jahanzaib	50
Mobeen Gabool	50
Aashan Rana	51
Zeeshan Haidar	51
Appendix B: Interview Questions	52

List of Tables

Table 1: Research Questions and Related Themes.....	19
---	----

Glossary

<i>Aaj News's</i>	A Private Television Channel in Pakistan
<i>Aalu Anday</i>	A Musical Satire Song
<i>Aisa Karogay to Kon Aaye Ga</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Anghan Tera</i>	A Satirical Television Show
<i>Auratnaak</i>	A Social Media Stand-up Comedy Show
<i>Beygairat Brigade</i>	A Satirical Music Band in Pakistan
<i>Bhānds</i>	A group that performs <i>Juggat</i>
<i>Cham Mota</i>	A Leather Slapstick Used in <i>Juggat</i> Performance
<i>Dhinak Dhinak</i>	A Musical Satire Song
<i>Dunya News</i>	A Private Television Channel in Pakistan
<i>Hasb-e-Haal</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Hasnah Manah Ha</i>	A Prime -Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Jazbatti</i>	A Musical Satire Song
<i>Joke Dar Joke</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Juggat</i>	An Epigram in Punjabi
<i>Khabardar</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Khabarnaak</i>	A Prime-Time Satire Show in Pakistan
<i>Paisay ki Game</i>	A Musical Satire Song
<i>Ranga</i>	A character who performs <i>Juggat</i>
<i>Waderay ka Beta</i>	A Musical Satire Song

Chapter 1: Introduction

Satire developed as a medium through which critical issues could be addressed while maintaining lightheartedness. As its popularity grew, it became a common element in prime-time media. Research has shown that satire can influence the attitudes of the message recipients (Sternthal & Craig, 1973). In contemporary scholarship, wit, and political humor are continually studied concerning political communication (Baumgartner & Lockerbie, 2018). It is an occupational hazard for a politically volatile country like Pakistan. However, a decade or two ago, political opinion leaders in the position of satirists tended to be professionals employed by newspapers and other forms of media, and they managed the flow of information from the media source to the general population (Lazarsfeld, et. al., 2021). Today, satirists and stand-up comedians use platforms such as social media and online sharing sites and belong to various walks of life both within and outside of professional media.

The media environment in Pakistan is also highly dynamic. Although it still reflects the legacy of colonial patronage of media government and media masses' relationships (Hussain et al., 2022). However, we cannot discount the fact that the media is essential for the flow of information due to the country's volatile political conditions and active struggles between military and democratic regimes (Parveen & Nawaz, 2018). In seven decades since its independence, Pakistan's civil government has never lasted more than 11 years (Smith, 2020). Despite an exponentially growing number of media outlets 100 TV and 200 radio channels since 2002 (Reporters without border, 2022), press freedom is still curbed through various legal and constitutional means (Mezzera & Sial, 2010). In an online article, Siddiqui (2019) references a survey conducted by a media watch organization

stating that 88 percent of Pakistan’s journalists self-censor to avoid any trouble. According to Freedom Network Pakistan, an independent rights group, over the last decade alone, 25 cases out of 26 concerning the death or disappearance of investigative journalists remain unsolved (Siddiqui, 2019). Some media theorists believe that censorship often continues into satire; Chulov (2015) summarized the limitations of Pakistan’s satire industry in the *Guardian*, writing that “only the satire that has the sense to limit its target is tolerated” (para. 25).

Despite the changing political climate, television shows made generations laugh, from slapstick to satire, political lampoonery to wit (Shuaib, 2020). The contemporary young Pakistani satirists – from comedian Danish Ali to the *Beygairat* (Dishonorable) Brigade music group – also add pointed laughter by using satire to address political and social issues (Ali I., 2014).

In Pakistan’s media and political context, political satirists find it difficult to position themselves as opinion leaders, though their political opinions are equally substantial with other political commentators. To analyze satire and political humor, researchers typically design their studies around the content of satire being aired on satirical TV shows. However, to get a more detailed understanding of satire, it is also imperative to study the people behind that creation—the satirists and their producers. The extant literature, however, seldom focuses on the media professionals associated with satire (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2021). The existing research has paid little attention to the question of how different approaches to satire are reflected in satirists' individual motivation and role orientation (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2021). Studying the production side of media requires access that is not easily granted. Having worked in Pakistan's media industry, I have the unique

opportunity to approach individuals directly involved in political satire production. This access allowed me to conduct a production-focused analysis of political satire in Pakistan.

This study is a primary research project interviewing prime satirists, stand-up comedians, and satire producers in Pakistan. Through an in-depth analysis of the data while drawing connections with the available literature this thesis not only investigates several issues unique to the production and political context surrounding Pakistani satire, but it also explores the following: how authorities control the content that is and is not aired through means that include censorship; how satirists frame arguments and tell stories about a traditionally conservative society through humor while also maintaining specific societal values; satire as a mode of dissent; how the volatility of Pakistan's political climate affects the craft of satire; and how satirists' lived experiences shape their framing of content. The themes answer various questions while addressing misconceptions regarding the freedom of expression in Pakistan and its media industry.

In this thesis, I first define and situate satire, political humor, and satirists in the contemporary media industry of Pakistan and how it is important to maintain a flow of information. Next, I provide a literature review of the available scholarship globally and within Pakistan while providing a chronological history of satire and humor from pre-colonial to post-colonial to contemporary satire in Pakistan. Following I provide an insight into the research methodology and how semi-structured interviews allowed us to explore more in-depth lived experiences of satirists in Pakistan. The analysis section describes in detail the themes derived from the interviews. Lastly, I discuss the implications of this study while concluding with the limitations that occurred while conducting this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Global Literature

Political satire has emerged as a phenomenon on television and a popular genre around the globe (Young, 2013). Now more than ever, contemporary politics depends on the political opinion of the masses. While traditional news outlets are riddled with partisan talking points, a renaissance is happening in political satire (Day, 2011). The existing literature on satire mostly dives into the characterization and classifications of satire, the content of satire, and why it is essential, but there is not enough insight into the production and processes that go into creating satire, satirists as opinion leaders, how they perceive themselves, and most importantly satire as dissent. In this literature review, I will further elaborate on these existing themes, their positioning in the global context, and that of Pakistan and identify gaps in the literature.

Satire is daring, an expression “identifying a spade as a spade” (Butterfield, 2012 p, 378). It is a trend that has continued for centuries, with wit as its sharpest weapon (Freedman, 2012). Satire, in its several forms, has tried to correct, improve, develop, and enhance societies' social and religious values throughout history (Rajabi, 2021). As a genre, it aims to entertain its audiences while criticizing the elite (Declercq, 2017). It has the substance of political taste while adding value to the cultural capital (Gilbert, 2012).

Contemporary satire often contains wit and humor with a target while passing a judgment or painting a fantasy (Paulson, 2019). These forms of political entertainment have a more significant possibility to emphasize various hidden aspects of society (Abid, et. al., 2018). Exposure to political issues not only acts as entertainment but also teaches audiences an understanding of the political narrative around them (Moy et. al., 2005). Good

political communication aims to understand that people are political as much as they are social and emotional and always need to connect with their world (Young, 2013)

Satirical comedy shows are designed in various formats, such as sitcoms, standup shows, skits, parody show, studio shows, and more (Abid et. al., 2018). While every format holds a separate audience and maintains a certain format, they often address contemporary issues at around the same time while utilizing their preferred mode of wit and humor. Some are direct hitters while some choose to disguise their critique in apparently harmless one-liners.

A satirist is an artist who uses wit as a weapon in the entertainment industry (Kacha, 2023). Satirists like Mike Twain are referred to as social commentators and fearless observers of society (The Kennedy Center, 2022). These performers, while bringing to light social evils, also use their content to criticize political leaders, an act that is often met with censorship or worse (Freedman, 2012). Political satirists are a mirror to society, critique is one of their commonly used tools, but its use brings a wide range of consequences regardless of the nature of their craft. Freedman (2012) provided a global insight into how censorship is a significant characteristic of authoritarian regimes and how satirists must exercise caution while doing their jobs. Countries like China, Russia, Egypt, South Africa, European countries, and more are used as case studies to provide historical context into satirists acting as a source of dissent in their times and facing the consequences of oppressive regimes. The research also draws comparisons between authoritarian regimes and democracies. While democracies vary in openness and often have measures in place to gatekeep critical content, they still provide satirists with an array of opportunities (Freedman, 2012).

Censorship is not the only uncertainty that affects the production of satire. Another element affecting their positioning as opinion leader is the abundance of self-generated content. In today's world, both professional and non-professional satirists compete for attention to drive opinion (Crittenden et al., 2011). Expanding on this phenomenon a study conducted by Crittenden and colleagues (2011) studied social media's impact on satirical artists' lives and how the abundance of online user-generated content has called into question the status of traditional satirists as opinion leaders. They divide satirists into four categories: traditionalist, creator, rookie, and technologist. Their research also provided insight into evolving mediums of satire, like new media, and how they can impact the livelihood of professional traditionalist satirists—creating a sense of rising uncertainty in the field of professional satire.

Another essential subject my research aims to analyze is the aspect of dissent in the purview of satire. Amber Day's work is a significant piece of literature that deals with that subject. Day (2011), in her book, builds her argument around the contemporary understanding of political discourse and how it is a deified concept. She builds upon the ideas of Jeffrey Jones, Jonathan Gray, and Geoffrey Baym, stating that satire is a vehicle for political awareness and participation in social and civil pursuits. She primarily discusses the three forms of satire in her work: the satiric documentary, the parodic news shows, and ironic media-savvy activism. Making an argument that all these genres provide the satirist an opportunity to step into the political world without compromising ethics and introducing fiction, giving the satirist a chance to “cultivate a blurring of the traditional categories of entertainment and news art and activism, satire, and political dialogue” (Day, 2011, p. 2).

Satire as dissent is a global concept. Many authoritarian regimes around the East have witnessed satire being used as a tool of dissent and satirists emerging as change-makers worldwide. Pearce and Hajizada (2014) studied how political humor is a means of dissent in an authoritarian regime like Azerbaijan. Being political humorists/satirists themselves, this study is an ethnographic piece with historical insights into the literature around central Asia. The authors talk in detail about the content, which brought light to the state's corruption, and were arrested for the alleged charges of “hooliganism.” They had created satirical YouTube videos criticizing the state’s latest donkey trade with Germany. As their video got traction, they were sentenced to several months in jail (Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). It was only after immense international pressure that they were released. Despite appearing lighthearted, humor threatens repressive regimes and can have serious consequences (Oring, 2014, as cited in Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). They also build a case stating, “online humor is likely the only practical way for dissident and distribution of a message to wider audiences and is likely to generate political participation” (Pearce & Hajizada, 2014, p. 70)

Only a few studies are available studying the production elements of satire while connecting it to the possibility of dissent. To build an in-depth literature backdrop on the subject, most people refer to the available interviews of satirists who fancy themselves as tools of dissent; therefore, making this study an essential addition to the subject.

History of Satire in Pakistan

To understand the study's relevance and how satire has developed as a mode of dissent, it is imperative to articulate how humor and satire originated in the pre-colonial Indo-Pak subcontinent and how it still grows as post-colonial Pakistan emerges as a significant player in the entertainment industry of the region. In precolonial times, humor

and satire were powerful resources for questioning the powers that be, both political as well as religious. Through laughter, satirists provide a temporary escape from the fetters of social and religious sanctions (Oesterheld, 2011). Urdu literature is brimming with first-rate satirists. Traditional performers such as Akbar Allah Abadi, Ibne Insha, and Mushtaq Yusufi, not to mention Bhānds, entertained with energetic monologues full of exuberant political commentary and were widely loved (Mohsin, 2015).

Moreover, in the wake of the independence movement, poets, satirists, and rhetoricians used their popular craft to speak truth to power and rally audiences laying a foundation for the modern satirist of today to dissent through their art. In the string of events in pre-Partition Literature, Saadat Hasan Manto emerged as one of the most influential voices; his dark comedy “Toba Tek Singh” was a sarcastic illustration of the dark moments of partition and its inevitable aftermath (Bisai, 2021). “Toba Tek Sigh,” considered Manto's magnum opus, was named after his hometown in Pakistan and was a powerful satire and a bitter indictment of the political process and behavior patterns that resulted in Partition (Thoker, 2017).

After 1947, humor and satire in Pakistan started to engage with all aspects of life, primarily political and social experience, but also occasionally religious institutions (Oesterheld, 2011). In the earlier years of independence, followed by satirical poetry, political cartoons were used to express resistance. The cartoonist used different rhetorical devices such as caricatures and analogies to convey satire and irony (Ghilzai & Bajwa, 2020). The cartoons from 1946-1947 articulated the stories of the birth of Pakistan and India. The main characters in those images were Mr. Jinnah, Gandhi, Cabinet Mission, and

two prominent political parties, AIML (All India Muslim League) and Congress (Ghilzai & Bajwa, 2020)

Pakistan's first state channel Pakistan Television (PTV) was launched in 1964. PTV was originally black and white, with color transmissions launched in 1976 (Juni et al., 2014). The earlier content themes ranged from serious family drama and love stories to satirical commentaries on social issues. In 1978 PTV debuted the first major satirical show, "Fifty Fifty," almost a year after the populist government was overthrown by a military coup (Paracha, 2015). "Fifty-Fifty" revolved around the current political drama at the time but also commented on the evolving fabric of a brand-new country. In 1984 came "Anghan Tera" (crooked Courtyard), the first satirical drama series which created waves among its viewers (The Citizens Archive of Pakistan, 2007).

The airwaves were dominated by Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) until the television industry in Pakistan saw significant growth regarding the private television industry in the reign of General Pervaiz Musharraf, a military dictator turned political leader. In 2002, he established the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to facilitate the private TV channel licensing process (Sajjad & Jalil, 2018). This move contradicted the conventional argument at the time that dictators-imposed control (Randall, 1993). There is a contrasting opinion as to why Musharraf did so. According to Maleeha Lodhi (2011), Pakistan's former ambassador to the US and the UK, he did that to build on his liberal agenda. However, Hassan (2017) claims Pakistan's military needed a favorable mouthpiece after the 1999 war in Kargil.

Following the relaxation of licensing policy in a matter of 2 years, Pakistani media was saturated with private channels (Sajjad & Jalil, 2018). The relaxation of state licensing

controls and support of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) opened doors for private channel expansion. By the end of 2009, 77 regional and national channels had entered the market (Television in Pakistan, 2010).

It proved to be a defining moment for both audiences and content creators. Since Urdu was and still is the National language spoken nationwide, Television producers tried to reinvent various forms of Urdu literature into dramas, entertainment shows, satire, and news content. However, satire was not a new element for Urdu; the language had conspicuously observed humor and satire since the thought-provoking poetry of Mirza Ghalib, the great poet, and visionary of his time (Gul & Javed, 2012).

The revolution facilitated the growth of news genres and opened the doors for widespread satire with shows like “*Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain*” (Pamment, 2017). The launch of “*Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain*” in 2007 created a new avenue for satire in the newly built private media industry and enhanced and strengthened political satire parameters.

Satirical talk shows then started to emerge as a popular genre. These shows were supported by the then-in-power left-wing political party Pakistan’s Peoples Party. To capture the purpose and motivation of the satirical shows, I interviewed Aashan Rana, the producer of “*Hasb-e-Haal*,” a pioneer satirical production in the genre of satirical talk shows. He has been with the show for 13 years. In 2009, “*Hasb-e-Haal*” was launched by a well-known journalist and its first host Aftab Iqbal on *Dunya News*; the show is not only a pioneer but is still the longest-running satirical show in Pakistan’s history. Aftab Iqbal reveals that The Daily Show’s interview with Musharraf (September 26, 2006) was a significant inspiration for *Hasb-e-Haal* (Pamment, 2017). *Hasb-e-Haal*, based on the

Bhānds format, started a new trend that dozens of network shows copied in the following years (Abbasi, 2018).

To provide a little perspective into *Bhānds*, it is an art form that originated in Punjab Province in the Mughal era. The *Bhānds* comprise a male comic duo: one figure, the *Ranga*, is an authoritarian ‘straight man’ who holds the *Cham Mota* (a leather slapstick); the second figure is the bible, a chaotic and more radical clown. These two characters engage in *Juggat*: a snappy comic dialogue rich with metaphoric wordplay (Pamment, 2017). *Juggat* is a form of comedic expression that I will address further in the study. Although the show did not strictly follow the same dynamic, it did revolve around the dynamic of a power center (host) countered by a satirist commenting on contemporary issues with his zeal and unapologetic commentary. Aftab Iqbal left *Hasb-e-Haal* in 2010 for unknown reasons (Amin, et. al., 2021). In September 2010, he devised a show with a similar format at Geo News called *Khabarnaak* (Rashid, 2014). *Khabarnaak*’s success was attributed to creating multiple roles (parodies) played by Mir Mohammad Ali, now the *Azizi* of *Khabarnaak* (Rashid, 2014). In 2014 after Iqbal left the show, he started his third venture at Express-News, where he started a show titled *Khabardar* (Times, 2016). After Iqbal’s departure, the co-host was offered the show—making Ayesha Pakistan’s first female Satirical show host. However, she left the show after hosting it for six years; in an interview, elaborating on why she left, she blamed the show's content attributing the overwhelming quantity of *Juggat* being her most extensive concern (Usman, 2022).

Another show that became a sensation around the same time was Banana News Network, launched by Geo News. It was produced by Nabeel Qureshi, a theatre master from Karachi (Ghafoor, 2014). The show ended in the middle of 2015; however, the writers

and on-screen comics Mustafa Chaudhary and Mobeen Gabool continued their passion for satire and have been creating their niche media ever since (Aijaz, 2017). Further in the study, Nabeel Gabool's interview builds on the motivations and inspirations of why he chooses to do satire.

As satire widened its scope, Pakistan saw a rise in musical activism. In 2012 Pakistan's first Satirical Music band, "*Beygairat Brigade*" (Bastard Brigade), was formed. They fancied themselves as a Muslim punk band performing dissent through music (Pirzadeha & Pirzada, 2019). I interviewed the lead singer Ali Aftab who wrote and sang the *Beygairat Brigade*'s catchy, transgressive song *Aalu Anday*, a piece that openly engaged in an anti-establishment critique. Knowing that traditional media outlets would not fancy it, the band released the song on YouTube, which got 90,000 views in the first few days of its release. To further build the context, it is important to mention another improv satirist turned musician Ali Gul Pir, who started his career in 2007 with a troupe called *Aisa Karogay to Kon Aaye Ga* and became an instant sensation when his song *Waderay ka Beta* (landlord's son) was released in 2012 (Shirazi, 2017). The music video was viewed 100,000 times in the first four days of its release. In an interview with a youth magazine, Ali said, "My work is a social satire which sometimes becomes political. I do not plan my songs; I usually write about something that angers me. Sometimes it takes me hours to write, sometimes weeks" (Mazhar, 2014, para. 11).

After the rise of political satire shows and political music, stand-up comedy was another satirical dimension that picked its pace. Groups such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Comedy, *Auratnaak*, strictly social, and comedians such as Shehzad Ghias now successfully tour nationally and globally, performing their satirical shows (Naveed, 2021).

Pakistan's Contemporary Literature in Satire

Research shows that political satire can influence its audience toward acceptance while creating a spirit of tolerance as it counters various complex narratives around them (Zaheer, 2018). For a politically volatile community like Pakistan, it is an inevitable dose to counter the strains of current affairs shows. Satirists provide their audience with a sense of community and purpose, which organized political commentators do not provide (Day, 2011).

The audience's exposure to political parody or satire focused on famous politicians impacts their perception of those political leaders. A content-based audience analysis conducted on Pakistan's major satirical shows by Abid et al. (2018) deciphered satire's implications on political culture. It showed that not only do they impact political perceptions among the masses, but they also have the potential to enhance the audience's interest in politics and generate political participation (Abid et al., 2018). However, several other pieces of research on a similar subject contradict their findings, stating otherwise.

Zaheer (2018) conducted an audience survey to understand audiences regularly watching satire. Their study revealed that one of the most profound factors that steer audiences toward political satire shows is their affinity towards political comedy. The study also revealed another interesting finding: people prefer satire shows that air after political shows and believe both are equally relevant sources of political information. Another theme derived from the study provides a deeper insight into a viewer's cognitive state, stating that these shows reduce stress and act as a buffer in a worryingly polarized society (Zaheer, 2018). Examining these findings, it can be inferred that political satire has become more relevant than ever, and satirists have stepped in the shoes of opinion leaders in countries like Pakistan.

Along with parody shows, humorous news bulletins, and stand-up comedy performances, musical activism is another intriguing avenue that rocked the viewers in Pakistan (Reeves, 2014). It is essential to note that only a little academic literature is available. Noor (2018) conducted one of the few available qualitative pieces of research involving five lead musicians (singers and composers) who work towards creating politically stimulating music often categorized as satire. Despite associating from different genres in music, most musicians elaborate their experience as a tool of expression that is their own and serves the good of the community. The researcher conducted a socio-cognitive analysis of content and content creators. The musicians shared their motivations and ideologies for creating the content in semi-structured interviews. Noor derived themes grounded in ideologies, sponsorships, political impetus, political connections, and audiences' reactions. Although all five had different responses to these themes, there were similarities in the political ideologies and impetus (Noor, 2018).

Pakistan is a religiously inclined heterogeneous community; the media content is expected to fall within religious bounds and is otherwise deemed improper (Eijaz, 2012). Hence satire falls on the thin line between entertaining and offending the public. Although the media laws catering to satirical content are vague at best, Pakistani stand-up comedians face harsh blasphemy laws, and the risk of offending the wrong audience is an occupational hazard (Hourel, 2015). In an interview with Reuters, Saad Haroon, a famous satirist and stand-up comedian who left Pakistan to settle in New York, when asked about satire moving toward digital spaces, said, "There is lots of development on social media. It is a clandestine, guerrilla comedy" (Hourel, 2015). It is important here to note that while the opinion of several stand-up comedians and satirists can be read in various newspaper

interviews and online documentaries, very few academic inquiries have been conducted around the subject, creating a massive gap in the field.

Although satire is a weightily studied area around content analysis, fewer studies are available on the experiences of individuals involved in satire, including its production and processes involved in creating the content and elements of dissent. To bridge this gap, we need more detailed studies to understand the “lived experiences” of satirists and the effects of their art on their lives. To address this existing gap, this study will focus on the lived experiences and motivations of satirists. Specifically, it will address how satirists in Pakistan deal with volatile political climates, fluid policies, issues of conservative power regimes, security concerns, and satire as their preferred mode of expression.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Research Context

Pakistan has always been in the midst of political volatility facing military and political pressures. Therefore, the freedom of expression has never been a cherished idea (Parveen & Bhatti, 2018). Though the freedom of expression may seem controlled, but due to the growth in private channels in the past two decades, satirical shows have become more popular (Nadeem et. al., 2012). These shows unlike serious political talk shows targets serious issues with an amalgamation of humor and fun. Hence, Pakistan represents a rich context for studying political satire where there are political and/ or military pressures and at the same time there exists a quantitatively growing media.

Researcher's Positionality

I have previously conducted qualitative research and belong to Pakistan which is the site of the research. I have five years of experience working in Pakistan's media industry in various capacities such as creative manager, public relations executive, producer, academic and more. My insight into the industry helped me articulate this research and approach the satirists. My knowledge of the inner working of Pakistan's media industry served as an asset throughout this research.

Sample Selection

A total of five participants (see Appendix A) were interviewed for this research. The participants belonged to various genres of satire and work in different positions within the satire industry in Pakistan. While selecting the participants, the following criteria were considered:

- The participant is a well-known satirist or satire producer in Pakistan with a record of influence over public opinion.

- The participant has been a part of a regular media show and was chosen from the satirical shows watched by most people in Pakistan.
- The satirists are pioneers in their genre of satire, as determined by the other variables above (popularity, influence, and the maintenance of a regular show).

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (See Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews “follow a guide or protocol that is devised before the interview and is focused on a core topic to provide a general structure” (Magaldi & Berler, 2020, p. 4825). These types of interviews, on the one hand, allowed the researcher to inquire about the pre-planned questions, and, on the other hand, allow enough flexibility for follow-up questions into novel areas previously unknown to the researcher. Both verbal and written consent for the interviews was secured. The interviews were conducted through Zoom and recorded consensually. Some interviews were conducted in English, and some were recorded in Urdu based on the interviewee's convenience. Interviews lasted for 25 to 45 minutes based on the openness and willingness of the interviewee.

Data Analysis

Consistent with the study's focus on in-depth “meanings” of satire, the production process, and how satire affects the lives of satirists, the transcripts were thoroughly interpreted to develop coding sheets having an engaged connection with the developed themes. The analysis was conducted through an iterative three-tier inductive coding method. First, transcript of the each of the respondents was separated into sentences (sentencing). Second, each sentence was coded with key words (wording). Third, themes were created from the key words (theme creation). After the initial themes' creation for each individual transcript, all the analyzed data were transferred to an Excel file. Each row of the Excel file represented a theme, a key word, transcript/ sentence, and the source

(participant). Now, using the “filter option” on the column of initial “themes”, main themes were identified. These are the themes that are recurring (i.e., these are either common in all the participants or found among any one or more of the participants). These themes formed the master table which is given in chapter 4 (findings).

Strategies for Quality

Before reporting the findings, the transcripts were re-read and compared to confirm that the interpretation is accurate. Once the analysis was run and themes were identified, the draft of the findings was shared with the participants, so that they may check that the meanings and context of their shared experiences are intact.

Research Questions

- What is a Pakistani Satirist's understanding of Satire and how do they perceive its normative value?
- What motivations and role orientations guide Pakistani satirists in their work?
- How do satirists perceive their role in creating or fostering resistance within Pakistan’s particular socio-political climate?
- What internal and external factors do Pakistani satirists perceive as influencing their work?

Note: The study is approved by UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board (IRB) with approval number IRB-23-0608.

Chapter 4: Findings

The interview data after the coding process resulted in several insightful themes. These themes answered the research question while at the same time also revealing aspects that were not directly asked in the interview questions but provided a very in-depth understanding of the satire industry in Pakistan. In this section, the derived themes are elaborated with excerpts from the interviews followed by elaborations.

The themes are grouped as follow based on how the interview data corresponds with the research Questions.

Table 1: Research Questions and Related Themes

Research Questions	Related Themes
Q1. What is a Pakistani satirist's understanding of satire and how do they perceive its normative value?	Satire is an Effective Tool in Simplifying News for Easy Comprehension
	Satire as a Continuing Tradition
	Satire as a Mirror
Q2. What motivations and role orientations guide Pakistani satirists in their work?	Satire as Continuous Reinvention
	Using Satire as a Tool to Entertain and Educate Audiences
	Satire Versus Journalism
Q3. How do satirists perceive their role in creating or fostering resistance within Pakistan's particular socio-political climate?	Satire as An Instrument of Dissent
	Satire for Satirists
Q4. What internal and external factors do Pakistani satirists perceive as influencing their work?	Production of Satire
	Editorial Policy as an Impact on the Content of Satire

Q1. What Is a Pakistani Satirist's Understanding of Satire and How Do They Perceive Its Normative Value?

This question aimed at exploring how satirists and political humorists recognize the importance of their craft and according to them how satire positions in the media industry of Pakistan. This question allowed us to gain insight into a satirist's understanding of the

industry and that of their content producers. The way the interviewees defined and operationalized satire is a unique blend of approach and insight.

Satire is an Effective Tool in Simplifying News for Easy Comprehension

Political satire is a form of art conveying an underlying serious message through fun. The message intended is mostly political and sometimes it is difficult to discuss it or talk about it in a usual journalistic serious tone. As one of the hosts of satire shows in Pakistan said, “Satire means explaining a serious subject matter in a non-serious tone which might not be possible to convey to the audience in a usual manner” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). This statement not only answers a satirist's understanding of their craft but also elaborates on how they perceive the normative value of their work that reaches millions serving the purpose of spreading information wrapped in wit. However, the goal is not simply to entertain as one of the participants said, “We work in the genre of Infotainment” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023) elaborating that for them satire is more than just laughter.

Importantly, it is not just the fun or the politicalness, but both fun and satire combine to make political satire. For example, one of the hosts said, “When it comes to political satire, it becomes very tricky to distinguish between satire and making fun of someone” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). In other words, political satire is not to make fun of a politician but to convey an underlying serious political message in an unserious and funny tone.

Similarly, there is also a difference between political satire and a *Juggat*. Political satire carries an intended message while *Juggat* does not. One of the participants while discussing the difference between the two said, “*Juggat* is a genre that has been there in Punjab for centuries. People know *Juggat* very well. But there is a very fine line between

the two [Political satire and *Juggat*]. ... *Juggat* is making fun of someone” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023).

More than just journalistic and industry parameters what sets satire apart in Pakistan is its cultural lineage. While *Juggat* or critical poetry isn’t fundamentally a part of the genre but due to their existence in the culture and history their impacts can be seen in the undertones of contemporary satire. The ratio between these undertones varies as per the performer's taste, as everyone operationalizes their craft to their liking and that of their target audiences.

Satire as a Continuing Tradition

As mentioned, wit and satire were rooted in Pakistan's pre- and post-colonial literature and inspired contemporary political satire. As one of the producers of a satire show said, “We [Pakistanis] have always been inspired by the lighthearted joking and wit by Anwar Maqsood and Mushtaq Yousafi, they are great writers, and very inspiring” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023). Mobeen Gabool further added on the subject said, “[before privatization] There used to be a [satirical] program called 50-50, ... it was a great program, they portrayed things, and several [critical] issues very well” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). Another satirist talking about 50-50 said “It was an elite production, ... I still go back to it for inspiration (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). Despite whatever role orientation of the participants, all of them agreed that their inspirations were legendary satirists like Mushtaq Yousafi a satirist poet, and Anwar Maqsood one of Pakistan’s earliest satirists. Their medium had limited access and their performances simple, but their impacts can still be felt in Pakistan’s highly privatized media industry.

To provide an insight into the pre-privatization of television, there existed newspapers and printed political cartoons. The producer of *Hasb-e-Haal* Pakistan’s

longest-running Satirical show said, “If we talk about satire's history, I immediately think of political cartoons” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). Elaborating on their importance, he added “So, if the newspaper had to talk about something controversial or severe like Army or politicians/leaders like Prime Minister, and there were a story concerning these people or entities, newspapers would often draw a cartoon around it.” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). He also added that “people found it fascinating how creatively it [satire] covered the issue” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). Although those cartoons still exist, their popularity has been overshadowed by more audio-visual mediums.

The advent of private channels in 2001 created room for more direct satire. As one of the famous satirists said, “In 2007 came the show *Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain*, and after almost two decades the genre is still going strong” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). He also said, “It [Satire] already existed, but then I created more in-depth satire, and the genre is here to stay as long as the news channels exist as long as the political situation in Pakistan remains unchanged” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). He added, “People would replace us, and they would be replaced by somebody else, But the political satire will be there” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023).

Satire is becoming more and more direct and diversified. The reason for this can be attributed to the audience's growing reception and acceptance. But also, the competition that has developed could be due to the introduction of social media platforms with user-generated content which is not only globally enjoyed but also requires little to no production support. Some mainstream satirists often maintain their social media platforms while enjoying a spot in major shows.

Another point of evolution in Pakistan's political humor was musical satire. Being a conservative country Ali Aftab's music took the masses by surprise. When asked what impacted his work he said: "When Aalu Anday happened, I was new; then came *Paisay ki Game*, then came *Jazbatti*, and finally, *Dhinak Dhinak*, the most controversial of them all" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). That explains that, with time, satirists saw an opportunity to experiment with more direct and heated subjects. His music was not only well received by younger audiences but also got global traction, placing Pakistan's satire in the global market. While mainstream media still maintains a certain standard for their more traditional audiences. Online mediums have evolved into more open and audience-centered platforms with more and more avenues for both professional and amateur humorists and satirists.

Satire as a Mirror

Satire is important for multiple reasons. From raising awareness to challenging people in power and criticizing social evils. It is a medium where a performer expresses common sentiments and grievances with the power of humor. It's imperative to look into how people associated with satire see its importance. When asked the question one of the satirical producers said: "Satire acts as a mirror of public opinion and emotion (A. Rana, March 30, 2023)" This statement was shared among his other counterparts. Ali Aftab said something similar in response to the presence of slang in his music "These mediums act as a mirror, and if society has these slangs, then these mediums should also use these insults. These mediums are supposed to be mirrors" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). Ali's song *Dhinak Dhinak* talked about Pakistan Army in ways that had never been talked about before in traditional media. His work generally caters to various critical issues within Pakistan while often reverting to the use of slang and related jargon and resulting in capturing the attention of target audiences.

Zeeshan Haidar, a famous satire producer said, “The real purpose of the use of humor is to make people realize the flaws and the irony of wrongdoings and the deviance of their (political leader’s) actions and sayings” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023). He added that “Satire is a must because people usually get annoyed with specific things, and when we directly criticize someone ... but they cherish satirical moments and making fun of contractional acts [committed] by others, that’s why satire is important” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023). Aashan Rana added another imperative aspect that builds on satire’s importance he said, “only a few people can understand the complexity of things happening around them if we have to talk about a severe issue within our country ... in layman's language, we use the medium of satire because satire is easily digestible” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). The use of sarcasm and irony while addressing pressing contemporary issues not only helps audiences stay appraised of their country but for a conservative country, it's more than likely to avoid censorship and suppression as compared to direct activism.

Mobeen Gabool a stand-up comedian and satirist while talking about why he chose to do satire elaborated on the importance of it and said, “When I started doing satire it was terrible and sad news [everywhere] So I thought [through satire] I could make things easy for the people of Pakistan” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). He added that “[As a satirist] I could take something positive out of those bad, sad news stories and impact people's lives in a good way” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). Satire is a benign lighthearted medium that fosters community and allows families to laugh together at the end of a long day when they sit in front of their screens at prime time, especially as most satirical shows air after a news bulletin or a current affair show. In those moments, several satirists believed their work brings people together through a shared smile or loud laughter.

Aashan Rana, a veteran satire producer, said: “Our people need catharsis and want to express their anger towards their [political leader’s] policies and they can’t but when they see us making *Juggatt*’s or throwing a satirical punch at their leaders ... people find pleasure in that” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). By laughing at jokes and paradoxes around critical issues, a sense of release can occur. It also creates a feeling of validation among people as audiences recognize their own experiences in that commentary. Not only does that act as catharsis, but it neutralizes anger.

Q2. What Motivations and Role Orientations Guide Pakistani Satirists in Their Work?

As the research was designed to not only study satire in Pakistan but also the lived experiences of satirists and satire producers. This particular question allowed me to ask them about their inspirations and motivations for choosing this profession. Some of the interviewees talked about their specific role models who inspired them to choose this as their prime craft as a performer. While others talked about how their will to inform Pakistani audiences about critical issues in a way that they could understand and stay informed as they shared a laugh.

Satire as Continuous Reinvention

Satire requires creativity and constant upgrade to remain relevant and maintain its viewership regardless of the medium on which it is being aired. Creative and imaginative content also establishes a satirist's unique expression. However, it requires a persistent upgrade and an ability to constantly push boundaries. As one of the satire producers said, “Repeated satire, or anything repeated without any creative energy or any creative reflection, starts falling flat on audiences, and they become used to it, and then they leave the TV or whatever pattern of comedy or humor they were watching” (Z. Haidar, February

19, 2023). If the content becomes predictable it may lose its audiences while lacking an ability to make a meaningful impact in society. Given this fact, satirists constantly push to come up with novel ideas for social commentary.

A satirist also has to mold the content and adjust their creativity based on the medium they use. From traditional satire to musical satire and self-generated satire, what differs is candidness that every medium allows differently. A renowned satirist and producer when asked about his perception of evolution in satirical content said:

Mainstream media is more cautious as compared to social media. That's why they have to be more careful in presenting things, like in *Hasnah Manah Ha*, but what we cannot offer on TV, we save those things for social media because they are run there like hotcakes. However, the mainstream media has already started to conform to the rules formulated by social media. And social media is full of exciting and innovative things, which mainstream media denies because everyone is free to say whatever they want to. (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023)

The same satirists maintain their audiences on multiple platforms and transport between their personas as per the need and acceptability of the masses. There are several internal and external factors too like a channel's political affiliation or editorial policy as well as a satirist's own beliefs and practices.

Over the years, the medium of satire which saw a total transformation is musical satire. Ali Aftab, one of Pakistan's pioneer musical satirists, when asked to comment about the content of his songs that contained slang, said: "Although I only use censor-friendly slang however, satire is a mirror and this medium [satirical music] should act as a mirror too when the society has slang so should music" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). Further commenting on the evolution of musical content and its impact he said "After Aalu Anday the death and birth anniversary of Abdus Salam were taken into consideration, and it has changed people's thinking patterns as well" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). This emphasizes

how the content of satire is a powerful reinforcer that not only challenges the norms and values but also reinforces while jogging the memories of people regarding conveniently forgotten people and issues.

Using Satire as a Tool to Entertain and Educate Audiences

The approval of audiences is inevitable for any genre of satire and the subtle and indirect nature of the content is believed to be one of the reasons it's so widely accepted.

As Aashan Rana, one of the satire producers, mentioned:

Satire is easily digestible. More importantly, the audience's literacy is also a factor to remember. Only some people can articulate the seriousness or complexity of several issues happening around them that are being covered in serious news. We often revert to satire to make the audience understand those issues' severity or possible consequences. (March 30, 2023)

He further added: “Audiences fell in love with satire seeing us do what they couldn't do themselves. Seeing the audience's feedback, many channels then jumped on the bandwagon” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). However, a different perspective regarding the audience's ability to comprehend satire was mentioned by Ali Aftab he said:

I don't think our audience normally differentiates between Satire and comedy. They think it's one in the same thing, which works for satirists. Since the masses don't pick up on things initially, we get the wiggle room to experiment with content. By the time they realize it meant something, we have gotten away with it. (March 16, 2023)

He also believed that “It's [satire] more like an aftertaste. So, in a society like ours, it is essential that when you're commenting on something current, you can be in trouble if what you've said has become an issue while the content is present” (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023).

Some satirists building on their initial expectation of the audience said: “The kind of reaction that we were expecting we might get would be harsh, but it was milder than we expected” (M. Gabool, March 16, 2023). His opinion was seconded by Zeeshan Hussain

who said: “They [audiences] become aware, and with this awareness, they developed an appetite for more clever satire and creative homework, as we now see on social media” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023).

While all the participants talked about audiences through a different lens and there are clear differences in their approaches the focus of all of their opinions remains that the audience has developed an affinity for satire due to the light-hearted nature of the content and their ability to easily comprehend it.

Satire Versus Journalism

There is a recurrent comparison that is made between the significance of satire versus serious journalism. The contrast between impact and reception across the board is made on various factors one of which is the importance of the medium. Ayesha Jahanzeb, when asked about how she thinks her counterparts in serious journalism perceive satire, said: “As far as serious journalists are concerned, they find it light-headed and not very serious. But in my understating, both comedy and satire are very serious business. Both of these are much more serious than regular journalism” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). While substantiating her argument she shared a story, “Also, after I [Ayesha] left the show, Jugno Mohsin, a serious female journalist, tried her luck with the show thinking that if I [Ayesha] did it, she could too. She worked for 6 weeks but the audience did not love it and the viewership dropped. So, it's important to note that not everyone can do satire. Her positioning as a serious journalist was heavily affected by her botched attempt to do satire” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). In her view, despite satire being journalism, it's a skill only experienced satirists know how to express. It also showed that it us a sentiment that exists among performers that how they are positioned in the industry.

Many of the known satirists in Pakistan made a move towards satire after being involved with serious journalism for a long time. When asked why they choose satire over serious journalism Ali Aftab said: “Music was something that I have always wanted to do. So that's how Aalu Anday happened. And then, I quit traditional journalism; for a while, I did music, and now I do [satirical vlogs] vlogs (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). Aashan Rana, when asked the same question, responded:

It was the time of current affairs shows; those shows helped people develop personal relations with powerful politicians as they regularly visited their shows as guests or analysts. Despite the trend, satire was challenging, and I decided to go along with it. As time went by, I became intertwined with Hasb-e-Haal. You would be surprised to know that I have worked in every position on the show. I started as a researcher, then post-production, executive production, and whatnot. What was once a challenge is now my life's work. (March 30, 2023)

While also comparing his work to his counterparts in current affairs he further mentioned “while keeping in line with current affairs shows on our News Channel. It's our job to openly criticize ruling political parties and people with the support of the elite, shed light on social issues, and raise awareness while coping with the political pressure” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023).

These mainstream satirical shows follow the same journalistic and editorial policy that a current affair show running on a news channel follows. They even cover the same news pieces while satirizing them they are spreading the same information. But they are often not held to the same journalistic zeal due to their nonserious appearances. While satire cannot substitute serious journalism it can be considered a valuable supplement to it.

Q3. How Do Satirists Perceive Their Role in Creating or Fostering Resistance Within Pakistan's Particular Socio-Political Climate?

This question covered the prime focus of this research. Based on this question I designed interview questions for the interviewees asking them if they believed satire played a role in dissenting and speaking truth to power. Few of the participants gave very concise answers however, some talked about the operationalization of satire as an art form being capable of many things including dissent.

Satire as An Instrument of Dissent

Journalism is often perceived as an instrument of dissent, however, satire's ability to dissent is a concept that is discussed greatly but is still considered subjective to every satirist, producer, and creator. When asked about satires or a satirist's ability to dissent Ali Aftab expressed that:

Everyone can be a journalist but not everyone can be an artist. Once you become one and start loving what you do, you can do anything with your talent. So, an artist can use art to do anything, even resistance. Once you do it with art, you won't do it any other way. (March 16, 2023)

An artist when choosing satire as a mode of expressing dissenting opinions wears many hats such as that of an activist aiming to involve the audiences in fruitful debates and political involvement. Ali Aftab is one of the rising satirical performers and introduced to the audiences a zesty take on several hot topics. However, there are limitations to dissent folded in musical satire as it's camouflaged in an indirect way which means that the reception may be unclear or could even go unnoticed. Also, since most of the musical dissent is released on social media platforms to avoid traditional censorship its reach is limited to digitally equipped audiences mostly.

To get an opinion from a satire producer working on a mainstream channel the same question was asked to Aashan Rana to which he replied: “It's our job to openly criticize ruling political parties and people with the support of the elite, shed light on social issues, and raise awareness while coping with the political pressure. But no matter what we do, we consistently maintain our standards (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). He further elaborated on how his satirist serves the purpose by talking about his lead satirist Sohail Ahmad he stated: “He (Azizi) started mimicking mighty politicians, people who were untouchable by the masses. We used satire to shed light on issues like Amnesty schemes offered by our leaders, their Royal demeanors, and their larger-than-life living standards”. This provided an insight into how it's perceived by the subjects of that criticism. He added: “But, of course, there were a few political figures who took offense at our mimicry of them and conveyed their displeasure” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). In his show *Hasb-e-Haal* for the first time, a mimicry artist sat next to a Prime Minister wearing the Prime Minister’s persona and addressed various ongoing political issues. When asked to elaborate on that experience, he said:

It was a very lighthearted presentation but effective, and the general audience received it very well. For many people, it was uncanny, and they were amazed by the mimicry of such influential individuals. People often ask us aren’t you scared of the political backlash? To which he said he replies “No.” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023)

However, while some believe that satire in Pakistan is capable of more vivid dissent, the policies in place do not allow for it to have all its possible potential. Zeeshan Haidar commenting on the recent political struggle between the judiciary and ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan said:

The number nine court (in Pakistan) says we can't go all out against Imran Khan because he is very popular. What else is left behind? We should have criticized. We should have condemned the court. The law shouldn't see whether someone is popular or unpopular. The law should take its course. But it didn't, and it bluntly expressed it. But we kept a lull over it. The courts go scot-free because we are not strong enough to criticize. However, we often do easily entrap politicians. So, these are the fault lines of our satire. (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023)

He shed light on how he feels as a producer when a certain editorial policy confines a satirist from commenting on a contemporary political crisis. He also later said, “What we cannot say on mainstream media, we often use other mediums to express those feelings” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023).

There is a divide on the mode of dissent that different mediums of satire transmit and to what extent a platform allows dissenting opinions. But it's also important to note here that Pakistan is a mainly religious and conservative community with constantly toppling democratic institutions. Also, often laws like blasphemy laws have been used to limit freedom of expression and have resulted in arrests and revoking of licenses. Satirists who continue to use dissenting opinions are also met with censorship and harassment. However, despite the risks, Pakistani satirists continue to speak and question the state consistently.

Satire for Satirists

A good satirist is not only witty but also cautious he/she aims towards making a difference by adhering to their values and policies. Mobeen Gabool, when asked about what satire is for him, said:

I started doing satire somewhere around 2006 and 2007, and that was when there was the boom of private media, the mushroom growth of private media channels. And unfortunately, there was an ongoing war in the neighboring country, Afghanistan. Most news was terrible and there was sadness, all over the place. So, I felt that my work could make things easier for the people of Pakistan. I could take

something positive out of those bad and sad news stories and impact people's lives in a good way. So that is how I started doing satire. (March 16, 2023)

He produced Pakistan's first well-known satirical news bulletin, and even after wrapping up the show, he continues to create content online.

Ali Aftab a musical satirist believed that his musical satire brought to light issues that were controversial in Pakistan's climate and needed attention. To characterize his efforts, he mentioned that "After Aalu Anday, the death, and birth anniversaries of Abdul Salam [Pakistan's Nobel Laurette] were taken into consideration and it has changed people's thinking patterns as well. Satire also dismisses politicians, as the people who are fed up with them find solace in satire" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023).

His work brought global attention to Pakistani music and was recognized as creativity that aimed to dissent and change the community.

Those who produce satire from behind the screen own satire in another unique way. Aashan Rana one of the satires producers talked about he chose to produce satire because it served more purposes than just wit and humor, he said:

I am proud of a segment we used to do on the show. We used to make appeals for fund generation for sick children and show photos of lost minors and older adults; wealthy philanthropists like Malik Riaz then owned some of those causes. The prayers of those people also kept us going, and today we are unstoppable. (A. Rana, March 30, 2023)

Explaining that satire means different things to every satirist. Some do it for the wittiness and some do it for the welfare and well-being of their audiences.

Q4. What Internal and External Factors Do Pakistani Satirists Perceive as Influencing their Work?

There are several internal and external factors that influence the satire industry in Pakistan – some explicit and others implicit. When asked the satirists to elaborate, they talked about the production process, the gender aspect, editorial policies, and other related issues.

Production of Satire

In Pakistan, satire is produced across several mediums. Print mediums continue to write satirical features and draw political cartoons. Mainstream media channels run Primetime satirical shows and social media platforms also see fresh content regularly. The production processes of all of these platforms vary, as does the timeline.

To provide a perspective into the production side of the show, I asked how Aashan Rana navigates *Hasb-e-Hal*. He said: “In the start, it would take us 12 hours in production and several hours in post-production to produce every single episode but now we do live transmissions” (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). Similarly, to that, another producer Zeeshan said “We don’t have to navigate much. The substance comes to us every day, at every moment, like political contradictions... So, people quickly pick the substance we play upon for choosing satire[content]” (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023).

It's also important to look at how these satirists acquire these positions, the hiring practices, and gender as an element in it. When this study was initially planned, gender was not a factor that I planned to investigate. However, while interviewing Ayesha Jahanzeb Pakistan’s first female lead satire host for a show, it became evident that she had a unique perspective into the production of Pakistan’s contemporary satire. While answering how she started with the journey, how she got into the field, and what lead her to make a move

from being an academic to a satirist, she opened by saying that “Becoming the first ringer is the most beautiful feeling one can ever have” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). She went on to share her journey of how she stepped into satire to shed light on the selection process and its many anomalies. She said that “My close friend who was a singer on a satirical show asked me to audition for the show, So, listening to my friend, I went for the audition. Not many people know this, but at the time I was 90 KG (220 lbs.) I went there, and the moment they looked at me, they said: “You are too heavy; we can’t have someone who weighs this much, and we are sorry about that.” I said OK, and I came back home, and I told my friend what had happened, and I moved on” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023).

She continued her story: “A year later my friend approached me again and said now that you lost a substantial amount of weight, and the position has opened up again so, please try ... She insisted, so I went for the audition a second time” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). The same evening, she received a call from the producer, and she was asked to come to meet the host Aftab Iqbal. She added: “They offered me to join them for one of the two live shows they were doing at the time. I was also offered good money, and I thought it would be a decent side income” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023).

After giving an in-depth detail into her journey she pointed out that after Aftab Iqbal left the show and she was offered first chair she saw another side of satire, “People accused me of copying my counterpart that I had succeeded the show from” (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023). She continued to host the show for seven years and when asked why she left, she responded:

The sole reason I left was the lack of gender support. ... The showrunner started allowing more explicit language, which I couldn’t tolerate. See, Under the belt,

Juggat was something that, as a woman, was unacceptable to me. I was also told that most of the disturbing *Juggat* happen off-screen, but I said that as long as I have to be a part of that culture, I won't tolerate it, and eventually, I choose my integrity over my spot in the show. (A. Jahanzeb, February 23, 2023).

After Ayesha left the show, she ran her own social media channel and continued to post satirical content. She also mentioned that she has decided to explore more avenues as producing her show required more capital than she had anticipated and now plans to move into the entertainment industry as it's more stable in nature. When a male satirist Ali Aftab who runs a vlog with a female counterpart was asked how he feels sharing a screen with a female he responded: "It's great working with her; I love working with Tamkanat, who is from Gujrat and is extremely funny" (A. Aftab, March 16, 2023). This shows that although gender support is getting better in the satire industry it's still very difficult for a female satirist to make her mark in an inherently male-dominated field. They are judged on issues like body image, acceptance of the culture, and more. After Ayesha's exit from *Khabarnaak*, no woman has been given a prime slot in a mainstream satire show. However, they can be seen as co-hosts and in other positions like *Bhānds* or musical performers, etc.

Editorial Policy as an Impact on the Content of Satire

The editorial policy is what drives mainstream satire, while its level of control varies from one outlet to another, it still regulates the content. These policies, however, are decided on several factors and interests, and as one of the participants said "Many people contribute to building a setup of satire as far as my commitment is concerned because I work for a channel, the channel's policy must be kept in view. So, I must remember whom to criticize and to what extent I must do so. As far as the track or an organization is concerned, an organization has to consider its interests, affiliations, and likes and dislikes" (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023).

Another important factor in editorial policy in a conservative country is ethics, as the producer of Pakistan's longest-running satire commenting on the subject said, "Many satirical shows came after our show, following our pattern and segments, but they could not survive due to diverting from certain ethical boundaries. The same reason our [Pakistan's] famous theatre succumbed to elusive *Juggat*, so did many political satire/comedy-shows" (A. Rana, March 30, 2023). He believed staying true to the policy is why his show is still standing.

The mediums like social media and standup comedy platforms, however, have much more relaxed editorial oversight. Zeeshan Haidar who produces satire for mainstream channels but also runs a social media channel said "Mainstream media is more cautious as compared to social media. That's why they have to be more careful in presenting things, like in *Hasnah Manah Ha*, but what we can't offer on TV, we save those things for social media because they are run there like hotcakes" (Z. Haidar, February 19, 2023). Many incoming satirists hence try their luck on social media platforms to avoid strict oversight from TV Channels.

Chapter Five: Discussion

As one of the few contemporary studies grounded in the “lived experiences” of satirists vis-à-vis satire’s production process and satire’s ability to dissent, it provided some interesting points of convergence and divergence. The study not only substantiates various claims made by existing literature but also bridges gaps that were identified earlier in the study while diverging from certain deliberations made by the literature.

As seen above, the study provided some interesting insights that are consistent with other qualitative studies in the field. In contemporary scholarship, wit, and political humor are continually studied concerning political communication (Baumgartner & Lockerbie, 2018). The study showed clear patterns of the interconnectivity of the political situation in Pakistan impacting the content of satire. It also dived into how satirists believed that it was their job to openly criticize ruling political parties while spreading awareness on social issues. As Friedman (2012) said, “Political satirists are a mirror to society, critique is one of their commonly used tools, but its use brings a wide range of consequences regardless of the nature of their craft”. The analysis of the interviews showed that the satirists were aware that in light of their work, there is always a possibility of facing consequences afterward. Some of the participants mentioned that they often received angry messages from the politicians who were satirized demanding apologies from the show.

The study also introduced the perspective of stand-up comedians, musicians, and producers who work either on screen or behind the screen. The existing literature is scarce on this subject. These producers shed light on how they design these shows and how much time and effort goes into creating an appealing show. They also emphasized that maintaining creativity and uniqueness is an inevitable feature to maintain the interest of the

target audience and maintain the integrity and placement of the show in the mainstream media. The gatekeeping of data and source analysis was also expressed as the core responsibility of the team working on the back end as they hold the satirist's reputation in their hands when they design their content to be aired live. One of the producers also mentioned that he worked in every position in the production line up, providing him with the necessary skill set to navigate the production process.

It brought to light why some choose to do satire over serious journalism and what kept them motivated to work in a field that is not as stable as serious journalism. Their opinion was not only insightful but paved the way for more directed questions in the future. One of the satirical producers, when asked why he choose to step into a fairly unstable field of satire as compared to current affairs, said that he believed satire was his preferred medium of expression and took pride in his position. Satirists also believed that political humor is not a nonserious medium but on occasion serves as the best avenue to address more critical concerns existing in society.

As the previous research stipulated that "satire can be radically disruptive, genuinely subversive or even a revolutionary force" (Griffin, 1994 p. 158), the analysis showed that satirists believed they were disguising the revolt against social evils in their content. From traditional satirists to stand-up comedians, their opinions were similar when it came to defining the purpose of their work as a means to spread awareness through innovative ideas. One of the musical satirists discussed how his music brought to light forgotten heroes in Pakistan and addressed the elephant in the room by talking about issues that were avoided even by serious journalists.

For a politically volatile community like Pakistan, it is an inevitable dose to counter the strains of current affairs shows. Satirists provide their audience with a sense of community and purpose, which organized political commentators do not provide (Day, 2011). This research seconded Day's opinion by stipulating that Political satire shows in Pakistan shows can influence their audience toward acceptance while creating a spirit of tolerance as it counters various complex narratives around them (Zaheer, 2018). Another satirist believed that satire is Aftertaste hence it might not directly answer questions, but its receiver gets the message eventually.

However, it also contributed some cutting-edge divergent points. Previously, Crittenden et al., (2011) stipulated, the abundance of self-generated content affects a satirist's positioning as an opinion leader. In contrast, the satirists involved in the study believed that the availability of social media platforms allowed them to talk about things they normally could not at their regular mainstream outlets. And also, that they design their content based on the medium and target audience.

Importantly, the limited existing literature catering the satire and satirists in Pakistan did not address the question of their lived experiences or the process that went into creating content. It also had never addressed satires' ability to engage in dissent, let alone the gendered element of satire in a conservative community. Hence the current study aimed at answering these questions while making way for further research in the field.

Limitations

Below are some of the limitations that occurred during this research project:

One of the main limitations while interviewing satirists in Pakistan was their limited availability. Satirists have busy schedules and are often hesitant to participate in research projects. Fear of backlash and offending the wrong people is also a possible factor behind

many of them not wanting to participate. Additionally, television channels like GEO News also had policies restricting satirists and current affairs analysts/hosts from participating in research projects and making it hard to approach anyone working on their platforms.

The existing political tensions and instability in Pakistan also impacted the response from several subjects who were approached. Many of their managers and assistants responded that, given the volatile political situation, they were not open to discussing an issue like dissent and rebellion through satire.

The language barrier was also a concern. Since English is not the primary language of most interviewees, it was a significant limitation throughout the process. Some interviews had to be conducted in Urdu, followed by a translation before transcription. Although the transcription is highly effective, and the researcher speaks both languages fluently, the possibility of some messages being lost in the translation is always a possibility.

At the time of the research, the researcher resided in the United States and the interviewees were from Pakistan the interviews were conducted on Zoom. Using digital mediums to conduct interviews can be a convenient and cost-effective way to conduct research.

In conclusion, conducting primary research on the subject of satirists in Pakistan from a foreign country while using digital mediums to conduct interviews can pose several limitations. However, valuable research can still be conducted by being aware of these limitations and planning accordingly.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Pakistan media over the last few decades saw a significant transformation in its content and performers. This dynamic shift can be attributed to various reasons but is most likely associated with its volatile and ever-changing political climate. In this situation, opinion makers like satirists inevitably create awareness while criticizing the elite along the way. Satire has long been documented as an influential means of communication and dissent, especially in Pakistan. In a country where political and social issues are ever-changing and often overlooked, satire and satirists have emerged as a vital force for spreading awareness while using their craft to speak truth to power. This research aimed at filling gaps in the existing academic literature on various elements of satire lived experiences of satirists and various other dimensions such as dissent, production, censorship, and more.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the role that satire plays in affecting and influencing social change and resistance in Pakistan, I conducted interviews with satirists and satire producers from various genres within the field. Participants shared their lived experiences, deliberating on the difficulties they face, the impact of the political situation on their craft, gender element, and how they use their wit to question the evils in society while challenging those in power. These individuals who were interviewed provided deep insight into Pakistan's contemporary media situation and the positionality of satire as a medium.

One of the most striking themes to emerge from these interviews was the subsistence of editorial policies within mainstream channels and how they motivate content while how strikingly different the scenarios are for the musical satirists and social media

performers. Satirist and satire producers also expressed their consciousness vis-à-vis the possible consequences of their work and how in the past it has led to stern warnings and the closure of various mainstream outlets. While global research attributes Pakistan as under brazen censorship (Ashfaq et. al., 2019), these claims were refuted by the satirists by claiming that while they do have to confine to moral and societal standards, they have several avenues to express themselves.

Despite the challenges they face, satirists expressed how they remain committed to their craft, viewing it as a way to speak truth to power and to spread awareness and effect change in Pakistan. Some of them believed it was their duty to hold those in positions of authority accountable and to expose issues that might otherwise go unaddressed while encouraging people to think critically about the world around them, all while spreading smiles and making the best out of difficult times.

Satirists believed satire was inevitable because it was digestible and was meant for audiences who could not articulate the complicated content of current affairs shows. They expressed that satire acts as a mode of catharsis, as people see their political leaders held accountable like regular people while jokes are thrown at them. Some satirists also believed that while the audience remains hooked to their wit and poise, they cannot distinguish between satire, *Juggat*, and humor. According to satirists, this isn't necessarily a problem since it makes it easy for them to perform their craft. They rely on the delayed nature of satire meaning making as it allows them to leave something as a food for thought which they can refer back to as an antidote for their future deliberations.

Overall, the interviews with satirists and satire producers in Pakistan emphasized their craft's vital role in promoting free speech, democracy, and social change. Despite the

challenges they face, these individuals continue to create work that challenges the status quo and inspires others to do the same. As such, they represent a powerful force for progress, transformation, and the potential of humor and satire.

References

- Abbasi, A. (2018) Book Review: Comic Performance in Pakistan: The Bhānd by Claire Pamment. Retrieved from [blogs.lse.ac.uk: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/01/22/book-review-comic-performance-in-pakistan-the-bhand-by-claire-pamment/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/01/22/book-review-comic-performance-in-pakistan-the-bhand-by-claire-pamment/).
- Abid, S., Yousafzai, F. U., & Gade, P. (2018). Parody of Politicians' Traits and Audience Perception: Analysis of Political Tv Comedy Shows in Pakistan. *The Pakistan Journal of Social Issues*, 106-118.
- Aijaz, R. (2017, October 18). Banana News Network boys bring international-style standup comedy to Pakistan. Retrieved from [tribune.com: https://tribune.com.pk/story/1534554/banana-news-network-bnn-boys-delve-standup-comedy](https://tribune.com.pk/story/1534554/banana-news-network-bnn-boys-delve-standup-comedy).
- Ali, I. (2014). Young Pakistani Satirists Test Boundaries. Retrieved from Voice of America: <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistani-satirist-change-narrative-1952286.html>.
- Amin, S., Qaisar, A. R., & Razzaq, U. A. (2021). Portrayal of Political Leaders in Infotainment Programs on Television and Political Leaders' Image Formation Among Viewers. *Global Media and Social Sciences Research Journal (Quarterly)*, 01-19.
- Baumgartner, J. C., & Lockerbie, B. (2018). Maybe it Is More Than a Joke: Satire, Mobilization, and Political Participation*. *Social Science Quarterly*, 99(3), 1060-1074.
- Bisai, S. (2021). When Manto dabbled his fingers in history: A critical study of Saadat Hasan Manto's "Toba Tek Singh" and "The Return. *Academia Letters*.
- Butterfield, R. (2012). [Review of Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America, by T. L. Friedman. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 15(2), 375-378.
- Center, T. K. (2022). Bassem Youseff on Jon Stewart | 2022 Mark Twain Prize | The Kennedy Center. Retrieved from The Kennedy Center: <https://www.kennedy-center.org>.
- Chulov, M. (2015). Pakistan: 'Only satire that has the sense to limit its targets is tolerated'. Retrieved from the [guardian.com: https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jan/12/laughing-in-face-of-danger-satire-in-muslim-world](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jan/12/laughing-in-face-of-danger-satire-in-muslim-world).
- Crittenden, V. L., Hopkins, L. M., & Simmons, J. M. (2011) Satirists as opinion leaders: is social media redefining roles? *Journal of Public Affairs*, 11(3), 174-180.

- Day, A. (2011). *Satire and Dissent : Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Declercq, D. (2017). *A Philosophy of Satire. Critique, Entertainment, Therapy*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent,. Kent Academic Repository.
- Eijaz, A. (2012). Articulation of Political Discourse Through The Prism Of Mass Media In Pakistan. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 1-21.
- Freedman, L. (2012). Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors. *Social Research, Politics and Comedy* , 87-112.
- Ghafoor, U. (2014, December 28). Film is about story-telling” — Nabeel Qureshi. Retrieved from usmanghafoor.wordpress.com: <https://usmanghafoor.wordpress.com/2014/12/28/film-is-about-story-telling-nabeel-qureshi/>.
- Ghilzai, S. A., & Bajwa, Z. A. (2020). History of Pakistanis’ Power Politics-from 1947 to 2020- through the Critical Lenses of Cartoonists Analysis of Political Cartoons. *European Academic Research*, 1373-1398.
- Gilbert, C. J. (2012). [Review of the book *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate*]. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 15(2), 378-381.
- Griffin, D. H. (1994). *Satire: A critical reintroduction*. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.
- Gul, T., & Javed., T. (2012). Humour and Satire in Urdu Literature. *The Dialogue* , 178-185.
- Hourelid, K. (2015, August 21). Pakistan's embattled comedians spin troubles into punchlines. Retrieved from reuters.com: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-comedy/pakistans-embattled-comedians-spin-troubles-into-punchlines-idINKCN0QP29720150821>.
- Hussain, D. F., Ahmad, D. I., Hassan, M. M., & Naz, P. D. (2022). Security Risks And Threats To Journalists In Pakistan: A Critical Analysis Of Media Landscape In Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(8), 7205-7215.
- Kacha, B. (2023). The ultimate L.A. Bookshelf: Short Stories. Retrieved from *Los Angeles Times*: <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/story/2023-04-11/essential-los-angeles-books-short-stories>.

- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (2021). *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign, Legacy Edition*. United States: Columbia University Press.
- Lichtenstein, D., Nitsch, C., & Wagner, A. J. (2021). Jokers or Journalists? A Study of Satirists'. *Journalism Studies*. 1756-1774. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2021.1952476.
- Magaldi, D., & Berler, M. (2020). Semi-structured Interviews. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 4825-4830.
- Mazhar, Z. (2014) It's a Saeen. It's a VIP. It's Ali Gul Pir! Retrieved from Youlinmegazine.com: <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/youth/it-a-saeen-it-a-vip-it-ali-gul-pir/MzQ=>.
- Mezzera, M., & Sial, S. (2010). Media and Governance in Pakistan: A controversial yet essential relationship. *European Union*.
- Mohsin, M. (2015, January 12). Pakistan: 'Only satire that has the sense to limit its targets is tolerated'. Retrieved from [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jan/12/laughing-in-face-of-danger-satire-in-muslim-world): <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/jan/12/laughing-in-face-of-danger-satire-in-muslim-world>.
- Moy, P., Xenos, M. A., & Hess, V. K. (2005). Communication and Citizenship: Mapping the Political Effects of Infotainment. *Mass Communication & Society*, 111-131.
- Muhammad Sher Juni, J. K., Haider, I., & Ashraf, A. (2014). Impact of pakistan television (ptv) dramas on rural culture: a case study of district layyah. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Research*.
- Naveed, S. (2021) The satirist and the state: Stand-up comedy in Pakistan. Retrieved from [thecorrespondent.pk](https://www.thecorrespondent.pk/the-satirist-and-the-state-stand-up-comedy-in-pakistan/): <https://www.thecorrespondent.pk/the-satirist-and-the-state-stand-up-comedy-in-pakistan/>.
- Noor, R. (2018). Socio-cognitive Approach: A study of Political Music Videos of Pakistan (2007-2017). *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 38(2), 687-694.
- Oosterheld, C. (2011). Humor and Satire: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial. *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, 64-86.
- Pakistan, T. C. (2007). *The Citizens Archive of Pakistan*. Retrieved from <https://citizensarchive.org/>: <https://citizensarchive.org/>.
- Pakistan. (2022, 1 6). Retrieved from *Reporters without borders*: <https://rsf.org/en/country/Pakistan>.
- Pamment, C. (2017). *Comic Performance in Pakistan the Bhaṅd*. London: Springer Nature.

- Paracha, N. F. (2015, July 5). Smokers' Corner: Satire in the time of cholera. Retrieved from dawn.com: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1192390/smokers-corner-satire-in-the-time-of-cholera>.
- Parveen, S., & Bhatti, M. N. (2018). Freedom of expression and media censorship in Pakistan: a historical study. *Journal of Historical Studies*, 01-21.
- Parveen, S., & Nawaz, M. (2018). Freedom of expression and media censorship in Pakistan: a historical study. *Journal of Historical Studies*, 4(2), 01-21.
- Paulson, R. (2019). *The Fictions of Satire*. Johns Hopkins.
- Pearce, K., & Hajizada, A. (2014). No laughing matter: humor as a means of dissent in the digital era: the case of authoritarian Azerbaijan. *Demokratizatsiya*, 67-85.
- Pirzadeha, S., & Pirzada, T. (2019). Pakistani popular music: A call to reform in the public sphere. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 197-211.
- Rajabi, M. R. (2021). The Function of Satire as Social Capital With an Emphasis on Mystical Satire. *Social Capital Management*, 8(2), 261-283.
- Randall, V. (1993). The Media and Democratisation in the Third World. *Third World Quarterly*, 14(3), 625-646.
- Rashid, Q. (2014, April 8). A few words on *Khabarnaak*. Retrieved from dailytimes.com: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/105203/a-few-words-on-khabarnaak/>.
- Reeves, P. (2014, April 10). 2 Pakistani Musicians Gain Fame Singing Political Satire . Retrieved from npr.org: <https://www.npr.org/2014/04/10/301242431/2-pakistani-gain-fame-singing-political-satire>.
- Sajjad, M., & Jalil, J. A. (2018). News Content on Private TV Channels in Pakistan: Pemra Standards And International Best Practices . *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, 20-38.
- Shirazi, M. (2017, September). Ali Gul Pir. Retrieved from thenews.pk: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/you/229181-Ali-Gul-Pir>.
- Shuaib, H. (2020). History of Laughter in Pakistan. Retrieved from youlin megazine: <https://www.youlinmagazine.com/article/history-of-laughter-in-pakistan/MTczNg>.
- Siddiqui, T. (2019). Pakistan Press Biased, Shadow-Banning Maryam Nawaz Proves Again. Retrieved from thequint.com: <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/press-censorship-in-pakistan-imran-khan-maryam-nawaz-sharif#read-more>.

- Smith, D. O. (2020, January 24). Civil-Military Relations in Pakistan: Positive Evolution or More of the Same? Retrieved from Georgetown Journal of International Affairs: <https://gija.georgetown.edu/2020/01/24/civil-military-relations-in-pakistan/>.
- Sternthal, B., & Craig, C. S. (1973, October 1). Humor in Advertising. *Humor in Advertising*, 37(4), 61-73.
- Television in Pakistan – An Overview (2010, October 7). Pakistan Advertisers Society. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://pas.org.pk/television-in-pakistan-an-overview/>.
- Thoker, S. H. (2017). Manto's Toba Tek Singh As A Political Satire: A Critical Study. *Journal of english language and literature (joell)*, 194-197.
- Times, G. (2016, July 20). Time for political satire. Retrieved from Gulf Times: <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/504242/time-for-political-satire>.
- Usman, S. (2022, September 6). From small to big screen, iconic Ayesha Jahanzeb enjoying career resurgence . Retrieved from dailytimes.com.pk: <https://dailytimes.com.pk/992956/from-small-to-big-screen-iconic-ayesha-jahanzeb-enjoying-career-resurgence/>.
- Young, D. G. (2013). Lighten up How satire will make American politics relevant again. *Columbia Journalism Review*.
- Zaheer, L. (2018). Public Affinity for Political Discourse in Pakistan. *Journal of Political Studies*, 229-241.

Appendix A: Participants

Ali Aftab Saeed

Ali Aftab Saeed is a singer, songwriter, performer, producer, activist, and one of the most influential artists working in Pakistan today. Saeed and his band, *Beygairat Brigade* (Bastard brigade) first electrified the Pakistani music scene with their song *Aalu Andey* (Potatoes and Eggs) in 2011, a pop song infused with biting political criticism of the Pakistani government in the wake of the assassination of the moderate Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer. The video of their first song was a viral hit, and Saeed and his bandmates quickly gained attention in international news (Aljazeera, 2011). They were interviewed and had extensive discussions about the impact of their music and message appearing in mainstream media across Pakistan and India and American media outlets such as the New York Times and Voice of America.

Ayesha Jahanzaib

Ayesha Jahanzaib is a famous female satirist and TV host in Pakistan. She is well known for her show *Khabarnaak*. She started off at the show as a co-host but after Aftab Iqbal's exit from *Khabarnaak*, she became the first female artist to get a solo satire show. She continued on the show for 7 years and now continues to produce satire on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Mobeen Gabool

Mobeen Gabool is a Pakistani comedian and satirist famously known for his persona Matko. Mobeen got early fame from Aaj News's 4 Man Show. After he left the show, he joined Geo News and became a part of Banana News Network which he left in 2014. Since then, he has been a part of several mainstream satire shows like *Khabardar*, *Joke Dar Joke*, and more. He also performs in an English satire show created by Aftab

Iqbal named “Loose Cannon”. He is well known for his mimicry of several famous politicians.

Aashan Rana

Aashan Rana is the producer of Hasb-e-Haal. He oversees the production and overall creative processes that go into creating Pakistan longest-running prime-time satire show Hasb-e-Haal. Aashan joined the show in 2010 and worked on the show in several capacities before finally becoming the lead producer of the show.

Zeeshan Haidar

Zeeshan Hussain is a veteran producer at Geo News Network. He started his career in serious journalism and made a move to satire. He produced *Khabarnaak* for 10 years before the show was shelved and continues to work with Geo on their new satire projects. He is also a film producer and a professional script writer for serious and comedy content.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

- Q. 1 Why did you choose satire as your preferred mode of intervention?
- Q. 2. How do you navigate through the socio-political climate of Pakistan? How do these factors influence your performance?
- Q. 3. What do you think is the value of satire in Pakistan in Pakistan's media fabric?
- Q. 4. How do you think satire is perceived by Pakistani audiences?
- Q. 5. What is your satirical inspiration?