

How do political debate programmes influence political participation? A case study from Nepal

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Definition of terms

The following list provides BBC Media Action’s definitions of key terms in the specific context of this research project and report. These concepts are explained in more detail in the main text.

Covariate A variable that is possibly predictive of the outcome under study. A covariate may be of direct interest or it may be a confounding or interacting variable.

Deliberative forum A place or event organised for deliberation or debate.

Dialogic media formats Television and radio programmes that present multiple and often opposing views to the audience and sometimes give them the opportunity to participate in the programme. Talk shows, discussion and debate formats can all be considered to be dialogic.

Discursive participation The various interactive ways in which citizens can talk in public settings about issues that affect the community, state, or nation in which they live – from one-to-one conversations to more formal meetings. However in the data from Nepal analysed in this paper, discursive participation includes only informal discussion with family, friends, neighbours and co-workers.

Explanatory variable Sometimes also known as an independent variable, this is a variable that explains what you would like to predict in a study. The presence or degree of the explanatory variable determines the change in what is predicted.

Generalisability The extension of research findings and conclusions from a study conducted on a sample population to the population at large. While the dependability of this extension is not absolute, it is statistically probable.

Grey literature A library and information science term that refers to informally published written material (such as reports). It may be difficult to trace via conventional channels such as published journals and monographs because it is not published commercially or is not widely accessible. Nonetheless, it may be an important source of information for researchers because it tends to be original and recent.

Mediated deliberation A form of public deliberation achieved when the media acts as a “mediator” between the mass public and elected officials. Media communication professionals relay information, values, and diverse points of view to the public in order for effective public deliberation to occur.

Multiple regression A statistical technique that predicts values of a variable in relation to two or more other variables.

Effect modification This is the instance when the relationship between a dependent and independent variable is changed (or modified) through the addition of a third variable, in a causal chain of events. More specifically, effect modification can take place through either mediating or moderating variables. A moderating variable can be thought of as changing either the strength or direction of a relationship between two variables, whereas a mediating variable can be thought of as explaining the relation between two variables. Through this definition, mediators can be thought of as an additional step on a causal path.

Monologic media formats Television and radio programmes that transmit information to the audience as passive recipients. Traditional news formats are often considered to be monologic.

Panel study Research using data from a (usually small) number of observations over time on a (usually large) number of cross-sectional units such as individuals, households, firms, or governments.

Political efficacy A theoretical concept used to explain political behaviour in political science. It indicates a citizen's faith and trust in government and his or her own belief that he or she can understand and influence political affairs. It is commonly measured by surveys and used as an indicator for the broader health of civil society.

R² A statistic that illustrates the percentage of individual differences in political behaviour outcomes (such as discussion of politics, voting and questioning politicians), as explained by the characteristics analysed (for instance age, literacy level, etc.). An R² of 100% indicates that, collectively, the characteristics studied would explain all differences in political behaviour. On the other end of the scale, an R² of 0 would indicate that the characteristics explain none of the differences.

State-society relations The UK Department for International Development (DFID) defines this as “interactions between state institutions and societal groups to negotiate how public authority is exercised and how it can be influenced by people. They are focused on issues such as defining the mutual rights and obligations of state and society, negotiating how public resources should be allocated and establishing different modes of representation and accountability”. (DFID's 2010 “Building Peaceful States and Societies” Practice Paper, p. 15.)

Typology A way of describing groups of respondents displaying different clusters of behaviours, attitudes or views of the world. A typology generally consists of a set of descriptive names or “types”, attached to thumbnail sketches of typical behaviour and/or attitudes for each group.

Variable A statistical term that describes a piece of data that has two defining characteristics: it is an attribute that describes a person, place, thing, or idea, and the value of the variable can vary from one entity to another.



Executive summary

This report focuses on the role of factual debate and discussion programming, defined for the purposes of this review as “dialogic formats”, on political participation, knowledge and efficacy. The paper first establishes the programmatic elements that characterise dialogic formats, conceptualising debate and discussion programmes as forms of mediated public deliberation. It then presents a typology of political participation, which accounts for a broad spectrum of behaviours ranging from latent forms, such as interpersonal discussion and following political affairs through the media, through to more goal-oriented, manifest forms such as voting, petitioning or protest.

The paper goes on to consider the existing peer-reviewed empirical evidence base for the impact of media on political participation and other outcomes, with a focus on dialogic formats that have the potential to fulfil this mediated deliberation function. The literature shows the inter-dependent relationship between more formal, manifest types of political participation, interpersonal discussion (classified as a latent form of participation in this paper) and related individual political outcomes of political knowledge and political efficacy. While there are many studies exploring the impact of news media (a monologic format), studies of dialogic formats are much less common. Where dialogic formats have been addressed, talk radio and political campaign debates are the focus of the research.

The review found that there is some mixed evidence that exposure to dialogic formats can have an impact on political participation. It is clear, however, that the relationship between exposure to programming and manifest forms of participation cannot be studied in isolation to other

important outcomes such as knowledge, efficacy and, most especially, interpersonal discussion. Studies show that exposure to dialogic formats can increase both the effectiveness and intensity of interpersonal discussion, which in turn is found to be correlated with more goal-oriented forms of participation such as intention to vote and participation in public forums. Likewise, knowledge is associated with both manifest and political forms of participation, and so has the potential to play a role in the relationship between exposure and increased participation.

The literature highlights, however, that while a correlation between programme exposure and learning exists, inaccurate information presented in broadcasts can actually amount to a decrease in knowledge. Many studies use a research design that looks at associations between stimulus and outcome, thus not allowing for a causative relationship to be inferred. The majority of the literature contains empirical studies from developed, western democracies; findings from this research cannot necessarily be generalised to developing countries and fragile states.

The review of the existing evidence base is followed by an in-depth look at the relationship between exposure to one of BBC Media Action’s own debate programme formats and political participation. Factual debate and discussion programme formats have been implemented in a number of countries in which BBC Media Action has worked in recent years. This paper presents data from Nepal, where the political debate programme *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) has been broadcast nationally on radio and television for more than five years. The analysis provides evidence that exposure to a debate programme

on the radio – which fulfils a mediated deliberation function – is positively associated with both latent and manifest forms of political participation. While it is not inferred that there is a causal relationship between the media output and political outcomes, the evidence presented goes some way to adding to the body of evidence of the impact dialogic programme formats have on interpersonal political discussion and more manifest types of participation in a developing country context, even when controlling for demographic factors and other personal characteristics.

The paper concludes with considerations for programme design and future impact evaluation research.





Chapter I

Introduction

A cross-cutting objective for all BBC Media Action governance work is to contribute to increased quality, and sometimes quantity, of engagement between people and those who hold power within society. Such an objective can be approached from multiple perspectives – be it influencing power holders to engage more effectively with their citizens through encouraging transparency and accountability, or supporting media to provide channels through which the public and power holders can interact. It can also involve empowering individuals themselves to play a more active role in the political process.¹ BBC Media Action interventions are generally multi-pronged and tailored to the context of the country for which they are designed.

Where BBC Media Action's work aims to support change at the individual or population level, projects and programming are primarily designed to influence political participation. By this we mean the extent to which individuals and groups within society are actively involved in the public sphere, political processes, debate and decision-making. Participation in this sense can span the spectrum of interpersonal political discussion, to dialogue on political issues through traditional and new media, to more formal or manifest forms of participation such as petitioning, protest, contacting officials, or voting.

Our governance and rights work aims to strengthen more accountable, peaceful and inclusive states and societies and we see participation as a necessary condition for achieving this normative state. Participation helps to ensure that decision-making processes – formal and informal – reflect the interests and views of ordinary people as well as those in power. Through sharing information it can strengthen transparency and answerability, and by involving a wide range of stakeholders it can help to build shared understanding and inclusive political settlements.

The type of participation that BBC Media Action projects seek to influence depends on both the overarching objective of an intervention and the context in which that intervention is implemented. For example, where the overarching objective of a project is to contribute to more accountable state-society relations, informal individual activities may be just as important as formal participation in the electoral process to vote in those leaders who will be more responsive to citizens' needs.

¹. For further information on conceptualising accountability see Larkin & Reimpell, 2012.

Such informal individual actions could include raising issues with the local media or questioning leaders at town hall meetings, for instance.

Depending on the context in question, numerous media formats are thought potentially to promote individual outcomes. The importance of an objective, reliable and unbiased news media to inform and politically empower citizens is well recognised within the political communications field. Factual formats can facilitate greater access to information, and when these incorporate a discursive or interactive element, they additionally provide audience members, at home or in a studio, with an opportunity to observe or engage in dialogue with experts, leaders or other guests. As such, factual formats including debate and discussion programmes can provide an independent platform for public dialogue and opportunities for citizens, or their representatives, to deliberate, debate and question.

BBC Media Action has also employed drama to address issues that may otherwise be sensitive or taboo to discuss in order to challenge individual attitudes, or influence social norms over time. The BBC Media Action approach to governance recognises that change is a complex and non-linear process, and that pathways to change are often influenced by multiple drivers and barriers outside the sphere of influence of a media intervention.

The extent to which these different media formats can impact on individual and collective political participation is a question that requires much more investigation. Empirical evidence for the impact of media on such outcomes exists, however literature reviews that assess evidence on the topic generally do not distinguish news media formats from other more discursive or interactive factual formats, or entertainment formats. Additionally much of the published research to date is limited to studies from North America and Europe, and so the generalisability of the findings to fragile states or developing contexts needs to be scrutinised. If donor and practitioner understanding of the role of media in development is to be improved, greater attention must be given to differentiating between different media formats, the mechanisms they incorporate and the outcomes they seek to address. It is also important to understand the contexts that influence the extent to which they are effective or not.

BBC Media Action has been supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to work with the media in 11 countries across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Our project will contribute to accountable state-society relations and support the empowerment of individuals to hold their government to account. In addition to building the capacity of local media, we have designed a combination of different broadcast formats to address the specific

governance priority outcomes identified in each country. These include factual discussion and debate programmes, magazine shows and drama. This multi-country programme of governance work provides an unprecedented opportunity to conduct a systematic assessment of the impact of different media formats on individual-level outcomes in a range of political and social contexts. Through such cross-cultural comparative research BBC Media Action will contribute to the evidence base for the impact of different media formats on individual outcomes, and the interplay between these outcomes and the enablers and barriers that might play a role in different contexts.

“When I see the regular people talk in the programme I feel motivated and it gives me confidence that I can also speak in front of the public”

Female *Sajha Sawal* listener, rural Nepal

This research report focuses on the role of factual debate and discussion programming – defined in this paper as dialogic formats – on political participation. The paper has been limited to a review and discussion around the empirical evidence that exists, and does not focus on the wider theoretical literature.

The remainder of this paper is divided into five sections. Section 2 establishes the programmatic elements that characterise dialogic formats, conceptualising debate and discussion programmes as forms of mediated public deliberation. Section 3 defines the key outcomes of interest: political participation, political efficacy and political knowledge. Section 4 reviews the existing evidence base for the impact of media on political participation with a focus on dialogic formats that have the potential to fulfil this mediated deliberation function.

This is followed by section 5 – a more in-depth look at the relationship between exposure to one of BBC Media Action’s own dialogic programme formats and political participation. Dialogic formats have been implemented in a number of countries in which BBC Media Action has worked in recent years, and data from Nepal is presented here, where the political debate programme *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) has been broadcast nationally on radio and television for more than five years. In section 6, the paper concludes with a summary of the evidence gaps that still exist, and considerations for future programme design and evaluation of the impact of dialogic formats broadcast as part of BBC Media Action’s DFID-funded programme of work.



Chapter 2

Defining the stimulus – factual debate and discussion programmes as mediated deliberation

Fraefel & Haeussler (2011) define media debates and interviews as “dialogic formats” and contrast these discussions to “monologic formats” such as documentaries or news programmes. Where dialogic formats present multiple and often opposing views to the audience, giving viewers or listeners access to a spectrum of opinions in one programme and in some cases an opportunity to participate, monologic formats transmit information to the audience as passive recipients. Talk shows, discussion and debate formats can all be considered dialogic in this way.²

It is important to acknowledge this distinction between different formats to understand the relationship between media and individual-level political outcomes. Dialogic formats contain an element of political interactivity or mediated two-way communication (for example, talk shows, discussion programmes and political debates) while more one-way information relay formats include news media.

Bucy and Gregson (2001) describe news media as a passive-indirect format, which they theorise leads to encouragement of passive-indirect modes of participation (such as following public affairs via the media). However they propose that interactive or mediated communication formats, such as debates, political talk radio, and televised town hall meetings, can lead to “active-direct” modes of political participation – such as voting, seeking office or writing letters to public officials. Hollander (1996) posits that talk radio, another dialogic format, “provides verbal proximity to media and political elites, as well as access to a mass audience of fellow listeners, via the direct feedback of listener calls”. This highlights the manner in which programmes of this kind sometimes explicitly attempt to mobilise the public to participate in civic affairs or contact officials.

In the context of a fragile, developing democracy, Mwesige (2009) argues that political talk radio in Uganda can be considered arenas of

2. While some studies in the literature focus on political party candidate or presidential debates, the focus of this paper is on debate and discussion programmes of a format similar to town hall meetings.

political competition and civic participation. Through these citizens can “communicate their preferences, interests, needs, collective problems and aspirations to seek redress from those in charge of public policy or change them”, in addition to learning about public affairs and educating each other. Additionally, as Fraefel & Haeussler (2011) highlight, the rise of new technology has meant that political discussion increasingly features the voices of members of civil society. Until recent years some of these people may have been passive or played only a marginal role in much traditional media coverage of political issues.

In a democratised public sphere all members of society, especially marginalised groups, should have the opportunity to participate in shaping, influencing and criticising public opinion

The characteristics of these media formats echo those principles on which political theories of deliberative democracy are based. Deliberative democracy can be thought of as a discursive system where citizens voluntarily and freely participate in discussions on public issues, share information about public affairs, talk politics, form opinions and participate in political processes (Kim et al, 1999). In a democratised public sphere all members of society, especially marginalised groups, should have the opportunity to participate in shaping, influencing and criticising public opinion. According to Chambers (2001) “while 19th and early 20th century democracy focused on expanding the vote to include everyone, today democratization is focused on expanding the public sphere to give everyone a say”. Such a shift from vote-centric to talk-centric democratic theory places a focus on the communicative processes of opinion and will formation that precede the more formal political engagement process – voting (Delli Carpini, 2004).

3. Although we note that debate abounds regarding the true concept and definition of public deliberation, and the legitimacy of different types of conversation in fulfilling this function, communication theorists agree that for public deliberation to exist a number of conditions must be satisfied (Burkhalter et al, 2002; Fishkin 2011; Girard, 2011; Gastil & Black, 2008). Fishkin (2011) describes five characteristics that must be satisfied for legitimate deliberation – accurate information available to all participants; substantive balance; diversity of views; conscientious weighing of all arguments; and equal consideration of views based on evidence.

At the core of deliberative democracy is public deliberation – defined by Burkhalter, Gastil & Kelshaw (2002) as a combination of careful problem analysis and an egalitarian process in which participants have adequate speaking opportunities and engage in attentive listening or dialogue that bridges divergent ways of speaking and knowing.³ Public deliberation in the context of media is known as “mediated deliberation” – a concept originally advanced by Benjamin Page. Page (1996, p. 6) argues that the size of the citizenry and the multitude of complex political problems “necessitate a division of labour in political expertise, policy-making and political communication”.

However while professional policy makers and politicians engage in deliberation in small groups, a level of public deliberation that involves all of the citizenry is necessary to ensure that citizens are informed and

in a position to hold their leaders to account. Page argues for the need for “professional communicators”, who “not only help policy experts communicate with each other, but also assemble, explain, debate and disseminate the best available information and ideas about public policy, in ways that are accessible to large audiences of ordinary citizens”. Page’s view resonates with that of Habermas (2006) who argues that the media play an important role:

“to mobilize and pool relevant issues and required information, and to specify interpretations; to process such contributions discursively by means of proper arguments for and against; and to generate rationally motivated yes and no attitudes [i.e. public opinions] that are expected to determine the outcome of procedurally correct decisions.”

Habermas, 2006

Gastil & Black (2008) propose a framework that considers both the analytic and social processes that should be in place for deliberation to occur across a range of different sites of public talk, and Box 1 maps the observable ways in which media can be assessed to fulfil these functions. Dialogic formats such as audience, political and campaign debates and political discussion programmes, which incorporate these media system functions, could be said to deliver the functions of a deliberative media process.

Box 1: Media processes for mediated deliberation (Gastil & Black, 2008)

Analytic processes:

- a solid information base is created
- participants identify and prioritise the key values at stake in an issue
- participants identify a broad range of solutions
- they weigh the pros and cons and trade-offs of solutions
- and (if in a decision-making body) make the best decision possible

Social processes:

- an adequate opportunity to speak allowing all points of view to be aired
- all participants have a right to comprehend – speakers communicate in a way that others can understand
- obligation to consider carefully the words they hear
- respect for other participants

This definition encompasses a range of debates and discussion formats that (regardless of variations in style, topics and participants) share a common set of underlying principles. Therefore it is a useful one with which to proceed towards a systematic evaluation of the impact of BBC Media Action’s governance programming on individual-level political

outcomes. These principles include relevance of information to audience needs, inclusivity of voice, and effective moderation to ensure balance of perspectives, comprehension and respect for all participants.

Where it is relevant to the media landscape in question, BBC Media Action dialogic programme formats additionally enable socially and geographically diverse audiences to have their voices heard in the deliberation process. Much of BBC Media Action's interactive factual programming can be viewed through this mediated deliberation lens, and these formats are referred to throughout the remainder of this paper as "dialogic".

In section 4 this contextualised definition of mediated deliberation is used to structure a review of the available empirical research on political mass media outputs and individual political outcomes of interest. In summarising the strength of the peer-reviewed evidence base, a differentiation is made between monologic and dialogic media stimuli. Before this evidence is presented, the political outcomes of interest and common approaches to measurement are defined in section 3 below.



Chapter 3

Defining the outcomes – political participation, political knowledge and political efficacy

Political participation

Political participation is a multi-dimensional construct, and as a result wide-ranging definitions of it have been employed across the theoretical and empirical literature. Where in some cases there is a risk of being too confined in what is accepted as a political participation activity, in others there are problems with conceptual confusion and stretching to include more informal types of participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2009).

Verba, Scholzman & Brady (1995) propose a rather narrow definition of political participation as any “activity (by private citizens and ordinary people) that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies”. However in their review of typologies of political participation, Ekman & Amnå (2009) draw a useful distinction between “manifest” forms of political participation, which include formal, goal-oriented behaviours such as those suggested in the definition of Verba et al, (for instance voting, protest, petitioning, strikes or contacting officials), and more “latent” forms of participation.

In the typology that Ekman & Amnå propose, latent forms of participation include activities classified elsewhere as “civic engagement” or “social involvement”, such as following political issues, contacting the media on issues, donating, volunteering or working as part of a collective to solve local problems. They argue that consideration for such latent forms of participation is central to progressing understanding of new forms of political behaviour, and also captures the nuance of political engagement across different country contexts over time.

Bucy and Gregson posit that involvement in a debate or talk show is in itself a form of political participation and that “interactive political experiences that occur . . . via cable channels and over the airways are deemed every bit as ‘real’, useful and important as their non-mediated

corollaries” (Bucy and Gregson, 2001, p. 269). Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs (2004), in their review of the empirical research on public deliberation and citizen engagement, also argue that “public talk”, or interpersonal discussion on political issues, is a form of political engagement. Both media engagement and interpersonal discussion are included in the Ekman & Amnå typology as a form of latent participation.⁴

This is a useful typology to adopt in reviewing the empirical evidence for the impact of media on political participation, and a spectrum on which BBC Media Action governance programming impact evaluation research is based. Where the overarching objective of a governance focused project is to support more accountable state-society relations, consideration for both latent and manifest forms of participation is crucial. While voting could be considered the ultimate mechanism that enables citizens to sanction their leaders for failing to account for their decisions and actions, in some contexts raising issues through the media can be just as important as a means to demanding answerability or imposing reputational sanctions on those in power (Larkin & Reimpell, 2012). For each of the studies reviewed in reviewed in section 4, the type of political participation outcome investigated has been categorised as latent or manifest in order to organise the evidence more clearly.

Political participation, in any form, cannot be considered in isolation to other individual political attitudes and outcomes. Evidence from the wider literature on political engagement suggests that political efficacy, political knowledge and interpersonal discussion on political issues (latent participation) may have a modification effect on more manifest (or formal) political participation. Bucy and Gregson (2001) theorise that even if exposure to dialogic formats results only in psychological rewards to the individual, such as increased political efficacy and feelings of empowerment, these in turn can motivate further political participation in already active citizens. These positive changes can also motivate politically inactive citizens into initiating some form of latent, civic participation.

Political efficacy

There is a vast literature on the concept of political efficacy, and this section demonstrates just some of the perspectives that have been presented. The most widely accepted conceptualisation of political efficacy describes it as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process . . . the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954). Political efficacy can be divided into two related but distinct components – external and internal efficacy.

4. Ekman & Amnå (2009) caution that the civil actions they classify as “latent” are of course “manifest” in the sense that they are observable behaviours, but “latent” in relation to specific political parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions. This is because they include not only activities intended to influence actual political outcomes but also activities that may potentially be of relevance for future “manifest” political action.

External efficacy constitutes the individual's belief that political elites and governmental institutions are responsive to citizen demands. Internal efficacy is the belief that one is competent to exert influence on and engage in the political process (Clarke, Kornberg & Scotto, 2010). McKinney & Chattopadhyay (2007) further distinguish political information efficacy (an element of internal efficacy). This may be defined as the level of confidence one has in his or her political knowledge and the belief that one possesses sufficient knowledge to engage in the political process through formal political behaviours such as voting.

“The most widely accepted conceptualisation of political efficacy describes it as ‘the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process ... the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change’”

Campbell, Gurin & Miller, 1954

A brief review undertaken for this paper of several studies measuring political efficacy revealed a degree of overlap in the way attitude statements are assigned to concepts of political efficacy, political cynicism, political trust and other democratic “norms”. (For example see McKinney & Chattopadhyay, 2007 and Finkel, Horowitz & Rojo-Mendoza, 2012.) These challenges have been faced in BBC Media Action's own research, as illustrated in difficulties with identifying a reliable efficacy measure for the Nepal analysis presented in section 5 (see the Appendix for technical background to this). The standard measure of political efficacy on BBC Media Action governance projects funded by DFID consists of a number of items that attempt to capture both internal and external efficacy. Analysis will be conducted on these items in all countries to produce a scale that is reliable for each context, and ideally, across multiple contexts. Future research publications in this series will document this process.

Political knowledge

Political knowledge can be conceptualised on numerous levels. In its simplest form it is defined as knowledge of political facts (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993), but it is related to the concepts of political awareness, political expertise and, at the furthest end of the spectrum, political sophistication. (This is defined by Eveland and Hutchens, 2008 as “knowledge of the political realm”.)

Political knowledge is extremely difficult to measure, and in practice few studies explore political sophistication or more complex levels of political expertise. Rather, measures tend to be fact-based responses to survey questions about political representatives or systems, or self-ratings of levels of knowledge on specific political “issues”, both of which are problematic. The former have been criticised for having poor validity as a measure of a true domain of political knowledge, and the latter have been criticised on the grounds that self-perceived knowledge does not necessarily correlate with actual knowledge (Gajora, 2012). It has been found that those who can recall factual information most completely may not necessarily possess a deep understanding of political affairs (Mondak, 1995, in Gajora, 2012). However the nature of quantitative survey data collection limits the extent to which studies can take alternative approaches, and so for now most large-scale studies continue to employ simple factual or self-report style measures of political knowledge.⁵

Inter-relationship between these outcomes

Empirical studies generally do not focus on participation, efficacy or knowledge outcomes in isolation, but rather investigate the relationships between them, or the mediating effects of the latter two on participation. Scholars widely accept the relationship between political efficacy and political behaviour. Morell (2005, p. 50) states that without internal political efficacy individuals “will likely become apathetic about, indifferent to and disengaged from the democratic process”. Delli Carpini (2004, p. 398) notes that democratic attitudes such as political efficacy “are positively associated with the amount and quality of democratic engagement”. Verba et al (1995) identify efficacy as part of a broader political engagement factor, among three overarching factors predicting political participation (which incorporate knowledge and recruitment networks).

Numerous studies show that increased political knowledge is associated with increased voter turnout (Verba et al, 1995; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Larcinese, 2007; and Grönlund & Milner, 2006). Larcinese’s (2007) analysis of 1997 British election data showed that a person scoring the maximum on a measure of knowledge is around one third more likely to vote than someone at the bottom of the knowledge distribution. The author concluded that political knowledge has a statistically significant association with British citizens’ likelihood to vote. Galston (2001) found that people possessing more political knowledge were better able to understand political processes and events, more likely to support core democratic principles such as tolerance, and more likely to participate in public matters.

5. A self-report measure of political knowledge will be captured as standard on all governance projects funded by DFID. In the Nepal quantitative study, presented in section 5, a simple measure of knowledge of political leaders and parties was used (the measures are provided in the Appendix).

Research has also shown that interpersonal political discussion is associated with increased political knowledge (Eveland et al, 2005) and political efficacy (Min, 2007). Eveland and Thomson (2006) additionally claim evidence of a causal link between political discussion and political knowledge. In a US national mail panel study that employed stratified quota sampling they found a statistically significant relationship between frequency of discussion and knowledge of presidential candidates. This was true even after controlling for prior knowledge levels, demographic variables, political interest, and news media use. (The research was part of a wider study on the US presidential election in 2000 and participants willingly volunteered to take part in periodic surveys.)

“... people possessing more political knowledge were better able to understand political processes and events, more likely to support core democratic principles such as tolerance, and more likely to participate in public matters”

Galston 2001

Implications for programme design and evaluation

In designing media and communication interventions to influence governance outcomes at the individual and population level, it is therefore important to understand and observe politically oriented behaviour along the spectrum from interpersonal discussion to voting and protest. Depending on the social and political context of the population in question, an increase in interpersonal political discussion may be just as positive and desirable an outcome as more manifest forms of participation such as voting. This is particularly relevant where democratic processes and electoral systems are weak. Likewise other attitudes, attributes and behaviours, which may play a mediating role in a pathway to change, should be explored through formative research and accounted for in evaluative research.



Chapter 4

Reviewing the evidence base

This section considers peer-reviewed empirical studies on the effect that media, and more specifically dialogic formats, have on political participation and related outcomes as outlined above.

Monologic media formats, such as news and press, currently dominate the literature. While we are primarily interested in evidence regarding dialogic formats, the findings from these studies are still relevant and important to understanding the potential impact of media overall and so have not been excluded from this review. However where evidence exists, a specific focus is placed on evidence from studies of formats that may potentially be defined and characterised as dialogic (see section 2).

The relationship between media and political participation

Evidence for media in general

The relationship between mass media and political participation is complex, and a wealth of literature provides evidence that exposure to mass media, generally defined in studies as news media, is positively associated with both manifest and latent forms of participation (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; Kim, Wyatt and Katz, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy, 1999; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Zhang and Chia, 2007).

When goal-oriented, manifest forms of participation are considered, activities are generally combined in an index (Zhang and Chia, 2007; McLeod et al, 1999). If voting is included in these indices, they tend to measure “intention to vote” rather than past voting behaviour. Where voting has been looked at in isolation (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006) it was found that news media with high levels of political content (such as broadsheet newspapers and public television news) contributed more than did media with less political content on propensity to turn out to vote (and knowledge gains). Numerous studies have also looked at the impact of news media exposure on intention to take part in public meetings or forums.

Both newspaper readership (McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy, 1999a) and paying attention to public affairs on television (Zhang and Chia, 2007)

have been found to predict intention to attend and speak at a local forum. McLeod et al (1999b) also found evidence that people who were exposed to news media were more likely to attend a public deliberative forum.

Leeson (2008) examined the relationship between media freedom from government control and political knowledge, participation and voter turnout. Analysis of data from a sample of more than 80,000 people across 61 countries showed that in countries where media freedom is low (such as Zimbabwe), voter turnout is significantly lower than in countries with the freest media (for instance Finland) – approximately 38% and 77% respectively. Other types of political participation, such as willingness to sign a petition and attending demonstrations, were measured through the World Values Survey (2005) and were also found to correlate positively with media freedom. Leeson attributes this to lower levels of political knowledge and higher levels of political apathy in countries where media freedom is low.

A wealth of literature provides evidence that exposure to mass media, generally defined in studies as news media, is positively associated with both manifest and latent forms of participation

Where latent forms of participation have been observed, interpersonal political discussion or “political talk” is the focus of almost all studies. In these studies interpersonal discussion varies in terms of being viewed as an outcome of mass media exposure (Delli Carpini et al, 2004; Pan, Shen, Paek & Sun, 2006) or a mediating factor in more manifest forms of political participation (Scheufele, 2002; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999). Cho et al (2009) theorise that “reasoning” behaviours, which include interpersonal discussion, are an integral part of a model of communication effects. The authors refer to “reasoning” as the “mental elaboration and collective consideration of a topic, [and] is a critical condition for news media use to produce political outcomes”.

In a cross-sectional study on news exposure and political participation, Jung et al (2011) found that exposure had a significant association with political participation through its impact on political discussion, political knowledge, and efficacy. As with previously mentioned studies, interpersonal discussion largely mediated the effects of news media on political outcomes. Jung et al (2011) do not claim causality, although they infer causal directions through use of structural equation modelling and comparison with alternate models and theories.

Observing interpersonal discussion as an outcome in its own right, Kim, Wyatt, and Katz (1999) found that issue-specific news media use was the

best predictor of informal political discussion among participants. Their analysis also demonstrated that news media use and political discussion were more strongly associated with formal (manifest) than other informal (latent) types of participation.

Scheufele (2002) also found that the relationship between television news exposure and political participation was stronger for those participants who discussed politics frequently with others than for those participants who did not. This study defined participation as an index that included manifest forms such as voting, protesting and attending meetings. In explaining his findings, Scheufele (2002) explains that “interpersonal discussion plays a role in the reception and processing of political news when it comes to translating mass-mediated messages into meaningful individual action”.

Evidence for dialogic formats

The evidence presented thus far in this section is from studies of one-way media communication formats that lack dialogue and/or interactivity between citizens and political actors. The literature search uncovered limited empirical evidence for the impact of dialogic formats on political participation. Where dialogic formats have been addressed, talk radio and political campaign debates are the focus of the research in this field.

In their review of literature on political debates, McKinney & Chattopadhyay (2007) note evidence for the relationship between exposure to debate programmes and manifest forms of participation. These include greater participation in political campaigns and an association with increased reported intention to vote, as well as latent behaviours such as seeking out additional campaign information. In an analysis of telephone survey data in the US, Hollander (1996) found callers to a talk radio programme to be more politically engaged than talk radio listeners and non-listeners. Their political engagement index included both manifest (writing to an elected official, donating money to political action groups or candidates, or attending town meetings) and latent forms of participation (writing to news media). Hofstetter (1998) replicated these results, finding that callers to a political talk radio programme were more politically engaged than listeners – who were more politically engaged than non-listeners. Hollander (1996) concludes that audiences of talk radio are “open to political mobilization” and feel more involved in the political process.

Bridging research across talk radio and debate formats, Pan, Shen, Paek, & Sun (2006) analysed data from 1,555 panel respondents during the 2000 US presidential election to explore whether exposure to the campaign stimulated interpersonal political discussion. Further, they explored how such discussion related to manifest participation (such as contacting a public official, attending political campaign meetings

and donating money to political candidates). Campaign exposure included viewing televised presidential debates and listening to radio discussion about campaigns.

Comparing responses before and after the election, Pan et al (2006) found that exposure to a media election campaign affected the intensity and effectiveness of interpersonal political discussion among citizens. In line with other studies (such as Scheufele, 2002; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999), the importance of interpersonal political discussion was again highlighted, with the frequency of political discussion significantly positively associated with respondents' civic and campaign participation. The authors conclude that "political conversation among citizens in the familiar settings of their everyday life needs to be viewed as a building block of public life in a democracy" (Pan et al, 2006).

It should be noted that across most studies of media and political participation researchers observe the influence of media alongside respondents' other socio-demographic characteristics. Aspects of the individual context such as age, gender and ethnicity, or psychological, attitudinal and behavioural characteristics such as political disposition or interest, can potentially impact on an individual's likelihood to be influenced by a media stimulus. Those characteristics that are commonly controlled for in studies looking at political participation and related outcomes include age, gender and education, as well as other combinations of measures of poverty/wealth, social class, literacy and ethnicity (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Larcinese, 2007; Gajora, 2011; Finkel et al, 2012; Barabas & Jerit, 2009).

The relationship between media and political knowledge

Evidence for media in general

There is a wide range of empirical research that looks at the impact of media exposure on political knowledge, either as an outcome in its own right or as a mediating factor in studies of political participation. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) report that it is generally agreed among scholars that mass media plays an important role in the process of public learning. Increased access to political information, facilitated by mass media, has been shown to increase citizens' political knowledge as well as politicians' responsiveness to citizens' needs (Snyder & Stromberg, 2004).

A large body of evidence points to the different effects of exposure to media formats on political knowledge. With regard to monologic media formats, numerous studies have found a positive relationship between use of news media and levels of political knowledge (Chaffee, Zhao, and

Leshner, 1994; Eveland and Scheufele, 2000; Neuman et al, 2002; de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; and Jung, Kim, and de Zuniga, 2011).

In a two-wave panel study in Denmark and the Netherlands, de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2006) controlled for participants' previous levels of knowledge in order to examine the differential effect of exposure to news regarding the European Union (EU). Exposure through both public and commercial television and broadsheet and tabloid newspapers was considered. They found that media exposure significantly increased participants' political knowledge (measured as two questions on EU politics). Further analysis revealed that it was the content, as opposed to the medium (TV/radio/press), of the news that resulted in knowledge gains. When news contained politically relevant and substantial information, the effect of exposure on knowledge was significant.

Numerous studies have found a positive relationship between use of news media and levels of political knowledge

Barabas & Jerit (2009) found a similar outcome in their study of news media and policy-specific knowledge, where volume, breadth and prominence of news stories were associated with knowledge increase above any socio-demographic factors. This has important implications for the design of programming that aims to increase knowledge, and is discussed further in section 6.

Evidence for dialogic formats

The evidence for the impact that dialogic formats, specifically, can improve individuals' level of political knowledge is mixed. Several studies provide evidence that debates and talk radio can result in learning, however where this entails learning incorrect information it cannot be equated with knowledge increase. Rather it constitutes a decrease in political knowledge. In a panel study to measure participants' political knowledge before and after the screening of a televised presidential debate, Maurer and Reinemann (2006) found that although exposure resulted in "learning", participants' learned both correct and incorrect facts. Although it used a quasi-experimental design, their sample was small and self-selected, and participants had higher levels of education and interest in politics than the general audience of the debate programme.

Similar evidence is provided in the study by Hofstetter et al (1999) of political talk radio, whereby listeners learned from both accurately presented facts and incorrect assertions made by German political candidates. Additionally where self-reported measures of knowledge

were used, Hollander (1995) found that while exposure to talk radio generally resulted in a sense of feeling informed, the extent to which this related to actual campaign knowledge depended on listeners' level of education. Among less-educated listeners this did not relate to actual campaign knowledge, while talk radio exposure was related to both the feeling of being informed and having campaign information among more highly-educated people. Hollander suggests that "greater cognitive ability and motivation brought about by education increases the ability to glean useful information from such programs".

This effect of education from programmes on knowledge gain echoes the long-standing theory on the "knowledge gap hypothesis", proposed by Tichenor, Donahue and Olien (1970) and supported by subsequent studies that provide evidence for the conditional nature of media effects. The knowledge gap hypothesis refers to the role of media in exacerbating disparities in knowledge that can exist between those of higher and lower socio-economic status. This has been explained by scholars as being a result of individuals with higher socio-economic status both having pre-existing knowledge (prior to exposure to a media stimulus), and also being better able to use information from media exposure compared with people with a lower socio-economic status. This creates even further advantages for people with a higher socio-economic status and thus widens the gap in knowledge between these two groups.

Where the aim of dialogic programming is to increase knowledge two issues of importance emerge from this limited review of evidence. Firstly, attention must be given to ensuring accuracy of information aired, and if participants voice distortions of the truth in dialogic programmes this must be followed up to avoid people learning incorrect facts or distortions. Secondly, presenters or discussion moderators should provide ample interpretation of complex information to support listeners who may lack prior education, experience or political knowledge to fully comprehend or process the issues and views discussed.

The relationship between media and political efficacy

Evidence for general media

There has been an influx of recent studies looking at the relationship between internet and other new media usage on political efficacy. However empirical studies looking at political efficacy and traditional media are relatively limited; the majority focus on talk radio and televised presidential debate programmes.

Evidence for dialogic formats

During the 2004 US presidential campaign, McKinney and Banwart (2006) studied the effects of viewing televised political debate

programmes on young people's democratic attitudes and values. The programme (Rock the Vote on CNN) consisted of a live, moderated debate between candidates, with questions from the studio audience and home viewers. Out of eight statements intended to measure democratic norms, only the efficacy statement "People like me don't have any say about what the government does" was significantly associated with viewing the programme. Comparing pre- and post-debate viewing responses, the study also found that after being exposed to the programme viewers were less likely to agree with the internal information efficacy statement "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on".

Empirical studies looking at political efficacy and traditional media are relatively limited; the majority focus on talk radio and televised presidential debate programmes

McKinney and Chattopadhyay (2007) explored the impact of three televised presidential debates on young people's political efficacy. The results found that although political efficacy increased somewhat between pre- and post-debate viewing, this shift was not significant.⁶ The study did find a significant effect for exposure on information efficacy, however. Respondents who had been exposed to the programme were less likely to agree with the information efficacy statement "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on". While the design of the study was a pre/post longitudinal panel, enabling the authors to infer causality, the sample consisted of 32 students who were enrolled on communications courses. The potential for bias in this sample is extremely high and so these findings cannot be considered representative of the general US youth population.

These studies are rare examples of where political efficacy and other attitudes are explored as outcomes of exposure to dialogic formats in their own right. As outlined in section 3 the concept of political efficacy is thought to play an important role in political behaviour. Thus political communication studies generally look at such attitudes as moderating variables in a pathway towards increasing democratic engagement.

The methodological limitations of the evidence reviewed is summarised below, and the implications of the findings for the design of programme interventions and evaluative research are discussed in more detail in section 6.

6. The authors report that it "approached significance" at $p < 0.062$

Discussion of limitations

There is a wealth of literature showing how mass media, particularly news media, has impact on individuals' political knowledge, efficacy, participation, and demonstrating the relationship that exists between these three outcomes. However there are several methodological considerations to take into account when assessing the strength of this evidence, and implications for evaluating the impact of BBC Media Action programmes.

Firstly variations in definitions of outcomes and measures used make it difficult to compare studies. Where some studies have measured formal participation as past voting behaviour (Scheufele, 2002), others have measured it as intention to vote (Kim, Wyatt and Katz, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy, 1999). Similarly, conceptual confusion exists around the term "civic engagement" (Ekman and Amnå, 2009) and this means that the spectrum of activities measured as latent forms of participation vary widely from one study to the next.

It is important to bear in mind that findings from studies conducted in a Western context, with long-standing, developed democracies, may not be generalisable to the contexts within which BBC Media Action works

As noted by McKinney and Chattopadhyay (2007), research into political efficacy is relatively underdeveloped in comparison with the evidence base on participation and knowledge. Also studies often do not find reliable scales of external and internal efficacy (Scheufele, 2002), or use a single-item measure of efficacy (Jung et al, 2011) because of the disagreement that exists between scholars on the valid measure of political efficacy.

With regard to design, a number of studies included here were telephone based (Hollander 1996; McLeod et al, 1999a; Zhang and Chia, 2007) or online (Jung et al, 2011), which can result in a biased sample from the outset. Several other studies also appeared to use small or non-representative samples (Hollander, 2007; Jung et al, 2011; Kim et al, 1999; McLeod et al, 1999; Maurer and Reinemann, 2006; Zhang and Chia, 2007; McKinney and Banwart, 2007). In the most extreme example, the sample used for a panel study consisted of political communications students (McKinney and Chattopadhyay, 2007).

With the exception of a few studies cited here (de Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006; Pan et al, 2006), the majority of studies on media communication and political participation are cross-sectional designs.

This means that although associations between media stimuli and outcomes can be inferred, causality cannot. Researchers go some way to addressing this problem by controlling for demographic and other endogenous variables such as interest in politics and group membership. They also use more sophisticated analyses such as structural equation modelling and hierarchical regression modelling (Eveland et al, 2005; Pan et al, 2006; Scheufele, 2002) in order to improve the robustness of findings.

There still remains, however, a paucity of evidence that shows how dialogic formats may impact on individuals in terms of their political knowledge or participation. Studies of talk radio formats contain elements of dialogic formats similar to BBC Media Action programmes (for example Hollander, 1996). However we cannot be certain that other programmes contain all the elements that ensure they are truly dialogic in format, and fulfil the functions of mediated deliberation as described in section 2. Detail on the quality and content of media outputs is somewhat neglected in these studies, with the notable exception of a few studies focusing specifically on quality of information in relation to knowledge gain (Barabas & Jerit, 2009; de Vreese & Boomgarden, 2006).

Other studies of political participation include little exploration of the potential for negatively impacting on attitudes and behaviour. Mwesige (2009), however, points to the potential for ineffectively moderated political discussion to excite and inflame or alternatively promote political inertia. Further consideration for the negative impact of poor quality or incendiary discussion on air is important.

The lack of evidence from developing countries is of particular importance. The vast majority of evidence that has been published in empirically reviewed journals comes from studies of media and populations in Europe and North America. Although evidence from developing countries does exist, this has mostly been collected as part of donor funded evaluation studies of development interventions, and published as grey literature. It is important to bear in mind that findings from studies conducted in a Western context, with long-standing, developed democracies, may not be generalisable to the contexts within which BBC Media Action works.

As Leeson (2008) highlights in his examination of media freedom from government control and political knowledge and participation, in countries where the media is state controlled, citizens are often politically apathetic. This, in turn, means that they are neither politically knowledgeable nor active enough to monitor effectively or punish the activities of self-interested politicians. In contexts such as these, there is a very different environment and set of social and political barriers to deal with when trying to influence individual or collective outcomes

through media interventions. There is a great need for further peer-reviewed studies from non-Western contexts.

While the studies reviewed in this paper provide useful evidence for the relationship between media and political participation, we cannot verify that the media stimuli in these studies are comparable to the type of programming that BBC Media Action produces in the countries in which we work. For example, we cannot say conclusively that talk radio is truly dialogic, and airs information that is accurate and relevant. Section 5 presents data from a BBC Media Action study in Nepal, where we are confident that the programme format meets editorial and production standards that ensure quality, and incorporates the characteristics of mediated deliberation outlined in section 2.

Chapter 5

Evidence from BBC Media Action dialogic formats

This section outlines the evidence for the relationship between exposure to a BBC Media Action multi-platform debate programme, and Nepali citizens' political participation. Information about *Sajha Sawal* is provided in Box 2 below.

Box 2: About *Sajha Sawal*

BBC Media Action's *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) is a 45-minute debate programme for both radio and television that has been broadcast in Nepal since late 2007.

Television, radio and social media were selected as important and complementary platforms for the programme. Radio remains the most widely used media platform in Nepal (93% listenership) with TV viewership standing at 74% overall and 96% in urban areas) (BBC Media Action, 2012). Radio is the primary platform for the intervention given its wide reach. However television, despite being limited in rural areas because of low penetration and nationally as a result of power cuts in the dry season, continues to command great influence and authority in urban areas. The intervention works through a combination of four platforms – radio, television, internet and mobile phones – complemented by building the capacity of media practitioners in partner FM stations. The specific objectives of *Sajha Sawal* are to:

- **Provide a forum for ordinary people to question and interact** with policy-makers and service providers, in ways that put important social issues affecting ordinary people on the political and public agenda.

- **Increase the representation** of marginalised groups and women in public discourse.
- **Improve audiences' understanding** of key governance issues.
- **Improve the capacity** of local media to produce quality radio programmes.
- **Encourage the compliance** of government officials, leaders and service providers with their commitments and promises.

Each week, different political leaders and government officials appear before a live audience to answer questions from the public, fulfilling the two-way communication necessary to be defined as a dialogic format. The programme was designed to foster political awareness and dialogue among Nepali citizens and to encourage them to engage in politics. *Sajha Sawal* differentiates itself from existing debate style programmes available to Nepali audiences by fulfilling a mediated deliberation function as described in section 2. It also has editorial values that emphasise balance and accuracy, qualities often missing in other debate programmes.

Sajha Sawal is broadcast in 73 of Nepal's 75 districts on 163 radio stations, and more than 16,000 people have joined *Sajha Sawal*'s live studio audience on TV since the first broadcast.

BBC Media Action carried out an impact evaluation of the programme in April 2012 using a mixed-methods approach including included qualitative⁷ and quantitative research. As with many of the studies cited in the literature, the design of the quantitative study was cross-sectional. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. The evaluation's target audience was men and women between 15 and 65 years of age living in Nepal. A total of 4,000 adults (2,000 men and 2,000 women) from 23 sampled districts were included in the study, using a three-stage stratified sampling design (district, cluster, household). Since specific exposure questions were asked for both TV and radio, in order to ensure fair comparison respondents who were exposed only via TV were removed from the sample.

Radio was selected for the focus of the analysis as those exposed only to radio represented 31% of the exposed population. This increased to 72% those who had been exposed to both radio and TV versions of *Sajha Sawal*, were included, and this therefore providing most statistical weight. Furthermore, prior analysis indicated that radio exposure was most equally distributed across demographic groups, such as urban and rural populations (BBC Media Action, 2012). The findings from this quantitative research are presented here.

Impact of *Sajha Sawal* on political participation

Multiple regression analysis was conducted on data from the impact study. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that predicts values of a variable on the basis of two or more other variables. The results of this regression analysis tell us if there is a significant association between two or more variables, when accounting for the influence of other important characteristics that could be masking the relationship.

Associations do not indicate a causal relationship, especially when analysing cross-sectional data as the order of events cannot be established. However, the ability for regression to account for characteristics that predict both programme exposure and political participation outcomes means that any associations found are less likely to be due to confounding. The outputs presented in tables 1 to 4 on the following pages provide standardised beta coefficients. Standardised coefficients enable association measured on different scales to be comparable, by providing the amount of increase in an outcome variable (for example political participation) for a one standard deviation increase in the predictor variables (for example exposure to the programme).

Analysis was split into two stages; the first stage of analysis examined the relationship between exposure to the programme and various potential

7. The qualitative research involved focus groups and interviews with listeners or viewers and non-listeners or non-viewers of *Sajha Sawal*, key informants of the society, listeners of the local discussion programmes, media practitioners from partner radio stations who worked on local discussion programmes, and managers of partner radio stations.

explanatory variables. The second stage of analysis then explored the relationship between these same potential explanatory variables and varying levels of radio programme exposure, looking only at exposed participants. Both analyses removed those participants who were solely exposed to the programme via TV. The first models (comparing those exposed and those not exposed to the radio format of *Sajha Sawal*) used a total of 3,624 observations and the second set of models (data from those exposed only to the radio format of *Sajha Sawal* only) used 918 observations.⁸

Differing levels of exposure was measured using an index that accounts for when participants last listened to the programme, the frequency with which they listen to the programme, and how much of the programme they listen to (for example part of or the entire programme). The main variables that were included in the analysis are detailed below.

- Additional exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on TV
- Political knowledge – objective measures of awareness of key political figures and parties
- Political participation⁹ – index score on a series of activities including attending rallies, contacting an official, etc.
- Discursive participation – index score on a series of interpersonal discussion items including discussion with friends and family
- Level of political interest – self-reported measure
- Freedom to act – self-reported measure
- Demographic variables – sex, age, place, literacy, and level of material deprivation

Unfortunately the analysis during the data preparation stage revealed that the political efficacy items used in this survey did not result in a reliable efficacy scale or set of subscales; therefore political efficacy was not included in regression models presented here.¹⁰

Researchers developed a three-layer regression model for each analysis stage. As illustrated by the empirical evidence cited in this paper, political participation can be influenced by a number of characteristics as well as media effects. Additionally, these characteristics (covariate variables) are associated with how likely a participant is to watch a programme; we therefore control for participants' political interest, political knowledge, and freedom to act in the analysis.

Discursive participation is also controlled for in this analysis of political participation, and similarly political participation is controlled for in the analysis of discursive participation. By controlling for these characteristics, we can have increased confidence that exposure is related to our outcomes of interest. The main predictive variables entered into the regression model were:

8. Demographic characteristics of both populations are presented in the technical appendix.

9. These are manifest forms of political participation, according to the typology presented in section 3.

10. Refer to the appendix for further detail.

- Model 1: exposure to the programme on radio, followed by additional exposure to the programme on TV
- Model 2: the other associated characteristics, or covariate variables¹¹ outlined above, were next entered into the model
- Model 3: the demographic variables were entered last

The figures presented in the tables in section 5 come from variables which were found to be significantly predictive of participation outcomes. Those which were not significant at $p < 0.05$ level were dropped from the models (therefore neither place nor material deprivation are included in the tables of results, as these were not found to have a significant effect on the outcome measures). The only time when this is not the case is for categorical variables that have been recoded into binary variables for regression analysis.¹² In this instance if one level of this variable is significantly predictive of outcomes, all its resulting dummy variables are also included in the tables.

The tables also present an R^2 value for each model, and whether the change in these values between models is significant. The R^2 value reflects the percentage of difference between respondents' scores on the outcome measure (political participation or discursive participation) that is accounted for by the characteristics entered into the model for analysis (exposure, demographics, etc.). It is a reflection of how good a "fit" this model is – the higher the R^2 value, the better the fit, and therefore a significant difference between R^2 represents a significant improvement in the model.

The implications of the findings from the tables are explained more fully in the Discussion of findings section.

Analysis stage I – exposure to the radio programme

Outcome measure – political participation

Hypothesis 1: Exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio will be associated with an increase in political participation

The first stage of analysis explored the relationship between radio exposure and political participation. It was hypothesised that being exposed to the programme would be associated with an increase in political participation. Table I shows the standardised beta coefficients for each level of the model, as described above.

11. Refer to the appendix for further detail about the covariate variables.

12. See the appendix for details of variable recoding.

Table 1: Exposure to *Sajha Sawal* and formal political participation

Variables	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Exposure			
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	.357***	.143***	.132***
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on TV	.051*	.000	.001
Covariates			
Interest in politics	-	.129***	.125***
Freedom to act	-	.197***	.184***
High level of political knowledge	-	.115***	.084***
Medium level of political knowledge	-	.047**	.035*
Discursive participation	-	.302***	.288***
Demographics			
Sex	-	-	-.043**
Literacy	-	-	-.083***
Total R² (%)	15.4%***	41.3%***	42.0%***

For all blocks β represents standardised regression coefficients¹³

***p<.0001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Sample size 2,928

Outcome 1: The association between exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio and increase in political participation is statistically significant

Model 1 looks at exposure on its own, and the findings show that radio exposure is significantly associated with an increase in political participation. Being additionally exposed to the programme on television also has a small but significant association with the outcome. When the covariate variables are added to the model (model 2), however, the effect size of radio exposure decreases. Similarly, when demographic variables are added to the model (model 3) the effect size of radio exposure decreases even further.

The R² value shows that adding these additional variables increases the fit of the model. When only exposure to the programme is included in the model, only 15.4% of the variance in participation was explained. However where the final model includes all of the significant explanatory variables, 42% of the variance in political participation is explained by the differences in these variables.

When all other variables are held constant, interest in politics, freedom to act, high and medium levels of political knowledge, and discursive participation each individually have a significant association with the

13. For ease of presentation standardised beta coefficients have been presented here.

outcome: as each of these increases, political participation increases. In terms of demographics, being female is associated with a decrease in political participation. Similarly, being illiterate is associated with a decrease in political participation. The effect of joint exposure through both radio and TV is no longer significant when we add in and control for the effect of the covariate and demographic variables.

The final model shows that when the effect of all these variables is controlled for, exposure to *Sajha Sawal* is still significantly associated with an increase in political participation, although the effect is reduced. Model 3 is the model with the best fit.

Outcome measure – discursive participation

Hypothesis 2: Exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio will be associated with increased discursive participation

The relationship between radio exposure and discursive participation was examined next. It was hypothesised that being exposed to the programme would be associated with increased discursive participation. Table 2 shows the standardised beta coefficients for each level of the model.

Table 2: Exposure to *Sajha Sawal* and discursive participation

Variables	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Exposure			
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	.347***	.092***	.065***
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on TV	.081**	.029	.029
Covariates			
Interest in politics	-	.443***	.441***
Freedom to act	-	.061***	.051***
High level of political knowledge	-	.077***	.049**
Medium level of political knowledge	-	.014	.004
Formal participation	-	.243***	.219***
Demographics			
Sex	-	-	-.169***
Age	-	-	.054***
Total R² (%)	16.4%***	52.9%***	55.9%***

14. For ease of presentation standardised beta coefficients have been presented here.

For all blocks β represents standardised regression coefficients¹⁴

*** $p < .0001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Sample size 2,928

Outcome 2: The association between exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio and increased discursive participation is statistically significant

Model 1 shows that exposure to the programme is significantly associated with increased discursive participation. When the covariate variables are added to the model, however (model 2), the size of effect of exposure to the programme decreases. When demographic variables are also added to the model (model 3) the size of the effect of exposure to the programme decreases even further. Again, the effect of joint exposure through both radio and TV is no longer significant when we add in and control for the effect of the covariate and demographic variables.

The R² value shows that the addition of associated characteristics such as freedom to act and interest in politics, as well as demographic variables, increases the fit of the model. When only exposure to the programme was included in the model, just 16.4% of the variance in discursive participation is explained. However where the final model includes all of the significant explanatory variables, 55.9% of the variance in discursive participation is explained by the differences in these variables – this shows that the model fits well .

When all other variables are held constant, interest in politics, freedom to act, a high level of political knowledge and political participation each, individually, has a significant association with the outcome: as each of these increases, so does discursive participation. Interestingly, unlike with political participation, only a high level of knowledge – and not a medium level – is associated with increased discursive participation. In terms of demographics, being female is associated with lower discursive participation. An increase in age is associated with increased discursive participation.

The final model shows that when the effect of all these variables is controlled for, exposure is still significantly associated with an increase in discursive participation, although the effect is reduced. Model 3 is the model with the best fit.

Outcome measure – political participation

Hypothesis 3: An increase in exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio will be associated with an increase in political participation

Table 3 shows the standardised beta coefficients for each level of the model.

Table 3: Varying levels of programme exposure and formal political participation¹⁵

Variables	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Exposure			
Varying levels of exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	-.276***	-.126***	-.111**
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on TV	.076*	.002	-.003
Covariates			
Interest in politics	-	.144***	.147***
Freedom to act	-	.121***	.111**
High level of political knowledge	-	.090*	.059
Medium level of political knowledge	-	.079*	.069
Discursive participation	-	.311***	.293***
Demographics			
Sex	-	-	-.093**
Literacy	-	-	-.114***
Total R² change (%)	8.0%***	26.7%***	28.4%***

For all blocks β represents standardised regression coefficients¹⁶

***p<.0001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Sample size 779

Outcome 3: The association between increase in exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio and increase in political participation is statistically significant

At this level of analysis the same pattern of findings as in the exposed versus unexposed analysis is found. The addition of the covariate and demographic variables to the model results in a decrease in the effect size of exposure level on political participation. A notable difference, however, is that neither medium nor high levels of political knowledge has a significant association with political participation, once accounting for participants' sex and literacy. The R² value again increases at each level of the model, meaning that more of the variance in political participation is explained by differences in these variables.

Looking at the individual significant demographic variables, being male is associated with higher levels of political participation than being female, and being literate is associated with higher levels of participation than being illiterate.

15. 4=low exposure and 1=high exposure; therefore a negative beta coefficient for the exposure variables indicates an increase in the outcome measure.

16. For ease of presentation standardised beta coefficients have been presented here.

Even at this more sensitive level of analysis, however, and controlling for all of these variables, an increase in the level of programme exposure is significantly associated with an increase in political participation.

Outcome measure – discursive participation

Hypothesis 4: An increase in exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio will be associated with increased discursive participation

Finally, we examined the relationship between levels of radio exposure and discursive participation. It was hypothesised that an increase in exposure to the programme would be associated with increased discursive participation. Table 4 shows the standardised beta coefficients for each level of the model.

Table 4: Varying levels exposure to *Sajha Sawal* and discursive participation

Variables	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β
Exposure			
Varying levels of exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	-.314***	-.176***	-.135**
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on TV	.116**	.047	.047
Covariates			
Interest in politics	-	.327***	.322***
High levels of political knowledge	-	.087*	.063
Medium level of political knowledge	-	-.014	-.019
Formal participation	-	.267***	.244***
Demographics			
Sex	-	-	-.139***
Age	-	-	.079**
Total R² change (%)	11.0%***	35.4%***	38.0%***

For all blocks β represents standardised regression coefficients¹⁷

*** p<.0001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Sample size 779

Outcome 4: the association between increase in exposure to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio and increased discursive participation is statistically significant

At each level of the model, the effect size of increasing levels of exposure decreases, because of the addition of the covariate and demographic

17. For ease of presentation standardised beta coefficients have been presented here.

variables to the model. Again, at this level of analysis neither levels of political knowledge (medium or high) nor freedom to act has a significant association with discursive participation, once accounting for participants' sex and age. The R^2 value increases at each level of the model, meaning that more of the variance in discursive participation is explained by differences in these variables.

Looking at the individual significant demographic variables, again it can be seen that male participants who are exposed to the programme have increased discursive participation than the females, and an increase in age is associated with increased discursive participation.

Even at this more sensitive level of analysis, when all other variables are accounted for, an increase in the level of programme exposure is significantly associated with increased discursive participation. Although the effect of exposure decreases as other characteristics are added to the model, Model 3 is the model with the best fit.

Discussion of findings

The findings from each of the regression models show that **the association between being exposed to *Sajha Sawal* on radio and participants' levels of political participation is statistically significant**. People who listen to the programme are more likely to take part in manifest forms of political participation – such as attending a political rally or signing a petition – and discuss politics with others, than people who are not exposed to the programme. Building a three-stage regression model allowed us to investigate the effect of various associated individual characteristics and demographic variables on participation, and therefore also their relationship with programme exposure. The pattern of results is similar for both political and discursive participation, at both levels of analysis.

Political discussion with others was the strongest predictor of political participation, and political participation had a statistically significant association with increased discursive participation. This result corroborates findings in the literature, and has important implications for BBC Media Action programmes. In some cases we may not be able to have a direct impact on audiences' intention to engage in manifest types of participation, which may be affected by social or personal characteristics such as literacy. However simply encouraging political discussion among citizens may lead to an increase in more manifest types of participation.

An interesting finding is also that **participants' level of political knowledge did not always have a significant effect on**

participation once we accounted for demographic variables. For example, looking at varying levels of radio exposure, once we accounted for participants' sex and literacy level, the effect of political knowledge was no longer significant. This is because participants' sex and literacy level may partially explain whether or not they have high or medium, as opposed to low, levels of political knowledge – therefore once we hold these variables constant, the effect of political knowledge on participation disappears.

Irrespective of participants' interest in politics, freedom to act, political knowledge, sex, literacy, and age ... we can conclude that when we control for these characteristics, radio exposure is still significantly associated with an increase in political participation

The analysis tells us that each of the associated characteristics (covariates) individually has a statistically significant effect on participation. Including these in the model increases the fit of that model. These findings show that the covariate variables such as freedom to act and political interest are not only associated with the outcome of political and discursive participation, but also with being exposed to the programme itself. That is, whether someone listens to the programme is partly explained by their interest in politics, level of political knowledge, freedom to act, and amount of political discussion with others. Interest in politics was found to be the strongest predictor of political discussion with others, and had a strong significant association with political participation.

Literacy was found to have a significant association only with political participation, and not discursive participation. This is unsurprising given the nature of some of the activities that contributed to the political participation index measure (for example signing a petition). Similarly, participants' age is only significantly associated with discursive participation – an increase in age is associated with increased discussion of politics with others, but not with political participation. Gender was also a significant variable in each model, whereby females were associated with a decrease in political discussion, and with political participation.

That the effect size of radio exposure reduces when demographics are included in the model can be partly explained by the association between sex, age, literacy level and participation. However it may also be possible that these personal characteristics are associated with propensity to listen to a political discussion programme in the first place. In future studies of this kind it will therefore be important to control for demographics and consider this in sample size calculations, and additionally to understand their interaction with exposure and outcomes.

Being a combined viewer and listener to the programme on both radio and TV does not appear to have a greater impact on participation levels than being exposed to the programme through one platform alone.

It is likely that participants who score highly on interest in politics and levels of political knowledge and political discussion with others are those most likely both to watch and listen to the programme. Therefore when we account for these variables the effect of additional TV exposure is eliminated.

Despite the important influence that demographic factors and other personal characteristics have on participation, our findings have important implications for evidencing the effectiveness of *Sajha Sawal* and other BBC Media Action dialogic programme formats. Irrespective of participants' interest in politics, freedom to act, political knowledge, sex, literacy, and age (all of which individually contribute to the explanatory power of the models of political and discursive participation) we can conclude that when we control for these characteristics, radio exposure is still significantly associated with an increase in political participation. Indeed, there appears to be a dose-responsive relationship between exposure and participation, with higher exposure levels having a significant association with increases in both types of participation. This allows us to be more confident in our conclusion that exposure has an effect on latent and manifest forms of political participation.

Limitations of the findings

As with studies in the wider literature, the cross-sectional study design means that although the analyses permit statements of association between exposure and political participation, a causal relationship cannot be inferred. To produce causal evidence, experimental or quasi-experimental designs and, particularly, longitudinal panel studies would be necessary. The findings presented here, however, go some way to adding to the body of evidence for the impact dialogic programme formats have on interpersonal political discussion and more manifest types of participation in a developing country context. Indeed, we can have increased confidence in the findings as we demonstrated that increasing levels of radio exposure are associated with higher levels of participation, not only simply whether or not participants were exposed to the programme.

The inclusion of multiple measures of efficacy – internal, external, and information – and political knowledge in future surveys, will also allow for exploration of these as outcomes, as well as their effect as covariate variables as reported here.



Chapter 6

Conclusions and considerations for future programme and research design

The objective of this paper was to assess the evidence base for the role of factual debate and discussion programming – defined in this paper as dialogic formats – on individual political outcomes, in order to improve understanding of how these formats can best be employed to influence political participation.

Summary of the evidence base

In defining the media stimuli, this paper describes debate and discussion programmes as dialogic formats, containing an element of political interactivity or mediated two-way communication, while more traditional news media formats are described as monologic, consisting of only one-way information relay. Political participation outcomes are defined as either latent (such as interpersonal discussion) or manifest (such as voting) forms of participation, with the latter defined as more formal, goal-oriented behaviours.

The literature has shown that there is mixed evidence that mono and dialogic formats are correlated with measures of political participation; however such evidence of correlation does not imply causality. Empirical studies have shown that political knowledge and political efficacy are strongly associated with both latent and manifest forms of political participation. While there is a large volume of studies exploring the impact of news media (a monologic format), studies of dialogic formats are much less common.

The studies that do exist, however, provide some evidence for the relationship between exposure to dialogic formats and political participation. Exposure to dialogic formats can also increase both the effectiveness and intensity of interpersonal discussion, which in turn is found to be associated with more goal-oriented, manifest forms of participation such as intention to vote and participation in public forums. Knowledge was also found to be strongly associated with both manifest

and latent forms of participation, and so has the potential to play a role in the relationship between exposure and increased participation.

The literature base presented comes mostly from empirical studies in Western, developed democracies, and does not necessarily represent the situation in developing, fragile, or transition states. Analysis of BBC Media Action quantitative data from an impact study conducted in Nepal concludes that being exposed to debate programming on the radio is associated with participants' levels of both formal and discursive political participation. Indeed, this appears to be a dose-responsive relationship, with higher exposure levels having a significant association with increases in both types of participation.

The findings from the review of research, and analysis of BBC Media Action's Nepal data, indicate some important considerations for programme development and design of impact research.

Considerations for future programme development

Where media interventions seek to influence participation, a number of considerations should be made when setting objectives. The first of these is to identify the scope of that participation and the extent to which more latent forms can be targeted as legitimate aims. Depending on the country context, impacting on propensity to participate in informal ways, such as contacting media or engaging in local level discussion, may be just as important as mobilising citizens to engage more effectively with more formal democratic processes in others. The second consideration is which pathway to change should be contemplated. The literature shows a strong association between latent forms of participation (such as interpersonal discussion), political efficacy, political knowledge, and more manifest combinations of participation such as voting, contacting officials and protesting. Where programmes aim to encourage citizens to hold leaders to account through monitoring and questioning, the pathway to change could be strengthened through simultaneously addressing potential mediating or antecedent political behaviours and attitudes, such as interpersonal discussion or political efficacy.

Where the aim of dialogic programming is to increase knowledge, attention must be given to ensuring accuracy of information aired, and interpretation for those listeners who may lack prior education, experience or political knowledge to comprehend fully or process the issues and views discussed. From studies of news media as well, it is clear that level of political content, or volume, breadth and prominence of the information, is directly associated with increased knowledge. Where projects work with local partner media to improve capacity to provide a platform for dialogue and debate, attention to ensuring the quality

of the discussion that people are exposed to is crucial. In one of a few studies addressing dialogic formats in a developing country context – talk radio in Uganda in this case (Mwesige, 2009) – the importance of the quality of mediation, and a sense of “objectivity” was reported by the study participants. Mwesige cautions against the potential for poor quality or unadulterated debate to result in misinformation, distortion, inflammation of conflict, or inertia.

Considerations for future impact research

Some limitations of the current body of empirical research on dialogic formats in evidencing the role of factual debate and discussion formats in political participation have already been outlined. These shortcomings – such as lack of studies from developing countries, poor attention to the quality of the media, and reliance on cross-sectional designs – limit the extent to which a clear understanding can be established for the strength of these formats as a tool in governance development work.

Studies in Europe and North America certainly have value in supporting understanding of the potential impact of media on political outcomes. However the social and political circumstances faced by populations in many developing countries mean that some assumptions on which Western studies are based, for example that a legitimate and functioning electoral process exists, may not necessarily hold. In the absence of such structures, the way in which media can influence political participation, and even the definition of political participation itself, may need to be questioned. Many studies additionally fail to account for the quality of the media stimulus that they observe. In the case of dialogic formats, where the audience is presented with multiple viewpoints, the effective moderation of those views and check on accuracy of information aired is crucial.

Where projects work with local partner media to improve capacity to provide a platform for dialogue and debate, attention to ensuring the quality of the discussion that people are exposed to is crucial

Through conducting standardised qualitative and quantitative research across numerous countries funded under the DFID multi-country programme of governance work, BBC Media Action contributes to addressing some of the limitations of the current evidence base. The unique opportunity to conduct governance and media research in the context of more than 11 developing democracies and countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East will allow for cross-cultural comparisons of

individual outcomes of interest. Using a mixed methods approach and nationally representative samples where possible in quantitative studies, the research will allow for rigorous analyses to explore the relationship between different forms of political participation. Analysis will also bring about understanding of how they interact with efficacy, and knowledge, socio-demographic factors, and the social, economic and political enablers and barriers that play a role in different countries and contexts. The added strength of this research will be that the quality of the media stimuli differentiate from existing debate style programmes available to audiences in developing countries. High quality moderation and editorial values emphasise balance and accuracy that is often missing in other media debate programmes, and analysis is supported in many studies by objective analysis of content. While these large scale cross-sectional or qualitative studies will not address the shortage of causal evidence, potential approaches to experimental and quasi-experimental study designs can produce much needed evidence at this level.¹⁸

This paper is one of the first in a series that will aim to document the influence of a range of different BBC Media Action programme formats on individual outcomes of importance in the health, governance and humanitarian development fields. Subsequent papers on the topic of individual governance outcomes will build on the evidence presented here, and seek to enhance understanding of the role that media can play in promoting participation, accountability and transparency in countries where this is most needed.

18. Democracy, governance and randomised media assistance, another BBC Media Action research report, reviews existing use of randomised control trials in producing evidence.



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Technical appendix

Sampling and study population

Data collection was conducted by Valley Research Group (VaRG) and took place during September 2011. A three stage stratified sampling design (district, ward, household) was employed. A proportional number of districts were randomly selected from each ecological region and developmental zone in Nepal. Selection of districts and wards were probability proportional to size (PPS), meaning the sample was self-weighting. The sampling approach was stratified by urban or rural location, gender, ecological region and developmental zone. In each ward an initial house was selected at random and from this starting point subsequent houses were selected in a randomly decided direction. Within households a screening questionnaire was used to determine the eligible respondent (men and women aged 15–65 years residing in the sampled household) and when multiple respondents could have been selected, one was identified using the KISH Grid method.

The approach resulted in a total of 4,000 adults (2,000 men and 2,000 women) from 23 districts being sampled. This was out of 68 potential districts covered by BBC Media Action’s partner FM radio stations. Since specific exposure questions were asked for both TV and radio, in order to ensure fair comparison between respondents, those who were exposed only via TV were removed from the sample used in the first set of analysis to test hypothesis 1 and 2. The second set of analysis (answering hypothesis 3 and 4) focused on those exposed individuals only. Therefore 3,624 and 918 observations were used from the original 4,000. Key demographics for these two sub-samples are presented below.

Table A: Overview of sample characteristics

Characteristic	Sample 1	Sample 2
Average age	34 years	34 years
Rural location	88%	84%
Female	51%	26%

Scoring

Dependent variables

Formal political participation was the additive measure of six survey items.¹⁹ Principal axis factoring (PAF) revealed that six of these measures load highly onto one factor (Cronbach's alpha = .818). This single factor was used as a continuous measure of political participation ranging from 6 (low participation) to 18 (high participation). Discursive participation was also measured by an index of four survey items² which loaded highly onto one factor (Cronbach's alpha = .891). This single factor was therefore used as a measure of discursive participation on a continuous scale ranging from 4 (low discussion with others) to 18 (high discussion with others). Although measures of political efficacy were included in the survey, PFA revealed that items measuring internal efficacy that load onto a single factor did not provide a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .288). Political efficacy was therefore not measured as a construct in this analysis.

Covariate variables

Political knowledge was measured in the survey using two objective knowledge statements²¹ which were combined to create a 3-point scale of low, medium, and high levels of political knowledge (Cronbach's alpha = .904). Several other statements from the survey were identified as covariate variables in the analyses: These were defined as "freedom to act",²² and "interest in politics". Freedom to act was the additive measure of two survey items to form a continuous scale from 1 (low freedom to act) to 4 (high freedom to act) (Cronbach's alpha = .699). Interest in politics, originally measured on a Likert scale, was measured as a dichotomous variable. Factor analysis was not used on any covariate variables, as these had an insufficient number of items for this type of testing.

Exposure variable

Model Set 2 investigated the relationship between varying levels of radio programme and exposure and the explanatory variable. A measure of exposure was derived using both recency and frequency of exposure survey items²³ as well as attentiveness to the programme.²⁴

Restructuring variables for regression analysis

Prior to entry into one of the four regression models, variables at the ordinal, nominal or binary level were recoded and restructured into dummy variables. An overview of this recoding is provided for variables included in the final regression models through table B below, along with descriptive information for each of these variables.

19. Signed a petition; taken part in a peaceful demonstration; attended a political meeting or rally; contacted, or attempted to contact, a local leader or politician to express your views; contacted or appeared in the media/political programme to express your views; been part of a community group or NGO to resolve problems in your local area. Voted in the Constituent Assembly election of April 2008 was the format of this question, which was different from the other items.

20. "Normally how often do you discuss political matters/issues with the following types of people: Friends; family members; neighbours; co-workers?"

21. "Do you know who the current Prime Minister of Nepal is?"; "Do you know what political party the current Prime Minister belongs to?"

22. "If I want to, I can go to the media to express my views"; "If I want to, I can take part in political activities without any fear of intimidation."

23. "How often do you listen to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio?"; "When did you last listen to *Sajha Sawal*?"

24. "On average, how long do you listen to *Sajha Sawal* on the radio?"

Table B: Overview of variables used in regression analysis

Overview of measures used in analysis					
Variable	Hypothesis used	Level of data	Recoded level of data for regression	Descriptive ²⁵	N
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	H ₁ H ₂	Binary	Dummy	Yes 25.2% (931)	3,624
Exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on TV	H ₁ H ₂ H ₃ H ₄	Binary	Dummy	Yes 13.5% (488)	3,612
Very exposure to <i>Sajha Sawal</i> on Radio	H ₃ H ₄	Quantitative	N/A	Mean 2.45 S.D 0.87	859
Interest in political process	H ₁ H ₂ H ₃ H ₄	Ordinal	Dummy	Interested 53% (1825)	3,444
Freedom to act	H ₁ H ₂ H ₃	Quantitative	N/A	Mean 2.09 S.D. 0.98	3,356
Political knowledge	H ₁ H ₂ H ₃ H ₄	Ordinal	Dummy	High 58.9% (2134) Med 8.5% (307)	3,624
Discursive participation	H ₁ H ₃	Quantitative	N/A	Mean 9.36 SD 4.82	3,445
Formal participation	H ₂ H ₃	Quantitative	N/A	Mean 12.37 SD 2.98	3,400
Sex	H ₁ H ₂ H ₃ H ₄	Binary	Dummy	Male 49.3% (1,787)	3,624
Literacy	H ₁ H ₃	Nominal	Dummy	Illiterate 19.7% (714)	3,624
Age	H ₂ H ₄	Quantitative	N/A	Mean 13.18 S.D. 13.55	3,624

Regression analysis

Analysis was conducted using multiple ordinary least squares regression in IBM SPSS version 20. The regression models presented in summary tables 1 to 4 in section 5 are parsimonious, meaning they only include variables which were significantly predictive of political participation or discursive participation. The only exception was non-significant individual dummy variables, which came from a larger set of dummies resulting from recoding a nominal and ordinal variable for entry into regression. This was because these individual non-significant dummies reflect a level of the original variable being statistically redundant rather whole the variable itself. The statistical significance of variables included in the four regression models were examined in two ways. Initially through t-tests

25. Note variable descriptive and N come from the sample testing H₁ & H₂, unless the measure has been used in the H₃ & H₄ only.

for each coefficient, and secondly through reviewing the significance test for the R^2 change for each variable included in the regression models. This was done because for t-tests to be reliable the residual distribution of outcome and predictor variables needs to be normally distributed, and this assumption was not checked. However the assumption of homoscedasticity for the ANOVA significance test for R^2 change was assessed, and therefore this formed the primary bases for inclusion of variables into the four models.

In order to ensure that the assumptions of homoscedasticity were met, the standardised residuals were plotted against the predicted outcomes for each of the models. This enabled assessment of equality in error at each level of the dependent variable required for the homoscedasticity assumption. Collinearity was also assessed for each variable entered into the models. Variables would have been excluded from analysis if they contributed less than 10% unique variance; no variable tested fell below this threshold.

R^2 reported in this paper's results section has been adjusted for the number of predictor variables included in the model. The term R^2 instead of "adjusted R^2 " has been used throughout for simplicity of reporting. The coefficients presented in tables 1 to 4 and outlined in section 5 are standardised, so association measured on different scales included in the five regression models are directly comparable.

Regression findings

Analysis stage one – formal political participation

For hypothesis 1, the third and final model shows the standardised beta coefficients when all significant covariate and demographic variables are included in the model. See the description below for the individual effect of each of these variables (significant effects only) when all others are held constant.

Covariate variables:

For every increase of 1 standard deviation (SD) in exposure there is a 13.2% SD increase in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in interest in politics there is a 12.5% SD increase in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in freedom to act there is an 18.4% SD increase in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in a high level of political knowledge there is an 8.4% SD increase in formal participation, and for every increase of 1 SD in a medium level of political knowledge there is a 3.5% SD increase in formal participation. For every increase of 1 SD in discursive participation there is a 28.8% SD increase in formal participation.

Demographic variables:

For every increase of 1 standard deviation (SD) in sex there is a 4.3% SD decrease in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore being female is associated with a decrease in formal participation. For every increase of 1 SD in literacy there is an 8.3% SD decrease in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore an increase in age is associated with a decrease in formal participation.

Analysis stage one – discursive political participation

For hypothesis 2, the third and final model shows the standardised beta coefficients when all significant covariate and demographic variables are included in the model; the individual effect of each of these variables when all others are held constant is described below.

Covariate variables:

For every increase of 1 standard deviation (SD) in exposure there is a 6.5% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in interest in politics there is a 44.1% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in freedom to act there is a 5.1% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in high levels of political knowledge there is a 4.9% SD increase in formal participation. For every increase of 1 SD in formal participation there is a 21.9% SD increase in discursive participation.

Demographic variables:

For every increase of 1 standard deviation (SD) in sex there is a 16.9% SD decrease in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore being female is associated with a decrease in formal participation. For every increase of 1 SD in age there is a 5.4% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore an increase in age is associated with an increase in discursive participation.

Analysis stage two – discursive political participation

For hypothesis 3, the third and final model shows the standardised beta coefficients when all significant covariate and demographic variables are included in the model; the individual effect of each of these variables (significant effects only) when all others are held constant is described below. The outcome variable for radio exposure in this model was scored in the opposite direction therefore a negative beta coefficient represents an increase in participation.

Covariate variables:

For every decrease of 1 standard deviation (SD) in exposure there is an 11.1% SD decrease in formal participation, when all other units are

held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in interest in politics there is a 14.7% SD increase in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in freedom to act there is an 11.1% SD increase in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in discursive participation there is a 29.3% SD increase in formal participation.

Demographic variables:

For every increase of 1 SD in sex there is a 9.3% SD decrease in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore being female is associated with a decrease in formal participation. For every increase of 1 SD in literacy there is an 11.4% SD decrease in formal participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore being illiterate is associated with a decrease in formal participation.

Analysis stage two – discursive political participation

For hypothesis 4, the third and final model shows the standardised beta coefficients when all significant covariate and demographic variables are included in the model; the individual effect of each of these variables (significant effects only) when all others are held constant is described below. The outcome variable for radio exposure in this model was scored in the opposite direction therefore a negative beta coefficient represents an increase in participation.

Covariate variables:

For every decrease of 1 standard deviation (SD) in exposure there is a 13.5% SD decrease in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in interest in politics there is a 33.2% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. For every increase of 1 SD in formal participation there is a 24.4% SD increase in discursive participation.

Demographic variables:

For every increase of 1 standard deviation (SD) in sex there is a 13.9% SD decrease in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore being female is associated with a decrease in discursive participation. For every increase of 1 SD in age there is a 7.9% SD increase in discursive participation, when all other units are held constant. Therefore an increase in age is associated with an increase in discursive participation.

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Images: Audience members ask questions during *Sajha Sawal* broadcasts

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