

A CONVERGENT PARALLEL MULTI-METHOD QUANTITATIVE DESIGN FOR STUDYING MEDIA AGENDA AND PUBLIC AGENDA IN A POLARIZED POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This paper presents a convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design for studying the relationship between media agenda and public agenda in a politically polarized environment. Most agenda-setting research treats media content and public opinion as separate concerns, limiting how well scholars can explain the transfer of issue salience from media to the public. This paper addresses that gap by reconceptualizing a doctoral research design as a standalone methodological contribution, detailing why the design was necessary, how it was constructed, and what it offers future researchers. The framework combines quantitative content analysis of prime-time television headlines with a public survey conducted in five capital cities of Pakistan. Out of 384 respondents contacted, 365 valid responses were collected and analyzed. The content analysis covered the first 15 headlines of 9 PM bulletins from PTV News, Geo News, and ARY News on odd dates from November 2023 to January 2024, measuring source, slant, frame, salience, coverage, and placement across six national issues. The survey measured issue salience, source preference, opinion formation, trust, and discussion patterns among viewers. Applied to Pakistan's pre-election media environment, the framework detected a strong, statistically significant relationship between television coverage and public issue priorities, alongside clear ownership-based differences in framing between the state-run and private channels and a more conditional, trust-mediated pattern of transfer for less domestically salient issues. These results demonstrate the design's capacity to capture both convergence and divergence between media and public agendas within a single integrated model, offering a structured, replicable approach for studying media influence on public opinion in Pakistan and other politically divided societies.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda has long been central to communication research. Agenda-setting theory holds that the media does not tell people what to think, but strongly shapes what people think about (Cohen, 1963). This idea was later tested empirically by McCombs and Shaw (1972), whose Chapel Hill study became the foundational empirical work establishing agenda-setting theory. Repeated coverage, story placement, and issue visibility imperceptibly shape the hierarchy of public concerns (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; McCombs, 2014). In this way, the media produces a kind of map of public importance. Some issues are made visible, while others are quietly pushed aside.

This theoretical argument is compelling. But its empirical study becomes harder in politically polarized societies. Audiences do not consume news in a neutral setting. They tend to pick channels that fit their political views and social identity. At the same time, media organizations work under ownership pressures, editorial preferences, and political alignments. So the shift from the media agenda to the public agenda becomes conditional. It passes through trust, selective exposure, source credibility, and political preference (Druckman, 2001; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2009; Iyengar et al., 2019). Pakistan is a strong case for this problem. Television remains a highly visible source of political news. Prime time bulletins still shape everyday political talk in homes, offices, and public spaces. Yet the television field is deeply contested. State-run and private channels do not always define public issues in the same way. They differ in emphasis, tone, use of sources, and framing. Private electronic media in Pakistan grew rapidly after 2002. This widened political voices but also intensified tensions around regulation, ownership, and editorial power (Mezger & Sial, 2010; Yusuf & Schoemaker, 2013). In this setting, the public does not receive one common agenda. It receives several competing ones.

The doctoral research on which this paper is based examined the television news agenda and

the public agenda on selected national issues in Pakistan. The original study used a convergent mixed methods approach. It combined quantitative content analysis of television headlines with a public survey in five major urban centers. This article reconceptualizes that design as “convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design” a standalone methodological contribution. The paper details the necessity of the design, its construction process, how key variables were defined, how the two data streams were combined, and the lessons learned. It suggests that in fractured media environments, agenda-setting research benefits from collecting media and public data simultaneously and analyzing them within a unified conceptual framework. This argument draws on a well-established body of research. Media influence scholarship has long shown that issue salience, framing, and priming work together rather than separately (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Entman, 1993; Entman et al., 2009). In a setting like Pakistan, where television channels operate within politically charged editorial cultures, studying media influence requires a design that can more closely observe these layers. A research paper becomes useful when it answers three questions: why a particular design was needed, how it was built, and what future scholars can learn from it. This paper addresses all three.

Aim and Objective:

This paper aims to reconceptualize the convergent mixed method as convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design used in the original doctoral study. Specifically, it has the following objectives: to explain why an integrated, dual-quantitative design was necessary for studying the relationship between media and public agendas in Pakistan's political polarized landscape; to detail the construction of the framework, including how content analysis and survey variables were aligned and operationalized; and to assess the design's methodological rigor, strengths, and limitations in order to offer guidance for future agenda-setting research in similarly divided political systems.

Agenda Setting Research and the Methodological Gap

Agenda setting research has produced a rich body of scholarship. Many studies show that news media influence public concern by making some issues more visible than others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004; Luo et al., 2019). The theory has evolved over more than five decades. It now covers not just print and broadcast media but also social media and artificial intelligence-mediated communication (Weaver, 2025). Yet a persistent methodological weakness remains.

Most studies still rely on only content analysis or on survey data. When only one side is studied, the researcher can describe issue priorities in the media or in public opinion but cannot directly compare the two. Meta-analyses confirm that content analysis is the dominant quantitative method, while the combination of content analysis with survey data accounts for less than a fifth of quantitative designs (Li & Jiang, 2022). This becomes especially serious in polarized settings. A design that studies only content risks assuming influence without gauging public reception. A design that studies only survey responses risks attributing public priorities to the media without examining what audiences actually received. Kim et al. (2017) and more recent bibliometric analyses confirm that integrated designs combining content analysis and surveys remain comparatively rare (Sulistyanto & Jamil, 2023).

A second gap concerns the treatment of salience. Many studies measure salience mainly through issue frequency. Frequency matters, but it is not the whole story. Television news signals importance through story order, airtime, and repeated prominence. Recent field research confirms that exposure to both the amount and the content of news coverage contributes independently to agenda-setting effects. Issue salience should be understood as a compound signal, not reducible to any single indicator (Geiß, 2022). When salience is reduced to counting alone, important dimensions of issue construction are lost.

A third gap involves audience conditions. Agenda setting does not occur in a social vacuum. The need for orientation, trust, selective exposure, and prior political alignment all shape whether media attention becomes a public concern (McCombs & Shaw, 1977; Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). In polarized societies, citizens may watch news regularly and still reject its agenda because they distrust the source. Research shows that exposure to counter-attitudinal sources can reinforce existing attitudes rather than broaden them. The use of opinion-congruent media narrows perceptions of which issues matter and reduces political tolerance (Steppat et al., 2022; Tóth et al., 2023). A robust design must include both exposure and trust.

A fourth gap is contextual. Classic agenda-setting literature largely emerged from institutionalized liberal media systems. These studies remain foundational, but they do not capture the realities of developing democracies shaped by regulatory weakness, concentrated ownership, and intense political conflict. Scholars note that evidence on media influence and democratic accountability originates predominantly from developed democracies (Grossman & Slough, 2022). Pakistan is a clear case. Its media expanded rapidly after 2002 but produced new tensions between commercial competition, political alignment, and public trust (Mezzera & Sial, 2010; Yusuf & Schoemaker, 2013; Pintak et al., 2018). Pakistan's ranking of 107th in the Democracy Index 2022 underscores that media influence operates within weak democratic institutions and pronounced elite polarization (Galeazzi & Zollo, 2023). Recent domestic research further confirms that sensationalism and partisan framing shape media-driven political discourse in Pakistan, making channel preference a stronger predictor of perceived media influence than demographic characteristics (Ali Ch. et al., 2025).

These four gaps collectively motivate the convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design adopted here. While such designs are traditionally associated with mixing qualitative and quantitative strands, this study adapts the approach into a dual-quantitative framework to

achieve empirical triangulation (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Why a Convergent Parallel Multi-Method Quantitative Design?

The convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design was not chosen simply for variety. It was chosen because the research problem demanded integration. Understanding the relationship between the television news agenda and the public agenda on major national issues in Pakistan cannot be adequately done through a single method.

The first need was to identify how television channels selected and emphasized national issues. Content analysis was the most suitable method for this. It allowed systematic coding of issue categories, frequency, framing, source, coverage level, and placement. Content analysis remains one of the most widely accepted methods in agenda-setting research because it translates visible patterns of media output into measurable data (Kim et al., 2017).

The second need was to understand what viewers considered important and how they interacted with television news. Survey research suited this part well. It allowed measurement of issue ranking, channel preference, exposure habits, opinion formation, trust in news media, and discussions with family and friends.

The third need was comparison. The study did not only want to know which channels were highlighted or which viewers prioritized in isolation. It wanted to compare both directly. This required a convergent design where two data strands are collected around the same research problem and integrated in interpretation. The content analysis and survey were not separate projects. They were linked from the very start. The integrated design also reduced overstatement. Content analysis alone may tempt the researcher to assume media influence. Survey data alone may tempt the researcher to attribute public priorities to the media without checking the actual content. Combining them reduces both risks.

In Pakistan, this approach was especially necessary. Television channels are not neutral

carriers of information. They are actors within a contested media sphere. Their editorial patterns often reflect larger political alignments. Viewers approach them with preference and suspicion. Agenda setting here is not just a process of transmission. It is a process of selection, trust, and interpretation. A mixed methods design captures this complexity more honestly.

Research Context and Case Logic

Pakistan was selected as the empirical context for clear methodological reasons. The country has a vibrant yet divided media environment (Mezger & Sial, 2010; Yusuf & Schoemaker, 2013). Television remains an important source of political news (Ilyas & Ahmad, 2020). Prime-time bulletins continue to matter in shaping the daily issue climate and public conversation (Kim et al. 2017). At the same time, political polarization has become deep and persistent. In politically divided media systems, audiences tend to gravitate toward channels whose coverage aligns with their existing political predispositions (Stroud, 2008), and the degree of trust audiences place in those channels shapes how strongly their coverage translates into public agendas (Tsfati, 2003). This makes issue salience structured, contested, and socially discussed.

The study focused on the period from November 2023 to January 2024, the three-month period before the general elections of February 2024. Election periods intensify political communication. Channels increase issue coverage. Viewers become more attentive to governance, corruption, electoral rights, and political statements. This made the pre-election setting methodologically valuable. It allowed the study to observe how channels prioritize issues when political stakes are high, making salience measures more meaningful and public comparison more relevant.

Three channels were selected for content analysis. PTV News represented the state-run broadcaster. Geo News and ARY News represented major private channels with national visibility. This created a meaningful comparison of ownership, since a state channel typically operates within official narratives, while private channels exhibit more criticism and market-driven editorial

choices. The study also selected six issues for analysis: governance, terrorism, basic rights of citizens, corruption, contemporary politics, and international relations. These were chosen because they appeared repeatedly in television news and held central social and political significance. They also allowed issue-by-issue comparison across both data strands.

Structure of the Convergent Parallel Multi-Method Quantitative Design Framework

The framework had two major components: a public survey and a quantitative content analysis of television headlines. These were linked through a convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design.

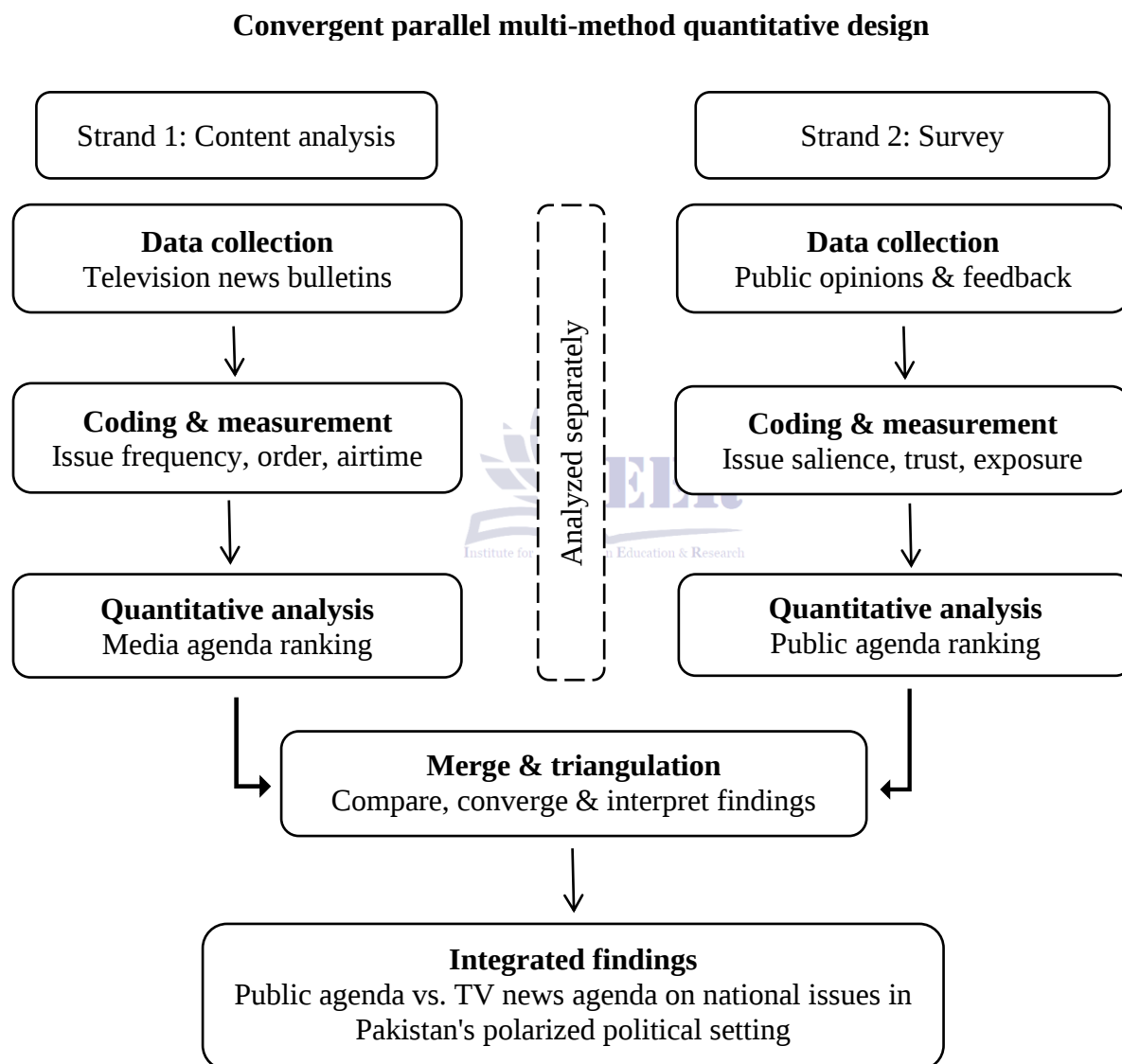


Figure 1

The design consists of two independent, concurrent strands analyzed separately before

being merged at the interpretation stage. Strand 1 involves the quantitative measurement of

television news bulletins, tracking issue frequency, airtime, and order to establish a quantified media agenda ranking (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017). Strand 2 captures public opinion, trust, and exposure to establish a quantified ranking of the public agenda. The findings from both strands are then merged and triangulated to analyze the statistical relationship between the public agenda and the television news agenda within Pakistan's polarized political setting (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

The design required close alignment between both components. The same six issue categories used in content analysis also appeared in the survey. Measures of public issue ranking were constructed to allow direct comparison with media issue ranking. Without this alignment, the two datasets would remain parallel but not truly integrated. Table 1 maps the corresponding operational metrics of both quantitative strands side by side.

Table 1. Variable Alignment Matrix for Dual-Quantitative Triangulation

Agenda Dimension	Strand 1: Media Agenda (Content Analysis)	Strand 2: Public Agenda (Audience Survey)	Analytical Purpose
Core Issue Salience	Headline Frequency (N): Dominant, Moderate, or Minimal daily appearances.	Issue Ranking: Respondents rank six national issues by personal significance.	Triangulates media emphasis against public concern.
Attention Intensity	Coverage Level (L): Airtime proportion: Heavy (>20%), Normal (10–20%), Light (<10%).	Media Consumption: Self-reported frequency and duration of watching 9 PM bulletins.	Examines whether baseline exposure conditions agenda adoption.
Prominence & Processing	Placement: Story order: High (1–5), Medium (6–10), Low (11–15).	Opinion Formation: Likert scale measuring how TV news shapes viewer perspectives.	Evaluates whether structural cues shift audience attitudes.
Information Gatekeeping	Source Attribution: Official, Unofficial, or Others.	Source Preference: Primary channels respondents use for issue information.	Maps whose narratives reach which audience segments.
Evaluative Direction	Slant: Favorable, Unfavorable, or Neutral toward actors.	Interpersonal Discussion: Frequency of talking about issues with family and friends.	Explores how media tone shapes everyday public discourse.
Narrative Packaging	Frame: Positive, Negative, or Neutral presentation logic.	Affective Polarization & Trust: Multi-item measures of group animus and channel trust.	Explains why audiences reject or accept specific media frames.

The convergent model allowed data collection from both sides within the same research phase. After separate analysis, both strands were compared. The point was not simply to place two datasets side by side. The aim was to ask whether issues with greater television salience were also ranked higher by viewers, and under what conditions that alignment was stronger or weaker. The framework also allowed channel-specific comparison. Viewers of PTV, Geo, and ARY were examined in relation to the agenda patterns of those same channels. This made the model more realistic in a polarized environment where television is not one agenda and the public is not one audience.

Survey Design and Measurement of Public Agenda

The survey was designed to capture urban viewers' priorities and perceptions regarding major national issues. The universe consisted of citizens in the five capital cities of Pakistan: Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta. These cities were selected because they are politically important, socially diverse, and more likely to include active television news audiences. The design focused on the urban public agenda rather than claiming full national coverage.

The study used geographic cluster sampling, selecting the five capitals as major clusters. Within these settings, respondents were approached through simple random procedures. The planned sample size was determined through Krejcie and Morgan's table, targeting 384 respondents at a 95 percent confidence level and a 0.05 margin of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This approach is widely used in social research (Pfeffermann & Rao, 2009). During fieldwork, 365 respondents provided valid and usable responses. These 365 cases were used in the final analysis. The multi-stage approach utilized 2018 General Election data for the National Assembly to isolate active sub-populations ($N = 4,645,683$) based on a 46 percent voter turnout baseline. The original sample was proportionally distributed as follows: Lahore ($n = 217$), Karachi Central ($n = 57$), Peshawar ($n = 55$), Islamabad (n

$= 35$), and Quetta ($n = 20$). The final dataset of 365 responses maintains this geographic distribution.

The survey instrument measured issue salience, source of information, opinion formation, and discussion with family and friends. It also included generalized trust in news media, political polarization, channel preference, frequency of watching 9 PM headlines, duration of viewing, and political affiliation. These measures improved the explanatory value of the framework because public agenda is not formed by exposure alone. Trust, identity, and discussion also shape it.

Issue salience was measured through ranking of the six selected issues. This created a direct basis for comparing public priorities with media priorities. Source-related items asked where respondents mostly obtained information. Opinion-formation items assessed how people formed judgments on key issues. Discussion items measured how far issues moved into interpersonal conversation.

The generalized trust variable was adapted from Kohring and Matthes (2007). Their four-dimensional construct was reduced to three sub-dimensions: trust in the selectivity of topics, trust in the selectivity of facts, and trust in the accuracy of depictions. The fourth sub-dimension, trust in journalistic assessment, was intentionally excluded because the target sample consists of common citizen voters. Evaluating complex editorial expertise might introduce cognitive bias. Measuring topic choice, factual accuracy, and fairness aligns more naturally with everyday public reception. Political polarization was informed by Iyengar et al. (2019), especially their work on affective polarization. These choices brought audience conditions directly into the agenda setting framework.

Content Analysis Design and Measurement of Television Agenda

The content analysis was designed to measure how channels built issue salience during prime time bulletins. The analysis focused on the 9 PM bulletins of *PTV News*, *Geo News*, and *ARY News*. The unit of analysis was the headline item. To

maintain consistency, the study selected the first 15 headlines from each 9 PM bulletin. Headline order itself communicates prominence. By limiting the sample to the first 15 items, the study concentrated on the most visible and editorially significant part of each bulletin.

Sampling was conducted on odd dates from November 2023 to January 2024. Systematic selection of odd calendar dates across the 12-week monitoring window serves as a rigorous data-reduction strategy without sacrificing variance. Sampling alternate days controls for cyclical broadcasting biases such as weekend programming shifts and recurring weekday patterns, while ensuring a representative sample that mirrors the continuous intensity of media output during the pre-election phase. The total content sample consisted of 1,555 headlines, which was large enough to permit detailed channel-wise and issue-wise comparisons. Coding units were limited to on-screen text elements, including headline strips, lower thirds, and tickers, as well as structural headers and newscaster voiceovers.

Each headline was coded into one of the six issue categories. After issue identification, every item was coded for source, slant, frame, salience, coverage level, and placement. This coding frame allowed the study to move beyond simple counting. It captured multiple dimensions of agenda construction, which matters especially in television news where issue importance is signaled in several ways at once. Kim et al. (2017) confirmed that television still occupies an important role in salience transfer in agenda-setting research. In Pakistan, this is even more relevant because prime time television remains one of the strongest sources of political information (Ilyas & Ahmad, 2020). The ownership comparison across PTV, Geo, and ARY added further comparative value by revealing whether issue priorities and frames were structured by ownership differences.

Operationalization of Key Variables

Translating abstract concepts into measurable indicators was one of the most important parts of this framework. Issue salience on the media side

was measured primarily through headline frequency, coverage level, and placement. This broader treatment was more accurate because television news signals importance in layered ways, not just through how often an issue appears.

Source was coded as official, unofficial, or other. Official sources included state institutions, office holders, and formal spokespersons. Unofficial sources included party representatives, analysts, and reporters. This variable indicated whether issue construction relied primarily on official narratives or on more mixed voices. Slant captured the evaluative direction of the story toward the main political actor or institution. It was coded as favorable, unfavorable, or neutral. Frame was coded as positive, negative, or neutral, capturing the broader presentation logic of the headline rather than just directional treatment of actors. The conceptual basis came from Entman's work on framing and Druckman's discussion of framing effects (Entman, 1993; Druckman, 2001; Entman et al., 2009).

Coverage level referred to the amount of airtime assigned to an issue. It was categorized as heavy, normal, or light. Placement referred to story order: headlines one to five were high prominence, six to ten were medium, and eleven to fifteen were low. In television news, story order carries strong symbolic meaning. Early placement signals urgency and editorial importance.

On the survey side, issue salience was measured through public ranking of the six issues, enabling direct comparison with media rankings. Source preference asked where respondents mostly obtained information. Opinion-formation items examined how respondents formed judgments on key issues. Discussion variables measured how often people talked about issues with family and friends. Generalized trust was measured through items on fairness, selectivity, and accuracy. A trusted channel can exert stronger influence than a distrusted one. Political affiliation and channel viewership served as important background variables in explaining differences among respondents.

Integration of Media and Public Data

The integration stage was the most important feature of this framework. It moved the study from two parallel methods to one coherent methodological model. The purpose was to compare issue priorities in television content with issue priorities among viewers, and then interpret the relationship in light of trust, viewership, and political orientation.

The first form of integration was issue alignment. The same six issue categories were used in both strands. If governance ranked high in content and also high among viewers, this suggested convergence. If an issue ranked high in one dataset but low in the other, this suggested divergence, and that pattern itself demanded explanation. The second form was channel-specific comparison. Viewers of PTV, Geo, and ARY were examined in relation to the issue priorities of those same channels. This avoided treating the public as one undifferentiated mass. The third form involved interpretation through background variables. Alignment or divergence was interpreted in light of exposure, trust, party support, and discussion patterns.

This integration stage helped the study avoid simplistic claims. Agenda setting was treated not as an automatic transfer but as a conditional relationship. The convergent design also improved analytical depth by enabling more precise questions: Which issues travel more strongly from media to audience? Which channels show greater alignment with their viewers? What role does trust play in that alignment? These questions become possible only when integration is built into the design from the beginning. The integration further links macro and micro levels of analysis, bridging newsroom priorities with citizen priorities in a way that is rarely achieved when methods are kept separate.

Validity, Reliability, and Methodological Rigor

A convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design framework becomes stronger when it demonstrates rigor in both its components and in the logic connecting them. In this study, rigor was achieved through careful issue selection, clear

coding rules, structured survey design, and direct alignment between the two data strands.

Content validity began with the issue categories. The six selected issues were not chosen randomly. They were visible in television news and central to Pakistani political discussion. This gave the study substantive relevance and ensured that both strands addressed issues that mattered to audiences and the media alike. Construct validity was strengthened through operational clarity. Variables such as source, slant, frame, placement, and coverage were defined for consistent application. On the survey side, issue salience, trust, source preference, opinion formation, and discussion were measured using structured items aligned with the conceptual framework of agenda setting. Reliability in content analysis was addressed through a clear coding scheme in which categories and subcategories were defined to enable more systematic classification and reduce arbitrary judgment. Survey rigor was supported through structured questionnaire design, transparent sampling, and the inclusion of media trust and political affiliation as explanatory variables. The study also treated convergence as evidence requiring context-based explanation rather than assuming it meant automatic media influence.

No method is perfect. Self-reported media exposure can carry bias. Urban sampling does not cover all population segments. Headline analysis does not include the full bulletin. But methodological rigor does not require perfection. It requires transparent design, careful operationalization, and honest recognition of limits. This framework aimed to meet that standard.

Strengths of the Framework

This framework offers several clear strengths for future agenda setting research. The first is integration. Studying the media agenda and the public agenda together allows for actual comparison rather than assumptions. It gives evidence from both production and reception sides simultaneously.

The second is contextual sensitivity. The framework was built for a politically polarized

environment. It recognizes ownership differences, party alignment, selective exposure, and trust as core features of the setting rather than assuming a neutral media field or a passive audience. The third is multidimensional measurement. The design goes beyond frequency to include frame, slant, source, coverage, and placement on the media side, and adds trust, source preference, opinion formation, and interpersonal discussion on the audience side. The fourth is comparative value. Including one state-run channel and two private channels enabled an examination of whether ownership structures shape agenda patterns. The fifth is practical usability. The design is structured and adaptable. Other scholars can apply it in similar political systems or modify it for digital news, regional media, or cross-national comparison. The sixth is timing. The pre-election period made issue competition sharp and visible, improving both content analysis and the relevance of public responses. Finally, the framework contributes to theory through method, showing that agenda setting in divided societies works through layered and conditional processes.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a convergent, parallel, multi-method quantitative design framework for studying media and public agendas in a politically polarized environment. The central argument is that agenda-setting in divided societies should not be studied through a single method. Media content shows how issues are selected, framed, ordered, and emphasized. Audience research shows how those issues are ranked, trusted, discussed, and interpreted. When both are integrated, the researcher gains a stronger and more realistic picture of agenda formation.

The Pakistani case shows why this matters in practice. In a media environment shaped by ownership differences, political division, and selective exposure, issue salience does not move in a straight line from television to citizens. It travels through repetition, framing, trust, and audience preference. A convergent parallel multi-method quantitative design is better suited to

capture this complexity than either method alone.

This paper also demonstrates that methodological contribution can emerge from doctoral research when the design is reconceptualized carefully. The value of this framework lies not only in the Pakistani national case. It lies in the way it joins content and audience evidence in one coherent model. It offers a structured, adaptable, and context-sensitive approach for future studies of agenda setting, media effects, and political communication. For scholars working in Pakistan and other divided societies, this framework may serve as a useful and replicable guide.

Limitations and Lessons Learned

The framework also has real limitations worth naming. The first is urban scope. Focusing on five capital cities does not represent all rural and semi-urban populations. The findings speak more clearly to the urban public agenda than to the full national picture. The second is the cross-sectional survey design. Responses captured at a single point in time cannot fully establish a long-term causal relationship between the television agenda and the public agenda. Alignment and association can be shown, but not complete temporal causation. The third is the focus on headlines. Headlines are important, but they are not the full bulletin. Some issue detail appears later in reports and studio discussions. The fourth is self-reported measures, which carry the usual risks of over- or underreporting.

These limitations also produced useful lessons. Issue alignment across datasets is essential; without it, mixed-methods comparison is weak. Trust variables matter greatly in polarized environments. Exposure alone is not enough. Future studies should consistently include trust, credibility, and partisan orientation. Content analysis also becomes more meaningful when salience is measured by combining frequency, airtime, and placement rather than by any single indicator.

Implications for Future Research

This framework can support many future directions. One clear extension is the study of digital media agendas and public agendas. Audiences now receive news from television, social media, online portals, and messaging platforms simultaneously. Future researchers can adapt this design to compare television with digital sources. Another extension is longitudinal work. A panel survey at multiple time points can capture changes in public priorities over time, strengthening causal interpretation. Future researchers may also combine this framework with experiments to test whether placement, frame, or source credibility directly changes issue ranking. Cross-national work is another promising direction. The framework can be applied in other developing democracies where media systems are politically divided and television still matters strongly. Researchers may also expand the public side through interviews or focus groups to deepen interpretation of alignment and divergence. Beyond scholarship, the framework can support policy discussion among media regulators, journalism educators, and news organizations who need to understand how issue importance is communicated and how public trust shapes agenda effects.

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