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## Title: Investigating Newspaper Reading Habits in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Quantitative Analysis

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## **Abstract**

It is crucial for newspapers and other media to measure audience engagement. There are some specific indicators of reading behaviour that are generally used to measure newspaper readership. They can include if someone read a paper yesterday, how often they read, how many times in the last week, how much time they spend reading, and how much of the paper/sections they read. Existing studies are largely concerned with determining the reasons for readership or the impact that it has. For example, the readership itself is too often ignored and is dealt with in too simplistic a way. Scientists usually use the measurement they have determined to be a single question, such as how often students read. Generally, more than one question produces more reliable results than one; there are many ways to measure readership. Frequency is only one of the indicators. The purpose of this study was to know about the choice, preference and habit of the newspaper readers in regard to the content of the newspaper. It was carried out in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan and adopted the survey method. It was found that an individual newspaper subscription pales in comparison to an institutional or official newspaper subscription. The regional newspapers had more readership than the national newspapers. The most time was spent on opinion/Op-Ed pages. Among the different sections, the political news and editorials received the most, whereas lesser interest was shown in the cinema, sports, business, and commerce and advertisements sections. These findings have implications for newspaper marketers.

**Keywords:** Gilgit-Baltistan, Newspaper Reading, Reading habits, Regional newspapers, newspaper marketers

## **Introduction**

The press has been found to have a significant influence in determining reading habits. It, in turn, then affects the politics and economy of a society. Mass literacy and reading behaviour are highly correlated. As literacy increases, so do the sources of information and knowledge. Power relationships and knowledge-based societies are additionally mediated by market forces and intricate social dynamics. This study aims to explore the reading pattern of newspaper subscribers of widely circulated newspapers of Gilgit-Baltistan. The key takeaway is that with the emergence of the local press, there's a new social reality: readership. Prior to the advent of modern schools, the community in Gilgit-Baltistan was mainly an oral one. All governance, social structures, literature, music, dance and mythology were of oral origin. The society is

rapidly moving towards a written culture with the advent of modern education. That change has led to the creation of the local press. It examines the changes in reading culture since the local press came into being, based on research into the influence of changes in media on cognition, perception and people's perception of society. There has never been any study conducted to date, and the results of the study will provide an explanation of multi-factors that are responsible for change in the Gilgit-Baltistan area. The contribution is two-fold; it creates new fields of research, and it has a direct link to mass communication as it evaluates the role of media in social change. Poor communication systems and a lack of media development in the reporting, design, opinion page, agenda-setting, and environmental news have helped to fuel political, ethnic, sectarian and geographic tensions in the region.

The press is a relatively new phenomenon in the area of Gilgit-Baltistan. Local newspapers have also seen a rapid growth of 15 years from one paper in 1996 to 18 papers in 2010. These papers are not only discussing different perspectives on local issues, but also linking local discourse to global conversations. Local press is contributing to the social and political narratives of a society on a fast modernisation path. The press has played a pivotal role in this change, as it is part of the traditional society, but it also challenges it. This is an emerging influence that produces a readership and a public sphere, thus reconfiguring the power relations. That public relies on the press as a new medium that delivers information.

### **Research Question**

RQ1: What are the newspaper reading habits of people in Gilgit-Baltistan?

### **Sub-Research Questions**

A- Do they read national or regional newspapers more?

B- What time of day do people in Gilgit-Baltistan prefer to read newspapers?

C- Which news topics or sections do readers prefer most?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to:

- Identify reading patterns and habits in the region.
- Determine the preferences and choices of readers in the sample area.

## **Literature Review**

Among all media consumption, readership is a phenomenon which can only be understood in terms of behaviour observed. Six major indicators: weekend edition completion rate, daily edition completion rate, frequency, and time spent reading, both weekend and daily. It is important to consider only one indicator, as this would provide only a partial picture. These indicators can be correlated or analysed using latent class analysis to generate quantitative and/or qualitative latent variables. In this study both are seen to be of value. Although print media has its drawbacks, it is still effective, even as the oldest mass medium in both developed and developing countries. While television might now be the preferred medium for news, many people say newspapers remain the most politically powerful medium. Newspapers, particularly quality newspapers, set the agenda and dominate interpretations of key events, according to researchers. They are also open to public discussion and public opinion dissemination. If people have limited time, they can present the story in newspapers in greater depth than other news sources. The political weight of quality newspapers is partly due to the fact that their readership is from the higher social classes (Craig, 2007).

## **Historical Background of Press in Gilgit-Baltistan**

Media in Gilgit-Baltistan dates back to 1907 when British agents in the subcontinent started the first print media of Gilgit-Baltistan, Shahler Spanler. The newspapers and the magazines were then posted from Kashmir to Gilgit. The roads were often in poor condition, and the weather was unpredictable, making it difficult to get news to people in time, and people often read out-dated news. The first literary magazine was launched by FGC, Skardu, with Ghulam Husain as editor. It was published on a yearly basis. Hunza Printing Press, the first printing press of the region, was also started then. This resulted in the emergence of more periodicals and contributed to the growth of a magazine culture. The only magazines were periodical magazines until 1998. The first regular newspaper edited by Advocate Mushtaq Ahmed was the Nawa-I-Gilgit newspaper.

## **Recent Developments in the Press of Gilgit-Baltistan**

With the rise of literacy, more and more Urdu and English newspapers were released on a weekly basis. A few newspapers were also introduced in the area from Islamabad. The aim of these publications is to enrich, enlighten and amuse readers. Due to the small market, no TV channel has started, but two radio stations (one in Gilgit and one in Skardu at 1512 KHz) and two FM stations are transmitting local, national and international news and awareness

programmes. Key publications include:

**Daily Muhasib:** First weekly newspaper published from Gilgit city.

**Daily K2:** Started May 1996 in Gilgit; initially printed in Islamabad, reaching Gilgit a day late. Other dailies and weeklies face similar delays due to the long Gilgit–Rawalpindi route. Air transport is unreliable because flights depend on weather.

**Weekly Naqara:** Printing in Islamabad, started January 2007.

**Weekly Waddi:** Started May 2007.

**Weekly Mountain Times:** Printing in Islamabad, started November 2007.

**Daily Sadd-I-Gilgit:** Started as a weekly in November 2004, printing in Islamabad.

**Daily Badd-i-Ishumal:** Printing in Islamabad, started June 1999.

**Daily Salam Gilgit-Baltistan:** Started 2011, initially printed in Islamabad.

**National daily Ausaf:** Launched a Gilgit-Baltistan edition from Islamabad in 2010.

**Weekly Chatan:** Printing in Islamabad, started June 2004.

**Azan:** Started September 2006.

**Bang-i-Sahar:** Started July 2004.

**Gilgit Today:** Started March 2007.

### **Measuring Newspaper Readership**

Technological growth has multiplied information sources. Interpersonal and social factors shape how people process news, and evidence supports this. Metropolitan newspaper readership has declined over the past three decades but still remains an important news source. In 2007, U.S. newspapers gave front-page coverage to issues rarely found in other media. Recently, newspapers have upgraded websites with 24/7 news desks, better breaking-news coverage, multimedia, and increased online traffic. By combining print and online audiences, newspapers now reach as many readers as before. (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008). Media effects research often uses newspaper readership — measured by exposure or attention — to predict outcomes. As a result, little is known about the demographics of local newspaper readers in small communities. Few studies have looked at the role of editorial pages, cartoons, letters to the editor, and op-ed pages with local, national, and international content (Roth, 2007).

### **The Importance of Regional Newspapers**

Rao (2010) argued that local news media are a key source of information and meet people's

need to know about their communities. Local newspapers spread general information about civic life and community events, helping residents understand important local issues. They bridge gaps by fostering public discourse and creating social connections needed for collective action. Regional newspapers provide social infrastructure that supports both individual and group action. (Foley & Edwards, 1999) Local media also legitimize and sustain political and social communities by providing information. (Wilkins, 1972). According to uses and gratification theory, citizens with stronger motives for seeking local news are more likely to be aware of and engage in civic activities than those with weaker motives. (MacLeod, 1999)

Newspapers that adopted civic journalism used more locally written stories and fewer wire or syndicated pieces than those that didn't. (Macmillan, 1998) People tend to read first about events they already know — a ball game, stock crash, or snowstorm they witnessed. This is key to understanding media. Why do children talk about their day, or why do we prefer novels and films about familiar settings? For rational beings, recognizing personal experience in a new form is deeply satisfying. Turning experience into a new medium gives a “playback” of prior awareness. (McLuhan, 1964) Many studies have examined media's power to shape political opinions. Lazarsfeld and colleagues (1968) found mass media had only limited influence on audience political views.

### **Reading Habits and Interests**

Zainab (1978), in her research, indicated that many researchers refer to reading as a habit. Reading habits are assessed through quantity of reading; time spent reading, frequency, preferred place of reading, and reading certain newspaper pages/sections. The ability to read can be developed. Wijesuriya (1995) states that subject selection is based upon one's interest or preference. They refer to Rudman (1957), who says that people read to pass the time and habits are developed when people read regularly. Krashen (1996) suggested that the reading habits and interests could be acquired from an early age, and access to facilities would help set up mature reading habits.

### **Readership Theory**

The early newspaper readership discussions focused on citizenship. The scholars studied the relationship between the mass media and the public, "the eyes of democracy. The strong advocates of this opinion were Alexis de Tocqueville (Tocqueville, 1969) and Thomas Jefferson (Mott, 1962). More seriously, Walter Lippmann (1922) tried to theorise newspaper readership by studying public opinion. He was one of the most intellectually balanced

journalists of the 20th century. Public Opinion is best known for his concept “the world outside and the pictures in our heads” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 18).

People cannot perceive the world directly, but they use the mass media to do so, Lippmann emphasised. Not many perceive reality as it is. Media shortcuts, personal values, stereotypes and relationships with others create a picture of the world that can be distorted from reality. These cut-and-cuts were at odds with the basic principles of mass communication," he said. As he understood it, there were two issues: journalists are limited in their reporting, and readers then filter the journalists' reporting through their own. He felt the world is so huge, and we only see a few happenings or news items that are blown out of proportion. He wondered about the facility of choosing and evaluating media: what happens if the media should impose its own thinking instead of mirroring the people?

This theory assumes audiences are passive, absorbing media messages with little resistance. The effects can be direct and immediate, or indirect and gradual through repeated exposure. The idea of a passive audience remains important to critics concerned about media ownership and control. Biocca noted that the passive audience concept persists in discussions about the rise of mass society, such as in cultivation theory. Rouner referred to this in her work on “non-elective” and “habitual” television viewing (Rouner, 1984). Between the two world wars, most research using the “magic bullet” theory focused more on media effects than on audience studies (Nowak, 1997). But in looking for universal media effects, scholars found puzzling evidence: some people paid attention to a message while others ignored it. This suggests audiences are “active” — they choose which messages to process. The idea of active choice, and questions about what shapes that choice and how it varies among individuals became the basis for modern audience research (Biocca, 1988; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Livingstone, 1998).

### **Newspaper Readership in Pakistan**

A survey found that about 6 in 10 adults and 7 in 10 people read a newspaper on weekends. Most people first encounter breaking news on television or radio. For detailed background and analysis, readers turn to newspapers. Newspapers have an advantage over TV and radio because they explain how an event happened, helping readers understand it. They also clarify the effects and future implications of events. Media scholar Philip J. Hanes (1996), in his article “The Advantages and Limitations Focus on Audience in Media Studies,” wrote: “Audiences

are not blank sheets of paper on which media messages can be written; members of an audience will have prior attitudes and beliefs which will determine how effective media messages are” (p.140).

Veblen (1994), in “Newspaper Readership and Informational and Cultural Processing,” described newspaper readership as a form of cultural participation involving information processing. Reading a newspaper is a more direct form of information processing than many other cultural activities. At the same time, choosing a newspaper is not a strong form of “conspicuous consumption” for status, because even expensive papers are relatively cheap and reading often happens privately at home. So, if readership links to social status independently of information-processing ability, that would be especially significant.

A survey by Gallup Pakistan, The Pakistan Readership Report (2002-2003), found that adults (18+) read newspapers 33% of the time while youth (10-17) read them 21%. By province: Punjab 31%, Sindh 49%, KPK 25%, and Balochistan 28%. Among youth: Punjab 16%, Sindh 34%, KPK 16%, and Balochistan 19%. The higher rate on Sindh is due to the high readership in Karachi (69% for adults, 4% for youth), whereas interior Sindh is low.

The report separates the newspaper buyers from the newspaper readers – not all newspaper readers buy newspapers. A copy is sometimes used by many people at home, at offices or in libraries. In Punjab, 10.17 readers share one copy; in Sindh, 5.57; in KPK, 8.47; and in Balochistan, 13.98. As Baluchistan is predominantly a rural region and as the economy is in an unfavourable condition in the province, the higher rate of readers per copy is better than the national average of 7.7. The national average is 7.7 readers per copy, including FATA/GB and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Gallup reports.

### **News Seeking Patterns**

The Herald survey (1997) showed that newspapers are popular media for Scotland's teenagers. Approximately three out of four boys read a paper about 10 minutes a day. The sports section is most popular, and 13% read the whole paper. In comparison, girls spend less time reading newspapers. Mehta and Paralikar (1999) examined the news-seeking behaviour in selected media and analysed various times, languages, news areas, news types and other aspects. Two newspapers were cited as being read by respondents due to the full access to news and full coverage. They typically read news in politics, society, health and education. Highly significant

differences between females towards news-seeking were found in the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The study's theory is based on the Theory of Uses and Gratifications (TUG), a theory that is orientated towards the audience to discover the reasons behind the choice and use of media. Research traditionally focused on media effects; Pamela Shoemaker was one of the first scholars to suggest that media are not only influential but also influenced by many factors. This is the approach that Lazarsfeld and Stanton began to explore during World War II when they studied news-seeking patterns for radio serial programmes in their 1944 book *Radio Research*. The central idea of Uses and Gratifications Theory is that people know what they want to use and can choose to satisfy their media needs. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's classic articulation also included five basic assumptions: First, audiences are active and goal-orientated, but the level of activity is variable; second, the motivation to connect needs with a given media choice is on the audience's agenda rather than the media's; third, need satisfaction is a dynamic within a complex social environment that involves other media and activities and therefore does not occur in isolation; fourth, the audience member is self-aware enough to provide accurate accounts of media use, interests, and motives to researchers; and fifth, that value judgements imposed on how audiences associate need with specific types of media and content should be put aside, including rules of thumb regarding the damaging impact of advertising on culture.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the study, a survey method was adopted for the study of newspaper reading habits in Gilgit-Baltistan. The survey is quantifiable and measured the readers' choices and preferences. The population of the study were all the newspaper readers of Gilgit city. Sampling was done randomly, with 300 readers selected as the sample size. A questionnaire was designed using the key indicators. It was planned to record the quantitative part of the research. Data were gathered using random sampling where questionnaires were given to the respondents. Data collected were tabulated for quantitative data analysis. Results of readers' choices, preferences and habits were presented in percentage. Results were presented in different tables and discussed. The purpose of this analysis was to relate the quantitative results to the theory and trends found in the academic literature.

## Survey Method

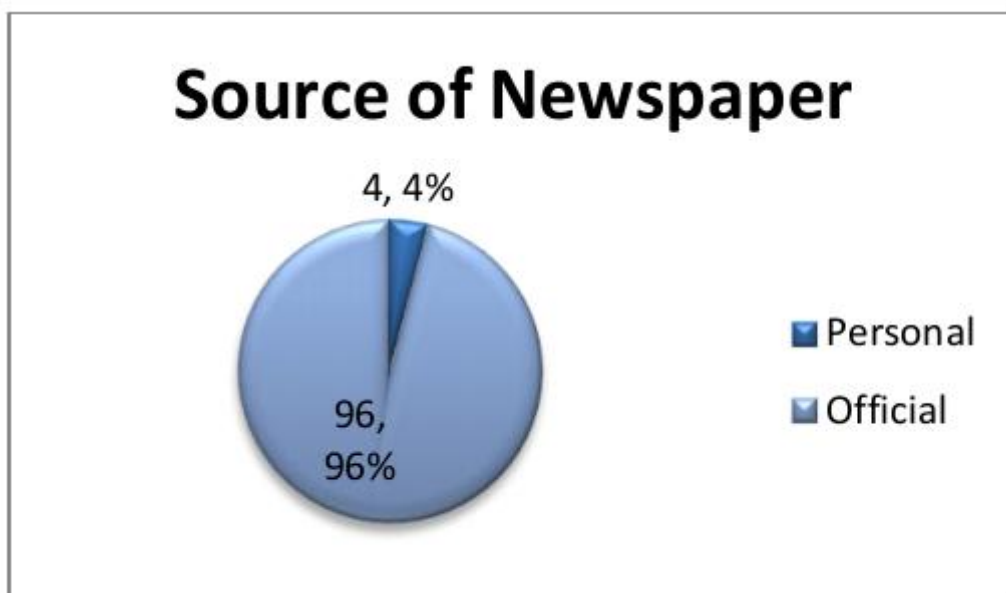
A survey is a descriptive research technique which is used when the researchers want to obtain data on behaviour or phenomena that are not directly observable. The first step in the process is to establish clear objectives to establish what information should be gathered; the second step is to identify the target population, and the third step is to set up a suitable sample size. Researchers then formulate questions, pre-test the questions for clarity and reliability, and then administer the questions to respondents and analyse the data to prepare the report. For this particular study, the population comprised all the newspaper readers in Gilgit City, and the sample of 600 was selected from the population using a random sampling technique to find the trend of their reading habits. The focus area was the reading habits of regular newspaper readers in Gilgit City. While, at times, it was difficult to distribute the questionnaires and took time to collect the questionnaires because some of them were unable to allocate time for filling out questionnaires.

## Data Analysis

**Table 1: Source of newspaper**

| Source   | No of readers | Frequency |
|----------|---------------|-----------|
| Personal | 12            | 4         |
| Official | 288           | 96        |

It can be seen from the table that most of the respondents read newspapers through official or institutional subscriptions and not through personal subscriptions. The 300 respondents included 288 readers (96 per cent) who read newspapers via official channels and 12 readers (4 per cent) who were personally subscribed to newspapers. The result revealed the very low level of personal newspaper subscription culture among the readers in the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, and the majority of people get newspapers from offices, institutions, or common sources.



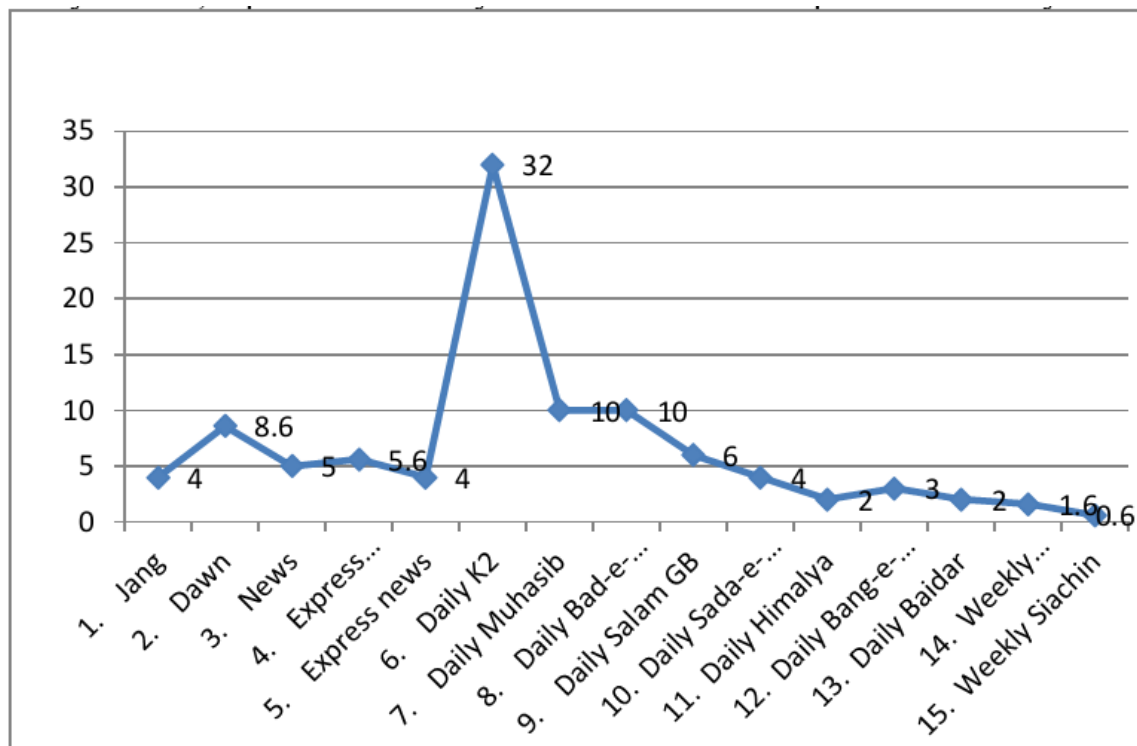
**Fig. 1**

**Table 2: Newspaper readership**

| Sr. No.      | Newspaper Name      | Number of Readers | Percentage  |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1            | Jang                | 12                | 4%          |
| 2            | Dawn                | 26                | 8.6%        |
| 3            | The News            | 16                | 5%          |
| 4            | Express Tribune     | 17                | 5.6%        |
| 5            | Express News        | 12                | 4%          |
| 6            | Daily K2            | 96                | 32%         |
| 7            | Daily Muhasib       | 30                | 10%         |
| 8            | Daily Bad-e-Shumal  | 30                | 10%         |
| 9            | Daily Salam GB      | 18                | 6%          |
| 10           | Daily Sada-e-Gilgit | 13                | 4%          |
| 11           | Daily Himalya       | 7                 | 2%          |
| 12           | Daily Bang-e-Sahar  | 10                | 3%          |
| 13           | Daily Baidar        | 6                 | 2%          |
| 14           | Weekly Siachin News | 5                 | 1.6%        |
| 15           | Weekly Siachin      | 2                 | 0.6%        |
| <b>Total</b> |                     | <b>300</b>        | <b>100%</b> |

The data shows that there are 96 readers for the Daily K2 indicated (32%), much higher than all other newspapers. This indicates that it is the most relevant and influential option for the respondents, possibly because of its regional relevance and accessibility. Daily Muhasib and Daily Bad-e-Shumal are the second most read newspapers, each with 30 readers (10%), a moderate level of readership, and importance in the local media.

Readership is also seen in mainstream national newspapers like Dawn (8.6%), Express Tribune (5.6%) and The News (5%) newspapers, which have lower impact than regional newspapers in this sample. This indicates that the preference is for local/regional newspapers rather than national newspapers in English. Daily Salam GB, Express News, Jang, and Daily Sada-e-Gilgit are among the newspapers that are seeing medium numbers of readers, with 6%, 4%, 4%, and 4% respectively. At the bottom end of the spectrum, newspapers like Daily Himalya (2%), Daily Baidar (2%), Weekly Siachin News (1.6%) and Weekly Siachin (0.6%) have very few readers, either due to poor circulation or small and specific readership or due to their low reach. It is evident that regional newspapers are predominant in the overall pattern, with Daily K2 dominating the newspapers, whereas the position of the national and English-language newspapers is secondary. The least read publications are weekly publications, indicating that the respondents are more likely to seek information on a daily basis from the various publications that are available.



**Fig. 1****Table3: Language Distribution**

| S/No         | Language | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|----------|------------|----------------|
| 1            | Urdu     | 88         | 88%            |
| 2            | English  | 12         | 12%            |
| <b>Total</b> | —        | <b>100</b> | <b>100%</b>    |

The data indicate that Urdu is the dominant language, accounting for 88% of the total frequency, while English represents only 12%. This suggests a strong preference for Urdu in the sampled communication context.

#### **Question 4: Region wise which newspapers do you read the most?**

**Table 4: Region wise newspaper readership**

| S/No      | National Newspaper | Responses (%) | Regional Newspaper | Responses (%) |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1         | Jang               | 4%            | K2                 | 32%           |
| 2         | News               | 5%            | Muhasib            | 10%           |
| 3         | Express News       | 4%            | Bad-e-Shumal       | 10%           |
| 4         | Express Tribune    | 5%            | Salam GB           | 6%            |
| 5         | Express            | 4%            | Sade-e-Gilgit      | 4%            |
| 6         | Dawn               | 8%            | Himalya            | 2%            |
| 7         | —                  | —             | Bang-e-Sahar       | 3%            |
| 8         | —                  | —             | Baidar             | 2%            |
| 9         | —                  | —             | Siachin News       | 1.6%          |
| 10        | —                  | —             | Siachin            | 0.6%          |
| Total     | National           | 30%           | Regional           | 60%           |
| Frequency | Newspapers         |               | Newspapers         |               |

These figures contrast the readership of national and regional newspapers, and indicate that there is a strong preference for regional newspapers. Respondents are more likely to trust local

newspapers than national newspapers because regional newspapers make up 60% of the total response while national newspapers make up 30%. K2 is the strongest in the region with 32%, followed by Bad-e-Shumal, each with 10%, and Muhasib, with 10%. Dawn is the front-runner of all national newspapers with 8%, followed by News and Express Tribune at 5% each. From the overall perspective, the table shows that there is a definite local flavour for news consumption here, with one regional paper K2 being the sole paper to take up almost one third of the responses.

**Question 5: What type of news do you read the most?**

**Table 5: News readership**

| S/No | Sections of the Newspapers | Number of Readers | Frequency (%) |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1    | Sensational News           | 27                | 9%            |
| 2    | Editorial                  | 59                | 19%           |
| 3    | Sports News                | 22                | 7.3%          |
| 4    | Letters to the Editor      | 52                | 17.3%         |
| 5    | Political News             | 60                | 20%           |
| 6    | Cinema News                | 28                | 9.3%          |
| 7    | Advertisement              | 30                | 10%           |
| 8    | Business and Commerce      | 12                | 4%            |
| 9    | Crime and Courts           | 10                | 3%            |

The table shows how people read the newspapers by section of the page with 300 people taken as a total sample. Political News has the most readers, at 60, or 20%, followed closely by Editorial at 59 readers, 19%, and Letters to the Editor at 52 readers, 17.3%. Combined, these three opinion and politics specialties account for more than 56% of circulation, indicating that there is a demand for opinion and public affairs. Cinema News and Sensational News have a 9.3% and a 9% respectively, while Advertisement has a 10%. Sports News receives 7.3% of all reads, while Business and Commerce and Crime and Courts receive only 4% and 3% respectively. Overall, readers seem to be attracted to political stories, editorial opinion and reader letters the most with relatively little interest in business and crime reports.

**Question6: Motives of reading newspaper**

**Table 6:**

| S/No  | Motives of Reading Newspaper | Number of Readers | Frequency (%) |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1     | To Get Information           | 77                | 25%           |
| 2     | For Personal Interest        | 133               | 44%           |
| 3     | For Killing Time             | 13                | 14%           |
| 4     | For Company                  | 21                | 7%            |
| 5     | For Entertainment            | 47                | 15%           |
| 6     | Please Mention if Any Other  | 09                | 3%            |
| Total | —                            | 300               | 100%          |

This table shows the main motives readers have for reading newspapers, based on 300 respondents. Most people read it because it is of personal interest to them: 133 readers (44%). The next most popular, at 25% and 77 readers, is To Get Information. There is a significant number of readers who still read newspapers for information and facts. The share of newspapers read as a form of entertainment is 15% and killing time is 14%, making a total of approximately 29%. There's a minimal amount of folks who consider it a social habit, with Company being much lower at 7%. 3% gave other reasons. The overall results indicate that the motivation for reading newspapers is mainly self-directed, that is, based on how people find information interesting and relevant to them, rather than solely for utilitarian purposes.

**Question7. Time spent reading newspaper:**

**Table 7: Approximately, how many times do you usually spend reading specific content/news of newspaper?**

| S/No | Newspaper Section | Don't Read | 5–15 Minutes | 16–30 Minutes | 31–45 Minutes | >45 Minutes |
|------|-------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1    | Political News    | —          | 90           | 55            | 103           | 52          |
| 2    | Editorial         | —          | —            | 28            | 74            | 198         |
| 3    | Business and      | 156        | 54           | 40            | 44            | 08          |

| S/No | Newspaper Section      | Don't Read | 5–15 Minutes | 16–30 Minutes | 31–45 Minutes | >45 Minutes |
|------|------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
|      | Commerce News          |            |              |               |               |             |
| 4    | Cinema News            | 145        | 111          | 24            | 20            | —           |
| 5    | Sports News            | 178        | 51           | 66            | 05            | —           |
| 6    | Letters to the Editors | 57         | 10           | 35            | 98            | 100         |
| 7    | Advertisements         | 108        | 93           | 67            | 22            | 10          |

The table below indicates the average amount of time devoted to the various sections of the newspaper. Editorial receives the most focused reading time (198 readers spend >45 minutes there, 74 spend 31-45 minutes, 272 out of 300 readers spend 30+ minutes). Letters to the Editors also is the recipient of deep reading; it has 100 readers at >45 minutes and 98 at 31-45 minutes. Political News has a wide overall engagement time, attracting readers who spend 103 minutes, 90 minutes and 52 minutes respectively on the website – a good mix of skim and skimless. Sports News, Cinema News and Business and Commerce have high “Don’t Read” figures: 178, 145, and 156 respectively; and most of those who do read these titles spend less than 30 minutes. The majority of the ads are skimmed, 5–15 minutes reading 93 readers, 108 readers do not read ads. In general, it is opinion and politics areas that get the most engagement, with entertainment, sports and business sections being either ignored or read quickly.

### Question 8: Which type of content do you read most?

**Table 8: Newspaper content readerships**

| S/No | Newspaper Section             | Don't Read | 5–15 Minutes | 16–30 Minutes | 31–45 Minutes | >45 Minutes |
|------|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1    | News                          | —          | 90           | 55            | 103           | 52          |
| 2    | Views<br>(Editorials/Columns) | 15         | 54           | 40            | 44            | 108         |
| 3    | Advertisements                | 178        | 51           | 66            | 05            | —           |
| 4    | Letters to the Editors        | 57         | 10           | 35            | 98            | 100         |

| S/No | Newspaper Section | Don't Read | 5–15 Minutes | 16–30 Minutes | 31–45 Minutes | >45 Minutes |
|------|-------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 5    | Cartoons          | 108        | 93           | 67            | 22            | 10          |

The following table displays the amount of time participants spend reading five sections of the newspaper. The longest reading times are for View (Editorials/Columns) articles and Letters to the Editor (108 and 100 readers respectively spend >45 minutes on them, an additional 44 and 98 readers 31 – 45 minutes). Which means about two thirds of readers read these opinion sections for 30 minutes or more. News attracts broad and diverse engagement – 103 readers spend 31–45 minutes, 52 readers spend >45 minutes, while 90 readers skim it in 5–15 minutes – it is read for both quick updates and deeper reading. The vast majority of readers read cartoons in less than an hour, with 160 readers spending 30 minutes or less reading cartoons and 108 readers not reading cartoons at all. The portion of the adverts was the most missed 178 respondents never read them and those who did only read up to 30 minutes. In general, readers spend the most time reading editorials and opinions, read news solidly and avoid or skim ads and cartoons.

**Question 09: What do you prefer to read in the OPED (opinion and editorial) page?**

**Table 9: OPED reading preference of newspaper readers**

| S/No | OPED (Opinion & Editorial) Page | No of Readers | Frequency (%) |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1    | Editorial Page                  | 111           | 37%           |
| 2    | Columns                         | 123           | 41%           |
| 3    | Cartoons                        | 200           | 66%           |
| 4    | Letters to the Editors          | 46            | 15%           |

This table is a breakdown of the OPED (Opinion & Editorial) page readership. By far the most popular element is cartoons, read by 200 respondents or 66% (high visual interest on the opinion page). The next largest groups are Columns with 123 readers (41%) and the Editorial Page itself (37% with 111 readers). This section receives the least number of readers with letters to Editors at 15%, 46 readers. The percentages add up to more than 100, and therefore, readers are obviously reading more than one OPED. Overall, the data can be interpreted as: Traditional

editorial and column content has a solid level of interest, but cartoons have the highest level of engagement, probably because they are shorter and more visually appealing.

**Question10: What kind of advertisements do you read most?**

**Table 10: Readership of advertisements**

| S/No | Kind of Advertisements | No of Readers | Frequency (%) |
|------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1    | Tenders                | 56            | 18%           |
| 2    | Jobs                   | 34            | 11%           |
| 3    | Classified             | 46            | 15%           |
| 4    | Socio-Political        | 77            | 25%           |
| 5    | Public Service Ads     | 87            | 29%           |

This table compares reader interest in the various types of newspaper ads. Public Service Ads are the most read at 29% (87 readers) and Socio-Political Ads follow closely at 25% (77 readers). These two civic-focused categories make up more than half of ad readership, indicating consumers are interested in ads that are social or public in nature. Tenders come in second at 18%, with 56 readers, followed by Classified at 15%, with 46 readers, with Jobs ads coming in as the lowest with 11%, with 34 readers. The pattern suggests that readers have more interest in reading ads related to public interest and governance than those related to commercial and employment interests in newspaper.

**Question11: What is your preferred time of reading newspaper?**

**Table 11: Newspaper reading time preference**

| S/No | Preferred Time  | No of readers | Frequency    |
|------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Morning         | 234           | 78 per cent  |
| 2.   | Evening         | 13            | 4.3 per cent |
| 3.   | Afternoon       | 30            | 10 per cent  |
| 4.   | At late evening | 23            | 7.6 per cent |

This table illustrates readers' preference for newspaper reading time. The most popular time is definitely the morning, with 78 per cent (234 readers) preferring it, meaning newspaper reading is linked to morning habits. Afternoon (30 readers) is a distant 2nd and late evening (23 readers) is 7.6%. Evening, at 4.3% (13 readers) is the least preferred. Overall, it can be seen that consumption of newspapers is concentrated in the morning with very little readership during the latter part of the day.

**Question12: What is your favourite place of reading newspaper?**

**Table12: Favourite place of reading newspapers**

| S/No | Favourite Place | No of readers | Frequency   |
|------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1.   | Library         | ---           | ---         |
| 2.   | Home            | 103           | 34 per cent |
| 3.   | Office          | 145           | 48 per cent |
| 4.   | Other place     | 52            | 17 per cent |

The following table presents the distribution of respondents by newspapers' reading places. The most frequent location is office with 145 readers accounting for 48%, indicating that many readers read during work time or breaks. Home is second with 34% at 103 readers, this shows that there is still a significant group reading at home. Other place accounts for 17% and there are 52 readers for that place, Library has no reported readers. In general, the data indicates that reading newspapers primarily takes place in "formal settings" (workplaces, homes, etc.).

**Question13: Do you think that nowadays you spend lesser time in newspapers reading than before?**

**Table 13:**

| S/No | Scale                  | No of readers | Frequency    |
|------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Strongly Disagree (SD) | 04            | 1 per cent   |
| 2.   | Disagree (D)           | 33            | 11 per cent  |
| 3.   | Neutral (N)            | 32            | 10 per cent  |
| 4.   | Agree (A)              | 28            | 9.3 per cent |
| 5.   | Strongly Agree (SA)    | 203           | 67 per cent  |

This table displays answers on an 5 point agreement scale. The percentage of readers who agree strongly (203) far outweighs the percentage who agree weakly (11) at 67%, reflecting a very strong consensus that this statement was being measured. Disagree and Neutral are at 11% and 10% each, respectively, while Agree is at 9.3%. 1% selected Strongly Disagree. When asked about the agreement/disagreement, 76.3% agree and 12% disagree. The results indicate a definite, overwhelming positive answer, and in most cases, the answer was “Strongly Agree”.

**Question14: What kind of issues cartoons do you read most?**

**Table 14: Cartoon of newspapers readership**

| S/No |                  | No of readers | Frequency   |
|------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1.   | Political issues | 203           | 67 per cent |
| 2.   | Social issues    | 44            | 14 per cent |
| 3.   | Economy issues   | 53            | 17 per cent |

The following table displays which types of issues readers are interested in. By far the most popular is political issues with 203 readers or 67% choosing these. Economy issues follow at 17% (53 readers) followed by Social issues at 14% (44 readers). The data shows that political topics are the preferred reading subjects, while economic and social topics are much less read.

**Conclusion**

The results of the study reveal that the readers' interest in sports, cinema, business and commerce news is comparatively less. That's one of the primary reasons because the majority of news from these categories is from outside of the region. This is not to say that local newspapers are not interested in local events – it simply means that there is not a great deal of local content available in these areas. The lack of local news production relies on newspapers relying on external and national news sources. In a similar way, commercial activities are limited in terms of areas and mostly take place in the major towns like Gilgit, Skardu and Chilas, and most of the trade is done along the Karakoram Highway (KKH). As a result, most business news is focused on trade with China. Many political topics are addressed from a commerce perspective because of their social and economic implications.

Lack of interest in cinema-related news could also be due to the fact that there are no cinema halls in this region. In the 1970s there were three cinemas, but as times went on, they became more commercialised, and the management of the cinema was set aside for financial gain. This has led to low exposure to cinema culture among the people. Moreover, the dependency on electronic and cable media for entertainment information is becoming significant, and so are the newspapers being less and less used for information related to cinema. The tendency is that visual media have taken the place of print media in terms of entertainment information and become more influential than print media.

Readers, on the other hand, are more interested in editorials, political news, and letters to the editor. The connection between these preferences for reading and the special constitutional and political situation of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan is one of the important results of this research. Not being fully represented at the constitutional level, people's hopes and worries are frequently voiced in editorials, political news and readers' letters. These sections help to define the local political, social and economic conversation.

Among readers, ads are extremely popular for a number of reasons, one of which is economic. The last two decades have witnessed the publication of most newspapers in Gilgit-Baltistan, which were founded with limited financial resources and by commoners. It has been difficult to support such newspapers, and government advertising has been a significant revenue source. Meanwhile, advertising brings a big audience to the newspaper, as educated people rely on newspapers for employment, admission, tenders, quotations and development-related announcements. Therefore, the advertising section is one of the most highly read sections of the local newspaper.

### **Implication of Study**

The study also has great significance for the newspaper organisations, policymakers and media practitioners of Gilgit-Baltistan. The high preference of regional newspapers indicates important roles in the influence and fulfilment of the information needs of the region's community. Readers' interest in political news, editorials and opinion pages indicates a great interest in public affairs and issues related to the political and social development of the region. Newspaper organisations should then invest more in the quality of local reporting and improve the analytical and opinion reporting, as well as boost the reportage of local sports, business and cultural activities to expand readers' interests. Furthermore, the low rate of personal newspaper

subscribers shows that innovative distribution and subscription strategies have to be implemented to help the newspaper industry in the region.

### **Future Recommendations**

Future research should use larger and more diverse samples from other districts of the region to make the findings relevant to other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan and other areas in Pakistan. However, researchers need to have mixed-method and longitudinal research designs to get a better idea of shifts in newspaper reading over time, especially as digital media use grows. Comparative analysis of print and online newspaper usage and a study of how socio-demographic variables (such as age, education, gender and occupation) affect newspaper choice will provide more evidence of the current change in audiences. In addition, research on the sustainability and relevance of regional newspapers for emerging information societies could be expanded to investigate the impact of social media and digital news media.

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