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Superstars in Politics: The Role of the Media in the Koizumi Regime

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of mass media on people's perceptions of charismatic leaders, focusing on Japan's Koizumi regime. We conduct an empirical assessment, looking at the influence of television and newspapers on the support for Koizumi and his principal policy.

This study uses individual-level data collected immediately after Koizumi's 2005 landslide win. The major findings are: (1) frequency of exposure to mass media is positively related to support for Koizumi but not to support for his principal policy and (2) the effect of watching television is only observed for women and that of reading the newspaper only for men. Thus, a charismatic male leader on television has a greater influence than his policy on female voters. The psychological effect of an "attractive" male leader on female voters is amplified through television. Despite no support from special interest groups, Koizumi won the election because of a televised superstar effect.

JEL classification: D72, L88, L82

Key words: Mass media, television, newspaper, election, Koizumi regime, superstar effect

1. Introduction

Popularity appears to be one of the key determinants that increases market demand. In the entertainment or sports market, demand for superstars is far greater than that for others, resulting in a substantial gap of earnings between superstars and others. The theory of the superstar suggests that the star effect stems from huge amounts of consumption and imperfect substitution (Rosen 1981). Concerning high levels of consumption, the development of mass media such as television makes it possible for large numbers of people to find amusement in televised entertainment programs and sports games. Superstar effects are also thought to be observed in elections and play a key role in determining the winning regime. It is important for a political party to exploit the popularity its charismatic politicians with the aim of winning the election. In addition to policy and political belief, what makes a political superstar is the image transmitted via mass media to voters. Inevitably, in modern society, to win an election the leader of a political party has a significant incentive to plan a strategy to improve his/her image for the national audience.¹

If the mass media does indeed increase the superstar effect, then it is of value to explore the effect of the mass media on voters' perceptions about political issues and politicians.² Existing literature deals with the relation between media and politics. A number of relevant studies come from the United States. These include those that use historical data to suggest that larger relief funds are allocated in areas where higher shares of households have radios (Strömberg 2004). Other research has focused not only on the exposure of the mass media but also its slant. The results show that neither right-leaning nor left-leaning newspapers influence readers' political knowledge, stated opinions, and turnout. However, both newspaper types were found to increase readers' support for the Democratic candidate (Gerber Karlan and Bergan 2009). It was also found that the introduction of the conservative Fox News Channel in 20% of US

¹ It was found that better-looking people earn more than average-looking people (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994; Biddle and Hamermesh 1998). To take the example of sports, attractiveness, as measured by facial symmetry, leads to greater rewards even after controlling for player performance (Berri et al. 2011).

² There are also studies in the field of economics that examine the effect of television on individuals' perceptions such as happiness (Frey et al. 2007; Bruni and Stanca 2008).

towns led its viewers to vote conservative Republican (Della Vigna and Kaplan 2007). Spanish-language news program on television also contribute to substantially boost voter turnout (Oberholzer-Gee and Waldfogel 2009). Furthermore, researchers are increasingly investigating the mass media and its political influence in other countries such as Italy (Durante and Knight 2012; Sabatini 2012), Russia (White et al. 2005; Enikolopov et al. 2011), Mexico (Lawson and McCann 2005), India (Olken 2009),³ and Muslim countries (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2004). These studies tell that the mass media plays a critical role in forming trends in public opinion.

Since the end of the 1980s, the mass media in Japan, especially television, has had a critical influence on politics; this has led the Japanese public to “consume” politics (Krauss and Nyblade 2005). In particular, Junichiro Koizumi, the prime minister from 2001 to 2006, is regarded as the most charismatic political leader in the last 25 years Japan. He is considered likeable and attractive; the *New York Times* have described Koizumi as Japan’s best-known Elvis impersonator (Stolberg and Dewan 2006). Koizumi also shares similarities with Ronald Reagan in that they both communicated with voters using a performance-based style and they aimed to reduce the size of government. Although it is not a good thing that politics has turned into something of a TV game show, Koizumi managed to take advantage of this style of television broadcasting and gained the support of the majority of voters (Ohtake 2003). As his principal policy, Koizumi called for the privatization of Japan’s postal services; this was opposed by many politicians (Imai 2009). Thus, he cleverly exploited the situation and came out the winner in the political world. Arguably, the case of a superstar in Japan’s political arena is useful to analyze how the superstar effect can secure electoral victory.

The purpose of this paper is to assess how Koizumi gathered the support of voters by focusing on the mass media. More specifically, we examine how the frequency of watching television and that of reading newspapers influenced support for the Koizumi regime and its principal policy. This paper used individual-level data to conduct a statistical estimation. The data was compiled from the “Social and Political Consciousness Survey in 21st Century Japan” (GLOPE 2005 hereafter). The survey was conducted across Japan in 2005 immediately after the election to determine voters’ perceptions about politics at the time of the election. In this election, where Koizumi narrowed the electorate’s focus to postal privatization, the

³ Research related to media and economics issues has also been conducted based on cross-countries data (Djankov 2003; Connolly and Hargreaves Heap 2007; Petrova 2008).

Koizumi regime won by a landslide.⁴ Therefore, the data certainly allows us to compare the determinants of support for Koizumi and those of his policy.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides the background and an overview of the Koizumi regime. Furthermore, two testable hypotheses of citizens' views towards the Koizumi regime and the main policy are also presented. Section 3 explains the dataset and provides a simple econometric framework to examine the hypotheses. In addition, estimation results are reported. The final section offers concluding remarks.

2. The Setting and Hypotheses

2.1. Overview of the Political Background

Review of Japan's Politics Post-World War II

For more than 50 years since its founding (apart from two short periods in 1993–1994 and 2009–2012) Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been the dominant party within a democratic setting. Among the LDP prime ministers, Junichiro Koizumi is known as the most popular and was very supported by the people. Table 1 shows that from 1989–2012, Koizumi's regime lasted for 60 months, which is clearly longer than any other regime (the second longest regime was that of Hashimoto at 30 months, half the length of Koizumi). The highest level of support during the Koizumi regime was 85%, which is the highest rate since 1989. In addition, the lowest support rate during the Koizumi regime was 39%, with only those of the Hosokawa and Hata regimes being higher. Considering the fact that the Hosokawa and Hata regimes were of only 8 and 2 months duration, respectively, the lowest support rate during the Koizumi regime is in fact very high compared with other regimes.⁵ To understand the reason why Koizumi garnered such high levels of support, it is necessary to discuss the political and economic background in Japan's post-World War II period.

The power groups within the LDP, known as factions (*habatsu*), are regarded as important when the dominance of the LDP is considered. The factions assume tasks in various areas, including candidate nomination, the acquisition of funds, and the allocation of party and government posts (Köllner 2006). Therefore, “the LDP's institutionalized factional system served as an effective functional equivalent of formalized procedures and norms of party management...Informal rules on how party and cabinet posts were to be allocated made the

⁴ A significant relation between the result of the 2005 election in Japan and happiness was not observed (Tsutsui et al. 2010).

⁵ The Hosokawa and Hata regimes were the first non-LDP regimes after World War II. They only received support for a very short period in 1993–1994.

political careers of LDP Diet members more foreseeable and helped to reduce uncertainty” (Köllner 2006, p.248). For a long time during the LDP’s ruling period, various factions formed links with special interest groups and industries, which are considered to play a key role in maintaining the LDP’s electoral dominance. For example, in Japan, politicians sometimes increase the expenditure allocated to public works in the hope that the construction industry will contribute to support election campaigns (Yamamura and Kondoh 2013). This is reflected in the fact that “larger amounts are spent on public works than in other countries, controlling for size and population” (Doi and Ihori 2009, p.181). There are also the LDP’s influential members of the Diet who are on committees called “policy tribes” (*zoku-giin*). They hand out political favors to those groups that support them in an election.⁶ In turns, thanks to the strong electoral support from these groups, the LDP did not share its political power with any other parties until the early 1990s.

In the early 1990s, the political power and stability of the LDP declined as a consequence of the serious corruption scandals that damaged the party. In response, members left the LDP and founded new parties that entered into coalitions with existing parties. Eventually, a seven-party coalition seized power for just 10 months (the equivalent duration to the Hosokawa and Hata regimes). The LDP then formed an alliance with the socialist party to come back into power. Since that time, the LDP has had to share power with other parties to ensure their political position in Japan. With respect to the economic situation, Japan has experienced long-term economic stagnation since the end of the “bubble economy” in the beginning of 1990s. In tandem, the political mechanism to maintain the dominance of the LDP failed to function well. The traditional political influence of special interest groups (with largely rural members) declined and the mobilizing of unaffiliated voters (who were mainly urban residents) became very important. Thus, the LDP was at the serious turning point in the beginning of new millennium.

The Koizumi Regime and the Elections

In 2001, Koizumi rose to the top of the governing LDP by exploiting his bad-boy image within a political organization whose rank-and-file members were longing for a plain-spoken leader with charisma and a vision of a new Japan. Koizumi pledged to scrap political convention, appointing cabinet members based on expertise and merit rather than on which faction of the party they belonged to (Strom 2001). Koizumi belonged to the Fukuda group, which is regarded as being outside the mainstream LDP. Hence, Koizumi did not enjoy any great benefit from the LDP’s institutionalized factional system, and it was this that provided

⁶ The cozy relationships among politicians, bureaucrats, and industry are sometimes described as an “iron triangle” (Sakakibara 2003).

him with the motivation for political reform. To survive in the political world, it was important for him to utilize the media to capture the floating vote. “Koizumi managed to capture the imagination of the Japanese public by means of snappy slogans and dramatizing politics. What set Koizumi apart from most former LDP leaders was that he appealed directly to public” (Köllner 2006, p.251). For the purpose of revitalizing the Japanese economy, Koizumi aimed to execute structural economic reforms to reduce wasteful public spending on infrastructure projects and to privatize the postal service. Supporters of the LDP were roughly divided into those who would benefit from reform and those who would be hurt by it. “Koizumi came to paper via a revolt by the LDP’s grassroots urban machine against the more rural-oriented party leadership” (Katz 2001, p.38). Koizumi “demonstrated an uncanny ability to instrumentalize the media, both old and new. Electoral cooperation with the New Komei party progress quite smoothly under Koizumi, contributing to the parliamentary dominance of the LDP” (Köllner 2006, p.254).

In 2005, the privatization of the postal service, which is considered Koizumi’s principal policy, was strongly opposed, not only members of the opposition party but also by many members of the LDP. Inevitably, the bill to privatize the postal service was rejected in the House of Councilors in August 2005. Thus, the rebellion of his own party members essentially prevented Koizumi’s principal policy from being realized. In response, Koizumi instantly dissolved the House of Representatives and conducted a general election to seek the public’s opinion on the bill. Therefore, a key issue of the general election was to determine whether the Japanese people agreed with the privatization of the postal service. In other words, Koizumi framed the election as a referendum on the privatization of the postal service.

During the election, Koizumi made good use of the mass media, especially television, to describe himself as the hero of the reform and his opponents within the LDP as “resistance forces” stuck in the past (Köllner 2006). Koizumi brought further drama to the election by recruiting so-called “assassin” candidates to stand against LDP members who did not endorse the bill. He clearly and quite simply highlighted the confrontational relationship between himself and his opponents. Koizumi helped to transform politics into something of a TV game show, encouraging voters to enjoy politics as they would sports or or movie (Ohtake 2003). Without a doubt, within the colorful drama, Koizumi was cast as the leading man. The viewing audience increased remarkably because of such a carefully staged event, leading the broadcast station to treat the campaign as political entertainment. Koizumi’s strategy to exploit the mass media was a very effective one, as it even caught the attention of those who were usually disinterested. It got people involved in politics and as a result they voted for the LDP in the election (Köllner 2006). Mass media induced floating or unaffiliated voters in urban areas to support Koizumi’s principal policy. Where special interest groups and factions declined, “the

personalization of the role (of the prime minister) is increasingly important to voters... Skillful and attractive prime ministers will gain popularity and better results for their party; unskillful and unattractive ones will find their terms quite short” (Krauss 2002, p.12).

In Japan, newspapers can be roughly divided into two categories. There are national newspapers such as *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, and *Mainichi*, and these are distributed throughout Japan. There are also many local newspapers. Generally, the readers of the former are far greater in number than that of the latter. For instance, in 2010, the circulation of *Yomiuri* was 10 million, and that of *Asahi* was 7.9 millions. To put it into context, the circulation of the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* in the United States is 2.0 million and 1.8 million, respectively.⁷ This suggests that newspapers are widely circulated in Japan compared with other developed countries.⁸ Concerning television in Japan in 2005, 99.3% of households had a television;⁹ that is, most people had easy access to television viewing. Therefore, considering newspaper and television together during the Koizumi regime, the Japanese people were most likely exposed to both mediums.¹⁰ Accordingly, in the 2005 general election, Koizumi’s actions

⁷ The circulation of the *New York Times* is only 0.9 million even though since the late 1990s its circulation has grown and local newspaper circulation has declined (George and Waldfogel 2006).

⁸ Data source is “Circulation Data For National Newspaper”, which is available on the website of The International Federation of Audit Bureaux of Circulations (IFABC):

<http://www.ifabc.org/resources/data-reports%2065/data-reports-65> (Accessed on May 6, 2014).

⁹ Data source is “Consumer Confidence Survey”, which is available on the website of the Cabinet Office, Government of Japan:

<http://www.esri.cao.go.jp/jp/stat/shouhi/shouhi.html> (accessed on May 7, 2014).

¹⁰ Based on cross-country data, the government ownership of mass media is observed to undermine political and economic freedom (Djankov 2003). In Italy, as prime minister, Berlusconi indirectly controls Italian public service television. Sabatini (2012) provides evidence that through the influence of Berlusconi’s media power, support for him persists despite of his various misconduct. In Japan, there is only one

resulted in the dramatization of the election and his landslide win.

2.3. Empirical Hypotheses

Gentzkov (2006) describes the introduction of television in the 1950s as a dramatic improvement of the previous entertainment technologies. Accordingly, the price of political information reduced and there was a greater reduction in the price of entertainment. Consumers responded by moving away from the former and toward the latter. However, the fact that Koizumi acted to dramatize politics suggests that television possibly broadcasted both political news and entertainment together. This is evident by the fact that “by collecting news and combining it with entertainment, media are able to inform passive voters about regulation and other public policy issues, acting as a (partial) counterbalance to small but well organized groups ” (Dyck et al. 2013, p.521).

However, attention is called for when considering the possibility that the influence of mass media causes people to be more interested with the characteristics of political leaders than with policy issues. This result would act as a counterbalance to special interest groups. A similar example can be seen in the relationship between a film and the leading actor. Fans of Tom Hanks go to see a film with him in the main role because they want to see him in the film, even if they are not interested in the film itself. Similarly, when Ronald Regan came to power, it was more likely because he was well-known actor rather than specific policies or political philosophies. Therefore, to closely examine the argument of Dyck et al. (2013), it is essential to disentangle the popularity of a political leader from those policy issues to which special interest groups are opposed. Therefore, we propose the following two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Through mass media, voters obtain information on policy issues and then support the policy that is against the interest of special interest groups.

Hypothesis 2: Through mass media, voters are fascinated with the character of the political leader and then support his regime even if they are not interested in his principal policy, which is against the interest of special interest groups.

On one occasion, Koizumi danced in his office with a visiting US film star, Richard Gere

public broadcasting agency, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK). Although Koizumi’s program obviously increased the television viewing audience, he did not build an empire of mass media like Berlusconi.

(who has been said to resemble him) (Van Gelder 2005). It is presumed that because news of this event was broadcast, Japanese fans of Gere would then like Koizumi even if they were indifferent to politics. The *New York Times* also reported an impressive episode in the United States showing how appealing Koizumi can be. In 2006 Koizumi visited the home of Elvis Presley with the then President Bush. Koizumi shares his birthday (Jan. 8) with Elvis Presley and it has been noted that their hairstyles are similar. Koizumi gave an Elvis Presley impression during the tour of Elvis's home. When Elvis's former wife pointed out a pair of oversized gold-rimmed sunglasses once worn by the King, the prime minister eagerly donned them, thrusting his hips and arms forward in imitation of a classic Elvis move. He later threw his arm around Elvis's daughter, belting out some Elvis lyrics, "hold me close, hold me tight". (Stolberg and Dewan 2006). Thus, Koizumi's strikingly appealing characteristics and the fact that his policy was opposed by special interest groups are appropriate to test *Hypotheses 1* and 2.

3. Estimated Model and Estimation Results

3.1. Data

This survey was purposefully conducted by GLOPE throughout Japan immediately after the 2005 election to systematically investigate voters' views on politics at that time. Sample points can be divided into cities (which are considered as urban areas) and towns or villages (considered as rural areas). Three thousand adults were invited to participate in the survey with stratified two-stage random sampling. The data includes various information on the Koizumi regime and his principal policy (postal service privatization), homeownership, schooling years, demographic (age and sex) status, and household income.¹¹

Information regarding the samples used in this research is shown in Table 2. The mean value of KOIZUMI (Koizumi supporter dummy) is 0.62, meaning that 62% people supported the Koizumi regime. This is consistent with the result of the election in 2005. The mean value of PRIVAT (postal privatization supporter dummy) is 0.42, suggesting that 42% people supported the privatization of Japan's postal service. Hence, there is a 20% difference between them, showing that one-third of those who supported the Koizumi regime did not support the

¹¹ Data for this secondary analysis were sourced from the "Social and Political Consciousness Survey in 21st Century Japan (GLOPE 2005)". Data were collated by Waseda University Centre of Excellence Program for the 21st Century: Constructing Open Political-Economic Systems (21 COE-GLOPE). The research was subcontracted to Chuo Chosa-Sha. Data were provided by the Social Science Japan Data Archive, Information Center for Social Science Research on Japan, Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

principal policy of the Koizumi regime. This can be interpreted as implying that one-third of Koizumi supporters preferred his appealing personality but not his policy. In other words, people voted for the LDP and its candidates even though they paid little attention the issues in dispute. Figure 1(a) indicates that the frequency of watching television is not related to support for the Koizumi regime for men. However, Figure 1(b) suggests that the more frequently women watched television, the more likely they were to support the Koizumi regime. Neither Figure 2(a) nor Figure 2(b) reveal an association between the frequency of watching television and support for the privatization of postal service regardless of the respondents' sex. These results indicate that television contributed to increasing in the number of women who supported the Koizumi regime, but not regarding his principal policy (which was a central issue in the general election). Turning to the effect of reading newspapers, the frequency of reading a newspaper is not related to support for the Koizumi regime and its policy at all (these results are not shown)¹². All in all, these results are consistent with *Hypothesis 2*, but not with *Hypothesis 1*. To further scrutinize these findings, regression estimations were conducted and the results are discussed below.

3.2. Empirical Model

To test *Hypotheses 1* and *2*, the estimated function takes the following form:

$$Y_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 TV_i + \alpha_2 NEWS_i + \alpha_3 Ln(INCOM)_i + \alpha_4 Ln(EDU)_i + \alpha_5 Ln(AGE)_i + \alpha_6 SPOUS_i + \alpha_7 CHILD_i + \alpha_8 UNEMP_i + \alpha_9 KNOW_i + \alpha_{10} GOVPT1_i + \alpha_{11} GOVPT2_i + \alpha_{12} VILLAG_i + \alpha_{13} MAN_i + u_i,$$

where Y_i represents the dependent variable for an individual i such as *KOIZUMI* and *PRIVAT*. The error term is represented by u_i . Because *KOIZUMI* and *PRIVAT* are dummy variables that are either 1 or 0, a probit model can be used. However, if a correlation exists between the residuals of different equations, then a bivariate probit model is more appropriate to conduct estimations of *KOIZUMI* and *PRIVAT* at the same time (Greene 2008). Furthermore, α' , as

¹² Figures are available upon request from the corresponding author.

reported in Tables 3, 4, and 5, is the marginal effect.¹³

If watching television and reading newspapers leads voters to support the Koizumi regime (the privatization of the postal service), the coefficients of *TV* and *NEWS* are expected to be positive when *KOIZUMI (PRIVAT)* is a dependent variable. The coefficients of *TV* and *NEWS* are positive in columns (2), (4), and (6) when *Hypothesis 1* is supported. In contrast, the coefficients of *TV* and *NEWS* are positive in columns (1), (3), and (5) when *Hypothesis 2* is supported. Newspapers can provide greater amounts and more detailed information about political issues than television; however, television was able to broadcast the Koizumi performance more vividly and visually than the newspapers. Because of the difference of the functions of television and newspaper, we can distinguish and compare the effects of mass media.

To control for the economic condition of the respondents, the logs of household income level (*INCOM*), schooling years (*EDU*), age (*AGE*), and job status (*UNEMP*) are included as independent variables. Koizumi's basic policy philosophy was based on a market mechanism to improve economic efficiency and therefore reduces the public sector, which is reflected in the privatization of the postal service. Owing to the reform, highly educated people are more

¹³ In a similar methodological framework, Sabatini (2013) uses an instrumental variable to control for endogeneity of trust for television for the determinants of trust in Berlusconi, the Italian prime minister. For the instrumental variables, Sabatini (2013) uses proxies of social capital such as the quality of friendships and trust in the press. Turning to the analysis in the present study, following Sabatini (2013), we conduct an IV probit estimation where *TV* (and *NEWS*) is treated as an endogenous variable and therefore use instruments such as degree of community participation regarded as a proxy for social capital. Results of the Wald test for the exogeneity of *TV* (and *NEWS*) are obtained. The test statistics are not significant, and thus there is insufficient evidence in the sample to reject the null-hypothesis that there is no endogeneity. This indicates that there is no need to use instrumental variables because endogeneity bias does not exist. Therefore, we do not report the results of the IV probit model although the results are similar to those reported in Tables 3–5. The results of the IV probit are available upon request from the corresponding author.

likely to have the opportunity to obtain high earnings. Therefore, *EDU* is predicted to be positive. In contrast, unemployed people are less likely to benefit from such a policy and so the coefficient of *UNEMP* is predicted to be negative. *SPOUS* (dummy for having a spouse) and *CHILD* (dummy for having a child) are incorporated to capture the family structure. *KNOW* (dummy to know about the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Japan) is included to capture the degree that respondents have a basic knowledge of Japan's political situation. As mentioned in the previous section, the Koizumi regime was based on an alliance between the LDP and the new Komei party. The political standpoint of respondents is captured by *GOVPT1* (dummy for a supporter of the LDP) and *GOVPT2* (dummy for a supporter of the new Komei party). There is the possibility of reverse causality between *KOIZUMI* and *GOVPT1* (and *GOVPT2*), resulting in estimation bias. However, estimation results reported later do not change even when *GOVPT1* and *GOVPT2* are excluded from the set of independent variables. Traditionally, the LDP received support from voters in rural areas, however, the influence of urban residents (traditionally independent voters) also increased. As mentioned in section 2, Koizumi enjoyed greater support from urban residents than from rural ones. Hence, the coefficient of *VILLAGE* is predicted to be negative. Furthermore, females are thought to find Koizumi more appealing, and as such it is predicted that *MAN* will be negative.

4. Estimation Results

Table 3 reports the estimation results based on the whole sample. Tables 4 and 5 exhibit the results of men and women, respectively. The model used here is a bivariate probit model and thus the determinants of *KOIZUMI* and *PRIVAT* are estimated jointly. The results including those of the independent variables are exhibited jointly in columns (1) and (2). The correlation coefficient for *TV* and *NEWS* is 0.42 and statistically significant. Hence, collinearity may occur. To deal with this possibility, we also report alternative models where either *TV* or *NEWS* are omitted from the set of independent variables. Therefore, two sets of results for *KOIZUMI* and *PRIVAT* are presented in columns (3) and (4), and in columns (5) and (6).

The results of the key variables (*TV* and *NEWS*) are shown in Table 3. As predicted for *KOIZUMI*, the coefficients of *TV* and *NEWS* are positive in columns (1), (3), and (5). *KOIZUMI* is statistically significant in columns (1) and (3) and *NEWS* is statistically significant in column (5) but not in column (1). Owing to the correlation between *TV* and *NEWS*, their standard errors increase in column (1). This might lead *NEWS* to be insignificant. In contrast, the results of *TV* do not change, showing that they are robust. In addition, the marginal effect of *TV* is larger than that of *NEWS* when *KOIZUMI* is the dependent variable. All in all, the effect of frequency of watching television on support for the Koizumi regime is

more significant and greater than that of reading newspapers. Switching our attention to the results of *PRIVAT*, contrary to predictions, *TV* is negative in columns (2) and (4). As predicted, *NEWS* is positive in columns (1) and (6). Neither *TV* nor *NEWS* are statistically significant. Based on these results, the presence of mass media acted to increase voters' support of the Koizumi regime. In contrast, *TV* and *NEWS* did not influence voters' support of Koizumi's principal policy, being a key issue in the 2005 general election. Hence, these results support *Hypothesis 2* but not *Hypothesis 1*.

Concerning the results of the control variables presented in Table 3, *INCOM* is positive in all columns. Furthermore, *INCOM* is statistically significant in the estimation of *KOIZUMI*, but not in that of *PRIVAT*. Therefore, people with high incomes are more likely to support the Koizumi regime. However, income level is not related to supporting the privatization of the postal service. As shown in columns (1), (3), and (5), the coefficient of *EDU* is negative, but is not statistically significant in the estimation of *KOIZUMI*. As is in columns (2), (4), and (6), *EDU* is positive and statistically significant in the estimation of *PRIVAT*. The results for *EDU* can be interpreted as follows. Educated people prefer market-oriented policies because they will benefit because of their education. However, education does not cause people to evaluate the appealing performance of Koizumi. As exhibited in columns (1), (3), and (5), *AGE* is negative while being statistically significant when determinants of *KOIZUMI* are estimated. This indicates that older people who are accustomed to more traditional Japanese values did not approve of Koizumi's performance, being behavior that is not typically associated with politicians. With respect to family structure (*SPOUS* and *CHILD*), job status (*UNEMP*), and political knowledge (*KNOW*), their coefficients do not show statistical significance in any columns. Therefore, these factors are not related to voters' support of Koizumi and his policy. One possible explanation for this result is that the effect of job status and political knowledge are absorbed by education level or income level. Consistent with the prediction, *GOVPT1* is positive and statistically significant in all columns, which suggests that supporters of the LDP also tend to support Koizumi and his policy. The results of *GOVPT2* are similar to those for *GOVPT1*, although it is not statistically significant in columns (2), (4), and (6). This reflects that the supporters of the new Komei party (allied with the LDP) are inclined to support the Koizumi regime rather than its specific policy. *VILLAGE* is negative in all columns and show statistical significance in columns (1), (3), and (5). This corroborates the argument that Koizumi was widely supported by floating voters mainly living in urban areas, but not by rural voters who were more likely to belong to some special interest groups in the agricultural sector (Miyake 1989).

Tables 4 and 5 show the results for the key variables. In Table 4, the coefficients of *TV* and *NEWS* are positive in all columns. However, with the exception of *NEWS* in column (5), they

are not statistically significant. Thus, frequency of watching television is not associated with support from men for the Koizumi regime and his policy. Furthermore, the effect of frequency of reading newspapers is not robust for men. It follows then that the mass media failed to influence men's views. Turning to Table 5, the coefficient of *TV* is positive and statistically significant in columns (1) and (3) and is negative and insignificant in columns (2) and (4). Furthermore, *NEWS* is not statistically significant in any columns. This implies that the frequency of watching television led women to prefer Koizumi but not his policy. In contrast, the frequency of reading newspapers did not affect women's support for the regime and policy at all. It is interesting to observe that *VILLAG* fails to be statistically significant although it is negative, indicating no difference in support for Koizumi between rural and urban women. This is in line with the argument that Koizumi enjoyed widespread popularity and had support not only in urban areas but also in rural regions (Ohtake 2003, p.128–129).

Summing up the estimated results of Tables (3)–(5), we arrive at the conclusion that taken together, the estimation results proposed in this section are congruent to and support reasonably well the two hypotheses stated in section 2. What is more, the images provided by the media, for example on television, resulted in women to support the the very appealing Prime Minister Koizumi, but did not influence support from men. That is, floating female voters were fascinated by Koizumi's performance, but not by his policy reported by mass media. This finding is in line with the argument that Japanese people were indifferent to politics even directly after the general election in 2005 (Tsutui et al. 2010).

Koizumi's popularity is comparable to that of Ronald Reagan (Ohtake 2003, p.115-127). Before becoming the president of the United States, Ronald Reagan was an actor in Hollywood. Regan had the advantage of an acting career and was able to win the support of US voters. Derived from what is found in this paper, Koizumi strategically offered an appealing and attractive performance, thereby intensifying the political drama to attract floating female voters. Furthermore, he exploited television to win the election and maintain his political power even though Koizumi was not professional actor. Throughout the election campaign in 2005, Koizumi repeatedly and strongly promoted his policy using simple phrases such as "I aim for a small government", "what can be done by the private sector should be done by the private sector", and "I ask whether you agree with the privatization of the postal service" (Ohtake 2003, p.123). However, it was his appealing performance and not his perseverance with his policy that resulted in a landslide win. The broadcasting of Koizumi's orchestrated political show substantially increased the viewing audience. Inevitably, television deals with Koizumi's political entertainment program (Ohtake, 2003, p.198–238). Any disadvantages Koizumi may have experienced by not belonging to the mainstream LDP were more than tempered by his unique performance and masterful use of mass media. Through his experience as a politician,

one could say that Koizumi naturally learnt how effective and significant the superstar effect could be in an election. Koizumi exploited television to purposefully play the role of a trickster in the political world to counter the traditional political forces relied upon by special interest groups.

5. Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to analyze the role of mass media in the formation of people's support for charismatic political leaders, taking into account the superstar effect of political leaders. For this purpose, this paper dealt with the Koizumi regime, which held power for longer than any other regime in the past 25 years. The exceptional Koizumi is said to have shown simple logic and impressive performance in his effective use of the mass media when playing to the gallery. We carried out an empirical assessment by focusing on the influence of television viewing and reading newspapers on voters' views about politics.

Based on a survey conducted immediately after Koizumi's landslide election win in 2005, a bivariate probit model was used for the estimation. The major findings are as follows. First, the frequency of watching television and reading newspapers is positively related to supporting the Koizumi regime while frequency is not related to the principal policy of the Koizumi regime. Second, the effect of watching television on support for the Koizumi regime is more significant and larger than that of reading newspapers. Third, after dividing the sample into men and women, the effect of watching television is only observed for women, whereas the effect of reading newspapers is observed only for men.

Koizumi was not supported by the LDP's institutionalized factional system or by special interest groups. Thus, it was necessary for him to use the media to compete with opponents that depended heavily on the system and interest groups. Our results imply that the charismatic leader's playing to the gallery via television played a greater role than his policy in drawing support from female voters. This is partly consistent with the argument that by the media mixing political news and entertainment, it encourages passive voters to vote, acting as a counterbalance to special interest groups (Dyck et al. 2013). However, the effect of newspapers is no less robust and smaller than that of television even though more abundant information can be provided by newspaper than by television. Hence, an incredibly appealing performance by a political leader might have a greater effect on the outcome of election rather than information about his policy. Thus, the following argument can be derived: the superstar effect is an important factor in the opposition of small special interest groups. However, at the same time, special attention should be called for regarding the danger of populism.

Since the advent of mass media, many charismatic political leaders have been seen to

effectively use the media to increase voter support. The media is seen to be especially useful to help “attractive” leaders increase their support level from the opposite sex. It is unknown whether such an argument is a generalization, and as such, it would be worthwhile to examine the issue using data from other countries. Furthermore, this paper made it evident that the televised images of a charismatic male leader influenced the views of female voters. However, it is unknown whether televised images of a female leader would influence male voters. That is, the question arises whether the effect is the same between sexes. In addition to these points, this paper only dealt with the effect of traditional mass media such as television and newspaper, which does not allow for interactive communication. In modern society, various types of interactive media (such as Twitter and Facebook) now exist and their influence cannot be ignored (Antoci et al. 2012; Sabatini and Sarracino 2014). Such modern interactive media is thought to affect people’s view about politics. However, research analyzing this effect is scarce. These issues remain to be addressed in future research.

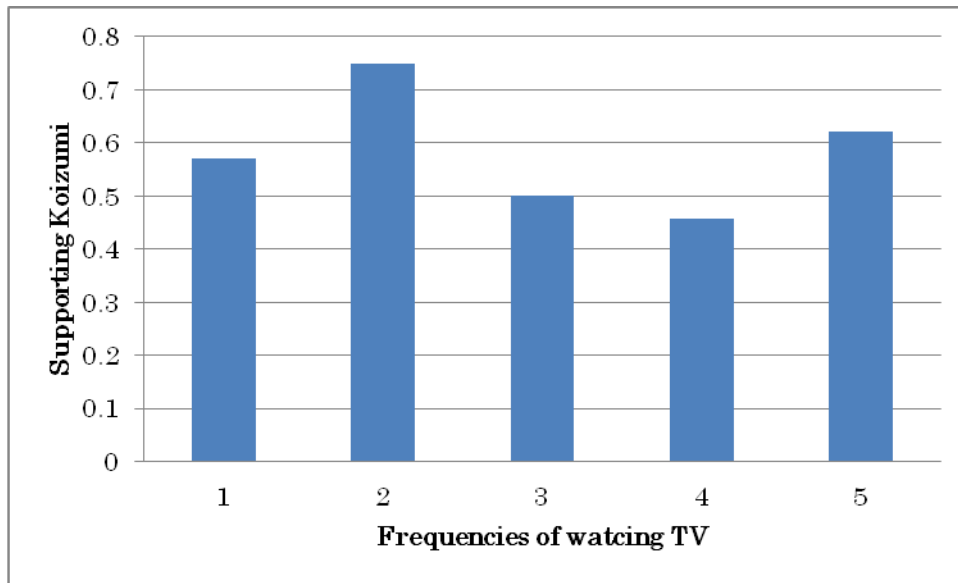
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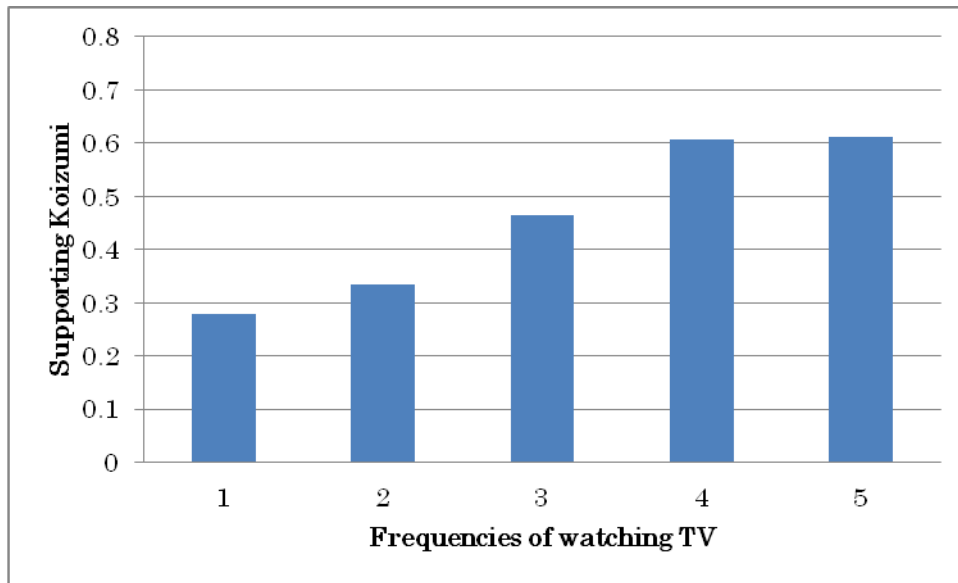
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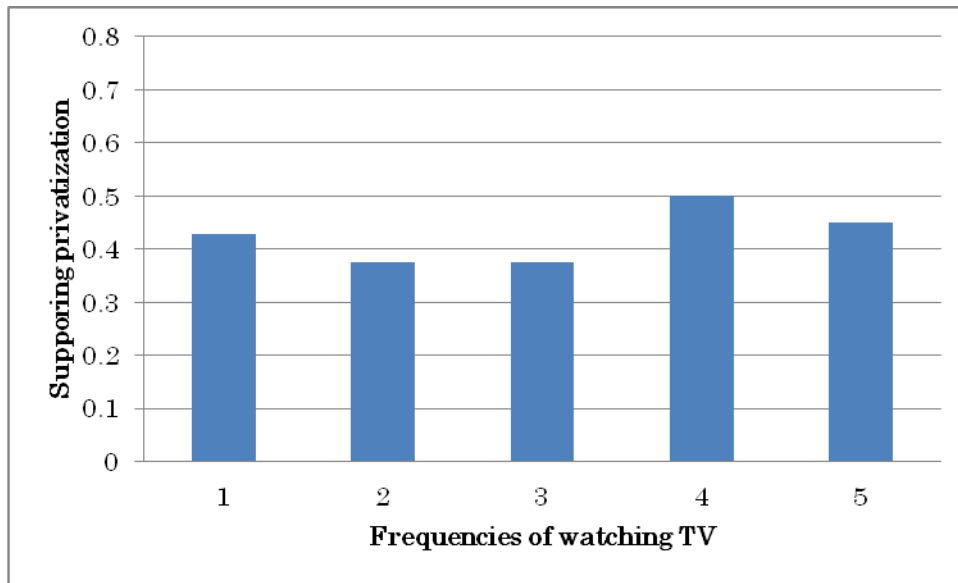


(a) Men

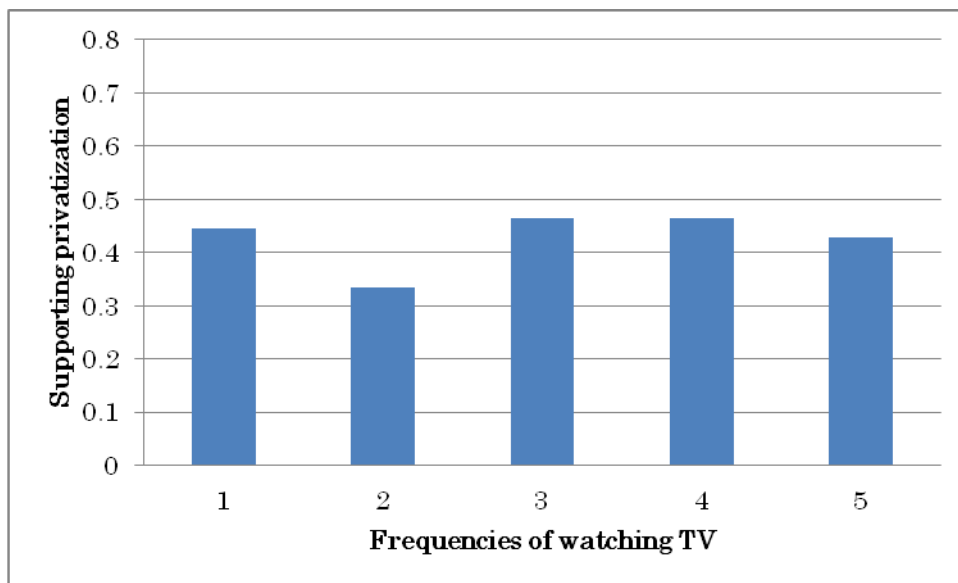


(b) Women

Figure 1. Support for the Koizumi regime



(a) Men



(b) Women

Figure 2. Supporting privatization of postal service.

Table 1
Duration of each regime (from 1989 to 2012)

Regime	Months	Highest support rate (%)	Lowest support rate (%)
Uno	2	28	28
Kaifu	27	56	35
Miyazawa	21	54	20
Hosokawa	8	71	57
Hata	2	47	47
Murayama	19	42	33
Hashimoto	30	53	31
Obuchi	21	49	23
Mori	12	39	7
Koizumi	60	85	39
Abe (First regime)	12	65	29
Fukuda	12	58	20
Aso	12	49	15
Hatoyama	9	72	21
Kan	15	65	16
Noda	15	60	20
Average	17.3		

Source

<http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/honkawa/5236a.html> (accessed on April 26, 2014)

Table 2
Variable definitions and descriptive statistics

Variables	Definition	Mean
KOIZUMI	Value is 1 if respondent supports Koizumi regime, otherwise 0.	0.62
PRIVAT	Value is 1 if respondent supports the privatization of postal services, otherwise 0.	0.42
TV	Frequency of watching TV. 1 (not at all)–5 (every day)	4.75
NEWS	Frequency of reading newspaper. 1 (not at all)–5 (every day)	4.38
INCOM	Household income (million yen)	5.22
EDU	Schooling years	12.5
AGE	Age	54.7
SPOUS	Value is 1 if respondent has a spouse, otherwise 0.	0.80
CHILD	Value is 1 if respondent has a child, otherwise 0.	0.55
UNEMP	Value is 1 if respondent is unemployed, otherwise 0.	0.19
KNOW	Value is 1 if respondent knows that Yohei Kohno is the Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2005, otherwise 0.	0.35
GOVPT1	Value is 1 if respondent supports the government party (the Liberal Democratic Party), otherwise 0.	0.39
GOVPT2	Value is 1 if respondent supports the government party (the Komei Party), otherwise 0.	0.03
VILLAG	Value is 1 if respondent lives in town/village, otherwise 0.	0.17
MAN	Value is 1 if man, 0 if woman.	0.53

Table 3
Determinants of supporting the Koizumi regime and the postal reformation
(Bivariate probit model): full sample

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT
TV	0.03* (1.70)	-0.01 (-0.23)	0.04** (2.49)	-0.002 (-0.10)		
NEWS	0.01 (1.45)	0.01 (0.40)			0.02** (2.29)	0.004 (0.31)
Ln(INCOM)	0.07*** (2.67)	0.001 (0.06)	0.07*** (2.78)	0.002 (0.09)	0.06** (2.59)	0.001 (0.07)
Ln(EDU)	-0.04 (-0.61)	0.20** (2.41)	-0.03 (-0.49)	0.20** (2.47)	-0.03 (-0.54)	0.20** (2.44)
Ln(AGE)	-0.14** (-2.49)	0.001 (0.02)	-0.13** (-2.34)	0.01 (0.15)	-0.14** (-2.51)	0.001 (0.01)
SPOUS	-0.01 (-0.17)	0.02 (0.50)	0.002 (0.01)	0.02 (0.53)	0.001 (0.04)	0.02 (0.46)
CHILD	-0.03 (-1.09)	0.01 (0.21)	-0.03 (-0.99)	0.01 (0.23)	-0.03 (-1.18)	0.01 (0.27)
UNEMP	0.05 (1.20)	0.01 (0.14)	0.05 (1.24)	0.01 (0.12)	0.04 (1.07)	0.01 (0.18)
KNOW	-0.01 (-0.29)	-0.03 (-1.01)	-0.004 (-0.14)	-0.03 (-0.97)	-0.01 (-0.31)	-0.03 (-0.98)
GOVPT1	0.44*** (19.9)	0.17*** (5.19)	0.44*** (19.7)	0.17*** (5.20)	0.44*** (20.1)	0.17*** (5.15)
GOVPT2	0.24*** (3.29)	0.07 (0.79)	0.25*** (3.37)	0.07 (0.81)	0.25*** (3.34)	0.07 (0.79)
VILLAG	-0.10** * (-2.68)	-0.04 (-0.95)	-0.10*** (-2.67)	-0.04 (-0.93)	-0.10*** (-2.67)	-0.04 (-0.93)
MAN	-0.04 (-1.28)	-0.01 (-0.14)	-0.04 (-1.26)	-0.003 (-0.14)	-0.04 (-1.25)	-0.004 (-0.12)
Wald chi-sq	208		205		202	
Sample size	858		858		858	

Numbers without parentheses show marginal effects. Numbers in parentheses are z-statistics based on robust-standard errors. *, ** and *** indicate significance at 10, 5 and 1% levels, respectively. The constant is included but its result is not reported.

Table 4
Determinants of supporting the Koizumi regime and the postal reformation
(Bivariate probit model): sample of men

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT
TV	0.002 (0.88)	0.002 (0.07)	0.04 (1.57)	0.01 (0.39)		
NEWS	0.02 (1.44)	0.01 (0.78)			0.03* (1.91)	0.01 (0.88)
Ln(INCOM)	0.06* (1.73)	0.04 (1.00)	0.06* (1.85)	0.04 (1.09)	0.06* (1.71)	0.04 (1.00)
Ln(EDU)	-0.01 (-0.05)	0.22** (2.04)	0.001 (0.01)	0.23** (2.09)	-0.004 (-0.05)	0.22** (2.04)
Ln(AGE)	-0.11 (-1.24)	0.002 (0.02)	-0.10 (-1.08)	0.01 (0.10)	-0.11 (-1.22)	0.002 (0.03)
SPOUS	-0.08 (-1.34)	0.03 (0.53)	-0.07 (-1.15)	0.04 (0.64)	-0.07 (-1.18)	0.03 (0.54)
CHILD	-0.01 (-0.34)	0.01 (0.39)	-0.01 (-0.29)	0.02 (0.42)	-0.01 (-0.36)	0.01 (0.39)
UNEMP	0.05 (0.95)	0.002 (0.03)	0.06 (1.02)	0.01 (0.09)	0.05 (0.90)	0.001 (0.03)
KNOW	0.02 (0.49)	-0.08* (-1.83)	0.02 (0.62)	-0.08* (-1.76)	0.02 (0.40)	-0.08* (-1.85)
GOVPT1	0.41*** (13.7)	0.19*** (4.25)	0.41*** (13.6)	0.18*** (4.21)	0.41*** (13.7)	0.19*** (4.25)
GOVPT2	0.37*** (2.89)	0.13 (1.08)	0.37*** (2.94)	0.14 (1.11)	0.37*** (2.87)	0.13 (1.07)
VILLAG	-0.12** (-2.59)	-0.06 (-1.05)	-0.12** (-2.54)	-0.05 (-1.00)	-0.12** (-2.62)	-0.06 (-1.05)
Wald chi-sq	116		114		115	
Sample size	455		455		455	

Numbers without parentheses show marginal effects. Numbers in parentheses are z-statistics based on the robust-standard errors. *, ** and *** indicate significance at 10, 5 and 1% levels, respectively. The constant is included but its result is not reported.

Table 5
 Determinants of supporting the Koizumi regime and the postal reformation
 (Bivariate probit model): sample of women

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT	KOIZUMI	PRIVAT
TV	0.04* (1.69)	-0.01 (-0.54)	0.05** (2.16)	-0.01 (-0.68)		
NEWS	0.01 (0.82)	-0.004 (-0.21)			0.02 (1.51)	-0.01 (-0.46)
Ln(INCOM)	0.09** (2.42)	-0.04 (-0.96)	0.09** (2.47)	-0.04 (-0.97)	0.09** (2.30)	-0.04 (-0.96)
Ln(EDU)	-0.10 (-1.01)	0.20 (1.64)	-0.09 (-0.93)	0.20 (1.60)	-0.09 (-0.93)	0.21* (1.68)
Ln(AGE)	-0.16** (-2.06)	-0.04 (-0.48)	-0.15** (-2.04)	-0.04 (-0.49)	-0.16** (-2.11)	-0.04 (-0.45)
SPOUS	0.03 (0.68)	0.02 (0.39)	0.04 (0.78)	0.02 (0.36)	0.03 (0.72)	0.02 (0.37)
CHILD	-0.04 (-1.03)	-0.01 (-0.28)	-0.04 (-0.95)	-0.01 (-0.31)	-0.05 (-1.16)	-0.01 (-0.19)
UNEMP	0.03 (0.42)	0.07 (0.85)	0.03 (0.43)	0.07 (0.84)	0.01 (0.16)	0.08 (0.95)
KNOW	-0.07 (-1.31)	0.06 (1.04)	-0.06 (-1.21)	0.06 (1.02)	-0.06 (-1.17)	0.06 (1.04)
GOVPT1	0.49*** (13.9)	0.15*** (3.13)	0.49*** (13.8)	0.15*** (3.15)	0.50*** (14.1)	0.15*** (3.05)
GOVPT2	0.16* (1.87)	0.02 (0.20)	0.17* (1.92)	0.02 (0.21)	0.17* (1.91)	0.02 (0.21)
VILLAG	-0.07 (-1.38)	-0.01 (-0.13)	-0.07 (-1.41)	-0.01 (-0.12)	-0.07 (-1.26)	-0.01 (-0.13)
Wald chi-sq	117		114		-466	
Sample size	404		404		404	

Numbers without parentheses show marginal effects. Numbers in parentheses are z-statistics based on the robust-standard errors. *, ** and *** indicate significance at 10, 5 and 1% levels, respectively. The constant is included but its result is not reported.