

Climate Change and the Press in Pakistan: A Comparative Study of Coverage Prior to the 2022 Flood



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Abstract: Pakistan has been through a lot of natural disasters since 2000. From earthquakes to floods and land sliding to droughts, and in all other this vulnerable situations, the awareness role of print media is highly crucial. This study is an attempt to comparatively analyse the print media coverage of climate change and related issues before the catastrophic 2022 flood in Pakistan during the month of April and May 2022 in the leading english dailies i.e. Dawn & The News

The study concludes that daily The News allocated more coverage during the month of April 2022, however, Dawn paid more attention in May 2022. The findings also reveal that daily the News published more articles and editorials, indicating a stronger emphasis on climate change. It also highlights print media's vital role in covering environmental awareness and the need for consistent coverage.

Keywords: Climate change, Global warming, Content Analysis, Print Media, Media Coverage

Introduction

The ongoing issues in Pakistan related to climate change poses a significant threat to the stability and sustainability of our planet. The presence of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, are primarily human generated due to their certain activities like burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrialization etc. These activities has led to a rapid increase in global temperatures and has caused global warming. This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences, including the rise of sea levels, the high temprature/extreme weather, loss of biodiversity, and disruptions to ecosystems.

Schmidt et al., (2013) expressed that climate change is a natural occurrence that has an impact on all living things, including the entire human race and rest of the species. Climate change also affects societal stability and human dignity, not just the reduction of petrol emissions. It also concerns with how we maintain our way of life,

safeguard the weakest, discuss difficult topics without contributing to further injustice (Ghani, 2013).

According to Dunlap (1998) climate changes is referred to “the variation in earth’s global temperature and regional weather pattern over time. This variation can be due to internal forces of earth, like changes in geothermal activity, forces external to the earth, like changes in solar activity, or human activity”. while Javed et al., (2020) referred it to “global warming”, or simply global climate change

Climate change can bring and is bringing huge and devastating effects. In addition to an increase in severe floods, hurricanes, super-storms, droughts, and heat waves, there will also be a decrease in food supplies, significant water scarcity, and human fatalities in the near future (Javed et al., 2020). The findings of Bashir (2019) says that if nations do not take action and do not overcome the emission of greenhouse

gas, we are pushing the next generation to a world with finite resources and millions of lives at danger due to sickness, water scarcity issues, loss of livelihood, relocation, and potential war. Due to the process of globalization we are seeing repeated disasters and frequent climate change. Media can play a huge role in informing the general public and can keep them updated about climate change and its various effects. Being aware of environmental changes can help people have active, successful lives (Naeem, 2013). Mr. Naeem further added that we need to preserve and protect natural resources from climate disorder in best interest of next generations.

The sustainability of the environment is what really ensures the stability of our planet (Malik, 2017). Setting agendas and influencing public opinion on topics like climate change, its impacts, and the need for action are mostly the duty of the media. One of the first stages towards emerging mechanisms is systematic and accurate information about climatic changes in Asian and African nations (Tagbo, 2010). Climate change is currently one of Pakistan's biggest problems as it is an agrarian nation. Choudhry (2016) found that Pakistan has been ranked 8th most vulnerable country in the world to climate change. By 2035, it is anticipated that Pakistan's glaciers would have melted, which will have a disastrous effect on freshwater flow. The majority of Pakistan's economy is centered on agriculture, which accounts for 21% of Pakistan's GDP but is also incredibly vulnerable to climate change. Pakistan ranks 135th in terms of (CO₂) emissions (Naseer, 2013). Sadly, it has also been ranked seventh in terms of climate change danger (Global Climate Risk Index, 2017). Pakistan's economy is based on agriculture, and the nation boasts one of the highest percentages of irrigated croplands (4/5th) in all of South Asia. In addition to its vulnerability to hunger and flooding, the government is equally vulnerable to both indoor and outdoor air pollution (Shakoor et al., 2011).

The two-thirds of Pakistan are classified as semi-arid to dry regions by the country's agro climatic categorization system; these regions are frequently identified by their irregularly low rainfall. The situation has gotten worse in recent

years, and the consequences of global warming are quite visible in the current time. Ghani (2013) in their research findings concluded that the average temperature of Pakistan has increased due to the climate changes that occur. It has put Pakistan in danger because the glaciers are melting at high increased level causing rise in sea level, floods and severe droughts.

Climate change awareness and Press in Pakistan

Mass media has taken over as the mainstay of modern life and society. The media's primary function, in addition to illuminating and informing, is to raise awareness of vital issues like climate change and associated disasters. News on the environment and climate change is important, as media is aware. In particular, the public's comprehension of climatic challenges has been sparked by scientists' communication about climates and policymakers' pronouncements and ideas through the media (Kakade et al., 2013).

Khan et al. (2017) found that mass media in Pakistan including print, electronic and social media, disseminate quick information. They all cover stories climate change and natural disasters aiming to inform and aware the general public from the effects and consequences of climate change regularly (Christian & Nordenstreng, 2010).

This comprehensive media coverage helps the general public to understand and get enough knowledge of the climate change and related issues. By highlighting the inter-connectedness between human activities and the environment, media outlets help foster a sense of responsibility and urgency among individuals and communities. The dissemination of information through various media channels allows for a wide reach and accessibility, enabling a broader audience to access information and engage in discussions regarding climate change and natural disasters.

Overall, media coverage serves as a vital tool in educating the public, shaping public opinion, and encouraging collective action towards addressing climate change challenges and implementing effective mitigation and

adaptation strategies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

During natural disaster and other issue dependance of people on media increases automatically. Mass media play a pivotal role in highlighting the issues of climate change and public awareness. For the last decades there has been seen a rapid change in the climate change globally and especially in Pakistan in the form of global warming, floods, earthquakes and water scarcity etc. However, media in Pakistan have different priorities and have little or nothing to do with coverage and awareness of the general masses regarding the issues of climate change. During the last few years media has been instrumental in addressing climate change issue by reporting on them extensively. However, there is a still space for improvement in coverage of the global issue.

The researchers of this study, through using content analysis tend to investigate the coverage (in stories, articles and editorials) given to climate change and related issues and the approach of the selected newspapers regarding awareing the general public regarding the climate changes and the expected floods (Flood 2022¹) in the country?

Significance of the Study

Print media has the power to raise public awareness about climate change by bringing attention to its severity, urgency, and potential consequences. Articles and news stories can highlight the scientific consensus on climate change, showcase the experiences of affected communities, and emphasize the need for action. By presenting information in a compelling and accessible manner, print media can engage a wide range of readers and foster a sense of responsibility and collective action.

The role of print media in highlighting climate change before the 2022 flood lies in understanding the effectiveness and reach of media coverage. It allows researchers, policymakers, and media professionals to

evaluate the impact of their communication efforts, identify gaps in reporting, and improve strategies for future climate-related events. This knowledge can contribute to more informed and impactful media campaigns, leading to increased public awareness, engagement, and ultimately, more robust actions to address climate change. The finding of this study is going to have value for both academic, professional and the general public. It can help the academicians to explore more about climate change and the media owners and policy makers to increase coverage and make proper policy about the awareness of the issue.

Research Hypothesis

1. Daily Dawn is more likely to publish more number of stories, Articles related to the issues of climate changes as compared to daily the News?
2. Daily Dawn is more likely to give more space to the issues of climate changes as compared to daily the News?
3. Daily Dawn is more likely to inform and aware peoples about expected flood in the country as compared to daily the News?

Literature Review

Azmi et al., (2015) investigate the media coverage of global climate variations and found print media in Malaysia is highly influenced by global events and news however, a moderate attention is paid to the issues of climate change. The coverage exhibited significant fluctuations during events associated with climate changes. Sharif & Medvecky (2018) identified three key factors; insecurity, repudiation, and a lack of awareness which contribute to the limited coverage of climate news in Pakistan's media.

Javed et al., (2020) investigated that journalists in Pakistan (from Environmental beat) faces numerous difficulties while reporting on climate or related issues. The researcher also expressed that environmental reporting is not a priority for editorial boards of print media organizations

¹ The study tends to investigate the priorities and coverage of Climate Change of the selected newspapers before the 2022 flood in Pakistan

across the country. The study also revealed that Pakistan's social, political, and state of war disorders hindered significant deliberation on climate issues.

Sustainable development can be achieved by responsibly protecting the environment and utilizing natural resources. Both developed and developing nations bear equal responsibility in taking care of the planet, as its survival is dependent on collective efforts (Yadav & Rani, 2011).

Shanahan, (2011) revealed that media plays a pivotal role in both educating and awaring the mass audience about the climate change and related issues. It possesses the power to effectively inform people about the dangerous consequences of climate change and highlight strategies that can be adopted to mitigate global warming. likewise, Bord et al., (2000) found that media shape public opinion and create environmental awareness through which individuals may be motivated to take actions.

However, Sundblad, (2008) argued that the media falls short in adequately analyzing climate change issues and their potential consequences. Instead, the media often prioritizes political news and focuses on stories related to political parties and governments, neglecting the perspectives of scientists. The researcher emphasized the importance of journalists having a strong understanding of climate change to accurately report on it and help the public comprehend and develop strategies to mitigate its impacts.

Boykoff (2010) examined that print media in England and Japan provide a satisfactory coverage of climate change during the selected period in both countries. Significant events and programs like the Kyoto Protocol and the Cool Biz campaign received substantial media attention in the UK and Japan. Climate change is a multifaceted topic in the media, with various approaches and perspectives. It is a complex and long-term issue that necessitates a certain level of scientific understanding from both journalists and the public. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) serves as a key representation of the mainstream scientific

consensus on global warming (Dunlap, 1998). Despite the growing awareness of climate change through digital media, mass media remains the primary source of information for the general public, especially regarding climate-related issues (Anderson, 1997). Consequently, the media holds significant influence over shaping public perceptions of the the climate change (Carvalho & Burgess, 2005). Former US president Mr. Obama in his speech in 2015 told that “Global warming has been acknowledged as a significant natural challenge for our planet” (BBC News, 2015).

Pakistan since last decade has been facing severe consequences due to global climate change. These consequences have been majorly seen in the form of earthquakes, floods, droughts, rising temperatures, hurricanes, and increasing sea levels. It is important to note that Pakistan's regional pollution accounts for a minimal share of just 0.46 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions (World Bank, 2018). In this context Cox (2015) told that promoting sustainability aligns with the preferences of economic and financial elites, emphasizing the need to prioritize sustainable practices and policies to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Numerous studies conducted over the past two decades have examined the role of mass media coverage in addressing various environmental problems. News media has been closely associated with social movements, particularly in relation to concerns about nuclear power. The relationship between climate science and social media is dynamic and essential, as news media plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes on various topics, including climate change (Stecula & Merkley, 2019).

Research Methodology

The research topic aims to examine the role of print media in raising awareness about climate change issues in Pakistan. Specifically, the study's goal is to evaluate the coverage of two reputable newspapers, namely Daily Dawn and The News, regarding climate change-related topics such as floods, droughts, acid rains, water issues, and global warming. The study aims to analyze the extent to which these newspapers

have highlighted and reported on these climate change issues, with the objective of assessing their contribution to public understanding and discourse on the subject.

Keeping in mind the nature of this study the researcher has conducted content analysis of News stories, Editorials and Articles of the two national English dailies i.e. Daily The News and

Daily Dawn during the period of 1 April, 2022 to May 31st, 2022. .

This systematic approach allowed for a thorough comparison of how each newspaper reported on climate change, providing insights into their editorial priorities and the prominence given to environmental issues in their coverage.

Data Tabulation and Analysis:

Coverage given to Climate Change by Two national Dailies during The Month of April 1st, 2023 to May 31st, 2022.

Table for the month of April 2022

Month	Name of Newspaper	Total No of Stories	Total Space in Sq.cm	Total Articles	Total Editorial
April 2022	Daily Dawn	25	4847.57	4	4
April 2022	The News	48	9404	6	2

Explanation:

The above table shows that that daily Dawn has published 25 News stories with an allocated space of 4847.57 sq/cm. The daily has also published four Articles and four Editorials

regarding the climate change or issues related to climate change. However, daily The News published 48 stories with allocated space 9404 Sq/cm. While published 6 Articles and 2 Editorials during the Month of April 2022.

Data Chart of April 2022

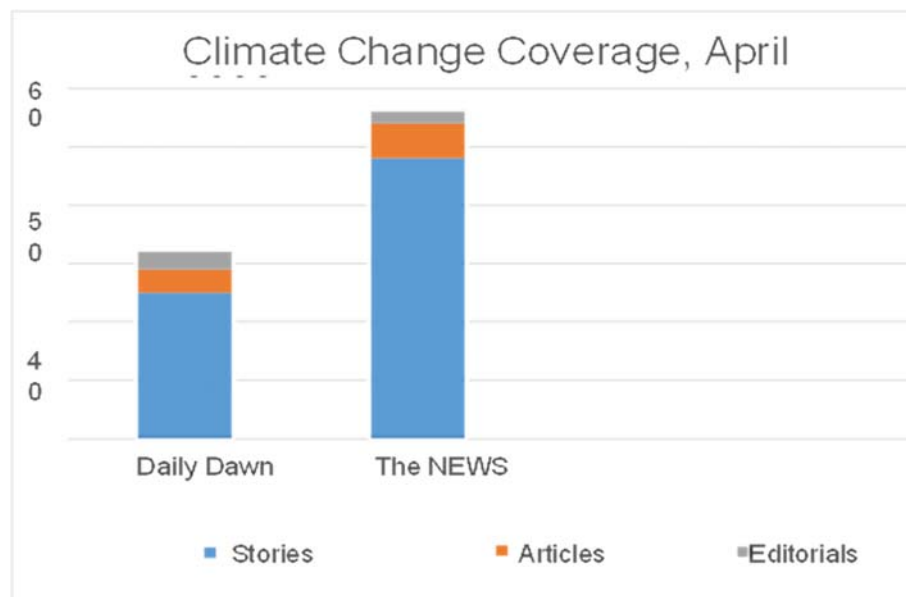


Table for the month of May 2022

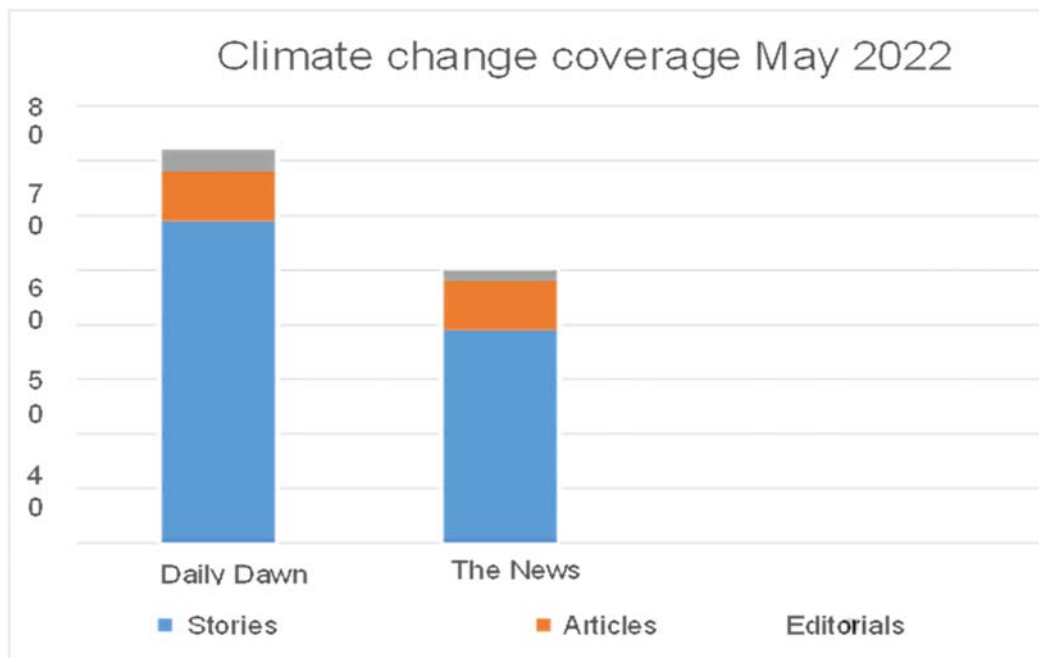
Month	Name of Newspaper	Total No. of Stories	Total Space in Sq.cm	Total Articles	Total Editorial
May 2022	Daily Dawn	59	10906.96	9	4
May 2022	The News	39	8044	9	9

Explanation:

The number in the table reveals that daily Dawn has published 59 News stories with an allocated space of 10906.96 sq/cm. The daily has also published 9 Articles and four Editorials regarding the climate change or issues related to climate change. However, daily The News

published 39 stories with allocated space 8044 Sq/cm. While published 9 Articles and 9 Editorials during the Month of May 2022.

Data Chart of May 2022



Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to find the attention given to the climate change issues before the 2022 flood in Pakistan in the Pakistani Print Media. A comparative analysis of the top English Newspapers i.e. Daily Dawn and daily The News is conducted during a period of two months (April 2022 to May 2022). The objectives set were to find out the number of stories & Editorials published with their allocated space, related to climate change and

other related issues. The researchers also aimed to investigate the priorities of both the newspapers regarding the mentioned issue.

Analysis of the reports published by the Daily Dawn and The News led to the following conclusions:

- During the month of April, daily The News published a higher number of stories i.e. 48 compared to Daily Dawn i.e. 25.
- The News allocated more space i.e. 9404

square centimeters, while covering issues related climate change during April 2022 however Daily Dawn provided a space of 4847.57 square centimeters.

- During the month of May 2022, Daily Dawn published a higher number of stories i.e. 59 news stories whereas The News published 39 stories.
- Likewise for the month of May, Daily Dawn allocated more space i.e. 10906.6 square centimeters compared to The News i.e. 8044 square centimeters.
- Over the span of two months, The News published a higher number of articles and editorials (15 articles and 11 editorials) compared to Daily Dawn (13 articles and 8 editorials).

The study, in the light of the data gathered and analysis, concludes that print media in Pakistan especially daily The News and daily Dawn for the last few years are playing a positive role by paying a considerable attention to climate change and related issues. However, both the dailies and other print media organizations still to pay more attention to climate change and related issues.

The findings reveal that daily The News paid more attention to the issue before the 2022 flood by publishing more number of stories, articles and editorials and spared more space as compared to Daily Dawn which shows the priority and concern of the organization in the context of climate change and related issues. It also shows how important was the issue for the mentioned newspaper and the role to play by informing the general public before the 2022 flood in Pakistan.

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