

PORTRAYAL OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES IN PAKISTANI MEDIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DAWN AND THE NEWS'S REPORTING OF THE 2022 FLOODS

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Abstract

Through a comparative content analysis of two English-language newspapers, Dawn and The News, this study investigates the media's approach towards climate change issues in Pakistan. The 2022 floods were taken as a case study to evaluate the role of print media in relation to public awareness and policy decisions, given Pakistan's high vulnerability to climate change. The study examines news stories published between July 1, 2022, and September 30, 2022, using framing theory as a theoretical framework. Census sampling was used and collected 312 news stories. The study's findings indicate that the Pakistani media covered the 2022 floods in way to criticize government, but this criticism was more procedural than substantive. Similar to this, the key variables—climate advocacy, victim-oriented coverage, and reactive and proactive approaches—indicate a mixed tendency in media coverage of the 2022 floods, showing that, in contrast to climate advocacy, the news coverage was dominated by the victim-oriented aspect of the natural disaster. According to the findings, Dawn provided 40% oppositional coverage compared to 29% critical reporting of The News, providing to cover the natural disaster and climate change issues in more detail from a real-time perspective. However, the proactive strategy, which supported scientific voices and arguments for raising awareness to reduce the effects of climate change, took up comparatively less space in the selected newspapers over the course of this study.

1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental deterioration and climate are the contemporary issues that the world, especially the developed countries, has been handling with great concern. The term "climate change" has become widely recognized on a global scale and has had a significant impact on countries. On the other hand, nations in the global south, including Pakistan, have been particularly affected by the phenomenon of

global warming. According to reports, Pakistan experienced 29 floods between 1950 and 2023, making it the Global South's most climate-affected nation. The country also faces various forms of climate injustice caused by a variety of factors. Adnan et al. (2024) examined that the agricultural sector in Pakistan has been devastated by floods and climate change. Ashraf (2024) argues that Pakistan's print media has faced criticism for their inadequate

coverage of the frequent floods and their lack of interest in creating awareness of the issue. Examining Pakistani press coverage of flood risk and resilience is therefore essential, as flooding and climate change constitute a serious threat to millions of people worldwide; adopting resilience techniques and risk-reduction measures is becoming more and more important. In the context of Pakistan, it is crucial to investigate resilience-based journalism practices in Pakistan before implementing resilience policies. This involves examining the reasons behind and strategies used by journalists to effectively communicate flood hazards and support policy change in response to environmental threats.

Different perspectives on media coverage of climate change-related issues can be found in the literature. Raza et al. (2025) argued that some studies have reflected the potential and limitations of Pakistani media; others have criticized media coverage for its reliance on sensational descriptions, political bias, and disregard for structural issues (Zareef et al., 2024); still others have emphasized the media's capacity to mobilize relief and raise awareness (Javed et al., 2023).

Shaeri et al. (2025) claim that researchers, responders, policymakers, and people all need to be able to understand and react to public mood in real time as climate troubles become more frequent, severe, and emotionally charged. The study found a favorable relationship between Pakistan's higher level of climate literacy and more media coverage of climate issues. This, in turn, can help to build strong climate policies. On the other hand, in Pakistan, a significant deficiency in climate literacy is attributed to the media's little attention to climate change. Consequently, it is essential to make appropriate use of the media's capacity to inform and increase public understanding of climate change. The potential for media platforms to impact public opinion and policymaking processes by cultivating a more informed and involved populace could result in more comprehensive and sustained climate action at the national level (Khan & Hanif, 2024).

Furthermore, the depiction of climate change in Pakistan's local media is particularly noteworthy due to the country's multi-sociocultural setting. Local historical and cultural narratives are frequently included by regional media outlets in their coverage of climate change. This dynamic interaction between media framing and historical narratives emphasizes how crucial it is to contextualize climate change messaging in ways that appeal to local audiences (Ali et al., 2024). The study is designed to investigate the ways the elite English Newspapers like (such as *Dawn* and *The News*), which have influence over policy issues, framed the climate change-related issue at the time of crisis. It is an attempt to examine whether the Pakistani media approach was more "Reactive" towards the natural disaster or there were some policy recommendations that fall into the category of "Proactive Journalism," which is usually aimed at creating public awareness and influencing policy decisions.

Research Questions

R.1: What was the media approach towards climate change during the floods of 2022?

R.2: How much coverage was given to the 2022 floods by Pakistani media in the context of policy debate around climate change issues?

Research Hypothesis

RH.1: It is more likely that reactive coverage dominates the media's approach to climate change as compared to proactive coverage.

Literature Review

This section assesses the literature on the relations between media and climate change-related issues in terms of government policy. The literature spans the elite influence over climate change issues and the role of scientific voice in minimizing the negative influence of climate change. Climate change has received a great deal of political and media attention within the last thirty years (Hase et al., (2021). The political and cultural understanding of this issue has been significantly shaped, reproduced, and influenced by the media (Lopes &

Azevedo, 2023). The public's observation of and response to the climate change issue are greatly influenced by the way it is framed and presented by the media.

Media Strategy of Climate Change

Modern methods have focused on the relationship between communication and attitude adjustment in addition to the media's significance (De Vreese, 2025). It is proposed in a study that the coverage only slightly adds to the public voice that is genuinely worldwide in nature, making political action even more challenging. Therefore, effective climate policy must account for this media-shaped global discourse (Gavin, 2009). In order to affect public opinion and policy, climate activist organizations mainly rely on news media coverage. The way the media portrays their acts and the climate solutions they provide determines how effective they are. Increasing media coverage of climate concerns and the limitations of existing solutions is therefore a key tactic for these groups. The news media have a significant role in mediating the amount to which social movements may effect change. As Dablander, (2025) argues, in the first comprehensive analysis of media coverage of climate activist groups in Germany, the researchers found that the more combative Last Generation received more coverage overall but was portrayed less favorably, particularly by right-leaning newspapers, and that reporting frequently neglected to address the risks and solutions to climate change (Boykoff, 2007; Hart, 2011; Stromberg, 2001).

Vu et al., (2019) expressed that the public's and media's power to influence policy on climate change would be diminished by a lack of journalism and public concerns. They are of the opinion that media organizations and journalism don't function in a vacuum. According to Mancini (2000), they are the outcome of interactions between social systems and, more importantly, economics and politics. However, Carragee & Roefs (2004) have bemoaned the scarcity of studies that accurately and objectively examine the impact of structural elements on news frame building.

Media Reporting and Public Perception

Vu et al (2019) argue that media reporting matters because it has a significant influence on public perception and policy actions. It looks at how media coverage of climate change differs across 45 nations based on their economic, governance, and environmental conditions. Over the last thirty years, there has been a growing body of scientific evidence to back up assertions that climate change is caused by humans and would have detrimental effects on the ecosystem. However, press coverage has not increased proportionately to the growing body of data (DiPeso, 2006). "Alarming or not, climate change is becoming an increasingly difficult subject to sell in much of the media," stated Kirby (2024), a former BBC journalist. Simply put, editors are uninterested in what they perceive to be a well-known story. Anderson (2009) claimed that, if educating the public about various social realities is the media's primary role, then the public's low comprehension of climate change may be the result of the press's indifference to the issue (Nisbet & Myers, 2007). Increased media coverage of scientific problems may have an impact on how science is incorporated into policy. Vliegthart & Van (2011) claimed that comparative framing studies between nations frequently make the notion that disparities in national media systems and news cultures have an impact on news frames without pinpointing the precise mechanism and timing of the influence.

Olausson & Berglez (2014) argue that differing concepts are often reflected in media debates on climate change, making it difficult to develop a articulate strategy to handle this complex issue. The researchers further stated that, to grasp the relationship between media and public discussion, as well as to explain media discourse on climate change and its alterations, an integrative approach is required. Like any other problem, the media's portrayal of climate change changes with time. What was once primarily a scientific discourse has now expanded to other domains, such as politics

(e.g., climate negotiations), economics (e.g., green marketing), popular culture (e.g., celebrities), law (e.g., climate regulations), and lifestyle (e.g., green consumption, tourism).

Media Influence on Public Opinion

To examine journalists' accounts of the difficulties they face when covering climate change concerns. Ayaz & Ahmed (2024) discovered that Pakistani media covered events, never gave environmental issues top priority due to policy agendas, and lacked professional training in climate journalism. The research work undertaken argues that Pakistan's media contributes to climate change policy and communication. It concludes that although the media is successful in increasing public awareness of climate-related issues, real government policy is not influenced by this awareness. Political bias, a lack of resources, and a lack of journalistic expertise are blamed for this failure. Nonetheless, the study emphasizes the expanding potential of digital and social media, which are thought to be more potent instruments for inspiring public participation and motivating action (Nasir et al., 2025).

In today's era, public opinion and political decision-making processes are greatly influenced by the media. The public's main source of information is the media, which includes a variety of platforms like social media and traditional news houses. According to academics, media framing and content have a big influence on how public attitudes and opinions are formed (Zollmann, 2019). In turn, this influence has a significant impact on how people and policymakers make decisions in the political arena (Okechukwu, 2023).

Global Perspectives on Climate Change Reporting

Berk & Schulman, 1995; Leiserowitz, 2006; O'Connor et al., 1999 have observed that public opinion surveys on climate change serve as the foundation for another line of inquiry. Bord et al., 1998; DEFRA, 2002, argue that numerous academics have examined the public's view of climate change, these research findings have shown that a large number of

people are misinformed about the science behind climate change, particularly with regard to its nature, causes, and effects. However, the majority of these studies have concentrated on how the general population, as recipients of information from the media, comprehends the problem of climate change. Little research, nevertheless, has examined the true connection between public knowledge of climate change and mainstream media coverage (Sampei & Aoyagi, 2009). Results of a comparative study of press coverage of climate change in the US, UK, and China show that Chinese media tended to portray climate change as a worldwide issue that the international community needed to address, but US and UK print media tended to define it as a domestic concern. Furthermore, in contrast to the climate consensus that was deep rooted in Chinese media discussion, US and UK newspapers frequently embraced the balanced reporting norm when presenting ambiguity and dispute. Song et al. (2022) expressed that, overall, the results indicate conflicting support for the moral arguments that underlie the journalistic coverage of climate change in the East and the West.

Media Functions and its Organizations

Media vents must stress accurate and impartial information in order to resolve contradictory frameworks around climate change. To provide the public with reliable information, journalists and other media workers must improve their scientific literacy. A more in-depth conversation can be adopted by including a variety of viewpoints in media coverage, including those of scientists, legislators, activists, and wedged communities (Aarya, 2024). Media organizations and journalism do not function in a vacuum. They are the outcome of social system interactions, particularly those involving "economics and politics" (Mancini, 2000). However, academics have mourned the dearth of studies that appropriately and empirically examine the influence of structural elements and news frame creation (Carragee & Roefs, 2004).

It has been revealed that media promotion significantly influences institutional decision-making and shapes public perceptions of scientific concerns (Greenberg 1998; Schwartz et al. 2023; Kerr & Wilson 2018). Research on news coverage of climate change offers a sociological approach to examine the values created by the media and marketed to the public, more thoroughly exposing the social cognitive context of the government's policymaking as compared to policy analysis (Chen & Liu, 2024).

Key Insights from the Literature

The study evaluates the literature on the connection between media and climate change-related problems in terms of government policy. The literature spans around the elite influence over climate change issues and that of the role of scientific voice in minimizing the negative impact of climate change. Climate change has received a great deal of political and media attention within the last thirty years. However, the extent and quality of coverage vary widely, and there is still much space for improvement, though the scope and caliber of coverage differ greatly.

Sharif & Medvecky, (2018) Claimed that scholars from both domestic and foreign universities have carried out a bit of research, although they are restricted to newspaper content analysis. For example, Boykoff (2011) examined Pakistani print media's coverage of climate change hitches and concluded that it was inadequate and restricted. Some studies of Pakistani media, specifically newspapers, found that local climate injustice issues were not adequately covered by their advocacy journalism.

A study conducted by Akram et al. (2023) observed that media coverage related to the floods 2022 in the context of Pakistan has been limited in relation to climate change. The research findings disclose that, previous to the start of the 2022 floods, there was a severe lack of complete coverage related to climate change in print media. Further, the researchers claim that there exists a dearth of media coverage related to climate change. He is of the opinion

that this gap is of considerable importance and media have the capacity to generate public alertness and facilitate policy transformation.

Pakistan's severe climate vulnerability was made clear by the floods 2022. Public discourse is shaped by the media, but little research has been done on how Pakistani print media presented this disaster. Ayaz & Ahmed (2024) claims that insufficient professional training, event-based reporting, lack of resources, governmental restrictions, and corporate influence are the main hindrances Pakistani media face when talking on climate change issues. These obstacles make it more difficult for the media to effectively spread knowledge and motivate the public to take action against climate change. The literature now in publication indicates that Pakistani media has failed to promote smart public conversation on climate change, despite the media's significant role as an agenda setter to increase awareness and instigate communities.

Boykoff's (2011) analysis shows that, Pakistani print media's coverage of climate change glitches is deficient and restricted (Sharif & Medvecky, 2018). Was it treated as a singular incident, or was it connected to climate change? Because hasty coverage runs the danger of hiding systemic reasons, this gap is crucial. The issue is that, in spite of plentiful scientific data, little is known about how print media contributes to floods' association with climate change and how this influence public understanding of policies. In order to lessen the catastrophic effects of climate change, Pakistani media can influence and advance public awareness, legislative changes, and collective action (Ayaz & Ahmed, 2024).

Theoretical framework

The researchers apply framing theory to conduct the study in the context of Pakistan, which evaluate different aspects of reporting, particularly in term of proactive and reactive approaches of media towards the 2022 floods in Pakistan.

Framing Theory

Goffman (2013) is known to be the founder of this theory, who introduced the theory in his

book "Frame Analysis." Hallahan (2011) expressed that Goffman first proposed the idea under the name Frame Analysis. Goffman said that people use their primary framework to understand what is occurring in the world. Because the user takes it for granted, this framework is considered primary. Its value as a framework is independent of other frameworks. Framing theory, which describes how media channels choose, highlight, and portray particular sides of reality to influence public perception of complicated subjects like climate change, serves as the foundation for this investigation. The media defines issues, assigns causes, renders moral judgments, and proposes solutions through particular frames. The way that prominent English-language newspapers in Pakistan, like *Dailies Dawn* and *The News*, frame climate change has a substantial influence on how readers understand the importance, accountability, and policy implications of climate-related issues. This study aims to identify differences in media coverage of climate change issues by comparing the frames used by these newspapers.

Roslyng & Dindler, (2023) argued that, within an established policy area, framing theory looks at how issues are produced interactively, conveyed in arbitrated form, and explained. Certain framing studies examine hegemonic or structural power. A more thorough account of how media give viewers schemas for understanding events was provided by Entman (1993). To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. De Vreese (2005) contends that the media plays an important role in shaping public opinion in democracies by framing topics in specific ways. His work presents a typology of issue-specific and generic frames, considers framing as a process including production, content, and media usage, and uses a case study to illustrate how framing contributes to the explanation of cross-national variants in news coverage. Entman (1993) expressed that frames have multiple positions,

such as the communicator, the text, the recipient, and the culture.

Gitlin (1980) is of the view that frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) are of the opinion that frames are interpretative packages that provide context for an issue. Gamson (1992) and Neuman et al. (1992) have observed that this is difficult to reliably identify frames since previous framing research lacks conceptual consensus and uses a variety of concepts, many of which are study-specific. Research has either used a deductive technique, in which frames are predetermined, or an inductive approach, in which frames arise from analysis; both have drawbacks. In order to solve this, Cappella & Jamieson (1997) suggested four requirements for legitimate news frames: they must be different from other frames, have representational validity, be frequently employed in journalism, and have distinct conceptual and linguistic elements.

De Vreese (2005) reasoned that, even though newsmakers may use a variety of frames while covering a story, academics agree that this flexibility in narrative construction and storytelling can be identified in analysis as certain unique traits. A broader typology or distinction with regard to the nature and content of the frame is proposed here in order to synthesize prior research and the various sorts of news frames that have been proposed. Some frames are only relevant to particular subjects or occasions. These frames could be referred to as issue-specific frames.

Relevance to the current study

There are many ways to view framing theory, which has a weighty effect on most values in natural disasters like floods. Though framing is a method through which the public acquires a specific perspective on a problem by orienting themselves toward a particular viewpoint (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Over the years, the idea of framing has developed. With various approaches, research methods, frame locations, an understanding of what frames are

and how to operationalize them, framing appears to be a successful strategy that is regularly employed in studies on climate change communication (Schäfer, & O'Neill, 2016).

This study employs the framing theory to inspect the Pakistani media approach towards climate change-related issues for many reasons. For instance, Schäfer & O'Neill (2016) claim that crucial concept in the study of communication is framing, which is the process of choosing particular elements of a problem and emphasizing them in communication to frame the problem in a particular way. Frame investigations have been applied often and in a variety of ways in studies of climate change communication, ranging from topical frames, both generic and specific, to formal framing approaches like episodic vs theme framing. Ford & King (2015) claim that over the last few years, research has focused heavily on how climate change is depicted in the media, signifying the importance of the media in influencing public opinion and policy. They believe that since most of the people gain their knowledge from newsprint, television, and the internet, media framing raises awareness of climate change related issues and defines some solutions as realistic and others as unreasonable. As a result, how the public views climate change is greatly influenced by the media.

Moser, 2010; Moser, 2014; Nerlich et al., 2010; Schmidt et al., 2013 discuss that how climate change is represented in the media is important. As a result, research on how climate change is covered and framed in the media has flourished over the last few years, with a particular emphasis on the science of climate change, its effects, and alleviation.

Anderson, (2011) argue that Media coverage of climate change influences the potential for public participation with the issue, despite the fact that the relationship between media coverage and public perceptions varies. Boykoff & Yulsman (2013) claim that. People find it difficult to make the connection between climate change and its effects, and they are unsure about what to do about it. As a result, the mass media continues to be their primary

source of information. Günay et al. (2021) argue that studies of media coverage of climate change have multiplied because the public gets the majority of its information about scientific topics from the media.

Research Methodology

Quantitative research methodology is applied here to systematically measure and analyze the **frequency, prominence, sources, and framing** of climate change coverage in Pakistani media during the floods 2022. This approach allows for **statistical analysis** to identify patterns, and trends in media reporting.

To evaluate the Media Coverage on Climate Change Issues in Pakistani Media, the researcher has conducted content analyses of two Pakistani Newspapers: *The News* and *Dawn*. The researcher focused primarily on the climate change issues and vulnerabilities caused by the devastating flood of 2022, as millions of people were also displaced while resulted in billions of dollars loses to the Pakistan.

Timeframe

The time frame of the study spans from July 01 to September 30, 2022, whereas news stories about the climate change issues in Pakistani media attained from the selected newspapers web pages/websites' archives, front and metropolitan pages, where the floods related news were given more space. The researcher collected news stories that were published on the subject matter while using the census sampling technique. After carefully examining the media coverage, the researcher identified representative frames, like flood, climate change, global warming, casualties, and policy decisions, to establish the relationship between the Pakistani government and the media in the context of climate change issues. According to Gamson and Modigliani, (1989), frames help researchers in understanding the main idea and a distinct picture of the subject. They (frames) also make it easier to categorize media coverage into three slant categories: supportive, neutral, and oppositional, as Entman (2007) claim that frames help in analyzing the media approach towards a specific issue.

Intercoder Reliability

By probing each news story, frames were found in accordance with Carter et al. (2011). The finer frames that were more representational of the text and more accurately expressed the broad patterns of the climate change-related topics and their interaction with Pakistani media (the media approach) were found after extensive analysis and comparison. The following is a list of the study's frames:

1. Types of framing: a) climate advocacy, b) victim-oriented frame
2. Policy debate: a) policy expressed, b) policy not reported
3. Media approach: a) reactive, b) proactive

Three categories of slants in the coverage—supportive, oppositional, and neutral—were found in addition to all forms of framing strategies. If the government's policies and activities were given a prominent space, news reports were viewed as supportive. News reports that criticized the government's role were viewed as oppositional, particularly during the 2022 floods. The neutral category comprised news reports that merely described the incident without displaying any specific viewpoint.

To more accurately depict the nature of media content, a single paragraph was taken as the unit of analysis for the slant categories. All of the paragraphs in a news story were counted while keeping the three slants' categories in mind. A story was then included in a specific category based on the higher number of paragraphs. For instance, the entire story fell into the supportive group if there were two supportive paragraphs and one neutral paragraph. The headline was consulted when there was an equal number of paragraphs.

In addition to the researchers, another student of MPhil in Journalism & Mass Communication at the University of Swat

received training in the slant coding technique. The researcher and the coder independently coded 32 news stories that were selected at random. For every one of the six variables, Krippendorff's alpha was computed. The supervisor provided both coders with additional coding scheme training after the initial coding had inadequate inter-coder reliability, i.e., it was below .50. On the second attempt, Krippendorff's alpha was higher. .70 for every variable.

Results of the study and Discussion

This study thoroughly evaluates how Pakistani media covers climate change topics, primarily in relation to policy discussions. In order to analyze the media coverage of the 2022 floods in the larger context of climate change and the government's response to this natural calamity, two prestigious English newspapers—the daily Dawn and The News—were selected for analysis. At the data collection stage, hard copies of the selected newspapers were obtained from the central library of the University of Swat, Pakistan. There were 312 news stories in the final sample. In order to assess the study's hypothesis and research questions, this chapter first examines the nature of media coverage in terms of policy debate surrounding climate change concerns in Pakistan. Next, a comprehensive examination of the media's general approach to climate change is presented to justify or otherwise reject the research hypothesis and research questions of this study. At the next stage of the analysis, a thorough analysis of the media's overall approach to climate change is given to support or contest the research hypothesis and research questions of this study.

Table No 1. Cross table of the newspapers and slant

Newspapers	Supportive(N%)	Neutral (N%)	Oppositional (N%)	Total
Dawn	62	57	78	197
The News	29	53	33	115
Grand Total	91(29)	110 (35)	111(36)	312 (100)
$\chi^2(2,$		$N=312)$		$=09.46,$
$p<0.05$				

The findings in the table above reflect the nature of media coverage, whereas out of a total of 312 news stories being published in both newspapers, 29% of the news stories were supportive of the government, highlighting the government's measures at the time of the flood favorably. The neutral coverage was found to be 35%, indicating that the selected newspapers gave multiple versions, including oppositional and scientific voices, in their flood-related news stories. The findings, however, show a more critical approach of the selected media towards natural catastrophes, whereas the government

was criticized for reporting 36% oppositional news stories for its rescue as well as preventive measures.

The cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and the nature of media coverage shows a statistically significant difference ($X^2 (2, N=312) = 09.46, p < 0.05$), which suggests a strong correlation between the selected media and the nature of media coverage of the 2022 floods in the context of climate change in the cross table above.

Table No 2. Cross-table of the newspapers and source type

Newspapers	International (N%)	Government (N%)	Oppositional (N%)	Scientific (N%)	Total
Dawn	19	93	65	20	197
The News	25	55	28	7	115
Grand Total	44 (14)	148 (47)	93 (30)	27 (9)	312 (100)

$X^2(3, N=312) = 10.74, p < 0.05$

Table No. 2 reflects the coverage of the 2022 floods in terms of sources. The findings show that the majority of the news stories were reported by mentioning the national sources, mainly the government's official and elected representatives from the treasury benches. These findings indicate how the government's elites shape the [policy] debate around the climate change issues in Pakistan. Following oppositional sources, i.e., 30% of the total sources, indicate that the selected newspapers also gave due space to oppositional voices in their coverage of the 2022 floods. The international sources and scientific sources shaped 14% and 9% of media coverage,

respectively, indicating the international concern about climate change and its response to the 2022 flood, and the scientific voices to mitigate the climate change phenomenon were included less in the routine coverage of the flood as compared to the official statements, decisions, and measures [government sources] during the timeframe of this study. The cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and the sources shows a statistically significant difference ($X^2 (3, N=312) = 10.74, p < 0.05$), which suggests a strong correlation between the selected media and the sources covering the 2022 floods in the cross table above.

Table No 3. Cross-table of the newspapers and type of framing

Newspapers	Climate advocacy(N%)	Victim oriented (N%)	Total
Dawn	69	128	197
The News	63	52	115
Grand Total	132 (42)	180(58)	312 (100)

$X^2(1, N=312) = 17.11, p=0.000$

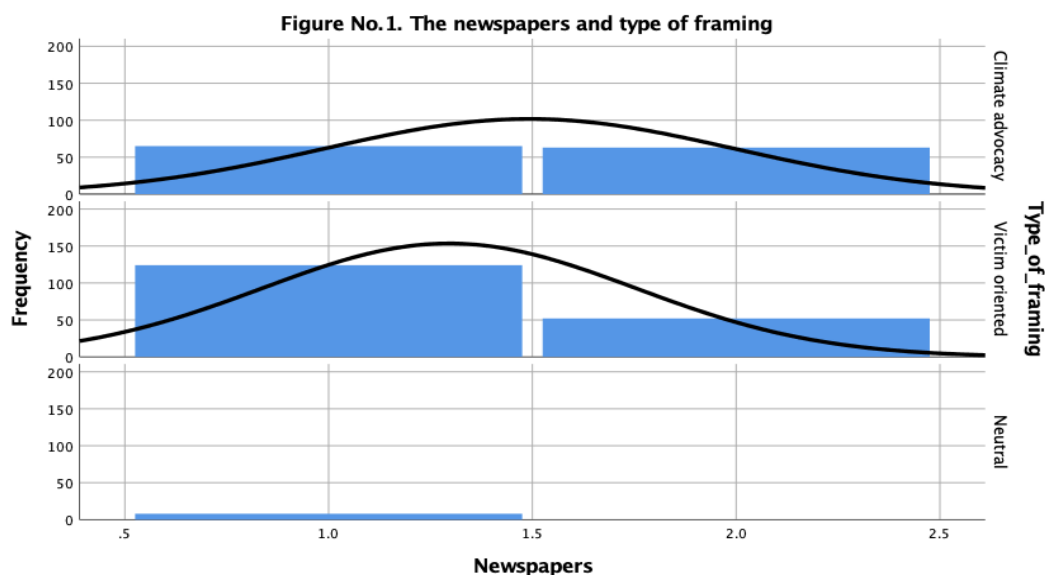


Table No. 3 and figure No.1. indicate the interaction between newspapers and types of framing, which is aimed at evaluating the Pakistani media approach towards climate change-related issues. Two broader frames are identified with the basic aim of thoroughly examining the Pakistani media approach: either it is mainly focused on news stories that promote climate change advocacy, or it is more inclined towards victim-oriented news, aiming to highlight the casualties caused by the devastating flood of 2022 in Pakistan. The findings suggest the selected newspapers, particularly daily Dawn, were more inclined to frame the 2022 floods in the context of victims,

giving 58 percent of the overall media coverage to the victim-oriented aspect of the natural disaster. However, both newspapers also framed the 2022 floods in the context of climate change advocacy by giving 42 percent of news stories that were designed to support climate change advocacy and related initiatives.

A statistically significant difference ($X^2(1, N=312) = 17.11, p = 0.000$) in the cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and type of framing indicates a substantial interaction between the selected newspapers and media approach [type of framing] towards the 2022 floods in the cross table above.

Table No 4. Cross- table of the newspapers and policy debate

Newspapers	Policy expressed(N%)	No policy reported(N%)	Total
Dawn	119	88	197
The News	44	71	115
Grand Total	153(49)	159(51)	312(100)

$X^2(1, N=312) = 08.47, p=0.004$

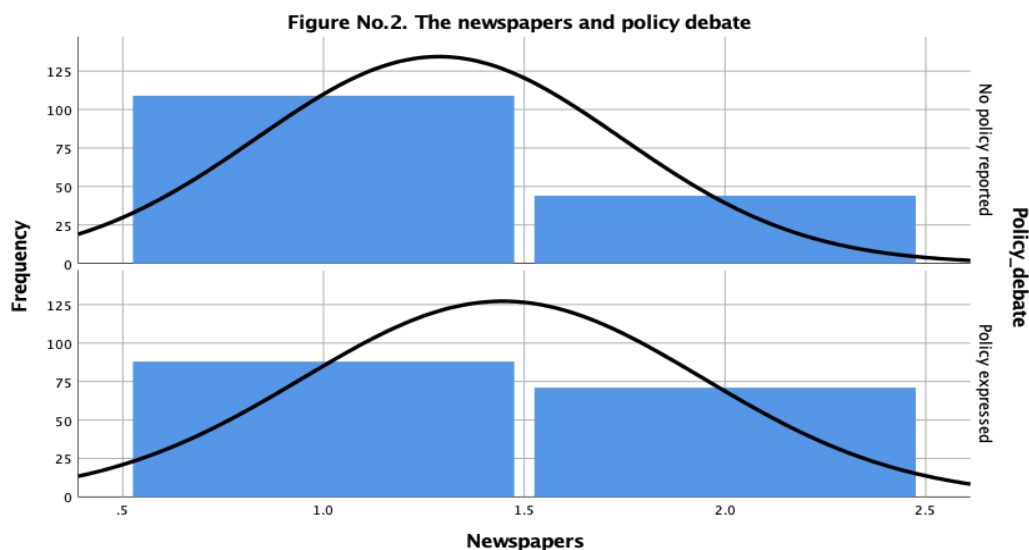


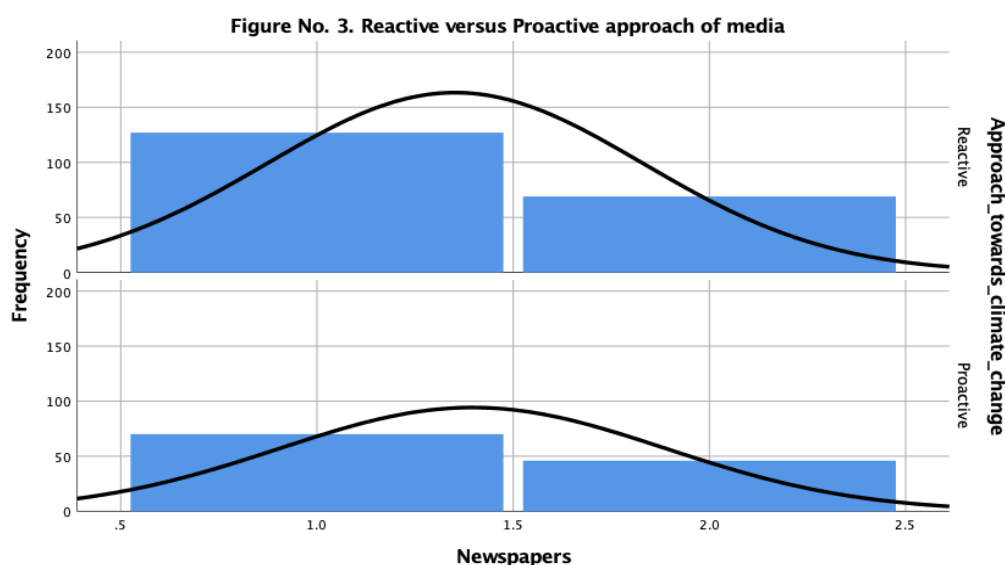
Table No. 4 and figure No. 2. indicate the relationship between newspapers and policy debate, which is aimed at evaluating how the climate change initiatives/policy debate around the 2022 floods influenced the media coverage. The overall coverage is examined based on two variables: policy expressed and policy absent. The findings show the selected newspapers took an almost balanced approach: policy was

expressed in 49 percent of news stories, and the policy debate was absent in 51 percent. A statistically significant difference ($X^2(1, N=312) = 08.47, p = 0.004$) in the cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and policy debate indicates a considerable relationship between the selected newspapers and policy debate in the cross table above.

Table No 5. Cross- table of the newspapers and approach towards climate change

Newspapers	Reactive(N%)	Proactive(N%)	Total
Dawn	142	55	197
The News	64	51	115
Grand Total	206 (66)	106 (44)	312 (100)

$X^2(1, N=312) = 08.74, p = 0.003$



The above table No. 5 and figure No. 3. show the relationship between newspapers and the approach towards climate change, aiming to evaluate the media approach in the two broader perspectives, i.e., reactive and proactive. The findings indicate the selected newspapers were more inclined to cover the 2022 floods in the context of a 'reactive' approach, showing the media intends to provide more coverage in response to the natural calamity and climate change issues. This approach of the media supports the arguments that 'causalities' make hard news, forcing the media to report disasters, both natural and manmade, more prominently in their routine coverage. On the other hand, the proactive approach, advocating the scientific voices and awareness-related arguments to mitigate climate change phenomena, shaped 44 percent of the overall media coverage. The cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and the sources shows a statistically significant difference ($X^2 (1, N=312) = 08.74, p = 0.003$), which suggests a strong association between the selected media and approach towards climate change at the time of the 2022 floods in the cross table above.

Discussion

RQ.1: What was the media approach towards climate change during the floods of 2022? The above findings of the study show that the

selected newspapers covered the 2022 floods more in the context of real-time event, whereas they provided space to both government and oppositional voices during this natural catastrophe in Pakistan (see table No.1). The findings clarify the media approach that was more balanced as they [media] provided 29% supportive coverage to government on one side and highlighted the oppositional voices by 36% to criticize government and its climate change measures. Referring to Table No. 2, the findings show that the scientific voices, which are essential for mitigation of climate change issues, gave a little space, i.e., 9% of the overall news coverage- 312 news stories on the 2022 floods and their related development. This shows a less interest of Pakistani media towards climate change phenomenon, rather they are more interested in providing space to both government and opposition, 47% and 30% respectively, to highlight their stances on the natural catastrophe in Pakistan. This approach of the media is seemingly shaped due to political influence over the climate change phenomenon, which is more a scientific issue than a political one.

Similarly, as shown in Table No. 3, the findings suggest that the selected newspapers were more inclined to frame the 2022 floods in the context of victims, allocating 58% of overall media coverage to the victim-oriented aspect of the

natural disaster. Nonetheless, 42% of the news Stories in both newspapers were intended to support climate change advocacy and related efforts, placing the 2022 floods in the framework of climate change advocacy.

RQ.2: How much coverage was given to floods-2022 by Pakistani media in the context of

Policy debate and casualties?

This study's findings show that the selected newspapers produced their news stories regarding the 2022 flood both in terms of policy debate and casualties that were caused by the severe floods in Pakistan. Regarding the first part of the question, the results indicate that both the selected newspapers, i.e., daily Dawn and The News, have taken an almost balanced approach to reporting the floods of 2022 in terms of policy debate, as the findings show that the policy was expressed in 49 percent of news stories, but on the other hand, in 51 percent of news stories, no policy debate was reported. A statistically significant difference ($X^2(1, N=312) = 08.47, p = 0.004$) in the cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and policy debate indicates a considerable relationship between the selected newspapers and policy debate in the cross table above.

Similarly, the findings in Table No. 3 indicate that the interaction between newspapers and types of framing shows that the selected newspapers tended to frame the 2022 floods primarily in the context of victims. A statistically significant difference ($X^2(1, N=312) = 17.11, p = 0.000$) in the cross-tabulation of the selected newspapers and type of framing indicates a substantial interaction between the selected newspapers and media approach [type of framing] towards the 2022 floods in the cross table above. The overall media coverage indicates that the victim-oriented aspect of the natural disaster shaped 58 percent of the news coverage, as revealed by the findings on both variables: climate advocacy and victim-oriented coverage. However, both newspapers also framed the 2022 floods in the context of climate change advocacy by giving 42 percent of news stories that were designed to support climate change advocacy and related initiatives

in Pakistan, which is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world.

RH.1: It is more likely that reactive coverage dominates the media's approach to climate

Change as compared to proactive coverage.

The findings of this study [refer to table No. 5] support the scholarship on media relations to the [hard] news during natural disasters/climate change phenomena (Chen et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2025; Thistlethwaite et al., 2019; and Van Aelst et al., 2025). The findings in this regard suggest that the Pakistani media, comparatively, tended more towards a 'reactive approach,' focusing more on the hard/breaking news relating to the floods of 2022 as they covered this natural disaster more in the context of victims (see table No. 3). These findings indicate that the selected newspapers of Pakistan were intended to provide more coverage in response to the natural calamity and climate change issues in a real-time perspective, showing that the media focus was on hard news that was covered to attract more attention of the audience. On the other hand, the proactive approach, advocating the scientific voices and awareness-related arguments to mitigate climate change phenomena, occupied comparatively less space in the selected newspapers, as out of the overall 312 news stories, climate advocacy attracted 132 (42%) news coverage during the timeframe of this study. The overall findings support the hypothesis, i.e., "*It is more likely that reactive coverage dominates the media's approach to climate change as compared to proactive coverage,*" and suggest more space for climate change advocacy in media reporting on the climate change-related issues in the future.

Conclusion of the Study

The study's findings suggest that the Pakistani media cover natural disasters, such as floods, and other climate change-related issues in a more balanced manner. In this regard, the findings show that though the selected media reported the floods of 2022 comparatively more in an oppositional way, the supportive coverage, highlighting the government's stance and

measures about natural calamity, indicates that it [the supportive coverage] was substantial in nature as compared to the oppositional coverage. The criticism of the government at the time of the 2022 floods was found to be procedural in its nature, which supports the arguments of Bennett et al. (2006), rather than a substantive criticism of the government to make it accountable for many of the aspects of the devastating flood, such as deforestation, which is one of the major causes of flooding.

The findings about the key variables, i.e., climate advocacy, victim-oriented coverage, and reactive and proactive approaches, indicate a mixed tendency in media coverage of the flood-2022 that is taken as a case study to examine the Pakistani media approach toward climate change-related issues in Pakistan. The study revealed that, in contrast to climate advocacy, which helps the government in gaining media support for its policies and actions pertaining to climate change-related issues, the victim-oriented element of the natural disaster [floods-2022] predominated in the news coverage. The results of this study also validate research on how the media handles hard news during natural catastrophes and climate change events (Chen et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2025; Thistlethwaite et al., 2019; and Van Aelst et al., 2025). The results in this area indicate that, in comparison, the Pakistani media moved more toward a "reactive approach," concentrating more on the hard/breaking news associated with the 2022 floods as they covered this natural disaster more in the context of victims. These findings show that the selected Pakistani newspapers were intended to cover the natural disaster and climate change issues in greater detail from a real-time perspective, demonstrating the media's emphasis on hard news that was covered to attract more viewers. However, over the timeframe of this study, the proactive approach, which promoted scientific voices and awareness-related arguments to minimize climate change phenomena., took up relatively less space in the chosen media. Thus, the results indicate that, in the context of the media's role in raising public awareness of climate change-related issues, the selected

newspapers framed the scientific voice—which is key for educating the public about the causes of climate change—in a very marginalized manner by covering 9% of the 312 news stories that were published during the timeframe of this study. This demonstrates how scientific views that are otherwise crucial for the mitigation of climate change-related issues are given very little weight by Pakistani media.

Recommendations of the Study

Pakistani print media continues to approach climate change as a series of calamities rather than a systematic policy issue, with 66% of coverage being reactive. This study presents the following recommendations for policymakers, media owners, journalists, and researchers for future studies in the nexus between media and climate change because of the media's wider approach to climate change-related topics in Pakistan:

1. The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and PEMRA should establish yearly grants or awards for investigative climate journalism, particularly for journalists who write a proactive news story having adequate space for a scientific voice.
2. Government agencies should proactively provide the media with project reports, finances, and climatic data.
3. For environmental stories, right-to-information rules need to be applied more effectively.
4. It is recommended that journalists concentrate more on the causes of the climate change phenomenon and provide due space to scientific sources for mitigating climate change in vulnerable regions of the world, including Pakistan.
5. As reactive coverage increases during floods and then disappears, it is recommended that climate journalists focus on follow-up stories, holding authorities accountable to bring about policy changes.
6. It is suggested for future studies to add TV channels or conduct comparative analyses of the Urdu and English presses for future research.

7. Researching audience reaction is also recommended in order to determine how proactive framing genuinely changes public opinion in Pakistan.

8. Several other frames, including victim, disaster, economic, political, moral, security, and hope, may also be the subject of future studies. Such studies will demonstrate the construction of climate, not only when it is covered.

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