

Discovering human rights journalism in Pakistani English dailies reporting Baluchistan conflict

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**Abstract**

Human rights journalism (HRJ) model has been applied in this study investigating the contents of two leading English dailies of Pakistan reporting on Baluchistan conflict which has caused massive human rights loss and violation in last several decades. The selected dailies, The News International and Dawn, found both with human rights journalism (HRJ) and human wrong journalism (HWJ) in year 2016. *The Dawn* has reported many such stories with less HRJ whereas *The News International* has reported comparatively few stories but with more HRJ ,solution-oriented news.

*Keywords:* Baluchistan Conflict, Pakistani English press, HRJ, HWJ

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### **Introduction**

Since the emergence of Pakistan, the Baluchistan conflict has been dwindling the situation in the region distressing hundreds of people by the clashes between separatist movements and the state. Like other media, print media have equally reported the victims of the conflict and their issues. The study is aiming to comparatively investigate on two English dailies, *The Dawn* and *The News International* how they frame Baluchistan conflict and conditions of the victims with respect to HRJ model. Historically, where Baluchistan has been experiencing a series of conflicts and incessant struggle by the separatist groups with the state the clashes between Baloch people and the state were more tensed in 1948, 1962, 1974 and finally in 2006 aiming to fight for the rights of their claim on natural resources of the land. Primarily, Baloch nationalist's groups have been fighting to withdraw states control over the natural resources such as gas, gold and coal mines leading to the grievance of the people of the region. Gradually, political and economic factors reinforced the fundamentalist ideology of human rights aspirations aiming to protect rights of large number of people (HRW, 2014), accordingly to guard and protect individuals and groups under the law to fight human rights abuses (Tanju 2015). Importantly, journalists while protecting and promoting the human rights are allocating satisfactory space and time to such newsworthy stories on human rights violations. Pragmatically, a free media is considered as citizen's basic right to watchdog and hold governments accountable for their decisions. According to Shaw, "in HRJ, journalists seek reasons of human rights violation and writes about its prevention in the ongoing conflict", therefore challenges social, political, economic and cultural imbalances of the society. HRJ demands two folds-one is the strength of media in

exposing the human rights abuses and the other is the capacity of journalists in reporting the factual stories of the victims from the conflict zones, therefore to promote peace in the region.

### **Human rights journalism**

Media do not directly protect human rights but aspire journalists to report stories on truth, accuracy and fairness to remind public their moral responsibilities in a society. A well-known researcher, Shaw recommended diagnostic-solution oriented reporting to critically analyze victims' experiences of their rights as humans are abused. While presenting HRJ model he apprehends reasons of violations to halt it from further expansion. Since media are believed as a major tool of shaping audience perceptions, for example stories on human rights issue shape public opinion about the conflict accordingly. Therefore HRJ can play a significant role in conflict situations motivating readers and people in the community to come forward and actively participate in the resolution of the conflict among different parties at extreme ends.

HRJ on Baluchistan conflict is challenging because media instead of focusing on human rights issues report news with sensationalism (Salma 2012, Zurutuza 2015). On other hand, media is believed as transmitting information to the audiences either deteriorate violence or otherwise promote peace journalism (Oze 2014, Hussain 2016, Aslam 2011, Prakash 2013, Kristin and William 2016). Preferably, to benefits the existing powers, media focus on conflict only and ignore victims and refugees crises (Maurice 2013), also such stories become newsworthy and debatable among the reporters (Yousaf 2009).

### **Literature and Theoretical Framework**

Conflict occurs when parties (states or other actors) disagree over certain matters. Conflict even becomes more salient when it leads to violence (Global Issues, p.297). Marx told,

since society is divided into class categorization of unequal distribution of wealth leading to discontent and revolt in the society(p.217-18). Similarly, conflict theory also states that conflicts arises in society when powers, resources and status are unequally distributed between groups, which need social change (Crossman 2017). But when conflict erupts it challenges and threatens the state machinery, fundamentalist ideology, socio-economic and political factors (Oze 2014; Oidine 2013, Osumah 2014). With respect to Baluchistan, Prakash (2013) believes that the nature of conflict got serious threat to national security. On the other hand, according to Hussain (2015, 2016),the Baluchistan conflict is comparatively posing less threat to the national security because of a nationalistic role of media in such situations. Similarly, Lee (2004) explained how in conflict situation media do not cross the state boundaries for the sake of national interest. However, print media positively report the sufferings and miseries of the victims during conflict (Acayo & Mnjama, 2004), while playing its due role in resolving differences (Becker 2004), to promote peace journalism (Aslam, 2011).

On the other hand, war journalism often make conflicts more severe (Siraj 2008, Ogenga 2012, Anderson and Hughes 2014).In such circumstances, media ignore miseries and sufferings of the war affectees (Hojjer, Nohrstedt and Ottosen 2002). Alternatively other than freedom of expression, Hackett (2006) mentioned media as a public communication tool can promote peace journalism. Also news objectivity is essential for peace journalism (Kempf 2007).

Two researchers selected peace journalism with context to Baluchistan conflict. They found practicing HRJ is possible if journalists are free from external pressures (Hussain 2015, Prakash 2013). Shaw (2012) argues, reconsidering HRJ is in fact peace journalism. Human rights universal declaration 1948, stated HRJ is practiced under human rights principles. However media in Pakistan, fails to report the human rights issues focusing less on peace building. It

portrays the negative aspects of conflict, thus adding fuel to the interstate conflict. Often, news stories generated from the conflict zones are framed in order to hide facts and the true face of the victims. Whereas, conflicting parties, state and security agencies ignore HRJ while paying little heed to the real facts and conditions of the victims and their rights.

This study aims to investigate reportage of Baluchistan conflict with respect to theory of framing and HRJ model. The news stories of each frame of the model employed by two English dailies *the News international* and *the Dawn* are thoroughly examined with regards to HRJ. The concept of framing theory works on a theme that media focuses on certain aspects of the stories while providing less attention to others as explained by Entman, that to frame a communicating message is to promote certain facts of a perceived reality. Based on framing theory and HRJ model, the present study analyzes news frames of the victims of Baluchistan conflict with respect to HRJ and HWJ.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been developed to investigate the aim of the study.

1. How is the Baluchistan conflict reported with respect to HRJ model?
2. How do *The News International* and *The Dawn* differ from each other while reporting on Baluchistan conflict?
3. How many stories are reported in each HRJ model frame?

### **Research methodology**

In this study, content analysis is applied as a useful technique examining text of news to draw objective inferences from the data. This method helps in identifying key themes within the body of contents while providing a wide range of social reality in a particular setting (Zhang & Wildemuth 2017). This process involves frequency and comparison of keywords-codes of the content followed by the interpretation of the context (Hsieh & Shannon 2005), and achieve data of high internal validity (Kutter & Kantner 2012).

### **Sampling**

News reports on victims of Baluchistan conflict in 2016, by the elite English newspapers of Pakistan, both *The Dawn* and *The News International* have been analyzed. Through systematic sampling and application of theories of framing and HRJ model, English dailies when reporting conflict are significantly influencing the decisions made by the policy makers in Pakistan. According to socio-political scientists, it is Print media set and frame the news while reporting any issue (Zia & Syedah, 2015). However, in Pakistan print media frequently report conflicts while allocating enough space to the coverage of violence and human rights issues (Zaheer 2016).

News published in year 2016 is sample frame, both by *The Dawn* and *The News International* reporting the victims of Baluchistan conflict. According to Neuman (2015), in order to develop sampling frame, operationalization of an idea is needed to process and measure a list of factors involved in the contents analysis.

A sample size of total 728 news stories of both *The Dawn* and *The News International* newspapers have been selected between January 2016 to December 2016. In this one year of time-frame last two week 's publications of both the selected newspapers (except publication holidays) of each month, a total 364 stories are considered for the study based on reporting of the Baluchistan conflict in humanitarian perspectives.

### **Variable:**

The study has been analyzed based on the following briefly described variables.

#### **1. Humanitarianism**

**Non-Violence Oriented:** These variables are meant for the number of words employed in news stories with respect peace and non-violence. These variables stand for news stories promoting peace for safe environment and avoiding violence from the conflict situation.

**Structural Violence Oriented:** These variables are described with respect to social institutions or social structure harming people and victims of the conflict by exploiting their needs with violation of the justice system. Where such conditions further lead to economic deprivations of the people living in a conflicting environment. Shortly, this variable stands for denial of the deserving human rights in a society.

**Cultural Violence Oriented:** These variables indicate those news stories reporting on some people in the conflict areas as superiors and while the others as inferiors by the class, race, sex, and religions. Infact these news stories are treated with discrimination and unequal respect to people.



## 2. Truth:

**Human Wrongs Oriented/Truth:** These variables occur when the true conditions of the affectees of a conflict are misrepresented in media reports by discouraging their contemporary human rights.

## 3. Empowerment:

**People/Human Face Oriented:** When news articles report the conflict victims and their families with dignity and respect are denoted by this variable. Such news stories motivate people about their rights to know their self-determination in a conflicting environment.

## 4. Holism:

**Holistic problems solving:** These variables are known for news contents not just identifying the problems of the conflict affectees but also providing solutions to their problems. These stories identify the hidden problems of the affectees while providing them a platform through which their issues can be resolved.

Since, in the HRJ model, HWJ is entirely opposite to the HRJ. In HWJ the vulnerable voices of the conflict affectees are not reported by media while not demonstrating some respect to the human rights. Alternatively, the operational definitions of HRJ variables are as follows.

## 5. Competition:

**Violence:** These variable present news stories expressing power and strength against the threats posed by a group or community during the conflict situation.

**Drama:** Drama variables are generated when actual conditions of the affectees are hidden and misrepresented in news reports. Such news avoids true information about the conflict while acting a dramatic role of reporting.

**Proactive:** Proactive variables describes huge loss of humanity, displacement and damages of property in news reporting during conflicts.

**6. Propaganda Oriented:** These variables occur when media adopts a biased approach in news reporting while promoting one conflicting party and ignoring other. Such reports create conspiracy while violating the victim's rights in conflicting circumstances.

**7. Demonization Oriented:** Such variables demonstrate stories reported by media in such a way that describe affectees as they are the reason of the conflict while presenting them as they don't deserve human rights. To show the people/victims as they are demonizing by the community and reporting mainly focuses on violations of human rights by them.

**8. Partially Solution Oriented:** When news stories report people/affectees/victims in such a way that they are in needs of only temporary facilities while ignoring their basic needs and requirements as they had enjoyed before conflict situation. Such variables indicate news reporting the immediate physical needs of the people while ignoring peace significant for a long term structural solution of the conflict.

### **Data Analysis**

Table-1 given below describes, the total collected data consists of 238 news stories on victims of the Baluchistan conflict reported in the perspectives of HRJ and HWJ by the two selected newspapers. *The Dawn* newspaper is found with 137 (57.56%) news reports while providing more coverage to the victims of the Baluchistan conflict. Whereas number of stories on HWJ are found greater than the HRJ .On other hand, *The News International* has published 101 (42.44%) news reports over the victims of Baluchistan conflict and the number of stories with respect to HRJ were greater than the HWJ.

### HRJ and HWJ Frames

Out of total news stories on Baluchistan conflict reported by both the newspapers, *the Dawn* and *the News international* in year 2016, only (93 or 39.08 percent) stories were found framed with respect to human right journalism, on other hand, (145 or 60.92 percent) stories were found framed with respect to HWJ. With respect to HRJ, comparatively, *The Dawn* published a greater number (53 or 38.40%) of stories whereas *The News International* published (40 or 39.60 percent) of stories.

However, with respect to HWJ, *The Dawn* reported victims of the conflict with 84(61.31%) news stories whereas *the News International* published 61(60.40%) news reports.

RQ1. How is the Baluchistan conflict reported with respect to HRJ model?

Newspapers	HRJ	HWJ	Total
The Dawn	53 (38.40%)	84 (61.31%)	137(57.56%)
The News International	40(39.60%)	61(60.40%)	101(42.44%)
Total	93(39.08%)	145(60.92%)	238

**Table-1**

The data designed in Table 1 with respect to HRJ and HWJ describes percentages and frequencies of news reports published in 2016 by *The Dawn* and *The News International*. *Factiva*, a computer based data collection tool provided total 238 such stories on Baluchistan conflict. The front, back and national pages contents of newspapers are analyzed. *The Dawn* provided 137 (57.56%) whereas *The News International* provided 101 (42.44%) news stories in total. While seeking for HRJ, *The Dawn* found with 53 (38.40%) and *The News International* with 40(39.60%)reports. Alternatively, with respect to HWJ, *The Dawn* produced 84 (61.31%) reports and *The News International* produced 61(60.40%) reports.

RQ2: How do *The News International* and *The Dawn* differ from each other while reporting on Baluchistan Conflict?

**Table. No. 2**

The table 2 identifies the front, back and national pages number of news and their

Newspapers	Pages			Total
	Front	Back	National	
<b>The Dawn</b>	21(15.33%)	09(6.57%)	107(78.10%)	137(57.56%)
<b>The News international</b>	23(22.77%)	32(31.68%)	46(45.55%)	101(42.44%)

percentages to total stories on Baluchistan conflict published in year 2016 by *The News International* and *The Dawn*. In this regard, *The Dawn* newspaper is found with 21 (15.33%) front page stories, 09 (6.5%) on back pages and 107 (78.10%) on national pages. On other hand,

*The News International* presented 23(22.77%) news stories on front pages, 32 (31.68%) on back pages and 46(45.55%) on national pages.

Human Rights Journalism		%	Human Wrong Journalism		%
Humanitarianism	36	38.70	Competition Oriented	125	86.20
Truth	06	6.45	Propaganda Oriented	10	6.90
Empowerment	33	35.48	Demonization Oriented	01	0.69
Holism	18	19.35	Partially Solution Oriented	09	6.21
Total	93	39.08	Total	145	60.92

The result declares both the newspapers are found differently reporting on HRJ and HWJ.

*The Dawn* produced on all selected pages, (137 or 57.56%) higher amount of news, than *The News International* (101 or 42.44 %). National pages of *The Dawn* produced (107 or 78.10%), whereas *The News International* produced (46 or 45.55%) stories. Alternatively, *The Dawn* covered relatively less amount (21 or 15.33%) of stories on front pages than *The News International* (23 or 22.77%).*The Dawn* again published (9 or 6.05%) stories on back page than *The News International*(32 or 31.68%).

RQ3: How many stories are reported in each HRJ model frame?

**Table No. 3 Distributions of News Stories**

Table 3 presents together both the newspaper reported 93(39.08%) stories on HRJ. Results further declare, 36(38.70%) stories are reported on humanitarianism category, 06 (6.45%) on truth category, 33 (35.48%)on empowerment category and 18 (19.35 %) on holism

category. On other hand, total 145 (60.92 %) stories on HWJ are covered by the two newspapers. Results further indicate 125 (86.20%) stories are published on competition category, 10 (6.90%) on propaganda category, 01(0.69%) on demonization category and finally 9(6.21%) stories on partially solution category.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study has identified how both the selected newspapers have discovered differently the hidden human rights issues of the victims while providing them a platform for the solution of the Baluchistan conflict. With this, the research has also investigated newspaper's differences in reporting and framing of news stories in accordance with models of HRJ and HWJ.

Findings have revealed the significance of Pakistan elite English press reporting victims of Baluchistan conflict with respect to HRJ and HWJ. Finally it is discovered that *The News International* provides more heeds to the publication of victims' issues in details whereas, *The Dawn* presents less attention to the sufferings of victims. The Dawn newspaper framed the victims of the Baluchistan conflict in its all news stories in selected pages and in specified time period with more attention to HWJ than HRJ. Alternatively, The News International framed the victims in its all news stories in selected pages and in specified time period with more attention to HRJ than HWJ.

1. How is the Baluchistan conflict reported with respect to HRJ model?

It is concluded that *The News International* frame sufferings of the Baluchistan conflict more in HRJ perspectives than *The Dawn*, similar to Alfini (2015), who studied human rights issues as dominantly framed by *The New York* than *The Washington Post*.

2. How do *The News International* and *The Dawn* differ from each other while reporting on Baluchistan Conflict?

The study found *The Dawn* relatively frame more stories on Baluchistan and victims' issues with respect to HWJ. Whereas *The News International* portrayed relatively frame more reports on HRJ. Likewise while investigating Indo-Pak conflict, Hussain (2015) mentioned *The News* report peace frame, whereas *Times of India* report war frames. A group of researchers while comparing British and Pakistani press framing Afghan war, have found British press relatively report impartial and positive stance (Safdar, Budiman, Hamid and Biniti 2014).

Similarly, while examining interethnic conflict in Malaysia, Young (2012) found three mainstream newspapers have differently framed the same issue. Then while investigating reportage of Operation Zarb-Azab by the U.S and Chinese news agencies, Yusuf(2015) concluded stories on terrorism related stories were differently framed. Rose(2003) also argued Israel-Palestine conflict is differently in a series of editorials published by *The New York Times*. Correspondingly, two newspapers in this study have differently covered Baluchistan differently while reporting HWJ dominantly framed by *The Dawn* and HRJ by *The News International*.

3. How many stories are reported in each HRJ model frame?

While reporting Baluchistan conflict *The Dawn* paid more attention to HWJ as compared to HRJ to rightly frame victim sufferings. Same as while applying theory of news framing on Taliban conflict, Siraj and Hussain (2016) have found media give more heeds to war and less coverage to peace building. Similarly Zia and Syedah(2015) have found print media as negatively framing the Kashmir conflict and ignore peaceful resolution.

Alternatively, although *The News International* somehow paid attention to HWJ but HRJ was dominantly framed to highlight victims' issues leading to resolutions of the Baluchistan

conflict. Likewise, Siyal (2009) stated that media drive people to understand human rights issues. Kaplan(2002) also believed media is a major means of information on human rights violations in international arena. Similarly, Radoli (2011) highlighted role of media in peace building while considering media as voice of a society.

At the end of the research on coverage of victims of Baluchistan conflict following recommendations are suggested for the reporters engaged in human rights reporting, government, media organizations and other institution working for human rights in conflict zones in Pakistan.

1. Print media organizations should give special heeds to the promotion of peace building and formulate policies favorable for independent reporting on human rights issues.
2. Reporting human rights issues from the conflict zone is a dangerous and challenging by profession. Therefore media organization must provide safe platforms, safety trainings along with special remunerations to the journalists.
3. Majority of human rights issues news stories were found in National pages while least of them on front and back pages, the media organizations should give space for the reportage of human rights issues both on front and back pages.



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