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Article:	Environmental Journalists Perspective on the Coverage of Environmental Issues in Media of Pakistan
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Abstract

Pakistan is facing serious environmental issues which is becoming a risk for the citizens of the country. This study is designed to focus on the Environmental journalist's perspective on the coverage of environmental issues in the Media of Pakistan. Survey research method was used and a structured questionnaire was distributed to collect data from environmental journalists in Pakistan. A non-probability sampling method, snow ball sampling was applied to collect data from the journalists on the specified issues. The questionnaire was sent to 20 journalists covering environmental beats, in which 18 responded. All major issues prevailing in the context of environment (globally/locally) were incorporated in the questionnaire.

The results showed that, according to the environmental journalists, the coverage of environmental issues in the media of Pakistan is not satisfactory, even considerable low, print and electronic media were the only major channel of communications that covered environmental issues, while these issues have significance and also audiences have some sort of interest in these issues, but journalists noted that there is no such options to highlight in the media due to some major reasons except a little coverage in the media.

Keywords: Environment, Environmental issues, Journalists perspective, Media and Environment, Pakistan and Environmental issues

Introduction

Presently, there has been a prime concern over the degrading environmental situation all over the world. Scholars are pursuing various studies to dig out the weakness in addressing this issue. Media scholars are taking on this issue in light of the coverage environmental issues are getting on various media channels. However, there is a concern that media channels don't have a bend towards environmental beat. They are concern with crispy news items to increase their ratings and to earn maximum profit. This practice has created lack of awareness in relation to environmental issues all around the world.

However, in the current years, due to the various environmental problems that have troubled humans at large and posing future threats, there has been an increased interest in this area in the media. There have been detailed reports in media to alert the people regarding the nature of the problem and possible solution.

Several studies have highlighted media coverage as an important factor in addressing an issue; media frame issues and establish opinion over it. A study conducted by Parlour (1980) has established that, the quantity of coverage and environmental issues are directly related. It is therefore pertinent to mention that the more media coverage highlights the environmental issues the more there will be awareness regarding it and more people will think of ways to control these problems.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to dig out how the media reported the environmental issues in Pakistan. Moreover, this study has focused on the study of environmental issues coverage in the media by considering the environmental journalists perspective.

Literature Review

Environment, Media and Communication

According to Olayiwola (2015) in the last 50 years, dramatic changes have been noticed in the environment. Population increase, pollution and the effect of human on natural resources are the key aspects that are notable. It recommended efforts for a good coverage of environmental issue which is to guaranteed a viable growth of human in a suitable environment Furthermore, it cannot be neglected that this issue has to be a key element in economic and decision making at political level, else, a deteriorating state of environment issues will put human being into risk.

Hansen (2010) has analyzed the role of communication and media in the emerging concern for environment that is both important in the context of politics and public. It has also been examined that who and what actors shapes the public agenda on environmental issues. These actors are mainly scientists, experts, governments, pressure groups and others.

According to Luedecke and Boykoff (2017) the frames that media sets have an influence on the coverage of environment, the way these issues are discussed and perceived.

According to Rong (2009) in China that has gone through tremendous development over the years lacks coverage of some environmental issues that is not drawing public attention. It states that, Media frames in the context of environmental issues can be used as a way to generate public opinion on environmental issues ultimately motivates societies to take actions to tackle them.

Researchers have assumed that news reporting is disillusioned by inconsistencies, distortions, cyclical and sporadic attention, and a misrepresentation of data (Adler, 1992; Boyle, 1993). While some media outlets employ a reporter on environmental side, a "rule of least effort" looks to be normally related to the outsized bulk of environmental issues (Dunwoody and Neuwirth, 1991).

In an exertion to be dramatic, timely, and simple, the media incline to underplay risks and overdramatized twists on issues in environmental journalism (Sachsman, 1996).

Problems and conflicts are mentioned over solutions. Most agreed that the media often reported the environment with a dike of twisted suspicions and misinformation (Jaehne, 1990).

Latest studies in international media coverage of environment issues Boykoff, McNatt, and Goodman (2015) in addition to climate discourse and the relationship of media, politics, and public opinion, proposed that media agenda contest public agenda on the awareness of climate change and policy implications. Through, the media have thus affected a range of processes from formal environmental policy to informal notions of public understanding about the environment. According to Paton (2000) media spread poorly investigating stories related to environmental issues to create sensationalism and not focused on the solution of these issues, sometimes news or stories are covered through opinion by experts of specific field. The literature also noted that environmental issues in Pakistan are poorly covered in sense of investigations and problem solving techniques.

Huge amount of coverage of environmental issues is very important for Pakistan, as we all know that Pakistan is the 5th county in the world which is most vulnerable to climate change. According to news reports and think-tank German watch report, Pakistan has lost thousands of lives and damaged its economy, however, despite this serious scenario the environmental issues does not given sufficient amount of coverage in the media having vibrant media landscape.

After thoroughly investigating the above literature the following questions were developed to conduct this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is the coverage of environmental issues by the Pakistani media satisfactory?

RQ2: Which environmental issues are covered more by the Pakistani media?

RQ3: Which environmental issues should be covered more by the Pakistani media?

RQ4: What are the reasons for the low visibility of environmental news in Pakistani media?

RQ5: To what extent, which channels of information provide the most reliable environmental news coverage?

Methodology

Survey methodology was used in this research study. To collect data for this study, a structured questionnaire was used. After the review of the literature, the different environmental issues were made part of this study. Mainly, Journalists who treat environmental issues in print media took part in this research. They were identified and contacted through the various sources like online searches, personal contacts and other references.

A non-probabilistic sampling technique, snowball method sampling method was chosen for this study. This method is used, when the target group is unrecognizable and impossible to draw a sampling frame. In this case, a few known individuals that belong to the group are asked to invite others to participate thus gradually increasing the sample size.

Twenty Journalists were asked to fill the questionnaire, whereas eighteen of them responded. The questionnaires were distributed personally; this process took four months, approximately.

Data Analysis

Your satisfaction with the degree of coverage of environmental issues by the Pakistani media

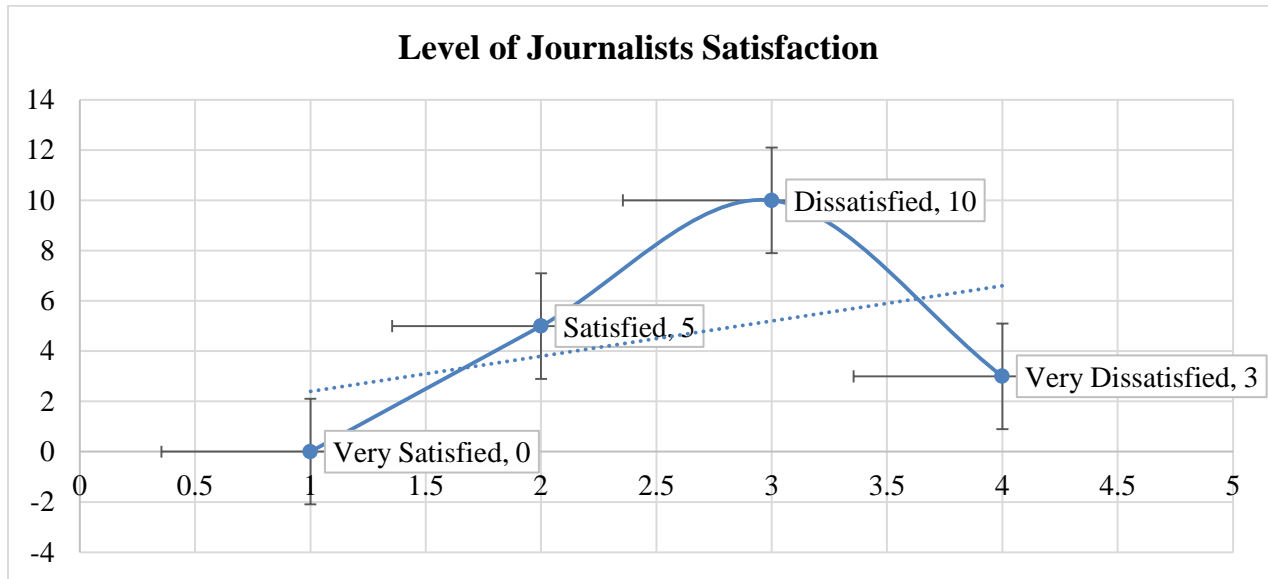


Figure 1

Journalists have shown dissatisfaction over the coverage of environmental issues in the Pakistani media. 55% of Journalists were of the view that the coverage of environmental issues is less. While 28% believe that print media give satisfactory coverage to environmental issues. 3% were dissatisfied and 0% very satisfied.

Your view on the reasons of low visibility of environmental news

Table 1

	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
They are boring	0	0	2	0	16
They create pessimism	11	4	0	3	0
They are difficult to understand	3	5	5	10	

They are not among routine life problem of an average citizen.	6	8	2	2	0
They are interesting, but people think that there is nothing they can do about these problems	12	6	1	1	0
Politics is high rating beat for media, they ignore the environment issue.	5	12	0	1	0
They are in conflict with the interests of organizations providing advertisement to the media, they exert pressure in order to ignore such issues	6	6	0	6	0
Environmental issues are not popular in the media	11	2	3	2	0
Journalists lack specialization and experience in the area of environment.	11	6	0	1	0

Most of the journalists (12) are of the view that they are interesting to the people, but they think that there is nothing they can do about these problems, while (11) says that they are not popular in the media and there is lack of specialization, experience of the journalists on the issues and they create pessimism.

Your view regarding channel of information that provide environmental news coverage

Table 2

Channels	Very much	Adequate	A Little	Not at all
Press	14	4	0	0

Television	15	2	1	0
Radio	11	5	2	0
Specialized books and magazines	1	1	16	0
Discussions with friends, relatives, colleagues etc.	2	3	12	1
Public speeches in schools and universities	1	2	13	2

This table shows that press (14) and television (15) are the top two channels of information regarding environmental news.

The channels of information which journalists consider to be the most reliable for the dissemination of environmental news

Table 3

Channels Outlets	Very much	Adequate	A Little	Not at all
Environmental documentaries	5	10	3	0
Panel discussion on television and radio	11	6	1	0
Specialized environmental programs	15	3	0	0
Articles in the daily press	17	1	0	0
Articles in the specialized press	11	6	1	0
Internet	5	5	8	0
Environmental exhibitions	6	6	6	0

This table shows that, articles in the daily press (17) and specialized environmental programs (15) are the most reliable channel for the dissemination of environmental news in view of the journalists.

Your view on environmental News that is covered by print media**Table 4**

Environmental issues /Variables	Not at all	Very Little	Widely	Very Widely
Water pollution	0	13	2	3
Air Pollution	0	11	5	2
Floods	0	2	7	9
Waste	0	12	6	0
Sound Pollution	0	16	2	0
Biodiversity	5	12	1	0
Risks from nuclear energy	16	2	0	0
Acid rain	15	3	0	0
The ozone hole	16	2	0	0
The greenhouse effect	13	5	0	0
Risks from biotechnology	15	3	0	0
Recycling	10	6	1	1
Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997	17	1	0	0

This table shows that, most important issues are not covered in the print media. These issues include risks from nuclear energy, acid rain, the greenhouse effect, ozone hole and Pakistan environment act, 1997. The issues that are covered are sound pollution, water, wastes and air pollution.

The study investigated that media covered water pollution, air pollution and flood issues however, the coverage was very little in the terms of its importance, we can say while analyzing the results that some of most important issues like, Risks from nuclear energy, Acid rain, The

ozone hole, The greenhouse effect and Risks from biotechnology is ignored by our media which showed that there is a significant ignorance in the terms of such important issues. The study also showed that editors are agreed that communication channels like Environmental documentaries, Panel discussion on television and radio, Specialized environmental programs, Articles in the daily press, Articles in the specialized press, Internet and Environmental exhibitions are very important for the awareness of the people however, if we look into the data received from our participants, it showed that media is not giving sufficient amount of coverage to the issues highlighted by the study pertaining to environment. The study however, analyzed that Press and TV are the mediums which are covering the issues but in limited amount.

This study after analyzing the results answered the research question RQ1 that the coverage of environmental issues by the Pakistani media was not satisfactory (Figure A) and it need to give a significant amount of coverage in all sort of media in order to highlight its impact on the society and human being.

The results while answering the RQ2 of this study showed that flood is the one environmental issue which is given more coverage in Pakistani media followed by water pollution and air pollution accordingly.

While answering RQ3 of this research study, the journalists were on the view that all the related environmental issues highlighted by this study need to have a significant level of coverage in the media however, greenhouse effect, air and water pollution and recycling are the major issues need to fully covered by the media in Pakistan.

The study find out that basic reason behind low coverage of environmental issues is the commercialization of media, and media agenda. The journalists highlighted during this study that political news and other commercial related news have impound huge amount of space and time

in the media and also low level of viewer interest in the environmental issues are reasons for the low visibility of environmental news in Pakistani media. The study analyzed that specialized environmental programs, articles in the daily press and articles in the specialized press are the channels of information provide the most reliable environmental news coverage.

The study also find out that, journalists also think the environmental issues are the complicated topics for news stories and need some technical and scientific knowledge pertaining to environment. The study also noted that environment impact all journalists beats i.e. politics, sports, economics and other social beats. However, other reason of low coverage of environmental issues is journalist need to convenes editor to print or broadcast the environmental issues story, as the editor thinks that these news stories are not that must interesting than politics.

Conclusion

This research paper was aimed to find out the Environmental Journalists perspective on the coverage of environmental issues in the print media of Pakistan. It has been revealed that the coverage given to environmental issues is less. Very rarely the important and ever growing issues in the realm of environment are covered. This study was an attempt to explore the area and give and provide direction to other researcher to focus on it. There is scope for research in this domain and they are open to work on the various other angles of this area. A study can be done comparing TV and print media and analyzing its coverage of environmental issues. The study highlighted that most important issues are not covered in the print media like risks from nuclear energy, acid rain, the greenhouse effect, ozone hole and even lacks coverage regarding the awareness to the Pakistan environment act, 1997. Lack of technical facilities and training, low priority of environmental concerns are the major reasons behind the low coverage of environmental issues in Pakistan, the study analyzed.

Moreover, the daily press and specialized environmental programs are the most reliable channel for the dissemination of environmental news, while there is need of other channels to enhance the coverage of environmental issues. Awareness programs in Schools and collages should be one of the prime objectives of authorities to highlight these issues.

Overall, Environmental Journalists were dissatisfied with the coverage of environmental issues in the print media of Pakistan. Here, it is pertinent to mention that, the same responsibility rests on editors to consider the environmental issues as important and give space to these issues in print and other channels of communication. The more the sensitivity of environmental issues are highlighted, the more informed the public will be and in turn greater concern for environmental issues and addressing them. The study also noted that government of Pakistan also need to sponsor programs and special pages and space in the electronic and print media in order to give sufficient amount of coverage to environmental issues in Pakistan, as Pakistan is facing climate change and it is the time to create awareness among the citizens. State run media also not giving coverage to environmental issues, here Government to take special interests for environmental coverage. Pakistan is vulnerable to climate change, and journalists who were the participants of this study hoped that in coming days government will do its part in crating awareness about environmental issues by sponsoring programs and paces in the media.

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