

Climate Change and Global News Perspective: Coverage of Flood Cataclysm by Global News Agents

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Abstract

Global news flow has a significant role in establishing communication between distinct parts of the Globe. This flow of news is attributed to some prominent news agencies such as AFP, AP, and Reuters. These agencies maintain 80% of global news reporting and hence work in developing a perspective on any issue. Climate change is one of the main global issues. Amongst others, Flooding is also a direct product of Climate Change. Floods in Pakistan had always made a disastrous impact on the development of the country. Pakistan is in the top 10 countries that are susceptible to climate risks according to Global Climate Risk Index 2021. It is believed that a prominent global perspective on floods in Pakistan is required to enunciate discourse on tackling the situation. Pakistan is suffering from the damage created by significant others. There is a lack of research and discourse on Climatic Cataclysm and news reporting on its reasons and effects in Pakistan. The current study intends to identify the representation of the Flood disaster in Pakistan in international news reports and how this news reporting is creating a global news perspective on climatic conditions. The study used qualitative content analysis approach to analyze the news articles reported in the global news agencies Reuters, Al-Jazeera, and CNN on the Floods cataclysm in Pakistan. The articles are selected by the headlines and the content is analyzed on themes. The results identify the significant role of global news agencies in expanding climate change discussions around the world. The results showed that the major factor of news focused on the economic and financial crisis but less focused on the Climate crisis and its future effects. Aljazeera has significantly different coverage pattern than CNN and Reuters. Aljazeera reported on the theme of Climate Crisis and its future implications.

Keywords: Global news perspective, flood cataclysm, news reporting, news agencies, content analysis

Introduction: Context and Issues

Climate Change

Climate change is the central concern of the world nowadays. The increasingly changing Climatic situations have generated some drastic effects and parts of the world are suffering from it. The source of knowledge for the public to understand climate change is the media. Climate change is being discussed around the world to mitigate its effects. Climate change policies under discussion target the issues of justice and equity in intersection with

social goals and economic evaluation of uncertainties. Developing The individual perception of the risks of climate change is the only tenet to control the worsening situation (Melillo et al., 2014). Information on Climate risk and its indicators is necessary for planning policies. The information on climate change indicators and the damages it causes in affected areas is required to develop and study national, international, and transnational policies for its mitigation (Wilby & Keenan, 2012).

There is the framing of Climate news disasters in transnational coverage. Floods, Hurricanes, Storms, and earthquakes are some of the notable climate change disasters that media covers from around the globe. The difference in representation is visible in discourse in Global North and Global South (Brüggemann & Engesser, 2017). There is a difference in coverage of Climate-related news between the Global North and Global South, where Global north is frequent whereas the Global South is rare and mostly focused on social dilemmas of climate disasters (Hase et al., 2021). The world discourse around Climate effects revolves around three sections of the world. One is those who are less dependable on fossils, second are the ones who have cost-effective energy resources and last are the ones who are major fossil fuel exporters. There is no evident discussion on the rest of the countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh that rely on any of these to meet their energy use and are threatened by climate change disasters (Duarte & Yagodin, 2012).

Floods have always been a devastating climate change effect. It washes away the settled town, villages, and cities. Its effects are immediate as well as long-lasting. The warming of the climate increases flood risks. Areas of the eastern part of Africa, the southeastern section of Asia, and the Indian Peninsula have a larger flood frequency ratio compared to other parts of the world (Hirabayashi, Mahendran, Koirala et. al., 2013) . The loss of lives is credited with the loss of livestock, fertile land, and riped crops and fruits, and is also an effortless way for waterborne diseases to attack an already suffering society. The 2010 floods in Pakistan cost the lives of Millions of people (Kronstadt, 2010). News reporting in Pakistan on floods has suffered locally as well as internationally. There is a significant gap in understanding the issue as there is no meaningful debate generated on it around the world (Sharif & Medvecky, 2018).

Global News Flow

Global communication emerged after World War II and expanded during the Cold war. The rise of global communication is due to the cosmopolitan interests of world economies. The advancement in technologies and the advent of the internet as a public facility led to a free flow of information around the world. This flow of information creates a global perspective on an issue, conflict, or country (McPhail, 2010). Global news flow worked on Agenda Setting Theory prioritizing wealthier countries and neglecting others. However, with the availability of Online media, this agenda is being overlooked since news is not restricted by the Gatekeeping of news agencies (Guo & Vargo, 2017). Global news has been used in a variety of ways linking with different fields of knowledge. Biocast uses global news media as a determiner of disease outbreaks. It gathers information from varied global news sources and transcribes them to create alerts for the detection of disease (Meng, Okhmatovskaia, Polleri et. al., 2022) .

World entertainers, news, and advertising drive the flow of global communication perspective. The global new flow consists of several components and revolves around four main elements that are international conflicts, organizations, diplomacy, dissemination of messages, and development of new communication technologies (Sparks, 2007). Global news flow has been studied in its relevance to a country's global image and its impact on its politics, economy, and culture. A country's newsworthiness is determined by its economic power. This creates a difference between global news reporting on developed, developing, and least developed countries. This results in unbalance in the global news content (Ngwu, 2018). To counter the situation a New World Information and Communication Order were proposed by Mac Bride Commission. The report demanded free and equal access to information to Global North and South. NWICO gave rise to global agencies that regulate the flow of information around the globe (Voices, 1980).

Global news agencies are the agents of global news flow. They regulate the flow of information as well as perspectives from one part of the world to another. Some major news agencies dominate the Global News flow. These include Reuters, AP Associated Press, AFP Agency France Press, BBC, CNN, Guardian, Aljazeera, and New York Times. They are responsible for a major part of global news reporting. These news agencies play the role of news wholesalers around the globe. The dominance of news agencies is attributed to the decline in original foreign reporting (Scammell, 2018). Aljazeera is serving idealistic goals in balancing news perspectives between the global south and north on notable events. It aims on transforming global news overcoming the traits of ignorance and misunderstanding (Mahroum & Eid, 2016).

Climate Change and Global News Perspective

Global news coverage of issues such as Climate change frames the understanding of the public on the issue. News by global news agencies develops perspectives that may be encouraging or discouraging the issue. Channels like Fox news use a distressing tone while reporting climate change events and comparatively CNN or MSNBC give an encouraging scientifically supported view. It reduces the acceptance of global warming amongst the audience (Feldman et al., 2012). Media covers natural disasters for a limited time. The framing of news is dominated by disaster frames. The tone and text of news whether written or oral generate a disastrous image of the catastrophe (Houston et al., 2012).

News reports on Floods in South Asia show victimized and suffering state of the public which for the countries like UK and America are different. News media talk about catering to the situation but in the case of LDC Least Developed countries the discussion is on the loss of life and portraying dreadful pictures dominates the news reports instead of a logical take on tackling the situation (Solman & Henderson, 2019). The representation of South Asian countries in global news agencies is lacking behind. Global news agencies report cataclysmic situations around the world that led to international discussions on the issue. Asian Countries, specifically Pakistan are suffering from the catastrophic effects of floods. The time and space given by the global newsagents to a country determine the Global perspective on it (Pilař, L., Kvasničková, et al., 2019).

Recent floods in Pakistan have been cataclysmic destroying a great part of Pakistan's residential, tourist as well as Agricultural areas. The devastation caused by the 2022 floods in Pakistan is enormous. The issue that has direct relations with global warming and climate change must be the news center of the world as well. The global world develops perspectives and discussions on such issues based on news reported by global newsagents that are responsible for balancing transnational news flow and representation (Brüggemann & Engesser, 2017). The perspective reflected by global news agents forms the base of the global perspective on the issue (Hamelink, 2014). Hence, this research aims to examine the coverage of floods by four global news agencies. The research addresses the question:

RQ: What is the perspective of global news coverage of Climate change disasters?

Literature Review

Climate change has adverse effects on developed, developing as well as underdeveloped countries. The global view generated on this issue depends on the sources of news dissemination around the globe. Moreover, the perspective created in international news regarding different sections of the globe is different. Disaster news coverage is one of the important and under-looked genres in the field of news flow. Media coverage, local or global of disaster news is short-lived. Research has been focused on the dramatic representation of disasters, and the use of diverse sources of disaster coverage. There is a lack of literature that examines causal explanations for disasters. Framing theory has been used in identifying disaster frames highlighting the issue-attention cycle. The limited coverage is around the cycle and the news dies down sooner (Houston et al., 2012). Zhang and Hellmueller (2016) used framing analyses to determine the different frames Aljazeera and CNN use to cover international news. The study focused on the story types that each newsagent cover in its online news articles. Along with framing, the study used global journalism as a theoretical framework inculcating the concepts of power relations and audience involvement in news content generated and distributed.

Agenda setting along with priming and framing analysis have been used to identify the media effects on coverage of global news events. The theoretical evidence supported by discourse analysis ponders on the view that international news channels such as Fox news developed a negative understanding of viewers on the issue of global warming whereas MSNBC has a positive role in raising public awareness of the issue (Feldman et al., 2012). Watanabe (2012) uses agenda setting to develop an algorithmic model of how global news agencies (AP, Reuters, and AFP) and elite newspapers (The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Times) shape the news that is identified locally. The analysis determined that national or local news channels, print or electronic, take on news from elite news channels. The distant events coverage by global newsagents is confined if there are no correspondents available in the field. The newsagents use publicly generated content as a source of information. The bombing in Syria in 2015 was an event covered by local news agencies using publicly generated content Murrell (2018) used information transparency theory concerning propaganda to identify sourcing and verification methods Reuters and AP have used to verify the authenticity of user-generated content which resulted in ethical dilemmas for global newsagents. Global newsagents are agenda-setting agents. They dominate the flow of news globally and shape the What and How mechanisms of the public

thinking process (Wang & Lu, 2022). Intermedia agenda setting has also been applied to understand the agenda that is developed as a result of cooperation between global newsagents and local traditional news reporting. The study identifies that for environmental news coverage global news flow works on a pattern of local to global (Mao et al., 2022).

The current study is focused on identifying the frames the global news agents use to represent news on the 2022 floods in Pakistan. Framing has usually been discussed in political opinion-making in public. It is the communication process to analyze the factors on which political news is covered. The frames constructed in global news will be analyzed for economic, human interests, morality, and responsibility factors (Dan & Raupp, 2018). The current study will use the framing analysis to determine the frames global news agents use to cover climate-related news, particularly for Pakistan. The study analyses the frame on themes of humanitarian, economic crisis, and causal effects. It will identify the tone set by AFP, AP, and Reuters in news items related to floods in Pakistan whether is encouraging, discouraging, or neutral.

Methodology

Global news flow has been in examination since the advent of news agencies. The analysis of news has been central to a variety of studies. Adegbola et al. (2022) used content analysis to determine the difference between news coverage of protests in Iran by Reuters, AP, AFP, and Xinhua. Critical discourse analysis of global coverage of floods in India and the United Kingdom enforced the notion of Western control over global media and showed countries like India as distant others that are suffering (Solman & Henderson, 2019). Global news flow imbalance is still in existence after NWICO. The discourse analysis argues that global media is still dominated by developed countries and developing and underdeveloped countries get the representation and portrayal frame the dominated sector deems profitable (Ngwu, 2018). International news media sets the tone of the global discourse on any issue. Thematic analysis of English news coverage of natural resources in green land gave rise to themes of high risk, vulnerability, and resource allocation (Davies et al., 2017). Adegbola et al. (2022) used content analysis to identify the biasness in reporting by global news agencies AP, AFP, Reuters, and Al Jazeera. The biasness was analyzed in the context of the protests in Iran against governmental policies in 2017. A similar method has been used by Zhang and Hellmueller (2016) to identify a global perspective that global news agencies develop on a transnational issue. The study content analyzed the data from news agencies of CNN and Al Jazeera. Climate change coverage has been content analyzed in numerous studies. Such a study used content analysis to identify how the global news network work to engage or disengage public on the issue of Climate Change and global warming (Feldman et al., 2012).

The current study will also use Content analysis to determine the framing and tone of news agencies in coverage of the flood cataclysm in Pakistan. Content analysis is a method of analyzing data systematically, standardizing data in the form to identify the meaning in it. Content analysis has widely been used in descriptive studies as well as social change studies to deeply analyze the content and the meaning it contained. It has also been used to compare the real world with the content world comparing its context another identifying dissimilarities differences and adaptations. Antenna lysis has widely been used in media studies to identify and describe and then a live image of a particular group of society. Media coverage has

profoundly been used along with propaganda techniques agenda setting and framing to analyze the content and propaganda hidden behind it. The current study will also use content analysis along with framing analysis to identify the frames that have been used by global news agencies for covering floods in Pakistan. The frames will be analyzed based on coding categories. the present study will undergo qualitative content analysis of the news articles retrieved from the selected global news agencies. the retrieved data will then be arranged into develop categories and analyzed accordingly.

Data Collection

The study is analyzing news articles and reports published by global new regencies during the starting month of the flood in Pakistan. Data is collected from the new agencies of Reuters, CNN, and Al Jazeera. Reuters is a western agency show is at CNN whereas Al Jazeera is a Middle Eastern agency. The blend of the two is taken to have a broad view of how each agency respective of their location and the authority has developed news articles on the flood cataclysm in Pakistan in 2022. Two news articles from each of the given agencies during the month of July to September have been selected and will be analyzed based on code developed by the researcher.

Reuters is a news agency founded in the 1850s. It has been regarded as the greatest news agency. The agency entered England and is owned by Thomson Reuters corporation. This has been considered to add a key role player in global news flow. CNN is the news media founded by Ted Turner in the 1980s. It is the latest than Reuters and a major determinant in global news flow. It is a cable news channel as well as develops news articles on its website and digital platforms. Al Jazeera is a Middle Eastern news channel based in Doha, Qatar. this channel was an Arabic news channel but now broadcast news in different languages and has earned its place in the list of global agencies. It claims to present unbiased and credible news based on facts (Hamelink, 2014). The researcher has extracted news articles from these three agencies and has developed codes accordingly to analyze the data. Articles were searched using the keywords “Floods” and “Pakistan”.

News Agency	Title of a news piece	Section
Reuters	Flash floods kill 550 in Pakistan in heaviest rains in decades (Asif Shazhad, 2022).	Environment
	Flooding in Pakistan kills dozens as heavy monsoon rains lash the country (Yousafzai, 2022).	World News
Al Jazeera	Flash floods in Pakistan kill over 40 people (Al-Jazeera, 2022a).	Climate Crisis
	Pakistan steps up aid efforts after ravaging floods(Al-Jazeera, 2022b).	Climate Crisis

CNN	Over 900 were killed by Pakistan monsoon rains and floods, including 326 children (Sophia Saifi, 2022)	Asian News
	Flash floods kill 550 in Pakistan in heaviest rains in decades (CNN, 2022).	Asian News

Table 1.1: News Articles and sources

Coding

The data extracted is analyzed on codes. The codes are derived from existing literature on climate change and disaster news coverage. The sub-categories are coded for each frame developed. The frames for analysis are Reporting frame, Cause and Effect evaluation, and Recommendation focus (Entman, 1993).

Reporting Frame identifies the frame in which news agencies have reported the issue. The reporting frame determines the point of view of agencies with which they are recognizing a particular issue (Houston et al., 2012). The frames have been characterized into distinct categories Political refers to a news piece that has been written in a political frame involving government and political parties, Financial- refers to any news piece that is written concerning the economic conditions of the country and how the said event may enhance or deteriorate economic stability, Environmental-discuss the worsening environmental conditions and Climate change, Human Interest- deals with the news piece as a human interest resource, identifying the humanitarian efforts or losses, deaths suffered in the reported incident, water-borne diseases, hampering education and malnutrition, Other-includes all other frames that might not fit into the above-defined categories.

A causal Frame is a determiner of the cause-and-effect relation created in the news piece. It identifies the blame target of the data. The causal blame is categorized into three subjects Public, Government, Crisis Communication, and Climate Change. The cause can be put over negligence by the government on the issue despite worsening situation and warnings, Public which has been aware of the situation and must have adopted some safety measures and climate Change identifying the worsening climate situation that is the root cause of devastation (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016).

The recommendation frame focuses on the way forward suggested by the news reports. The recommendation can be regarding humanitarian aid, asking for international funds, non-governmental organizations, and rehabilitation of the flood-stricken people. This section will analyze the recommendation comment, remark, or feedback in the content that might not be visible but intended. It will identify whether the respective agency reports have suggested a viable way forward to tackle the situation or not (Adegbola et al., 2022).

Coding Categories	Sub-Categories	CNN	Reuters	Aljazeera
Disaster Effects	Infrastruture damage	Yes	Yes	No
	Financial effets	No	Yes	No

	Evacuation	No	Yes	Yes
	Disease and health damage	No	No	Yes
	Death	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coverage Frame	Political (Government, political parties)	Yes	Yes	No
	Financial (Economy stability, the material loss)	Yes	Yes	No
	Environmental crisis (Climate, environmental conditions)	Yes	No	Yes
	Human Interest (Humanitarian efforts, losses, deaths diseases)	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Public	No	No	Yes
Causal Frame	Public	No	No	No
	Government (lack of efforts by the government)	No	Yes	No
	Climate Change Crisis (labeling floods as a climate change crisis that was not in one's control)	Yes	No	Yes
Recommendation and Crisis Management	Asking for International aid.	Yes	Yes	Yes
	dealing with NGOs	No	No	Yes
	asking the public to rely on self-help	No	No	No

Table1.2: Coding Sheet

Results and Discussions

The study identifies news pieces by the agencies CNN, Aljazeera and Reuters during the months of July. The unit of analysis in data is the individual news story published. The research observed the given codes of analysis in each news piece. The data was collected on the 2022 Floods in Pakistan. The keyword used to extract data are “Floods” and “Pakistan”. Reuters and CNN published a maximum of two news stories in the month of July whereas Aljazeera published more news stories relatively. The study has selected two news stories from each news agency considering the least number of news stories published. CNN has published two news reports on its website under the section of “Asian News”. On the other hand Reuters has published the reports under the section of “Environment” and “World News”. On the contrary, Aljazeera has given news reports under the section of “Climate Crisis”. The study has analysed following results from the data:

Disaster Effects

The disaster effects were analysed to identify the tone in which news is given. There is a major difference in the coverage of disaster effects by each news agency. The three news

agencies have different frames for disaster effects. CNN primarily focused on Infrastructure damage. It featured the damage done to buildings, schools, mosques, residential areas and roads. Apart from this the other disaster effect covered by CNN was death count and life loss in disaster. Reuters comparatively discussed infrastructure loss along with financial curbs, evacuation issues and death toll. Aljazeera did not discuss infrastructure but focused on financial issues, evacuation issues, death. The main difference was the coverage of effects on health and disease. CNN and Reuters did not cover this issue but Aljazeera was primarily focused around this effect.

Coverage Frame

The common coverage frame by the Reuters and CNN is governmental and humanitarian. The secondary frame for CNN was Financial and Environmental crisis whereas for Reuters were Finance and Human Interest. However, Aljazeera has primary frame of Human interest and public whereas secondary frame was environmental crisis. Aljazeera mainly focused on public view and sufferings on the crisis.

Causal Frame

Causal frame identified that how news agencies are considering as the cause of crisis. CNN and Aljazeera significantly discussed the floods in Pakistan as a result of environmental change and a product of climate crisis however Reuters tone of coverage blamed government for the crisis and mis-management.

Recommendation and Crisis Management

Recommendation frame identified the way forward suggested directly or indirectly by the news agencies. The three agencies under observation encouraged international aid and as well ask for it. There was no mentions of non-governmental organizations involvement or public self-reliability.

Conclusion

News agencies are the forums that control the flow of news. It shapes how a news is framed and published by the news channels around the world. Ngwu (2018) has argued that there is a difference in news coverage of news related to developed, developing and underdeveloped country. The research worked on identifying the tone and frame news agencies have used to report flood devastation in Pakistan. The results identified that news agencies of CNN and Reuters focused primarily on infrastructure and financial loss whereas Aljazeera was focused more on getting public opinion and view through the news reports. Aljazeera used a sympathizing tone highlighting the problems faced by locals and steps taken by government. Aljazeera also focused on highlighting the Climate issue. However, CNN and Reuters though have slightly touched environmental factors but prominently highlighted the financial losses the country has faced and will be facing in future as well. It used a straightforward harsh tone in news report. None, of the agencies highlighted the issue of climate change effects and how Pakistan is suffering. The research used immediate news reports by the news agencies during the month of July. It cannot be a whole representative of all the reports published by agencies

in later months. The future research can be more specific on type of news stories. The news frames in other news agencies can also be identified.

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