

PAKISTAN UNDER CLIMATE CRISIS: THE ROLE OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Climate change causes global damage, ranging from weather patterns leading to drought and flooding to completely crippling a nation's economy. These secondary effects of climate change are primarily caused by the developed nations' unfathomable carbon emissions. Hence, there should be a collaborative effort from these nations to lessen the damage to under-developing countries. This paper aims to analyze the role of international & domestic media in the coverage of the climate crisis in Pakistan and how the dissemination of information is lacking in the media. Pakistan is one of the worst affected countries due to climate change, ironically being one of the least carbon emitters. The people of Pakistan need to be better informed about the consequences of changing climate, and this lack of awareness causes serious problems. The responsibility of spreading accurate information regarding weak policies, the impact of increasing carbon emission rates, and secondary complications caused to underdeveloped countries falls on the shoulders of domestic and international media outlets. Through qualitative research methodology, this study aims to prove how the media lags in disseminating the necessary facts and information to the public. In addition to highlighting the consistent failures of international media outlets when covering climate change, recommendations and actions are provided for courses of action that can be taken to remedy this problem.

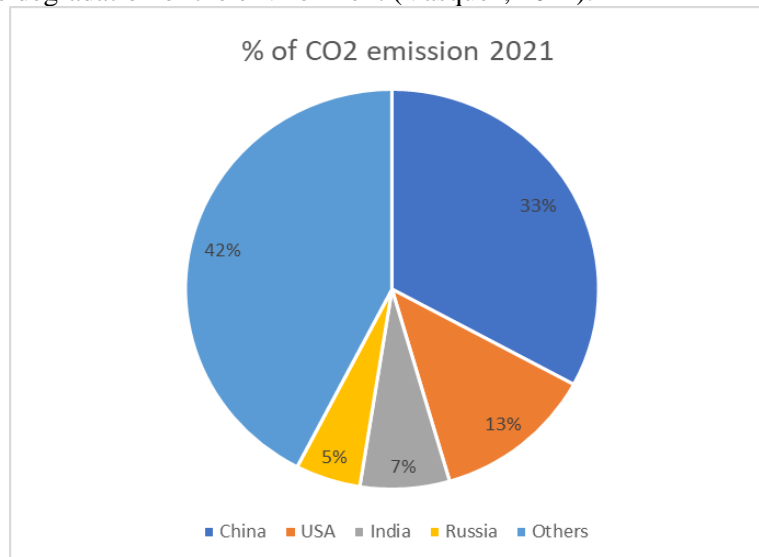
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INTRODUCTION

Economic destabilization, agricultural destruction, rising air temperature, increased number of wildfires, shifting weather patterns resulting in frequent and severe droughts, floods, and rising sea levels are only a few problems caused by the most important and controversial issue of this time-climate change. With problems being so severe and the impact being so widespread-one must ask themselves why the public in all nations is confused about the etiology of climate change, its impact, and possible future complications. This debate and uncertainty can be attributed to the inaccurate portrayal of climate change in worldwide media channels and the adverse effects this distortion has on developing nations. The wave of industrialization led the masses to participate in the industrialization process, affecting the unknown climate change. The rule of nature suggests that nothing lasts forever, and things deteriorate over time, as in climate. Developed countries, in their race towards power and hegemony, prioritized industrialization without considering the drastic effects it would cause on the climate. The first official declaration in 1896 on the effects of climate change was presented by Svante Arrhenius, who claimed that the earth's temperature is rising due to increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere ("How do we know", 2022). The main cause of this increased temperature was developed countries' unprecedented use of fossil fuels. The United States of America is the top emitter of carbon after China, and this is in some ways linked to its hegemony. Before other developing or developed economies came along, the

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USA was responsible for exploiting and degrading the climate. These actions were carefully veiled until the USA successfully secured its dominance over the world, as indicated by the first-ever conference on climate change in 1979 organized by the USA itself (UN conferences). If we carefully examine the issues of climate change and the USA's exploitations, the question arises as to why the effects of climate change were not broadcasted before as they should have been. Why did it take 83 years to call the first official conference on climate action? The climate issues started to get even worse when every country, whether developed or developing, joined this race to achieve economic stability. As of now, countries such as China, India, Russia, and Japan are included as the top emitters of carbon dioxide and are responsible for the degradation of the environment (Vasquez, 2022).



Due to environmental degradation, underdeveloped countries have faced the worst effects of climate change. For example, Pakistan faced various challenges of climate change, such as heat waves, extreme weather patterns, floods, and smog. Pakistan, in 2022, was hit by the worst flood in its history, resulting from an extreme climate crisis within the Asian region. The havoc caused by this flood left the government and the people of Pakistan devastated. According to the Asian Development Bank, 1/3rd of Pakistan was underwater, and it will take a long time to recover from the drastic effects of floods (Sheerazi, 2022). Complications such as water-borne diseases, food insecurity, and poor infrastructure will further cripple Pakistan long after the flood is forgotten. A cruel irony exists in this scenario as Pakistan is one of the least emitters of carbon dioxide—primary cause of climate change. The climate crisis is not specific to one country and is the result of a collective activity that causes harm to the environment. The blame is to be shared, but when it comes to underdeveloped countries specifically, the floods in Pakistan are poorly covered in media campaigns around the world. The mainstream international media frames this issue so that it pins the blame on Pakistan's poor economic structure and political instability while covering the actual reasons that caused these issues. This paper aims to analyze the role of international and domestic media in covering the issue of climate crises in Pakistan. Furthermore, it addresses how the mainstream media tries to cover the facts that left Pakistan in such terrible conditions. Using different approaches to analyze media coverage and its role in climate change, we aim to build our argument to support the hypothesis. Towards the end of this research, we will provide recommendations to curb this problem.

Approaches To Examine the Climate Change in Pakistan

The role of the media in covering the climate issues of Pakistan can be explained with the help of different approaches, as explained in the Journal of science communication. These approaches include the political-economic, structural, and sociocultural approach (Sharif & Medvecky, 2018). Certain proponents of the political-economic approach believe that media is regulated by the government and operates under certain rules that render its output. Many international corporations have been found to be in close quarters with the media because they do not want people to be aware of the effects of their production on climate. The structural approach suggests that the media selects news when it is event-oriented, controversial, or conflicted, has a strong visual appeal, and is suitable for a 24-hour news cycle. This is why viewers sometimes see news about climate change for a short time. The issue of

climate in Pakistani media houses is subjected to event-oriented coverage such as weather forecasts, press releases, press conferences, etc. Pakistani media outlets cover climate issues, while foreign or international media cover them. On the issue of climate change, little revenue is generated from such news, and there are no subsidies or advertisements from any State or non-state actors, so as a result, the media does not prioritize it over other topics backed by better monetary gains. The third approach is sociocultural, suggesting that people are interested in hearing the news of politics. Political discussion is widely discussed and has become a social culture from household conversations to every aspect of society.

Critical Analysis

Pakistan's Climate Crises Through the Lens of International Media

There exists a common theme among media outlets in developed countries that places blame solely and entirely on the lack of strong public policy, political instability, and lack of resources of developing countries. These media outlets will rarely shift blame onto the developed nations' production of carbon emissions resulting in climate change. History of climate abuse from these powerful nations has permanently damaged the economies of underdeveloped countries, and some may not be able to recover without substantial assistance. The underdeveloped nations focused on agriculture, increasing resources, creating policies, and improving education must shift their money and resources to thwart the secondary effects of climate change caused by their developed neighboring countries. The so-called societies that push the agenda of democracy and free speech all around the globe failed to keep their media independent. The purpose of the media is to voice the views of the unheard & underprivileged. The role of the media is crucial because the way it portrays any issue determines the necessary course of action that needs to be adopted. Unfortunately, the media lacks adequate information regarding the serious issue of climate change, domestically and internationally. According to a survey published by the International Federation of Journalists, 52% of journalists say that their news agencies do not dedicate special coverage to climate change. Only 1 out of 4 journalists believe that the media adequately covers climate change issues ("IFJ Global Survey", 2022). These facts indicate how the media's role is limited to news that benefits certain major global players. International media is a medium for transmitting policy-related issues to gain validation and support. Regarding climate change issues, there is a need to create a global climate court that provides justice to those most affected. The media needs to create awareness about this but fails to do so. If the media responsibly works in the form of international forums and focus groups, a global climate court can be established that will deeply impact the most affected countries in a positive way. Pakistan is the least emitting and most climate-affected nation, and there is no international venue for raising this issue. If a global climate court existed where Pakistan could present its case, a repatriation cost could have been paid. These are the type of necessary issues that the media needs to highlight and create awareness for. Another concerning factor here is that Pakistan, an underdeveloped country, is dependent on developed countries such as the US, China, etc., making it difficult for Pakistan to confront them and demand reparation. This reflects the relation of how in the global political scenario, rich countries exercise their power.

Turning a blind eye to the environment and human health by distorting media perception to turn a profit is nothing new in the history of developing nations. For example, Tobacco companies were aware of the link between lung cancer and tobacco use in the early 1960s. Public understanding of health risks will undoubtedly reduce their sales, so the media did not cover the negative health effects. Instead, public campaigns were launched to doubt the scientific discovery that tobacco causes lung cancer. Because of these doubts, regulating tobacco products took over forty years. Similarly, in the case of the environment, industries that release harmful chemicals have adopted the same strategy to raise suspicions and build a dangerous narrative that climate change is a natural event and that related to addressing the issue will affect our economy. Thus, through disinformation campaigns the public is kept in the dark which in the long run is corruption and a crime against our environment.

A more recent display of the media's blatant bias and failure to cover climate-related phenomena accurately occurred when Pakistan was devastated by the unprecedented floods of 2022. Conclusive evidence of shifting weather patterns, and Climate experts all point their fingers at developed countries being the culprits of climate change. It should fall on their shoulders to remedy the solution by providing reparation costs and resources to promote technological advancements and assist developing nations in enacting strong policies. Regrettably, the international relief efforts in terms of financial compensation were painstakingly low scraps when looking at the billions of dollars of damage

done. Despite being the second most responsible country for damaging the climate, the USA committed to pay only 50 million dollars in relief, and China only paid 17 million dollars. In the same way, Canada also committed to giving relief of 5 million dollars (Sachs, 2022). According to financial experts in Pakistan, many other countries are also giving relief to help Pakistan in this difficult time, but will the total of these reliefs cover all the damage to Pakistan up to 30 billion dollars? The answer to this question is no. Financial compensation is not enough. It is simply a band-aid applied to this wound that may quickly be ripped off when Pakistan deals with additional flooding. International media played headlines about their relief to Pakistan during floods, successfully hiding the role of these nations in climate change that has caused these flooding.

The main issue with media is that it has become a corporate business that only operates by airing issues that make their profit. Instead of broadcasting impactful topics, the media only broadcasts filtered information. For example, corporate and political actors are engaged in polluting the environment through certain activities like; deforestation and land clearance to build industries, air pollution by releasing certain polluted chemicals, and raising the earth's temperature through reckless businesses. The media does not expose the real criminals because of their long-term benefits (Gustafson et al., 2019).

Pakistan Drowning- Internal Issues or An International Agenda?

The reliability and accuracy of information from various international media outlets have been a primary concern for developing nations. One of the most widely debated topics where media outlets have been accused of bias and providing falsified information occurs when climate change is discussed. The University of Kansas conducted a massive study analyzing over 37,000 articles to ascertain how the media frames climate change in over 45 countries. According to Vu, assistant professor of journalism at KU, one of the most consistent findings derived from this study include two different schools of thought between developed and underdeveloped nations. Developed nations tend to gravitate towards the notion that the climate crisis in certain underdeveloped regions is due to corruption and political issues. At the same time, the opposing side attributes the damage to the misuse of fossil fuels and increasing carbon emissions shifting blame toward big carbon-emitting countries. If international media outlets provide information to their consumers based on developed nations' agendas, this will negatively impact underdeveloped nations. The people of developed nations will not gain awareness or sympathy for the poor countries affected by climate change. People need to be educated more on the effects of carbon emissions and the use of fossil fuels. In that case, stronger policies to restrict carbon emissions will not be passed in developing nations. Thus, climate change will continue disproportionately affecting underdeveloped countries due to a lack of coverage and policy change. Professor Vu continues to argue a potential deeper agenda in the developed nations regarding media coverage in their respective countries. People in the media who oppose climate change are using their positions in the media to promote their biased agendas. This will undoubtedly lead to biased media coverage and transfer the blame away from developed countries. This, in turn, will influence policymaking (Vu et al., 2019). This has already been seen time and again. For example, underdeveloped countries like Pakistan are blamed for the damage caused by heavy monsoon rains due to political instability and weak policymaking. However, developed nations will not comment on Pakistan being the lowest carbon emissions and being the most vulnerable and affected when it comes to climate change. According to a study completed by scientists in Dartmouth, the United States has caused over \$1.9 trillion in climate change-related damages to develop countries from 1990- 2014 while profiting a staggering 183 billion (Borenstein & Costley, 2022). A conclusion can be drawn that the economic damage done by the leading carbon-emitting nations disproportionately affects the lowest carbon-emitting nations. Pakistan, one of the lowest carbon-emitting nations, is a prime example of this. Pakistan's political instability, poor infrastructure, water mafias, and poor urban/rural development plays an important role in the increased damages that occurred due to the floods. However, the increased intensity of monsoon seasons and record heat waves due to climate change should be noticed. According to Siddiqui and Khan, Senior Program Officers for the United States Institute of Peace, industrialized countries must take responsibility for the damages caused to Pakistan by assisting Pakistan in developing climate resiliency. The rhetoric of shifting the blame away from developed countries and onto developing countries must stop. If false media coverage persists, the damages will continue to mount, and Pakistan will not be the only victim.

Pakistan's Climate Crises Through the Lens of Domestic Media

Accurate and unbiased Media coverage can influence the perception of any issue, change inefficient policies, and gain the support of the masses. Unfairly, this power and responsibility have been exploited by independent media outlets both internationally and domestically. There is a striking difference between international and domestic media coverage. From television being in every home to every small shop around the corner, the people of Pakistan like to engage in conversations about day-to-day issues. Media has a wide appeal to people and can shape their views. However, this power to sway people and misinformation results in weak policies. There is a wider gap in awareness about climate change in developed and developing countries of the world. In developed countries like America and Japan, 90% of the population has knowledge pertaining to the causes and effects of climate change; however, in developing countries, the percentage can be found to be much lower. Only a few clusters of affluent and educated people know about climate change, its causes, and its future outlook (Leiserowitz & Howe, 2016). This is not surprising for a country like Pakistan, which falls below the poverty line, has a low literacy rate, and has political instability. The impoverished have shifted their focus on basic needs to sustain life, not future climate crisis possibilities. The main reasons for this wider gap are lack of education, media coverage, and societal responsibility. The percentage of unawareness about climate change is higher in the adult population compared to the young population. 40% of adults in developed nations are unaware of climate change, whereas this percentage goes up to 65% in developing countries (Leiserowitz & Howe, 2016). Media can play an important role in developing a sense of awareness in these countries where the percentage is low. But unfortunately, television media is highly centralized by ownership structures.

Most of the news channels cover news about political instability with limited coverage of climate change. Pakistani people take a keen interest in politics, so news channels allocate more budget, screen time, and priority to such issues. Most news channels deliver information about the political situation through various television shows and invite different political figures to analyze the future of Pakistan's politics. Why is there no television show telecast weekly when it comes to climate change? Media should play its role responsibly rather than only profitably airing news. Different awareness campaigns can change public interest, and the mindset of the masses and the media can change people's perspectives and make them aware of climate change. A strong and well-informed public can change the future of climate change. The consequences of climate change in Pakistan in terms of food insecurity will be witnessed until 2080, according to the book "climate change profile of Pakistan" published by the Asian Development Bank (Chaudhry, 2017). This is a great risk for future generations, and the media should work as an independent institution irrespective of political biases. If the position of the media remains the same, it will threaten every aspect of development in the country. There is a need to create strong and independent institutions in the country to influence the implementation of policies because developing countries are good at making strong policies on paper but fail to get fruitful results. In this case, the media is a driving force to initiate a change in the country. Imagine if most of the country's decision-makers emphasized the creation of dams to subdue floods and prohibited building infrastructure in high-risk areas. Pakistan's crippling damage may have been reduced.

Another noteworthy aspect is that the local media journalists are not well equipped or trained to deeply understand the dynamics of climate change and thus have difficulties utilizing technology effectively. The media houses lack the financial resources and fail to provide the tools or equipment necessary to cover climate change issues. This all results in poor data collection, which leads to the lack of proper coverage of this alarming issue.

Recommendations To Improve International Media Coverage

The importance of climate change cannot be stressed enough when focusing on its impact on developing nations. What we share globally requires individual and group responsibility to pursue action to solve the issue of climate change. International media possesses the structure, supporting resources, and influence required to enact effective change at the domestic and international levels that can result in substantial gains for nations. International media should deploy personnel in the most affected countries, such as Pakistan, to gather data and information that will help cover the issue of climate change effectively. To create accurate news representation, the international and domestic media should join forces to gain populace support.

One of the media's most powerful tools is that it is the fourth pillar of democracy and is legally independent. Through the power of being an independent institution, international media can arrange media talks that are aired globally. These televised talk shows and forums will enable the representatives of affected countries to put their concerns in front of a global audience. Negotiations among developing and developed countries can be arranged to pave the way for collective action required to counter the issue of climate change globally. In the current developing world, where we have peace talks and summits, we need to focus on the importance of a clean environment by conducting climate summits and talks.

International organizations, such as the UN, World Bank, etc., must launch proper televised campaigns that work for awareness. These international organizations should have a channel responsible for recruiting climate experts and researchers that must conduct talk shows and televised ad campaigns regarding the effects of climate change. As mentioned before, there exists no climate court that is responsible for settling down climate-related disputes. It is the responsibility of international organizations, along with international media, to push the agenda of a climate court and explain why it is important. Thus, the world can have its climate court where countries like Pakistan can present its case.

Similarly, other environmental polluters responsible for environmental degradation try to create confusion among people that climate change is a natural phenomenon. Many corporations run disinformation campaigns among the people to hide the real reasons for climate change. This reflects that these businesses also have a stake in the whole process. The international media forums need to crack down on these disinformation campaigns and should provide the facts through their channels. By exposing these campaigns, the true reasons that are resulting in climate change can be uncovered. The spread of information is an enormous responsibility of the media, and this powerful medium must be used in the proper context to provide global benefits.

International media has a wide audience that depends on them for actual stories. The media needs to be regulated independently without bias or pressure from rich countries and provide people with the information necessary for a course of action. The element of corruption and biased views on certain stories have a negative impact on some developing countries. Independent news outlets should be held liable for spreading false information and need to create an entity that is responsible for double-checking the information that is being published. This may help decrease the spread of falsified information to the general masses.

The booming clothing industries not only impact consumers because with the changing fashion trends, many clothes also end up in dumps and landfills, which is not sustainable for the environment. These dumps are a leading reason why our environment is being damaged. The international media fails to cover or expose these clothing brands and their crimes regarding the climate. This creates a disparity that allows large fashion industries to carry out their businesses.

The effects of climate change have had the worst impact on poor countries, resulting from harmful practices done by developed nations. International media can have a positive effect in aiding developing countries. If the issue of climate change is addressed properly on the international forums, it can help developing countries in terms of reparation costs. This reparation cost does not reverse the effects of climate change but can be helpful for development projects in poor countries.

Recommendations To Improve Domestic Media Coverage

First and foremost, Pakistan needs to have a strong political system that prioritizes the issue of climate change as its number one agenda. The flood of 2022 should be a wake-up call to all policymakers and the general public that it is time to put their personal agendas second and place the country and the well-being of its people at the forefront. Pakistan is a country that is not taking enough steps to solve this issue because every political party has its own political interest. Unfortunately, most of the political parties do not emphasize nor have strong viewpoints when it comes to the issue of climate change. A question arises here why the running government is only responsible for floods or heat waves? In short, every political party should be responsible for not taking enough steps toward climate change. We should work on long-term policy solutions rather than covering up the issues. Otherwise, the future of Pakistan will be hindered. Climate change has become the top concern for developing countries, and it must go parallel with development because a country like Pakistan cannot be fully developed without considering the issue of climate change. Every year, the issue of climate change is seen more drastically. There will be no positive outcomes concerning development until we make strong, independent

institutions to solve the issue of climate change. Weak institutions will further digress the system, resulting in drastic and long-lasting results.

There is also a need to revive the basic responsibility of domestic media, which is to deliver transparent and correct information to its audience without covering the legitimate facts. If the media will continue to work for these stakeholders to gain monetary benefits the issue of climate change will be suppressed more, and unfortunately, there is a chance that Pakistan will face permanent damage to its economy.

There must be a proper media strategy instead of telecasting meaningless TV shows to gain views and monetary benefits; the media industry should provide the audience with some informative sessions on the preventive measures to tackle the issue of climate change. This will create not only a sense of awareness but also a sense of responsibility toward the climate issue. If the media continues to provide impractical entertainment to its audience, it will never change the mindset of people.

Government should play its part in subsidizing the media industry to promote the severity of the climate change issue. Those media channels that will telecast the talk shows on climate-related discussions will be subsidized more. The incentive of better monetary gain will allow the media channels to run climate-related campaigns.

There is a need to remodel the policy on climate change to count the media as an essential stakeholder in the policymaking process. Pakistan has had ample environmental legislation since the 90s, but this legislation will be useless because of the poor implementation process. Pakistan has the best policies on paper, but there will be no positive gain because the government cannot implement such policies. So, the government should use the media as a stakeholder to implement such policies.

Pakistan is a country that comprises 68% of the young population (Vener & Jamshaid, 2021). and this number is going up because of the high fertility rate (3.6%), which is the highest in Asia ("Fertility rate", 2020). The Elderly population does not have access to digital media, so they are not much aware of climate change, but we can change the perspective of our young generation related to climate. The future of climate will be different if the State involves the younger population in different climate change initiatives. For example, there will be an appreciation certificate from the government of Pakistan if the person participates in planting more than 100 trees or clearing plastic waste from the area in which he/she resides.

The Ministry of Climate Change, Viamo, and UNDP carried out a survey to investigate the young population's perception and level of awareness of climate change. The survey consists of questions related to climate initiatives, strategies, and knowledge about climate change. Almost 8800 people aged between 19-34 completed the survey. The outcomes of the survey are beyond expectations. Youth who have digital access are aware of climate change. 40% of the respondents are aware, and only 10% of the respondents are unaware. Results are reversed in the case of non-smartphone surveys. 24% of respondents are also aware of the government initiatives like the Billion Tree Tsunami, and 31% know about Clean Green Pakistan. This survey shows the power of digital media, which makes people aware of any event happening in the country (Vener & Jamshaid, 2021).

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