



## Effects of Climate Change on Society: An Analysis of Role of Pakistani Media

Muhammad Atif Shahzad<sup>1</sup> & Raza Waqas Ahmad<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, International Islamic University, Islamabad

Email: [atif.shahzad@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:atif.shahzad@iiu.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup>(PhD), Independent Researcher of Media and Communication Studies, Email: [ch.razawaqas@gmail.com](mailto:ch.razawaqas@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received:	January	24, 2025
Revised:	February	27, 2025
Accepted:	March	02, 2025
Available Online:	March	03, 2025

#### Keywords:

Climate change, role of media, environment

#### Corresponding Author:

Muhammad Atif Shahzad

#### Email:

[atif.shahzad@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:atif.shahzad@iiu.edu.pk)



### ABSTRACT

Climate change is not the problem of one country; it's a global issue. In today's modern world, especially South Asian countries like Pakistan are facing the most sensitive issue of climate change. The climate change has diverse effects on society. The public awareness is necessary regarding the impact of climate change on society. In the modern era, media is one of the most important tools to educate the people on any issue. Due to the importance of media, this study investigates the role of media in covering the climate change issue and its effects on society. For this purpose, the researcher collected the data from environmental journalists through the purposive sampling technique. The result of the study shows that the media is not giving importance to climate change or environmental issues in their coverage. The result also shows the diverse obstacles that journalists encounter while covering climate change, ranging from organizational limitations to audience involvement. Media coverage on political issues is high, but on the other hand, media coverage on environmental issues is less. Given the sensitivity of the issue, the media needs to educate people about the impact of climate change on society. The study suggested that the media needs to change its coverage priorities and give more space or coverage to environmental issues to reduce this gap.

## Introduction

Climate change is not the problem of one country; it's a global issue. With frequent floods and rising temperatures, climate change poses a serious threat to Pakistan. The nation is among the most susceptible to these difficulties, and because of its brittleness, deficient institutions, and lack of knowledge, it is unlikely to respond to them successfully. Climate change is causing

temperatures to rise, precipitation patterns to shift, solar radiation to intensify, and extreme weather events to occur. This is detrimental to land, forests, farming, food, and the health of people (Khan & Khan, 2016). Approximately 971 million people reside in areas with significant risks of climate change, according to research. The majority of those who are at high risk reside in developing or less developed nations. Nearly every region of the world has been impacted by climate change, but South Asia has been hardest damaged. This is due to the fact that it is the region where climate change is most likely to occur and where the least amount of information regarding self-defense and adaptation is available. Pakistan has seen several natural disasters in the past, which have made it more difficult for the nation to adapt to new circumstances. These consist of protracted periods of drought and flooding, the breakdown of glaciers and lake stuffed quakes, tropical storms, landslides, and other forms of snow and ice (Hussain, Chaudhary, Jafri, Malik, Ali, & Awan, 2022).

Rising temperatures have caused a noticeable shift in the monsoon pattern and an increase in cyclone incidence in northern Pakistan during the past few years, which has had an impact on the agricultural sector (Abubakar, 2020). Pakistan's population growth and ensuing urbanization will have disastrous consequences from these climate change effects. Pakistan has been listed as the 12th most negatively impacted country by climate change impacts on livelihoods and agriculture (Awan and Yaseen, 2017). Pakistan is particularly vulnerable to climate change.

A major threat to life as we know it is climate change, which can result in a shortage of food and clean drinking water, unpredictable weather patterns, melting glaciers, droughts, and other natural disasters. World organizations, such as the WHO, have been actively organizing international conferences, seminars, and workshops to put pressure on member nations to take decisive action to reduce environmental degradation and protect future generations from the catastrophic effects of climate change. This issue has been in the public eye for more than 40 years. Although the impact of climate change on health has not gotten much attention from the international community, the subject has been brought to light to a significant extent. Thus, the Inter-Academy Partnership's (IAP) initiative to address this issue is a commendable scientific undertaking. One of South Asia's developing nations, Pakistan, is one of the top 5 nations most impacted by climate change (Lindwall, 2022).

The country is more vulnerable to security risks from climate change because of its poor state institutions and limited ability to adapt. Pakistan's media and civil society have flourished during the past 20 years as active state apparatuses, but there hasn't been much done to educate the public about upcoming difficulties in the wake of new unconventional security concerns like climate change (Khan & Khan, 2016). There is no denying the media's critical role in creating and promoting issues such as climate change.

The media is important an important source of information for a society because it can be used for a variety of purposes, including reporting, recording, examining, serving as watchdogs, and promoting social causes. Through raising awareness, the media can impact the process of formulating policies and potentially save lives. The media shapes the context in which policies are developed, even when it may not directly alter policies. The media has the power to inform the public about climate change. Media coverage of climate change fosters social relationships between academics, policymakers, the scientific community, and the general public. Going one step further, developing nation media may educate global audiences, grab their interest, and eventually promote collaboration to deal with the crisis. There are several human interest stories

around climate change in addition to scientific ones. This study explores the role of media can raise public awareness of the environmental implications of climate change

## **Literature Review**

Since the natural environment plays such a crucial role in everyone's life, we cannot ignore it in order to ensure the survival of both the current and future generations. The significant modification of environmental sustainability can be attributed to numerous variables generated by human activity. The natural systems of the areas could be impacted by the environmental changes. He also expressed opinions regarding the effects of environmental change on natural elements such as rangelands, fisheries, and forests, among others. Experts concluded that smallholders would face some repercussions as a result of environmental change (Easterling et al., 2007).

The majority of what is now known about climate change focuses on changes to ecosystems caused by human activity. Climate change is one of the most significant environmental issues that humanity has ever confronted. It has been a problem for generations, but it wasn't brought to light until the 1980s. Since then, proponents of environmental conservation have voiced grave worries over human interference in climate change, claiming that the consequences carry significant hazards to the political, social, and economic spheres (Ahmed, 2022). "Climate change is moving much faster than we are, and humans risk witnessing permanent harm that would be catastrophic," UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the world.

Unintentional effects of climate change are being felt by communities, food crops, freshwater resources, and energy supply. Even though poor nations emit fewer greenhouse gases than industrialized nations, their reliance on climate-sensitive industries like water and agriculture makes them far more vulnerable (Jan, Khan, & Mahsud, 2020). According to Schmidt, Ivanova, and Schäfer (2013), the effects of climate change are widespread and frequently make headlines. The study shows that media attention to climate-related topics has increased globally as a result of climate change's emergence as a significant media topic. The media's attention span varies among the nations, nevertheless. Climate change is receiving a lot of media attention, particularly in carbon-dependent nations.

In today's world, the majority of people relies on the media to keep up with current events, local and international news, and even rumours involving well-known individuals. This is a result of the public's lack of direct access to news that is pertinent to anything outside of their local surroundings; hence, the media play a crucial role in informing the public about a plethora of other important issues. One significant problem is the changing global climate. The media is the primary source of information for the vast majority of the population regarding global climate change. His research shows that the media has not only become a means of distributing local and national news, but it has also grown into a major source of information for the general people. Previous study indicates that as public interest in understanding more about this subject that is affecting their lives has risen, so has media coverage of global climate change over time (Doulton & Brown, 2009). The influence of media analysis on popular attitudes and opinions regarding climate change is undeniable. The role of scientific research and policy discourse in shaping public awareness and action is surpassed only by that of media coverage in terms of impacting attitudes and effecting change (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007).

Boykoff (2004) have highlighted the role of media of his research regarding the spreading awareness of climate change in the society. He argues that media can reduce or increase the importance of this issue in society through their coverage. Nisbet & Scheufele (2009) point that

accurate and fair reporting may educate the people about the sensitivity of climate change issue, dramatic or alarmist reporting may create the tension about the issue in the society. It is evident that way environmental concerns are depicted in the media has a big impact on how people view them and react to them.

The media is highly influenced on public opinions. Different types of media like electronic, print, social, online media are playing a crucial role in disseminating information that shapes environmental discourse and shapes public attitudes and actions related to climate change.

This study uses the agenda-setting theory to examine how the media influences the public views of environmental issues and establishes the public's priorities for knowledge and attention. The media impacts on public perceptions and comprehension of the environment and establishes public policy by deciding which environmental issues are important and which are not.

The agenda-setting theory, first proposed by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, holds that individuals are more likely to learn what to think from the media than what to believe. This theory contends that the amount and caliber of media coverage surrounding a topic affects how important people believe it to be. The concept is particularly relevant to the study of communication related to climate change since media outlets may choose whether stories, headlines, and featured images highlight or downplay environmental issues. Agenda-Setting Theory offers a crucial framework for assessing the extent to which Pakistan's media has contributed to increasing public awareness of the country's environmental problems connected to climate change within the parameters of this research. Considering the serious effects it is going through, which include catastrophic flooding, a shortage of water, and harm to crops. Pakistan serves as a case study for how media framing may affect public opinion and official responses.

R.Q: What is the role of Media in reporting the climate change effects on society and how media is important for creation of awareness in the society?

## **Research Methodology**

The goal of this study was to determine how the media covers the problem of climate change and its effects on the environment. Since media outlets aim to make money, each one has a specific agenda when it comes to pushing a certain topic or subject. In this research, the researcher used a qualitative research design in order to investigate how the media covers climate change and its impact on the natural world. The study uses a qualitative research design. The method of qualitative analysis was chosen because it enables an extensive comprehension of the opinions and experiences of journalists covering climate change-related environmental concerns. The qualitative method of this research aims to collect comprehensive data from journalists in order to examine the trends, obstacles, and constraints that they face. For this study, the researcher collected the data from 15 journalists who were involved in covering environmental issues using the purposive sampling technique. These professionals have expertise in covering environmental issues from different media organizations like print, electronic, digital, etc. The role of these journalists is significant for creating awareness regarding the environmental issues that occurred due to climate change in society. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The questions of the interview consisted of challenges, the role of media organizations, creating public awareness, and creating awareness regarding climate change. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.

## Data Analysis

The main purpose of this research was to find the role of media regarding the promoting of sensitive environmental issue of climate change and its effects on environment. For this, the researcher interviews the environmental journalist and indentified the themes for analysis.

**Table 1: Thematic Analysis**

<b>Identified Theme</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Motivation and Expertise	The comments from journalists showed a range of experiences in covering environmental issues, from a few years to decades. Many first became interested in the subject because they were personally interested in environmental sustainability, had experienced natural disasters, or were becoming more conscious of climate change as a worldwide issue. A few attendees also emphasized their duty as watchdogs, believing it is their duty to bring these important concerns to the public's attention.
Media Coverage of Climate Change: Insufficient Coverage and Shaping Public Perception	Most journalists regarded Pakistan's media coverage of environmental issues as inadequate. Although articles on climate change occasionally make news reports, they are frequently eclipsed by stories about politics and the economy. Participants mentioned that long-term impacts receive less attention, and the severity of the changing climate is underreported. The journalists underlined how important it is for the media to shape public opinion. But because of the scant coverage, many continue to be ignorant of how dangerous climate change is. A few others pointed out that the informative component of climate reporting is occasionally eclipsed by the sensationalized coverage of other topics, such natural catastrophes.
Challenges in Reporting: Organizational Constraints and Audience Engagement	The difficulty presented by organizational considerations was a recurrent subject. The main obstacles to substantial reporting on climate change, according to journalists, are newsroom priorities, budget constraints, and an emphasis on commercialized material. Reporters voiced unhappiness with editorial choices that marginalized climate stories in favor of more instantly marketable information, as the environmental beat frequently lacked sufficient resources. Everyone agreed that there isn't much interest in news on climate change. A few participants talked on the challenge of making news about climate change interesting to the broader audience. In response, a few journalists stated that they try to tie environmental tales to common issues like local livelihoods, agriculture, and health.
Agenda-Setting and Media Responsibility	The majority of journalists concurred that Pakistani media outlets are not doing a good job of directing public conversation around climate change. Political news predominates, which obscures environmental issues. Some journalists, however, felt that if finances and priority lists were rearranged, the media might influence the national dialogue far more. A few individuals agreed that although the media has the power to

	<p>affect policy, its effect is limited by inconsistent coverage. They believed that policy talks frequently excluded journalists and that environmental issues lacked the traction necessary to affect decision-making processes.</p>
Digital Media and Climate Change Reporting	<p>In terms of reporting on climate change, electronic media has been called a game-changer. Publishers emphasized that greater outreach and more autonomous reporting have been made possible by blogs, social media, and internet platforms. Digital platforms' instantaneity makes it possible to provide updates on climate-related incidents more quickly.</p> <p>Several participants saw variations in the coverage provided by conventional and digital media. Digital platforms provide more varied, in-depth investigation of climate change, but conventional media often offers more organized, although constrained, coverage. But there were issues with digital content's veracity and sensationalism potential.</p>
Collaborations and Sources	<p>Many journalists agreed that working with environmental specialists is crucial to ensuring reporting accuracy. People who actively interacted with government institutions, scientists, and NGOs thought their reporting was more reliable and nuanced. Some, meanwhile, voiced worries over getting hold of trustworthy data.</p> <p>For majority of the participants, maintaining accuracy and steering clear of sensationalism was paramount. They stressed the significance of looking for numerous sources and double-checking information. Journalists also spoke about the challenge of striking a balance between professional reporting and intriguing headlines.</p>
Personal Views and Impact	<p>Journalists talked on how reporting on climate change significantly affects their own beliefs. Many becoming increasingly conscious of the gravity of the issue and environmentally conscious. Many expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of urgency shown by the public and politicians in addressing climate change.</p> <p>The three most often suggested improvements to coverage were to enhance financing, give more space for in-depth reporting, and give journalists specific training in climate science. Some recommended forging stronger connections with international media to raise awareness of local climate issues on a worldwide level.</p>
Future of Environmental Reporting	<p>Future environmental reporting, according to journalists, will likely involve more in-depth investigative pieces, a greater emphasis on media education on climate change, and increased collaboration with scientific associations. They also asked the media to stop portraying climate change as a fleeting craze and instead address it as a serious, long-term issue.</p> <p>It was universally acknowledged that reporters covering the complex scientific facets of the environmental crisis are ill-prepared. Respondents called for more specialist training and resources to aid journalists in understanding and communicating the intricate connections between environmental science and societal implications.</p>

The thematic analysis explains the diverse obstacles that journalists encounter while covering climate change, ranging from organizational limitations to audience involvement. The analysis shows the role of media regarding the covering of climate change issues is questionable. The coverage of media is high on political issues but on the other side the coverage of media is low on environmental issues. Although digital media presents novel prospects, there exists a requirement for enhanced resources, professional collaboration, and specialized training to augment the precision and profundity of environmental reporting in Pakistan.

## **Discussion**

The main objective of this study was to find the role of media on the most prominent issue of today's world the effects of climate change on society. The result of the study shows that the media is not playing the role to create the awareness or educate the society regarding it existing issue of climate change and its impact on environment. The media giving the less space of climate change issue. Some journalists point out that "the climate change news is not on priorities in newsroom like political issues". The findings of this study are consistent with other research indicating that, despite being one of the biggest worldwide issues, news agendas have not given priority to climate change (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007; Painter, 2013). Due less coverage, media fails to create the awareness or educate the society on this issue.

The researchers conducted interviews with journalists who emphasized the consistent discrepancy between the prominence of climate change and the coverage it garners in the mainstream media. They all agree that the media is an important instrument for educating the public, but it has a limited role in reporting on environmental issues, especially climate change. This view is supported by study by Anderson (2009), who contended that the media frequently ignores important long-term topics like climate change in favor of more immediate or dramatic stories. In addition, Boykoff (2009) noted that when there are conflicting reports, media attention to climate change tends to shift in response to political and economic developments. The Agenda-Setting Theory suggests that the public's knowledge and discourse may be greatly impacted by this absence of coverage. McCombs and Shaw (1972) claimed that the media has the ability to shape public opinion by influencing the topics that are brought to light. As a result, when the media fails to give the importance of climate change issue, it does not raise enough awareness in society to encourage action. Already conducted Studies showing a direct relationship between public concern and the volume of climate change coverage in the media (Schmidt, Ivanova, & Schäfer, 2013).

The public may be greatly impacted by this lack of coverage in light of the Agenda-Setting Theory. There are a variety of factors that contribute to the lack of media coverage on climate change. Reports on politics and the economy may take precedence over news related to the environment if news organizations believe they are more lucrative or urgently relevant. Furthermore, the fast-paced, event-driven style of contemporary news cycles may not be compatible with the intricacy of climate science and the gradual nature of its effects (Carvalho, 2010). In addition, there is the matter of journalistic balance; despite the overwhelming consensus of scientists on the subject, a concentration on portraying 'both sides' of the climate debate has frequently resulted in confusion (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004).

## **Conclusion**

The study concluded that the media playing his role on climate change issues is very limited. Media is failed the address this issue in society. The effects of climate change on environment are very dangerous. And media is an important tool to educate the people or society. But the particularly this issue, media is failed to educate the people regarding the climate change and its impact on society due to less coverage. According to result of study, a significant gap exists between the media and public awareness regarding the climate change issue. To reduce this gap media needs to change the priorities of coverage and give more space or coverage the climate change or environmental problems. Due to sensitivity of this issue media needs to educate the people regarding the effects of climate change on society.

## **References**

1. Abubakar, S. M. (2020). Pakistan 5th most vulnerable country to climate change, reveals Germanwatch report. *Dawn, January, 16*.
2. Ahmed, K. (2022). Role of Media Creating Awareness with respect to Climate Change. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 10(1), 77-88*.
3. Anderson, A. (2009). Media, politics and climate change: Towards a new research agenda. *Sociology Compass, 3(2), 166-182*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00188.x>
4. Anwar, A., Younis, M., & Ullah, I. (2020). Impact of urbanization and economic growth on CO2 emission: a case of far east Asian countries. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(7), 2531*.
5. Boykoff, M. T. (2009). We speak for the trees: Media reporting on the environment. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 34(1), 431-457*. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.enviro.051308.084254>
6. Boykoff, M. T., & Boykoff, J. M. (2004). Balance as bias: Global warming and the US prestige press. *Global Environmental Change, 14(2), 125-136*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2003.10.001>
7. Boykoff, M. T., & Roberts, J. T. (2007). Media coverage of climate change: Current trends, strengths, weaknesses. *United Nations Development Programme*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/climatechange/reports>
8. Carvalho, A. (2010). Media(ted) discourses and climate change: A focus on political subjectivity and (dis)engagement. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 1(2), 172-179*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.13>
9. Doulton, H., & Brown, K. (2009). Ten Years to Prevent Catastrophe? Discourse of Climate Change in and International Development in the UK Press. *Global Environmental Change, 19*.
10. Easterling, W. E., Aggarwal, P. K., Batima, P., Brander, K. M., Erda, L., Howden, S. M., ... & Tubiello, F. N. (2007). Food, fibre and forest products. *Climate change, 2007, 273-313*.
11. Guterres, A. (2018). Remarks on climate change. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-09-10/remarks-climate-change>.
12. Hussain, A., Chaudhary, M. N., Jafri, S. Z., Malik, S., Ali, N., & Awan, D.-e. S. (2022). Climate Change And Its Impacts On Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology , 9195-9217*.
13. Jan, A., Khan, T. A., & Mahsud, M. I. (2020). The climate Change awareness and literacy in Pakistan: role of media and social actors. *Liberal Arts & Social Sciences International Journal, 4(2), 256– 266*.

14. Junichi Okado, Bin Ai, Yuren Hasama, Naoko Sakurai, Yoshinori Fujiwara, & Danji Hoshi. (2003). Covariance structure analysis of health-related indicators for elderly people living at home, focusing on subjective sense of health. *Comprehensive Urban Research*, 81, 19-30.
15. Khan, S., & Khan, R. M. (2016). Role of Media in Tackling Climate Change Issue—A Case Study of Pakistan. *Margalla Papers*, 20(1).184-190.
16. Lindwall, C. (2022). *What Are the Effects of Climate Change?* NRDC. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-are-effects-climate-change#weather>.
17. McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187. <https://doi.org/10.1086/267990>
18. Painter, J. (2013). *Climate Change in the Media: Reporting Risk and Uncertainty*. London: I.B. Tauris.
19. Schmidt, A., Ivanova, A., & Schäfer, M. S. (2013). Media attention for climate change around the world: A comparative analysis of newspaper coverage in 27 countries. *Global Environmental Change*, 23(5), 1233-1248.
20. Schmidt, A., Ivanova, A., & Schäfer, M. S. (2013). Media attention for climate change around the world: A comparative analysis of newspaper coverage in 27 countries. *Global Environmental Change*, 23(5), 1233-1248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.07.020>