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Role of Print Media During COVID-19: A Content Analysis of Daily Mashriq and Daily Aaj in Pakistan

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Abstract: *Print media plays a key role in raising awareness among people and in the public understanding of various issues. This study discusses the role the print media during COVID-19 pandemic how the print media raises awareness among people in the contagion. Using a quantitative method, the researchers analysed the contents of two leading newspapers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, daily Mashriq and Daily Aaj. The study then achieved the results regarding how they reported the stories in various dimensions such as awareness, negative, positive aspects, etc.*

Introduction

Print media plays a very vital role in today's society. Print media play an important role in increasing public awareness. In this study, we discuss what role the print media play during Covid-19, how the print media help to aware people in the Covid-19 pandemic as we know that even in this age of social media, the general public still values the recognised print media outlets as reliable, trustworthy sources of information during times of trouble. Print media is considered the oldest media, which disseminates printed materials. Print media includes a number of forms such as newspapers, magazines, books, newsletters, advertising, memos, business forms, etc. The most vital and significant role of print media is to disseminate information in a written form to a specific targeted audience for whom a particular set of data has been meant. It implies that there would never be any wastage of vital information, and thus the primarily concerned audience

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would get the maximum benefit from the written data. Print Media is one of the trustworthy media of mass communication. Many people think that there is an end of the print media after the new media came, but the trust and faith what people have on print media cannot be gained by electronic as well as the new media.

For our research study, we selected two mainstream newspapers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, i.e. daily Aaj and daily Mashriq. We collected information from articles of these two newspapers in the month of May in which a strict lockdown had been enforced due to coronavirus throughout the country.

Daily Aaj newspaper is a member of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society. It is an Urdu language newspaper founded by AW Yousafi (late) in 1989. Nowadays it is being published from Peshawar, Islamabad and Abbottabad. Yousafi earlier also served as bureau chief of daily Jang from 1961 to 1965.

The second newspaper that we selected is daily Mashriq, an Urdu-language newspaper published from Peshawar. It was founded in 1963 by Inayat Ullah Khan. In 1964, the newspaper was nationalized by the military regime of Ayub Khan, and subsequently, it became part of the National Press Trust (NPT), which was established to manage nationalized independent newspapers in order free media. In 1967, the NPT re-launched the paper from Peshawar and another edition from Karachi. In 1972, the third edition from Quetta was added. It remained in government hands until the government of Benazir Bhutto abolished the NPT in 1994 and privatized all newspapers. Nowadays, this paper is owned by Ayaz Badshah.

Research Question
The research has the following main question:

- How have daily Aaj and daily Mashriq covered the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of placement on various pages and content?

Research Objective

- What role these two leading newspapers play in the awareness of people.
- To explore how they disseminate positive, negative and education news about pandemic to aware people.

Literature Review
In finding solutions to the problems in my study, different articles, journals, magazines, books, websites etc. have been studied. Some of them are mentioned below;

Shafi elaborates (2020) that print and electronic media were the main actors on the screen of war against COVID, which saved millions of lives in Pakistan. Though some persons lost their lives before the media became aware of the pandemic, it reciprocally saved the majority of lives in the society by warning the public of deadly outbreak COVID. In addition, the sudden outbreak

of COVID, its deadly massacre and long-lasting effects forced the government of Pakistan to enforce emergency for the time being. This step jeopardized the small, medium and large-sized enterprises in Pakistan either directly or indirectly. The first sudden lockdown made the economy of Pakistan fell one-third of its rising and increasing rate. The pace of economy slowed down each and every economic generating element, thus caused disparity and disappointment among these elements.

Sahni & Sharma (2020) says that in the war against the epidemic, the role of media cannot be neglected. It was the reign of fear and terror in the hearts of the people against COVID and media helped the people to be pacific in their dealings and affairs by making them aware of SOPs. The SOPs provided by media helped the people up to a great extent which alternatively reduced the infections and attacks of COVID-19.

According to Bilal, Latic, Bashir, Komal and Tan (2020), this was a great challenge amid the conglomerate of various other challenges in the world in general and Pakistan in particular. Electronic media adopted an aggressive strategy against COVID by describing its features of assault to the common man of the society. A threat is great when the opponent is not aware of his rival's weakness. Same is the case between COVID and people. People became aware of the weaknesses of COVID i-e its attack, the timing of the attack, its easily accessible victims etc. It was due to media. The same deterrence was also done by the print media through the power of the pen.

Powell (2020) says that if media had not spread the information of COVID viral infection, Pakistan would have been hit hardly by COVID. When the first case arose, it was media which circulated that a virus which is airborne and transmittable has been observed in the Lahore city of Pakistan. It shocked the nation. Abruptly, the people adopt preventive steps by making their selves under house arrest.

Tang (2020) states that media apparently made obvious the true picture of the government of Pakistan against COVID. Pakistan helped the poor by delivering them food and other necessities in time of lockdown. It also allowed the trading elements of Pakistan i-e industry, agriculture, governmental machinery etc. to continue their duties under SOPs. It also purchased a huge amount and variety of medical equipments from China, Japan, North and South Korea, USA and the like for the precautionary measures and for the treatment of COVID infected patients in Pakistan.

Raccanello & Viventini & Rocca & Barnaba & Hall& Burro (2020) state the very symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, sneezing, sore throat, high and cold fever. Media disclosed these symptoms by providing this information reachable to the common man. Similarly, the people became conscious of the epidemic and followed the preventive course of conduct, which resulted in the low scale death and infectious rate as compared to the larger scale.

Zunaira & Firdos & Arif (2020) While media was the staunch oppressor of COVID intellectually; it foretold the messages of health hazardous COVID attacks. It educated the masses

of viral infections, about its symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and feedback of the treatment that either if the methods and instruments of the treatment were effective of not.

Waris & Atta & Ali & Asmat & Basit (2020) elaborate that following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Pakistan, the mainstream media has constantly been striving to provide credible and relevant information as an alternative to the bumblebee government, which has traditionally missed views, attitudes and opinions - including women, minorities and experts and the general public. Citizens and opinion makers have also gained prominence in the social media and electronic fields. Another unusual thing is the increased diversity of tones and thoughts that cause infection. The official COVID-19 response seems to be that some sections of society are shouting with concern that the government is ignoring them. They are not finding a voice in the general mainstream media, but they are finding a platform in the electronic media across Pakistan. This confirms our mandate to increase the wide spectrum of diverse and multilateral votes in Pakistan.

Rehmat (2020) says that the government of Pakistan is taking all measures against COVID-19 to provide and ensure the state liabilities to its people. From the first day, the first case was compiled in the city of Karachi in Sindh, all services and measures were used with the utmost efficiency to ensure the safety of life in the area. Meanwhile, all cases have a travel history, suggesting that the transmissions should be imported elsewhere in the country. The Government of Pakistan provides COVID-19 mitigation strategies with its own actions. Early case identification and contact identification and tracking to prevent the spread of COVID-19, risk communication, social distance, quarantine and isolation.

Research Methodology

In this section, we discuss how we collected information from all relevant sources to find answers to the research problem. This study employed content analysis. In this research, we used the quantitative method and collected data from two main leading Urdu newspapers daily Aaj and daily Mashriq. We took 62 stories, i.e. 31 from daily Mashriq and 31 from Daily Aaj from the month of May 2020.

Data

For this study, we collected data from two main leading newspapers Daily Mashriq and Daily Aaj Newspaper. The duration of this data is one month (May 2020). The total number of sample newspaper is 62. We collected data from thirty-one copies of daily Mashriq while thirty-one from daily Aaj. From that, all newspaper the collection of data is in coding sheet using SPSS about coverage of COVID-19, which is printed on the front page of the newspaper. The collected data about the awareness, information, positive, negative, and neutral statements about COVID-19, which is printed by print media.

For all this data, we further used SPSS for analysis. While the entry of data in SPSS is to give dummy numbers to the variables. The coding sheets contain the following format:

Month_____ **Year**_____ **Newspaper**_____

S.No	Date	Page	Column				Nature			Purpose			News sources
		F	1	2	Above	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Awareness	Information	Education	

Explanation of Coding Sheets Are Below:

S.No

The serial number means how many observations we have.

Date

The data shows that the data we have from which day.

Page

Means that from which page of the newspaper the coverage was found. So, our coverage page is the front page. In the SPSS we give dummy number of "1" which means front page.

Column

Column use for the coverage of pattern that is the story is one column, two-column, or more than two columns, for more than two columns here denote the word above. The dummy numbers used for this part is 1= one, 2=two, and 3=above.

Nature

Here the nature meaning is that what type of news are. Whether the news of COVID-19 is positive, negative, and neutral. Dummy for positive=1, negative=2, and neutral=3.

Purpose

Purpose shows what type of news (Awareness, Education, Information). Dummy for Awareness=1, Education=2, Information=3, Awareness and Information=4, and awareness and education=5.

News Source

That what is the source of news (News disk, Reporter, Newsagency). Dummy for News Disk=1, Reporter=2, and News Agencies =3.

Data Analysis

This chapter presents our finding and analysis and how we used data. For this investigation, the data run by SPSS software and make the Frequency tables by the help of Frequency test in SPSS for all the collected sample.

The tables and interpretation are discussed below:

Table 1. Column

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	One	19	6.7	6.7
	Two	112	39.6	39.6
	Above	152	53.7	53.7
	Total	283	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows that 54% of the stories were there are above than two columns, while 40% of them were two column stories, and 7% of them were one column stories in the newspapers.

Table 2. Nature

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Positive	192	67.8	67.8
	Neutral	91	32.2	32.2
	Total	283	100.0	100.0

Table 2 show that 68% of the stories where there is positive, while 32% of them are neutral in the newspapers.

Table 3. Purpose

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Awareness	59	20.8	20.8
	Education	58	20.5	20.5
	Information	46	16.3	16.3
	Awareness/Information	86	30.4	30.4
	Awareness/Education	34	12.0	12.0
	Total	283	100.0	100.0

Table 3 show that 30% of the stories were there are about the awareness/information, while 21% were about awareness, whereas 21% were about education, and 16% were about information, and 12% of them were about awareness/education.

Table 4. News Source

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	NEWS desk	116	41.0	41.0
	Reporter	70	24.7	24.7
	news agency	97	34.3	34.3
	Total	283	100.0	100.0

Table 4 shows that 41% of the stories were given by news disk, while 34% of stories were given by news agency and 25% of stories were given by the reporter.

Conclusion

The results of this study were suggested that print media has been playing a vital role in spreading awareness of the pandemic of coronavirus disease. For this study, we chose the two leading Urdu medium mainstream newspapers daily Aaj and daily Mashriq for the month of May 2020. We studied 62 newspaper copies. We observed the front page of both newspapers in which 54% of the stories were above two columns, and 40% of them were about two columns stories, while 7% of them were one columns story in the newspaper. Also, 68% of the stories in the newspaper are positive, and 32% of them were neutral. About 30% of stories were on information and awareness of the masses, 21% were about education, and 16% was about information. In these, 41% of the stories were given by the news desk, and 34% of stories were given by the news agencies, and 25% was given by the reporters.

It is clear from the analysis of both newspapers that print media is playing a very strong role by conveying the right information to the people. These newspapers publish the news related to coronavirus on the front page. Such efforts by the leading newspaper have been extremely vital in clearing the doubts and myths on Covid-19.

The study also proved that print media is playing a very positive role, and most of the stories raised awareness among readers and educated them not only on symptoms of the disease but also how to prevent it. The print media-aware the people about the COVID-19 and give them information about the disease and daily changes in the death ratio and newly infected cases. By the help of print media, many backward areas knew about the pandemic, and everyone got aware of the symptoms. Print media also teaches the people how they can be safe from this pandemic.

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