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## Treatment Of Environmental Issues In Leading Pakistani Dailies



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**Abstract:** *Environmental issues are contemplated as the most frightening and challenging issues that occurred due to climate change. These environmental issues are disturbing the whole world including living species. Pakistan is also facing issues regarding environmental changes. Pakistan is considered the 7th most susceptible country in terms of environmental disasters. The current research is conducted to study and analyze the treatment of Pakistani English papers in the coverage of ecological issues and the basic drive of this research is to evaluate the “media representation of environmental issues” as discussed in leading Pakistani dailies (Dawn and The News). The content analysis is used to know the frequency and direction of environmental issues. The universe of the study contains textual content of print media including news stories and editorials. It is concluded that The News, gives more coverage to environmental issues as compared to Dawn newspaper in terms of news stories and editorials.*

**Key Words:** Environmental Issues, Media Representation, Pakistani English Dailies, Content Analysis

### Introduction

Presently, mass media has become an essential part of every nook and corner of life. Apart from illuminating and updating awareness, additionally, the key role of media is to educate the masses by highlighting serious environmental issues and their impact (Fursich, 2010), as media coverage is connected with the societal development of reality. The other researcher stated that the media builds reality in readers' minds (Hannigan, 2006).

Environmental issues are considered alarming issues that risk millions of lives. According to the WHO Global Health

Observatory, approximately two hundred casualties per one hundred thousand are happening due to climate crisis aspects in Pakistan. Teravainen pointed out that Media coverage is acknowledged to be an active tool in understanding science and information to the masses (2014). It is not astounding that the community view about many issues like climate change or many others resembles the evidences depicted by the prominent genre of media (Peters & Heinrichs, 2008).

Boykoff argued that Mass Media coverage of climate crisis can take part in numerous fields,

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logical, political, and social (2009). Hansen (2011), stated that the concept of media treatment can permit us to recognize more profoundly why certain climate issues are capable of seizing society's consideration whereas further issues vanish from the media and public consideration. Still, distortion of climate crisis updates particularly in the media can happen, which creates misperception among the community (Cho, 2010).

Climate changes present in dailies based on the preferences of the environmental reporters (Massey & Ramanathan, 2001) and news publishing supervisor (Young & Dugas, 2011) through the process of "agenda setting" which selects which kind of matter they found as imperative to display to the masses (Elmasry, 2012; Hannabuss, 1995).

In Pakistan, environmental issues are considered alarming and burning issues in the Lexus of improvement and progress. It is distinguished that the main portion of published research on environmental issues is in Europe based while Asian region attained only minimum portions of learned devotion (Schäfer & Schlichting, 2014). This study is reinforced by the conclusions of another research conducted in Pakistan, according to which Pakistani media provides the minimal opportunity to address this issue (Kamboh & Yousaf, 2019). The basic aim of the present research is to evaluate the treatment given to climate related aspects by selected Pakistani print media and what role do media play to alert the public regarding climate change.

The rationale of the present study is to observe the media exposure of climate change issues in order to know whether the media is paying attention to this issue or not. Likewise, it also pinpoints how much consideration is given to environmental issues by selected Pakistani English dailies (Dawn and The News) these are considered Pakistan's leading and most influential English dailies by means of their reporting, reliability, and distribution networks, from January 2021 to December 2021. This is done to

comprehend the agenda of dailies and editorials related to the environment. The media should play a substantial role in addressing climate change problems faced by Pakistan, as people rely frequently on media.

## Research Questions

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- How much attention has print media given to environmental issues among Pakistani English dailies throughout the chosen time period?
- Which frame of the environmental issue is given more coverage?
- Which environmental issue has been given more coverage?
- What role is the media playing in aware the public about environmental issues?

## Hypothesis

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H1. It is more likely that The News has given more coverage to environment issues than Dawn news.

H0. It is more likely the Dawn news has given more coverage to environmental issues than The News.

The topic of the current research is "News coverage of environmental issues in mainstream dailies of Pakistan" and the literature highlights the issues of the previous thirty years that Environmental communication has grown very quickly in articles, magazines, and books. Past studies state that the first day of the earth in 1970 was very much important and it further wanted the attention of different media outlets (Bowman, 2003; Brooks, 2002; Burke, 2005, Cantril & Oravec, 2010; De Mott & Tom, 2012). Earth is facing issues of global warming, extreme weather conditions, flood rainfall, and pollution. All of these issues are causing environmental hazards. Environmental issues are mainly the result of exploitation and human interference around the globe. These issues are prominent in 3rd world countries and underdeveloped countries and this noticeable problem doesn't seem to end soon.

Different scholars critiqued that journalists usually cover environmental issues as a subject only (Greenberg et al, [1989](#)). The other argued that the journalists didn't cover and report the critical issues; they only covered those issues which they considered important (Sachsman, [1999](#)). For instance; most journalists often try to search for new material but sometimes it is critical for them to cover the issue of the environment because it needs special skills and a lot of hard work to bring out some facts about the environment. After giving coverage to environmental communication, Western news organizations create many mistakes in reporting and covering the issue and different awareness campaigns failed to create awareness and bring a change in culture to solve this issue at a larger level (Allan, [2002](#)). It was investigated that the institute of tropical rain deforestation gives coverage to this issue but still they failed to overcome and cope with this issue (Lundburg, [1984](#)). Another argument is that journalists tend to give coverage to the issue at the time when the crises occurred.

Gore (2006), acknowledged that environmental issues become a global threat and it needs the proper attention of the media. Alam (2015) states that print media or electronic media plays an important role in awareness of several societal and many other issues in today's world. In this way Print media especially, dailies play a prominent role by informing the public about disastrous and critical issues. The main responsibility of the media is to keep the public aware of the natural happenings and disasters not only around the entire world but also at the national and local levels.

According to Elkin, climate change issues have become dangerous (1995). Pollution heavily affects public health and also disturbs the economy of the country. It is seen previously that around the entire world 18 countries are facing climate problems of which 10 are in Asia regarding different perspectives like Hydro use, pollution, and the atomic need for water.

Moreover, the rising sea level is bringing climate change and it acquires almost 45% of the water (Slovic, [1986](#)). Environmental changes nowadays are a global concern because there are so many changes occurring around the world during the last two decades. Pakistan is one of those countries that are facing very serious threats like global warming, pollution, food scarcity, smog, earthquakes, and floods. All these happenings are because of environmental changes. Environmental communication is totally different from other communication because it needs special skills to educate, be aware and inform the public about environmental changes, their effects, and future consequences.

### **Environmental Developments**

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In the 1970s, Environmental issues and their impacts on the earth have been acknowledged, discoursed, and recognized with the man-made emission of pollution that causes the change in the earth's climate system. (Landsberg, [1970](#); Hoffert, [1974](#); Wang, Yung & Lacin, [1976](#); Rotty, [1979](#)). The year 1990, was a slither of scientific reports issued on climate change and environmental issues. In this year, IPCC issued its First Assessment Report on climate, and almost 700 scientists released the Scientists' Declaration. In 1992 media coverage continued to increase. The most noticeable and heavily covered event this year was the conference on Environmental issues and their Development which is held in the United State. Another increase in coverage was reported in 2001–2002, amid the new evidence (rising ocean temperatures) and the IPCC Third Assessment Report that provided strong evidence that global warming had anthropogenic ancestries (McFarling, [2001](#)). Media analysis on environmental issues helps in shaping public attitudes and perceptions towards the issue. A number of factors are involved in shaping these factors; mass media coverage is a key contributor (Bykoff & Roberts, 2007; Stecula & Merkley 2019).

## Environmental Issues in Pakistan

From 1999 to 2018 due to high weather conditions, Pakistan has been ranked the 5th most suffering country in the world (Eckstein et al. [2020](#)). Pakistan's economy is mostly based on agriculture (Rehman et al. [2015](#)), and any changes in temperature and distractions in water accessibility and heavy rain can cause destruction on the conditions of the already unadorned problems of poverty and food security in the country. In 1998 to 2018, Pakistan has viewed 152 life-threatening weather conditions and has lost almost 9999 lives and agonized economic losses cost \$3.8 billion. (Abubakar, [2020](#)).

### 2.3 The State of Environmental Issues and Journalistic Priorities

Many researchers argue that mass media are key factors in the identification and clarification of environmental issues (Schoenfeld et al., [1979](#); Spector & Kitsuse, 1977). Like Pakistan, other evolving states also give less coverage to environmental issues (Azmi et al., [2015](#)). Past studies revealed that Middle East, African, European and Asian countries received an abrupt increase in coverage which was comparatively lower than the United Kingdom (Boykoff & Roberts, [2007](#)). Furthermore, Kim states that many European and also Asian countries like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are giving less focus or coverage to environmental research ([2011](#)).

## Media and Environment

The environment exists in our surroundings and consists of the physical, chemical, ecological, biological, and other natural surroundings. Media and the environment are closely related because people get awareness through media about the environment. Burgees claims that currently the role of mass media in shaping public opinion about environmental issues has been well acknowledged (Burgees, 1990). In the public and private sectors, social media plays a significant role, in upscaling and stabilizing norms, describing specific issues, and then presenting

news stories dailies, and then interpreted by individuals. Pakistani media formulate an agenda for public opinion and generate a link between the public and the Government and set the environment for human development, and it raises public issues for solution (Hanan et al., [2016](#)). Media accountability is not limited to pouring information but it needs to draw public attention through its accurate and reliable material on environmental concerns such as food, water, energy, and health. The public in turn can put pressure on the government to respond vigorously (Riaz, [2018](#)).

The researchers have selected Framing and Agenda Setting theory because these are very much suitable in defining how media according to its policy highlights issues and make them important for people to read.

## Methods

Quantitative content analysis is applied to gather data. The primary based data is collected from papers from the Govt Punjab Public Library while the secondary data is collected through articles and journals. The researchers selected news and editorials related to environmental issues as unit of analysis.

The following frames are used for the analysis of this study.

- Global warming
- Pollution
- Smog
- Storm
- Rainfall
- Others

## Results

This study is designed to investigate the treatment given to environmental issues in Pakistani English dailies. Study implies the technique of content analysis of two Pakistani leading dailies Dawn and The News. Coverage is determined in terms of news stories and editorials. Selected time period (i.e., January to December 2021) is taken for the

study. The frames selected for the study are Global warming, Storm, Pollution, Smog, Rainfall and others.

This section consists of data analysis and findings of the research topic, entitled as” News Coverage

of Environmental issues in Mainstream English Papers of Pakistan”.

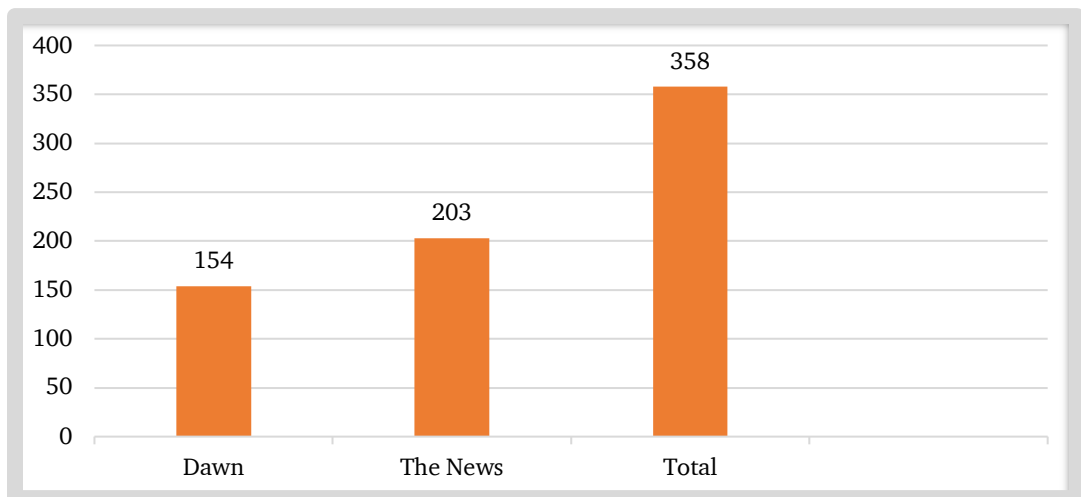
H1. It is more likely that The News has given more coverage to environment issues than Dawn newspaper.

**Table 1**

*Number of news stories on environmental issues*

| Months       | Dawn       | The News   |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| January      | 14         | 21         |
| February     | 6          | 13         |
| March        | 5          | 6          |
| April        | 10         | 24         |
| May          | 11         | 14         |
| June         | 18         | 14         |
| July         | 28         | 17         |
| August       | 18         | 16         |
| September    | 10         | 19         |
| October      | 10         | 8          |
| November     | 16         | 24         |
| December     | 8          | 28         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>154</b> | <b>204</b> |

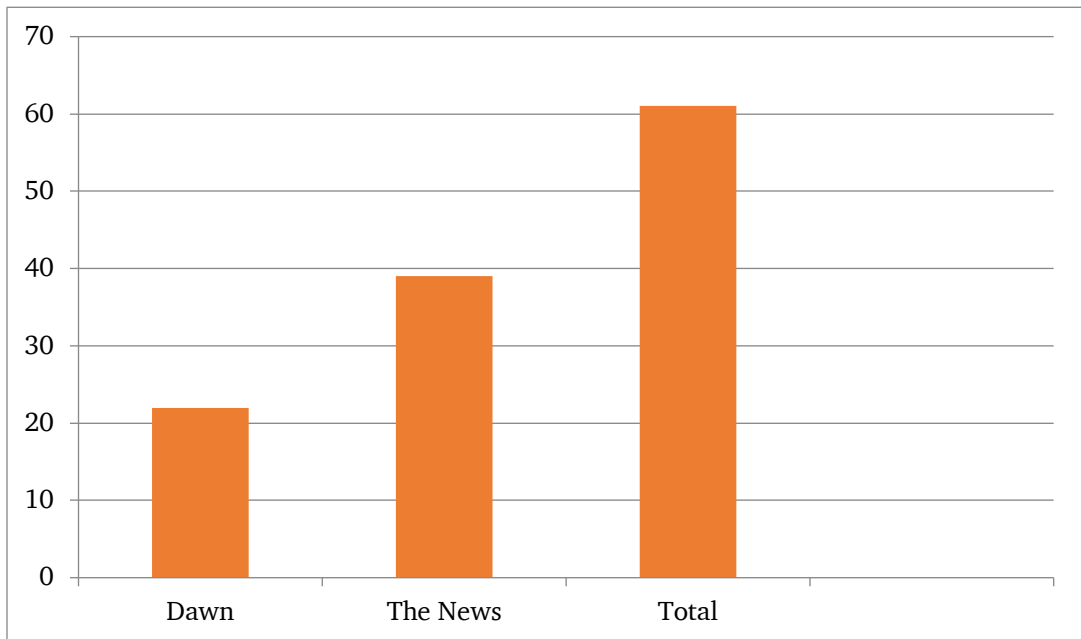
The table shows the frequency of coverage concerning environmental issues in the selected Pakistani dailies. The selected newspaper of Pakistan published total 358 news stories. The table shows that The News reported total 204 stories on the environmental issues in 2021, and Dawn reported total 154 stories on environmental issues. It means that The News has given more coverage to environment issues than Dawn.



**Table 2**  
*Number of Editorials on Environmental Issues*

| Months       | Dawn      | The News  |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| January      | 2         | 2         |
| February     | 0         | 1         |
| March        | 3         | 2         |
| April        | 2         | 2         |
| May          | 3         | 1         |
| June         | 1         | 3         |
| July         | 2         | 7         |
| August       | 3         | 6         |
| September    | 1         | 1         |
| October      | 2         | 2         |
| November     | 4         | 7         |
| December     | 2         | 3         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>39</b> |

Table shows the frequency of editorials on environmental issues in the selected English dailies of Pakistan. In 2021 the selected newspaper of Pakistan reported total 61 editorials. The table highlights that The News reported total 39 editorials on the environmental issues in 2021, while Dawn reported total 22 editorials on environmental issues.



**Table 3**

*Number of News Stories*

| <b>Newspaper</b> | <b>No. of News Stories</b> |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Dawn             | 154                        |
| The News         | 204                        |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>358</b>                 |

Table shows that in 2021, total 358 news stories were reported on environmental issues in Pakistan. This table shows that The News has given highest coverage to environmental issues as compared to Dawn.

**Table 4**

*Number of Editorials*

| <b>Newspaper Name</b> | <b>No. of Editorials</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Dawn                  | 22                       |
| The News              | 39                       |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>61</b>                |

Table show that in 2021, total 61 editorials were reported on environmental issues in Pakistan. The News report 39 editorials and dawn report 22 editorials on environmental issues. This table also shows that The News has given highest coverage to editorials on environmental issues as compared to Dawn.

**Table 5**

*Frames used in Dawn regarding Environmental Issues*

| <b>Frames</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> |
|----------------|------------------|
| Global Warming | 3                |
| Pollution      | 6                |
| Smog           | 12               |
| Storm          | 14               |
| Rainfall       | 35               |
| Others         | 84               |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>154</b>       |

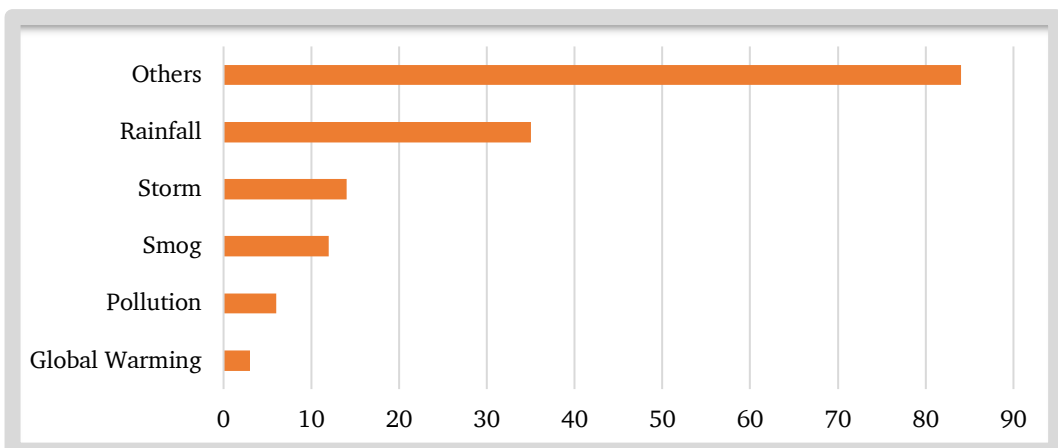


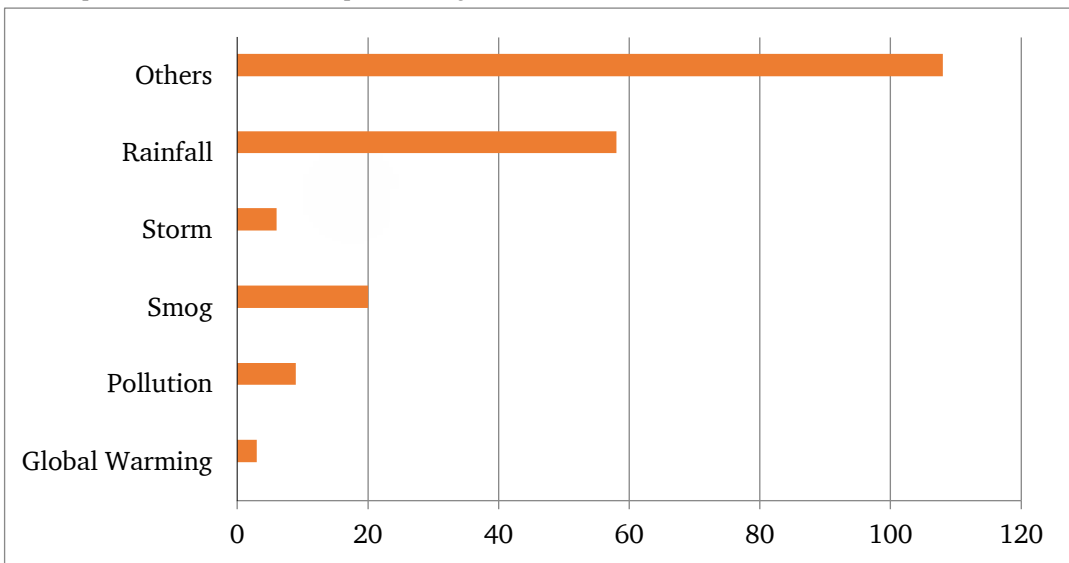
Table shows that Dawn newspaper has reported total 154 frames on environmental issues in Pakistan. The table represents that 3 stories are reported on global warming, 6 on pollution, 12 on smog, 14 on storm, 35 on rainfall and 84 on other frames that didn't match any of the category.

**Table 6**  
*Frames used in The News regarding Environmental Issues*

| Frames         | Frequency  |
|----------------|------------|
| Global Warming | 3          |
| Pollution      | 9          |
| Smog           | 20         |
| Storm          | 6          |
| Rainfall       | 58         |
| Others         | 108        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>204</b> |

This table shows that The News reported total 204 frames on environmental issues in Pakistan. The table represents, 3 stories are reported on global

warming, 9 on pollution, 20 on smog, 06 on storm, 58 on rainfall and 108 on other frames that didn't match any of the category.



**Discussion**

The study is based on the content analysis of news stories and editorials of the dailies. According to the findings of the selected newspaper researchers discuss and analyze the following research questions.

How much attention has the media given to environmental issues among Pakistani English dailies throughout the selected period?

The results show that The News has given more coverage to environmental issues as compared to the Dawn newspaper. The News reported 204 news stories in the selected period while Dawn reported 154 news stories in the selected period. Results also indicate that The News published 39 editorials on environmental issues and Dawn newspaper published 22 editorials on environmental issues during the selected period. In Pakistan, The News gives more coverage to Environmental issues in terms of news stories and editorials in 2021.



Which frame of the environmental issue is given more coverage?

Environment issues are not discussed in detail, rather only weather updates are discussed by the print media. The dailies have reported the "Other" frame of the environment as compared to global warming, smog, storm, rainfall, and pollution.

Which environmental issues have been given more coverage by the papers?

The researchers analyzed the results and found out that both the selected newspapers have given high coverage of rainfall. During the selected time frame The News reported 58 news stories which are based on rainfall while Dawn reported 35 news stories on rainfall.

### **Conclusion**

Environmental issues are gradually increasing day by day. Media being a key actor plays an important role to disseminate information at a large level but still fails to spread awareness and protective measures to deal with it. Media has given more coverage to political issues, terrorism, rape cases, and other fewer concern issues but did not consider environmental issues as of prime importance. In this study, the researchers analyze two mainstream English newspapers and examine how much focus they have given to environmental issues. The present study is conducted to explore and investigate the coverage given to environmental issues by the English dailies of Pakistan. The study is based on content analysis of two newspapers Dawn and The News. The coverage is determined in terms of news stories and editorials. The selected period is one year from January to December 2021. The main frames

What role is the media playing in informing the public about environmental issues?

Environmental issues are increasing day by day but unfortunately, the media is not paying full attention to these issues. Print media can play a prominent role through content publications and covering environmental stories but media report these issues and news in the newspaper after the environmental disaster occurs and don't publish any protective measures to deal with the disastrous situation. Media should contribute to this situation and create consciousness and awareness of environmental issues for the better awareness among the masses.

selected for the study are Global Warming, Pollution, Smog, Storm, Rainfall, and others. It is concluded that The News published more environmental issues as compared to the Dawn newspaper. The researchers analyzed that still, the number of news stories and editorials is less as compared to the need and demand of the issue. In Pakistan, people are facing many environmental challenges daily. The European media is working hard to create documentaries and informative articles to inform the public at large about this issue, but unfortunately, Pakistan's print media is giving less coverage to environmental issues. There is news about environmental issues but people are not aware of how to deal with and how solve these issues. A major reason behind this is less educated and less aware journalists. Therefore, it is the duty and responsibility of the media to discuss environmental issues more effectively.

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