

Media Treatment of the Internally Displaced Persons from Swat

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Abstract

The paper explores that how three English newspapers of Pakistan, i.e. Daily The Nation, Daily The News and Daily Dawn treated the issue of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Swat, which was resulted after the military operation in the Swat valley, as a part of the war on terror after 9/11 incident. The content analysis of news stories and editorials of sample newspapers for a period of three months after the crisis started in Swat highlights the facts that how the media treated the great crisis situation of the Internally Displaced Persons. Total number of stories and editorials analyzed in study about the IDPs was 270, out of which there were 219 News Stories and 51 editorials. The help of Media Framing Theory has been sought to answer the Research Questions. The News overall gave the space to maximum number of News Stories and Editorials by publishing a total of 101 stories while Dawn gave the smallest coverage to the issue. The topic 'Government's Support' got the largest coverage, while the topic 'Opinion Leaders' got the minimum coverage in the three newspapers. It is important to note that there was not found any significant difference in the mean story lengths in various categories of the study including Slants and Frames.

Introduction

The world has witnessed many drastic changes as a result of terrorist attacks in United States of America in September, 2001. The world was told by the super power to either support the US in the war on terror or face the consequences. So, Pakistan decided to aid the US in the war on terror, which resulted severe unrest in the whole country especially the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and we are still facing the consequences. The war on terror has taken lives of thousands of troops and innocent Citizens, and displacing millions of innocent citizens from the regions of their origins.

In May 2009, the war on terror caught strength and to crush the Talibans settled in the Swat valley, the Pakistan army started military action in the valley. Swat Crisis is termed as the largest Humanitarian and Displacement Crisis of the world in the recent times, which compelled about a million people to flee the conflict zone while killing hundreds of innocent civilians as according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and Pakistani officials. Most of the Internally Displaced Persons rushed to the safer regions like Charsadda, Mardan, Nowshera, Swabi, and Peshawar. (UNHCR official website)

Terrorism

Terrorism is actually the unlawful act or activities to damage the lives and materials of people or states.

Internally Displaced Persons

Internally Displaced Persons have recently come out as an international issue due to the changed political environment of the world after the Cold War and due to conflicts within the states. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) started its work for the prevention and protection of internally displaced persons from disastrous circumstances in early 1990s and therefore, a lot of attention has been devoted for protection and assistance of IDPs during the conflicts time.

According to the United Nations, more than 27 million people have been internally displaced in the year 2009, including Pakistan. The report of United Nations tells that Colombia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Pakistan have the largest population of the internally displaced persons in the world.

To ensure the protection of rights of Internally Displaced Persons, some Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement have been formulated by international community.

Some of problems, which the Internally Displaced Persons face during their exodus period are mentioned below:

Social Status, Work and Education

Though the Internally Displaced Persons have basic right to resume interaction with the supportive social network, however, at the end of crisis, some IDPs prefer remaining in camps. It also happens that “some people usually become passive and reluctant to take any kind of responsibility for their own lives after such crisis” (Black, 1998).

Legal and Political Rights

According to Newland (2003) Internally Displaced Persons lose political and legal rights while in displacement.

Food, Shelter and Livelihood

Food, Shelter and Livelihood is another thing which the Internally Displaced Persons lose during exodus period because they lost their belongings (Newland, 2003).

Land and Property

The Internally Displaced Persons usually lose their property and land they find great difficulty in getting them back (Newland, 2003).

Responsibility of Media

As stated by Marshal McLuhan, the world has transformed into a ‘global village’. Now in this global village, the media is having a big influence on attitude and behavior of society. Our thoughts, fashion, speech, dreams, and beliefs all bear the imprints of the media content. Like all wars, the role and responsibility of media in war on terror can never be set aside.

In the present media age, conflicts are not only viewed from the opposing parties’ perspectives but the media is also considered a party of conflicts. Media can heighten any conflict or can also make a big event smaller by ignoring it or by the techniques of Agenda Setting and Framing.

Objectives

This study has the following objectives:

1. To analyse the extent of the coverage given to Swat IDPs in leading English newspapers of Pakistan.
2. To examine the coverage pattern and editorial treatment of the Elite Pakistani Press with the issue of the IDPs from Swat.
3. To explore that how much space was given by the newspapers to the issue of IDPs from Swat.

Literature Review

Huang (2006) in his article “Framing the War: A Comparative Study of Coverage of Iraq War by two Chinese Newspapers and two US Newspapers” found that American newspapers used the frames in the coverage of Iraq war as freeing of people of Iraq from dictatorship of Saddam Hussain, however, newspapers from China framed the incident as violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

Gans (1979) detected ethnocentrism, individualism, and leadership as factors effecting news. Similarly, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) say that “the reporter’s framework, personal attitudes and orientations influence news construction.”

Shoemaker and Reese explain that “ideology is closely linked to powerful in society, which is played out through the media. At the ideological level we examine specifically how the media function as extension of powerful interest in society, how the routines, values and organizational structure combine to maintain a system of control.” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991: p.185)

Li (2009) in his study has explored how United States Television networks framed the 9/11 incident in their news coverage during the 24 hours and how the crisis affected the media coverage frames and treatment during the 24 hours of crisis.

The literature published on the conflicts that resulted in the displacement of people has not been found too much rich or theoretically exact. One of the major reasons of it is that the humanitarian community concentrates more on aid delivery than on the portrayal of different aspects and research. “When there is a growing literature on the Internally Displaced Persons, at the same time, there is very little theoretical work on the settlement of the internally displaced persons” (Muggah, 2003).

Framing Theory

Framing occurs at every stage as journalists analyze reasons; in this process of framing they imply moral judgments (Akhavan-Majid and Ramaprasad, 2000). Thus the Framing implies subjective involvements in presentation of an event or issue (Tuchman, 1978). The concept of Framing was presented by Erving Goffman in 1974, who was of the view that people always require the system of primary framework to perceive, recognize and label infinite number of happenings (Goffman, 1974).

Entman (1991) elaborates Framing as “the process of Framing occurs when media persons prioritize some aspects of a reality by using some keywords, phrases, and concepts that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts.”

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993) “we can study Framing as a strategy of processing and constructing news discourse.” Similarly Norris elaborates the process of framing by saying that “the journalists consciously or unconsciously use news frames to simplify, prioritize and structure the news discourse” (Norris, 1995).

Framing of News

According to Entman (1993), “news framing is to highlight some pieces or angles of a news item more than the others to affect the audience’s understanding in a wanted line”. So, we can say that framing is selection of some attributes of a news item and presenting them in mass media with more prominence and salience than other aspects.

Research Questions

Following are the Research Questions of the study.

Research Question 1: To what extent the national English newspapers of Pakistan gave importance to IDPs issue?

Research Question 2: What was the mean story length in the coverage of IDPs in the leading newspapers?

HYPOTHESES

The following are the Hypotheses of the research study:

Hypothesis 1: There will be more stories on the topics ‘Government’s Support’ and ‘Human Interest Aspect’ than on other topics.

Hypothesis 2: Overall, the mean story length in *The News* will be greater than *The Nation* and *Dawn*.

Hypothesis 3: The mean story length will be greater in ‘News Stories’ than in ‘Editorials’.

Hypothesis 4: The mean story length in frame ‘Taliban as Foe’ will be greater than in frame ‘Taliban as Friend’.

Methodology

The study is based on the Content Analysis of three English Pakistani newspapers i.e. Daily *The Nation* Islamabad, Daily *Dawn* Islamabad, and Daily *The News* Rawalpindi for a period of three months w.e.f. May 1, 2009 to July 31, 2009. The sample newspapers are widely circulated English newspapers in Pakistan, having a strong and well built professional repute. All the hardcopies of sample newspapers for the study period were collected and arranged in chronological order. All the editorials and news stories alongwith pictures published about IDPs from Swat on newspapers’ front and back pages were collected, coded and analyzed.

The slants of the news stories and editorials have also been analyzed in terms of favorable to government, unfavorable to government and neutral. For example, if a story contained information about good handling of IDPs by government, that story has been coded as favorable and otherwise has been coded as unfavorable. However, if paragraphs of story contained equal favorable and unfavorable slants, the story was coded as neutral.

Time Period

The newspapers have been contextually analyzed for a time period of three months with effect from May 1, 2009 to July 31, 2009. The main reason for selection of this time period is that the issue of the Internally Displaced Persons remained dominant in Pakistani print media during this time period after start of fight between the militants in Swat and Security Forces of Pakistan in the first week of May, 2009.

Topics/Aspects/Issues

Topic is the main theme of news content, about which the whole news story revolves. After initial reading and observing the coverage of the Internally Displaced Persons from Swat in different newspapers during the study period, the following 'Ten Topics' were identified and news items were coded according to these topics.

1. Political Leaders' visits to IDPs camps
2. Government's Financial/Physical Support
3. International Aid/Friends of Pakistan
4. Diplomatic/Political Activities between countries of the world
5. Military Operation/Armed conflict
6. Human Interest Aspects
7. Opinion Leaders (Sports, NGOs, Showbiz Stars etc.)
8. Medical Facilities
9. Unhealthy or Inhospitable Environments
10. Access to Basic Necessities

Length of Story

The length given by newspapers to news stories about the IDPs from Swat was also measured in centimeter square, which was calculated by multiplying the height of the news story with its width. It is usual that the news stories published on front and back pages carry the remaining parts of the story in inner pages of newspapers. So, the length of the remaining parts of the news stories was also measured from inner pages of newspapers and was included in the total measurement of the story.

Results

The research study analyzed the media coverage given to the IDPs from Swat in the newspapers. The data was analyzed by using SPSS, detail of which is explained below:

Description of the Population

The complete picture of the population of study is shown in Table 1, which shows that total number of stories and editorials analyzed is 270.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of newspapers' coverage of different categories

Categories	Frequency & Percentage
Total Number of stories	270
Newspaper	
Dawn	84 (31.1)
News	101 (37.4)
Nation	85 (31.5)
Type of Story	
News Story	219 (81.1)
Editorial	51 (18.9)

It can be seen that 84 stories were published in *Dawn*, which comprises 31.1 percent of total population, *The News* published 101 stories, which comprises 37.4 percent of total population. Similarly *The Nation* gave space to 85 stories, which is 31.5 percent of total population. In this way, we can observe that *The News* published the largest number of stories while *Dawn* published the smallest number of stories.

The Table 1 also shows that 219 News Stories appeared in sample newspapers which is 81.1 percent of total sample, while a total of 51 Editorials appeared in sample newspapers, which comprises 18.9 percent of total sample stories.

Research Question 1: To what extent the national English newspapers of Pakistan gave importance to IDPs issue?

Answer to R.Q. 1: During the study period, all the three sample newspapers gave greater importance to issue of IDPs from Swat, as can be seen in the Table 1. A total of 270 news items appeared, out of which, 219 'News Stories' and 51 'Editorials' were published, which is good amount of news coverage given to the issue.

Frequency Distribution of Topics In Coverage

For the coverage given to the different Topics/Aspect/Issues categorized in the research study to study the media content in detail and to observe the nature of the coverage, we can refer to Table 2, which clearly elaborates that a total of 09 news stories appeared in sample newspapers about 'Political Visits', 66 news stories about were published about 'Government's Support' and the topic 'International Aid' got 60 news stories.

Similarly, the topic 'Diplomatic Activities' secured 12 stories, 'Military Operation' got 15 stories, and 'Human Interest Aspects' was given space for 60 news stories. Furthermore, 06 stories were published about 'Opinion Leaders', 07 stories about 'Medical Facilities', 15 news items appeared about 'Inhospitable Environment' and 'Access to Basic Necessities' got space for 20 news items.

So, we can observe that the largest number of stories were published about 'Government's Support', which got space for 66 news stories.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of Topics in coverage

Topics/Aspects/Issues	Frequency & Percentage	Chi-Square
Political Visits	9 (3.3)	200.963; p=.000
Government's Support	66 (24.4)	
International Aid	60 (22.2)	
Diplomatic Activities	12 (4.4)	
Military Operation	15 (5.6)	
Human Interest Aspects	60 (22.2)	
Opinion Leaders	6 (2.2)	
Medical Facilities	7 (2.6)	
Inhospitable Environment	15 (5.6)	
Access to Basic Necessities	20 (7.4)	

Hypothesis 1: There will be more stories on the topics ‘Government's Support’ and ‘Human Interest Aspect’ than on other topics.

Substantiating H-1: When we refer to Table 2, we see that coverage on three topics ‘Government's Support’, ‘International Aid’ and ‘Human Interest Aspect’ is significantly greater than number of news stories on other topics. (Chi-Square = 200.963, p = 0.000)

So, the Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Coverage in Newspapers By Topics Of Stories

The Table 3 depicts a clear picture of the number of stories published about various topics of the study in three sample newspapers during the study period. We can see that *Dawn* published 02 stories, *The News* published 03 stories while *The Nation* published 04 stories about the topic ‘Political Visits’. The topic ‘Government’s Support’ secured 21 stories in *Dawn*, 21 in *The News* and 24 in *The Nation*.

Similarly, *Dawn* published 19 news stories about ‘International Aid’, while *The News* and *The Nation* published 24 and 17 stories respectively. The topic ‘Diplomatic Activities’ was given space for 2 stories by *Dawn*, 6 by *The News* and 4 by *The Nation*. Furthermore, 09 news items were published by *Dawn*, 03 by *The News* and 03 by *The Nation* regarding ‘Human Interest Aspects’. *The News* published 06 news items about topic ‘Opinion Leaders’, while *The News* and *The Nation* did not publish any news story about the topic.

Table 3: Coverage in the newspapers by Topics

Variable	Categories	Newspaper ID			Total
		Dawn	News	Nation	
Topic	Political Visits	2 (2.4)	3 (3.0)	4 (4.7)	9 (3.3)
	Government's Support	21 (25.0)	21 (20.8)	24 (28.2)	66 (24.4)
	International Aid	19 (22.6)	24 (23.8)	17 (20.0)	60 (22.2)

Diplomatic Activities	2 (2.4)	6 (5.9)	4 (4.7)	12 (4.4)
Military Operation	9 (10.7)	3 (3.0)	3 (3.5)	15 (5.6)
Human Interest Aspects	18 (21.4)	21 (20.8)	21 (24.7)	60 (22.2)
Opinion Leaders	0 (0.0)	6 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	6 (2.2)
Medical Facilities	3 (3.6)	3 (3.0)	1 (1.2)	7 (2.6)
Inhospitable Environment	7 (8.3)	6 (5.9)	2 (2.4)	15 (5.6)
Access to Basic Necessities	3 (3.6)	8 (7.9)	9 (10.6)	20 (7.4)

A total of 03 news stories were published by *Dawn* about the topic ‘Medical Facilities’, while the same topic was published by 03 and 01 time by *The News* and *The Nation* respectively. Similarly, *Dawn* published 7 stories while *The News* and *The Nation* published 06 and 02 stories respectively about ‘Inhospitable Environment’. The topic ‘Access to Basic Necessities’ was used in 03 stories by *Dawn* while *The News* published 08 stories and *The Nation* published 09 stories about the topic.

Mean Story Length in Newspapers, Type Of Story And Topics

About the mean length of stories about the IDPs, we may refer to Table No. 4, which tells us that the mean story length was 201.26 square centimeters in *Dawn*, 193.50 square centimeters in *The News* and 167.15 square centimeters in *The Nation*. Similarly, the mean story length with respect to ‘News Stories’ remained 197.25 while mean story length of ‘Editorials’ was 146.29.

Table 4: Mean Story Length in newspapers, type of story and topics

Categories	Mean Story Length in ‘Square Centimeter’	ANOVA
Newspapers		
Dawn	201.26	1.817; p=.164
News	193.50	
Nation	167.15	
Type of Story		
News Story	197.25	7.253; p=.008
Editorial	146.29	
Topic of Story		
Political Visits	266.78	1.952; p=.045
Government's Support	183.48	
International Aid	173.85	
Diplomatic Activities	151.33	
Military Operation	248.33	
Human Interest Aspects	212.92	
Opinion Leaders	106.17	
Medical Facilities	156.00	
Inhospitable Environment	181.40	
Access to Basic Necessities	147.50	

About the mean story length in the different topics of the study, the Table 4 tells us that stories published on the topic ‘Political Visits’ were having the largest mean story length i.e. 266.78 while the topic ‘Government’s Support’ had mean story length 183.48, ‘International Aid’ 173.85, ‘Diplomatic Activities’ 151.33, ‘Military Operation’ 248.33, ‘Human Interest Aspects’ 212.92, ‘Opinion Leaders’ 106.17, ‘Medical Facilities’ 156.00, ‘Inhospitable Environment’ 181.40 and the topic ‘Access to Basic Necessities’ was published with the mean story length of 147.50.

Research Question 2: What was the mean story length in the coverage of IDPs in the leading newspapers?

Answer to R.Q. 2: Table 4 shows that mean story length of news items published about the IDPs in *Dawn* was 201.26. The mean story length of news items published in *The News* was 193.50 while the mean story length of the stories published in *The Nation* was 167.15.

Hypothesis 2: Overall, the mean story length in *The News* will be greater than *The Nation* and *Dawn*.

Substantiating H-2: When we refer to Table 4, we see that there is no significant difference in the mean story length of news items published in the three sample newspapers about IDPs. (ANOVA = 1.817; p=.164)

So, the Hypothesis No. 2 is not supported.

Hypothesis 3: The mean story length will be greater in ‘News Stories’ than in ‘Editorials’.

Substantiating H-3: The Table 4 shows that the mean story length of ‘News Stories’ in the coverage was 197.25 while mean story length in the ‘Editorials’ was 146.29. So, the difference is significant. (ANOVA = 7.253; p=.008)

So, the Hypothesis No. 3 is supported.

Mean Story Length in Slants And Frames

When we have a glance on the Table No. 5, we get the information about the mean story length in Slants and Frames applied in the coverage of the Internally Displaced Person from Swat in sample newspapers during the study period.

Table 5: Mean Story Length in Slants and Frames

Categories	Mean Story Length	ANOVA
Slant		
Favorable	211.30	3.508; p=.031
Unfavorable	191.38	
Neutral	160.54	
Frame A		
IDPs as Burden	225.36	3.118; p=.080
IDPs as Co-Citizens	167.50	

Frame B		
War on Terror as Problem	203.80	3.575; p =.063
War on Terror as Solution	387.50	
Frame C		
Taliban as Foe	213.21	0.916; p=.342
Taliban as Friend	180.00	

The Table tells us that mean story length in stories carrying ‘Favorable’ slant was 211.30, the stories having ‘Unfavorable’ Slant were having mean story length of 191.38, while ‘Neutral’ Slant was published with mean story length of 160.54.

About the mean story length in Frames, the table shows that stories published with frame ‘IDPs as Burden’ were having the mean story length of 225.36 while the frame ‘IDPs as Co-Citizens’ was published with mean story length of 167.50. Similarly, the stories with frame ‘War on Terror as Problem’ were having a mean story length of 203.80, while stories with frame ‘War on Terror as Solution’ had a mean story length of 387.50.

When we talk about the mean story length in the categories of the FrameC, we see that frame ‘Taliban as Foe’ was used in stories with mean story length of 213.21 while frame ‘Taliban as Friend’ was published in stories with mean story length of 180.00.

Hypothesis 5: The mean story length in frame ‘Taliban as Foe’ will be greater than in frame ‘Taliban as Friend’.

Substantiating H-5: Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean story lengths of frames ‘Taliban as Foe’ and ‘Taliban as Friend’. (ANOVA = 0.916; p=.342)

So, the Hypothesis No. 5 is not supported.

Discussion and Results

The study explores the media coverage of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Swat as a result of an armed conflict. The study also compares the differences in the coverage in sample newspapers with respect to type of story, topics/aspects/issues, length of story, slants and frames.

The total number of stories and editorials was 270, out which a total of 219 News Stories (81.1), while 51 Editorials (18.9) were published. A total of 84 stories (31.1) were published by daily *Dawn*, *The News* published 101 stories (37.4), while *The Nation* published 85 stories (31.5). In this way, we can observe that *The News* gave the largest coverage to the issue while *Dawn* published the smallest number of stories. Similarly, *The News* published the largest number of Editorials i.e 20, *Dawn* published 18 Editorials while *The Nation* published 13 editorials about the Internally Displaced Persons during the study period of three months, which is quite a good number of editorials on a issue. This means that the Pakistani media gave due importance and salience to the issue of the IDPs as according to the Framing theory.

Similarly, the largest number of stories were published about the topic ‘Government’s Support’, which got space for a total of 66 news stories. Then two topics ‘International Aid’ and ‘Human

Interest Aspects' got equal number of stories i.e. 60. The topic 'Access to Basic Necessities' got 20 news items, then, topics 'Military Operation' and 'Inhospitable Environment' got equal number of news items (i.e. 15). 'Diplomatic Activities' got 12 stories, while topic 'Political Visits' got 09 stories, 'Medical Facilities' got 07 stories, while topic 'Opinion Leaders' got minimum coverage with only 06 stories. Though, the most cited topic was 'Government's Support', but the Slant used in maximum number of stories carrying this topic was 'Unfavorable to the Government'.

The mean story length was 201.26 square centimeters in *Dawn*, 193.50 square centimeters in *The News* and 167.15 square centimeters in *The Nation*. Similarly, the mean story length with respect to 'News Stories' remained 197.25 while mean story length of 'Editorials' was 146.29. Similarly, about the mean story length in different topics of study, the Table 4 tells us that stories published on topic 'Political Visits' were having the largest mean story length i.e. 266.78 while the topic 'Government's Support' had mean story length 183.48, 'International Aid' 173.85, 'Diplomatic Activities' 151.33, 'Military Operation' 248.33, 'Human Interest Aspects' 212.92, 'Opinion Leaders' 106.17, 'Medical Facilities' 156.00, 'Inhospitable Environment' 181.40 and the topic 'Access to Basic Necessities' was published with the mean story length of 147.50.

The mean story length in stories carrying 'Favorable' slant was 211.30, the stories having 'Unfavorable' Slant were having mean story length of 191.38, while 'Neutral' Slant was published with mean story length of 160.54. About the mean story length in Frames, we can observe that stories published with frame 'IDPs as Burden' were having the mean story length of 225.36 while frame 'IDPs as Co-Citizens' was published with mean story length of 167.50. Similarly, the stories with frame 'War on Terror as Problem' were having a mean story length of 203.80, while stories with frame 'War on Terror as Solution' had a mean story length of 387.50. Similarly, frame 'Taliban as Foe' was used in stories with mean story length of 213.21 while frame 'Taliban as Friend' was published in stories with mean story length of 180.00.

So, we can say that quite a good mean story length was given to the stories covering the issue of the IDPs and the Framing technique was used by the newspapers and different frames and slants were evident in the coverage of the IDPs.

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