

Agenda Setting and Framing of Water Issue: Analyzing the Role of Press in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: The media shapes public opinion and covers every social problem. Investigating "News Treatment of the Social Issues and Shaping the Public Opinion: The Agenda-Setting Function and Framing of Press in Pakistan" was the primary focus of this study. The study's goals were (a) to investigate how the two daily, Dawn and Jang, covered the social issue of clean drinking water. The objectives of the study were: (a) To analyze the distribution by gender when establishing the agenda and defining the importance of the social issue. (c) To determine the scope of social topics covered by Dawn and Jang, the two daily. (d) Examining the public agenda from the media viewpoint. (e) To determine the extent to which the readership of the two daily, Dawn and Jang, has changed their perceptions. Jang Lahore and the Daily Dawn made up the population. The sample consisted of news articles about the study's social issues that appeared on the front and back pages between January 1 January 1, 2015, and December 31 December 31, 2015. Using a suitable sampling technique, a sample of 300 respondents was chosen to represent the opinions of readers of these newspapers. One tool used to gather public opinion was a questionnaire. The main finding was that, in terms of news placement, Jang Newspaper covered every topic more extensively than Dawn. The Jang Newspaper's agenda is influenced by public opinion on clean water, suggesting that both newspapers should cover all social issues, advance the public agenda, and consider agenda-setting and framing concepts when reporting.

KEYWORDS: Agenda Setting, Framing, Water Issue, Pakistan, Print Media

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Introduction

The best awareness-raising tool is the mass media. It has the natural ability to influence people's opinions on any subject (Anholt, [2007](#)). By assisting viewers in prioritizing topics, the media fulfils its function as a change agent. The way the media covers any topic and disseminates information about it eventually affects how the audience perceives it (Kotler, [1971](#)). Accordingly, academics think that the media can affect public agenda and opinion (Andrews & Caren, [2010](#)). The ability of a community to comprehend what is going on around them is greatly aided by the media, particularly newspapers (Rosenthal, [2014](#)). Newspapers choose their headlines, front page lead, and the color and size of the headlines to give their audience hints (McCombs, [2002](#)). According to the researchers, the media was essential in the creation of reality (Yusuf et al., [2013](#)). Journalists immediately draw our attention to a unique story. This issue might be more widespread or generic (Gandy & Li, [2005](#)). People are given information about a certain problem that they are inclined to consider as fact, and

this process is intended to shape public opinions. Whether or not the topic is viewed objectively, people's opinions are impacted by the media's perceived fair and objective portrayal of it (Russell, [2013](#)). Media attention is beneficial for people to gain knowledge about the concerns and, in turn, determine the relative importance of each issue (McCombs & Shaw, [1972](#)).

Historical Background

Information affects the public policy decision-making process, which makes it a significant phenomenon. Public pressure is created when people are exposed to certain news articles that are motivated by agendas; this pressure must somehow be incorporated into the policy-making process (Baumgartner & Jones, [1991](#)). The print media's repeated publication of news in prominent locations, such as the front or back pages, establishes credibility with the audience and explains agenda-setting theory. The phenomenon of agenda-setting during the 1968 US presidential election has been explored by academics. One hundred Chapel Hill, North Carolina, residents participated in the study. According to the study's findings, the People's perceptions and media coverage were largely the same. Every time their theory continues to support the earlier findings, more than 400 comparable experiments have been carried out since 1968 (McCombs & Shaw, [1972](#)).

News Treatment of Social Issues and Shaping the Public Opinion

Media professionals obtain information from their own sources as well as from newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. They choose, mould, and create news stories out of minor details. According to Reese and Shoemaker ([2009](#)), "It is the process of selecting, writing, cutting, positioning, scheduling, repeating, and otherwise massaging information to become news." It is crucial to understand how gatekeeping actually works since the gatekeeper, who also serves as an editor, is in charge of giving us a clear picture of the world. Understanding the gatekeeper's or editor's work is equally important. Since the late 1950s, this topic has been examined and studied, and media and communication experts have created theories to comprehend its true scope and significance (Garton & Wellman, [1997](#)).

Agenda Setting

The public's knowledge of any significant topic is largely raised by the press. Any subject that receives a lot of journalistic coverage will eventually persuade the reader of its significance and become the agenda item. More coverage drew more public attention, according to agenda-setting studies (Scheufele, [2000](#)).

Framing

News is always framed in a particular way by the media, copy editor, or reporter. Public opinion is influenced, shaped, and affected by the art or science of framing. The general public is unable to conduct research to discover the truth. The majority of a common person's research is conducted through media sources, websites, channels, and periodicals. Agenda-setting is the most effective approach used by the media to create imagined or real reality (Okoro & Odoemelam, [2013](#)). Certain academics have examined the impact of news framing on viewers and readers. They investigated how people became invested in the problem and felt accountable as citizens (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Understanding how different news items are framed under specific themes, how each new story is framed into the larger theme, and how it ultimately increases pressure on citizens and policymakers simultaneously is made easier by the framing theory (Riaz, 2009).

Agenda Setting Theory and Framing

Framing is a characteristic that characterizes how many academics interpret the message in a way that is an extension of the "agenda setting," which states that the press does not convey "what to think, but rather what to think about" (Lane, 2001). According to Asemah and Edegoh (2012), "the foundation of framing theory is that the media draws attention to specific events and then situates them within a field of meaning. By connecting particular senses on a topic, the matter presentation has an impact on the recipient's beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how the two dailies, Dawn and Jang, addressed the water issue as a social issue.
2. To analyze the distribution by gender when establishing the agenda and defining the importance of social issues.
3. To determine the role of interpersonal communication in agenda-building
4. To examine public opinion reliance based upon the print media agenda.
5. To find the proposed solutions to the Water issue in Pakistan according to Respondents

Statement of Problem

The press is effectively changing public opinion in society. Media organizations and groups have employed a number of people to keep an eye on societal events for this reason. According to McCombs, news coverage has a direct impact on how important a topic is in public perception. Through their news reporting, the media plays a crucial part in bringing an end to the conflict. They also play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. According to Raza et al. (2012), the media has developed into a potent instrument for planning the nation's foreign policy. The media informs the public and enables them to comprehend why one problem is preferred over another (Scheufele, 1999).

Daily Jang

It is one of Pakistan's oldest newspapers and the biggest publishing group. According to Bhat (2015), Jang is "the most popular" Urdu daily in Pakistan and well-known among the country's "policymakers." Through the efforts of Mir Khalil ur Rehman, the newspaper was founded in Delhi in 1939.

Daily Dawn

The oldest and most popular English-language newspaper in Pakistan is Dawn. The Dawn newspaper was started in the 1940s by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who founded Pakistan. On top is Daily Dawn, one of the three biggest English-language dailies in the nation. Pakistan Herald Publications is the newspaper's publisher. In Pakistan, Dawn is a widely read English newspaper with a high degree of credibility (Ali, 2010).

Significance of Study

This study focuses on how different social topics are portrayed in Pakistani print media and what the general population thinks of them. There is much discussion and disagreement surrounding the role of print media in agenda-setting. To obtain a relative concept, a public survey was conducted, and content analysis techniques were applied to daily printed news items. The purpose of this study was to look at the motivations behind it.

Literature Review

The study's theoretical background is covered in this section, with particular reference to other studies on the topic. The goal is to explain how the media shapes "public opinion" and "agenda setting." Public opinion is formed, and societal issues are covered by the media. The media is the most reliable source of information regarding local political conditions and is relied upon by the public for simple access and analysis of shifting circumstances (McCombs et al., [1972](#)). The audience's needs are the main emphasis of the "agenda-setting" theory. The theory was primarily tested on the basis of how the media catered to the requirements of its audience. Nonetheless, this idea is directly related to the setup's social and individual demands (Shaw, [1979](#)). The researchers have provided an explanation of how the news was chosen and shaped. They made it clear that editors, broadcasters, and newsroom employees all had a part in shaping social and political reality. According to the study, the audience concentrates on a specific element when reading the news, doing it in a manner that the media emphasizes. Additionally, the researchers clarified that the media served as a means of defining a particular issue and provided it with a perspective on the campaign's development (McCombs et al., [1972](#)). According to Wanta and Wu ([1992](#)), interpersonal communication plays a significant role in agenda-setting since discussions address subjects that receive media coverage while addressing other concerns and issues. The aforementioned communication style has proven to be successful and predictive for understanding concerns in the coverage of both media-related and non-media-related topics.

Social Issues

According to Kee & Hoong ([2017](#)), social issues are the occurrences that the media covers the most and draw the audience's attention. The dimension to consider the issue is provided by the frequency of coverage and the projection of issues. In framing, the issues' political and social dynamics are crucial (Raza, [2013](#)).

Drinking Water Issue

Without water, life cannot exist. In the UN evaluation, Shahid ([2015](#)) explained that over 884 million people lacked access to safe, plentiful, fresh, and clean drinking water. Around the world, there is a major concern about the lack of clean drinking water. Substantial illnesses like malaria, hepatitis, dysentery, and diarrhoea have been brought on by contaminated drinking water, leading to fatalities and substantial health problems. According to the authors, 7.84 per cent of families were experiencing problems with their drinking water. (Khan & Javed, [2007](#)).

Methodology

The methods are chosen to produce both practical and scientific outcomes. For the current study, both content analysis and the technique survey were used.

Research Design

For this study, the researchers have chosen to use content analysis and surveys. The study has taken into account media content and how the issues are handled from a "Agenda-Setting" standpoint. The study used both a closed-ended inquiry on the issues that are prevalent in society and an open-ended technique to ask the audience what they believe to be the most important issues in their society and region (Iyengar, [1992](#)).

Population of the Study

All of Pakistan's daily publications are included in the population of the subsequent study. The category includes newspapers that are continuously published.

Delimitation of the Study

Numerous national dailies from various towns and areas are published in Pakistan. The researchers find it quite challenging to take into account every newspaper in the county and incorporate them into the sample. Because there are so many publications and regional languages, it is impossible to analyze them all. Thus, the researchers only chose the English-language Daily Dawn first edition and the Urdu-language Daily Jang.

Sample of the Study

The "front, back, and editorial pages" of the newspapers from "January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015" were chosen for examination. Out of the 300 respondents in the study's sample, 150 are Dawn (English) newspaper readers, and the remaining 150 are Jang (Urdu) newspaper readers. The "convenient sampling technique," which was obtained by choosing respondents from the readers of two daily, served as the basis for sample selection. The news articles from the paper's front and back pages are included in this analysis. The reason for this is that every significant story of the day is covered on both the front and back pages.

Research Instruments

To gather sample replies to topics pertaining to the issues to be covered, the researchers employed a questionnaire.

Data Collection

National libraries were chosen as the key source of information for the newspapers of the chosen duration. The researchers obtained newspapers from the Punjab Public Library in Lahore and the Jinnah Library in Trust Plaza Gujranwala. The libraries where the records were kept have provided the necessary sample of newspapers. The concerns discussed have been separated into the following categories by the researchers.

Statistical Methods for Analysis

The information was tabulated using the data that was cited. A contingency test called "chi-square test of independence" was used to examine the data.

Content Analysis

Reviewing how social concerns were covered in publications like Daily Dawn and Daily Jang served as the foundation for the content study. One newspaper is published in Urdu, while the other is published in English. Researchers have made considerable use of the "content analysis" method of media (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). In order to measure the variables with a purpose, the technique is used to analyze the material in "a systematic, objective, and quantitative way" (Kerlinger, 1986). The typical method chosen to investigate the "agenda-setting" notion of media is content analysis.

Variables for Content Analysis

The variables under study are:

Frequency and Length: By counting published stories on the "front and back pages of the papers," the researchers were able to determine the frequency. They also measured the "length" in centimeters each column.

The Slanting: A specific issue's presentation in the paper is examined in relation to its "favorable, unfavorable, and neutral" aspects. It has been examined in "coding units" and "paragraphs." The "favourable, unfavourable, and neutral" units on the sheet serve as the basis for the coding, which allows for an independent investigation.

Framing: One of the key components of "agenda setting" effects is framing, or how a "news story" is presented. Method situations and subjects are identified through the "framing." The framing talks about how the public, media, and its employees specifically plan activities and problems (Reese, [2001](#)).

The Placement of The New Story

In this study, the locations were distributed into the following four types:-

1. The "upper half of the front page."
2. The "lower half of the front page."
3. The "upper half of the back page."
4. The "lower half or back page."

The Contextual Unit of Analysis

The total items serve as the research's "contextual unit of analysis," and its framing is respectable at the outset. The contextual unit of analysis serves as the foundation for the emphasis on "framing."

Intercoders Reliability

For the "validity and reliability" purposes, "intercoder and intracoder reliability tests" were used, and the corresponding results were obtained. According to Wimmer and Dominick ([2006](#)), intercoder reliability refers to the level of agreement between coders who use the same tool to code the same content.

Water Issues

Water difficulties include both the scarcity of potable water and the scarcity of water for farming. Individual health and the economy at the national or regional level are closely related to this issue. (Satterthwaite, 1993).

Public Opinion

The public's perception of the world they live in is largely shaped by the media. Every significant state organ, whether be an individual or an organization, looks to the media to see how it is covering them and the world. The media's reporting has an impact on them and influences them. These days, political discourse is shaped and defined by the media, which also controls political agendas (Russell, [2013](#)).

The following is the coding sheet for the issue that the content analysis identified:

Issues	Coding
Water Crises	This category will include news articles about drinking water, water supply for irrigation or otherwise, and water shortages that are published in Daily Dawn and Daily Jang. This category will cover stories of illnesses brought on by a lack of clean, pure drinking water. News regarding governmental regulations.

Results

The "chi-square contingency test," one of the most used statistical procedures for analyzing nominal data, was employed to investigate content analysis in the first data segment.

Placement of News Items regarding the Issues

According to the findings, Dawn covered water-related topics on "the upper and lower half" of the front page, 13.88% and 19.45%, respectively. Water-related topics have been included in 14.90% of Jang's tales in the upper half and 17.02% in the lower half. In contrast to the Jang Daily, which gave 29.78% and 38.30% on the top and lower sections, respectively, the Dawn newspaper gave 27.78% on the upper back and 38.89% on the lower part about water difficulties. The "lower half of the front page" and the "lower half of the back page" had more news about the water problem. However, Jang gave the subject more space on the "upper half of front and back pages." According to the comparison, Jang gave the water crisis issue a bit more room than the other.

Figure 1

Story Placement in Newspapers

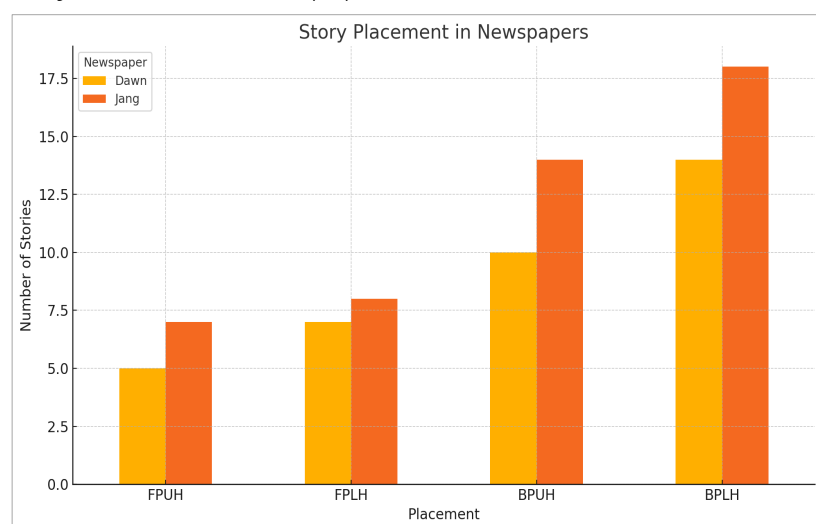


Table 1

Frequency of News Stories Published in Daily Dawn and Jang

Issues of the Study	Ranking of covered frequency of News Stories	Ranking of covered frequency of News Stories
	Dawn	Jang
Water issue	36	47

Table 2

Measurement (Length) of News Stories Printed in Daily Dawn and Jang

The Study Issues	Ranking with respect to space covered of News Stories (cm per column)	Ranking with respect to space covered of News (cm per column)
	Dawn	Jang
Water Issues	1375	1498

Slant of the Issues

The news stories' slant was published in Dawn and Jang on the water issue.

Figure 2

Water Crises Issue: Comparison of Responses

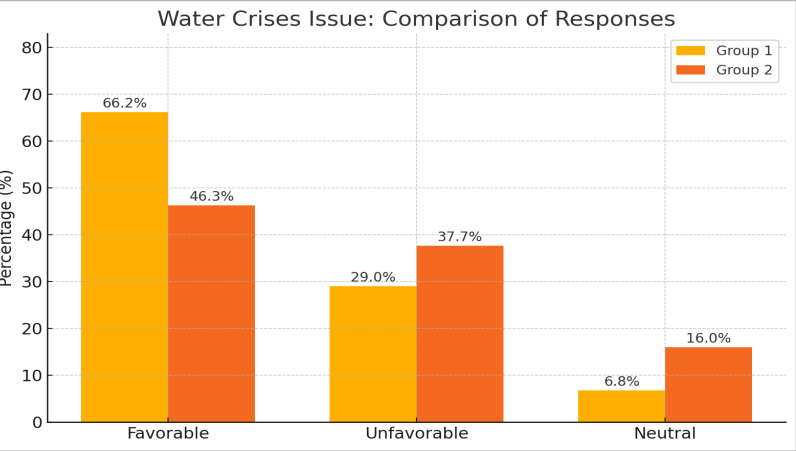
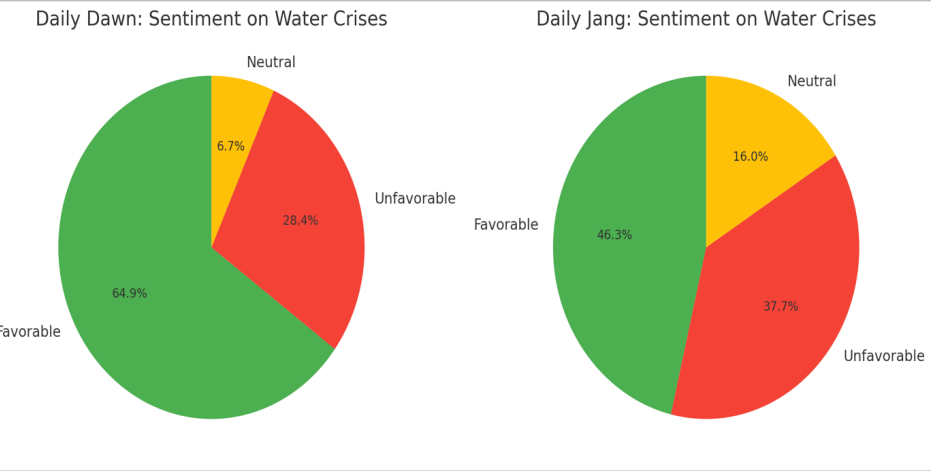


Figure 3 & 4



The findings indicate that the "chi-square" value is 33.3, which is higher than the "critical value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance." As a result, the calculated figure is significant and indicates that the null hypothesis has not been accepted. Additionally, the table reveals that Dawn has supported "Government's policies" with 66.2% of the vote, compared to Jang's 46.3%. Regarding the water crisis, Daily Dawn covered the government's policy more extensively than Daily Jang.

Framing of the Issues

Framing of the Social Issues News Articles in Jang and Daily Dawn

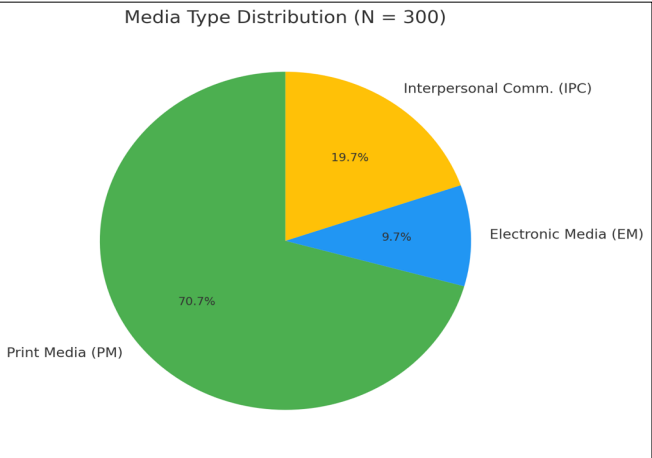
Table 3

	Dawn		Jang	
Issues of the Study	Pro Govt. (%)	Anti Govt. (%)	Pro Govt. (%)	Anti Govt. (%)
Water Crises	22 (61.11)	14 (38.89)	18 (38.30)	29(61.70)

Outcomes from Survey Research

Figure 5

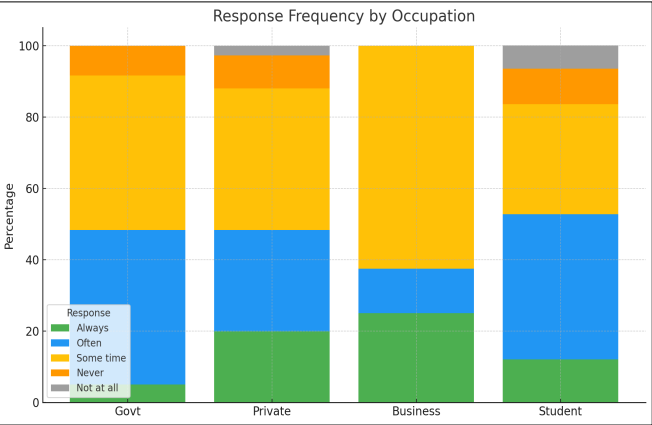
Source of Information



According to the descriptive study, 70.7% of respondents believed that the print media was the primary source of knowledge regarding the terrorism issue, 9.7% said "electronic media," and the remaining 19.7% preferred face-to-face interaction.

Figure 6

Respondents' Distribution based on their Conversations with Friends and Colleagues about the Water Issue



The calculated chi-square value of 6.16 is below the threshold chi-square values of 9.49 at the 0.05 significance level and 13.28 at the 0.01 significance level. Additionally, as shown in the above chart, the majority of respondents concurred that publications were doing their part to raise awareness of the water crisis. It demonstrates that respondents, both male and female, believe that the media is doing a good job of raising awareness of the nation's fresh drinking water. Currently, the country is experiencing a significant problem with clean and fresh water and owing to the availability of dirty water to the citizens, a lot of ailments are spreading, mainly liver diseases. People are now aware that they need to utilize fresh, clean water and be on the lookout for contaminated water, thanks to the media, especially newspapers. As a result, the majority of people began installing filters in their homes and using boiling water.

Hypotheses Testing

The question of whether the media's agenda influenced the public's agenda was covered in this section. The operationalization of the respondents' computed variables pertaining to their issue priority was as follows:

DJW: The Daily Jang readers who gave the water issue top priority and talked about it with their friends and coworkers are included in this calculation. Since the six indications were combined into one, the computation ranged from 1 to 30.

DDW: The Daily Dawn readers who gave the water issue a top priority and talked about it with their friends and coworkers are included in this calculation. Since the six indications were combined into one, the computation ranged from 1 to 30.

Figure 7
Regression Analysis between Daily Jang's Readership with Priority on Water Issue and their Discussions

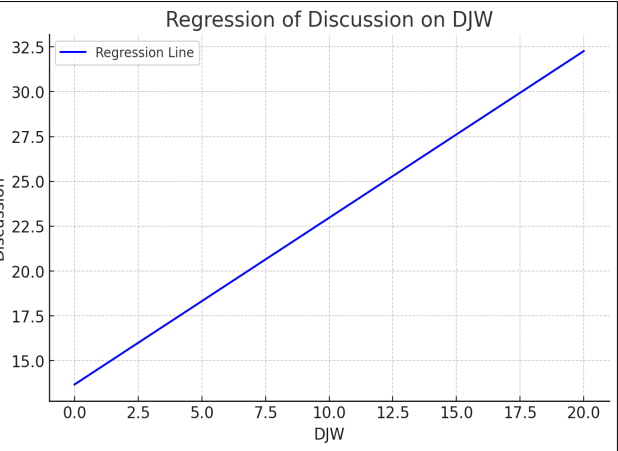


Table 4
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.681	.227		60.268	.000
	DJW	.929	.23	.32	4.03	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Discussion

As $t=4.03 > 1.96$, $\beta = 0.32$, the computed value did not fall within the crucial range, according to the results. The findings showed that the Daily Dawn audience accounts for 32% of the variation in conversations about water issues with friends and coworkers.

Figure 8
Regression Analysis between Daily Dawn's Readership with Priority on Water Issue and their Discussions

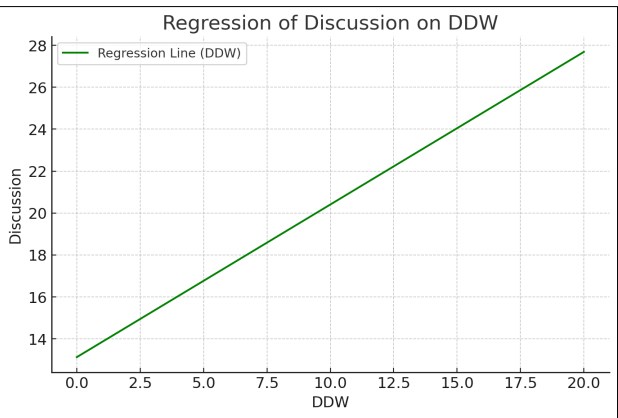


Table 5

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.127	.291		45.109	.000
	DDW	.728	.31	.21	2.34	.000

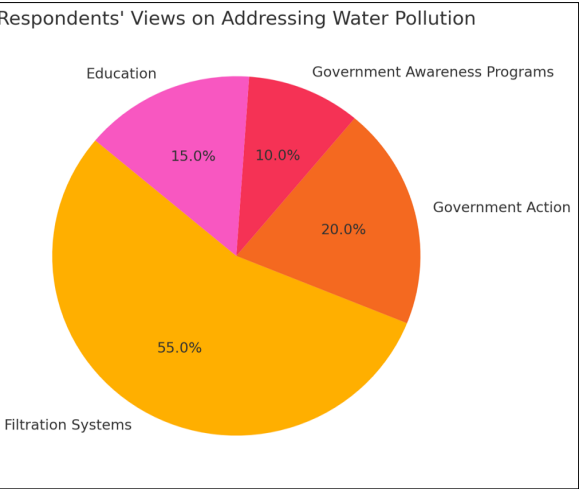
a. Dependent Variable: Discussion

As $t=2.34 > 1.96$, $\beta = 0.21$, the computed value did not fall within the crucial range, according to the results. The findings showed that the Daily Dawn audience accounts for 21% of the variation in conversations about water issues with friends and coworkers.

Solution of the Water issues in Pakistan according to Respondents

Respondents were taking water pollution seriously; their proposed solutions are as follows:

Figure 9



Discussion and Conclusion

The study's findings investigated the evidence that the media and press have aided in the formation of the public's perceptions of various issues. The findings of this investigation corroborated those of Sadaf (2011) and Harbert (2010). The researchers evaluated the Dawn and Jang newspapers' agenda-setting and framing functions in influencing public opinion regarding the prevailing social issues in order to forward the main theme. Every subject is now openly covered in print and electronic media on a national and worldwide scale, making the media the most powerful instrument in all of society. The findings also corroborate Riaz's (2009) study, which emphasized the role of print media in the agenda-setting process.

Conclusion

The English and Urdu press in Pakistan is regarded as the most well-liked, reliable, and accountable mass media outlet. People use both to gain a thorough awareness of many contemporary situations with the aid of news articles. It is now commonplace for the media to have an agenda and for people to align themselves with the viewpoints that are presented. Regardless of age or educational background, all print media readers are impacted. Issues that are emphasized in print media are given more weight, and as a result, the media

has undermined the significance of its readers' viewpoints. Newspapers are the primary source of news on most topics, according to the majority of people. For this reading sample, newspapers are undoubtedly the most popular media. For the majority of problems, Riaz (2009) does have a comparable degree of reliance on newspapers. Every issue is covered in newspapers in a fairly similar manner. It appears that both newspapers support and follow a media agenda. What Riaz (2009) says is not the same as this. Dawn and Jang had quite different ideas. The public agenda and the media agenda appear to be similar, based on poll data about the topics' perceived relevance. People seem to be generally satisfied with how the issues have been addressed. If the public agenda was much different, they should be more critical of the coverage. However, it appears that 10% to 20% of readers are not completely satisfied.

Recommendations

1. The findings suggest to the two daily' policymakers that instead of establishing an agenda, they ought to draw attention to matters of popular concern. Newspaper readers look for trustworthiness in the information that is provided.
2. The findings are in line with the phenomena that draw attention to the actual societal problems. It is advised that policymakers prioritize these issues in accordance with the circumstances, avoiding sensationalization and prejudice.
3. Newspaper policymakers are advised to create policies that allow readers to have a rational explanation and solution. Additionally, print media should be used to advance issues' ultimate realities.
4. Interpersonal communication plays an important role which cannot be bypassed.

Areas for Future Research

Newspaper readers were the main focus of this study, and two dailies, Daily Dawn and Daily Jang, were chosen. All of the main newspapers may be included in the linked studies. Meanwhile, a comparison of national and international media outlets or regional and national media outlets could be useful in gaining a better understanding of the real agenda setters. The question of how and why the contents are regionally moulded is also one that can be researched. Is there a global agenda, whether it be in the local media market or not? Future research may also include televised media. The fact that so few comprehensive studies of this kind have been carried out in Pakistan is encouraging.

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