



Media News Coverage: Acts of Terrorism and Impact on Audience

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Abstract

This study's key focus is to meet the objectives and analyze whether people use media outlets to seek terrorist activities information, whether terrorist attacks affect public opinion, whether media play an active role in creating awareness about terrorist activities and whether prolonged news coverage about terrorist activities effects emotions and attitudes of people. The researchers collected data from 400 respondents from Gujranwala and Lahore cities of Pakistan through survey method and used Agenda Setting and Framing Theory as a theoretical framework. The simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of a sample. The researchers apply correlation to the collected data for analysis. Findings of the study explored that terrorist news on media highlight problem recognition; mobilize people, which lead to seeking information about terrorist activities. The majority of the respondents agree that they use traditional & new media outlets to seek information actively that influence their opinions, attitude, and emotions. Media news mobilizes, creates awareness, and educates people about terrorist activities. Terrorism means fear, and the purpose is



not only physical attacks but also the psychological effects of fear and panic on society.

Keywords: *Media coverage, Terrorism, News channels, Impact, Behaviour, Pakistan*

Introduction

Terrorism is distinguished by the insecurity and fundamental vagueness that creates fear by using violence to achieve political or social goals (Aven and Renn, 2009a). The word terrorism means fear, and the purpose of terrorism is not only physical attacks but also the psychological effects of fear and panic on society (Christensen and Aars, 2019). The acts of terror taken out by the armed men intended with their political benefits manifest and spread fearsome (Galily et al., 2016) with the devastation the event grounds. The organizations of terrorists' have their program or ideology to project through their actions. Terrorism is an activity that conveys the meaning of violence (Combs, 2017), A group of targeted people along with the terror is to be formed (Rubaltelli et al., 2018), and political objectives and intentions to bring change (Galily et al., 2015). The change creates a global environment of threat and fear. "Terrorism" word explanation includes several undertakings, terrorists' suicide bombings (Wang et al., 2017), drone attacks in the name of the war on terror (McQueeney, 2014), target killings (Guiora & Shelton, 2015), violent protests or political violence (Jasko et al., 2017), and the latest cyber terrorism.



After the attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Tower building, the world became familiar with the word "terrorism" (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017); because of that incident, the world's attention diverted towards the entities and activities of the terrorists (Sultan, 2016). Terrorist activities brought a massive change in the media worldwide, giving high coverage to terrorism as the activities increased over time. For the study of global terrorism, the area of Afghanistan and Pakistan is critical because it is the most targeted area for such activities, whichever by the extremist groups or by the administrations in the name of "war on terror" (Ingram, 2016). In terms of terrorism, the US Department of State (2012) acknowledged Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan as the most dangerous countries. Pakistan is considered the insecure land on the planet because of the activities of terrorists (Sandler & Enders, 2008). The picture framed after the 9/11 assaults broke Pakistan down. A few activist gatherings like Al-Qaida and Taliban asserted to shield in Pakistan, hostile to fear-based oppressor tasks propelled against those Taliban and radical gatherings that brought about successive assaults in various areas nationwide. Army activities and an investigation of "verifiable examples of fear-based oppression in Pakistan" revealed a reduction to 5% from 45% in KPK and a recorded increment in Sindh to 68% from 23%. After that, a decline of 9% (Saeed et al., 2014). Pakistan Army and Intelligence organizations have done Zarb-e-Azb, Rad-ul-Fasad, and numerous other minor and substantial scale tasks regarding the war on psychological oppression. The media of Pakistan additionally committed the spaces for countering fear-mongering and offering attention to the general population.



The media treatment of terrorism is essential. While it is difficult to establish a straight linkage between media coverage and public opinion, the media can influence the public agenda and raise issues over others (Renn et al., 1992). The mass media reports portray incidents (An and Gower, 2009). Journalists and other media personalities define and explain how threats and crises can be understood (Ploughman, 1995); such frames stand on specific local principles and cultural context (Nevalsky, 2015). Media is the harmony-building specialist that can keep the circumstances in control, advancing friendship with their substance, particularly in contention seasons (Salih et al., 2018). The media in Pakistan also has a spot for battling psychological oppression and acquiring harmony with the public. Broad communications in Pakistan advanced the counter fear-mongering activities including "Zarb-e-Azb and Rad-ul-Fasad" to crackdown against the radical and advance harmony. An investigation found the examination of Pakistan's papers that the substance has a Pro-US approach to detailing and composing the issues identified with fear-based oppression. The influential papers pursued the United States' arrangement is showing psychological warfare, and the print media upheld the war against fear giving harmful inclusion to the Taliban (Jan et al., 2013). Fear-based oppression has a nearby connection with the media inclusion as the high media detailing and more regard for their exercises advanced progressively in future psychological militant occasions (Kearns et al., 2019). The less consideration can, at the same time, acquire a positive result on fewer occasions. The shrewd media inclusion can help make harmony and bring mindfulness among the majority.



Terrorist attacks can affect public perception of the threat of terrorism and have severe implications for public policy and risk governance (Lee et al., 2010). There is reason to believe that this is a challenge for policymakers expected to take practical steps to address public unrest (Renn, 2008). However, the increasing threat of terrorism can lead to public demand for over-action or fall into the hands of dictatorial and popular political movements (Hetherington and Suhay, 2011). Previous studies have shown that terrorist attacks in a country affect the well-being of its people (Silver et al., 2002), and attacks in the same geographic area are more effective than in other areas (Avdan and Webb, 2019). The present research work will guide us on how media coverage helps create awareness about terrorists' activities. The present study will also highlight the role of news channels in dealing with terrorism. Through this study, the researchers will also investigate the role of media channels how these channels inform and educate people about terrorism and the impact of terrorism on the public. This study aims to eradicate indistinctness and bring together ideas about the relationship between media coverage of acts of terrorism and its impact on the audience. The study seeks to achieve the objectives.

1. Whether people use media outlets to seek terrorist activities information
2. Whether terrorist attacks affect public opinion about terrorism
3. Whether media is playing an active role in creating awareness about terrorist activities.
4. Whether prolonged news coverage about terrorist activities affects emotions and attitudes



Literature Review

Oju (2021) attempted to add to the progressing mediations to terrorism, especially the Boko Haram insurrection in Nigeria. This study inspected the mass media's authority in reducing terrorism, and it concluded that the mass media were fatal weapons that could stop and reduce illegal intimidation. Regardless of their beginnings and causes, the media utilized to stop any psychological oppression by handling the foundations of illegal intimidation. Farooq (2021) analyzed the relationship between media and terrorism and discovered how assessments changed due to media regarding terrorism. It further focused on how media created fear and anxiety among individuals by depicting overstated news about terrorism, how the Pakistani public's thoughts influenced, and individuals worldwide' opinions. The study concluded that media was molding the public's thoughts and incorrectly, depicted news to draw in more crowds and acquire benefits and evaluations. Rashid (2020) investigated that the terrorism movement abroad influenced stress regarding terrorism in Sweden and the possible intervening impact of news media. The results showed that public stress over psychological oppression co-differs with the recurrence of terrorist activity in the more extensive geo-social district, regardless of whether outside of the nation of home. After the attack, people began to be more aggressive and trust outside groups (Jakobsson & Blom, 2014), emphasizing post-attack resistance (Solheim, 2018).

Wang and Zhuang (2017) attempted to understand the deviations in the word "terrorism" meanings. The controversies prevail in defining the term "terrorism" as its acceptance. The vague meaning of terrorism is universally accepted and worked. Terrorism successfully promoted several groups to appear that are only removed by law and force. Kearns et al. (2019) found



that the terrorist attacks committed by Muslim organizations were reported too high than other incidents. It creates an impression of Muslims as terrorists and threatens the community's image worldwide. Gerhards and Schafer (2014) conducted a study to analyze the media's coverage of terrorism in international, regional, and "country-specific" contexts. The study compares the four events of terrorism and their reporting in the main news outlets. The research established the "standardization" for the coverage of the terrorist activities in the global media channels and termed it "global standardization of coverage".

Rubaltelli et al. (2018) uncovered that revelation to terrorism arouse distress in the general population, as recorded by the stress test. The study found that photos and visuals about terrorism are highly perilous for sensitive people. It spreads fear and makes people destabilized. The study was conducted to find the impact of the terrorism-related photos on the individuals and the effects of "individual differences" considered in "environmental sensitivity" to find the "psychological response" of the people. Results showed the perceived likelihood of future attacks affected by exposure to terrorism pictures and psycho-physiological reactivity to stress. Iqbal (2015) studies the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism. The researcher took out this research as an extension to examine the association between media and terrorism. The emotional numbness of long reports of terrorism seems to have had an overall impact, with viewers of multiple terrorist stories expressing more anger than watching just one video of terrorism. It is unclear why this did not happen (Hoffman & Kaire, 2020).



The media may have a more significant impact than other times, such as in an information-deficient emergency. The news is more biased during the crisis, and stereotypes are more likely to be used. Shoshani and Slone (2008) investigated a significant link between news of terrorist attacks and more stereotypical and negative perceptions of the nationality with which the terrorists were associated. Nevalsky (2015) carried out research and explored that, in January 2015, the US media portrayed the terrorist attacks in Paris, France, and Borno positively, whereas attaches in Nigeria were portrayed negatively. In addition, the US and European news media are more focused on terrorist attacks by Islamic criminals than terrorists of other beliefs and religions, which can affect people's understanding of terrorism, primarily by Islamic organizations (Kearns et al., 2019). Exposure to stories of terrorism can provoke emotions of people, which make them uneasy (Breckenridge et al., 2010), exchange freely for trade security (Merolla and Zechmeister, 2009), and evoke a passion for the use of military force (Huddy et al., 2005).

Gareeva et al. (2016) conferred on the role of mass media for disseminating information about terrorism, as media is a powerful tool for giving its viewers the news of importance. The matter of significance of the researchers was that terrorists control the media content to give their messages. It is the priority of the terrorist groups and organizations to get attention and coverage in media and consider the audience and policymakers at the international level. Eriksson (2016) discussed that media has the power to formulate the opinion of the masses. The researcher conducted a study to inspect how media reporting or content can inflict diversified opinions. Patrick (2014) is engrossed in the perception of civil society about terrorist activities. The media construct the news using a



different method of "framing" and the distinctive styles of "narrative" that inspire the audience by giving them a dimension to think about the issue. The representation of strikes by terrorists varies based on the locality of the attack, which is an essential aspect of the study of "media and terrorism". "Raza and Awan (2013) study carries the "agenda-setting role of mass media" as the drone attacks' coverage gives an approach to the public for insight into the issue. People build their opinions about America and the attacks through news reports. The frequency of the news and the style of the media reporting on drone attacks affected public opinion directly.

The physical and psychological harm in deaths and torture is that humiliation of human rights that have not been projected through the US media. The international laws of human rights also support civilians for their lives to be protected. "International Humanitarian Law" describes that distinction should be clear between the "civilians" and "combatants" during conflicts so that innocents must not be attacked. Kwonetal (2017) examined Twitter for "networked framing of terrorism news" regarding how the tweets were being framed for the news about terrorism. The researcher divided the "proximity effects" of the terrorist activity on the masses into "geographic, social, and temporal proximity. The "media institutional frames" were distinguished in the "episodic/thematic and space frames" in this research. The researchers defined "social proximity" as the most conspicuous frame of tweets about terrorism. After analyzing the Twitter posts at the "Boston Marathon bombing and the Brussels Airport attack."The study results concluded that "proximity effects" were more conspicuous on "audience frame" than media. The audience's tweets were "thematic" in nature if both



events were taken as the study sample. Media organizations' tweets were frequently episodic, probably because the journalist has to maintain impartiality and neutrality in disseminating news while the audience is more expressive about their emotional state. On the other hand, the media rarely acts as a terrorist microphone. It is generally inaccessible to terrorist targets (Abrahms, 2018) and often acts as a microphone for political leadership (Wilkinson, 1997), even presenting its attack structure (Nacos et al., 2011).

Result

Table 1: Demographic Compositions of Respondents

| Marital status of respondents | | | ARY | | Geo | | Dunya | | PTV | | Other | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|------|--------|------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|-------|--------|--|
| | | | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| Single | Age | < 24 | 71 | 73 | 39 | 31 | 21 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 22 | 16 | |
| | | 25 - 30 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | |
| Married | | < 24 | 0 | 8 | 44 | 37 | 22 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | |



| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | - | 11 | 13 | 1 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | - | 11 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | |
| | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 1 shows 71 male respondents and 73 female respondents aged below 24 with single marital status watch ARY most of the time to seek terrorist activities information. 39 male respondents and 31 female respondents belong age below 24 with single marital status watch Geo TV channel and 21 male respondents, and 9 female respondents belong to age below 24 with single marital status watch Dunya News most of the time for terrorist newsgathering. 5 male and 3 female respondents belong to age below 24 with single marital status watch PTV news whereas 22 male respondents and 16 female respondents belong to age below 24 watch other news channels to get terrorist news. Findings show that 5 male and 4 female respondents aged 25-30 with single marital status watch ARY get terrorist news. 5 male respondents and 5 female respondents belong to age 25-30 with single marital status watch Geo TV channel, and 1 male respondent and 1 female respondent belong to age 25-30 with single marital status watch Dunya News most of the time for terrorist newsgathering. 0 male respondents and 1 female respondent belong to age 25-30 with single



marital status watch PTV news whereas 0 male respondents and 2 female respondents belong to age 25-30 with single marital status watches other news channels to get terrorist news.

Table 1 also shows that 0 married male and 8 female respondents belong to age below 24 watches ARY news, whereas 44 married male and 37 female respondents belong to age below 24 watches Geo News most of the time to seek terrorist information. 22 married male and 11 female respondents belong to age below 24 watches Dunya news and 1 married male and 0 female watches belong to age below 24 watches PTV news most of the time. 3 females under age 24 watch other news channels to get terrorist activities news. 11 married male and 13 female respondents belong to age 25-30 watch ARY news, and 1 married male and 8 female respondents belong to age 25-30 watch Geo news to get terrorist news. 1 married male and 5 female belong to age 25-30 watch Dunya news whereas 1 married male and 0 female belong to age 25-30 watch PTV news and 0 married male and 2 female belong to age 25-30 watch other news channels to seek terrorist activities news. 11 married males and 4 females belong to age 31-36 watch ARY news, and 1 married male and 5 females belong to age 31-36 watch Geo news whereas 0 married male and 2 females belong to age 31-36 watch Dunya news daily to get terrorist news. 2 married males and 0 female respondents belong to age 31-36 watch PTV news, and 0 married male and 2 female respondents belong to age 31-36 watch other news channels to seek terrorist activities news.



Table 2: Variable Analysis

| | Frequencies | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| | Seek Information (SI) | Media Influence (MI) | Media Mobilization (MM) | Problem Recognition (PR) |
| Disagree | 48 | 28 | 58 | 63 |
| Agree | 352 | 372 | 342 | 337 |
| Total | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 |

Table 2 shows that 352 male and female respondents agree and 48 disagree that they use traditional and new media outlets to seek information actively. 372 male and female respondents agree, and 28 disagree that media news influence their opinions, attitude, and emotions towards terrorism activities. 342 male and female respondents agree, and 58 disagree that media news mobilizes, creates awareness, and educates them about terrorist activities. Finally, 337 male and female respondents agreed, and 63 disagreed with media outlets highlighting and broadcasting terrorist news.

Table 3: Association among Variables

| | PR | MM | MI | SI |
|----|----------|---------|----|----|
| PR | | | | |
| MM | 3.597 | | | |
| MI | 21.355** | 44.16** | | |



| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|---------|----------|--|
| SI | 27.61** | 15.60** | 49.272** | |
| * Significant at 5% | | | | |
| ** Significant at 1% | | | | |

Table 3 shows that there is no significant relation between Media Mobilization (MM) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value 3.597 is greater than 5% value. There is a significant association between Media Influence (MI) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value between them is 21.355, significant at 1%. There is also a significant association between Media Influence (MI) and Media Mobilization (MM), where the value between them is 44.16, significant at 1% level. The table also shows a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value is 27.61, significant at 1%. There is also a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Media Mobilization (MM), where the value is 15.60, which are significant at 1%, and there is a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Media Influence (MI) where the value is 49.272 which is significant at 1%.

Method

The media theories that support this study are agenda-setting theory and framing theory. Media inform, and people are aware of terrorism and the relevant events in the world. As people get news about the extremists' attacks, their causes, and consequences, according to the media's agenda-setting role, it forms their opinion about terrorists and their planning. This theory supports the study to understand how media gives awareness to people and eventually stimulates peace. More importantly, a recent meta-analysis of theory and research in mass communication revealed that agenda setting was the most widely used theory among mass communication



theories (Bryant & Miron, 2004). Media frames sway what the public thinks about and how they perceive the world around them. Regarding framing effects, Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) point out that the framing effect contributes to the media effect that does not occur due to the variation in 'what' is being presented.

The researchers used the survey method and collected data through purposive sampling. The researchers designed a structured questionnaire to investigate the Media Coverage: Act of Terrorism and the Impact on Audience. The questionnaire is filled with 400 respondents, 200 males, and 200 females, through a purposive sampling technique. The researchers collected data from respondents aged 18 and above from Gujranwala and Lahore. The questionnaire was composed of age, gender, and marital status demographic variables. In addition, respondents asked 4 questions about Problem Recognition, 6 questions about Media Mobilization, 5 questions about Media Influence, and 4 questions about Seek Information.

Discussion

The research "Impact of Media News Coverage about Acts of Terrorism on the behavior of people" aimed to investigate whether media is playing an active role in disseminating terrorist activities, whether terrorist attacks affect public opinion about terrorism, whether prolonged news coverage about terrorist activities affects emotions and attitudes, whether people use media outlets to seek terrorist activities information. This portion will discuss findings that have been analyzed in the previous chapter by comparing and justifying the literature review. In addition, the contents of this chapter will include a discussion about media coverage and its impact on the audience.



The study's findings reveal that of most of the respondents, male and female, 49.8% watch ARY news most of their daily lives to get information about terrorist activities. The majority of male and female respondents, 64%, watch TV news for less than 1 hour daily to seek information about terrorism. Findings also show that the majority of the male and female respondents with single marital status belong to age below 24 watches ARY news. In contrast, most male and female respondents with single marital status belong to age 25-30 watch Geo News for terrorist activities updates. The majority of the married male and female respondents belong to age below 24-watch Geo news. In contrast, most married respondents aged 25-30 and 31-36 watch ARY news daily to get news related to terrorism activities.

The study's findings show that 352 male and female respondents agree to use traditional and new media outlets to actively seek information. Findings support the research hypothesis of the present study that media is playing an active role in disseminating terrorist activities. Gareeva et al. (2016) carried out the researcher to investigate the role of mass media for disseminating information about terrorism, which shows that media is a powerful tool for giving its viewers the news of importance. The matter of significance of the researchers was that terrorists control the media content to give their messages. It is the priority of the terrorist groups and organizations to get attention and coverage in media and consider the audience and policymakers at the international level. 372 male and female respondents agree that media news influences their opinions towards terrorism activities, which supports the hypothesis that terrorist attacks affect public opinion about terrorism. Eriksson (2016) stated that media has the power to formulate the opinion of the masses. The researcher conducted



a study to inspect how media reporting or content can inflict diversified opinions. Patrick (2014) is engrossed in the perception of civil society about terrorist activities. The media construct the news using a different method of "framing" and the distinctive styles of "narrative" that inspire the audience by giving them a dimension to think about the issue. The representation of strikes by terrorists varies based on the locality of the attack, which is an essential aspect of the study of "media and terrorism". Raza and Awan (2013) investigate the "agenda-setting role of mass media" as the drone attacks' coverage gives an approach to the public for insight into the issue. People build their opinions about America and the attacks through news reports. The frequency of the news and the style of the media reporting on drone attacks affected public opinion directly.

The study's findings show that 342 male and female respondents agree that media news mobilizes people, creates awareness, and educates them about terrorist activities, which supports the hypothesis that media is playing an active role in creating awareness about terrorist activities. Rimsha (2021) researched the relationship between media and terrorism and discovered how assessments changed due to media regarding terrorism. The study concluded that media created fear and anxiety among individuals by depicting news about terrorism and molding public thoughts. After the attack, people began to be more aggressive and trust outside groups (Jakobsson & Blom, 2014), leading to an emphasis on post-attack resistance (Solheim, 2018). Furthermore, 337 male and female respondents agree that prolonged news coverage about terrorist activities affects the emotions and attitudes of the people. Gerhards and Schafer (2014) conducted a study to analyze the media's coverage of terrorism in international, regional, and "country-specific" contexts. The study compares the four events of



terrorism and their reporting in the main news outlets. The research established the "standardization" for the coverage of the terrorist activities in the global media channels and termed it "global standardization of coverage."

The study's findings show that there is no significant relation between Media Mobilization (MM) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value 3.597 is greater than 5% value. However, there is a significant association between Media Influence (MI) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value between them is 21.355, significant at 1%. There is also a significant association between Media Influence (MI) and Media Mobilization (MM), where the value between them is 44.16, significant at 1% level. Findings also show a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Problem Recognition (PR), where the value is 27.61, significant at 1%. There is also a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Media Mobilization (MM), where the value is 15.60, which are significant at 1%, and there is a significant association between Seek Information (SI) and Media Influence (MI) where the value is 49.272, which is significant at 1%. Iqbal (2015) studies the symbiotic relationship between the media and terrorism. The researcher took out this research as an extension to examine the association between media and terrorism. The emotional numbness of long reports of terrorism seems to have had an overall impact, with viewers of multiple terrorist stories expressing more anger than watching just one video of terrorism. In addition, exposure to stories of terrorism can provoke emotions of people, which make them uneasy (Breckenridge et al., 2010), exchange freely for trade security (Merolla and Zechmeister, 2009), and evoke a passion for the use of military force (Huddy et al., 2005).



Conclusion

The result shows that most of the respondents think that ARY News gives mostly coverage to terrorist activities. The media coverage of terrorist activities has a substantial impact on the audience. News channels are adequate for creating awareness through their media coverage. These news channels can alter opinion towards any issue and create awareness. The present study confirms that People build their opinions about the attacks through news reports. The frequency of the news and the style of the media reporting on drone attacks affected public opinion directly. The survey results elaborated how the media coverage treats the issue, essentially inspiring the thoughts. The media may have a more significant impact than other times, such as in an information-deficient emergency. The news is more biased during the crisis, and stereotypes are more likely to be used. The international laws of human rights also support civilians for their lives to be protected. "International Humanitarian Law" describes that distinction should be clear between the "civilians" and "combatants" during conflicts so that innocents must not be attacked. The study's findings explored that terrorist news on media highlight problem recognition; mobilize people, which leads to seeking information about terrorist activities.

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