



Human Rights in Pakistan and Coverage of the Press

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the abject state of Human Rights in Pakistan. Human Rights have been considered important throughout the course of history. The present research was conducted to study the situation of Human Rights in Pakistan and Role of Press (1999-2020). The reason for going back to the year 2000 for this research was the imposition of Martial Law during this period and gross violations of Human Rights in Pakistan. The objective of this descriptive study was to explore the positive/negative role of print media vis vis the coverage of Human Rights in Pakistan.

The Universe for the present study are the most highly circulated and popular newspapers of Pakistan i.e. Daily Jang and Daily Dawn, the technique of systematic sampling was used. By Using SPSS to analyze and then the Descriptive method was used to clearly illustrate the findings of the research and the relationship among the data collected was also explored through statistical methods.

The findings of the study subsequently reveal that the Daily Jang in Pakistan, portrays human rights in a negative way and usually give very little space to the issues of violations of human rights in their daily editions. A detailed discussion about the findings and recommendations have also been made to improve the existing situation of Human Rights and the Role of the Print Media in Pakistan in the relevant portions of the study after concluding it.

Keywords: Human Rights, Print Media, Regulatory Authority, Newspapers

Introduction

It is very clear that Human rights are the rights to which all humans inhabiting this earth are entitled to. Human Rights are rights inherent whatever may be the nationality, place of residence, sex, ethic or national origin, color, language, religion or any other status of the particular individual. All human beings are entitled to their fundamental rights without discrimination. These rights are interrelated interdependent and indivisible. The concept of Human Rights is a result of the endless struggle by human beings to remain human beings. This struggle has always been existent in all societies against political, economic, social and cultural oppression as well as against the injustices and inequalities of the time. It can be said without the slightest reservation that all human beings are born free and are equal in their demand for treatment with dignity and the fulfillment of their fundamental rights. They are endowed with a certain amount of reason and conscience and they should act towards one another in the bounds of the spirit of brotherhood.

Human Rights are considered to be a set of individual and collective rights that have been formally promoted and protected through international and domestic law all the more since the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Protections of such rights, however, have been in existence for much longer through the great charter of the Magna Carta which was signed by the English King John on June 15, 1215. But it is imperative to note here that Islam spoke of human rights as early as the fourteenth century, before any Magna Carta had been drawn up in England and also before the UN Declaration of the Human Rights. However, it is after the UN Declaration that the concept of a definite legal protection all over the world has grown rapidly.

A number of international treaties exist on human rights which have been promulgated since the UN

Declaration to which an increasingly large number of nation states are a party. While the language of human rights increasingly pervades our moral, legal and political vocabularies to such an extent that many have claimed we now live in an age of rights.

To begin with, human rights may be regarded as those fundamental rights to which every man or woman living in any part of the world is entitled by virtue of having been born as human being.

In other words, human rights are a genus to which humanitarian law is a species. The former relates to the basic rights of human beings everywhere at all times, and the latter relates to the rights of particular categories of human beings, particularly, the sick, the wounded, prisoners of war during armed conflicts and hostility.

The Human Rights landscape looked very different at the beginning of the 2000 than it was in the year 2020 with more advocates and institutions addressing more issues in more impressive manner. Yet even as human rights NGOs grew in number and human rights institutions proliferated, the number of claims of violations of human rights has increased and the record of enforcement grew ever more dismal. That's why concern about the rights and their protection has always been the uppermost in the minds of sages and Philosophers, not only in present time but in every period of human history. It is an established fact that in a democratic society Free Media / Press can be a powerful instrument against abuse and violation of human rights. The media can play an important role in this crusade against violation of human rights.

Mass Media is considered to be "The fourth Estate" most prominent after the Legislature the Executive and the Judiciary. The Media has become the prime educative, informative and catalytic agent at the fore front in safeguarding human rights. It is the most systematic and effective means of reaching the target audience quickly and subsequently communicating convincingly with a large number of people in a very short span of time. Media is thus rightly called the "Watch dog" of people's rights and the "mirror of contemporary society".

A vigilant and enlightened mass media can go a long way in spreading human rights awareness to achieve this objective it is essential that agencies of mass media should remain free, independent, responsive trained in human rights and committed to social welfare.

Media/Press influences people at the social and cultural levels and its impact is more popular, lasting and far-reaching than all the government agencies put together. Media can also establish an effective and impressive dialogue among people and between government and people hence its role and responsibility increases many fold. It provides a free platform for popular dialogue and is dreaded by wrong doers and violators of human rights.

Pakistan is a developing country. Due to the economic crises and poverty prevailing in our country the basic human rights are mostly always neglected. In our country the role played by the media in the struggle for protection of human rights would increase in the coming days as media penetration is going to multiply. The studies done by the World Association of Newspapers reveal a declining popularity for the print and electronic media in the Western World due to the onslaught of internet. But this is not happening in Pakistan. In Pakistan all forms of mass media like print, Television, Radio and internet are expanding.

Human rights - Background

It is very evident that the multiplicity of media can be useful to maximize the coverage of human rights in the media. The advent of the social media is also an instrumental factor in bringing to light instances of violation of human rights which earlier would never have seen the dawn of light. There are two major approaches to the question of human rights, the Western and the Islamic approach. A comparative analysis of both approaches will enable us to study the issue of human rights in its proper perspective.

The Western approach:

Mostly in the West people are found with the claim that the world got the concept of basic human rights from them. According to them the world got the concept of modern human rights from the Magna Carta. This was issued by king John in 1215 but it did not limit the power of the King in middle ages and it was just a piece of paper. The truth is that until 17th century no one knew that the Magna Carta contained the principles to bind the King to renounce certain rights, respect legal procedure control of parliament on the right of taxation and accept that the will of King could be bound

by law. If the people who had drafted Magna Carta were living today, they would have been greatly surprised if they were told that their documents contained these too. It shows that the Western world had no concepts of human rights before the advent of the seventeenth century. We find the practical proof and demonstration of these concepts only at the end of 18th century that too in the Constitutions of America and France. After the American and French constitutions many other countries also included the basic human rights in their constitution. But these rights were only given on paper were not given to people in their real life.

In the middle of the 20th century United Nation passed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights against genocide and also framed the regulations to check it. But the position of United Nation in providing and protecting these rights is very obvious. It has passed several resolutions and regulations against the violation of human rights. But there is no single resolution which can be enforced, these all are just piece of papers and have no physical or moral force to enforce them.

Most of the United Nations resolutions have been violated at different places the major examples is Kashmir and Palestine issues, where the United Nation has failed to enforce its resolutions against violation of human rights.

The Islamic approach

Islam is a Universal religion which clearly defined the concepts of human rights. Islam not only gave the idea of a noble individual regardless of his caste, color and creed, but also restored the decorum of the entire humanity and paved the way for a primary forum of existence for all human beings. Dignity of man was restored not only in terms of their social status but also in terms of security and sanctity. The Quran declares if you kill a man, you kill the whole of humanity, nothing could be a more comprehensive and concise than this positive declaration.

When we talk about human rights in Islam and we really mean that. These rights have directly been granted by God. They are not given by any King or legislative assembly. The rights by King or legislative assembly can be withdrawn in the same way in which they are conferred, such as the dictators, when they give the rights to their people when they are pleased and withdraw them when they wish, they also violate them when as they will. But in Islam all the rights are given to man by God. No legislative assembly or government has the authority to abrogate or withdraw them. These rights are the part of Islamic faith. Every Muslim or administration must have to accept, recognize and enforce them.

The 1973 constitution of Pakistan describes the fundamental Human rights which are to be available to all citizens' women as well as men wherever they may be, as well as all people temporarily or permanently in Pakistan. The executive is bound to implement these rights while the judiciary is bound to take notice of any violations and provide redress on individual complaints or take notice of its own (called 'Suo Moto' notice) of any gross violations of a collective right.

Research Methodology

This research paper has been conducted by using content analysis as a mode of research design. Walizer and Wiener (1978) have defined content analysis as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information.

As purely a method of social research Content Analysis is a documentary method that aims at a qualitative or quantitative analysis of the content of texts, pictures films and other forms of verbal, visual or written communication.

Validation of the Newspapers

The newspapers selected for the study are considered the most popular, highly circulated influential, opinion maker and leading newspapers of Pakistan. One National Daily of Urdu language and one of English language are:

1. Daily Jang
2. Daily Dawn

The period of study is 21 years from Jan 1999 to Dec 2020. The three most important categories selected for the study of human rights are:

1. Women
2. Children
3. Minorities

For these categories, the most important and general issues related to human rights are:

1. Gender discrimination
2. Sexual harassment
3. Physical torture
4. Child labor
5. General discrimination

Reporting of all these issues is analyzed in three ways

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Neutral

Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and issues of the Daily “Jang” from 1999 to 2020

This test is performed to check the association between categories and issues of the Daily “Jang” from 1999 to 2020. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used to check the association. The cross table of the categories and issues are given as below.

Table # 1...

		Issues						Total
		None	Gender Discrimination	Sexual Harassment	Physical Torture	Child Labor	General Discrimination	
Categories	None	2	0	0	0	0	0	22
	Women	0	34	126	48	2	0	210
	Children	1	14	19	12	13	0	59
	Minorities		3	1	1	0	4	9
Total		2	51	146	61	15	4	300

The table indicates that in human rights issues, women are mostly highlighted by the “Jang” newspaper. 210 newspapers from the total 300 contain the reports about the different issues about the women which are the 70%. In these 70% women issues the maximum number of cases is about the sexual harassment. From the 210 reports of the women 126 are about the sexual aggravation which is 60%. When we apply the chi-square test, we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 4.70) *Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and reporting of the Daily “Jang” from 1999 to 2020*

This test is performed to check the association between categories and reporting of the newspaper “Daily Jang” from 1999 to 2020. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used for check the alliance. The cross table of the categories and their reporting is given as below.

Table # 2...

		Reporting				Total
		None	+Ve	-Ve	Neutral	
Categories	None	19	0	3	0	22
	Women	3	58	126	23	210
	Children	1	20	28	10	59
	Minorities	0	5	4	0	9
Total		23	83	161	33	300

This table shows that if we through light on the categories of human rights issues then we conclude that women are mostly highlighted by the “Daily Jang”. 210 newspapers from the total 300 contain the reports about the different issues about the women which are the 70%. In these 70% women issues and in case of reporting the maximum number of cases reported negatively. From the 210 reports of the women, 126 are negatively reported which is 60%. When we apply the chi-square test then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.15)

Testing for association b/w the attributes of issues and reporting of the Daily “Jang” from 1999 to 2020

This test is performed to check the association between issues and reporting of the “Daily Jang” from 1999 to 2020. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used for checking the relationship. The cross table of the issues and their reporting is given as below.

Table # 3...

		Reporting				Total
		None	+Ve	-Ve	Neutral	
Issues	None	20	0	3	0	23
	Gender Discrimination	0	24	22	5	51
	Sexual Harassment	2	37	84	23	146
	Physical Torture	1	15	43	2	61
	Child Labor	0	4	8	3	15
	General Discrimination	0	3	1	0	4
Total		23	83	161	33	300

This table shows the relationship between the issues of human rights and their reporting by the “Daily Jang” newspaper. From the table we can deduce that the sexual aggravation issues are mostly repeated in the newspaper. 146 newspapers from the total 300 contain the reports about the sexual harassment issues which are about the 50%. In these 50% issues, the maximum number of cases is negatively reported. From the 146 reports, 84 are negatively reported which is 58%. When we apply the chi-square test to check the connection between the issues and their reporting, we find association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.44)

Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and issues of the Daily “Dawn” from 1999 to 2020
 This test is performed to determine the relationship between categories and issues in the “Daily Dawn” from 1999 to 2020. We determine if there is any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used to check the association. The cross table of the categories and issues are given as below.

Table # 4...

		Issues					Total
		None	Gender Discrimination	Sexual Harassment	Physical Torture	Child Labor	
Categories	None	6	0	0	1	0	7
	Women	1	14	163	75	2	255
	Children	0	5	9	13	5	32
	Minorities	0	2	4	0	0	6
Total		7	21	176	89	7	300

The table shows that in human rights issues women are mostly highlighted by the “Daily Dawn” newspaper. 255 newspapers from the total 300 contain the reports about the different issues about the women which are the 85%. In these 85% women issues the maximum number of cases is about the sexual harassment. From the 255 reports of the women 163 are about the sexual harassment which is 64%. When we apply the chi-square test then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.65). *Testing for association b/w the attributes of categories and reporting of the Daily “Dawn” from 1999 to 2020*

This test is performed to check the association between categories and reporting of the “Daily Dawn” from 1999 to 2020. We check, is there any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and chi-square test is used for check the association. The cross table of the categories and their reporting are given as below.

Table # 5...

		Reporting				Total
		None	+Ve	-Ve	Neutral	
Categories	None	6	0	1	0	7
	Women	1	58	165	31	255
	Children	0	4	28	0	32
	Minorities	0	1	5	0	6
Total		7	63	199	31	300

This table indicates the relationship among the attributes of the categories of human rights and their reporting. 255 newspapers from the total 300 contain the reports about the different issues regarding women which are the 85%. In these 85% women issues and in case of reporting the maximum number of cases is negatively reported. From the 255 reports of the women 165 are negatively reported which is 65%. When we apply the chi-square test then we find that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance. (Chi Square = 2.27)

Testing for association b/w the attributes of issues and reporting of the Daily “Dawn” from 1999 to 2020

This test is performed to find an association between issues and reports in the “Daily Dawn” from 1999 to 2020. We determine if there is any association among the attributes characterized? This test is performed on the 5% level of significance and the chi-square test is used to examine the relationship. The cross table of the issues and their reports, is given as below.

Table # 6...

		Reporting				Total
		None	+Ve	-Ve	Neutral	
Issues	None	0	0	0	0	7
	Gender Discrimination	0	8	12	1	21
	Sexual Harassment	0	3	120	23	176
	Physical Torture	0	0	62	7	89
	Child Labor	0	2	5	0	7
Total		7	3	199	31	300

The table shows the relationship between the issues of human rights and their reports by the “Daily Dawn” newspaper. From the table it is clear that sexual harassment issues are mostly repeated in the newspaper. 176 newspapers from the total of 300 contained the reports about the sexual harassment issues which are about the 59%. In these 59% issues maximum number of cases are negatively reported. From the 176 reports 120 are negatively reported which is 68%. When we apply the chi-square test then we see that there is association between the attributes at 5% level of significance (Chi-Square = 3.072).

Findings

Daily “Jang”

1. It is observed that the space in centimeters occupied by the reports about the human rights in the daily Urdu newspaper “Jang” shows that the space varies from “0 cm” (means no news about the human rights) to 48 cm space in the Jang newspaper. The news with space 2 cm is mostly repeated in the newspaper.
2. It is observed that the categories of reports about the human rights in the daily Urdu newspaper “Jang” indicates that the 70% reports about the women, 20% reports about the children and 3% reports are about the minorities while the remaining 7% have nothing in context to human rights. If we compare all the categories of the human rights, we concluded that frequent repeated reports are about the women.
3. It is observed that all the issues reported with regards to human rights in the daily Urdu newspaper “Jang” showed that 49% reports about the sexual harassment, 20% reports regarding physical torture, 17% reports regarding gender discrimination, 5% reports about child labor, 1% reports about general discrimination while the remaining 8% have nothing about the human rights. If we compare all the issues regarding human rights, we find most reported highlighted sexual aggravation.
4. It is observed that the coverage criteria of any report about the human rights in daily Urdu newspaper “Jang” showed that 54% reports are negatively reported, 28% reports are positively reported, 11% reports are neutral and the remaining 8% have nothing on reporting decision of human rights. If we compare all the reporting signs of human rights, then most reports are found negatively reported.

Daily “Dawn”

1. It is observed that the space in centimeters occupied by the news regarding human rights in the daily English newspaper “Dawn”, indicates that the space varies from “0 cm” to 18 cm space in the newspaper. The news with a space of 6 cm is mostly repeated in the newspaper.
2. It is observed that all the categories of reports about the human rights in the daily English newspaper “Dawn” indicates that the 85% reports about the women, about 11% reports about children and 2% reports about minorities and the remaining 2% have nothing to do about the human rights. If we compare all the categories of the human rights, then we can safely assume that mostly the oft repeated reports are about women.
3. It is observed that all the issues of reports about the human rights in the daily English newspaper “Dawn” shows that the 59% reports about the sexual harassment, about 30% reports about the physical torture, 7% reports about the gender discrimination, about 2% reports about the child labor and the remaining 2% have nothing about the human rights. If we compare all the issues about the human rights, then mostly reports which were made were about sexual harassment.
4. It is observed that the reporting criteria of news about the human rights in the daily English newspaper “Dawn” shows that 66% reports are negatively reporting, about 21% reports are positively reporting, about 10% reports are neutral and the remaining 3% have nothing about the reporting decision about human rights. If we compare all the reporting signs about the human rights, then mostly reports are negatively reported.
- 5.

6. Conclusion/Suggestions

After a comprehensive Content Analysis of the material gathered for this research the researcher has arrived at the following:

1. Though journalists have expanded the covering or reporting of human rights into new areas, many human rights issues are still under reported by the media.
2. Human rights issues that take place in the Rural settings are rarely reported. Human Rights are still taken largely to mean civil and political rights, and the importance of economic, cultural and social rights is completely ignored by the print media in their reporting of economic issues, including poverty and social and economic discrimination.
3. The print media does not explain and contextualize human rights information clearly for the consumption of its readers.
4. Though the data on human rights violations and standards are not lacking, however the impact of such reports on the public is not as pronounced as it might be expected.
5. The print media misses a lot of human rights stories because they do not pay attention to the specific legal and policy implications that matter. Most of the time, they do not have adequate knowledge of human rights and its relevance to the material they report. These shortcomings diminish the professional quality of coverage and hamper the communication of information that is sometime essential for understanding.
6. The print media interest to cover human rights (as well as other issues) in a consistent and accurate manner is limited by the proliferation of news outlets, the concentration of news ownership. Organizations from the traditional ‘news’ and business news sectors have combined in large multimedia groupings with organizations that specialize in entertainment. That’s why majority of news organization give more importance to entertainment and infotainment issues.
7. No special pages on human rights issues were found in the print media of the period examined. As compared to the print media, the electronic media treats human rights issues with a relatively wider focus. Due to its distinct educated group, English newspaper has much space to report the human rights issues in their true perspective. Urdu print media nonetheless has more or less language related pressure from society, depending on the nature of the issue being reported.
8. English newspapers reporters were found more specialized in human rights issues than Urdu

- reporters although human rights is not yet a distinct reporting area.
9. There is an overall lack of investigative reporting on human rights issues in Pakistani newspapers.
 10. The realistic and unbiased analysis of the issues is largely missing. The journalists should duly understand what these rights are, to be able to describe the issue reported.
 11. Reporters/ journalists should be given opportunities to become better informed on international laws of human rights. This can best be done through a range of awareness raising activities including courses/training on human rights.
 12. Special training programs should be organized for the journalists from media organization and NGO's. Regular updating of editorial reports, editing and handbooks to familiarize journalists with human rights terminology and to reinforce ethical principles in coverage of human rights issues.
 13. The Government should eliminate all forms of official interference in the work of journalists and should remove all the obstacles to the exercise of free media. Open access to official information should be provided and they should train their official spokesmen on the need to provide the media with up-to-date reliable information related to the Government's human rights obligations.
 14. Instead of focusing on providing them information and data on rights violence, the journalists should be taught tools helpful in carrying out investigation, and in reporting the cases.
 15. Media organizations should not be politically and financially motivated by their sponsors as far as being unbiased is concerned in cases of human rights violation and their subsequent reporting.

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