FRAMING FLOOD RESPONSIBILITY: A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CLIMATE JUSTICE NARRATIVES IN PAKISTANI AND AMERICAN PRINT MEDIA

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Abstract

This article presents an analysis of media representations of the 2022 flood in Pakistan through a comparative critical discourse analysis (CDA) of two news articles published in Pakistani and American newspapers. Grounded in Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the study explores textual, discursive and social practices in the articles published in Dawn (Pakistan) and The Washington Post (USA). The study draws on competing narratives, where the article in Dawn identifies internal governance shortcomings – including an urban planning failure, policy gaps, and unsustainable development practices – while downplaying external factors. The article in The Washington Post, however, places the floods in a wider context of global climate injustice, tying the crisis to Western industrialization, historic greenhouse gas emissions, and the global conversation around international climate finance. The two articles utilize different linguistic techniques comprised of separate choice of words, active and passive module of verbal construction, and different modalities for creating their stories. The work also looks at intertextuality and interdiscursivity. The results suggest that media discourse on environmental crises does not simply mirror but also informs public knowledge and policy initiatives, adding to discussions around a national responsibility versus global accountability. This comparative analysis provides guidance for media practitioners and policymakers, calling for a balanced approach in disaster reporting that includes both internal policy reforms and other dimensions of climate justice. The paper recommends the continued need for integrated media frameworks to ensure balanced stories are communicated in the context of growing climate-induced catastrophes. The findings underscore the importance of media accountability and balanced communication in environmental emergencies.

Keywords; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), socio-political framing, Norman Fairclough, climate justice, intertextuality, interdiscursivity, disaster reporting, linguistic strategies, media accountability

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Pakistan floods were a catastrophic natural disaster that caused widespread devastation, displacing millions and reducing critical infrastructure to ruin. Media coverage played a pivotal role in shaping public perception and discourse around the crisis. Notably, images circulated by STF Brazil, Semana, and TNI significantly influenced both national and international responses. This paper employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), following the framework of Norman Fairclough, to examine how the disaster was (re)presented in both Pakistani and American newspapers. By analyzing media narratives, the study explores how social realities and power relations are (re)constructed through discourse. In comparing coverage across two national contexts, the research aims to uncover how language mediates national and international understandings of the crisis and contributes to broader ideological formations.

The power of the media as a tool for informing and shaping public opinion is widely acknowledged, particularly in its role in constructing social realities. However, there remains a lack of cross-national comparisons in how different national media outlets cover the same event – especially between Pakistani and American newspapers. Previous research has largely focused on single-nation case studies, often limited to Western contexts, rather than addressing broader patterns in media discourse at the global level. This gap underscores the need for a more

comprehensive inquiry into the linguistic and ideological processes underlying media reportage of natural disasters, both locally and globally.

The objective of this study is twofold: (1) to ascertain the discourse strategies used by the media in Pakistan and the USA in reporting the floods, and (2) to determine how these strategies are related to – and reflect – the wider socio-political and cultural ideologies. By its nature, this examination seeks to reveal the power dynamics embedded in media representations and how they shape public perception of the disaster.

Adopting Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, this investigation is based on the analysis of the links between discourse and social practices. Fairclough's (1995) 3-D model of text, discursive practices and social practices offers a framework for examining the position of media language in relation to the reflection of and contribution to social structures. The study analysed the language and framing style of news articles to identify patterns in describing the flood and roles given to various actors – local and overseas – in relation to the flood.

The dearth of comparative analysis of media across cultural and political contexts – especially of Pakistani and US newspapers – is noteworthy. Previous research has largely overlooked the fine-grained differences between how local and international media organizations frame events, with respect to environmental crises. The present research has addressed this gap and provided a rich account of how the two media systems frame stories that potentially portray wider socio-political value bases and cultural attitudes.

By filling this comparative gap through the examination of news media in disaster communication using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study offers a broader perspective on how catastrophic events are framed across cultures. It also suggests that such insights can help rethink journalistic practices and inform policy discussions on disaster management and international communication. Moreover, this study also illuminates the role of media representations behind public perception, and policy responses to future environmental disasters.

In Pakistan, mainstream media attention quickly faded, leaving the voices of the most affected communities either marginalized or represented in a superficial manner. In contrast, American media coverage was largely lacklustre, appearing as an afterthought on major networks and limited to brief segments that rarely linked the disaster to broader conversations about climate change. These disparities in media reporting underscore the need for a comparative analysis of how media narratives shape public understanding of international crises.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The 2022 floods in Pakistan, a catastrophic climate-triggered event, caused massive destruction and worsened socio-economic vulnerability. Describing media, crisis discourse, and the influence of journalism on public awareness and policy response are particularly important in the context of heightened concerns about climate change. Policy responses, political storylines and foreign impressions form and change as news is reported. Comparison of American and Pakistani press shows the strategies used to present the environment in different sociopolitical and cultural frames. This review of the literature utilizes media framing, discourse analysis, and climate crisis reporting to illuminate key theoretical concepts, methodological approaches, and research opportunities. This research looks at disaster discourse in Pakistan's media, previous studies on catastrophe media coverage, and critical discourse analysis in media studies.

2.1. Framing Disasters: The Role of Media in Shaping Public Perception

Media strongly shapes public perception of natural disasters through reframing, interpretation, and response. Information is organized for political purposes and shaped by perspectives or narratives. It is not neutral. Language, metaphors, and framing influence policy responses and collective action, as explored in studies that look in particular at how media discourse informs public opinion about disasters (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Media responses may enhance the sense of urgency by assigning blame for the disaster in relation to climate change and state failings, or attenuate responsibility by depicting disasters as inevitable and arising naturally (Boykoff, 2007).

Basu et al. (2021) in their work "Analysing media framing of cyclone Amphan: Implications for risk communication and disaster preparedness," examined how Indian media outlets framed Cyclone Amphan coverage and its impact on public risk perception. They analyzed news content to understand how different framing strategies influenced public preparedness behaviors and policy responses. The researchers found that media framing significantly affected how communities understood disaster risks and their willingness to engage in preparedness activities. They concluded that strategic media framing could enhance disaster risk communication effectiveness, though they noted limitations in examining long-term behavioral changes following media exposure to disaster coverage.

Greer et al. (2022) in their study "Media framing and agenda setting (tone) in news coverage of Hurricane Harvey," conducted a content analysis of major American newspapers including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Houston Chronicle from 2017 to 2018. They investigated how different media outlets framed Hurricane Harvey coverage and the tonal variations in disaster reporting. The researchers discovered significant differences in framing approaches between national and local media, with local outlets emphasizing community resilience while national media focused more on federal response failures. They concluded that media tone and framing patterns varied substantially based on geographic proximity to the disaster, though they did not specifically address how these framing differences influenced actual policy outcomes.

Nyirenda et al. (2025) in their research "Framing of disaster impact in online news media: A case study from Malawi on flood risk management," analyzed how Malawian online media portrayed flood disasters and their management. They examined the relationship between media framing choices and public understanding of flood risk mitigation strategies. The study revealed that media representations often emphasized immediate humanitarian concerns while downplaying long-term adaptation measures and structural vulnerabilities. They concluded that online media framing in developing countries tends to focus on crisis response rather than prevention, though they acknowledged limitations in not examining cross-cultural framing comparisons with international media coverage of the same events.

Based on the reviewed literature on media framing of disasters, several research gaps emerged that warrant further investigation. While existing studies have examined how different media outlets frame individual disasters within specific national contexts, there remains limited comparative analysis of how the same disaster event is framed across different cultural and geopolitical contexts, particularly between Global North and Global South perspectives. Most current research focuses on either Western media coverage or local media within affected regions, but few studies systematically compare how international and domestic media construct competing narratives about the same climate disaster. Additionally, while scholars have identified various framing strategies used in disaster coverage, there is insufficient attention to how these frames specifically relate to climate justice discourse and postcolonial power dynamics in disaster reporting. The integration of critical discourse analysis with systematic linguistic analysis to examine the precise grammatical mechanisms through which ideological positions are constructed and naturalized in cross-cultural disaster coverage remains underexplored. Furthermore, existing studies tend to examine media framing in isolation without adequately connecting linguistic choices to broader questions of environmental justice, responsibility attribution, and the reproduction of colonial relationships in climate disaster discourse.

2.2. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis: A Theoretical Lens

According to framing theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993), the way in which a problem is presented depends on the audience's understanding of the issue. Although frames conceal as much as they reveal, they highlight different aspects and, in doing so, influence public opinion and policy. The media routinely **employs** diagnostic framing (explanation of the cause of a problem), prognostic framing (solution), and motivational framing (action) in relation to climate change and disasters (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Basu and Dutta (2021) in their study "The role of popular discourse about climate change in disaster preparedness," employed Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how dominant climate change narratives influence public risk perception and preparedness behaviors. They analyzed popular media discourse to understand how vague representations of climate issues reduce community capacity for disaster readiness. The researchers found that mainstream climate discourse often produces ambiguous knowledge that undermines effective risk communication and preparedness planning. They concluded that CDA reveals how discursive power structures shape public understanding of climate risks, though they noted limitations in examining the long-term effects of discourse on actual behavioral changes in disaster preparedness.

Tenali (2022) in the research "Climate change acknowledgment to promote sustainable development: A critical discourse analysis of local action plans in coastal Florida," applied Fairclough's CDA framework to evaluate how five Florida municipalities acknowledge climate change in their sustainability action plans. The study examined the relationship between discursive representations of climate issues and sustainable development policies at the local level. The analysis revealed that public pressure, environmental champions, and recent storm events significantly influenced how climate change was discursively constructed in policy documents. The researcher concluded that CDA effectively exposes the ideological tensions between climate acknowledgment and development priorities, though the study was limited to a specific geographic region and policy context.

Slemon (2025) in the work "Absences and silences in critical discourse analysis: Methodological reflections," provided a methodological examination of how Fairclough's CDA approach handles what is not said or represented in discourse. The study explored the theoretical and practical challenges of analyzing absences, silences, and omissions within critical discourse analysis frameworks. The research highlighted how traditional CDA methods may overlook significant ideological work performed through what is excluded from discourse rather than what is explicitly stated. The author concluded that incorporating analysis of absences strengthens CDA's capacity to reveal power relations, though acknowledged the methodological complexity of systematically identifying and analyzing discursive silences.

Based on the reviewed literature on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework, several research gaps become apparent in its application to media studies and climate discourse. While existing studies have successfully applied Fairclough's CDA to examine climate change discourse in policy documents and popular media, there remains limited research that systematically integrates CDA with cross-cultural comparative analysis, particularly in examining how the same climate events are discursively constructed across different national and cultural contexts. Most current applications of Fairclough's framework focus on single-nation studies or Western contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding how CDA can reveal power dynamics in Global South media representations versus international coverage of the same events. Additionally, while scholars have used CDA to analyze what is present in climate discourse, insufficient attention has been given to examining absences and silences in cross-national disaster coverage, particularly regarding colonial histories, responsibility attribution, and structural inequalities. The methodological integration of Fairclough's three-dimensional model

with systematic linguistic analysis tools remains underexplored, especially in revealing how specific grammatical choices construct ideological positions about climate justice and international responsibility in disaster discourse

2.3. The Politics of Climate Discourse: Postcolonial and Environmental Communication Perspectives

As argued by scholars like Chakrabarty (2009), climate change cannot be separated from historical injustices, with the Global South bearing the brunt of ecological disasters despite their minimal contributions to the accumulation of greenhouse gases. The Western media often perpetuates neo-colonial narratives by focusing on the provision of aid and relief rather than challenging the fundamental injustices of climate governance (Mahony & Hulme, 2018).

Davis et al. (2023) in their work "Postcolonial lessons and migration from climate change: ongoing injustice and hope," examined the intersection between climate justice and postcolonial justice, particularly focusing on how colonial legacies compromise adaptation capacities in Pacific Island countries. They explored the dynamic interaction between coloniality and anthropogenic climate change through grounded experiences of cultural traditions and migration patterns. The researchers found that ongoing colonization effects create a necropolitics that simultaneously drives both colonial oppression and climate vulnerability. They concluded that understanding climate-induced migration requires recognizing the interconnected nature of historical injustices and contemporary environmental challenges, though they acknowledged limitations in extending findings beyond Pacific Island contexts to other Global South regions.

Ejaz and Najam (2023) in their study "The Global South and climate coverage: From news taker to news maker," analyzed how Global South countries are transitioning from passive recipients of international climate coverage to active producers of climate narratives. They examined patterns in global media coverage to understand shifting power dynamics in environmental communication and representation. The research revealed significant disparities in how climate stories are framed when originating from Global South versus Global North media outlets, with Southern perspectives emphasizing local agency and adaptation strategies. The authors concluded that Global South media are increasingly challenging dominant Western climate narratives, though they noted persistent structural inequalities in international media distribution and attention that limit the reach of Southern perspectives.

Maru et al. (2024) in their research "Stories from the Global South: The interplay of climate science, 'action' and the implications for development," explored how climate science narratives intersect with development discourse in Global South contexts, particularly examining the gap between scientific knowledge and local action. They investigated how environmental communication shapes development priorities and policy responses in vulnerable regions. The study found that climate science often fails to translate into meaningful local action due to disconnects between global scientific framing and local development needs and priorities. The researchers concluded that effective climate communication in the Global South requires integrating scientific knowledge with local development contexts and community-based adaptation strategies, though they acknowledged challenges in scaling up localized approaches to meet global climate governance requirements.

Based on the reviewed literature on the politics of climate discourse from postcolonial and environmental communication perspectives, several critical research gaps emerge that require urgent attention. While existing studies have examined postcolonial dimensions of climate change and Global South media representation separately, there remains insufficient research that systematically analyzes how postcolonial power structures are linguistically reproduced in cross-national climate disaster coverage, particularly through comparative analysis of Western and Global South media narratives about the same events. Most current research focuses on broad patterns of representation or single-region case studies, leaving a significant gap in understanding how specific discursive strategies perpetuate neo-colonial relationships in climate communication. Additionally, while scholars have identified the problematic nature of humanitarian framing in Western climate coverage, there is limited investigation into how alternative framings from Global South media challenge or resist these dominant narratives, and what linguistic mechanisms are employed to assert agency and critique historical responsibility. The intersection between environmental communication theory and postcolonial discourse analysis remains underexplored, particularly in examining how colonial histories and climate injustices are made visible or invisible through specific media framing choices. Furthermore, existing research lacks systematic analysis of how different national media construct competing narratives about climate responsibility, adaptation versus mitigation, and the role of international support versus local solutions in disaster response.

2.4. The Linguistic Foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis: Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is fundamentally grounded in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, which provides the linguistic analytical framework for understanding how language operates as social practice. While CDA focuses on uncovering power relations and ideological structures, SFG offers the precise tools needed to examine how these dynamics are constructed through specific linguistic choices. Halliday's three meta-functions reveal different dimensions of meaning-making central to critical discourse analysis: the ideational meta-function shows how different versions of reality are constructed through transitivity patterns, the interpersonal meta-function exposes power relationships through modality and evaluation, and the textual meta-function reveals how information is organized to privilege certain perspectives. This integration means SFG provides the methodological rigor that enables CDA practitioners to move beyond impressionistic interpretations toward systematic analysis of how ideology operates through grammar and lexis. In analyzing media coverage of the 2022 Pakistan floods, this combined approach allows for detailed examination of how American and Pakistani

newspapers use specific grammatical structures to construct different narratives about causality, responsibility, and victimhood, revealing the linguistic mechanisms through which power relations are reproduced in climate disaster discourse.

Wu (2023) in the work "Critical discourse analysis based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics: Taking The Economist's first commentation on the end of China's Zero-COVID policy as an example," applied Halliday's ideational metafunction, particularly transitivity analysis, to examine hidden ideologies in Western media coverage of China's COVID-19 policies. The study focused on transitivity patterns, voice, and nominalization as analytical tools to reveal how seemingly objective news reports constructed specific representations of Chinese policy decisions. The researcher found that The Economist employed specific transitivity choices to portray China's policy changes negatively, using passive constructions and nominalizations to obscure agency and responsibility. The author concluded that SFG provides precise linguistic tools for uncovering ideological positions in media discourse, though acknowledged limitations in examining reader reception and long-term discourse effects beyond textual analysis.

Zhang and Li (2024) in their comprehensive review "A review of interpersonal metafunction studies in systemic functional linguistics (2012–2022)," surveyed 160 studies to examine patterns and trends in interpersonal metafunction research within the SFL tradition. They analyzed how scholars have applied Halliday's interpersonal metafunction to examine relationship construction and power dynamics across various discourse contexts. The review revealed four major research themes: theoretical explorations of interpersonal meaning, multilingual comparative studies, discourse analysis applications, and language teaching implementations. The authors concluded that interpersonal metafunction analysis has proven valuable for understanding power relations and social positioning in diverse contexts, though they noted gaps in cross-cultural comparative research and integration with critical discourse approaches.

Petrova and Volkov (2024) in their study "Ecological discourse analysis of Russian educational texts based on the transitivity system," employed Halliday's transitivity framework to analyze how ecological responsibility is constructed in Russian educational materials. They examined how different process types and participant roles shape environmental discourse and ecological consciousness among learners. The research found that educational texts predominantly used material processes to describe environmental phenomena while employing mental processes to construct ecological awareness and responsibility. The researchers concluded that transitivity analysis effectively reveals how educational discourse constructs relationships between humans and nature, though they acknowledged limitations in examining the actual impact of these linguistic constructions on student environmental attitudes and behaviors.

Based on the reviewed literature on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as the linguistic foundation for Critical Discourse Analysis, several significant research gaps emerge that warrant attention. While existing studies have successfully applied individual meta-functions to analyze various discourse types, there remains limited research that systematically integrates all three meta-functions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) within a comprehensive CDA framework, particularly for cross-cultural media analysis. Most current applications focus on single-language contexts or specific meta-functional aspects in isolation, leaving insufficient exploration of how the three meta-functions work synergistically to construct ideological positions in comparative international media coverage. Additionally, while scholars have used SFG tools to analyze environmental and political discourse separately, there is a notable gap in applying comprehensive SFG analysis to climate disaster discourse that spans multiple cultural and linguistic contexts. The methodological integration of SFG's systematic analytical procedures with Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model remains underexplored, particularly in revealing how specific grammatical choices at the micro-level connect to broader macro-level power structures and social practices in international climate communication. Furthermore, existing research lacks detailed examination of how transitivity patterns, modality systems, and thematic structures work together to construct competing narratives about climate responsibility and disaster causation across different national media contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used as the main methodological tool in this study to analyze the framing of the 2022 Pakistan floods in Pakistani and American newspapers. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is especially relevant for this research as it allows for a thorough analysis of language, power relations, and ideological basis within media texts (Fairclough, 1995). Since media representations shape public perception and governmental responses to climate disasters (Boykoff, 2007), investigating the coverage of these events in newspapers by means of Critical Discourse Analysis uncovers the underlying biases, framing strategies and discursive patterns with which climate narratives are constructed.

3.1. Research Design

The research in the paper is qualitative in nature and is centred on CDA as a methodology. The qualitative research method is fitting to this design because it seeks to interpret text, rather than quantifying patterns, and will permit a detailed understanding of the discursive strategies contained within media coverage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

CDA, as proposed by Fairclough (1995), provides a three-dimensional model for analyzing media discourse:

i.   **Textual Analysis (Micro-Level)** – Examining linguistic features such as metaphors, lexical choices, and sentence structures.

ii. **Discursive Practice (Meso-Level)** – Investigating how news articles draw upon existing discourses, sources, and intertextual references.

iii. **Social Practice (Macro-Level)** – Situating media discourse within broader socio-political and economic structures.

This methodological approach is especially useful to the study, as it enables a comparative discourse analysis to be conducted on Pakistani and US news media in order to reveal variations in how each constructs climate responsibility, government accountability and humanitarian issues.

3.2. Data Collection

The study uses purposive sampling in data collection and analyses two newspaper articles published during the peak of the 2022 Pakistan floods:

i. **Dawn (Pakistan):** "Man-made Catastrophe" by Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, published on August 25, 2022.

ii. **The Washington Post (USA):** "U.N. chief calls Pakistan floods a 'climate catastrophe'" by Shannon Osaka, published on August 30, 2022.

These sources were chosen because Dawn presents Pakistani (local) viewpoint and The Washington Post provides an International (Western) perspective. The choice allows for a comparison of domestic vs. international media framing of the same event.

3.2.1. Sampling Technique

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting data based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2002). The selection of these articles was guided by the following criteria:

• **Relevance to the Topic:** Both articles directly discuss the 2022 Pakistan floods and their socio-environmental impacts.

• **Source Diversity:** One article represents a Pakistani newspaper, while the other represents an American newspaper, allowing for cross-cultural analysis.

• **Publication Date Proximity:** The articles were published within a five-day window, ensuring that both respond to the same phase of the disaster.

3.2.2. Time Frame

The news articles from June to December 2022 provide a perfect time frame during which the flood crisis peaks and follows through. Articles were selected that were published in August 2022, around the time of the disaster when media discussion was at its peak.

Analytically comparing these articles through Fairclough's CDA model show how media framed, attributed responsibility for, and situated this moment in a larger environmental and political story.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the investigation relating to American and Pakistani journalists and their framing of the 2022 Pakistan floods are offered in this section. This paper aims to uncover (behind media narratives) the linguistic tactics, ideological underpinnings, and, more generally, the wider social implications. This paper examines the discursive relations between language, power and social structures that inform media discourse using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Fairclough's CDA functions on three levels, which are intertwined with one another-social practice, discursive practice, and text analysis. For a clearer understanding of the construction of meaning, textual analysis—micro-level—is focusing on language features including the choice of words, metaphor, and syntax. The meso-level level based on discursive practice investigates how newspapers use external providers of opinions and intertexts to weave into a coherent whole the aggregated narratives from which the two NEWS FRAMES were derived. Lastly, a macro-level social practice locates these discourses in larger political, economic, and ideological spaces, thus exploring the politics of power in mediating climate events in the media.

The use of a coding sheet will ease the synthesis of key themes derived from the textual analysis, maintaining a rigorous and structured approach to the data. This would allow for how each newspaper represented the flood being examined before a discursive and social policy analysis. This multi-level study has potential to deepen public understanding of the contrast in the language of liability, solution presentation and public opinion framing of climate change related news in American and Pakistani media.

4.1. Textual Analysis (Description)

This section concisely analyses two newspapers articles using Fairclough's (1995) CDA, concentrating on micro-level features of the texts. This study discusses different linguistic features of vocabulary, grammar, modality, cohesion and rhetorical devices to see how the Dawn (Pakistan) and The Washington Post (USA) reported the story of 2022 Pakistan floods.

4.1.1 Vocabulary (Word Choices, Loaded Terms, and Euphemisms)

The language used to discuss disasters is a key to framing them, for example whether they are defined as natural events, failures of governance or climate injustices.

Dawn, the Pakistani newspaper, is highly emotive and dramatic in its choice of language describing the floods as a "man-made disaster" brought on by "flawed development models" and "the four deadly sins of development." The sentence "monsoon waters are angry" anthropomorphizes the floods, recasting them as a force of nature taking back the land we mistreated. "Prisoner", "choked passages" and "defying gravity" – it is not just the negative sentiment of these words that hint towards a long-standing critique of Pakistan's infrastructure.

The American newspaper The Washington Post, however, uses scientific and politically inflected language, the framing of which is, not floods as a national failure, but a global climate crisis. The term "monsoon on steroids" implies an unnatural, extreme reinforcement of a natural event and ties the calamity to climate change. The references to "epochal levels of rain" and "destruction of our planet" suggest a planetary emergency and underline the need for global action. Moreover, it repeats the words "loss and damage," used in climate talks to place the floods within a historical context as a result of historical emissions mainly by wealthy countries.

Dawn's choice of words dramatizes Pakistan's record of development failure, The Washington Post's choice of language highlights climate justice and global responsibility.

4.1.2 Grammar (Passive vs. Active Voice, Nominalization)

The use of structures of language determines how responsibility is fixed or negligently kept from being fixed.

Dawn adopts an active voice to place the blame exactly where it should be for instance, "our development model is insisting on defying gravity" attributes agency to Pakistan's policy makers, and implies that there was nothing natural about the disaster. He is doing this, and we are too, now we have choked their passages and snapped on the banks, the 'we' makes it the team effort, of ownership, and erasure- "there's 13 years of history and miles This sentence ties back to we have dirty the waters and we will have to clean them" (on the 35m long sign) and here- he could make his hands together—put our hands together—there's 13 years of history and miles and miles of fucking silt.

The Washington Post seems to favour the passive voice quite a bit to take responsibility away from the obvious subject, but this is mainly used on the Post's own stories. When assertions like "almost certainly" that Pakistan "will not get indemnity" are made and "efforts have been thwarted,'' we know exactly who is preventing the climate funds being sent. The passive voice is then used when determining who is responsible among developed nations: "Efforts by developed countries have been blocked at every turn by the United States." This deliberate use of active and passive voice expresses an ideological position over who should be held responsible for climate disasters.

So, while Dawn directly accuses Pakistan's development, The Washington Post oscillates between using the passive (when describing inaction on aid) and the active (when blaming developed countries), cleverly shaping readers' perceptions of responsibility.

4.1.3 Modality (Certainty, Obligation, and Authority)

Modality, expressing degrees of certainty, necessity and obligation, conditions how categorically a proposition is put forward.

Dawn employs strong certainty modals, which stress the impossibility of avoiding such future calamities. For example, "It'll flood again" exudes a sense of certainty about the inevitability of the coming floods, thus reiterating the fact that Pakistan's governance failures are yet to be fixed. The modal verb "must" often come up in calls on policy reform, e.g., "Pakistan's response must include adaptation and mitigation."

The Washington Post: How obligation and necessity modals can drive global climate action. "We need to end our green war with nature" "Let us stop sleepwalking towards the destruction of our planet" These words of urgency and moral responsibility reflected in the language of the UN Secretary-General. As well, the words "open itself up to litigation" add a legal dimension; they suggest climate reparations is less a choice than a fact.

The modality of Dawn frames a story of eventual decision and national duty whereas the modality of The Washington Post is global duty and legal responsibility.

4.1.4 Cohesion and Coherence (Text Structure, Pronoun Usage)

Cohesion and coherence provide the logical progression of ideas and the way in which arguments are presented. The one in "Dawn" is more of an when the writer shares his historic examples (Mehrgarh, Indus Valley Civilization, the Mughal period) in an attempt to situate the flood as a break in Pakistan's traditionally symbiotic relationship with nature. This historical context serves to reinforce the assertion that the disaster is man-made, and did not simply result from natural forces. There is inclusive pronoun use "we" as well and "our," which have predicated a sense of national collective responsibility.

The piece in "The Washington Post" applies an economic and political narrative (from Pakistan's immediate financial liability in terms of loss -$10billion- to global climate negotiations (COP27, Paris agreement). The move from local despair in Pakistan to global help creates a sense of coherence in framing the floods as an issue of global climate justice and not as an isolated phenomenon. And it speaks in the third person too ("the U.S.," "developing countries," "Pakistan"), conveying authority in a more detached way.

Dawn makes a nationalistic and historically determined case, while the Washington Post tracks a reasoned political and economic cause and effect line to relate the floods to a global climate narrative.

4.1.5 Devices (Metaphors, Analogies, and Persuasive Strategies)

In both pieces, rhetoric of involvement is used as a means of involving readers and for rhetoric use of description.

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in Dawn, uses a metaphor to dramatize the crisis in "Gravity propels the water flow, but our development model is insisting on defying gravity. → A metaphorical criticism of Pakistan's suicidal urbanization and "Prisoner of four deadly sins of development" → A metaphor that moralizes policy failures as permanent sins.

The Washington Post employs similes and melodramatic metaphors to generalize the issue by likening it to "Monsoon on steroids" → Implies an unnatural disaster thereby connecting the floods to human-caused climate change and "Sleepwalking towards the destruction of our planet" → Implies global inattention and indifference to all issues pertaining to the environment.

Dawn's metaphors concentrate on national policy failures; The Washington Post's major rhetorical devices stress global climate urgency and neglect.

Table 4.1. Textual Analysis (Description) Coding Table

Category	Sub-Category	Dawn (Domestic Framing)	The Washington Post (Global Framing)
Vocabulary	Word Choices & Loaded Terms	"Man-made disaster," "prisoner of four deadly sins," "biblical rains," "monsoon waters are furious" → Emphasizes governance failures and flawed development.	"Climate catastrophe," "relentless impact," "monsoon on steroids" → Frames floods as climate change driven.
Grammar	Active vs. Passive Voice	Active voice: "Our flawed development model has made our lives insecure." → Assigns responsibility to Pakistan's policies.	Mix of active & passive: "The damage is likely to exceed $10 billion." → Obscures immediate responsibility; active when blaming the U.S.
	Nominalization	"Statist development model," "unplanned growth" → Structural critique of governance.	"Loss and damage," "climate negotiations" → Emphasizes legal and policy debates.
Modality	Certainty, Obligation, Authority	Strong certainty: "The floods will become costlier..." → Urgent tone, positioning floods as policy driven.	Cautious certainty: "Pakistan will almost certainly not receive compensation..." → Hedges claims while advocating climate reparations.
Cohesion & Coherence	Text Structure	Narrative-driven, moves from history to policy failures → Constructs cultural and political critique.	Policy-driven, structured around climate agreements → Reinforces global accountability.
	Pronoun Usage	"We," "our" → Collective national responsibility.	"Pakistan," "developing countries" → Maintains external observer stance.
Rhetorical Devices	Metaphors & Analogies	"Prisoner of the four deadly sins," "defying gravity" → Fatalistic, internal critique.	"Monsoon on steroids," "sleepwalking towards destruction" → Global climate crisis framing.
	Persuasive Strategies	Rhetorical questions: "Can this season… provide an opportunity to reflect?" → Encourages national introspection.	Expert testimonials: Guterres' statement → Uses authoritative voices for credibility.

To sum up, Dawn and the Washington Post used distinctive terms to describe the context of the 2022 Pakistan floods. Whereas The Washington Post zeroes in on the issue of climate injustice and backs reparations on the part of rich countries, Dawn sees the calamity as an act of government failure, self-inflicted.

Lexical, syntactic, modality, coherence, and rhetorical features indicate broader ideological perspectives on policy responses, costs to the economy, and the responsibility for climate. This phase sets the stage for the later phases of CDA–discursive practice and social practice–according to Fairclough's model. These stages will investigate in greater detail how the media debate is mediated with politics, policy, and power relations.

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4.2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

This part of the paper analyses the production and structure of knowledge as well as intertextuality between the two newspapers stories (of Dawn, Pakistan and of The Washington Post, USA) and on wider social discourses and intertextual references to other sources. With regard to CDA, we adopt Fairclough's (2013) meso-level of discursive practice that focuses on the practices of producing, circulating and consuming texts that incorporates intertextuality, interdiscursivity, framing and genre conventions and illustrate how they shape the media narrative of climate crises.

4.2.1 Intertextuality (References to Other Texts and Discourses)

Both newspapers embed their stories in a wider context of politics, science, and history, but in very different ways.

In Dawn, the hegemonic connections are more indirect, through at least gestures to Pakistan's history with floods and environmental discourse. The article draws on the history of Pakistan, referring to the Indus Valley Civilisation, the Mughal era, Mehrgarh settlements, in order to situate the floods along historical lines. Such pre-colonial and indigenous systems are used as reference points in the article, which proposes that a sustainable relationship with nature has been broken by contemporary development (and in doing so, supports its assertion that bad governance and urban planning were the cause of disaster). And the article subtly takes aim at government reports and media narratives that explain the flooding simply as a natural disaster and says that such "misleading and fatalist myths" must be deactivated. This points to the discursive contestation over truth – official narratives are framed around the discourse of climate change as an externality, which Dawn challenges by framing the disaster as a failure of national policy and urban planning.

On the other hand, The Washington Post participates more directly in global discussions on climate change, connecting the Pakistan floods with United Nations (UN) climate talks, the Paris Agreement, and debates about climate reparations. The article uses much of its precious word space to quote UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and to present the floods not as a disaster for one affected region but as a global climate emergency. It also alludes to climate lawsuits in Peru and surrounding island nations, cementing the notion that Pakistan's disaster is a part of a wider movement for climate justice and financial reparations from the rich world. The article also cites economic studies to measure Pakistan's financial loss ($10 billion), situating the argument within wider global ecopolitical and climate policy debates.

Whereas The Dawn is grounded in historical and local environment narratives, The Post weaves in global climate politics and international financial justice narratives.

4.2.2 Interdiscursivity (Mixing of Different Discourses)

Both newspapers draw on several discourses to construct their narratives but combine different discourses packages to strengthen their own ideological stance.

In Dawn, environmental, developmental, and political discourses strongly overlap with one another. The article melds climate science (acknowledging the role of global warming in increasing the severity of monsoons) with governance and infrastructure discourses that ultimately hold policy failures, poor urban planning, and rampant land encroachments to account for the inundations. Through this hybrid discourse, climate change is framed as only one among several contributors to the crisis, and one in which Pakistan itself is uninsulated against. There is also a moral and philosophical language: That Pakistan is a "prisoner of the four deadly sins of development"— a turn of phrase that transforms what might otherwise be considered inevitable acts of nature into the result of human greed, mismanagement, and short-sighted governance.

By contrast, in The Washington Post, scientific, humanitarian, economic and legal arguments are blended to make the case for climate reparations. The article contributes to the climate science-individual behaviour debate, drawing attention to the greenhouse gas emissions narratives and the role of global warming in extreme weather. It incorporates humanitarian narrative — referring to the floods as a "catastrophe" and giving human numbers to quantify the loss (1,000 dead, millions displaced). The piece also includes legal and economic discourses, referring to U.S. liability fears, COP27 talks, and lawsuits from developing countries, thereby framing Pakistan's floods as part of a wider movement for legal redress and monetary reparation from the developed world.

Whereas at Dawn development and governance are mixed together, at The Washington Post the intertwining occurs between climate science, humanitarian, legal and economic discourses to generate a story of global guilt and reparations.

4.2.3 Framing of Information (What Is Emphasized or Omitted?)

The way both newspapers frame causality, responsibility and solutions are particularly important.

In Dawn, the floods are seen more as a result of poor policies than only climate-driven disaster. It focuses less on Pakistan's victim status in the global lexicon and more on the lacunas in domestic governance, finding fault with the government for not being able to put in place infrastructure that is resistant to climatic shocks. The focus on urban planning failures, poorly managed waterways and unregulated land use all suggest that the onus will be on Pakistan to find solutions, not on external aid or reparations. Crucially, despite stating that climate change is a factor, the article refrains from centring global climate justice narratives and from making demands for financial assistance from the West.

By contrast, The Washington Post presents the floods as part of a global crisis that can be traced to polluters and the victims. The article is filled with calls to hold the U.S. and other developed countries responsible for their past emissions, saying Pakistan is a victim of Western industrialization and carbon explosions. The framing

naturally leads to a solution from global climate finance mechanisms and implores the U.S. and other developed nations to pay Pakistan. The article does not touch on domestic governance failings of Pakistan, does not discuss corruption, urban planning, or local development failures in any way. This selective framing presents Pakistan as a passive victim rather than an active agent that is tasked with coping with its vulnerabilities.

Dawn contextualizes the flood as a national governance failure and plays down the need for external aid, while The Washington Post narrates the disaster as a climate injustice with a claim that the West owes Pakistan reparations (whilst ignoring the internal weak state in Pakistan).

4.2.4 Genre Analysis (News Report vs. Editorial)

The information structure and presentation is influenced by genre conventions.

Dawn article is an editorial which on the editorial page permits opinion, critique, argument rather than indisputable reporting. In her role as author, the critical position is made explicit, with the writer deploying rhetorical questions, metaphors, and terms of judgment to present Pakistan's development model as unworkable. The emotive voice and parley with policy specific literature place the article as being for a domestic audience interested in reforms to national policy.

The Washington Post piece, on the other hand, is a news story, and it provides expert testimony, economic data, and political talks that, while not intimate, give a relatively indifferent but convincing presentation. Having quotes from UN officials, US diplomats and climate finance experts add an important sense of authority to the article, bolstering its legitimacy in discussing international climate policy. The article is written for an international audience, especially in the West where there are debates about climate politics, finance, and humanitarian aid.

Dawn editorial format does lend itself to subjective critiques and debates on governance at the local level and The Washington Post's news report format puts Pakistan in the global debate on climate justice based on the opinions of experts.

Table 4.2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation) Coding Table

Category	Sub-Category	Dawn (Domestic Framing)	The Washington Post (Global Framing)
Intertextuality	References for Other Texts & Discourses	-References Pakistan's historical relationship with floods (Indus Valley Civilization, Mughal era, Mehrgarh settlements). - Critiques government reports & media for presenting floods as "misleading and fatalist myths." - Draws from local environmental and developmental discourse.	- References for global climate agreements (Paris Agreement, COP27, UN climate negotiations). - Quotes UN Secretary-General António Guterres, integrating climate justice discourse. - Mentions climate lawsuits in Peru and island nations, framing floods within the global fight for climate reparations.
Interdiscursivity	Mixing of Different Discourses	- Blends climate science, governance, and development discourse. - Attributes floods primarily to policy failures, urban mismanagement, and land encroachments. - Uses moral and philosophical discourse (e.g., "prisoner of the four deadly sins") to critique governance.	- Mixes scientific, humanitarian, economic, and legal discourses. - Connects floods to greenhouse gas emissions, climate finance, and Western accountability. - Frames Pakistan as part of a broader legal and economic movement for reparations.
Framing of Information	Emphasized vs. Omitted Aspects	- Frames flood as a governance and development crisis, not just a climate-driven disaster. - Emphasizes domestic policy failures (unregulated land use, poor urban planning).	- Frames flood as a global climate injustice, attributing them to Western industrialization. - Highlights financial loss ($10 billion) and humanitarian crisis (1,000+ deaths, mass

		- De-emphasizes Pakistan's role as a victim on the global stage, instead pushing for self-reform.	displacement). - Omits internal governance failures, corruption, or urban planning mismanagement.
Genre Analysis	News Report vs. Editorial	- Editorial format: Opinion-driven, uses metaphors, rhetorical questions, and strong evaluative language. - Directly critiques Pakistan's governance and development policies. - Intended for a domestic readership (policy makers, intellectuals, citizens).	- News report format: Presents expert opinions, economic statistics, and political negotiations. - Uses detached yet persuasive language, backed by authoritative sources. - Intended for Western policymakers, climate activists, and global readers.

In conclusion, we provide media which employ varied frames and discourses to shape the reader's view of the 2022 Pakistan floods. References to the floods are made by both The Washington Post and Dawn in terms of the broader milieu of global climate finance and legal wrangling, which underscores the need for reparations from the West, juxtaposed with a critique that focuses on national governance, the tropes of development and a history lesson. The contradictions in the narratives reflect wider international concerns over geopolitics. While American media fosters an attitude of global accountability, Pakistani media advocates self-improvement.

This study supports the final stage of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in examining how these discourses contribute to the reinforcement of the power system, economic inequality and global climate policy.

4.3. Social Practice (Explanation)

Dawn and The Washington Post articles on the 2022 floods in Pakistan show that these ideological and cultural standpoint differences are indeed tangible in actuality and demonstrate how our histories, power structures, and global hierarchies have shaped our conversations. The lexical choices in each story support different interpretations of these catastrophes, whether as failures of home management (Dawn) or as climate justice problems (The Washington Post). According to Fairclough, in his analysis of texts language is not neutral but is deeply embedded with social and political practices and that language upholds dominant approaches, as well as resists power relationships.

4.3.1 The Role of Ideology in Shaping Discourse

The Dawn account is a self-flagellator and nationalistic narrative - portraying the floods not as an act of nature but as a result of mismanaged urbanization and governance. Repeatedly it stresses Pakistan's own failings, with phrases such as "our flawed development model has made our life insecure" and "no lesson has been learnt or applied." This is consistent with a political mindset of personal responsibility, that climate tragedies are framed as anthropogenic rather than purely natural events. By grounding domestic accountability, Dawn steers away from the global climate justice discussion and rather calls on national policymakers to reconsider Pakistan's urban planning and positioning to disasters.

By contrast, The Washington Post develops a global discourse of power, locating the Pakistan floods within the larger framework of global climate injustice and global economic inequality. It is a piece that points the finger very directly at the West, notably the U.S., specifically with lines like "Pakistan will almost certainly not receive compensation from the countries that are most responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. This framing serves to position climate change as the direct outcome of historical Western industrialization, and further to assert that Pakistan's misery is not the product of a national failure, but is also indicative of global capitalism and environmental plunder.

By depicting the United States as a hegemonic power that refuses to accept responsibility for climate devastation, The Washington Post stands with climate justice movements calling for reparations to the global south. "The United States has blocked such efforts at every turn" The "US has blocked such efforts at every turn" legitimizes the hierarchical power relations of international climate negotiations, posing the West as an obstacle to climate finance that is frail policy change.

4.3.2 Socio-Political, Historical, and Economic Influences on Discourse

The historical conditions that the articles are written in are significant in determining their narratives. Dawn alludes to its ancient civilizations in Pakistan (such as Mehrgarh, the Indus Valley, and the Mughal period) to claim that Pakistani societies historically lived with monsoons but have since interfered with that balance through modern development policies. This historical context is a moral commentary on Pakistan's post-colonial economic course, implying that the development approach borrowed from Western paradigms have proved incompatible

with the country's geographical and ecological conditions. The article' claim that "Gravity moves the water course, but still our development model is hell-bent on defying gravity" can be read as a metaphorical critique of Pakistan's westernized drive for infrastructure, which it casts as unnatural and unsustainable.

The Washington Post, on the other hand, takes a more historical perspective in framing the impacts on the Global South of Western-industrial-era economies. Drawing upon previous climate summits, for instance the Paris Agreement (2015) and COP27 (2022), the article locates the misery suffered by Pakistan within the overarching discussions about climate reparations. This account of development is compatible with the neo-colonial critique of environmental injustice which emphasizes how rich countries have benefited from industrialisation throughout history while externalizing its negative impacts on the less well-off countries. The statement that "the issue has become a flashpoint in global climate negotiations" hints that Pakistan is not just the recipient of an unfortunate act of God, but a testing ground for the long-term legal fight for climate justice around the world.

Economically Dawn's discourse is insular: that Pakistan needs to re-plan its infrastructure development without dependency on outside assistance. It attacks cash grants and emergency assistance programs, writing that "little attention has been paid to calculating economic losses and the cost of climate-resilient recovery." This feeds into a self-reliance storyline where it is up to the country itself to achieve resilience through internal policy changes and not rely on foreign assistance.

By contrast, The Washington Post is framing the issue economically and externally, focusing on the financial duties of wealthy nations. It points to Pakistan's economic losses of over $10 billion — a figure placed in the bigger narrative that the richer parts of the world need to pay back the poorer ones for climate heartache. Finally, the mention of Oxfam's report on underfunded climate relief operations serves to further cement the charge that Western nations in the past have left these countries in the lurch when they should have been providing help and making the political argument for why a loss-and-damage fund is necessary, not just donations.

4.3.3 Discourse, Power, and Social Change

These narratives have implications for more than media coverage, shaping policy, public opinion, and advocacy. Dawn's emphasis on its domestic failures at governance, further reflects a nationalist call for reform to the leaders of Pakistan, that they must mend flaws in their infrastructure and policy. But this narrative may also benefit powerful vested interests in Pakistan, who want to distract the media gaze from the bare facts (and Pakistan's weak hand) in international climate negotiations. By promoting individual responsibility over international accountability, Dawn runs the risk of reinforcing an internalizing narrative on blame that doesn't question the global economic system perpetuating climate vulnerability.

The Washington Post instead forms an alternative counter-hegemonic discourse, demanding climate justice and reparations. By framing Pakistan as a victim of Western economic and environmental practices, the article feeds into wider international campaigns for a more formalised climate compensation regime. But this narrative is also in danger of oversimplifying Pakistan's own internal problems, and risks painting the country as little more than a beneficiary rather than an active agent of climate adaption. Although the claim for compensation is justified under climate justice, the fact that there is not more of a focus on Pakistan's domestic policy changes makes the discourse a partial one.

Table 4.3. Social Practice (Explanation) Coding Table

Category	Sub-Category	Dawn (Domestic Framing)	The Washington Post (Global Framing)
Discourse & Power	Power Structures	Self-critical, nationalist discourse emphasizing internal policy failures.	Global climate justice discourse holds Western nations accountable.
	Hegemonic vs. Counter-Hegemonic Discourses	Aligns with domestic elites by focusing on Pakistan's governance rather than global inequalities.	Challenges Western hegemony by advocating for climate reparations.
Ideology	Nationalism vs. Global Justice	Frames floods as Pakistan's own failure due to flawed urbanization and governance.	Positions Pakistan as a victim of Western industrialization and climate injustice.
	Blame Attribution	Pakistani government and policymakers: "Our flawed development model has made our lives insecure."	Western nations, especially the U.S.: "The United States has blocked such efforts at every turn."
Historical Framing	National vs. Global History	References Pakistan's ancient civilizations (Indus Valley, Mughal	Links Pakistan's crisis to historical Western emissions and failed climate negotiations

		era) to critique post-colonial development.	(Paris Agreement, COP27).
Economic Framing	Financial Responsibility	Calls for self-reliance: "Little attention has been given to calculating economic losses or the cost of climate-resilient reconstruction."	Emphasizes Western accountability: Highlights Pakistan's $10 billion loss and need for international climate reparations.
	Aid & Development Perspective	Criticizes reliance on external aid, arguing for better domestic infrastructure investment.	Advocates for financial compensation from developed nations, citing Oxfam and climate relief reports.
Linguistic Features	Metaphors & Analogies	Fatalistic, internal critique: "Prisoner of the four deadly sins of development," "Defying gravity."	Climatic and economic injustice framing: "Monsoon on steroids," "Sleepwalking towards destruction."
	Pronoun Usage	"We," "our" → Encourages national responsibility.	"Pakistan," "developing countries" → Positions Pakistan as an external case in global negotiations.
	Certainty & Modality	High certainty: "Flooding has emerged as the worst type of climate-induced disaster."	Hedging & caution: "Pakistan will almost certainly not receive compensation…"
Policy Implications	National vs. Global Solutions	Urges Pakistan to rethink urban policies and disaster preparedness.	Calls for systemic reforms in global climate finance and Western accountability.
Social Change	Potential Impact of Narrative	Reinforces elite discourse by shifting focus inward rather than challenging global economic structures.	Strengthens advocacy for climate reparations but risks portraying Pakistan as a passive recipient of aid.

Taken together, the Dawn and Washington Post articles demonstrate two discourses in contest—one of domestic policy failure, and another of global climate injustice. Whereas Dawn emphasizes self-reliance and calling for policy overhauls, The Washington Post emphasizes past emissions and the economic duties of rich nations. These ideological skirmishes are emblematic of a broader power struggle within climate governance, in which the developing world feels itself caught between domestic calls for accountability and external calls for justice.

These conflicting realities shape how we make sense of Pakistan's floods, and by extension, they inform policy making, international aid talks and popular consciousness. The decision of whether to frame disasters as internal governance failures or global injustices is not just a journalistic one, but a political one: It decides who is responsible when the shit hits the fan, and who might therefore be expected to act when it comes to addressing climate crises.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The current research conducted a systematic CDA of representation of the 2022 Pakistan floods in the Pakistani and American print media, using a three-dimensional model (textual, discursive, and social practices) as developed in Fairclough (1995). The results show sharp differences in media portrayal based on political, ideological, and financial considerations.

The Pakistani newspaper (Dawn) largely reported the floods as a government failure of governance, highlighting a misplaced development, urban mismanagement, and inadequate infrastructure. Its message was self-reflective, calling on federal policy makers to shore up disaster preparedness and climate resilience. Though it acknowledged climate change as a significant dimension, the article framed the narrative of global climate justice as peripheral and called for domestic rather than external reparation.

The Washington Post, meanwhile, framed the floods within the larger context of climate justice and global economic accountability. It cast Pakistan as a victim of Western industrialization, emphasized the accumulated

emissions of rich countries through history, and called for climate reparations. This global view pointed out the failure of the United States and other wealthy nations to offer generous compensation and policy support to vulnerable developing countries. In so doing, The Washington Post upheld an alternative narrative to the one that is hegemonic here in the West, questioning the West's responsibility for climate.

These tensioned discourses are indicative of larger ideological battles being played out in climate governance, in international development and in the media treatment of disasters. While Pakistan media is advocating for self-reliance and policy changes, American media is advocating for global accountability and financial remunerations. This contrast speaks to the power imbalances in the international climate negotiations, in which countries of the global South demand justice – and, in some cases, reparations – while wealthy countries continue to avoid liability through diplomatic wrangling.

The research highlights how language can be a potent force in moulding public comprehension, policy advocacy and geopolitical dynamics. Whether to frame disasters as internal governance failures or global injustices is not just a journalistic decision but a political one — specifically a political one that decides who is responsible and who is expected to be responsible.

Recommendations

Journalism and the media need to recognize their influence on public conversation and policy decisions. Rather than perpetuating the simplistic narratives that tend towards blaming local government or shifting blame to the developed world, media should take a more even-handed approach, acknowledging failures in domestic policy and climate injustice on a global scale.

Final Thoughts

The 2022 Pakistan floods were not only a natural disaster – it was a discursive battlefield where media narratives mediated political debates, international relations, media campaigns and climate justice demand. The difference here between Dawn's reflection and The Washington Post's global accountability frame reveals how language, power and ideology are imbricated in mediating the understanding of climate crises.

As climate disasters grow more frequent and more severe, it is vital that media, policymakers and international institutions collaborate to form narratives that can bring about meaningful change — narratives that not only apportion blame but also demand solutions in a world that finds itself in an intensifying climate emergency.

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