



Pakistani rescue workers gather at the site of a building collapse in Muzaffarabad.





Gaps in disaster reporting



- Several large-scale human-caused and natural disasters over the last two decades have been widely covered in the news and other media¹ and have compelled the attention of scholars as well as the public. For example, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing forced a somewhat complacent nation into recognizing its vulnerability to terrorist attack, and the unimaginable September 11 attacks placed the world on notice that no place and no people are invincible.



- Oct 2005 Earth quake in Pakistan and Kashmir that left 1,2500 dead and thousands injured. In 2010 flood in Pakistan and again devastated thousands of Sqkm area and that left thousands homeless and In 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami killed over 15,000 people, swept millions of tons of debris offshore, and released radioactivity of unknown danger through unknown exposures, once again underscoring the vulnerability of people around the world. While fewer in number than studies of disasters studies man made or natural, research addressing the psychological outcomes and media coverage of these natural events has further advanced our understanding of key issues associated with disaster media coverage and some times creating more troubles and psychological truma .

- Most studies examined disaster television viewing in the context of terrorism and explored a range of outcomes including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) posttraumatic stress (PTS), depression, anxiety, stress reactions, and substance use. There is good evidence establishing a relationship between disaster television viewing and various psychological outcomes, especially PTSD and PTS, but studies are too few to draw definitive conclusions about the other media formats—newspapers, radio, and internet (including social media)—that have been examined. As media technology continues to advance, future research is needed to investigate these additional formats especially newer formats such as social media.







ROLE OF MEDIA IN DISASTER



Media throughout the world plays a vital role in disaster management by educating the public about disasters; warning of hazards; gathering and transmitting information about affected areas; alerting the government officials, relief organizations and the public to specific needs; and facilitating discussions about disaster preparedness and response.



In recent history, communication has proved critical for the cause of disaster mitigation. It has provided not only the data management & analysis techniques but also increased our knowledge towards hazards' origins and behaviors. Advent of mass media in recent years has helped sensitize people in most effective manner through live coverage of hazards and prompt reporting.



Social scientists and experts are of the view that through a system of devoted international cooperation, the human sufferings caused by catastrophic impacts of disasters can be reduced significantly. This cooperation revolves around public information & education, improved warning systems, disaster preparedness and mitigation. These measures are aimed at ensuring improved public safety and lower economic losses. If we observe closely, communication is the most important means for achieving all of the above stated objectives.



**IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA
&
ROLE OF ELECTRONIC
MEDIA**



Understanding the importance of media communications, various humanitarian organizations have also established communication departments responsible for strong internal and external communications and media relationing. As per the new communication techniques for disaster management, it is now believed that the success of humanitarian efforts depends largely on the organization's understanding of and relations with the media



There are certain activities in hazard mitigation and post disaster activities which are directly dependent on the mass media. These activities are focused on creating public awareness about the risk and responses. Various advanced communication means can be used to give early warnings, evacuation plans and help post disaster activities.



Media can play a leadership role in changing the mindset of the society for making it more pro-active rather than reactive. It also has the responsibility to make the message more valuable and credible for the general public. Sensational and hyped news can give birth to another crisis in the form of chaos and fear causing more losses.



One major contribution that the electronic media can make is establishment of early warning systems in far flung and disaster prone areas. Radio Channels can play a primary role as they have an outreach to most remote areas. The media contribution can lead towards the development of a more robust community which is more aware and educated about the disaster preparedness and mitigation.



ROLE OF PRINT MEDIA



The role of print media cannot be neglected as it has been observed that receivers of the information have more trust on the written message than word of mouth. The information given in newspapers is perceived as reliable advice and people take it more seriously.



Earth Quake Coverage, 2005 (October 9 November 9) and Floods Coverage, 2010 (July 29 August 29)
Newspaper: Dawn & The News



Table 1

Categoryz	Total news items in directions of Sub Categories
A: Civic Engagement & Social Utility	Earthquake, 2005
	High level of involvement of media (+): 172 Dawn
Sub Category	High level of involvement of media (+): 61 The News
A1: Disaster Awareness	Floods, 2010
A2: Information about affected people	High level of involvement of media (+):151 Dawn
A3: Information about affected area	High level of involvement of media (+): 161 The News
A4: Information of other state actors	Earthquake, 2005
A5: Social reconstruction after disaster	Low level of involvement of media (): 41 Dawn
A6: Survivor stories & Eye witness accounts	Low level of involvement of media (): 38 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Low level of involvement of media (): 17 Dawn
	Low level of involvement of media (): 38 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	Moderate level of involvement of media (o): 64 Dawn
	Moderate level of involvement of media (o): 88 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Moderate level of involvement of media (o): 94 Dawn
	Moderate level of involvement of media (o): 72 The News



Table 2

Category	Total news items in directions of Sub Categories
B: Rescue & Relief Operations	Earthquake, 2005
Sub Category	Motivated by Govt. : (+) 83 Dawn
B1: Operations by government	Motivated by the Govt.: 33 The News
B2: operations by armed forces	Floods, 2010
B3: Volunteers & NGOs	Motivated by the Govt.: 25 Dawn
B4: International Organizations	Motivated by the Govt.: 28 The News
B5: Others: India Pakistan Perspective	Earthquake, 2005
	Self Motivated: () 126 Dawn
	Self motivated: (): 136 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Self motivated: () 70 Dawn
	Self motivated: () 58 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	Neutral: (o) 0 Dawn
	Neutral: (o) 4 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Neutral: (o) 0 Dawn
	Neutral: (o) 12 The News



Table 3

Category	Total in directions of Sub Categories
C: Need Assessment	Earthquake, 2005
Sub Category	High need assessment: (+) 97 Dawn
C1: Food	High need assessment :(+) 57 The News
C2: Shelter	Floods, 2010
C3: Cloths	High need assessment :(+) 41 Dawn
C4: Medicines and Medical facilities	High need assessment :(+) 46 The News
C5: Requisition for Rehabilitation	
	Earthquake, 2005
	Low need assessment : () 34 Dawn
	Low need assessment : () 5 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Low need assessment : () 8 Dawn
	Low need assessment : () 8 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	Moderate need assessment : (o) 43 Dawn
	Moderate need assessment: (o) 8 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Moderate need assessment: (o) 8 Dawn
	Moderate need assessment: (o) 9 The News



Table 4

Category	Total news items in directions of Sub Categories
D: Donation, Aid & Funds	Earthquake, 2005
D1: Appeals for help/Support	International (+): 132 Dawn
D2:Aid announced	International (+): 42 The News
D3: Aid Received	Floods, 2010
D4: Rehabilitation Effort	International (+): 36
	International (+): 54 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	National () : 30 Dawn
	National () : 25 The News
	Floods, 2010
	National () :11 Dawn
	National () : 39 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	Regional (o): 5 Dawn
	Regional (o): 6 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Regional (o): 8 Dawn
	Regional (o): 7 The News



Table 5

Category	Total news items in Direction of Sub Categories
E: Accountability of Donation & Disaster Sub Categories	
E1: Trust Deficit	Earthquake, 2005 Favorable (+) 9 Dawn
E2: In efficient Utility of Aids & corruption	Favorable (+) 11 The News Floods, 2010
E3: Questioning the people in power	Favorable (+): 1 Dawn
E4: Mismanagement & Feeble response	Favorable (+): 0 The News
	Earthquake, 2005 Against () 97 Dawn
	Against () 44 The News
	Floods, 2010 Against (): 56 Dawn
	Against (): 122 The News
	Earthquake, 2005 Neutral (o) 2 Dawn
	Neutral (o) 1 The News
	Floods, 2010 Neutral (o): 0 Dawn
	Neutral (o): 0 The News



Table 6

Category	Total news items in Direction of Sub Categories
F: Media Ethics	Earthquake, 2005
Sub Categories:	Ethical: (+) 45 Dawn
F1: Victim oriented approach	Ethical: (+) 6 The News
F2: Privacy invasion	Floods, 2010
F3: Risk amplification	Ethical: (+) 51 Dawn
F4: Enflaming tone & terminologies	Ethical: (+) 4 The News
F5: Negative impact on donors/victims	
	Earthquake, 2005
	Unethical: () 84 Dawn
	Unethical: () 100 The News Floods, 2010
	Unethical: () 84 Dawn
	Unethical: () 112 The News
	Earthquake, 2005
	Neutral: (o) 17 Dawn
	Neutral: (o) 5 The News
	Floods, 2010
	Neutral: (o) 26 Dawn
	Neutral: (o) 25 The News



DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS



The study in hand focuses on the comparison of two English National Dailies, Dawn & The News, and their respective role in covering two major natural disasters, Earthquake 2005 & Floods 2010, in Pakistan. A categorization scheme was developed to study the natural disaster news coverage in Pakistan, the scheme was based on six major categories and each category was divided in to further categories.



Results of the study have suggested that Media's emphasis is on civic engagement and social utility during disaster. This category has received the highest coverage especially disaster awareness, each day after disaster brings the updates regarding warnings, alerts, evacuations and other details that spread the awareness regarding disaster among affected people and other public.



RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIA IN DISASTER



Despite the fact that the private media groups and channels do have commercial interests, media's role in case of a disaster should be based more on ethical and moral dimensions. This is one area where media should be much more responsible in disseminating information



It must win people's confidence and provision of reliable information will serve the purpose. Not only the media should be providing the correct information and right message at right time but also it should create an environment of solidarity and faith. This will help in augmenting the collective responsibility of all segments of the society to tackle the challenges posed by any disaster.