



Media and Communication Review (MCR)

Volume 1, Issue 2, Fall 2021

ISSN (E): 2790-8364 ISSN (P): 2790-8356

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.12>

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/mcr>

Journal QR



Article: **Coverage of Minorities in Daily Dawn Newspaper**

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.12.05>

Article History: Received: August 2, 2021
Revised: October 26, 2021
Accepted: November 15, 2021
Published: December 24, 2021

Citation: Memon, B., Khuhro, R. A., Sikandar, K., & Yousifzai, S. S. (2021). Coverage on minorities of daily Dawn Newspaper in Pakistan. *Media and Communication Review*, 1(2), 86–99.
<https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.12.05>

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A Publication of the
School of Media and Communication Studies,
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Coverage of Minorities in *Daily Dawn* Newspaper

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Abstract

Minorities are a significant part of a society. They reinforce the cultural plurality of a community, which promotes brotherhood and tolerance in society. In Pakistan, minorities comprise 3.8 % of the total population. The white portion of the country's flag also represents minorities. Though minorities have contributed a lot in all walks of life, they still face many serious problems. In this context, media plays a significant role in sensitizing the issues of minorities. The main objective of this study is to investigate the coverage of religious minority groups in *Daily Dawn*, an English Pakistani newspaper. For this purpose, a quantitative content analysis of 100 news stories (published during 2011-2021), was conducted. The stories were selected using a keyword search in the online search engine of the newspaper's web page and were analyzed with the help of a coding sheet. The findings showed that most stories have a positive tone, while those found negative were small in number. Overall, the study found that minorities, such as Christians and Ahmadis, are represented and covered less in the newspaper. It was also determined that most stories were about the Pakistani Hindus.

Keywords: Christians, content analysis, *Daily Dawn*, Hindus, media coverage, minorities

Introduction

Minorities are a significant part of a society. They bring pluralism to society with their diverse cultures. These minorities teach people to live together in harmony and show tolerance towards others. In the context of defining minorities, Pakistan is a diverse country, with 3 % of the total population being minorities. Majority of the minorities are religious minorities, such as

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Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Qadianis/Ahmadis, Buddhists, Parsis, and Bahais.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) census 2017, Christians are 1.59 %, Hindus 1.60 %, Qadianis 0.22 %, Scheduled Caste 0.25 %, and others 0.07 % of the total population of the country (PBS, [2017](#)).

Respect for the rights of minorities is believed to be the main ingredient of a country's social and political development. The Constitution of Pakistan assures the same rights to all minorities residing in the country. Being the fourth pillar of the state, media is believed to represent all groups within the country. According to previous studies, the issue of the coverage of minorities in media has been highlighted globally (Joshua & Zia, [2020](#)). However, in the Pakistani context research has shown mixed trends concerning the portrayal of minorities in the country's media. Some studies reveal that mass media gives positive coverage to minorities and their issues (Batool, [2018](#); Dogar & Rizvi, [2021](#); Ittefaq et al., [2021](#)). Nevertheless, few studies reveal opposite results saying that media does not give importance to minorities and their issues (Ittefaq et al., [2021](#); Rahman, [2021](#)). Hence, the major objective of this study is to determine the coverage patterns of the Pakistani minority groups in *Daily Dawn*, an English Pakistani newspaper. In this context, the specific research objective of this study is to determine the coverage patterns of the news stories about minorities in *Daily Dawn*. This study tried to find the research question "What are the coverage patterns of minority groups in *Daily Dawn*?"

Further, the researcher has formed the following hypotheses for the analysis:

- i. The proportion of the positive coverage of all minority groups should be greater than the proportion of negative coverage.
- ii. Pakistani Newspaper *Daily Dawn* is fair in its coverage of Ahmadis and Christians.

Literature Review

According to the literature, most of the media research on minorities started in the 1970s. A lot of literature is available on the representation of ethnic

minorities in the media in Pakistan. Many studies have been conducted regarding news coverage of minority groups. Gul (1999) researched Pakistani minorities and a separate electorate. Ali and Jalaluddin (2010) conducted a content analysis study regarding the two leading Urdu newspapers, daily Jang and Nawa-e-Waqt. They have analyzed the news coverage of Pakistani minority groups for a year. The study found that the media representation and image of minority groups were positive in the two major Urdu newspapers in Pakistan (Ali, 2004). Cortes (2006) described in his study entitled "Minorities and Mass Media" that minorities have long been mindful of the influence of mass communication on their lives and they seek to increase their influence on the media.

Mesti (2011), in his research entitled "Hindu Minority in Pakistan", reported that stereotypes against the Hindu minority were expressed in the discussion of courses in Pakistani government schools. Several attempts have been made to resolve and handle this issue.

Bushra (2011) added, "The unfortunate fact in Pakistan is that we (the public as a whole, including the media) do not prefer to talk about minorities." Some English dailies try their best to cover this issue frequently. However, for the average reader, this is a wastage of time. On the contrary, an overwhelming number of Urdu press and electronic media avoid giving due representation to the minorities due to the ostrich syndrome.

Ashfaq (2015) reported in the findings of his research that the examined three English daily newspapers provided adequate coverage of an event involving violence against minorities in terms of news detail and frequency. Newspaper articles condemned the violence and called for stern action against the perpetrators to discourage this kind of barbarity. The research also concluded that Daily Times gave the event more space than the other two newspapers. The coverage style of the three was nevertheless identical.

In a similar manner, Khan (2016) pointed out in his research paper that the media is silent on the problems and difficulties faced by minorities. There are very few cases wherein the media covers the issues of minorities. Moreover, there exist some restrictions on reporting minorities affairs. He also expressed the view that such an aggressive stance against minority

reporting needs to be tackled urgently so as to overcome any animosity created for a section of the citizens of the country.

Joshua and Zia (2020) conducted in-depth interviews of policymakers and media persons. This study explored whether there exist any written policies for electronic media in the country to highlight the issues of minorities. The issue of media representation of minorities have been highlighted globally (Joshua & Zia, 2020).

Rahman (2021) studied and anchored the available studies on the attitudes of the Muslim majority towards religious minorities in Pakistan. Researchers found undesirable attitudes towards religious minorities in Pakistan that had a profound effect on their lives.

In a study regarding media representation of the sanitary workers (most of them belonging to religious minorities) Ittefaq et al. (2021) discovered that such workers believe that “they do not have any representation in Pakistan’s mainstream media which can voice their issues.” They are also worried about their controversial social representation in the media.

In a study regarding portrayals of minorities in the English language newspapers, Ali and Jalaluddin (2010) find out that *Daily Dawn* and *Daily The Nation* give more coverage to the Christian community than other minorities.

Ashfaq (2015) also analyzed the media coverage of the November 2014 murder of a Christian couple accused of blasphemy in Pakistan's English Press. The study shows that the Press adequately covered the event in terms of both quality and quantity. It condemned the incident and called for action against the perpetrators to prevent such an incident in the future.

In a study, Batool (2018) differentiated between the representation of minorities in the Pakistani and Indian print media. The study found that religious minorities have unequal and biased representation in both the Pakistani and Indian print media. The Pakistani print media has been ignoring Pakistani Hindus while the Indian print media negatively represents the Indian Muslims.

Dogar and Rizvi (2021) analyzed the framing of religious minorities' image in the news of three national dailies of Pakistan. This content analysis

study stated that the media positively portrayed minorities. In the context of framing, much attention was paid to controversial issues like forced conversions, attacks on places of worship, violation of the right to liberty, and other human rights.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted using the methodology of quantitative content analysis. For this purpose, the Pakistani English newspaper, *Daily Dawn*, was selected and analyzed. “Content analysis is a quantitative research method used to determine the occurrence of certain words or concepts in a text or text set. Researchers analyze the presence, meaning, and relationships of such words and concepts, then the messages within the text, the authors, the audience, and even the amount of culture and time” (Krippendorff, 2018). The population of this study is the Pakistani English language press. Thus, the researchers selected one of the leading English newspapers *Daily Dawn* for the analysis. It is the most credible and popular English newspaper in Pakistan. It is published in Karachi and Lahore simultaneously, having around 100,000 circulation which is the highest of any Pakistani English newspaper. In this quantitative content study, the researchers purposively adopted keyword search in the www.dawn.com. For that, a single keyword (Minority/Minorities) was entered in the online search engine of Epaper web page of *Daily Dawn*. After entering the keyword, the researcher found at least 150 stories. However, the researcher specified and took 100 stories for the analysis.

For data collection, 10 years period from January 2012 to February 2021 was selected for the analysis. The unit of analysis in this research was a complete story regarding minorities of Pakistan appearing on the front, last, and inside pages including articles, editorials, and features. The electronic version of the *Daily Dawn* edition was used for collecting data. A coding sheet was designed as an instrument for data collection. The researchers entered 100 news stories into the coding sheet.

After entering data in the coding sheet, the researchers entered the data in the latest version of the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The basic descriptive tests were operated, and results were presented in frequency tables.

Findings

Table 1

Frequency of the Stories by Publication Year

| Years | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 2012 | 4 | (4.0) |
| 2013 | 4 | (4.0) |
| 2014 | 7 | (7.0) |
| 2015 | 8 | (8.0) |
| 2016 | 5 | (5.0) |
| 2017 | 11 | (11.0) |
| 2018 | 11 | (11.0) |
| 2019 | 9 | (9.0) |
| 2020 | 32 | (32.0) |
| 2021 | 9 | (9.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 1 shows the year-wise frequency of stories related to minorities published in *Daily Dawn* during the period starting from January 2012 to February 2021. In this way, it was found that out of the total 100 minority-related stories, the first highest proportion of stories amounting to almost one-third (32.0%) was published during the year 2020. Then, the second-highest proportion of the stories that are slightly higher than one-tenth (11.0%) was published in the year 2017, and the same proportion of stories (11.0%) was published during the year 2018 as well. Thus, overall it was observed that a great number of minorities-related stories were published in Dawn in the year 2020.

Table 2

Frequency of Stories by Genre Type

| Genre of story | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| News Story | 84 | (84.0) |
| Article | 5 | (5.0) |
| Column | 6 | (6.0) |
| Editorial | 5 | (5.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 2 reports the frequency regarding the genre type of the minorities' related stories published in *Daily Dawn* during the period starting from January 2011 to February 2021. It shows that the vast majority of the content about minorities, over four-fifth (84.0%), appeared as news stories. Whereas, among the remaining number of the material,s the other genre type were articles amounting to half of the one-tenth (5.0%), columns sizing slightly over than a half of the one-tenth (6.0), and editorials that stood the proportion of half of the one-tenth (5.0%). Overall, it surfaced that the most common genre of minorities' related issues was "news story".

Table 3

Frequency of the Stories by Minority Type

| Types of Minority | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Hindus | 37 | (37.0) |
| Christians | 2 | (2.0) |
| Qadianis | 4 | (4.0) |
| Budhists | 1 | (1.0) |
| Combined Minorities | 56 | (56.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 3 reports data regarding the frequency of minority type in the published minorities' related stories. It shows that fifty percent of the stories (56.0) published in *Daily Dawn* during the selected period were about "combined minorities". It is followed by stories about Hindus (37.0%). However, the remaining number of the published stories were about Qadianis (4.0%), Christians (2.0%), and Buddhists (1.0%). Hence, it is deduced that the majority of the stories were about more than one minority.

Table 4

Frequency of Byline Stories

| Byline | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Reporter | 71 | (71.0) |
| News Agency | 9 | (9.0) |
| Monitoring Desk | 9 | (9.0) |
| Writer | 11 | (11.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Regarding the byline of the stories related to minorities (see table 4) it was found that out of the total of 100 stories published in *Daily Dawn* during the period starting from January 2011 to February 2021 the first highest proportion amounted higher than three quarters (71.0%) of the stories had a byline of the word “Reporter”. Whereas, the second-highest proportion that is greater than one-tenth (11.0%) of the stories had a “writer” name. However, the remaining number of stories amounting to almost one-tenth were with a byline of the name of “news agency” (9.0%) and Monitoring Desk (9.0%). Summarily it deduced that the great majority of the minorities’ related stories were published with the byline of “Reporter”.

Table 5

Frequency of Stories with and without Visuals

| Visuals | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| Photo | 73 | (73.0) |
| Without Photo | 27 | (27.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 5 indicates that almost three-quarters (73.0%) of the stories, a good majority, were published with photos. Whereas, slightly more than one quarter (27.0%) of the stories were carried without any photo.

Table 6

Frequency of the Stories by Word Size

| Words | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 100 | 10 | 10.0 |
| 200 | 58 | 58.0 |
| 300 | 21 | 21.0 |
| 400 | 5 | 5.0 |
| 500 | 4 | 4.0 |
| 700 | 1 | 1.0 |
| 1000 and above | 1 | 1.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |

Table 6 reports data about the word size of the stories. It indicates that the first highest proportion, almost three-fifths (58.0%), of the stories was 200 words. The second-highest proportion, slightly over one fifth (21.0%),

of the stories, had a size of 300 words. Whereas, the third-highest proportion, one-tenth (10.0%), of the stories was of the size of 100 words. Finally, the remaining stories were of the size of 400 words (5.0%), 500 words (4.0%), 700 words (1.0%), and 1000 or above words (1.0%). 1. The data mentions that the majority of stories were of a 200-word size.

Table 7

Frequency of the Stories by Tone Type

| Tone | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Positive | 59 | (59.0) |
| Negative | 41 | (41.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 7 indicates that out of the total of 100 stories almost three-fifths (59.0%) had a positive tone. Whereas, the remaining proportion of slightly over two-fifth (41.0%) of the stories was negative. Thus, the findings show that the majority of the stories had a positive tone.

Table 8

Frequency of the Stories by Headline Type

| Headline | Frequency | Percent |
|----------|-----------|---------|
| Single | 94 | 94.0 |
| Multiple | 6 | 6.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100.0 |

Table 8 shows the type of headlines of the stories. It shows that out of the total of 100 stories the vast majority (94%) of them had a single headline. However, the remaining stories (6%) carried multiple headlines.

Table 9

Frequency of the Stories by Framing

| Framing | Frequency | Percent(%) |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Rape | 1 | (1.0) |
| Domestic Violence | 2 | (2.0) |
| Forced Marriage | 2 | (2.0) |

| Framing | Frequency | Percent(%) |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Conversion of faith | 9 | (9.0) |
| Migration | 3 | (3.0) |
| Legislation | 30 | (30.0) |
| Conflicts | 3 | (3.0) |
| Election Process | 2 | (2.0) |
| Violence | 3 | (3.0) |
| Killing and abused | 5 | (5.0) |
| Criticism on policies | 7 | (7.0) |
| Protest | 4 | (4.0) |
| Protection of minorities right | 16 | (16.0) |
| Population | 1 | (1.0) |
| Sensitization of minorities issues | 5 | (5.0) |
| Development | 3 | (3.0) |
| Kidnapping | 3 | (3.0) |
| Sexual harassment | 1 | (1.0) |
| Total | 100 | (100) |

Table 9 shows that out of the total 100 stories the highest proportion of over than a quarter (30.0%) was related to “legislation” relating to minorities. The second-highest proportion amounting to 16.0% was related to the “protection of minorities’ rights”. Whereas, the third-highest proportion amounted to nearly one-tenth (9.0%). was related to the “conversion of faith”. However, the remaining stories were framed as “criticism of politics” (7.0%), “sensitization of minorities’ issues” (5.0%), “killing and abuse” (5.0%), “protest” (4.0%), “kidnapping” (3.0%), “development” (3.0%), “violence” (3.0%), “conflicts” (3.0%), “migration” (3.0%), “domestic violence” (2.0%), “forced marriage” (2.0%), “election process” (2.0%), “sexual harassment” (1.0%), “population” (1.0%), and “rape” (1.0%). In this way, the 100 stories published in the *Daily Dawn* had 18 various frames.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, four hypotheses were developed and tested. The data strongly supported the prediction of 3 hypotheses. The researcher collected data by applying a longitudinal quantitative content analysis technique with the help of a coding sheet through keyword search from the e-paper version of the

Daily Dawn English newspaper. News, reports, articles, features, and editorials written about minorities were picked from the *Daily Dawn* e-paper.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the proportion of positive coverage of all minority groups will be greater than the proportion of the coverage having a negative tone. The data strongly supported this hypothesis, as out of the total 100 stories published from January 2011 to February 2021, the tone of the majority proportion (59.0%) was positive. This proves that *Daily Dawn* has given positive coverage to minorities in Pakistan.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that Dawn gives fair coverage to Ahmadis and Christians. However, the data did not support this hypothesis as it revealed that the newspaper's coverage of Christians was only 2%, while for Ahmadis it was merely 1%. Though the Christians are one of the largest minorities in Pakistan, *Daily Dawn* has given very little coverage to them.

This study has conducted a longitudinal content analysis of how Pakistanis minority groups are covered in the *Daily Dawn*, from the year January 2011 to February 2021. It was determined that a great number of the total 100 stories related to minorities in Pakistan were published in the year 2020. Those 100 stories were inclusive of all types of material including editorial, column, article, and news. However, it was found that the most common genre of the material published was news, while a majority of the published stories were about combined minorities. Additionally, most stories carried the credit line "Reporter". Most of the stories were accompanied by photos. Furthermore, it was determined that majority of the stories were 200 words stories, having a positive tone and single headlines. Finally, all of the 100 stories were categorized into 18 frames. Out of those 18 frames, three dominant frames in order were stories related to "legislation of the minorities", "protection of the minorities", and "faith conversation" of the minorities. Thus, it was revealed that legislation regarding the protection of minorities' rights and faith was a dominant theme.

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