

Media and Communication Review (MCR)

Volume 4 Issue 2, Fall 2024

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

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



Article QR

MCR Media and
Communication
Review



Title: Media Coverage of Child Abuse Cases: Impediments and Limitations

Author (s): Zerish Tasleem¹, Zermima Tasleem², and Aiza Saif¹


Affiliation (s): ¹University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan
²Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.42.08>

History: Received: June 24, 2024, Revised: September 15, 2024, Accepted: September 20, 2024,
Published: December 24, 2024

Citation: Tasleem, Z., Tasleem, Z., & Saif, A. (2024). Media coverage of child abuse cases: Impediments and limitations. *Media and Communication Review*, 4(2), 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.42.08>

Copyright: © The Authors

Licensing:  This article is open access and is distributed under the terms of [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Conflict of Interest: Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of
The School of Media and Communication Studies
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Media Coverage of Child Abuse Cases: Impediments and Limitations

Zerish Tasleem^{1*}, Zermina Tasleem², and Aiza Saif¹

¹University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

²Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

Abstract

This study explores the dearth of extensive coverage on child abuse in print media, highlighting its global impact and the intricate relationship between news reporting and instances of abuse. Employing a qualitative research design, it draws from primary and secondary sources, including a content analysis of English and Urdu dailies. The findings reveal a substantial underreporting of child abuse cases, diminishing public awareness of the issue's severity. The interviews with reporters and editors further underscore three key obstacles to comprehensive coverage: the prevalence of unreported cases, inadequate government support, and capacity limitations within media outlets. The study advocates for collaborative efforts to address unreported cases, enhance media-government partnerships, and overcome resource constraints, thereby promoting a more thorough coverage of child abuse in print media.

Keywords: child abuse, collaborative efforts, digital media, government support, newspapers, print media

Introduction

The issue of child abuse is not just limited to abuse, but it also encapsulates the prevailing attitudes against child abuse, exploitation, and neglect. It also manifests the prevailing social and cultural norms, as well as the legal framework enacted for the safety and well-being of children in the society. However, since these societal rules, norms, attitudes, and behaviors are subjective in nature and are socially and culturally constructed, so it is a major challenge to quantify them in an objective manner (Malik et al., 2021). Still, statistics related to child protection are maintained and are available in countries all over the world. Systematic proof of an issue's occurrence and prevalence is necessary to attract attention towards it and bring it on political and policy agendas. Media plays an essential role in reporting on children's rights and violations. The press can investigate ways

*Corresponding Author: zerishtasleem@gmail.com

to stop child exploitation, while uncovering and spotlighting abuse. The media's responsibility is to alert the public and decision-makers to these abuses (Rahim et al., [2021](#)).

Print media has a magnificent, centuries-long, historical legacy that has had a significant impact on the society's growth (Donovan et al., [2022](#)). Particularly, in light of the development of the media, its historical significance cannot be over-emphasized. Newspapers, periodicals, and books all fall under the category of print media, which has traditionally been the main channel for the transfer of knowledge across society. It has been essential to human growth because how it spreads knowledge, makes communication easier, and fosters a sense of community (Anderson et al., [2021](#)).

Throughout history, print media has served a variety of purposes, from political propaganda to education and amusement. Particularly, newspapers have remained crucial in educating the people about significant occasions, political changes, and broad societal problems. The media landscape underwent a profound change with the arrival of the Internet in the late 20th century and due to digital technologies (Udenze, [2019](#)). As digital platforms grew and changed how people receive and consume information, print media faced a significant threat. In a number of ways, the digital era has changed the media environment. There are new channels for the diffusion of information on digital media platforms, online networks, online news websites, and digital magazines (Kitzinger et al., [2023](#)). By making it possible for real-time updates and expanding the audience for content, these channels have fundamentally changed how people access news. People's ability to obtain news and information while on the go, thanks to mobile devices and smartphones, has significantly impacted the readership of the traditional print media.

This process has accelerated the digitization of media. Digitization, innovative techniques, and digital inventions have influenced the communication channels in the society. They also help consumers to deal with the rapidly changing media landscape. The tremendous boost of media digitization has altered the communication channels and the print media environment (Adnan et al., [2020](#)). Media companies that still use print have struggled to change for the digital era. They have started the difficult process of developing their web presence, preparing their content for digital consumption, and experimenting with cutting-edge business methods

(Kitzinger et al., [2023](#)). Digital subscriptions, paywalls, and other techniques have been implemented throughout this change to help consumers deal with the rapidly changing media landscape.

Recent years have seen a rise in the serious and pervasive societal issue of child sexual abuse which calls for all-encompassing attention. Reports indicate that the cases of child sexual abuse have been increasing by more than 33% every year (Okpara & Okoro, [2024](#)). A DW report showed that in the first/last 6 months of 2023, 1390 cases were reported in Punjab only (Nazir & Janjevic, [2023](#)). Hence, governments, advocacy organizations, and the general public have all given this subject more prominence on their agendas. Its importance is further highlighted by the fact that it is acknowledged as a serious societal issue. Increased knowledge of these extremely disturbing problems is largely due to the profusion of media coverage and the Internet's widespread use. From molestation and exploitation to child pornography, child sexual abuse includes a wide range of crimes (Ruggeri, [2022](#)).

When dealing with kids today, protecting their well-being requires not only the understanding that such offenses are complex, but also the implementation of prevention and intervention strategies. The way the public perceives topics about sex between adults and children has changed greatly over time. A variety of educational initiatives focusing on prevention and intervention, on the other hand, have been introduced alongside changes in legislation to strengthen child protection laws and expand access to survivor support services, as well as improving judicial responses. This tendency has been greatly stimulated by print media, which has introduced many aspects of child safety, influences public opinion, and promotes policy reforms (Nili, [2020](#)). On this basis, a more thorough exploration into the subtle link between print media and child sex abuse should be conducted, which has made inroads throughout the modern culture (Wang et al., [2021](#)).

There are many children who have suffered from physical or mental injuries due to abuse, so the damage extends beyond such cases and includes their sexual health. In solving this problem of abused children, the role of media has become increasingly crucial. However, sensational stories in newspapers can indirectly harm the victims of abuse by adding to their pain and distress. In this respect, the pragmatic approach to threats posed by irresponsible journalism is noteworthy. This thesis examines the media

coverage of child abuse cases, focusing on the limitations and impediments that come with this critical role. As for any other data analysis, the first aim is to develop a theoretically well-founded explanation to account for the specific instances of child sexual abuse.

Newspapers and print media certainly help to define the problem of victimization by providing empirical accounts and templates of victim-related behavior. The extent that child sexual abuse can vary in its content and the kinds of people it affects are diverse. In this research, this problem is surveyed using three case studies. The aim is the comprehensive mapping of the problem and its wider ramifications (Genay et al., [2021](#)).

Newspaper journalism usually records the severity of child abuse situations. For the most part, important child protection issues that might come into contact with such events are simply ignored, even if a newspaper report reports on a local government investigation into the allegations of exploitation. However, many cases go unreported when political agendas overshadow the responsibility of prioritizing child protection in media coverage. In the metropolitan area alone, there are 2,718 unaddressed cases of child abuse (Lonne & Parton, [2014](#)).

In influencing public opinion and disseminating information, the media has always been important. Books, periodicals, and newspapers collectively have served for centuries as the main carriers of information and vehicles of communication, greatly furthering cultural growth and consciousness (Barthelemy, [2022](#)). The relatively harmonious relationship between journalists and sources began to change with the advent of digital technology, changing the way people access and spread information. These new formats, made possible by digital platforms, offer real-time updates and reach substantially larger audiences than the traditional print media could ever dream of (19, pp. 32-34). However, to survive in today's rapidly changing media ecosystem, print media must adjust by creating an online presence and by seeking new economic paradigms (Adnan et al., [2020](#)).

The alarming rise in the cases of child sexual abuse highlights the need for intervention from both the society and the media. Recent statistics show that there has been a worrying increase in the number of reported cases ((Nazir & Janjevic, [2023](#); Tiryaki & Uzun, [2024](#)). This tends to prove that the role of the media is important in promoting the knowledge and actions of the masses. Nevertheless, there are quite a number of factors that are

typically in conflict with the reporting of such stories including their over-dramatization, distorted attention to the specific case(s) of abuse, and underreporting. In the course of its further development, print media is faced with a number of such challenges, which, however, can be overcome so long as it remains (Nili et al., [2020](#); Waziri-Azi, [2024](#)).

Problem Statement

The data on Pakistan's media freedom and child rights serves as the foundation for this research. The country ranks 149 out of 185 for child rights and 150 out of 180 for media freedom respectively, indicating significant obstacles in these two areas. Despite an increase in the number of reported cases of child abuse, media coverage remains poor due to various obstacles. Hence, the goal of this study is to find out what factors, such as cultural sensitivity, economic and political pressures, and restrictions on media freedom, prevent effective reporting of child abuse. It aims to provide suggestions for improving media coverage, public awareness, and responses to child abuse by identifying these obstacles. This would increase the media's role in protecting children's rights and fostering social development.

Research Questions

1. How far the media is free and active in reporting child abuse cases?
2. What are the limitations and impediments of reporting child abuse cases in print media?

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the level of press freedom and the reporting of child abuse incidents in Punjab, Pakistan's print media.
2. To investigate the obstacles faced by journalists while covering child abuse cases, including societal, resource-related, and editorial difficulties.

Significance of study

Societal advancement is hindered by one of the greatest issues faced by humanity, namely child abuse, which seems to have no remedy in sight at present. There are many challenges for print media and one concerning finding of this study is the restrictions on how child abuse can be depicted on the covers of newspapers. These cases should be given due prominence

and attention. (Goel et al., [2023](#)). It has been observed that the coverage of these cases is disproportionately low as compared to the incidents of such cases. There are umpteen reasons for this inadequacy, for example, societal obstacles, lack of knowledge regarding child abuse cases, lack of resources, and editorial policies, all of which comprise major challenges for reporters in covering child abuse cases (Lee et al., [2021](#)). Media houses do not give priority to child abuse cases because they do not provide financial benefits to news agencies. This research is important for the media, government, and academia because it enables the readers about the mechanism of reporting child abuse cases and what kind of issues reporters face during their reporting (Nili et al., [2020](#)). The data from the print media reports highlights the real challenges that create limitations in reporting.

Literature Review

Media's role is very important in highlighting the issues that threaten the society. Both in developing and developed countries, the media faces challenges in the reporting and coverage of such issues. In Pakistan, child abuse is a serious challenge and the media's role is very important in reporting this issue to the public and government. Indeed, it is one of the most debated public/social policy topics. Public concern over children's safety is almost always intense and necessitates a quick policy reaction (Rizvi et al., [2023](#)).

The existing literature highlights many issues that the media faces during the reporting and coverage of child abuse. Bashir et al. ([2020](#)) stated that the autonomous body PEMRA has made rules and regulations for the media. Additionally, PEMRA is a tool through which the government controls the media. Indeed, PEMRA is one of the major challenges for the media and there are many internal rifts between private media channels and PERMA. In Pakistan, the involvement of private media houses has made this industry attractive and the owners look for pieces of news that can give them popularity, instead of highlighting the society's problems and issues. Ittefaq et al. ([2021](#)) illustrated that media is not used to correct the problems. Rather, it is a fast-growing industry and the government is a main customer of this industry. The acquisition of government ads and promotions are the main targets of each media group. These groups collect news through which they establish strong relations with the government. Through media, people come to know what the government is doing (Tasleem et al., [2023](#)).

Many problems prevalent in the society are usually framed by the media which presents a picture which is very different from the reality. The reason is that the media /presents an issue keeping in view the type of reaction and attention it will receive. This ends up creating a very skewed picture of the issue in the society (Mirza & Tasleem, [2024](#)). In the past, many issues related to children have been investigated and highlighted; however, it is only recently that child abuse has received its due share of attention. Around 120 paper articles and several TV films and documentaries were studied and researched by Font and Maguire-Jack ([2020](#)) to make a list of some of the most used frames when highlighting the issue of child abuse. Some of these frames are as follows:

- Portrayal as a failure of child care centers and protective services.
- The frame of sexual predators: The unknown sexual predator narrative is reinforced which gives the impression that they are usually unknown people and close relatives are not involved in such practices. The actual situation is usually different.
- Focus on respecting the sanctity of the parents' decisions: Media creates a narrative that the parents' decisions should be respected without giving due regard to children's wishes.

Apart from these overused frames, it is almost impossible for media reporters and broadcasters to place child sexual abuse in a more nuanced and subtle manner. The reason is that it might not be commercially viable to highlight the intricate and complex nature of the various conditions and circumstances that usually lead to issues such as child abuse, for instance, lack of proper parenting or the socioeconomic position of the family (Bhat et al., [2021](#)). These factors usually attract less eyeballs and readers due to which the media is forced to look over them and to keep talking about a limited range of ideas.

Ejaz et al. ([2023](#)) opined that in Pakistan, mass media faces different challenges affected by the working conditions. The most common threats are security challenges, job security, financial constraints, limited freedom of speech due to government interference, and field reporters working with limited resources. These challenges are obstacles to the development of strong media (Tasleem et al., [2023](#)).

Media plays a defining part in ensuring that the issue of child sexual abuse becomes a part of the political and policy agenda. Media reports and analyses are important in highlighting such issues. Media coverage of this issue is of great significance, as it is a major factor responsible for defining what child sexual abuse is and why there is a need for child protection frameworks and policies (Nili et al., [2020](#)). In India, a general trend was observed that the sensitive and personal information of the victim were openly broadcasted to the general public. The information included the identity details and other personal information about the child. This trend was particularly observed on social media. This type of reporting ends up becoming a major cause of the non-reporting of incidents, as it contributes to attaching a sense of shame and social stigma to the victim as well as the other family members who are not offenders and have no direct role in the whole situation (Dang et al., [2023](#)).

South Asia is among the areas where child abuse is the most prevalent. It has the most number of cases after western and eastern Africa. In South Asia, Bangladesh has a very high rate of child abuse cases. Part of the problem is the consistent and regular occurrence of natural disasters, such as floods. These disasters have serious impacts on child care and safety as many children end up suffering from child labor, separation from parents, kidnapping, and trafficking. George and Venkiteswaran ([2019](#)) opined that in South Asia, media freedom is a complicated term. Media is not free with its true spirit. The government decides the informal SOPs for the media which is obliged to follow such SOPs.

Child abuse is a severe problem in Pakistan. Granich et al. ([2023](#)) noted that many children suffer from daily abuse. He also noted the different forms of abuse experienced by children in Pakistan, including sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. Granich also highlighted the economic exploitation of children and trafficking as serious problems. The majority of cases go unreported in Pakistan due to various factors. UNICEF research showed that the number of children suffering from child labor is nearly 3.3 million (Tasleem, [2020](#)). These children do not have any access to their most basic needs and rights of education, health, and a healthy childhood. Andersson et al. ([2021](#)) indicated that reputation is the major reason which becomes a hurdle in reporting child abuse cases and it also becomes a limitation for the media in reporting such cases.

Before moving forward, it is important to define child abuse. Children usually behave and experience things that are in accordance with their age or psychological and physical development. Child abuse can be defined as any experience that is not in accordance with their age or stage of development. Child abuse also includes cases where children are coerced or forced into sexual acts, subjected to violence, or compelled to engage in behaviors that violate societal norms, morals, or taboos. Some examples of child abuse can include any kind of sexual activity involving children, or beating children, or child labor (Niu et al., [2020](#)).

Child abuse has very severe consequences for a child's psychological, social, and physical development. They might develop anti-social behaviors and attitudes, detach themselves from the society, develop feelings of fear and anxiety, and begin to favor seclusion. Maharani ([2023](#)) noted that the news media in an Asian country has often compromised on the privacy of children while reporting child abuse cases. The media usually broadcasts the private information of the victims to their nationwide audience, thus aggravating the situation of the child.

Theoretical Framework

A social responsibility theory that focuses on ethical responsibilities and accountability of media professionals was developed by Hamdy ([2013](#)). The hypothesis stresses the need to concentrate on the effects of media activities on the society. According to Osaili et al. ([2023](#)), the above theory sheds light on how media-related issues and challenges affect social dynamics and are closely correlated with media practice. It emphasizes the media's obligation to report issues in a manner that improves public understanding and awareness.

Schauster et al. ([2016](#)) likewise contended that the media /plays a key part in impacting public discernment. Moreover, media inclusion, whether positive or negative, fundamentally decides public impression of different issues. The social function of the media can be undermined and threats to press freedom can rise as a result of poor media coverage. This is especially true when it comes to serious issues such as child abuse, which is a major challenge for the society.

The social obligation hypothesis accentuates that the media has an essential commitment to report dependably on major problems and advance public mindfulness. Media outlets have an ethical obligation to handle the

reports of child abuse with care and accuracy. Schauster et al. (2016) emphasized that social responsibility is frequently overlooked as a result of new media trends, particularly keeping in view the competition for print advertising. At the point when the media focuses on drama and business intrigues over moral revealing, it adversely affects social advancement and public comprehension of significant issues.

The following are the central tenets of the social responsibility theory:

Media independence: The media's capacity to function independently of external influences. *Ownership of media:* The extent to which media ownership influences news reporting's content and direction.

Increasing awareness: The function of media in educating and informing the general public about significant issues.

Responsible reporting: The obligation of the media to report the news in an ethical and thoughtful manner.

News announcing and insightful revealing: The significance of making a distinction between extensive investigative reporting and general reporting.

Developing the community: The commitment of the media to the general turn of events and government assistance of local areas.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative method allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights, offering a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. The current study is based on a case study design. By clearing the perspectives and narratives, qualitative research helps to have a clear and deeper understanding of the problem (Ahmad et al., 2022). A total of ten participants participated in this research. All participants were from the print media, comprising beat reporters, columnists, and editors. Purposive sampling technique was used in this research. The primary data collection method used for this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with employees from various newspapers. Face-to-face interviews were conducted. For secondary data, a newspaper review was conducted. In the current research, individuals comprised the unit of analysis. The thematic analysis approach was used for the interpretation of the data collected through interviews. A total of six steps were adopted to conduct the thematic analysis.

Table 1
Six Steps

Step 01	Familiarization with the Data
Step 02	Initial coding
Step 03	Themes Generation
Step 04	Reviewing of the Themes
Step 05	Naming the themes
Step 06	Writing the analysis

Results and Discussion

Content analysis involved a review of the newspapers reporting on cases related to child abuse. Urdu and English newspapers were chosen from in between 2020 and 2022. Content analysis involved studying the newspaper articles and stories in great depth and understanding the nature of the treatment of the issue of child sexual abuse.

Table 2

Child Sexual Abuse Cases Reported in Newspapers (2020-2022)

Year	Cases in Punjab	Cases in Lahore	Percentage
2022	1807	102	5.64
2021	1602	112	6.52
2020	2403	148	6.16

Table 2 highlights that 148 cases were reported in the city of Lahore in the year 2020. This is the highest number yet. In the year 2021, the second highest number of 112 cases was reported. In 2022, 102 cases were reported in Lahore.

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Cases

The news reports and articles highlight that child sexual assault is growing in poor and working class communities. The trend has been rising in both rural and urban areas. The analysis also showed that there is a serious lack of reporting of the specific causes for murdering children. Furthermore, newspapers did not go into the depths of the issue to find out the actual causes. The analysis showed that the stories on child abuse were usually reported on back pages and hardly gained any attention.

Table 3
Newspapers Reporting of Children Sexual Abuse (2020-2022)

Name of Newspaper	Language	Coverage	Overall no. of Child Abuse Cases Reported	Child Sexual Abuse Cases Reported	Others
The Nation	English	All Pakistan	690	355	135
Dawn	English	All Pakistan	680	340	149
Jang	Urdu	All Pakistan	700	350	145
Daily Express	Urdu	All Pakistan	650	338	114

Table 2 summarizes two years' worth (2020-2022) of child abuse cases reported in 4 Lahore newspapers (2 English and 2 Urdu). Specifically, The Nation and Dawn reported a combined total of 1370 cases, including 695 cases of child sexual abuse. In contrast, Jang and Daily Express, the two Urdu newspapers, reported 1350 cases, with 688 cases of abuse.

Thematic analysis technique was applied to the raw data collected from the participants. Themes were derived from the data via the interviews.

Theme 1. Unreported Cases and Media Challenges

Child abuse, a grave concern in societies like Pakistan, often goes unreported due to societal pressures and stigma (Abbas & Jabeen, [2020](#)).

Sexual crimes against children have indeed been a longstanding and deeply concerning issue. The historical underreporting of such crimes can be attributed to various factors, including social stigma, fear of reprisal, lack of awareness, and a reluctance to involve authorities. In many societies, discussing or disclosing such sensitive matters was often taboo, and victims or their families might have faced significant societal pressure to keep such incidents private. R1

“Lack of Information: Journalists rely on credible information to report on incidents. When cases go unreported or victims choose to remain silent, there is a lack of concrete information for journalists to work with.” R2

In the context of the challenges faced by print media reporters in reporting on child abuse cases, it's crucial to recognize the ethical considerations that come into play. While the need for awareness and reporting is evident, journalists must navigate these issues responsibly. Sensitivity to the trauma experienced by victims and their families is paramount, and media principles often emphasize the importance of ethical reporting practices. R3

Societal expectations, cultural norms, and fear of judgment can create an environment where individuals may hesitate to come forward with their experiences. Breaking the silence requires challenging deeply ingrained societal attitudes and providing support systems that encourage disclosure without stigma or blame. R4

To summarize, media outlets play a pivotal role in advocating for victims' rights and raising awareness, but collaboration with experts and educational initiatives are essential to address the root causes of underreporting (Ittefaq et al., [2021](#); Nair et al., [2019](#)). Ultimately, a comprehensive approach involving education, ethical reporting practices, and collaboration with support organizations is necessary to combat child abuse effectively.

Theme 2. Lack of Support from Institutions

The interviews underscored a critical issue, that is, the palpable absence of support from governmental authorities and institutions significantly obstructs comprehensive coverage of child abuse cases in print media. Editors and reporters consistently highlight hurdles arising from insufficient collaboration and engagement from these organizations (Abbas & Jabeen, [2023](#)).

The lack of proper support from authorities and institutions significantly hampers efforts to expose child sexual abuse cases. Without the necessary cooperation from law enforcement and other relevant institutions, journalists and advocates encounter substantial challenges in gathering evidence and presenting a convincing narrative. R1

Effective communication and collaboration channels between the media, government, and organizations, including NGOs, are imperative to create awareness and highlight the gravity of the

issue. The sentiment expressed by the respondent underscores the challenges faced by advocates, journalists, and concerned individuals in bringing attention to sexual abuse. R2

“When authorities downplay the severity of the issue, it not only obstructs the work of journalists and media professionals but also perpetuates an environment where perpetrators can operate without fear of consequences.”R3

Media coverage plays a powerful role in shedding light on the challenges faced by journalists when dealing with indifferent authorities. By showcasing the struggles and obstacles encountered in reporting on sensitive topics, journalists can advocate for institutional accountability and improvements in their conduct. Media coverage serves as a vital tool for informing the public about the realities journalists face in their efforts to address sexual abuse. R4

The lack of collaboration and support from institutions impedes the print media's reporting and coverage of child abuse cases (Abbas & Jabe, [2023](#)). Apathy /from authorities can lead to inadequate responses, delayed investigations, and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable (Shahid et al., [2024](#)). Police reluctance to engage with media persons and non-registration of complaints add further challenges. Holding authorities accountable through media coverage is crucial to ensure transparency and action in addressing sexual abuse cases. By advocating for change, journalists contribute to building a society where institutions prioritize victims' well-being and actively work towards preventing and addressing such crimes (Lawson, [2020](#)). In essence, government support is essential to overcome the obstacles in reporting child abuse and collaborative efforts between media and authorities are vital for comprehensive coverage and effective action.

Theme 3. Capacity Issues of Print Media

The profound shift media resources from print to electronic media presents a significant challenge for print journalism. Skilled professionals are drawn to electronic media's immediacy and visual appeal, leaving print media with a reduced pool of reporters and journalists (Bashir et al., [2020](#)).

“Complex stories require significant time, resources, and expertise to be effectively covered. This encompasses the need for dedicated journalists,

specialized training, and the establishment of teams with the skills and knowledge required to handle sensitive and intricate subject matter.”R1

Building a case for the societal importance of in-depth reporting on complex issues can help garner financial support. Collaborative efforts between print media, non-profit organizations, and foundations can be explored to pool resources and expertise. Partnerships can provide additional funding avenues and enable the creation of specialized teams to address complex cases. R2

The swift reporting can capture the attention of higher authorities promptly. Electronic media often uses visuals, audio, and multimedia elements to convey news stories. This dynamic and engaging presentation style can have a more immediate impact on viewers, drawing attention from a wide audience, including higher authorities. R3

The allure of electronic platforms, with their immediacy and visual appeal, has led to a redistribution of human resources, leaving print media with fewer personnel. The decline in human resources directly impacts the capacity of print media organizations to cover stories comprehensively. With fewer reporters available, there may be limitations in terms of covering a diverse range of topics and conducting in-depth investigations.R4

The respondents highlighted the impact of resource constraints on print media's reporting of child abuse cases. Revenue generation and editorial decisions often prioritize other topics over sensitive issues, such as child abuse. The enduring strengths of print media in in-depth reporting and analysis can be preserved through strategic adaptations and collaborations (Ghulam et al., 2023). Overall, capacity limitations within print media, exacerbated by resource shifts and facility disparities, hinder comprehensive reporting on complex issues like child sexual abuse.

Conclusion

This research examined the constraints that mass media encounters in reporting cases of child abuse in Punjab, Pakistan, stating the lack of resources and insufficient collaboration with the government as major limitations. Such difficulties arise from the deep-rooted social norms that discourage individuals from acknowledging the problematic nature of child abuse (Robert & Thompson, [2019](#)). Poor cooperation from the relevant

authorities is said to widen the scope of these challenges, as such factors reduce access to necessary information (Habib et al., [2023](#)). The ability of the media houses to address this critical issue is also affected by resource inadequacy, such as finances, and editorial policy (Riaz et al., [2021](#)). In addition, these stories' receive little strength from these institutions, as lack of interest or collaboration /by officials hinders the availability of critical materials, which ultimately restrains the range and depth of coverage by mass media.

There is a need, as pointed out by Shahid et al. ([2024](#)), for multifaceted efforts to support reporting platforms, foster partnership between the government and the media, and deal with the capacity of print media. In this case, there is a need to broaden the reporting outlets for the cases of child abuse, collaborate the media with the government, and work on the resource base of the print media. According to Chang et al. ([2021](#)), qualitative interviews recover how journalists are placed within media structures not as mere actors, but they face ethical difficulties and inscribed conflicts that mould media content. Ultimately, effective and comprehensive media treatment of this issue emphasizes the need for enhanced public information, better reporting mechanisms, and the mobilization of the parties involved to create awareness and seek appropriate interventions.

Future Recommendations

The print media must adopt innovative and strategic approaches to minimize the negative impact of its reporting on sexual abuse cases and enhance the sensitivity and effectiveness of its coverage.. An effective strategy is investing in the training of reporters so that they retain the sensitivity required to report on delicate subjects while being able to investigate and report on them. Moreover, it is equally imperative to fight for financial resources and advanced technologies to overcome the inequalities and resource deficiency that thwart extensive coverage.

Digital revolution has given a new something – a way to adjust, a way to target further and farther crowds – to the print media. By spreading news on internet platforms such as websites and social media in real-time, it can target an audience that would otherwise not read print newspapers (Luo, [2022](#)). This digital presence allows the print media to remain in competition with the quickly changing information market and connect with readers in an innovative way.

Collaboration emerges as a powerful strategy to overcome the challenges associated with reporting child sexual abuse. Working in tandem with electronic media or other outlets can help pool resources, share expertise, and enhance the impact of investigative projects. Collaborative efforts foster a holistic approach to reporting on sensitive issues, ensuring comprehensive coverage and a more profound impact on public awareness.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

Funding Details

No funding has been received for this research.

References

- Abbas, S. S., & Jabeen, T. (2020). Prevalence of child abuse among the university students: A retrospective cross-sectional study in University of the Punjab, Pakistan. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 40(2), 125–134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272684X19861578>
- Abbas, S. S., & Jabeen, T. (2023). Child sexual abuse in Pakistan: Using evidence based social ecological model for explanation and policy formulation. *Community Health Equity Research & Policy*, 43(2), 219–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272684X211013151>
- Adnan, M., Yousaf, Z., Nawaz, M. B., & Bhatti, M. A. (2020). The changing role of Urdu news media with digital communication in Pakistan. *Journal of Research*, 36(1), 173–184.
- Ahmad, A., Farhat, P. A., & Choudhary, S. M. (2022). Students' insights about the influence of text messaging on academic writing skills. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 522–533. [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022\(3-IV\)49](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2022(3-IV)49)

- Anderson, J. R., Betts, S., Bothell, D., & Lebiere, C. (2021). Discovering skill. *Cognitive Psychology*, *129*, Article e101410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogpsych.2021.101410>
- Andersson, H., Aspeqvist, E., Dahlström, Ö., Svedin, C. G., Jonsson, L. S., Landberg, Å., & Zetterqvist, M. (2022). Emotional dysregulation and trauma symptoms mediate the relationship between childhood abuse and nonsuicidal self-injury in adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *13*, Article e897081. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.897081>
- Barthelemy, M. (2022). *Spatial networks: A complete introduction: From graph theory and statistical physics to real-world applications*. Springer Nature.
- Bashir, A., Shafiq, Z., Arshad, F., & Bakht, N. (2020). Challenges before electronic media channels in Pakistan. *Pakistan Vision*, *21*(1), 199–223.
- Bhat, E. A., Sajjad, N., Rather, I. A., Sabir, J. S., & Hor, Y. Y. (2021). In vitro assembly complex formation of TRAIIP CC and RAP 80 zinc finger motif revealed by our study. *Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences*, *28*(12), 7511–7516. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sjbs.2021.08.083>
- Chang, C. C., Hsieh, M. H., Chiou, J. Y., Huang, H. H., Ju, P. C., & Wang, J. Y. (2021). Multiple factors associated with child abuse perpetration: A nationwide population-based retrospective study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *36*(11-12), 5360–5382. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518805100>
- Dang, D., Ogunraku, O., & Sinchuri, J. (2023). *Improving early intervention and detection practices by primary care nurses for children who have undergone trauma* [Bachelor thesis, Savonia University of Applied Sciences]. Thesus. <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/814274>
- Donovan, C., Gomez, J. P., Falk, L., Barth, C. M., Champ, P. A., Brenkert-Smith, H., Meldrum, J. R., & Wagner, C. (2022). *Living with wildfire in Log Hill Mesa, Ouray County, Colorado: 2017 data report and a comparison to 2011 and 2012 data*. US Department of Agriculture. https://wildfireresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/rmrs_rn091.pdf

- Ejaz, W., Ittefaq, M., & Jamil, S. (2023). Politics triumphs: A topic modeling approach for analyzing news media coverage of climate change in Pakistan. *Journal of Science Communication*, 22(1), Article eA02. <https://doi.org/10.22323/2.22010202>
- Font, S. A., & Maguire-Jack, K. (2020). The scope, nature, and causes of child abuse and neglect. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 692(1), 26–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220969642>
- Genay, A., Lécuyer, A., & Hachet, M. (2021). Being an avatar “for real”: A survey on virtual embodiment in augmented reality. *IEEE Transactions on Visualization and Computer Graphics*, 28(12), 5071–5090. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TVCG.2021.3099290>
- George, C., & Venkiteswaran, G. (2019). *Media and power in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Goel, R. K., Göktepe-Hultén, D., & Nelson, M. A. (2023). Drivers of international research spending. *Annals of Science and Technology Policy*, 7(1), 1–80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/110.00000025>
- Granich, S., Jabeen, T., Omer, S., & Arshad, M. (2023). Addressing the issue of child sexual abuse in Pakistan: A conceptual analysis. *International Social Work*, 66(3), 715–725. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728211031955>
- Habib, G., Ullah, M. U., Khanum, T., & Khan, A. (2023). Role of media in coverage and reporting of child abuse cases. *Journal of World Science*, 2(4), 529–540. <https://doi.org/10.58344/jws.v2i4.273>
- Hamdy, N. (2013). Arab investigative journalism practice. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 6(1), 67–93. https://doi.org/10.1386/jammr.6.1.67_1
- Ittefaq, M., Ejaz, W., Fahmy, S. S., & Sheikh, A. M. (2021). Converged journalism: Practices and influences in Pakistan. *Media International Australia*, 181(1), 167–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X211017329>
- Kitzinger, R. H., Gardner, J. A., Moran, M., Celkos, C., Fasano, N., Linares, E., Muthee, J., & Royzner, G. (2023). Habits and routines of adults in early recovery from substance use disorder: Clinical and research

- implications from a mixed methodology exploratory study. *Substance Abuse Research and Treatment*, 17, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/11782218231153843>
- Lawson, L. A. (2020). GHG emissions and fossil energy use as consequences of efforts of improving human well-being in Africa. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 273, Article e111136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2020.111136>
- Lee, C., Jung, Y. S., Park, H., Shemon, E. R., Ortensi, J., Wang, Y., Laboure, V. M., & Prince, Z. M. (2021). *Griffin software development plan*. Argonne National Laboratory. https://inldigitallibrary.inl.gov/sites/sti/sti/Sort_47321.pdf
- Lonne, B., & Parton, N. (2014). Portrayals of child abuse scandals in the media in Australia and England: Impacts on practice, policy, and systems. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(5), 822–836.
- Luo, A. (2023, June 22). *Content analysis | guide, methods & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/content-analysis/>
- Maharani, F. (2023). Criminal responsibility for children who perpetrate serious abuse to achieve justice in society. *Jurnal Legalitas*, 16(2), 234–247.
- Malik, M., Munir, N., Ghani, M. U., & Ahmad, N. (2021). Domestic violence and its relationship with depression, anxiety and quality of life: A hidden dilemma of Pakistani women. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 37(1), 191–194. <https://doi.org/10.12669/pjms.37.1.2893>
- Mirza, H., & Tasleem, Z. (2024). Enhancing university students' career orientation through personal growth tools: The moderating role of career self-management. *Journal of Management and Research*, 11(1), 114–148. <https://doi.org/10.29145/jmr.111.05>
- Nair, P. (2019). Child sexual abuse and media: Coverage, representation and advocacy. *Institutionalised Children Explorations and Beyond*, 6(1), 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2349301120190106>
- Nazir, Z., & Janjevic, D. (2023, May 25). *Pakistan's brain drain crisis escalates as thousands leave*. DW. <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistans-brain-drain-crisis-escalates-as-thousands-leave/a-65733569>

- Nili, A., Tate, M., Barros, A., & Johnstone, D. (2020). An approach for selecting and using a method of inter-coder reliability in information management research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 54, Article e102154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102154>
- Niu, S., Liu, Y., Wang, J., & Song, H. (2020). A decade survey of transfer learning (2010–2020). *IEEE Transactions on Artificial Intelligence*, 1(2), 151–166. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TAI.2021.3054609>
- Okpara, C. J., & Okoro, J. T. (2024). Child abuse: A deliberate act against the best interest of a child. *African Journal Of Law And Human Rights*, 8(1), 38–46.
- Osaili, T. M., Dhanasekaran, D. K., Zeb, F., Faris, M. E., Naja, F., Radwan, H., Ismail, L. C., Hasan, H., Hashim, M., & Obaid, R. S. (2023). A status review on health-promoting properties and global regulation of essential oils. *Molecules*, 28(4), Article e1809. <https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules28041809>
- Rahim, S., Bourgaize, C., Khan, M., Matthew, L., & Barron, I. (2021). Child sexual abuse in Pakistan schools: A non-systematic narrative literature review. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 30(5), 546–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2021.1901168>
- Riaz, M. M., Javed, M. N., & Bhuttah, T. M. (2021). Reporting on electronic media in Pakistan and ethical standards in journalism. *Elementary Education Online*, 20(5), 3093–3093.
- Rizvi, A. A., Jan, S. U., & Malik, A. (2023). The regulator’s perspectives to operationalize maqasid al shariah: A case of Pakistan. *The Lighthouse Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 93–121.
- Robert, C. E., & Thompson, D. P. (2019). Educator sexual misconduct and Texas educator discipline database construction. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 28(1), 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2018.1476999>
- Ruggeri, F. (2022). Simple adoption and family models, between effective equalisation of status filiationis and parental ties. *Actualidad Jurídica Iberoamericana*, 17, 684–715.

- Schauster, E. E., Ferrucci, P., & Neill, M. S. (2016). Native advertising is the new journalism: How deception affects social responsibility. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(12), 1408–1424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216660135>
- Shahid, M. S., Bashir, S., & Fatima, S. (2024). Social media addiction and aggression in Pakistani young adults: Social connectedness as a moderator. *Journal of Professional & Applied Psychology*, 5(3), 424–433. <https://doi.org/10.52053/jpap.v5i3.308>
- Tasleem, Z. (2020). Does education eliminate the rural poverty in Pakistan? *Competitive Social Science Research Journal*, 1(3), 21–31.
- Tasleem, Z., Hatim, M., Ghaffar, W., Khurshid, M., & Shahzad, E. (2023). The economic analysis of cross-border migration: A case study of Lahore, Pakistan. *Journal of Economic Impact*, 5(2), 162–170.
- Tiryaki, S., & Uzun, B. (2024). Fanatic or ultras: Tribune culture in Turkey. *Communication & Sport*, 12(5), 888–907. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21674795231172657>
- Udenze, S. (2019). The pros and cons of using new media in news gathering and reporting. *International Journal of Informatics & Computers*, 2(1), 6–10.
- Wang, X., Rodríguez, D. A., & Mahendra, A. (2021). Support for market-based and command-and-control congestion relief policies in Latin American cities: Effects of mobility, environmental health, and city-level factors. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 146, 91–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2020.12.004>
- Waziri-Azi, F. (2024). *The interplay between corruption and human trafficking epidemic: Implications and solutions for Nigeria*. National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons. <https://naptip.gov.ng/download/the-interplay-between-corruption-and-human-trafficking-epidemic/>