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Children's Rights through the Eye of the Pakistani Press: An Analysis of Print Media

ABSTRACT

News coverage has a major impact on the interpretation of news events and the response towards these events by public and policy makers. The study intended to investigate the extent of children's rights representation in newspapers in Pakistan. The aim was to determine the coverage, type of the News and level of placement in four selected newspapers (Dawn, The Express Tribune, Jang, and Nawa-i-waqt). A content analysis of 316 news editions of selected samples was conducted over the duration of one year (November 2017 to October 2018). The purpose of content analysis is to provide advocates with a comprehensive basis for how children's problems are presented in the news. A systematic sampling technique is used for the collection of data. The Nawa-i-waqt newspaper covered the maximum news stories (792 in number) as compared to the other dailies. Furthermore, most of the stories about children were found on the inside pages of newspapers which shows that children's issues received minimal coverage. This paper argues that the press should take more responsibility by adequately informing children and making them aware, so that the attention of the government and the public can be aimed at tackling child problems in society.

KEY WORDS

Child Rights. Media Responsibility. News Coverage. Newspaper. Social Problems.

1 Introduction

The word “rights” is not easy to define, for multiple and contrary meanings attached to the word confuse the whole idea of what should be constituted as “right”. Generally, however, rights are those fundamental rules which are owed to people by some legal system or ethical theory. Freeman characterized rights as “*just cases or privileges that start from moral as well as lawful standards,*”¹ and claimed that children’s rights have essential importance in human life. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) characterizes a child as an individual who is less than 18 years of age, but in Pakistan, according to article 25A of the constitution, someone under the age of 16 is termed as a child. According to the UNCRC, minimum freedom and entitlement that should be provided to every child without any discrimination is termed as child rights. A child has the right to live individually in a society and should be able to live with peace, self-respect, patience, independence, fairness and unity.² Children’s rights can be depicted as “*the rights that apply both to the protection of the individual child and to the creation of the circumstances in which all children can fully develop.*”³ According to UN, four main categories which cover all the aspects of children rights are Protection, Development, Survival and Participation. Protection means that all children ought to have the privilege to be shielded from mishandling, disregard, abuse or elsewhere. Development is the rights to all types of development (physical, emotional and mental development) which should be provided to children. Physical development highlights the necessary physical growth of a child and thus playing, diet and nutrition play an important role. Survival means that the right to survival is the basic need of children and should be provided to all children without any discrimination. The basic needs of children for survival are food, clothes shelter and a life with pride. And participation means that a child must be able to actively participate in his/her life matters and this right must be provided to him/her in direct or indirect ways. There may be a variation in how different children participate in different matters, based on their age and maturity level.

1.1 Emergence of Children’s Rights Convention

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was launched in the 1940s and during the international expansion of human rights, a general document indicated the absolute truth that all people are born equally. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) helped in the development of civil rights, economically, socially, culturally as well as politically.⁴ CRC was adopted on 20 October 1988 by the UN General Assembly and was approved in 1990. After their confirmation, the UN Convention paved the road to the restoration of the rights of children in 187 countries.⁵ By signing the United Nations Convention on Terrorism, governments agreed to secure the children from unfairness, sexual harassment, commerce and viciousness and to provide special care for orphans and immigrants.⁶

¹ FREEMAN, M.: *Human Rights*. Oxford : Polity Press, 2002, p. 19.

² UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF): *UNICEF Pakistan*. New York : UNICEF, 2017. [online]. [2022-04-01] Available at: <<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/pk>>.

³ YATES, V.: *CRIN Newsletter*. London : Children Rights Information Network, 2005, p. 33.

⁴ See: BRATVOLD, M. J.: *Human Rights, Children, and The Role of Mass Media: The Case of the Latin American Street Child*. USA : Acadia University, 1996.

⁵ CRC: *Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund*, 2009. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <www.unicef.org/crc>.

⁶ LIIRA, T.: *How Youth and Children’s Issues are Represented in the Media: Content Analysis on Newspaper Articles*. Finland : Humak University of Applied Sciences, 2012. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/48014>>.

1.2 Children's Rights in Pakistan

According to the society for the protection of rights of the child (2013) about 48% of the population are children in Pakistan. With a recent census now the population is 200.69 million in 2017 making it 6th largest population. The ratio of children is increased to 1.87%.⁷

On account of social, basic and institutional factors, for example, poverty, unemployment and brief connections, children security issues are usual.⁸ Child labour in Pakistan has many facets. It is estimated that more than 10 million children are workers in Pakistan. There are deficiencies in the training framework due to poor foundation, low nature of instructing, absence of qualified educators, non-appearance, corporal sentences, passionate and verbal mishandling, strict circumstances and absence of instructive materials; and all these factors drive children out of school.⁹ Pakistan follows the constitution of 1973 which was approved in the regime of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The constitution safeguards the rights of all segments of society regardless of their age, gender and religion. Article 11(3) of the constitution of Pakistan prohibits slavery, forced labour and declares that no child below fourteen years old will be employed for the extractive industry or for any other dangerous work. Article 25(A) highlights that in "accordance with the law, free compulsory education for all children under the age of 16"¹⁰ is to be provided. Some other Articles of constitutions like 25 (3), 26 (3), 35 & Article 37 also state the rights of family and children.

1.3 Experience of Children in Pakistan

Pakistan ratified the Child Rights Convention (CRC) in November 1990. In this regard, The National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) has propelled a few exercises in collaboration with Provincial commissions for Child Welfare and Development (PCCWDs) and local NGO boards of trustees. According to a report by the Civil Rights Commission of Pakistan in 2005, in the initial a half year of 2005, 71 children were murdered after sexual mishandling. Child abuse is widespread. Also, due to poor living conditions, children throughout the country suffer from malnutrition, illness and death. Pakistan sanctioned ILO Convention 182 as the most exceedingly extreme type of child labour in 2001; however, they keep on working in hazardous occupations including mining. The number of rapes has increased, including those involving young girls.¹¹ Statistics from Pakistan on women's and children's health in particular are the worst in the world. The literacy rate was 59% but the infant mortality rate was the highest in South Asian countries.¹²

⁷ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. *Population Census 2017*. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/brief-census-2017>>.

⁸ AZIZ, F.: Child Abuse. In *Journal of Ayyub Medical College*, 2007, Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 1-2. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://ayubmed.edu.pk/JAMC/PAST/19-3/00%20Editorial.pdf>>.

⁹ SPARC.: *The State of Pakistan's Children*. Islamabad : Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, 2016, p. 98-104. [online]. [2022-04-01] Available at: <<https://www.sparcpk.org/sopc2017/sopc2016/Combined/The%20State%20of%20Pakistan's%20Children%202016%20Report.pdf>>.

¹⁰ *Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Article 25(A)*. [online]. [2022-06-04]. Available at: <https://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1549886415_632.pdf>

¹¹ See: HYAT, K.: *State of Human Rights*. Lahore : Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, HRCP-Pakistan, 2007.

¹² STATISTA: *Pakistan: Literacy Rate from 2006 to 2017, Total and by Gender*. 2017. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/572781/literacy-rate-in-pakistan/>>.

1.4 Representation of Children's rights in Print Media News Coverage

The press is considered the “obligatory representative” of the people and known as the “fourth pillar of state”. Press is mandatory for the “collective image” of various groups, which form society. News reports can influence and thus urge the public and the policymakers to talk about street children, early marriages, child labour and other social issues. In order for effective policies to be made, to improve the well-being of children, journalists covering children's issues must be able to make the public resonate with children's lives. Similarly when a journalist is writing about children's issues and cases, he/she should know which part of his/her story can be examined.¹³

2 Statement of the Problem

Children are the ultimate future of all societies. Yet the way we are treating our own is offensive and a disgrace to mankind. By dismissing their rights, we are preparing an unpleasant future for the country (Yousafzai, 2107). The low coverage rate of children's problems in Pakistani newspapers is one of the most serious problems in Pakistan. There are a number of reasons that make Pakistani newspapers ignore or provide little coverage to children's issues. Generally, coverage of children's issues is not very important for the Pakistani press.

3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study formed to evaluate and analyze the representation of children's rights in the press of Pakistan. The nationwide English and Urdu Newspapers are published in Pakistan and have a great readership. The Objectives were constructed to know how much children's rights were in the news and how the press treated children's rights:

- To explore the children's issues which are frequently published in the selected newspapers.
- To examine the level of prominence given to children issues reported in all four newspapers.
- To determine the quantification of the child-rights news (size and placement of the news).

4 Research Questions

The research questions are constructed in the light of objectives of this study. The prime purpose was to know how the press is representing the children's stories. How many stories on children's right are published and on which pages and place the press gives space to these stories. All the research questions were aligned with the objectives of this study.

What level of prominence/placement is given to child-rights issues reported in the four selected newspapers?

What is the extent of the coverage given to children's rights issues/theme by all selected newspapers?

How and what kind of visual stories are being used in the selected newspapers?

Is there a difference in the coverage between the English newspapers and Urdu newspapers?

¹³ See: WARTELLA, E.: Electronic Childhood. In DENNIS, E. E., PEASE, E. C. (eds.): *Children and the Media*, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1996, p. 29-40.

5 Literature Review

Nwankwo and Okwemba explored how the media report children's affairs and their study focused on whether the media recognizes and upholds children's rights. Content analysis was used to investigate how the media understand and illustrate child-related issues. 420 editions of the Daily State, East Africa Standard and Kenya Times were examined, at random, in selected years – from June 2000 to June 2002. They found that Children's issues are not as prominent when contrasted with other political issues, making them be avoided by the media. Subsequently, the media will in general report youngsters' issues only when they are sensational.¹⁴

In another study Ikpe investigated press reports on the sexual behaviour of children in Nigeria and found that the newspapers were mainly concerned with negative stories of rape or other similar sexual problems, therefore supporting the inclination for the media to concentrate on negative stories in their reportage of children related issues.¹⁵ This phenomenon is not only for children, but media also give less coverage to womens' issues. It has been observed that during elections male candidates received more media representation as compared to female candidates.¹⁶

The research by Manzo aimed to explore the media coverage of the link between child trafficking and slavery among West African children in international law and academic research in the context of geography and development.¹⁷ A paper presented by Oyesomi, Oyero and Okorie examined the use of journalism development to promote the protection of Nigeria's child rights issues. In addition, development journalists should play a role in promoting media activation for development and social revolution. Development journalism is the use of journalistic means for the development of society. The most important thing for researchers is to encourage journalists to be at the forefront of the rights-protection companies. It is helpful that the media distributes and communicates the content about child-rights issues in daily papers, magazines, radio stations and TV channels as issues of national intrigue.¹⁸

As indicated by Ortum the way in which news is secured can impact how social issues are translated and reacted to by general society and policy makers. The study analyzed the scope of children's rights issues in driving Kenyan daily papers were inspected to recognize the degree, sort and level of unmistakable quality of youngsters' issues in two daily papers. He found that issues related to children had low noticeable quality, which made kids imperceptible in the articles of both newspapers and these articles are found in the middle pages of both newspapers.¹⁹

In another comparison on youngsters' rights stories in two Nigerian Newspapers over a five-year time span from 1999, the year that the Oslo challenge was propelled, to 2003, the year that the National Assembly of Nigeria adopted the law on the rights of the child. The study found that children's-rights issues were generally insufficient. Furthermore, such reports were

¹⁴ NWANKWO, E. H., OKWEMBA, A.: *How the Kenyan Media Covers the Children's Rights Issues: A Content Analysis*. Nairobi, Kenya : Presented to International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). 2002. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/how-the-kenyan-media-covers-the-childrens-rights-issues-a-content-analysis.html>>.

¹⁵ See: IKPE, E.: *The Coverage of Sexuality by the Nigerian Print Media*. Lagos : Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, 2007.

¹⁶ See: NAZAR, A. et al.: Female Politicians and Pakistani Media: A Content Analysis of English and Urdu Newspapers. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 235-251.

¹⁷ See: MANZO, K.: Exploiting West Africa's Children: Trafficking, Slavery and Uneven Development. In *Wiley*, 2005, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 393-401. [online]. [2022-01-23]. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20004478>>.

¹⁸ See: OYESOMI, K. O. et al.: Media Advocacy, Development Journalism and Child Right Issues in Nigeria. In *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2014, Vol. 2, No. 2B, p. 261-265. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<http://sasjournals.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SJAHSS-22B261-265.pdf>>.

¹⁹ See: ORTUM, L. L.: *An Investigation into the Extent of Children Content in Kenyan Media: A Case Study of the Nation and the Standard Newspapers*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Nairobi : University of Nairobi, 2013, 60 p.

typically covered in the middle pages of the papers predominantly. Poor reporting on child rights stories acts as a sign of frail news worthiness of such issues among media professionals. In fact, media and other stakeholders, while setting out their agenda, overlook children's voices. Children are often constructed as being 'reckless' in wider society and in addition to this, decision-making processes on the part of journalists do not appear to challenge these widely held assumptions.²⁰

Numerous guardians see daily papers as disregarding child's modifying and training issues. In his study, the greater part of guardians (53.4%) said, the newspaper was either "not exceptionally accommodating" or "not supportive by any means" in helping them to settle on choices about what demonstrations their youngsters should watch. Indeed, parents were significantly more inclined to state that newspapers were "not useful by any means" (28.7%) than to state that they were "extremely useful" (9.6%). Just 31.8 percent said they were "fairly useful".²¹ According to Woodruff newspaper coverage of child nutrition issues in California, articles on child nutrition are minimal in California's mainstream newspapers read by state-wide policy makers and opinion leaders. Researchers argued that there are very few stories of children's rights in mainstream media.²²

The burden of child labour is much featured in Vietnam by the main newspaper reports. The labour newspaper underlines that 30 percent of Vietnamese kids between the ages of six to seventeen join work, with most children remaining near their home to provide help with their privately-run business. The newspaper also contends that the genuine number could be substantially bigger as teenagers utilized as domestic servants, restaurant workers or children chipping away on the streets as beggars, shoes shiners and newspaper and lottery sellers were not canvassed in the report.²³ Another study on the print media coverage of sexually abused children realized that most daily papers in Kenya embrace an approach of sensationalization in detailing the abuse cases and there is no clear sensitivity towards the said topic from either law or journalists. (Kerlinger, 2004) investigated the role of media in the prevention of child abuse and concluded that the media can assume a vital part in revealing the issues and impression of children's abuse in the world either by going up against the whole issue or by sidestepping it out and out.

5. 1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of social responsibility of the press. Social Responsibility Theory was presented by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Lang Schramm in 1956. The theory emphasizes the moral and social responsibility of the people and institutions that occupy the media, which means the media are convinced that they are responsible to society. Media should be conscious to design its content and it should play a role to maintain the peace and for the progress of society.²⁴ The theory of social responsibility is the result

²⁰ See: OYERO, O.: Children: as 'Invisible' and Voiceless as Ever in the Nigerian News Media. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2014, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 25-41. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/07/vol2/oyero.pdf>>.

²¹ ADAY, S.: *Newspaper Coverage of Children's Television. Report Series No. 7*. Annenberg Public Policy Center: University of Pennsylvania press, 1997. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=googlescholar&id=GALE|A20556104&v=2.1&it=r&sid=googleScholar&asid=7884bbb3>>.

²² See: WOODRUFF, K. et al.: Coverage of Childhood Nutrition Policies in California Newspapers. In *Journal of Public Health Policy*, 2001, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 150-158. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3343510>>.

²³ NGUYEN, H.: *Growing Pain of Child Labor in Vietnam*. 2009. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/5181903/CHILD_LABOR_IN_VIETNAM>.

²⁴ See: OKUNNA, C. S.: *Teaching Mass Communication: A Multi-Dimensional Approach*. Enugu : New Generation Books, 2002.

of the Hutchinson Commission on Press Freedom, founded in 1947 in the United States, to promote the concept of the freedom of the press, as stated in the libertarian theory of free freedom.²⁵ This study is linked with theory to determine how the Pakistani press has managed to fulfill this responsibility. How much space is devoted to and on which pages child related issues are portrayed in daily papers. The results will help to find out if media is fulfilling their social responsibility or not, by representing children's rights in a manner which can help policy makers to solve the issues.

6 Methodology

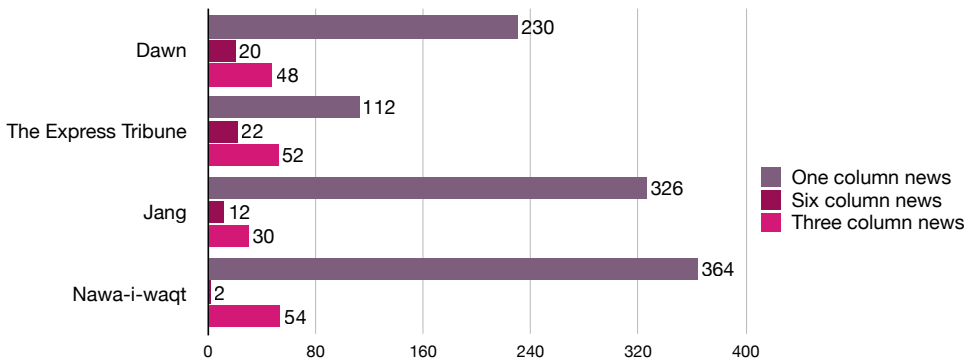
Research relies on content analysis of the four national newspapers including two Urdu and two English named as Daily Jang and Daily Nawa-i-waqt in Urdu and Daily Dawn and The Express Tribune in English, published between November 2017 to October 2018 for the coverage and collection of the news including survival, development, protection as well as awareness news regarding child's rights issues. Systematic random sampling techniques are used in which every fifth newspaper out of a total sample of 1460 newspapers is examined. The Newspapers Jang, Nawa-i-waqt, Dawn and The Express Tribune are chosen because they are among the leading Pakistani newspapers with nationwide circulation and readership and considered as the most read newspapers in Pakistan. This time period is important because the children's rights problems are increasing in Pakistani society.

Data are collected using analytical analysis techniques. This involves calculating the occurrence of information on child issues in four newspapers. An analysis of four sample newspapers includes all the news and events including the themes on development, education, health, child labour and child abuse. The themes were chosen in the light of social and children's right issues discussed in UNCRC with the help of news stories. A total of 316 Newspapers were reviewed. The results presented in graphs show the coverage of the newspapers related to children rights including how much of a newspaper covered child related news stories with the theme of the news as crime, education, health, etc., the placement of the news, on which pages the news stories are provided as well as the kinds of visuals portrayed in the newspapers regarding child rights.

7 Results

The result sections show the overall data collection and its analysis. The primary focus was on the selected issues regarding children's rights. The selected newspapers have nationwide circulation and readership across the country. Every graph shows a separate result to fulfil the objectives of this study. The major focus of the study was to know how much news exists regarding children's rights and how it is represented by the press. The study measures the total number of stories during this period and checks the placement and size of the news in newspapers, as priming and framing is important in news coverage to play up or play down the news value.

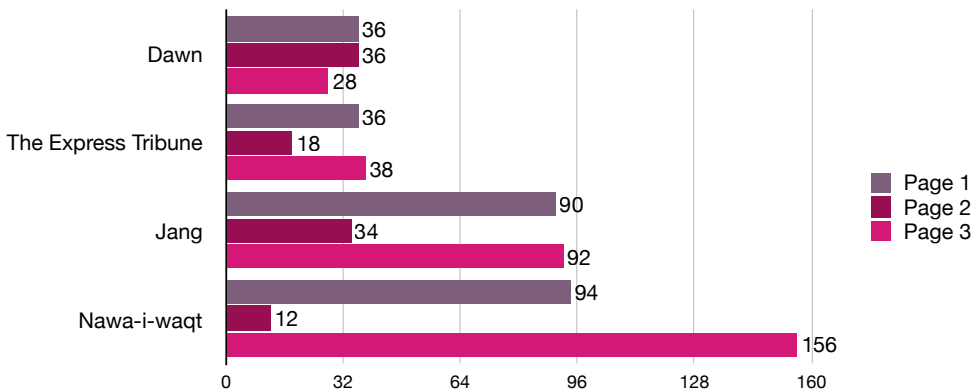
²⁵ See: FOLARIN, B.: *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text*. Ogun State, Nigeria : Link Publication, 2002.



GRAPH 1: Showing size of the news stories from November 2017 to October 2018

Source: own processing, 2022.

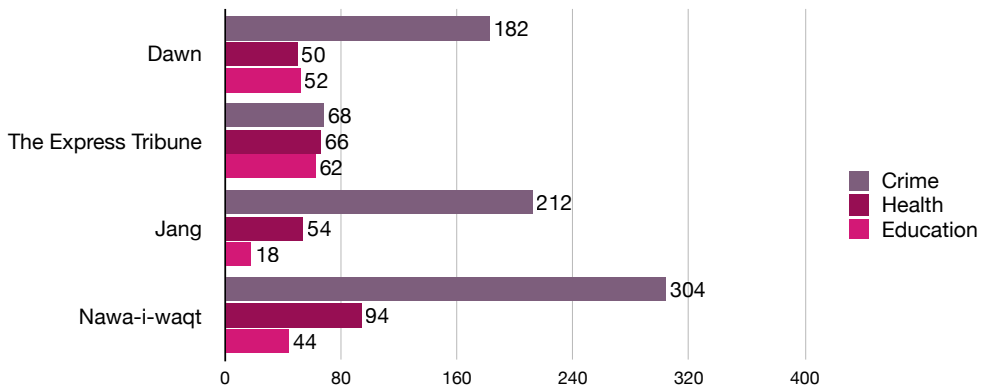
This bar graph illustrates the size of the news stories with three basic types of column with different numbers of news reports. Dawn newspaper published 230 news stories in one column, 48 news stories in three columns while only 20 news stories covered in the six columns of news. Similarly, The Express Tribune printed 112 news stories in one column, 52 news stories in three columns whereas 22 news stories are portrayed in six columns of news from November 2017 to October 2018. By examining the Jang newspaper, it can be seen that there are 326 news stories in one column, 30 news stories in three columns while six column news stories are only 12 in number. Nawa-i-waqt has the top quantity of news, providing 364 news published by the newspaper in one column, 54 news stories in three columns whereas only 2 news are seen published in six columns by the Nawa-i-waqt newspaper.



GRAPH 2: Showing placement of news stories from November 2017 to October 2018

Source: own processing, 2022.

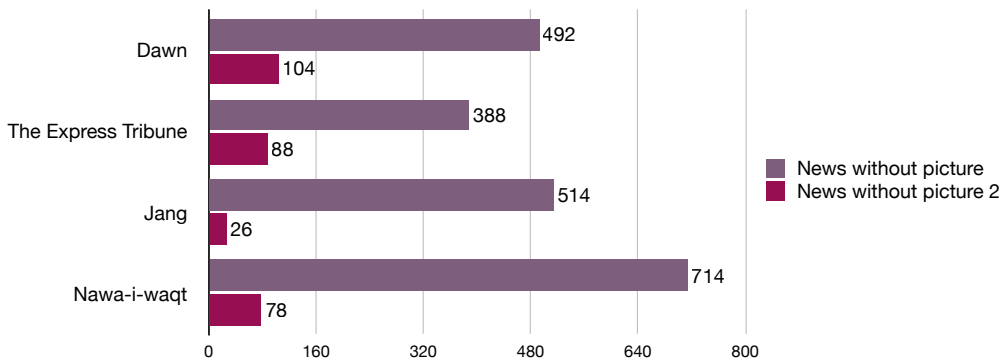
This bar graph depicts the placements of news in selected daily papers highlighting on which pages these newspapers are covering the news stories. There are 36 news stories given on both page one and page two separately while 28 news stories are published on page three by the Dawn Newspaper. The Express Tribune has printed 36 news stories on page one and 18 news stories on page two, while 38 news stories are covered on page three by the newspaper. Examining the Jang newspaper, 90 news stories can be seen on page one but only 34 news stories on page two, whereas 92 news stories are given on page three. Nawa-i-waqt news enumerates the classification of news in such a way that page one covers 94 news stories, only 12 news stories are covered on page two while 156 news stories, which comparatively is the highest number among all news, can be seen on page three.



GRAPH 3: Showing themes of stories in newspapers from November 2017 to October 2018.

Source: own processing, 2022.

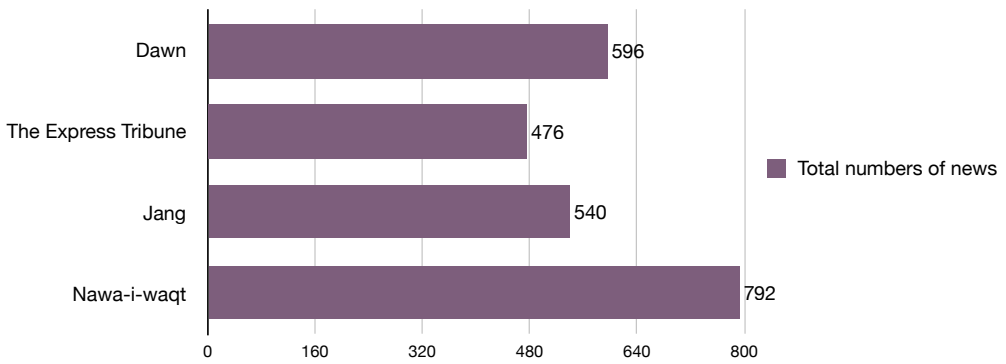
The given graph demonstrates the theme data of selected newspapers in which the Dawn newspaper published 182 news stories related to crime. The news stories regarding health are 50 in number while education related news stories are 52. The Express Tribune published 68 crime related news stories, 66 news stories regarding health and 62 news stories of education which are highest among the others. Similarly, the Jang newspaper puts forth 212 news stories regarding crime, 54 news stories of health while education related news stories are 18 in number. The Nawa-i-waqt newspaper covered the highest news stories related to crime which are 304 in number, health news stories are 94 in number which is also the highest amongst the others while 44 news stories related to education are published.



GRAPH 4: Number of Visual stories. Showing the visual stories of newspapers from November 2017 to October 2018

Source: own processing, 2022.

This graph illustrates the news stories with visuals as well without visuals in all selected daily papers from November 2017 to October 2018. The Dawn published 596 news stories, from which only 104 news stories are in visuals and the remaining 492 news stories are published without visuals or pictures. Similarly, The Express Tribune printed a total of 476 news stories from which 388 news stories are without visuals while only 88 news stories are covered with the picture alongside captions. Furthermore, from November 2017 to October 2018, Jang printed 540 news stories from which only 26 news stories are published with visuals and the remaining 514 news stories are without visuals. Moreover, the Nawa-i-waqt newspaper published the maximum number of news stories, in the time period from November 2017 to October 2018, which are 792 in number. 714 news stories are published without visuals whereas only 78 news stories are covered with visuals.



GRAPH 5: Total Number of News stories. Showing total number of news stories from November 2017 to October 2018

Source: own processing, 2022.

This graph demonstrates the total number of news stories published by all selected newspapers from November 2017 to October 2018. The Dawn daily paper published the second highest news stories which are 596 in number while The Express Tribune printed the minimum number of news stories which are 476 in total. The Jang newspaper covered a total of 540 news stories whereas Nawa-i-waqt published the maximum number of news stories from November 2017 to October 2018 which are 792 in number.

8 Discussion

This study has attempted to investigate the part that media play in reporting children’s rights. This analysis has led us to look at how child related issues are revealed by each of the four chosen newspapers (Dawn, The Express Tribune, Jang, and Nawa-i-waqt) from November 2017 to October 2018. Evidence assembled from this study shows that there is low coverage of children issues in all chosen daily papers in Pakistan. The same results are found in studies of (Oyero, Ortum & Eman) in other countries.²⁶ Among all selected newspapers, Nawa-i-waqt gave the highest attention to child-related issues and published 792 news stories related to child rights. Regardless, this seems to be very low coverage and quantity of news when compared to other news, especially to political news. It is a responsibility of the press to maintain the balance in different areas and to cover all events in society. The press is one of the key institutions for the progress of society and it is a social and moral responsibility of the press.

The findings from four selected newspapers for the period of one year from November 2017 to October 2018 underscore that the portion of crime related news stories for children in the Nawa-i-waqt newspaper is the biggest which is 304 news stories in total while The Express Tribune covered the minimum news stories related to crime which are 98 in number. The Dawn newspaper contained 182 news stories while the Jang newspaper published the second highest number of news stories which are 212. Moreover, all selected newspapers gave coverage mostly on the inside pages of newspapers. Both the Dawn and The Express Tribune newspapers published 36 news stories on page 1 while the Jang and Nawa-i-waqt

²⁶ See: EMAN, M. S.: *Coverage of Children’s Issues in Egyptian Newspapers at The American University in Cairo*. [Master’s thesis]. Cairo, Egypt : The American University, 2015. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=etds>>; ORTUM, L. L.: *An Investigation into the Extent of Children Content in Kenyan Media: A Case Study of the Nation and the Standard Newspapers*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Nairobi : University of Nairobi, 2013, 60 p.; OYERO, O.: Children: as ‘Invisible’ and Voiceless as Ever in the Nigerian News Media. In *Estudos em Comunicação*, 2014, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 25-41. [online]. [2022-04-01]. Available at: <<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/07/vol2/oyero.pdf>>.

daily papers printed 90 and 94 news stories, respectively, on page 1. It shows the priority of press regarding children's rights in Pakistan.

Dawn news published highest, with 104 news stories with visuals out of 596 total news stories and the remaining 492 news stories were published without visuals. Similarly, The Express Tribune included 88 news stories with visuals and 388 news stories without visuals. On the other hand, the Jang newspaper covered the minimum number of news stories with visuals which are 26 in number, whereas the remaining 514 news stories were published without picture stories. Furthermore, the Nawa-i-waqt newspaper published only 78 news stories with visuals out of a total of 792 news stories while the remaining 714 news stories were covered without any visual.

The findings show that there is low media coverage regarding children as well as their rights. Media give coverage to issues of children only when some problem or incident occurs or when a certain news story gets highlighted on social media. Otherwise, media don't put much effort into covering children issues and their rights. It can be seen that in the month of January 2018, all selected newspapers have the maximum news stories regarding child rights. By viewing the findings of both English and Urdu newspapers, it is clear that the Urdu newspapers (Jang and Nawa-i-waqt) gave more coverage and attention to children's rights and their issues. Both Urdu newspapers covered more news stories which are 1332 in number while English newspapers published a total of 1072 news stories from November 2017 to October 2018. Moreover, English newspapers paid more attention to the visuals containing child rights news stories and printed more of those stories as compared to Urdu newspapers. The quantity of the visual news stories is 192 in number. On the other hand, Urdu newspapers covered 104 news stories with visuals along with captions.

9 Conclusion

The above results point to a number of interesting trends in news stories about children issues. Previously, not much coverage was given to children issues in the four newspapers, but there has been a recent increase in the news coverage about children and crime related stories are being reported excessively, as sexual abuse and child abuse is increasing day by day. In the meantime, different kinds of news were ignored, particularly news related to social issues, like those concerning street children, child labour, health issues, education and early marriage. Development news were ignored as well, the press focus on more negative news (Muita & Khamasi, 2007). The Media is interest in negative news not about positive, productive or progressive news regarding children's rights or in general. The study examined the media coverage of children's rights and the results showed that it is necessary to increase coverage of children's issues in major newspapers to create awareness regarding children's rights.

Pakistan sanctioned the Child Rights Convention (CRC) in 1990 and, the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) in collaboration with Provincial commissions for Child Welfare and Development (PCCWDs), local NGOs and local press to create the awareness on Children's right and health problems. But it did not produce good results, the CRC discusses the role of media in questioning children's rights and in the collection of data from different regions. Unfortunately, the press in Pakistan has not the same priorities and focuses on the news events and problems of children in newspapers. It is pertinent to state that the media have a greater responsibility in shaping the children's agenda as well as giving them adequate coverage and visibility, so that the attention of governments and the public concerned can be used to solve children's problems in society. The reason for the low prevalence of children's problems in newspapers is that children's problems are considered unpredictable when compared to political or economic issues. Social issues and problems faced by Pakistani children have minuscule coverage which shows that it's not considered the priority by our press.

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