Content analysis of frames used in op-ed coverage of armed conflicts between Pakistan and India

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Abstract

This paper analyses how Pakistani print news media framed two armed conflict that occurred between India and Pakistan post-Pulwama attack in 2019 using five framing categories; conflict, morality, responsibility human interest, and solution. Using census approach subset of data; 282 opinions and editorials were collected from a population of 1,321 published number of items. Results from content analysis showed that media published a significant amount of content in editorials and opinions regarding armed conflicts. Content analysis disclosed that Pakistani print media placed emphasis on the use of conflict frame, and the use of human-interest frame was seen slightly low in numbers across all the newspapers during framing of Balakot airstrike and Pakistani retaliation after the Pulwama attack. However, there was no significant difference found between framing categories used by print news media. Findings are discussed in the context of journalistic priorities in selecting specific frames during framing of armed conflicts that holds national and international prominence.

Keywords: Armed-conflicts, Framing, Content Analysis, Print Media, Indo-Pak Conflicts, Op-Ed Coverage.

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Introduction

India-Pakistan relations have seen worse and better times as both parted their ways after independence of the subcontinent. Despite the bittersweet relations, not a single solitary occasion in India-Pakistan history has incited such reverberations across the two nations as Pulwama assault on 14 February 2019 (BBC, 2019). India and Pakistan, the two dominant powers in South Asia, have always had contentious relations over Kashmir since the two countries became independent states in 1947 (Ahmed & Ashraf, 2019). Geographically, Kashmir is located on an interconnecting point between South Asia, Central Asia and northern region of Indian state starting from Himalayas range (Mukherjee, 2016). This region is considered the disputed area between India and Pakistan. Kashmir region is basically divided in three main sections based on state influence. The part of Kashmir, which is inclined toward the Muslim Majority Pakistani side, can be seen as the Pakistani zone of control commonly called Azad Kashmir; the southern part, almost always called Jammu and Kashmir, which is closer to the Indian side, can be seen as the Indian area of influence (Habibullah, 2011; Mukherjee, 2016).

Apparently, the Pulwama attack was within the Indian occupied Kashmir on Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CPRF) soldiers which has nothing to with Pakistan but as an act of vengeance for the Pulwama attack, the Indian airstrike on Balakot gave birth to risk of war between two countries and a threat to South Asia's overall peace and security (BBC, 2019).

The identity of the individual that carried out the Pulwama attack was unanticipated and right in the face for the Indian government. Pegahi (2019) explained that for all the previous combats and attacks on Indian soil, Indian officials have never been hesitant in blaming Pakistan for supporting and carrying out terrorists' attacks in India . But the February 2019 attack in Pulwama was carried out by an Indian Kashmiri (Pegahi, 2019). Pegahi (2019) further aired out that a young man, reportedly twenty years old Adil Ahmad Dar, was a resident of a village located near Pulwama, where he attacked the Indian convoy (Pegahi, 2019). Explaining the causes of the attack, Pegahi (2019) argued that it was a result of constant humiliation and torturing by Indian forces in Jammu and Kashmir and Ahmad Dar was, previously, beaten by Indian forces multiple times for falsely accusing him of throwing stones at Indian personnel (Pegahi, 2019). Pegahi (2019) also stated that the young man was also imprisoned five times before he finally took the route of suicide bombing (Pegahi, 2019). The rage and anger of residents of Indian-occupied Kashmir has been increasing from past few years against Indian oppression (Ahmed & Ashraf, 2019). India's armed response to rapidly developing frustration and discontentment of Jammu

and Kashmir has resulted in a considerable increase in the internal militant groups and local support for insurgents (Feyyaz, 2019). Despite generations of contentions, India-Pakistan relations have always seen their highs and lows regarding disputed Kashmir issue since its partition. Starting from the Kargil Conflict twenty years ago when the two nuclear powers fought with each other, the Kargil War on May–July 1999 was a defining moment in Indo-Pak as both countries recently became nuclear weapon holders after successful nuclear tests (Carranza, 2020). After the two states became nuclear powers scholars have been at odds; some thought that these nuclear powers would be important for the security and solidity of South Asia (Mitra, 2001), while other thought that it would not be possible but the Kargil Conflict gave them a solid case to exemplify their opinions (Rej, 2019). Nevertheless, after the Kargil War in 1999, violations across the line of control (LOC) border between India and Pakistan have increased with time (Mukherjee, 2016), notably Indian violation of line of control (LOC) border for apparently performing operation in Azad Kashmir (Rid, 2020), the Pakistan controlled side of Kashmir in September 2016 after Pathankot and Uri attacks in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) (Feyyaz, 2019), and most recently, after the Pulwama attack in 2019 in which an Indian convoy carrying 2,500 CPRF soldiers was attacked resulting in 40 dead, for which the blame was put on Pakistan for backing up the terrorist (Rej, 2019). The Pulwama attack flared up the wave of tensions even more. The Pulwama incident was the fifth major armed conflict that occurred between neighboring countries possessing nuclear powers. Both countries came close to nuclear war in response to conflicts of the international border crises of 2001–2002 and the 2008 Mumbai crisis ignited by terrorist of Pakistan-based outfits (Carranza, 2020) and attacks on Uri town of Kashmir and Pathankot incident. The Pulwama incident and its after-effects were given massive media coverage on every medium be it digital, print, or electronic. Media local, regional, and international covered the incident and the armed conflicts after Pulwama widely. The incident was analyzed via a number of different approaches having different insinuations by many journalist, and policy and security analysts, and published on different forums (Feyyaz, 2019). All the approaches and speculation put forward require deep understanding and in-depth knowledge of India-Pakistan relations, history, and their current equation. Analyzing conflicts of such dimension, which includes various factors such as the competing interests of certain groups and countries, requires that every possible context is kept in mind. It is also important that every written line and quoted individual that have relevance with the issue is examined (Kim & Jahng, 2016; Livingston & Eachus, 1995).

News framing is an effective way of understanding media coverage of conflicts; this way it is possible to study powerful impact of frames used in media and how specific frames are used in emphasizing on certain realities (Lasorsa & Reese, 1990). The framing process is excessively used among media dynamics to understand and comprehend complex conflict situations. This process includes selecting aspect of issues and conflicts to present in front of an audience providing the meaning or central idea of a conflict (Entman, 1993). In conflict issues, media framing often becomes politically driven or even institutionalized. News media has the ability to manipulate content and give salience to one issue over another by highlighting one aspect of news over another (Hawkins, 2011). With the help of frame analysis, this paper aims to examine how Pakistani media framed the two armed conflicts that took place between India and Pakistan after the Pulwama attack in Jammu and Kashmir. This study will observe what kind of frames respective newspapers used in framing two main armed conflicts after the Pulwana attack, whether there is difference/similarity in the selection of frames across newspapers. Agenda covered in editorials of respective newspapers also reveal the journalistic activities being practiced in framing armed conflicts post the Pulwama attack. This significance in examining media-conflict relationships has increased dramatically over the years because of the imminent role of media in the framing conflicts of national and international concerns. Through this study, the author has tried to investigate news framing being done by Pakistani media after Pulwama attack. The author has carried research through gathering of data and careful in-depth analysis, and the results are stated in light of frame analysis and framing process practiced in news media. To eliminate any possible inclination or researchers' biasness, reliability was also achieved through two coders as well.

India-Pakistan armed conflicts

Ever since from establishment of India and Pakistan as independent states after the end of British colonization, both neighbors have walked paths that often interconnect, deviate and every now and then lead to conflict between them. This bittersweet relation between both countries is often reinforced by constant military propaganda, criticism on every international forum and indulgence in armed conflicts across borders. Indo-Pak relations has been the interest in research for a long time by scholars, international relation researchers and political analysts locally and internationally such as Maiti (2017), Maini (2013), Pattanaik (2008) and Mitra (2001). According to scholars, the bone of contention between soaring relation of India and Pakistan lies in the unresolved issue of Kashmir (Mitra, 2001). The valley

of Kashmir has been the disputed territory between India and Pakistan since their Independence. Due to which both countries have been actively engaged in conflicts over years due to Kashmir dispute. Indo-Pak conflict has been a major concern for the peace of south Asia as both countries posses' nuclear powers and analysts view this conflict as mean of nuclear deterioration.

The Kargil Conflict in 1999 was another attempt to forcefully conquer Kashmir region that resulted in cross-border conflicts (Maini, 2013). It is stated in that in May 1999, Pakistan military forces, as an attempt to intrude on Indian-occupied Kashmir, illegally entered the Himalayan mountains leading to the Kargil region of the Indian-administered region of Kashmir (Maiti, 2017). Although at first Indian forces couldn't recognize the intrusion, major cross border skirmishes and military combats occurred between the two forces, later after realizing the intensity of the situation (Pegahi, 2020). Sources documented that Pakistan military forces did succeed in going over several miles (80km) into the control line (Zehra, 2018). After the catastrophic effects the Kargil Conflict had on both countries, it was believed that India and Pakistan would refrain from indulging into conflict at such a level and issues would be resolved through democratic and strategic means (Ahmed & Ashraf, 2019). It was accepted that nuclear deterrence will fill in as a settling factor by making a full-scale traditional clash very costly a price between the two nations (Acosta, 2007). But in any case, after the Kargil Conflict in 1999, infringements across the LOC between India and Pakistan have expanded with time, notably Indian infringement of the LOC fringe for obviously performing activity in Azad Kashmir, the Pakistan-controlled side of Kashmir. In September 2016, there were the Pathankot and Uri assaults in Indian-regulated Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and most recently, the Pulwama assault in 2019 (Feyyaz, 2019). In the line of Indo-Pak conflicts, the Pulwama Balakot Crisis proved to be the final nail in the coffin. The Pulwama crisis escalated the conflicts between two neighbors to the extent that both countries nearly came to the edge of waging a nuclear war (Pegahi, 2019).

Role of media in conflict times

Over the years, scholars have been keenly invested in examining role that media plays during conflict situations; researchers argue that media tend to get highly politicized while reporting conflicts (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014). Moreover, studies have highlighted that media biases often come between reporting conflicts concerning political or geopolitical risks (Elmasry et al., 2013). Media have the power to sensationalize an issue by overemphasizing one aspect and leaving out another. An intriguing part

of studying relationship of media and conflicts is that they feature the degree to which media has risen as an important factor is protests and conflicts. Media and journalists are habitually held responsible to escalate differences between opposing rivalries. Journalist while reporting conflicts and combats represent the content as a war depicting one side losing and the other side winning (Lynch, 2015; Rid, 2020). Nevertheless, with the emergence of new media, audience reach has been expanded and media has also gain importance in the process of influencing peace building (Fong, 2009). Due to this fact, media has the capacity to promote peace on global scale. Military combats cannot create their own momentum rather it is necessary to mobilize conflict actions and gather support from public. For conflicts to gather masses support, it is important to have an unanimity between leading parties and public, for this purpose media plays a vital role in creating awareness among audience about the rivalries, reasons behind the conflict and the consequences that would be faced as a result of combat (Juan & Hasenclever, 2015; Sanín & Wood, 2014). This process of creating awareness must be done consistently throughout the conflict by media organizations. The regulation of conflict information and reporting is also affected by the change in technology and the arrival of new mediums. This change in platforms has not only increase the swiftness of spreading conflict information but also questioned the actors that take part in spreading conflict news (Meyer et al., 2018; Rid, 2020). The notion of reporting frames during conflicts comes in direct contrast with objectivity of journalism (Hoxha & Hanitzsch, 2018; Zandberg & Neiger, 2005). Continuing this aspect of journalistic association with selected elements and neutrality while reporting conflicts, McLaughlin (2016) highlighted that the extent of journalists objectivity during conflict scenarios fluctuates due to the influx of facts, including the nature of the contention, communal interest in conflict, and military censorship (McLaughlin, 2016).

News framing and frame building

News framing is a practice which combines various aspects of information into a meaningful news content (Gitlin, 2003; Kim et al., 2014). This practice involves selection of certain aspects of information and leaving out others by highlighting the issue through a certain angle (Entman, 1993; Kim et al., 2014). Through news framing, media can give importance to a specific problem, so that readers think in a certain dimension of reasoning and interpretation (Scheufele, 1999). Researchers of framing agree on the concept of selecting aspects of an issue and making it noticeable; according to them, framing is a process of constructing themes (Benford & Snow, 2000). Presenting different themes of similar information may lead to the

different interpretation by the readers. Robert Entman (1993) described framing process as:

Frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 55).

A couple of factors identified by scholars that drives news framing process includes political influence, social norms as discussed earlier, sponsors generating revenue for news channels, and journalists' own abilities to frame news content (Benford & Snow, 2000; Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Valera-Ordaz, 2019). Over the years, scholars had been at disparity that not all frames are developed with equal consideration (Dan & Raupp, 2018; Levin et al., 1998), and there is a difference in selecting which concepts and ideas are considered as frames and given precedence by scholars while leaving out others. The most frequently used types of frames in news reporting are classified as generic and issue-specific frames. Even though the evolution of generic and issue specific frames and their types is often controversial, generic frames such as conflict frame and human interest frames are so widely used by journalists in news content that they are considered applicable to virtually every news type and topic (Dan & Raupp, 2018; Entman, 1993).

Agenda setting studies focus on the influence involved in selection of issues that are to be presented in front of audience, and the formation of frames depicts media practices in selecting aspects of information that are used to display issues and events (Kim et al., 2011; Nisbet et al., 2003). This practice of selecting frames involves some other factors as well; being within organizations or outside organizations have an impact on the selection of frames by journalists. A study conducted by Plant et al. (2009) on media framing of 2008 United States elections and Barack Obama's presidency depicts how differently mainstream media treated Obama as African-American during the campaign period and the elections (Plant et al., 2009). Examining the framing in US media, Plant et al. (2009) argue that unlike the usual framing of African-Americans in US news media as violent and indifferent, Obama's image was constructed in a positive light (Plant et al., 2009). Numerous researches have been conducted to access importance of frames in media according to the impact they have on audience and the interpretations they extract from those frames (Levin et al., 1998; Nisbet et al., 2003; Scheufele, 1999; Valera-Ordaz, 2019; Vreese et al., 2001). Even though these studies did reveal important revelation regarding frames occurring in news content, but to date there are no standard established measures to counter similar frames found in news reporting. In framing

issues and events that hold national and international importance, there must be well established analytical measures to cater and examine the reoccurring frames in news media.

Hypotheses

Keeping in mind the objective of the study to identify the frames used by Pakistani newspapers in framing of Indo-Pak armed conflicts after Pulwama attack in February 2019, the following hypothesis are suggested:

H_1: Conflict frames dominate most on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than solution frame.

H_2: Responsibility frames dominate most on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than morality frame.

H_3: Pakistani newspapers use human interest frames less than other framing categories.

Methodology

To answer the research questions, a quantitative content analyses of frames is done using the Op-ed sections of six newspapers: *The News, Express Tribune, The Nation, Dawn, Daily Times*, and *Pakistan Today*. The main purpose of this study is to identify the frames adopted by respective newspapers in framing armed conflicts post-Pulwama attack. Keeping in view of the requirement of this study, the quantitative content analysis is adopted. In current study, census approach was employed to collect sample data, keeping in mind the research focus of the study. Census method is the method of statistical listing where all members of the population are studied. Through this approach, a subset of data from population was collected. In current study all the editorials and opinions; 1,321 in number published in Op-ed page of six Pakistani English newspapers were studied from which subset of 282 items was selected based on the keywords like Indo-Pak relations, armed conflicts, aircraft, tensions, and equivalents to. Only English newspapers were included in the current research for frame analysis; both Urdu and English newspapers have national level presence in Pakistan, but English newspapers are often consumed by policy makers, the corporate community, and the country's urban population. Due to this fact, English newspaper publications were selected so that analysis can be carried out smoothly and effectively.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Before analyzing and coding data into coding sheets, inter-coder reliability of the subsample was attained. To achieved inter-coder reliability, 50 data

items were given to two coders. Both coders were active media persons and were given coding training prior to filling sample data for reliability in coding sheet. The researcher also conducted inter-coder reliability test for ensuring a high degree of inter-coder consistency. This was being done to enhance the consistency of data coding the intercoder reliability showed fair agreement between their coding (see table 1 below)

Table 1. Inter-coder Reliability

		Value	Asymptotic Standard-ized Error[a]	Approximate T[b]	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.889	.018	35.989	.000
N of Valid Cases		446			

Theoretical framework

In this section, the theoretical framework for the study is developed. This paper aims to take into account how journalists framed two major armed conflicts after the Pulwama attack and examined any differences and similarities in framing the conflict across newspapers. For this purpose, examining frames in Pakistani newspapers through frame analysis fits well with the objective of the study.

The idea of framing defined by Goffman (1974) revolves around interpretations from the already existing schemas in our surroundings. A frame refers to an interpretation structure that arranges readers experience and directs them to practice, individually or collectively (Clubb, 2016). Through framing realities into certain aspects, journalists have control over audience thoughts. A frame restricts or determines the context of the message by forming the conclusions people make about the message (Goffman, 1974). A media frame is considered an important element of reporting as it gives meanings to events and provides information about the issue in a specific way (Levin et al., 1998). Media frames allow journalist to pick up and organize aspects from events and issues and transform them into a presentable manner in front of audience (Gitlin, 2003). Framing can include the aims of sender but the reasons of altering a reality into a certain angle cannot be identified (Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing is a crucial practice in the creation of social meaning, as it helps form the interpretations that people see in the world (Fong, 2009).

Entman (1993) defines media framing in two stages: selection and giving importance (Entman, 1993). According to him framing is a process of selecting different aspects of a reality and making it more salient in front of viewers to identify problem or a situations, bear moral assessments,

interpret cause of problem, and promote treatments recommendations. Theses stages are accomplished at the creation level of frames and is done by journalists in media framing, that within the context of this research takes place in editorials and opinions. Linking this to the argument above about the influence of media, news cannot be viewed as a representation of reality. Rather, they can be seen as incomplete, arbitrary, and prejudiced in the interpretation of truth. Framing theory has been examined by scholars in both conventional and new media formats including newspaper, journals, social media, and more recently by blogs (Vreese et al., 2001). A number of diverse themes has been investigated using frame analysis be it political, social, biological, environmental, wars and conflicts, and researches in economic fields (Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Mallouli & Sweeney, 2019; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009; Schuck & Vreese, 2009; Schwalbe et al., 2008).

Keeping in mind the bases of framing theory, this study employs five framing categories to examine editorials and opinions published by Pakistani newspapers in framing Indo-Pak armed conflict after the Pulwama attack. The framing categories used in current study are supported by Galtung peace and war journalism frames. In 1986, peace and conflict researcher Johan Galtung (Hussain, 2020) presented a model defining two opposing modes of journalism regarding conflicts practiced in media. He uses the term "peace journalism" while demonstrating the model and named two contrasting approaches namely peace journalism and war journalism.

Based on the framing categories a detailed coding sheet is developed to analyse number of pieces collected from six newspapers included in the study. Deploying these frames to inquire about the framing process adopted by Pakistani media in reporting armed conflicts following Pulwama attack benefits researcher to understand the media organizing method and different ways to give meaning through the choice of certain event frames.

Results

Table 2. Frequency of frames appeared in post Pulwama editorials and opinions

	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Conflict	86	30.5%
Responsibility	56	50.4%
Morality	45	66.3%
Solution	67	90.1%
Human interest	28	86.1%
N	282	

Table 2 shows frequency of frames in published items. According to table 2, newspapers published highest number of items using the conflict frame. After the conflict frame, the solution frame has more frequency in items than rest of the frames. The number of items published using conflict frame is 86 and solution frame is 67. The responsibility frame is used in 56 items, the morality frame is used in 45 items, and the human-interest frame is used in 28 items.

H_1: Conflict frames dominate most on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than solution frame.

Table 3. Significant mean of hypothesis H_1

	Conflict	Solution	t	sig
Mean	3.663	3.478	.749	.455
N	86	67		

H_1 was tested by comparing means of Conflict (N=86, Mean=3.663) and Solution (N=67, Mean=3.478) framing categories. Significance value (.455) suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between means of the two framing categories, so the H1 is not supported by the results.

Table 4. Frames by newspapers

		Newspaper						
		Dawn	The News	Express tribune	The Nation	Daily Times	Pakistan Today	Total
Frames	Conflict	1.8%	6.0%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%	3.6%	86
	Responsibility	3.6%	2.9%	2.4%	3.9%	4.6%	2.4%	56
	Morality	2.1%	1.4%	2.4%	2.8%	3.9%	3.1%	45
	Solution	3.1%	4.6%	3.5%	5.3%	4.2%	2.8%	67
	Human interest	1.4%	1.8%	1.0%	1.8%	1.8%	2.1%	28
N		34	47	45	57	59	40	282

Table 4 shows cross tab between frames and newspapers. While reporting the Indo-Pak armed conflict with reference to post Pulwama, all newspaper publications used conflict frames in a larger number except *Dawn. Dawn* published more items using the responsibility frame. As shown in table 4, *Dawn* published five items using the conflict frame, *The News* published 17 items, *Express Tribune, The Nation,* and *Daily Times* published 18 items each using the conflict frames, and *Pakistan Today* used the conflict frame in 10 items.

H_2: Responsibility frames dominate most on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than morality frame.

Table 5. Significant mean of Hypothesis H_2

	Responsibility	Morality	t	sig
Mean	3.536	3.911	.112	.269
N	56	45		

H_2 was tested by comparing the means of Responsibility (N=56, Mean=3.536) and Morality (N=45, Mean=3.911) framing categories. Significance value (.269) suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between the means of the two framing categories, so the H_2 is not supported by the results.

H_3: Pakistani newspapers use human interest frames less than other framing categories.

Table 6. Significant mean of Hypothesis H_3

	Human Interest	Others	t	sig
Mean	3.714	3.647	.812	.361
N	28	254		

H_3 was tested by comparing means of Human Interest (N=28, Mean=3.714) and all the other framing categories (N=254, Mean=3.647). Significance value (.361) suggests that there is no statistically significant difference between Means, so the H3 is not supported by the results.

Discussion

Media's role in conflict and war has been given special consideration by scholars with a special focus on media practices in conflict reporting (Schoemaker & Stremlau, 2014). While framing complicated issues like wars and conflicts, frames are developed by journalists in a way that present complex and extensive information in a simplified form that can be interpreted and understood by the audience. Media has a very dominant role in constructing public opinion on matters of national and international conflicts (Roluahpuia, 2017). The present study was designed with the aim of evaluating framing practices which are being adapted by Pakistani newspapers in reporting Indo-Pak armed conflicts regarding post Pulwama attack. Framing primarily involves selecting issues and making them under consideration for the public. To frame an issue or event requires selection of aspects of reality and presenting them in news content in a form which identifies the problem regarding the issue, presenting causal explanation and giving treatment referrals towards the specific issue. Different framing

analysis has been carried out to understand journalistic practices in selecting frames in news reporting (Nisbet et al., 2003). Frames diagnose the issues and conflicts, determines what are causes of conflict between the opposite parties, identifying the agents that are responsible for creating the conflict, make more judgments regrading effects of the conflicts, present remedies and take necessary steps for the resolution of conflicts. Analysing the framing techniques being used by Pakistani newspapers in the coverage of Indo-Pak armed conflicts post Pulwama attack was one of the main aims of the current study. It was hypothesized that; Conflict frames dominate more on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than solution frame. Results of the frequency analysis of frames used in several items published during Indo-Pak armed conflicts by Pakistani newspapers are in consensus with first hypothesis and does not support second hypothesis.

Responsibility frames dominate more on the editorial pages of the respective newspapers than morality frame. While analyzing the frames appeared in the Op-ed section of Pakistani newspapers, results indicated that use of the conflict Frame in number of items published by newspapers dominate with a higher number of frequency (see table 2). This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in the use of conflict frame extensively in media coverage by journalists (Hoxha & Hanitzsch, 2018; Hussain, 2020; Mallouli & Sweeney, 2019; Mitra, 2001; Roluahpuia, 2017). Conflict frames are said to have been used by journalists to highlight the disagreement between two opposing parties regarding the ongoing conflict to gather public interest and put forward the situation with a multiple interpretation which will be debated in the later section of the discussion. Use of conflict frames by Pakistani newspapers in the framing of Indo-Pak armed conflicts validates that the newspapers heavily focused on analyzing the two-armed conflicts that took place between India and Pakistan and provided diverse interpretations to the audience. Items published in *Dawn* and *Daily Times* stated:

> The Indian incursion has raised the stakes for Pakistan. It is reportedly the first time since the 1971 war that the Indian jets intruded into Pakistan territory. It was a brazen military offensive though the Narendra Modi government claims it was a pre-emptive strike against alleged militant camps and not military action. ("Pulwama attack," 2019, p. 3)

> Silencing the drumbeats of war merely postpones coming to terms with the prickly tension between the two countries over Kashmir and cross-border terrorism. If there is a re-occurrence of hostilities, which side came out looking

better after Pulwama, Balakot and the aerial combat won't matter much. (Jaaved, 2019, p. 5)

Keeping in mind the research questions of the current study, evaluating relationship between framing categories and the newspaper holds uttermost value. Outcomes from the analysis of relationship between frames and the newspaper publications seem to be consistent with the initial observations discussed in the first half of discussion. Conflict frame was seen leading across all framing categories used in the items published by respective newspaper except *Dawn*. With respect to our research question, it was found that the journalists comprehensively used conflict frame in their editorials and opinions (Beig, 2019; Haider, 2019; Khan, 2019; Shaikh, 2019). Use of conflict frame is often considered an essential element of news media as journalists use conflict farming to present issues and problems through disagreement between individuals, opposite revelries, or countries. These results mirror the previous studies that have been examined, use of the conflict frame in diverse forms of analysis. Jebril et al. (2013) examined the use of conflict and human-interest frame in the news media and changing political views during 2008 American elections and concluded that conflict was used frequently by journalists in news media (Jebril et al., 2013). A further study investigated how journalist emphasize the use of the conflict frame on the issues of political interest with reference to an important European event (Valera-Ordaz, 2019). Another study on the launch of euro currency in 1999 also concluded that conflict frame was dominantly used in the coverage of the respective event (Vreese et al., 2001). Researchers established that the digital journalist emphasized on the use of the conflict frames in the political and economic news (Ireri et al., 2019). In consensus with these studies, the findings of the study also supports and validates that conflict frame is frequently used by journalists on the disputes that hold national and international importance to diagnose the issue, regulate what are causes of conflicts between opposite parties, present moral verdicts regrading effects of the conflicts and present remedies for the solution and resolution of the conflicts.

Percentage of human-interest frame was seen slightly low in numbers across all the newspapers but there was no statistically significant difference found in the light of our third hypothesis, Pakistani newspapers use human interest frames less than other framing categories it can be asserted that our third hypothesis is not supported by results. While evaluating the conflict circumstances, presenting impacts that human life would face is a general practice by journalism. A human-interest frame is designed in a manner that present news with reference to the individuals that will affected, including

emotional and human angle of the conflict and issue. Using human-interest frame in less percentage by Pakistani journalists may indicate the fact that they were more focused on the critical evaluation of the conflict rather inculcating over emotionalized content.

Conclusion

This study is designed to determine and better understand framing process being adopted by Pakistani media in framing two armed conflicts between India and Pakistan following the Pulwama attack in February 2019. In addition, it examines what frames media used in framing two main armed conflicts. As described in detail in current study, framing theory and frame analysis have gained immense acceptance in media and communication studies to understand media's ways of presenting complex news and how audience perceive it (Ireri et al., 2019). The key debate in this study is how media framed two armed conflicts. As this paper has accounted, researchers have concluded that a significant aspect for understanding conflict reality and the complexities is framing of that respective conflict in news media. Framing allows journalists to critically select and present certain angles of realities that they particularly desire to put forward to audience. The paper also discussed scholars' points of view of framing analysis carried out by multiple researchers on describing framing effects and process. According to several research studies, framing is a powerful mean of analyzing media process of constructing information and its impact on audience perception (Scheufele, 1999). Frames are powerful enough in promoting certain meanings while averting others. As previously mentioned, analyzing frames used by Pakistani media in framing of Indo-Pak armed conflicts was the main aim of the current study. The findings from the frame analysis of number of pieces evidently indicate that Pakistani media actively took part in the framing of two armed conflicts. It was observed that media heavily focused on providing multiple interpretation of conflict scenarios and events as and when they were unfolding. Conflict framing is considered one of the most frequently used frames in conflict reporting by news media (Ireri et al., 2019). Studies conclude that news content embedded with conflict frame is likely to have more news value and use of conflict framing is inculcated in journalistic routines for the purpose of balance reporting (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Fong, 2009; Hussain, 2020; Juan & Hasenclever, 2015; Kim & Jahng, 2016). The findings are also in consensus with these studies, using conflict framework in the framing of armed conflicts in Indo-Pak reinforces the fact that newspaper publications concentrated extensively on analyzing the two-armed conflicts between India and Pakistan and providing audiences with difference of opinion.

Conflict frame increases validity and places emphasis on the gravity of the situation. Implementing conflict framing by Pakistani media certifies the fact that journalists considered Indo-Pak armed conflict to be an important issue and analyze and critically examined the situation and kept audience informed of every recent development in the conflict. These findings also answer our research question that focuses on determining dominate frames that occurred in reporting of armed conflict by newspapers.

However, the outcome from our analysis also validates that there was no statistically significant difference between framing categories used by Pakistani media during coverage of post Pulwama armed conflicts. Taken together, the findings of this research provide insights on the framing process adopted by Pakistani media while reporting two armed conflict; the Balakot attack and the Pakistan retaliation in February 2019. These findings contribute to the growing literature of understanding framing theory and applying frame analysis in conflict context. The insights gained from this study may be of assistance to future studies interested in examining frames and framing process used by journalists while covering armed conflicts.

A number of important limitations need to be considered. Firstly, the present study only examined content from English newspapers and the findings cannot be generalized on newspapers with different languages, though local language media and newspapers are also an important factor in shaping public opinion. Secondly, another shortcoming of this study is that it focuses exclusively on newspaper editorials and opinions and didn't include how other media platforms like TV, radio, and social media websites report the conflict. Thirdly, another source of uncertainty in current study would be the analysis conducted with a limited spotlight on the inclusion of just a single occasion. It would be fascinating to explore whether contrasts in observations can be seen in the manner in which the armed conflict was covered in Indian news channels.

This research asks many questions in need of further investigation. It would be interesting to see a comparative editorial analysis of Pakistani and Indian newspapers on coverage of India-Pakistan armed conflicts. Further research could also be conducted to determine the effectiveness of framing techniques employed by journalists in understanding complex Indo-Pak conflicts with such a huge historical background. Furthermore, this study only analyzed editorials and opinions from respective newspapers. It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas: (1) investigating the framing process by comparing content of editorials and news stories, and (2) examining other new media platforms including websites and social interaction forums that are now considered an essential part to spread news and information regarding any issue or conflict. Another

interesting aspect to considered for future research would be the impact of framing process in gathering political support for ruling government during days of conflicts and combats.

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