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# Tharparker Famine 2014: Comparative Analysis of Pakistan's English and Urdu Media Coverage

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## Abstract

This paper examines print media coverage of Tharparker Famine 2014 occurred in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The research observes the magnitude and patterns of media coverage in the wake of famine. It explores extensively the discourse of famine in English and Urdu media. Moreover, it entails the issues highlighted or overlooked in this regard. For this purpose, four widely circulated newspapers of Pakistan were selected and content analysis of news reports and editorials was conducted. Unlike many other natural disasters, famine is largely considered to be a predictable catastrophe that retains pre-disaster period. This study examines the coverage by media in pre and post-famine periods. Findings revealed that Urdu language media gave more coverage to the famine as compared to English language media. It was also found that both English and Urdu language media did not give any coverage to pre-famine phase and remained focused on post-famine period.

## Introduction

In the course of a calamitous situation, the significance of information and communication is largely acknowledged (Lee, 2008). It is reasoned that the effective communication and information may possibly contribute to mitigating a disaster or reducing its probable impairment (Space, 2015; Moges, 2013; Pantti et al., 2012; Dwivedi, 2010; Quarantelli, 1996). Crises require a high scale of mass information, which makes role of mass media more significant in catastrophic circumstances. In this regard, news media is considered to be the most prominent and vital news source about disasters, particularly for community that usually faces it (Space, 2015; Hoberman, 2011; Scanlon, 2011; Quarantelli, 1996; Wenger, James, & Fanpel, 1985). Besides, media acts as a liaison between the affected public, general masses, national and international donors and disaster management authorities (Iqbal, Ali, Khursheed, & Saleem, 2014).

Thus, the role of media is very important during natural calamities which becomes a reason for social scientists to examine the coverage as well as consequent influence of media in the wake of natural disasters (Moges, 2013; Houston et al., 2012; Hoberman, 2011; Rybalko, 2011; Harbert, 2010; Liu, 2010; Olson et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2008; Brunken, 2006; Tierney, Bevc, & Kuligowski, 2006; Szinell, Bussay, & Szentimrey, 1998; Quarantelli, 1996).

Natural catastrophes are a common phenomenon in South Asia. Particularly, Pakistan is considered to be one of the most disaster-prone countries of the world due to its meteorological diversity (Ahmad, Kazmi, & Pervez, 2011). Moreover, Pakistani mass media has become very dynamic and liberated (Yousaf, 2012; Mezzera & Sial, 2010; International Media Support, 2009; Shoeb, 2008) and it is thought that influence of Pakistani journalists is mounting (Nazir, 2013).

As a matter of fact, disaster risk management institutions

are weak in Pakistan (Sayed & González, 2014) and it is considered the duty of mass media to keep an eye on the performance of disaster management institutions. Furthermore, media is also expected to support disaster risk management and play a role to create awareness in general masses, victims and potential victims. Contrarily, role of media is, however, often criticized to be ineffectual during disasters (Naeem, 2013, p. 3). It is also noted that the coverage of media is limited to happening phase most of the time. That's why significance of examining coverage of Pakistan's mass media in disaster situations becomes quite high and makes this research noteworthy.

It is relevant to mention that in the developed countries, literature on media in the wake of natural disasters is well researched (Rybalko, 2011; Tierney et al., 2006; Szinell et al., 1998; Quarantelli, 1996), but it is under-researched in developing countries and almost insignificant research studies are available in the context of Pakistan. This research aims at examining the reporting and editorial coverage of English and Urdu print media of Pakistan during Tharparker famine 2014.

### Rationale for selecting Tharparker famine 2014

Famines and droughts are considered the worst disasters worldwide (Anjum et al., 2012). In Pakistan, famines are frequently occurring phenomenon (Ahmad et al., 2004) and their frequency is on an increase (Qureshi & Akhtar, 2004). So there is dire need for examining the media coverage of famines in Pakistan.

It is relevant to mention that famine is considered a combination of human as well as geo-physical reasons (Qureshi & Akhtar, 2004). Being slow-paced creeping occurrence (Szinell et al., 1998) it is largely considered predictable. Thus, the research intends to examine the coverage behavior of media in a predictable calamity and analyze the media's coverage in the pre and post-disaster period. Tharparker famine 2014 was one of the worst

famines in Pakistan. It affected almost 306,063 families with approximately 248 casualties (EM-DAT, 2015). The data obtained from National Disaster Management Authority of Pakistan (NDMA) reveals that more than half of the casualties were recorded among children. It is worth mention that it was Pakistani media that revealed the calamitous event and miseries of victims. That is why it is significant to examine the magnitude and patterns of media coverage during Tharparker famine.

### Rationale for selecting English and Urdu media

This research examines and compares the coverage of English and Urdu media during the Tharparker famine 2014. In this regard, four daily newspapers of Pakistan were selected. Out of the four, two deal with the domain of English while the other two deal with Urdu language. The selected dailies are Dawn, The News, Nawa-i-Waqt and Jang.

Rationale to select the newspapers was their large circulation. In Pakistan, there are 1,052 dailies and these are top four widely circulated newspapers of Pakistan for decades (ABC<sup>1</sup>report, 2015). Furthermore, the status of these newspapers is accepted as influential and persuasive (Kheeshadeh, 2012; Malik & Iqbal, 2011; Shoeb, 2008).

Rationale for comparing the English and Urdu media coverage is the dichotomy of thought on different issues represented by English and Urdu language media, which often belongs to two different schools of thought (Shoeb, 2008) and their reporting and editorial priorities often vary.

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<sup>1</sup>ABC stands for Audit Bureau of Circulation. This is only authorized institution of the Government of Pakistan that determines rating and circulation of all print media publications in Pakistan. The organization works under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Thus, the research intends to examine and analyze the representation as to how contrarily English and Urdu media discussed the issue. The research also examines as to which issues were prioritized and/or overlooked by media in the two languages.

### Research Objectives

Considering the aforementioned rationale, objectives of the research are:

- To examine how English and Urdu media covered Famine 2014;
- To observe which issues or aspects of famine were highlighted and/or overlooked by selected media in pre and post-disaster phases of famine.

### Research Questions

Following are the research questions for the study:

RQ1. Which of the selected English and Urdu media gave relatively more coverage to the selected disaster?

RQ2. How selected English and Urdu media addressed pre and post-famine periods?

### Literature Review

In this part, previous studies related to media coverage of famine are being addressed. Mass media is considered significant for disseminating awareness among people in the wake of catastrophes. Moges (2013) conducted a research to examine the role of media in promoting information and awareness regarding disaster risk reduction, which includes pre-measures, to reduce the vulnerabilities, which leads to crisis situation, and post- measures to minimize the loss. In this regard, qualitative data was gathered and analyzed. Results showed that Ethiopian newspapers did not concentrate on disaster-related issues. Particularly, risk-reduction aspects were badly ignored despite the fact that

people were in dire need to be given awareness regarding disaster. It was concluded that Ethiopian mass media overlooked its expected role.

Media coverage is often objected to be limited to apparent happening in the wake of natural disasters. It ignores debating predictive aspects as well as the risk-reduction future plans. Wondafrash (2006) examined Ethiopian newspapers to observe the role of media in famine/drought during 2002. Four newspapers (The Ethiopian Herald, Reporter, Fortune and Addis Admass) were selected and frames of their 178 articles were examined. In-depth interviews of the people, who worked in these newspapers, were also conducted. Results of the research showed that newspapers remained focused on relief and recovery (post-Phase) of the drought. Use of the event and appeal frames was concentrated but prognostic and diagnostic frames were overlooked. It was also noted that newspapers treated famine as a natural calamity, instead of human-made disaster.

Famine is considered amongst natural calamities that gain least attention of media. It is also said that famine coverage is dependent on some Western involvement or UN declaration. Stupart (2013) conducted quantitative content analysis of websites of BBC, CNN and Aljazeera to investigate the pace and length of the famine reporting. Famines occurred in Somalia, Malawi and Sudan were selected in this regard. Findings revealed a dramatic silence regarding famine victim accounts and media organizations barely conversed directly about their needs, challenges and thoughts on the famine. It was also noted that prior to the issuance of United Nations' declaration, there was very little coverage of famine in the media. Right after the declaration, the famine became a significant media event and afterwards for two consecutive months the issue remained in the news media. In fact, the UN declaration made the issue significant and newsworthy as well as relevant to local elites.

One more study, which deals with the same issue, has been addressed here. Ogbimi (2012) examined Western media's coverage of famine occurred in Somalia in 2011. Content analysis and framing of the articles from three selected Western newspapers were conducted. The Guardian, The International Herald Tribune and daily Hurriyet were the selected newspapers. It was found that the response of the media was very inadequate and scanty in the beginning but improved after UN involvement. The study contended that international news norms were based on Western perceptions and news coverage increased mostly after UN declaration of the famine. It was found that one month after the UN declaration, famine reporting declined. The content analysis and framing of the news items suggested that UN humanitarian supports, sufferings and deaths of famine victims were mostly focused in the International Herald Tribune. Words and phrases such as "Famine stricken", "hungry Somalia", frequently dominated in the Hurriyet daily news of the famine. Also, words like "hunger stricken people", "failed state", "most dangerous place to live on earth", "Somalia rubbish strewn street", etc., were regularly used.

McCarty (2013) examined the media framing of African famine in 2011. Six American newspapers (the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune) were selected and 160 articles examined to discover the common frames. It was found that African famine hardly became American media's agenda. Only five (3%) news items were published in pre-famine declaration phase. However, 35 percent (56 articles) coverage was given during acute crisis phase and 62 percent (99 articles) in the aftermath of the famine. Research concluded that "contributing factors" to famine were related to environment. Failure of local government was termed as a secondary factor.

Danker-Dake (2008) conducted content analysis of New York Times from 2003 to 2007 to examine the amount of coverage African countries received. It was noticed that most of the time Western media coverage depicted famine to be a natural calamity, which is beyond human control. Results revealed that Africa-related coverage of New York Times often consisted of crisis news and 46.8% news reports were published regarding war and famine or natural calamities. After that, news reports related to development (39.1%) and human interest (11.9%) were published. The study concluded that Africa was covered more fairly by the news media, which is more similar to the way European and Asian events are covered.

In general, different media organizations follow different agendas while providing coverage to various issues. So is the case with famines. Tesfaye (2014) conducted content analysis of one-year news coverage of BBC and CNN websites regarding Ethiopia. It was investigated how international news websites treated media coverage of Ethiopia. Findings exposed that the two media organizations discussed the Ethiopia in dissimilar manner in terms of themes and topics. BBC mostly emphasized on the issues related to the drought, famine and global aid while the CNN paid much attention towards the press and human rights issues. Both news websites (BBC & CNN) were inclined towards the negative side of the event. Almost 63% of total coverage of BBC and 55 percent of CNN coverage was negative in tone. Only 14.81% news of BBC and 38.10% in CNN retained positive tones. But this negative tone can be seen as a positive feature as it informs the world about the worse conditions, which could help stimulate aid for the affected people.

## Theoretical Framework

This study has been conducted within the theoretical framework of Agenda Setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).



The theory emphasizes on how media select, display and transmit information and how these actions eventually shape public opinions and views. Many scholars have observed agenda-setting role of media in the context of natural disasters (Downey et al., 2012; Hoberman, 2011; Harbert, 2010; Birkland, 1997; Brunken, 2006).

### Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory says that the media has to be selective and choosy in reporting events. Research findings of McCombs and Shaw (1972) proposed that news media, in making these selections, retains substantial control on the substance and topics of public appeal. According to this theory, only those topics are worth thinking which are discoursed and discussed in the media.

McCombs and Shaw (1993, p. 65) stated: "Media may not only tell us what to think about, but also how to think about it, and consequently, what to think". Thus, media has the ability to construct reality and for this reason holds potential to influence a large population and public perception regarding selected issues.

### Agenda Setting: Attention, Prominence and Valence

McCombs (2005) states three dimensions to describe the usefulness of the news media in shaping the public agenda: attention, prominence and valence. While conducting content analysis of news reports and editorials of selected newspapers, current research considers these three dimensions of agenda setting. The research examines attention of the print media on issues related to the disaster through quantifying frequency of published news reports and editorials about famine. Prominence is observed through examining the placement and size of published news reports. Valence is examined to analyze the tone and direction of the news items i.e. favorable, unfavorable and neutral. Thus,

attention, prominence and valence of media are explored in this study by applying the agenda-setting theory.

In short, this study examines the issues that were selected and highlighted during pre and post periods of Tharparker famine. The study also explores the way in which media plans for the public to think about the famine with media's perspective.

## Methodology

Many social scientists and research scholars utilized the method of content analysis to examine the coverage of print media in the wake of natural disasters (Moges, 2013; Houston et al., 2012; Hoberman, 2011; Harbert, 2010; Liu, 2010; Olson et al., 2010; Barnes et al., 2008; Brunken, 2006). Likewise, content analysis of news reports and editorials of four selected newspapers was conducted in this study. English newspapers considered for the current study were daily *Dawn* and *The News*, while daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* and daily *Jang* were their *Urdu* counterparts. In this regard, the entire issue of newspapers was taken into account so that no piece of news report and editorial regarding selected disaster would be ignored. A total of 600 issues considering two English and two Urdu dailies were examined.

In order to analyze the content, five-month consistent coverage was purposively selected. Since famine is largely considered a predictable catastrophe, thus one month before the revelation of the famine was considered as pre-disaster phase and four months after the revelation of famine were considered as post-disaster phase. Rationale for the time division was to examine the behavior of media coverage in pre and post-famine periods.

In this regard, frequency, size, placement and tone of the news items were examined.

**Tone:** All news reports and editorials were coded as favorable, unfavorable or neutral. Tone was set with reference to relevant government(s) and disaster management institutions.

Size: Size of news reports was classified into three categories <sup>2</sup> i.e. ordinary, prominent and extraordinary. This aspect was measured through the method of counting the number of the columns of published news items.

Placement: Since front-page coverage is considered very significant that is why the front-page placement was especially scrutinized while coding and all the other pages, except editorial page, were considered as "other page".

### Pre-testing and Inter-coder reliability

In order to ensure the inter-coder reliability, a pilot study was conducted. In this exercise research tool was tested and coding categories were refined (see Table 1). In pre-testing exercise, 45 issues of all the four dailies were chosen and examined.

In order to measure the inter-coder reliability, Holsti's (1969) formula was exercised. Total inter-coder reliability count was .98. The reason behind the high level of reliability was the skilled coders who were well aware of the study. Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS version 21) was utilized to analyze the data and its validity.

Table 1  
Coding categories for data collection

Coding category	Description
Warning and Precautionary Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News related to the disaster risk assessment, cautions, threats, prediction for the expected disaster and its intensity, magnitude, and advisory information on approaching disaster.</li> <li>• Protective and pre-emptive measures,</li> </ul>

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<sup>2</sup>News reports that contained 1-2 columns were coded Ordinary  
 News reports that contained 3-5 columns were coded prominent  
 News reports that contained 6-8 columns were coded extra-ordinary

	<p>safety and preventive actions along with the news related to needs, requirements and prerequisites i.e. food, cloth, medical, shelters, household items, security and transportation, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerability reduction plans and activities i.e. evacuation strategy, readiness and emergency training.</li> </ul>
Rescue and Relief Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunt for disappeared or missing persons, lifesaving, supplying necessities i.e. food, shelter, transportation, medicine and medical facilities, and household items.</li> <li>• Relocation, repairing and restoring vital services.</li> </ul>
Destruction, Loss and Damages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human injuries and casualties, human sufferings, problems and hurdles faced by victims and public</li> <li>• Material loss, infrastructure damage, financial and agricultural loss</li> </ul>
Statements, Visits and Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announcements and speeches of important personalities or institutions i.e. political, judicial, military and civil society representatives, etc.</li> <li>• Visits of important state personalities to affected areas, along with foreign tours in wake of disaster for meetings, etc.</li> <li>• Assemblies and reunions of important personalities and/or institutions i.e. governmental, non-governmental, military, parliamentary and judicial.</li> </ul>
Accountability and Answerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liability, performance and efforts of relevant government and institution(s). It adds self or internal accountability i.e. by relevant government and institutions, and external accountability i.e. by political opponents, judiciary, other national and/or provincial government(s), civil society, and media.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protests and demonstrations of civil society, victims, etc., about the performance and activities of relevant government and institutions and/or officials.</li> </ul>
Information and Advices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All the news items related to warnings, alerts and precautionary measures of ongoing disaster along with informative or advisory analysis and surveys.</li> </ul>
Rebuilding and Restoration Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appealed, received and pledged funds, grants and donations.</li> <li>• Economic recovery plan i.e. granting loans, waive off in tax, fees, and/or debt etc.</li> <li>• Rebuilding &amp; restoration activities i.e. building of houses, schools, institutions, repairing of infrastructure, and psychological treatments.</li> </ul>
Policy Dialogue and Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The news items related to disaster risk management policy, disaster mitigation or prevention planning, establishment of institutions, formulation and/or implementation of laws, etc.</li> </ul>

## Findings and Discussion

News reports: Data gathered from the selected newspapers revealed that during these five months, all of the four newspapers published 243 news reports related to famine. Data showed that Urdu language newspapers gave more coverage comparatively i.e. 79%, whereas English language newspapers published 21% of the total news reports.

Among all the newspapers, daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* gave the highest coverage to the famine and 106(43.6%) news reports were published. Contrarily, daily *Dawn* published the lowest number of news and only 25(10.3%) news reports were published in five months. Daily *Jang* published 86(35.4%) reports and daily *The News* published 26 (10.7%) reports

(see Table 2).

Editorials: During the five months, all of the four selected newspapers published only 14 (100%) editorials: 7(50%) by each language media. Among all newspapers, *The News* published the highest number of editorials i.e. 5 (35.7%), whereas only 2 (14.3%) editorials were published by *Dawn*. Urdu newspapers *Jang* and *Nawa-i- Waqt* published four (28.6%) and three (21.4%) editorials, respectively (see Table 2).

Since frequency or number of news items is one of the criteria to measure the priority of coverage (Norris, 1995), it may be argued that Pakistani media did not prioritize the famine 2014 in terms of reports and editorials and that's why only 243 reports and 14 editorials were published in five-month period. Although famines are considered dramatic events and are also newsworthy, they are considered as least newsworthy among natural catastrophes (Eisensee & Stromberg, 2007). The study conducted by Eisensee and Stromberg (2007) disclosed that famine/drought got low coverage than earthquake. Moges (2013) also found in his research study that even Ethiopian media did not cover famines despite the fact that famine is a frequent phenomenon in Ethiopia and this area is continually affected by it. Mathews (2009) also confirmed that famine was given the lowest coverage despite the deaths of millions of people in Democratic Republic of Congo. Same results were shown in famine-related study conducted by Ogbimi (2012).

Table 2  
Frequency of news reports and editorials published in English and Urdu media

Newspapers	News reports	Editorials
Dawn	25 (10.3%)	2(14.3%)
The News	26 (10.7%)	5(35.7%)
Jang	86(35.4%)	4(28.6%)
Nawa i Waqt	106(43.6%)	3(21.4%)
Total	243(100%)	14(100.0%)

Insofar as the tone of the news reports is concerned, most of the news reports published during the famine were neutral in tone i.e. 109(44.9 %). However, 108 (44.4%) news reports were unfavorable and only 26(10.7%) favorable reports were published (see Table 3). As far as tone of editorials is concerned, out of 14 editorials, nine (64.3%) were unfavorable in tone whereas, three (21.4%) favorable and two (14.3%) were neutral (see Table 3). Results indicate that 79 (32.5%) news reports were placed on the front page; however, 164 (67.5%) were printed on the other pages of the newspapers. It was also observed that most of the news reports (76.1%) were of ordinary size whereas 20.6% prominent and 3.3% were extraordinary.

Results show that no coverage was given to the pre-famine phase and resultantly not a single news item was published in the first four weeks. In post-phase, the highest news coverage was given in the first two weeks and 73 (30.0%) and 89 (36.6%) news reports were published in the fifth and sixth weeks, respectively.

As far as content categories are concerned, data revealed that the highest amount of news reports was published regarding "statements, visits and meetings" and 57 (21.7%) news items were published. Subsequently, "accountability and answerability" category was given the highest coverage and 47 (19.3%) news reports were published (see Table 4).

The lowest coverage was given to "policy dialogue and debate" and "rebuilding and restoration activities" and one (0.4 %) and three (1.2%) news reports were published, respectively (see Table 4). Results report sharp decline in news coverage from eighth week onwards and resultantly only one news report was published in 12th week. Furthermore, no news item was published in the last nine weeks of the selected time period.

Table 3  
Tone-wise coverage of news reports and editorials

Newspapers		Tone			Total
		Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	
Dawn	News report	7(2.9%)	11(4.5%)	7(2.9%)	25(10.3%)
	Editorial	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	2(14.3%)	2(14.3%)
The News	News report	2(0.8%)	17(7.0%)	7(2.9%)	26(10.7%)
	Editorial	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	5(35.7%)	5(35.7%)
Jang	News report	9(3.7%)	43(17.7%)	34(14.0%)	86(35.4%)
	Editorial	3(21.4%)	0(0.0%)	1(7.1%)	4(26.6%)
Nawa-i-Waqt	News report	8(3.3%)	38(15.6%)	60(24.7%)	106(43.6%)
	Editorial	0(0.0%)	2(14.3%)	1(7.1%)	3(21.4%)
Total	News report	26(10.7%)	109(44.9%)	108(44.4%)	243(100.0%)
	Editorial	3(21.4%)	2(14.3%)	9(64.3%)	14(100.0%)

Table 4  
Content category-wise coverage of news reports

Content categories	Frequency	Percent
Rescue and Relief activities	44	18.1
Destruction, loss and damages	56	23.0
Statements, Visits, and Meetings	68	28.1
Accountability and Answerability	57	23.4
Information and Advices	10	4.2
Rebuilding and Restoration Activities	3	1.2
Policy Dialogue and Debate	1	.4
Others	4	1.6
Total	243	100.0

### Comparison of Urdu and English media coverage

In the comparison between English and Urdu newspapers, data indicates that Urdu language newspapers gave more coverage to the famine as compared to English language newspapers. Urdu dailies published 192 news reports, whereas English dailies published 51 news reports. Since frequency or number of news items is one of the criteria to measure the priority of coverage (Norris, 1995), it can be stated that Urdu media comparatively gave more



priority to the famine and published higher numbers of news reports. Contrarily, English media gave less priority and less coverage to the famine (see Table 2). However, the situation was different in the case of editorials. Both English and Urdu dailies published equal amount of editorials i.e. seven editorials by each language media.

As far as tone of news reports is concerned, English media remained neutral most of the time and 28 (54.9%) of its news reports were neutral. Urdu newspapers, however, remained unfavorable most of the time and 94 (49%) of their total news reports were unfavorable. English dailies published 14(27.5%) unfavorable and 9 (17.6%) favorable news reports. Urdu dailies published 81(42.2%) neutral and 17(8.9%) favorable reports (see Tables 5 and 6).

It is supposed that different media organizations' contents are divergent in terms of tone (King, 2008). Tone determines the slant of media towards certain issues or events. Data revealed that Urdu and English media maintained different agenda in terms of tone. English newspapers published more neutral news reports. However, Urdu newspapers comparatively maintained unfavorable tone, which shows that Urdu newspapers were more critical towards disaster management authorities, government and its activities. It remained focused on highlighting the weaknesses and negligence on part of the authorities concerned. Nevertheless, English media remained focused on accounting the famine related activities as it were without analyzing and favoring or disfavoring the activities.

In the comparison between tone of news reports and editorials, data revealed that editorial tone of Urdu and English media was different as compared to the tone they maintained in the news reports. In case of the editorials, English media remained unfavorable and all the editorials, seven in total, were unfavorable in tone. However, Urdu media published two unfavorable editorials. Furthermore, three editorials were favorable and two were neutral in tone. Since editorials are helpful in shaping the opinion (Van Dijk,

1993) and ideology of readers (Hall, 1975) and influence the target audience (Le, 2003; Gill & Whedbee, 1997). It can be said that editorially English media remained fully critical and presented the weaknesses and negligence of famine-related aspects to readers. But Urdu media that comparatively remained critical while reporting, remained favorable in editorials and exposed positive aspects of famine-related accomplishments.

Results of various studies showed that most of the time media provided neutral and negative coverage to natural calamities. Comparatively less favorable and positive media coverage is given to disasters. Brunken (2006) found that media gave more neutral coverage to the natural disaster but when it conversed about government response, negative coverage and blame game was apparent. In another study regarding disaster coverage, Moges (2013) concluded that privately owned media mostly gave neutral coverage to the disaster. However, state-owned media would be more favorable towards government. Same result was endorsed in the research study conducted by Liu (2010). He noted more favorable tone of Chinese media towards government and its policies.

Table 5  
Tone of content categories in English language media

Categories	Tone			Total
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	
Rescue and Relief activities	4(7.8%)	4(7.8%)	0 (0.0%)	8(15.7%)
Destruction, loss and damages	0(0.0%)	7(13.7%)	0(0.0%)	7(13.7%)
Statements, visits, and meetings	0(0.0%)	12(23.6%)	4(7.8%)	16(31.4%)
Accountability and answerability	2(3.9%)	1(2.0%)	9(17.6%)	12(23.5%)
Information and advices	0(0.0%)	4(7.8%)	1(2.0%)	5(9.8%)
Policy and Debate	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)

Rebuilding and Restoration Activities	3(5.9%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	3(5.9%)
Other	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Total news reports	9(17.6%)	28(54.9%)	14(27.5%)	51(100.0)

Table 6

Tone of content categories in Urdu language media

Categories	Tone			Total
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	
Rescue and Relief activities	1(0.5%)	21(10.9%)	14(7.3%)	36(18.8%)
Destruction, loss and damages	3(1.6%)	23(12.0%)	14(7.3%)	40(20.8%)
Statements, Visits, and Meetings	3(1.6%)	24(12.5%)	25(13.0%)	52(27.1%)
Accountability and Answerability	8(4.2%)	1(0.5%)	36(18.8%)	45(23.4%)
Information and Advices	2(1.0%)	9(4.7%)	3(1.6%)	14(7.3%)
Policy Dialogue and Debate	0(0.0%)	1(0.5%)	0(0.0%)	1(0.5%)
Rebuilding and Restoration activities	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Others	0(0.0%)	2(1.0%)	2(1.0%)	4(2.1%)
Total	17(8.9%)	81(42.2%)	94(49.0%)	192(100.0%)

Placement and Size: It was learnt that Urdu newspapers placed 60(31.2%) of their total news reports on the front page and 132(68.8%) on the other pages. English newspapers printed 19 (37.3%) news reports on the front page and 32 (62.7%) on the other pages (see Table 7).

Table 7

Placement-wise coverage by Urdu and English newspapers

Placement	Urdu Newspapers	English Newspapers
Front page	60(31.2%)	19(37.3%)
Other page	132(68.8%)	32(62.7%)
Total	192(100%)	51(100%)

As far as size of the news reports is concerned, data shows that Urdu newspapers published 164 (85.4%) of their total coverage as ordinary news. However, 22 (11.5%) prominent and 6 (3.1%) extraordinary news reports were published. English newspapers most of the time published prominent news reports i.e. 28(54.9%). Besides, 21 (41.2%) ordinary and two (3.9%) extraordinary news reports were published (see Table 8).

Table 8  
Size-wise coverage by Urdu and English language media

Size	Urdu Newspapers	English Newspapers
Ordinary	164(85.4%)	21(41.2%)
Prominent	22(11.5%)	28(54.9%)
Extra ordinary	6(3.1%)	2(3.9%)
Total	192(100.0%)	51(100%)

It is pertinent to mention that front-page coverage is considered to be the most important (Andrews & Caren, 2010) to evaluate prominence of some issue (Wanta, 1997; Gordon & Heath, 1981). Prominence indicates the significance any media organization attributes to the certain issue (Clayman & Reisner, 1998) or ideology because prominence of news item increases the likelihood of gaining wide target audience (Clayman & Reisner 1998). Likewise, size is also one of the elements that determine prominence (Vliegenthart et al., 2005; Ader, 1995; Shoemaker, 1984). Additionally, size of a news item is considered important while examining agenda-setting practice (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) and priority of the media coverage (Norris, 1995).

Keeping in view the results presented in Tables 7 and 8, it can be stated that although English language media published less number of news reports as compared to Urdu media, it gave more prominence to the famine 2014 in terms of placement and size. As compared to the Urdu language media, it published more prominent and extraordinary news reports and placed more news on front pages.

Content Categories: Results revealed that in both language media, the highest amount of news reports were published regarding “statements, visits, and meetings”. In this regard, Urdu and English newspapers published 16(31.4%) and 52(27.1%) news reports, respectively. English media published these reports in more neutral way whereas Urdu media remained more unfavorable in tone (see Tables 5 and 6).

Next category that was provided the highest coverage in both languages was “accountability and answerability”. English and Urdu media published 12(23.5%) and 45(23.4%) news reports regarding “accountability and answerability” issue while covering this issue, tone of both language media remained unfavorable most of the time (see Tables 5 and 6). Results of various earlier studies also show that usually media place “accountability” and “responsibility” frames more recurrently (Hoberman, 2011; Barnes et al., 2008) in news reports and editorials.

In English media, the lowest amount of news reports was published regarding “rebuilding and restoration activities” i.e. three (5.9%) and “information and advices” i.e. five (9.8%). The situation was different in the case of Urdu newspapers in which the lowest coverage was given to “information and advices” and “policy dialogue and debate”. In this regard, 14(7.3%) news reports were published about “information and advices” and one (0.5%) news report was published regarding “policy dialogue and debate” issue. Data disclosed that Urdu media did not publish any news report regarding “rebuilding and restoration”. In the second place, not a single news report was published regarding “policy dialogue and debate” in English media.

It is said that media influences the policymaking and policymakers depend on media to be thought and seen as good disaster managers (Barnes et al., 2008). Contrarily, findings of this study show that both language media in Pakistan overlooked this aspect. Subsequently, “policy dialogue and debate” received almost no attention. In five

months, Urdu media published one news report and English media printed not even a single report. It may be reasoned that in the times of disasters, media remained focused on the apparent devastation and happenings instead of the future policy despite the fact that media could bring disaster-related issues to policy agenda (Scheufele, 1999) and can support disaster management by accelerating debates about disaster preparedness and planning (Space, 2015).

In post-disaster phase, recovery is important to restore the life of victims and it must be discoursed in media. But in case of the Tharparker famine, this important aspect was ignored in Pakistani media. In Urdu media, not even a single report was published regarding "Rebuilding and restoration activities". On the other hand, English media published only three news reports.

Pre-famine period: As far as media coverage of pre-famine period is concerned, data revealed that both language media did not publish any news item in first four weeks (pre-famine period) despite the fact that famine is a predictable calamity and retains pre-disaster phase. Various previous research studies concluded that media overlooked pre-disaster stage and provided frequent coverage to post-disaster phase. It is said that most of time mitigation and preparation phase is badly ignored in media (Barnes et al., 2008; Quarantelli, 1991) and response phase is comparatively given more coverage during natural disasters (Houston et al. 2012; Liu, 2009; Barnes et al., 2008).

People need information in both pre and post phases of a natural disaster (Space 2015; Iqbal et al., 2014; Kreps, 1979). Warning announcement is particularly important in pre-disaster phase (Nayak, 2012). In-fact, providing information is an important part of disaster reduction and mitigation. Results of this study indicate that Pakistani media did not provide any information or warnings in pre-famine phase and subsequently played no role in halting the upcoming disaster and its losses.

Post-famine period and decline in coverage: It was noticed that both language dailies published the highest amount of news reports in the first and second week of post-famine period. English newspapers published 21(41.2%) and 14 (27.5%) news reports, whereas Urdu newspapers published 52(27.1%) and 75(39.1%) news reports in the first and second week, respectively. Table 8 shows that there was a gradual decline in coverage after fourth week in Urdu newspapers while coverage of English newspapers declined after second week. Urdu media did not publish any news report in the last nine weeks of selected time period. English media published only one news item in the eighth week and after that no news was published in the last eight weeks of selected time period (see Table 9).

Results of various previous research studies indicate that frequency of disaster coverage declines gradually (Rausch, 2011; Olson et al., 2010; Kuttschreuter & Guttelling, 2009), particularly national coverage drops over time (Miles & Morse, 2007). The reason is that mass media reports natural disasters for shorter periods of time than other issues (Houston et al., 2012). Eisensee and Stromberg (2007) also observed that "disaster fatigue" causes decline in media coverage. They argued that media becomes fatigued or bored if they have to cover a disaster shortly after another disaster.

Table 9  
Week-wise coverage by Urdu and English language media

Post- famine period	Urdu Newspapers	English Newspapers
1 <sup>st</sup> week	52(27.1%)	21(41.1%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> week	75(39.1%)	14(27.4%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	24(12.5%)	1(2.0%)
4 <sup>th</sup> week	26(13.4%)	5(9.8%)
5 <sup>th</sup> week	3(1.6%)	5(9.8%)
6 <sup>th</sup> week	8(4.2%)	3(5.9%)
7 <sup>th</sup> week	4(2.1%)	1(2.0%)
8 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> week	0(0.0%)	1(2.0%)

Total	192(100.0%)	51(100.0%)
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## Conclusion

The research aimed at examining the coverage of English and Urdu language media of Pakistan in the wake of Tharparker Famine 2014. This examination was conducted within the framework of agenda-setting theory and its three dimensions i.e. attention, prominence and valence.

As far as attention is concerned, findings show that Pakistani media provided minor coverage to the famine. In five months, all of the four newspapers published only 243 news reports and 14 editorials. It means that media did not give much attention to the issue. Comparatively, Urdu media gave more attention and published higher number of news reports as compared to the English media. Interestingly, number of editorials was equal in both media and seven editorials were published on famine by each language media.

In analyzing prominence, it was noted that although Urdu media gave more coverage to the Tharparker famine 2014 in terms of frequency as compared to the English media. Yet English media gave prominence to the issue in terms of size and placement as compared to the Urdu language media. Out of its total coverage, English media placed higher amount of news reports on the "front page" and published higher amount of "prominent" and "extraordinary" news reports regarding the famine.

For analyzing valence, third dimension of agenda-setting, tone of media contents was scrutinized. It was noted that Urdu media was unfavorable most of the time and it remained critical towards government, concerned authorities and their functioning. Contrarily, English media maintained neutral tone most of the time and remained focused on events as they happened. Data shows that both English and Urdu language media published lower number of news reports in favorable tone. Editorially, both language media adopted reverse behavior in terms of tone. English media that was neutral in reporting was critical editorially. On the



other hand, Urdu media that reported the famine in critical way remained appreciative towards government and concerned authorities in editorials.

It is relevant to mention here that pre-disaster phase which is considered important to mitigate and control the aftereffects of catastrophe was fully ignored. No attention was paid to providing coverage to pre-famine period and subsequently, neither the English nor Urdu language media published any news item in the selected period of pre-famine phase. Both language media provided most of the coverage to "statements, visits and meetings" and "accountability and answerability" but ignored certain aspects that were much more important in famine management. In this regard, "policy dialogue and debate", "rebuilding and restoration activities" and "information advices" were given less attention. In post-disaster phase, there was a gradual decline in coverage of famine in both language media.

Although role of media is very crucial while reporting disasters and calamities (Iqbal et al., 2014) but journalists are unprepared to report and cover natural disasters (Lowrey et al., 2007). Therefore, local journalists are often criticized for ignoring community's preparation aspects and readiness of emergency efforts (Walters, Wilkins & Walter, 1989) and assessments in preparedness phase (Liu, 2010). Furthermore, mass media organizations' planning regarding disaster preparedness is normally of poor quality and is seldom implemented at the time of disaster (Quarantelli, 1991). It is therefore suggested that instead of focusing on response phase only, Pakistan's media should equally focus on the preparedness phase and mitigation aspects of disaster. It is also suggested that policy and recovery related issues should especially be discoursed in the media so that long-term benefits can be achieved regarding disaster mitigation and management.

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