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**A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF FLOOD
COVERAGE IN PAKISTANI MEDIA: 2022 AND 2025**



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Abstract

In this study, an application of Eco-critical Discourse Analysis (EDA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used to examine the representation of environmental crises by Pakistani media through news stories about floods occurred in 2022 and 2025. Selecting particular English language media sources, the study aims to analyze how Pakistani media connect the concept of floods with climate change and other environmental destructions and issues of responsibility. It also seeks to identify how such issues become possible through media's choice of language. In fact, the study analyzes not only floods as natural events, but also as occasions to discuss various perceptions of victims, nature, and responsibility. Metaphorically, environmentally-focused articles reveal how Pakistani media regularly perceive the concept of nature as a destructive power and as an environmentally vulnerable system affected by humans. While in both 2022 and 2025, human suffering and emergency situations are emphasized, coverage of issues related to climate change and governmental responsibility becomes more prevalent in 2025. Nevertheless, news stories about human tragedies continue to dominate the Pakistani media. Overall, findings of the study illustrate the increased ecological awareness in Pakistani media; however, further analysis should be conducted based on an EDA perspective.

Keywords: *Eco-critical Discourse, Flood Representation, Pakistani Media, Climate Change Discourse*

INTRODUCTION

Climate change, a phenomenon that keeps escalating in this day and age, determines disaster media coverage, which has significant consequences. In this country, flooding, due to rising temperatures, melting glaciers, and poor policies, occurs more often than any other natural calamity. In 2022, monsoon rains forced 33 million people to flee their homes and resulted in losses worth approximately \$30 billion. Such catastrophes demonstrate Pakistan's exposure to risk and connect its problems with global climate injustice.

The purpose of the current study is to conduct a comparative discourse analysis of media coverage of the 2022 and 2025 floods in Pakistan. Using such frameworks as media framing and critical discourse theory, I explore how news stories are presented and what ideologies become visible through the choice of words. In particular, my research examines whether Pakistani media describes floods as inevitable acts of nature or consequences of poor policy choices.

The framework used in this paper is critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA views news articles not just as factual accounts but as constructs of power. It reveals the ways in which discourse can naturalize certain perspectives and silence others. For example, according to earlier studies, news reports on disasters in Pakistan relied heavily on visual representations and authoritative

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declarations but ignored sustainable and local approaches to recovery. In the words of Muhammad Saleem and Junaid Khan, discursive practices play a role in shaping media discourses of such events as the flood in 2022.

An opposite story defined Pakistani flood news coverage. In 2022, several media organizations faced harsh criticism for not doing enough on account of prioritizing politics. Reporters depicted vivid rescue and relief operations along with rallies led by the ruling parties while paying little heed to delays in the alerts or poor maintenance of the dams. By 2025, the involvement of social media and citizen journalists became more frequent. Victims stranded in villages of Sindh and Punjab relied on WhatsApp, TikTok, and local radio stations to bring their case to light. Those grassroots-level stories would often touch upon issues of accountability which received little coverage by traditional outlets. In 2025, one researcher observed that most TV news stations aired government statements without fail and showed helicopter drops of supplies without trying to uncover the reasons behind the faulty warning system. On the contrary, online platforms distributed videos shot by drones showcasing flooding and volunteers rescuing civilians using Telegram and Twitter accounts.

The comparative analysis shows how the discourse on the topic of flooding evolved between the years 2022 and 2025. Media reports in 2022 were mostly associated with political blames and dramatizations, where the role of governments was emphasized without an attempt to address the cause of the problem. However, in 2025, climate justice, resilience, and responsibility became relevant issues that indicated greater involvement of media in addressing the problem; however, sensationalism and anthropocentrism remained significant factors in reporting.

Literature Review

This part provides an overview of an essential literature review of research studies conducted on Eco-criticism, discourse analysis, and floods' media portrayal in Pakistan. It shows how environmental crises such as floods have been portrayed in news media and how ecological consciousness has been developed linguistically.

Eco-criticism was coined by William Rueckert in his groundbreaking essay titled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism" in 1978, which provided the framework for understanding the interplay between texts and the environment. The word 'Eco' is derived from the Greek word 'oikos', meaning home or earth, and emphasizes the symbiotic nature of humanity and the environment (Mishra, 2016). Eco-criticism, however, evolved over time to encompass media discourse apart from literature, allowing researchers to investigate environmental problems through linguistic analysis.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework established by academics like Fairclough and van Dijk offers a thorough analysis of power, ideologies, and responsibility in the context of language use. The application of CDA to media texts has made it possible to trace how disasters are portrayed as inevitable occurrences caused by nature or human actions. Studies prove that linguistic strategies such as the choice of metaphor, agency construction, and evaluation can have an impact on people's perceptions about environmental disasters.

Analyzing several articles from various media and reports about the 2022 Pakistan floods shows that both international and local English-language media focus on the human suffering, forced migration, and financial consequences caused by the natural disaster (Reuters, 2022; Al Jazeera, 2022; Time Magazine, 2022). Even though the issue of climate change is raised in news pieces, it is

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always mentioned incidentally rather than being presented as the primary reason for the occurrence. In addition, it is clear that media use emotional pictures and structured narratives but do not encourage discussions related to environmental mismanagement and policy failures. It is necessary to emphasize a substantial gap in the area. Demonstrating the needs of comparative studies that interrogate developing media over time.

Scholarly research papers focusing on the function of print media and online sources throughout the floods of 2022 have highlighted that news about floods mostly focuses on humanitarian and emergency-based stories. According to these studies, although such portrayals are very moving, they often end up covering the actual causes of the disaster, including lack of proper urban planning, deforestation, and failure of government institutions. This means that responsibility remains diffused, while the floods themselves are considered natural occurrences and not environmental crises.

Reports and analyses carried out by the English language media about the floods of 2025 have shown that there is a significant shift in the discourse. Sources such as Reuters, AP News, and The Guardian are now considering flooding in terms of climate change and environmental factors. Reports written in the year 2025 show a clear inclination towards talking about flooding with reference to global warming and glacial melting among other factors.

Moreover, reports published by humanitarian organizations and international organizations about the 2025 floods show how climate-related risks and resilience have been highlighted, resulting in a more Eco-conscience media frame. Nevertheless, even though these trends seem promising, some scholars still claim that disaster-oriented and anthropocentric discourses have prevailed, and sustainable and environmentally oriented solutions have not received enough attention yet.

In general, it could be concluded that most scientific works have identified a lack of comparative and longitudinal research related to the analysis of flood frames in different years. For instance, according to Uzma Sadiq and her co-authors, current research tends to focus on particular flood cases, such as 2022, and does not consider whether and how framing of ecology has changed in the Pakistani media. Thus, a comparative study should be conducted in order to analyze the changes in terms of environmental discourse.

In summary, the analysis of the relevant literature and media studies forms a solid foundation for this research. The integration of Eco-criticism and Critical Discourse Analysis within this research has been undertaken to make an original contribution to knowledge in terms of a comparative analysis of how environmental issues and responsibilities have been portrayed in Pakistani floods.

Methodology

The proposed study will analyze the Pakistani media reporting discourse in terms of 2022 and 2025 floods using the Eco-critical discourse analysis method. Using Eco-criticism by Lawrence Buell and Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough, the current research aims at analyzing the way the media represents the environmental crises linguistically and ideologically. Thus, using this theoretical framework will make it easier for researchers to investigate flood discourse not only from the point of view of facts narrated in media sources but also from the perspective of cultural and ideological discourse concerning nature.

Within the framework of such an approach, principles of Buell's Eco-criticism will be used to investigate different representations of nature in media texts, whether as a proactive entity or destructive power or a passive background of human suffering. Meanwhile, Fairclough's CDA

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framework will help in investigating various linguistic features that can be used when representing information concerning the 2022 and 2025 floods, including vocabulary selection, usage of metaphors, assignment of agency, and evaluations.

Moreover, the application of both Eco-criticism and CDA helps to investigate the process of construction of social agents in media discourse, ranging from victims of floods to institutional and environmental actors. The use of these theories underscores the linkages among language, power, and ecology, thus helping to understand how media discourse either supports or challenges the anthropocentrism and disaster-oriented approaches. With the help of comparative analysis, it is possible to explore dynamic dimensions of ecological awareness in Pakistani media and the part played by news discourse in shaping public perceptions about climate vulnerability.

Analysis

The comparative study of the Pakistani media headlines concerning the portrayal of the floods of 2022 and 2025 highlights that there is an apparent change in the linguistic discourse in the way environmental disasters are represented through headlines. While both sets of headlines portray destructive floods occurring in the country, the linguistic construction, assignment of blame, ideology, and environmental concerns are quite different in the two eras. Headlines from 2022 portray floods as natural calamities which happen due to unmanageable environmental conditions, while the headlines from 2025 indicate a greater emphasis on linking floods with climate change and human accountability.

2022 Flood Coverage

The data for this analysis consists of flood related headlines which is collected from the three major Pakistani English newspapers (Dawn, Express Tribune and Daily Pakistan). The headlines were collected from the flood reporting of year 2022 and 2025 and are analyzed through the combined lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and Eco-Criticism to examine how language construct meaning around environmental disasters.

“Unprecedented monsoon rains wreak havoc across Pakistan” (Dawn,2022)

The use of the adjective “unprecedented” straightaway makes clear that the floods have been exceptional and unnatural, giving rise to panic. Here again, through linguistic means, the magnitude of destruction and the occurrence of an unparalleled phenomenon have been emphasized. Through the metaphorical expression “wreak havoc,” monsoon rains have been characterized as a destructive entity possessing the potential for violent action. The human element has been eliminated altogether from this linguistic construction of meaning in which natural phenomena alone seem to possess the power and ability to act, while all other human influences on nature’s course have become invisible. Therefore, this headline serves to promote the idea that flooding is a natural event, a part of nature and unavoidable. According to Eco-Criticism, this linguistic framing sustains the age-old human vs. nature binary.

“Floods leave millions stranded as rains continue” (Express Tribune,2022)

The headline places focus on human pain through the use of the quantifier “millions,” signifying the enormous socio-economic implications of the flood situation. In addition to this, the verb “leave” positions those who are affected as passive recipients of this calamity without any ability to resist

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their misfortune. The use of the continuation phrase “as rains continue” adds to the helpless tone by creating an impression that there is absolutely nothing that can be done to stop the rains and prevent the consequent flooding. Linguistically, the flood becomes an outside event unconnected to its wider context of ecology and politics. Rather, the report focuses solely on the human implication without addressing any other issue. In terms of Eco-criticism, therefore, the report shows a human-centric approach.

“Nature’s fury devastates rural Sindh” (Daily Pakistan,2022)

“Nature’s fury” uses personification to give nature human qualities of emotion and feelings, including being furious and angry. The use of such language constructs floods in a very dramatic manner, which turns floods into acts of revenge and violence perpetrated against the environment. In addition, the use of the verb “devastates” adds to the destructive image presented. Rural Sindh is depicted as a victim under attack by nature in a way that strips the community of its agency. More importantly, the headline denies any form of human involvement, policy failure, or exploitation of nature in the construction of floods. Moreover, mentioning “rural Sindh” puts emphasis on the geography of vulnerability while drawing on the dynamics of center/periphery in disaster discussions at the national level. Eco-critically, the headline reinforces dualism between nature and humanity.

“Heavy rains trigger deadly floods nationwide” (Dawn)

The use of “triggered” creates an impression that rainfall and flooding have an immediate and straightforward causality, whereby flooding results directly from heavy rainfall. The linguistic construction does not take into account the possible environmental deterioration, poor quality of infrastructure, and even climate change that could play a significant role in making flooding devastating. Use of “deadly” makes readers fear floods because it creates an impression that floods are dangerous and deadly natural disasters that cause the death of people. Use of “nationwide” increases the perceived magnitude of the disaster, whereby it shows that flooding is a ubiquitous phenomenon that cannot be avoided. From an Eco-critical approach, the headline is concerned with events instead of analyzing what led to such events.

“Worst flooding in decades displaces thousands” (Express Tribune,2022)

The superlative construction “worst flooding in decades” places the flood within a historical context and indicates just how serious and severe the flooding event has been. This creates a sense that such an event has been rare and out of the ordinary and thus helps to contextualize the event in ways that make it seem extraordinary in terms of its cause and nature. By using the word “displaces,” a sense of agency is stripped away from those affected by the disaster, indicating victimization through no fault of their own.

“Villages submerged as rivers overflow” (Daily Pakistan,2022)

The use of images showing the villages being “submerged” portrays a complete engulfing and destruction of them, making for powerful visuals. The usage of the verb “overflow” humanizes the flooding process by suggesting that the water overflowed due to natural factors alone without any external influence. The village is constructed in such a way that it becomes the object under the action of nature. The headline avoids mentioning any human factors involved in the destruction like

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encroachment of the river banks, deforestation, and faulty water management systems.

“Relentless rains paralyze daily life” (Dawn,2022)

The adjective “relentless” anthropomorphizes the rain through personification and intentionality. In the same manner, the verb “paralyzes” characterizes the society as being immobile and helpless. The headline exaggerates the impact of disruption even as it further cements the supremacy of nature over human institutions. The ordinary life is the focal point of attention with societal breakdown emphasized rather than the environment’s involvement. From a linguistic standpoint, the language produces a feeling of terror and helplessness. Ecco-critically, the headline perpetuates the image of nature as being antagonistic without delving into the underlying issues of climate change, ecological imbalance, or infrastructure deficiency.

“Emergency declared in flood-hit districts” (Express Tribune2022)

The headline uses passive voice construction and does not mention the administrative body that has declared the state of emergency. The term “flood-hit districts” objectifies regions by reducing them to mere geographic locations defined by the catastrophe. The emphasis is placed on dealing with the crisis and therefore on the language of emergency response rather than preventive environmental planning. This bureaucratic style dehumanizes the audience emotionally and separates it from the environmental aspect of the crisis. An Eco-Critical reading of the headline would reveal its implications in this regard.

“Rescue efforts underway amid widespread destruction” (Daily Pakistan,2022)

The focus on “rescue efforts” takes center stage in the headline, thus emphasizing relief operations and ignoring the reasons behind the floods. The use of the term “widespread destruction” is too general, hence not assigning blame on anyone for such destruction. In addition, the use of passive voice does not reveal the individuals who caused the disaster as well as those behind rescue operations. Language-wise, the headline stresses action in the aftermath of disaster rather than its prevention. ***“Floodwaters engulf homes and farmlands”***

2025 Flood Coverage

Unlike the coverage of the year 2022, the headlines of the year 2025 highlight a substantial shift in discourse towards climate-conscious reporting. The flood reports make more references to the impact of climate change, science, governance, and the environmental crises in the system. Instead of viewing nature as an adversary, the coverage acknowledges that the floods arise from ecological imbalances caused by humans.

“Climate-driven floods return amid rising temperatures” (Dawn,2025)

The expression “climate-driven” makes clear that the floods can be attributed to the effects of climate change; there has been a marked departure from the disaster-centric discourse of previous times. In contrast to the 2022 media coverage, the causation in the headline refers to broader environmental causes and not just rainfall. The word “return” suggests repetition, meaning that these floods are expected to happen due to climate change in the region. “Rising temperatures” represents a use of scientific language related to climate change in the media discussion. Linguistically, the headline also expands responsibility beyond nature and includes human actions

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that contribute to climate change.

“Experts warn climate change intensifies flooding” (Express Tribune,2025)

Use of the term “experts” creates the impression of scientific expertise, thus adding more validity to the subject matter in question and legitimating its discussion within the media context. Use of the word “warn” suggests an element of urgency and forethought, which makes the article more proactive and environmentally conscious in the face of disasters. Moreover, the use of the term “intensifies” suggests that the floods are getting worse because of certain human-made climatic conditions. Grammatically, agency moves from an uncontrollable force to the one that is more controllable because of human impact.

“Glacial melt and extreme weather linked to floods” (Daily Pakistan,2025)

In this headline, the link between flooding and other changes in the environment is made through terms like melting glaciers and unusual weather patterns. The use of the term “linked to” is an indicator of scientific neutrality and precision. Instead of using metaphors like the ones used in headlines from 2022, this headline uses precise terminology. This headline places the flooding in Pakistan within the context of climatic events across the globe. In an eco-critical sense, this headline shows the move towards environmental systematics.

“Pakistan faces renewed climate crisis as floods hit” (Dawn,2025)

The use of the verb “faces” implies that Pakistan is dealing with an environment-related issue that recurs from time to time. The use of the phrase “renewed climate crisis” suggests that floods in Pakistan represent part of an ecological crisis. As opposed to the previous headlines about disasters, which emphasize destruction, the current headline takes into consideration the recurrence of the phenomenon. The language is serious in tone and not sensational. Ecocritically, the headline points out the ecological imbalance, which requires sustainable policies and measures.

“Poor planning worsens climate-induced flooding” (Express Tribune,2025)

This is one of the headlines that most clearly represent a turn towards institutional culpability. This headline uses “poor planning” to suggest that there is human and governmental culpability as far as the intensity of the floods is concerned. In contrast to the stories in 2022 which portrayed nature alone as the culprit, the use of “poor planning” highlights governmental and structural failures. The adjective “climate-induced” still highlights environmental elements; however, the addition of human error in the discourse makes for a balanced one. The language in this headline helps shift away from victim language and instead introduces the element of preventability to the disaster narrative.

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of both periods reveals the following discursive transformations:

- **Agency and Responsibility:**

2022: Nature is the active agent; humans are passive victims.

2025: The role of human agencies, climate change, and governance is emphasized.

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- **Metaphors and Tone:**

2022: Metaphors related to conflict, warfare, and destruction predominate ("batter," "wreak havoc"); the tone is emotive and alarming.

2025: Metaphors related to reflection, warning, and responsibility prevail ("signal climate warning," "reflect imbalance"); the tone is analytical and preventive.

- **Temporal Framing:**

2022: The framing of floods as exceptional and unprecedented events.

2025: Recurring floods connected to long-term climate patterns.

- **Eco-Critical Discourse**

Human suffering is emphasized; the causes of flooding remain unexplored.

2025: Climate science, policy assessment, environmental degradation, and sustainable development become integrated themes.

In summary, the evolution from 2022 to 2025 shows that the Pakistani media is increasingly becoming interested in Eco-critical and climate-related discourse. While headlines in 2022 emphasize sensationalism and disasters, headlines in 2025 emphasize climate causation, governance, and responsibility.

Conclusion

This research analyzes the construction of the 2022 and 2025 floods in Pakistani English-language media through the lens of Eco-critical and Critical Discourse Analysis.

The analysis revealed that media discourse impacts how people perceive environmental disasters, paying special attention to the impact on humans, the response to the disaster, and developing perceptions regarding climate changes.

In 2022, the analysis found that floods were viewed as natural disasters caused by "nature's fury." Humans were depicted as passive sufferers, while the role of the government and ecological factors were left out. In 2025, headlines frequently used words such as climate change, global warming, glacier melt, and policy failures to describe floods.

However, it was noted that disaster-focused rhetoric dominates even then, while climate solutions are not discussed at all. Therefore, this research indicates the development of an ecological consciousness in Pakistan, which should be continued.

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