



Suicide Reporting: A Comparative Study of News Framing in Local and National Newspapers

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Today's leading causes of death include suicide. Every suicide is a trauma that affects the people left behind for a very long time, having an influence on families, communities, and even countries. Using content analysis, the study was constructed. To learn how suicide news is framed in local and national publications, a study was done using the framing theory. Data was gathered between April 1 and September 30 2020 from news articles in two newspapers, Daily Chand and Daily Express. For data collection, a coding sheet was created. In total, 47 news stories about the topic were discovered by the researcher to have been thematically structured over the course of six months. Coding sheets were developed to collect data. The researcher found total 47 news stories related to the issue during six months were framed in thematic framing. The researcher finds out that in thematic framing 29 stories were framed from Daily Express while 18 from Daily Chand. The results demonstrate that the National newspaper gives mostly coverage to suicide on city or national/international page while local newspaper mostly prefers to give space to suicide on the back page of the newspaper. In most of the cases poison was used by the victim as a tool to end their life. The overall result shows that Suicide ratio is higher among the young generation and unmarried people.

Keywords: Suicide, Daily Chand, Daily Express, Thematic, Framing



Introduction

Suicide is one of major cause of death around the globe. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) suicide is taking the lives of about 800000 people in a year. In the year 2016, it was the second most leading cause of death among the people from 15 to 29 years of age. Suicide occurs in both developed and under developed countries. About 79 percent of the suicide occurs in low- or middle-income countries in 2016. About 20 percent of the suicide cases can be done through self-poisoning in which most of the people belongs to rural areas of under developing countries. Some of the other common methods of committing suicide are firearms and hanging.

Suicide can be defined as ending the life on oneself. Suicide can often done by the person because of pain or suffering from a huge problem or tension. While, suicide attempt can be defined as when a person tries to commit suicide but cannot achieve the goal then it is known as suicide attempt (Division, 2019). Suicide thoughts occur when someone feels that it's difficult to survive in the overwhelming conditions. Some common conditions are financial problems, ending of relations, death or loved one and debilitating illness. Unemployment, rejection, and sexual abuse are also main reasons for a person to think about suicide.(Jenifer, 2020). There are some of the common causes by which a person commits suicide. One of them is depression as it gives a person loss of hope and emotional pain. The high rate of suicide rather than depression is academic failure, financial problems, losing job, loss of social status and ending of relationship or friendship (Shcimelpfening. 2020).

According to daily dawn report 1287 people including 586 female committed suicide in the last five years in Sindh province of Pakistan. Data was collected by Sindh police in order to know the suicide cases in the province. The study concluded that 681 Muslims and 606 Hindus committed suicide from January 2014 to June 2019. 702 people's age were 21 to 40 years. Aim of the study was to know about the factors which are increasing the rate of suicide in Sindh. 646 people including 356 female ended their life MirpurKhas division in which 324 were having 21 to 40 years of age in which 197 were Muslims while 449 were Hindus. 299 persons having 116 females from Hyderabad division ended their life in which 191 victims were having age between 21 to 40 years. 187 of them were Muslims and 112 were Hindus. A total of 181 people committed suicide in Shaheed Benairabad area in which 75 were female. Among the deceased 139 were Muslims and 42 were Hindus. The number of people between 21 to 40 years of age were 91 in the area. 107 people including 25 females committed suicide in Karachi in which 68 people had age of 21 to 40 years. The study found that different methods were used by the victims to end their life including jumping into a well, poison, hanging, jumping from high places, gunshot and use of sharp knife or blade. Some of the major reasons of suicide are



unemployment, poverty, marital issues, domestic violence, falling socio economic status, psychological issues and addiction of drugs. The study concluded that civil society, religious scholars, lady health visitors, family welfare workers; NGO's and mass awareness campaigns can help to control suicides cases (dawn.com, 2020).

In Pakistan, there is no official data about suicide cases. In south Asian Islamic countries, the rate of suicide cases as well as suicide attempts are illegal, religiously and socially condemned. In the recent studies the ratio of suicide cases has been increased. In this study, police data from the Sindh province were studied to provide the trends of suicide from 1985 to 1999. 2568 suicide cases were reported in the period in which 71 percent were men and 39 percent were women. In the year 1987, there were only 90 reported cases while the maximum numbers of suicide cases were reported in the year 1999. The most common method for suicide was organophosphates a poison while hanging was on the second number (Khan & Hyder, 2006).

Literature Review

The number of suicide cases among students were increased during the last few years while the official statistics about suicide is still unknown. Unnatural cause of death is known as suicide. Aim of the study was to examine qualitative analysis of the students who committed suicide around the country. 68 cases were studied from 11 famous e-newspapers of Pakistan from the year 2010 to 2017. The study found that suicide rate in male was 76.5 percent and 23.5 percent in females. In which 22.1 percent of the students were from universities, 23.5 percent from colleges while 42.6 percent from schools. Committers used 33.8 percent hanging, 27.9 percent gunshot, poison 13.2 percent, jump from heights 5.9 percent, burn 4.4percent and 1.5 percent wrist cutting methods were used. Most suicide cases were reported from Punjab 52.9 percent, 23.6 percent Sindh and 8.9 percent in Khyber PaktoonKhwa. Common reasons of suicide were failure in examinations 23.6 percent, 11.8percent scolded by parents, failure in love 8.8 percent, harsh attitude of the teachers and domestic problems 5.9percent, un-satisfaction of life 4.4 percent, 2.9 percent ragging and poverty 1.9 percent. Due to lack of proper reporting and socio cultural problems the number of suicide cases are increased. To control the epidemiology of suicide in the students of Pakistan, a standard system of recording should be made to prevent suicide (Shakeel. 2019). In the United States, suicide accounts for the second-highest number of deaths among adolescents and imitation plays a significant role in it. As Identification Theory suggests, this study found that imitation suicides increase among adolescents with the media coverage of adolescent suicide or of local celebrity suicide (Lee, 2019).

Mahesar (2018) said that aim of the paper was to know about the coverage given be a Sindhi language newspaper Daily Kawish. Result shows that 38 news related to suicide was reported in



the month of June. 13 news stories were related about the attempts of the suicide while 25 was about suicide. The study revealed that males committed suicide was reported 17 times and female who committed suicide was given coverage 21 times. The study also explored that 17 news reports about suicide did not identify about the age of the people committing suicide. 14 news stories showed that age between 21 to 40 years while 7 stories depicted the age under 20 years. 21 news stories about suicide had printed in the inner pages of the newspapers. Suicide reported on agriculture and business page were 9 in number while 8 news stories was printed in the second page of the newspaper. By hanging 19 news stories were printed. Poison as a technique for committing suicide had shown 14 times while other methods of suicide were shown in 5 stories. Domestic conflicts as a cause of suicide were shown in 22 news stories, unidentified was 8, mental disorder had shown in 5 stories while 3 news stories showed other issues and problems as a cause behind the suicide acts.

Jenkin, et al (2019) aid that reporting on suicides as a public health issue and that as individual suicide cases are often mixed together, which results in weakening the debate around suicides. A study in this respect was carried out by researchers in New Zealand, who analyzed news items from newspapers with high circulation in the country. Majority of the stakeholders identified by the researchers supported reporting of suicides as a public health issue. Fong, et all (2019) found that according to World Health Organization the way media giving coverage to suicide reporting is increasing the number of suicide cases around the world. Aim of the study is to know about how media is framing suicide reports in Malaysian English newspaper The Star from the year 2013 to 2017. Result of the study revealed that the most important frame found to cover suicide case is the method of suicide through which the victim took his life in the newspaper. Authorities as a source were found in the number of stories during reporting.

Media, (2019) said that the rate of suicide is higher in nurses than the general public. The researcher found that in the United States female nurse suicide rate is much higher than for female in general. The result shows that 11.9 out of 100000 female nurses committed suicide as compared to 7.5 out of 100000 women in general population. The study also conclude that the ratio of male nurses were more higher with the rate of 39.8 out of 100000 as compared to 28.2 out of 100000 men in general.

Jetter, (2019) found that even suicide terrorist attacks attract more media coverage than non-suicide attacks. This paper found empirical evidence of it after analyzing 60,341 terror attacks in 189 countries from 1972 to 2012. The evidence suggested that the press cover suicide terror attacks in an unusual fashion. Karimipour, (2016) explored that about 12 sports persons have committed suicide from 2000 to 2012. A number of stories have been published about their suicides in mainstream media. Aim of the study was to dig out how media covered the stories



about the sports men. Framing analysis of 176 stories from The New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Sports Illustrated, Bleacher Report and ESPN. The result of the study revealed that mostly thematic framing were used by the media outlets about the specific issue.

Significance of the Study

Because the media is consider as a mirror of society, this study was done to determine the connection between print media and suicide-related topics. It will advance our understanding of studies into suicide, national policy, media ethics, etc. It's crucial to investigate the country's suicide triggers and make recommendations to the government on how to resolve the problem in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Suicide is a global public health issue. One million people per year commit suicide. It is an intricate issue having biological, psychological, and social components. Depression is the main factor that causes behaviour that is suicidal. The media, a powerful tool for communication, will be crucial in promoting action to prevent suicide attempts. Through the employment of distinctive media frames, the media have the ability to incite action.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent local newspaper of Pakistan use thematic framing when giving space to suicide?

RQ2: Is there any difference between the local and national newspapers use of thematic framing when reporting suicide?

Objectives

- To observe the pattern of suicide news reporting in the national and local newspapers.

Framing Theory

Framing theory is second level agenda setting theory as both theories discussed how media mold the attention of the masses from an important issue to what they want to project and it is used to know media effects. Frame can be defined as how media organized or structured information and how to show it to the audience. Media changes the mind of the people by framing the news in such way that audience thinks in the way which media wants. This changing perception is known as second level of agenda setting (Bajracharya 2018).

Frames are explanation of events that include organization and individualized elements. They package associated ideas to help seek attention, understanding, storage and reclamation of



information. Frames evolve out of collective efforts to make sense of problem and to help people "locate, perceive, identity and label their experiences (Goffman,1974). Frames are cognitive shell that is used to conduct both the representation and perception of reality. Frame provide context while context informs action, behavior and understanding. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) suggest that frames provide contextual cues that guide how new information can be understand and react by the audience (Goffman1974).

Thematic Framing

Thematic framing is such type of framing in which issues are presented and portrayed about their systemic causes, consequences and trends. Thematic framing include analyses of the experts, reports on research help to prevent the disease, intervention and treatment, mortality rate discussion social indicators and risk factors and presentation of community-level and policy-based medicines about public health issues (Iyengar,1991).

Research Methodology

A method which is used by the researchers to conduct their studies is known as research methodology. The term methodology as it is an approach in which research problems are solved systematically (Mishra & Alok, 2017). Content analysis method was used as a research methodology to study the print media contents on the suicide reporting. The term word research methodology as all the techniques and procedures which is used to identify the issue or problem, selection, collection, processing and analyzing the information about the problem is known as research methodology (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

It is a framework of research methods and techniques selected by a researcher. It allows the researchers to do research in such a way which is suitable for their subject (Bhat 2020). In this research a quantitative research design was applied and data was collected through quantitative content analysis. Each story was coded with different codes according to the objectives and research questions as newspaper name, date, title, length, placement, frame and finally the tone of the news story. The frame in the articles is studied on whether it uses primarily a thematic frame or not.

The news stories were measure quantitatively as months, news story length, age of the suicide attempter, pages, and marital status of the suicide attempter. Data was analyzed by descriptive statistics and presented in frequency distribution. The researcher also analyzed data qualitatively as dateline, tools and tactics for the attempts, legal responsibilities, placement and thematic framing. Data were evaluated and presented in frequency distribution by descriptive statistics.



The universe for the study was print media, the researcher collected data from the two newspapers including Daily Express Urdu language newspaper and local newspaper in Swat Daily Chand. The researchers who collect data from all the population is known as census. While, most of the researchers draw sample from the population which is known as sampling and present the whole population. One of the main reason of sampling is to save resources and time (Babbie, 2010).

Population is a complete collection of objects, entities and institutions with same characteristics which are concern of the researcher. Same features of the groups differentiate them form other objects, entities and institutions. Alternate word of the term population is universe (Rafeedalie, 2020). The population of the study was two selected newspapers Daily Chand Swat and Daily Express from April 1st to September 30th 2020 about suicide news coverage framing.

Parameters

In this research newspaper means Daily Express and Daily Chand. Month means the timeframe from where the data has collected which is from April to September. Year means the year from which the data was collected. It is 2020. Thematic framing means that type of framing in which the story is framed on a wider context Date means from 1st date to 31st. Dateline refers to the story from where it is reported. Age means age of the person committed suicide. Gender means the person is male or female. Column means in how much columns the story is published in the newspaper. In this study column means from 1 column to 8 columns. Placement means where is story is placed whether it is published on the front page, back page, national/international page and city page. Tools mean which tool is used by the person to commit suicide. Status means whether the person is single, married or divorced.

Thematic Framing Parameters

Parameter for thematic framing would be domestic violence, unemployment, poison, shoot oneself through gun, hanging from fan, unknown reasons, inflation, FIR and investigation.

Data Analysis

Table 1 Total Stories Published in both Newspapers Daily Express and Daily Chand from April 1st to September 30th 2020

	F	%
Daily Express	29	61.7
Daily Chand	18	38.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 1 shows the number of stories published in both the newspapers. It shows that 61.7% thematic stories had published in Daily Express while 38.3% stories published in Daily Chand.

Table 2 Stories Published from April to September

	F	%
April	3	6.4
May	7	14.9
June	12	25.5
July	12	25.5
August	8	17.0
September	5	10.6
Total	47	100.0

Table 2 reveals the number of stories published in every month. It shows that 6.4% stories had published in the month of April. In May 14.9% stories were published. 25.5% of the stories in both June and July. In the month of August 17% of the stories reading thematic framing had published while 10.6% stories published in September.

Table 3 Dateline of the Story of Different Cities

	F	%
Okara	9	19.1
Lahore	6	12.8
Sahiwal	3	6.4
Kasur	4	8.5
Patuki	1	2.1
Khwazakhel	2	4.3
a		
Bahrain	2	4.3
Matta	5	10.6
Kabal	4	8.5
Others	11	23.4
Total	47	100.0

Table 3 reveals the dateline of the stories which shows that 19S.1% of the suicide incidents occur in Okara. 12.8% suicides occur in Lahore. In Sahiwal 6.4% of the incidents has reported. In Kasur district 8.5% of the suicide is reported while 2.1% suicide stories were reported from Patuki. 4.3% of the stories had reported from both Khwazakhela and Bahrain area. From Matta 10.6% of the stories related to suicide is reported while 8.5% stories have been reported from Kabal. 23.4% of the suicide stories are reported from other areas of the country.

Table 4 Age of Suicide Committers

	F	%
15-20	15	31.9
21-25	8	17.0
26-30	4	8.5
31-35	3	6.4
36-40	1	2.1
more than 40	6	12.8
Unknown	10	21.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 4 explores the age of the people who committed suicide. It shows that 31.9% of the committer's age is from 15 to 20 years. Age between 21 to 25 years, the percentage of the committers is 17%. 8.5% of the reported suicide stories age is from 26 to 30 years. While , 6.4% of the suicide victim has an age 31 to 35 years. From 36 to 40 years of age the number of suicide committers is 2.1%. 12.8% of the reported suicide cases age is more than 40 years. While, 21.3% of the committers is not specified in the news story.

Table 5 Gender of Committers

	F	%
Male	30	63.8
Female	17	36.2
Total	47	100.0

Table 5 shows the gender of the people who committed suicide. It shows that 63.8% of the committers of suicide were male while 36.2% of the masses who committed suicide were female.

Table 6 Column Wise Coverage

	F	%
1	17	36.2
2	29	61.7
3	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 6 illustrates column wise stores published about suicide stories. It shows that 36.2% of the stories published one column. Two column stories printed in the newspapers had 61.3% while 2.1% of the stories published in three column stories.

Table 7 Page Wise Placement of Suicide in Daily Express and Daily Chand

	F	%
Front page	3	6.4
Back page	19	40.4
city page	15	31.9
national/internation al	8	17.0
Others	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 7 explores the page wise placement of the stories about suicide. In which, 6.4% of the suicide stories had published in front page. Stories printed on the back side of the newspaper are 40.4% while 31.9% of the stories regarding suicide printed on city page of the newspaper. In national or international page 17% stories and 4.3% stories printed in other pages of the newspaper about suicide.

Table 8 Tools Used to Commit Suicide

	F	%
Shoot by gun	13	27.7
Poison	18	38.3
Hanging	14	29.8
Jump into water	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 8 found the tool from which the person took their life. 27.7% of the committers take their life by shooting themselves by gun. 38.3% of the people who committed suicide took their life taking poison. Hanging method used to take life by the person is 29.3%. While, 4.3% of the committers has taken life by jumping into water.

Table 9 Status of the Suicide Committers

	F	%
Single	23	48.9
Married	14	29.8
Divorced	1	2.1
Unspecified	9	19.2
Total	47	100.0

Table 9 reveals the status of the committers who committed suicide. In which 48.9% of the committers are single, married suicide committers are 29.8%. 2.1% of the status of the suicide committer is divorced while 19.2% of the committers of the suicide are unspecified.

Table 10 Does the Story Places the Problems in Wider Context?

	F	%
Domestic violence	27	57.4
Unemployment	2	4.3
Others	2	4.3
Unknown reasons	16	34.0
Total	47	100.0

Table 10 explores that the story shows the problem in wider context. It shows that 57.4% of the committers committed suicide because of domestic violence. 4.3% each committed suicide due

to lack of unemployment and other issues. While, 34% of the committers committed suicide because of unknown reasons as reported in newspapers.

Table 11 Is Legal Reforms Listed in the Story

	F	%
FIR	17	36.2
Hospital	2	4.3
Both	28	59.6
Total	47	100.0

Table 11 shows that whether legal reforms have done in the story or not. It shows that 36.2% of the stories, FIR has been reported and investigation is started by the police. In 4.3% stories, the victim has been sent to hospital. While, in 59.6% stories both FIR and hospital reforms have reported in the stories.

Table 12 Similar Incidents Happened Before

	F	%
Yes	45	95.7
No	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 12 explores that same incident happened before or not. It shows, 95.7% of the incidents have happened before and 4.3% of the incidents did not happen before the suicide reported.

Table 13 Does the Story Comes Against Women Based on Sex or Gender are Normalized or Common Place

	F	%
Yes	33	70.2
No	14	29.8
Total	47	100.0

Table 13 shows that the suicide committed story suggest that women-based sex or gender are normalized in the place or not. It shows 70.2% of the stories are against women-based sex or gender in the specific area while 29.8% stories are against the statement.

Table 14 Is there Common Method Used by the Victim

	F	%
Yes	46	97.9
No	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0



Table 14 illustrates the method used by the victim of suicide. In which, 97.9% of the reported stories shows same method used by the victim while 2.1% of the stories the suicide committer did not use the same method.

Discussions

Results of the study revealed that 61.7% suicide news coverage is given by Daily Express to thematic framing and 38.3% of the studies published in Daily Chand in thematic framing. It shows that Daily Express has given more coverage to thematic framing as compared to Daily Chand. Results of the study disclosed that higher number of suicide news stories are published in the month of June and July which is 25.5% in each month as printed in thematic framing. The results also found that the lower number of cases reported in both the newspapers is 6.4% in the month of April. It shows that in the summer season the number of suicide cases are more as compared to the winter season. Result of the study also found that most of the suicide related news printed in both the newspaper according to dateline is 19.1% from the Okara district of Punjab in thematic framing. The result also examined that only 2.1% stories were file from the Patuki which is the least number in the due timeframe. Result of the study explored that the high number of suicide ratio is found in the age between 15 to 20 years which is 31.9%. One the other hand the result also disclosed the lowest rate of suicide between the age of 36 to 40 years which is only 2.1% which are framed as thematic framing. It shows that the young teenagers have the high tendency to commit suicide as compared to other age's people.

Result of the study also revealed that in covering suicide related news in thematic framing the higher ratio is found in male which is 63.8% while in the same framing the lower number of suicide cases found against female as 36.2%. It shows that the higher number of suicide committed by male. Result of the study examined that 61.7% of the suicide news stories are placed as two column stories while only 2.1% of the suicide news stories are placed as 3 column story. Which means that print media is mostly giving 2 column space to suicide news stories. Result of the study found that 40.4% of the suicide news is printed in back page in thematic framing and 6.4% in front page. It shows that most of the stories about suicide is printed in the back page of the newspaper. Result of the study also exposed that 38.3% of the suicide committers in thematic framing used to take poison to end their life. While, 4.3% of the committers take their life by jumping into water. It shows that the most common method used by the suicide committer is poison. Result of the study explored that in thematic framing suicide stories 48.9% of the committers are single and 2.1% are divorced. It shows that the ratio of suicide is found more the unmarried people. Result of the study revealed that the most common problem face by the suicide committers are domestic violence which was found in 57.4% of the thematic framing stories. The study also explored that only 4.3% of the committer are because of



unemployment. It shows that one of the major problem which is leading the masses to suicide is domestic violence.

Result of the study unveiled that legal reforms FIR and hospital have been done when the suicide case happened. It found that both FIR and hospital reforms have been done when such kind of cases occur which is 59.6%. While in 4.3% cases no FIR was reported only the victim is send to the hospital for postmortem. Result of the study disclosed that in thematic framing 95.7% of the suicide cases are found same 4.3% of the cases were not same. It shows that victim has learnt about the method of suicide from media or person. Result of the study found that 70.2% of the stories about suicide were found that suicide is normal up to some extent in the area. While in 29.8% of the stories suicide was not found normal in the specific area. It shows that in some areas of the county the rate of suicide is too high. Result of the study revealed that in thematic framing stories about suicide same method or tool is used by the suicide committer is 97.9%. While, only 2.1% of the victim of suicide did not follow the same method. It shows that specific method, tool or tactic is used by the suicide committer to take their life.

Conclusion

Aim of the study was to know about how the local and national newspapers of the country are framing suicide. In this research, thematic framing about suicide was studied. Data was collected from the newspapers of six months, April 1st to September 30th 2020. It was found that both local and national newspapers are giving thematic framing to suicide related news. It is concluded that a total of 47 number of suicide news stories were found and framed in thematic framing in which 29 (61.7%) were printed in Daily Express and 18 (38.3%) news stories related to suicide was found in Daily Chand.

It is also concluded that the ratio of suicide is found more in male as compared to female as well as in unmarried and married people respectively. It is also concluded that most of the time same method is used by the victim to end their life. Most of the suicide stories were in national newspaper were placed in city or national or international pages while in local newspaper most of the stories were placed in the back page of the newspaper. It is concluded that in thematic framing most of the suicide cases occur due to domestic violence. It is also concluded that most of the suicide committers took their life by taking poison.



Recommendations

- It recommended that suicide is not solution of the problem. Problems should be solved peacefully.
- It is recommended that media should not show the method of suicide as it may help a person to commit suicide.
- It is also recommended that media do not sensationalize the suicide.
- It is recommended that media organizations do not publish the photographs of the suicide victims.

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