

Annex III
Final Media Monitoring Report

Society for

Alternative **media**
and Research

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Executive Summary

The monitoring study is aimed at gauging the coverage trends in the mainstream and regional print and electronic media, especially on the issues which are critical to people's political, social and economic rights.

A total of 25 issues were selected for monitoring on the front-back and the editorial pages of the mainstream Urdu, English and vernacular Pushto and Sindhi newspapers and the main bulletin and the talk shows on mainstream and regional TV channels. This monitoring was carried out for nine months from February to November 2019.

The issues selected for monitoring were classified into two categories – people-focused and media-focused.

The ten people-focused issues were water, climate change, food security, gender, education/students, labor and peasants, art, culture and literature, science and discovery, and agriculture. The above mentioned ten issues are critical to every aspect of people's collective political, social and economic lives in Pakistan. They may come across as apolitical but they are very much political and are critical to Pakistan's future as a stable and democratic country.

Therefore these issues for the sake this media monitoring have been called People Focused.

On the other hand, in order to gauge on which issues the print and electronic media were focusing, we selected 15 issues: Politics/Political parties/Statements, Government, Economy, Foreign Affairs / International, Parliament, Judiciary/Court Cases, Terrorism, Crime, Military, Entertainment, Sports, Advertisement, Energy, Weather, and Other (Specify).

These issues have been called Media Focused.

Findings

There is little space for the people-focused issues on the front and back pages of the Urdu, English, Sindhi and Pushto newspapers. During the nine months, less than 6% news on the front-back pages in the mainstream English newspapers were on the people's issues – slightly more on the back (5.8%) than on the front page (5%). The people-focused issues only make it to the front and back pages when there is a crisis. For example, when there is a spike in the number of polio cases or there is a locusts attack. Similarly, if a report portrays dismal situation of education in Pakistan, it gets a mention on the front or the back page. News regarding gender issues also made it to the front and back pages when there is a controversy such as the Aurat March.

The front and back pages of the mainstream Urdu newspapers carry a large number of news items. But their focus on the people's issues is scant. Only 2.81% of the news on the front pages of the Urdu dailies were on the people's issues. However, on the back page there was more coverage for the issues identified for this study. Out of the total 17554 news items, 1549 or 8.8% were on the people issues. The pattern of not giving space to issues which are critical to the people's lives holds on the front and back pages of the in regional dailies. On the front pages of the regional newspapers, only 4.8% or 470 of the total 9306 news items focused on the issues of health, education, gender, art, culture, climate change, water, etc. There was little more space on the back page as 8.27% or 850 news items out of the total 10274 were about the ten issues.

However focus on the people's issues slightly increases on the editorial pages. During the nine months monitoring, 10% of the editorials in the three English dailies – 278 out of the total 2753 – were on the people's issues. Almost one-fifth of the articles (19.6%) were on the people's issues. The three Urdu dailies discussed the people's issues in 278 (10%) editorials out of the total 2753

during the nine months. Similarly 12% or 476 articles out of the total 3958 took up issues regarding health, education, gender, food security, culture, language, art, agriculture, etc. Surprisingly, there was high number of editorials on the people's issues in the Pushto and Sindhi newspapers. Editorials (43.2%) were on the people's issues. However, it seems that the regional dailies, especially those in Pushto, were facing lack of content. A number of editorials were found to be repeated. This may have contributed to higher percentage of people's issues discussed in the editorials. Similarly, nearly half of the articles (47.7) were on the people's issues. Here again it was found that the articles were repeated multiple times, especially in the Pushto dailies.

The readers of the newspapers want to see their issues discussed in the print. The people-focused issues were most discussed in the letters to the editor section on the editorial pages in the Urdu, English, Sindhi and Pushto newspapers. Out of the total 2950 letters to the editors in the three English dailies, 749 (25.3%) were regarding the issues of health, education, gender, food security, agriculture, culture, language, and science and discovery, etc. Out of the total 987 letters to the editor in the Urdu newspapers, 187 or 18.9% were regarding the ten selected issues. The letters to the editor section was missing in the Pushto newspapers while it was irregular in the Sindhi newspapers. However the ten issues identified for this have been given space in the letters to the editor section – 90.6% of the letters were about the issues of health, education, water, agriculture, food security, etc.

In the main bulletins and the main talk shows of the day of the mainstream TV channels, there seems to be no airtime for the issues which are critical to the people. In the mainstream TV channels, out of the total 22115 news items included in the main bulletin, only 1570 or 7.09% were regarding the people's issues. In minutes this translates into only 6.91% of the airtime of the news bulletin and the talk shows on the people's issues. Similarly, on the Sindhi and Pushto TV channels, out of the 18931 news items, only 1500 or 7.91% were about the people's issues. However, the situation is slightly better in terms of airtime allocation with 11.74% of the airtime during the bulletins and talk shows given to the people's issues.

On the electronic media also, the focus is on the crisis reporting. The activities and gatherings regarding the Women's Day only make it to the main bulletin and the talk show when there is controversy such as around the slogan *mera jism meri marzi*. The reporting on the TV channels is marked by what is happening at the present now, with little or no background information and context of an issue.

The talk shows discussed the people-focused issues occasionally and superficially. Importantly none of the monitored talk shows exclusively discussed any of the people-focused identified for this monitoring. Additionally a curious trend is that the host may announce to discuss a people-focused issue during the show but would not take it up.

The hosts of the talk shows would take up an issue concerning the people only when it makes it to the daily news agenda. Mostly the controversy forces the talk shows to discuss a people-focused issue. It can be the Aurat March, cases of typhoid in Hyderabad, domestic torture, cheating practices in exams in Sindh, deaths of infants in Sindh, Supreme Court proceedings on fee structure of private educational institutions, loss of crops due to untimely rains in March, negative propaganda about the effects of anti-polio drops on children, increase in the prices of medicines, etc.

Methodology

The objective of this monitoring study was to gauge the coverage trends in the mainstream and regional print and electronic media, especially on the issues which are critical to people's political, social and economic rights.

A total of 25 issues were selected for monitoring on the front-back and the editorial pages of the mainstream Urdu, English and vernacular Pushto and Sindhi newspapers and the main bulletin and the talk show on mainstream and regional TV channels. This monitoring was carried out for nine months from February to November 2019.

The issues selected for monitoring were classified into two categories – people-focused and media-focused.

The ten people-focused issues were water, climate change, food security, gender, education/students, labor and peasants, art, culture and literature, science and discovery, and agriculture. The above mentioned ten issues are critical to every aspect of people's collective political, social and economic lives in Pakistan. They may come across as apolitical but they are very much political and are critical to Pakistan's future as a stable and democratic country.

Therefore these issues for the sake this media monitoring have been called People Focused.

On the other hand, in order to gauge on which issues the print and electronic media were focusing, we selected 15 issues: Politics/Political parties/Statements, Government, Economy, Foreign Affairs / International, Parliament, Judiciary/Court Cases, Terrorism, Crime, Military, Entertainment, Sports, Advertisement, Energy, Weather, and Other (Specify).

These issues have been called Media Focused.

While monitoring the media, we wanted to see if the people-focused selected issues get any coverage on the front and back and editorial pages in the print media and the main bulletins and talk shows of the electronic media.

Therefore for the print media five days a week, front/back and editorial pages have been monitored. Overall three mainstream Urdu and English newspapers – Jang, Express and Nawa-e-Waqt and The News, Dawn and The Tribune – were monitored. From the regional print media, Pushto and Sindhi language newspapers were monitored. Similarly we selected the main news bulletins (9-10pm) of TV channels –mainstream and regional (Pushto and Sindhi). Additionally from the selected TV channels, one talk show was also selected for monitoring. In order to monitor more channels, the TV channels and their talk shows were replaced every month.

It is important to highlight that no monitoring was carried out on the two weekly offs and national holidays.

A total of 15 mainstream and regional TV channels, three national Urdu dailies, three English dailies and two Sindhi and two Pushto newspapers were monitored from February to November 2019.

Table 1: TV Channels and Newspapers monitored

TV Channels	
GEO	Aap News
Dunya	Express News
ARY	Hum News
AAJ	Neo
SAMAA	Abb Takk
92 News	Khyber News
Dawn News	KTN
Mashriq	
Newspapers	
Dawn	Nawa-e-Waat
The News	Kawaish
Express Tribune	Khabroona
Dunya	Awami Awaz
Express	

Team

A team of six monitors, headed by a supervisor, were deployed for this monitoring. For the print media, the monitors were provided hard copies of the newspapers. While for the electronic media, recorded bulletins and talk shows were provided to the monitors.

Limitations

Availability of the regional newspapers remained a challenged. It is important to highlight that in his age of instant communication and internet, the websites of the regional newspapers remain for most of the time dysfunctional. The Pushto daily, Khabroona, remained available for only eight days during February.

This monitoring was done on the working days. The newspapers or the TV bulletins or the talk shows on the weekly holidays and the national holidays were not monitored. Therefore it is possible that the issues identified as the people-focused got the space or the air time on weekly offs and national holidays.

Why these ten issues?

As stated above the ten issues have been selected keeping in view their critical importance in the governance of the country. In a way these issues can be termed as the issues of the people, which it seems have been unable to find space in the ever expanding news media in Pakistan. A brief look at these issues highlights the fact that there is a need for making them priority urgently.

Today Pakistan has become a water-deficit country, with a per person annual availability of water at 1.017 cubic meters.¹ Pakistan is one of the ten countries which have been most affected by climate change from 1997 to 2016.²

According to globalfoodsecurityportal.org, “despite the growth in production of staple crops, Pakistan has experienced a sharp decline in food security in recent years due to a combination of militant activity, natural disaster, and economic instability.”

On the World Economic Forum’s gender index 2018, Pakistan is the second worst country in terms of gender parity.³ Education in Pakistan presents a confused picture, torn between a class-based system trying to find a balance between “traditional and modern education” and with a “clear separation of religious and secular educational content”.⁴

Over the years the labor and peasants have been conspicuous by their absence from the mainstream media. Their voice and their issues seem to be no longer a story for the news media. Art, culture and literature, science and discovery have also taken a back seat in terms of getting media coverage in Pakistan.

¹ Ebrahim, Zofeen. Is Pakistan running out of fresh water? Dawn, March 30, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1398499>]

² Global Climate Risk Index 2018. Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2016 and 1997 to 2016, German Watch, [available at <https://germanwatch.org/sites/germanwatch.org/files/publication/20432.pdf>]

³ Ahmed, Amin. Pakistan among worst performers on gender equality: WEF, Dawn, December 19, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1452284>]

⁴ Hoodbhoy, Pervez. Why attempts to reform Pakistani education fail, Dawn, October 27, 2018 [available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1441704>]

News Media in Pakistan

News media in Pakistan has expanded exponentially since 2002. As the country opened its airwaves to private electronic media, journalism in Pakistan underwent a sea change. Private TV channels and social media became the new face of media of Pakistan.

Today the country has 91 privately-owned television channels. Of them 35 are news channels. Pakistan has also witnessed a mushroom growth of private radio stations. The country has more than 130 private FM radio stations. Despite the growth of private electronic media in Pakistan, state media (Pakistan Television and Radio Pakistan) has an edge in outreach to every part of the country.

Pakistan has 246 big and small Urdu dailies, 53 English dailies, 63 monthly magazines (English, Urdu, Sindhi, and Balochi), 17 weeklies, and three fortnightlies, according to All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS). Noticeably Urdu-language dailies are covering almost every part of the country, overshadowing the regional press.

A significant development is the number of regional private TV channels operating in the provinces, especially in Sindhi language. In the interior Sindh, there is a vibrant and strong regional press in the form of 23 dailies in Sindhi language.

This vibrant print media has now witnessed the emergence of news and entertainment private TV channels in Sindhi language.

Moreover Karachi is the hub of print and electronic media. Head offices of the most of the print and electronic media are in Karachi. Almost all the Urdu, English and vernacular newspapers have offices in Pakistan's financial metropolitan. This makes Sindh a journalistic center of Pakistan in terms of the number of media outlets and the content generation – both regional and national.

In Balochistan, the regional press is weak. The national newspapers, Urdu and English, are the main source of information. There are local newspapers with limited outreach. Similarly the mainstream private TV channels are followed in Balochistan, with PTV Bolan catering to the news and entertainment in Balochi language.

Findings

English Dailies

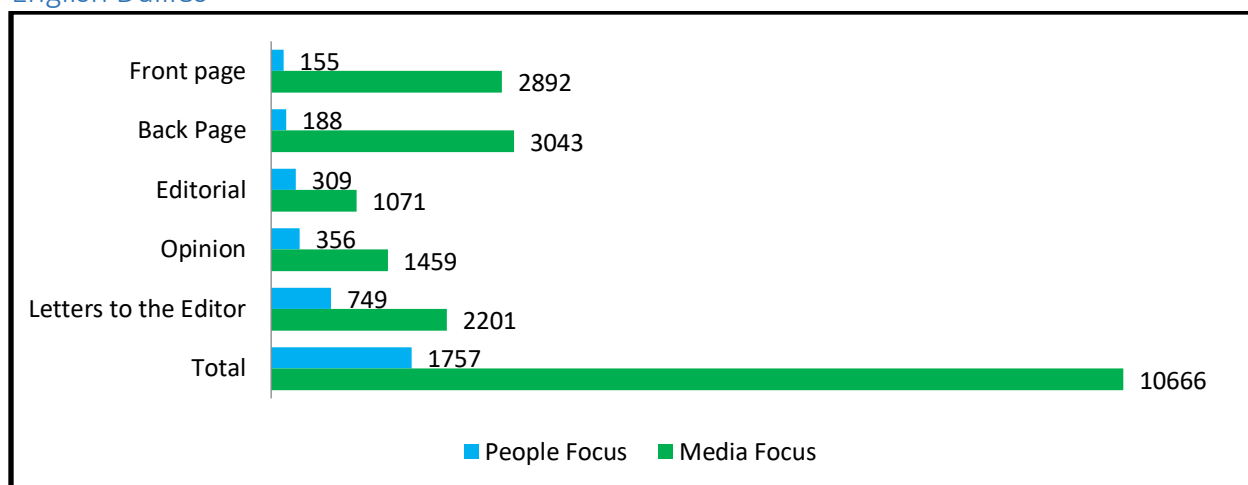


Figure 1: English Newspapers

Overall out of the 12423 news items, editorials, articles and the letters to the editor on the front-back and the editorial pages, 1757 or 14.1% were regarding the people's issues.

Evidently the mainstream English newspapers in Pakistan do not give coverage to the ten issues identified for this research study on the front and back pages. During the nine months, less than 6% news on the front-back pages in the mainstream English newspapers were on the people's issues – slightly more on the back (5.8%) than on the front page (5%). The people-focused issues only make it to the front and back pages when there is a crisis. The news regarding health and agriculture remain on the inner pages. However when there is a spike in the number of polio cases or there is a locusts attack, they get space on the front and back pages. Similarly if there is a report which portrays dismal situation of education in Pakistan, it gets a mention on the front or the back page. News regarding gender issues also made it to the front and back pages when there is a controversy such as the Aurat March.

Additionally, there is also a complete lack of investigative stories on issues such as health, education, gender, agriculture, food security, etc.

However the editorial pages of the mainstream English newspapers are giving more coverage to the ten issues than on the front and back pages. During the nine months monitoring, 10% of the editorials in the three English – 278 out of the total 2753 – were on the people's issues. Daily Dawn regularly gives space to the issues of health, gender, food security, climate change, agriculture, education, etc. in its editorials.

Similarly, articles on the people issues identified for this study have also been given space on the editorial pages in the English newspapers. Almost one-fifth of the articles (19.6%) were on the people's issues. There is a regular weekly column on the issues of education on Dawn's editorial pages.

However, it is clear that the readers of the English newspapers want to see the people's issues discussed. Out of the total 2950 letters to the editors, 749 (25.3%) were regarding the issues of health, education, gender, food security, agriculture, culture, language, and science and discovery.

Urdu Dailies

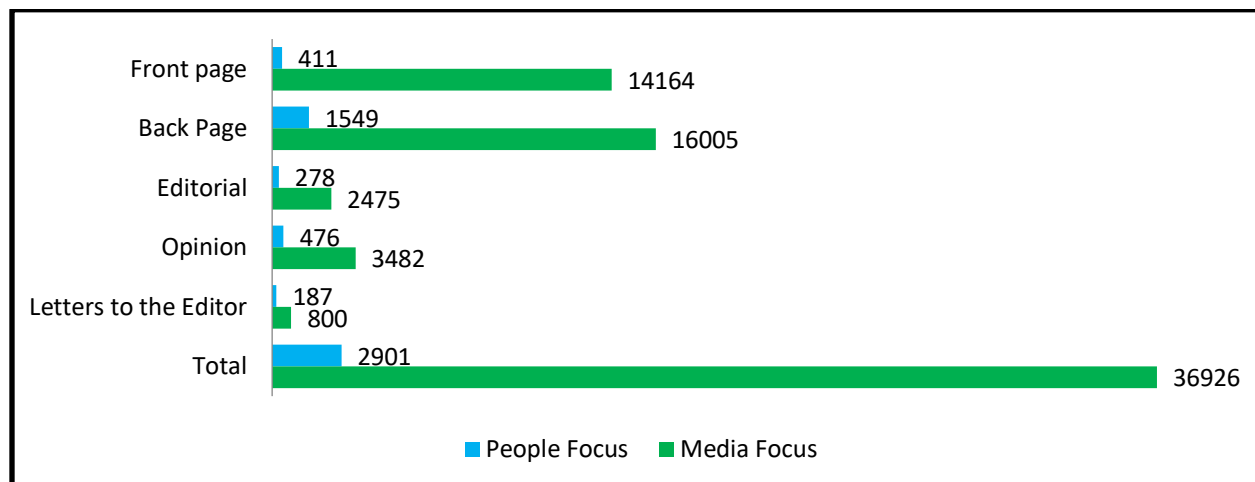


Figure 2: Urdu Newspapers

The front and back pages of the mainstream Urdu newspapers in Pakistan carry a large number of news items. But their focus on the people's issues is scant. Similarly they also carry more articles

on the editorial pages. However, there seems to be little attention to the letters to the editor section. The letters to the editor in the mainstream Urdu pages are much less than the letters in the English dailies.

Overall out of the 32,129 news items, editorials, articles and the letters to the editor on the front-back and the editorial pages of Urdu dailies, 1960 or 6% were regarding the people's issues.

Only 2.81% of the news on the front pages of the Urdu dailies were on the people's issues. However, on the back page there was more coverage for the issues identified for this study. Out of the total 17554 news items, 1549 or 8.8% were on the people issues.

As in the case of English dailies, Urdu newspapers also tend to give relatively more space to the people's issues on the editorial pages. The three Urdu dailies discussed the people's issues in 278 (10%) editorials out of the total 2753 during the nine months. Similarly 12% or 476 articles out of the total 3958 took up issues regarding health, education, gender, food security, culture, language, art, agriculture, etc.

The readers of the Urdu newspapers also want the newspapers to give space to the issues of the people. Out of the total 987 letters to the editor in the Urdu newspapers, 187 or 18.9% were regarding the ten selected issues.

Regional Dailies

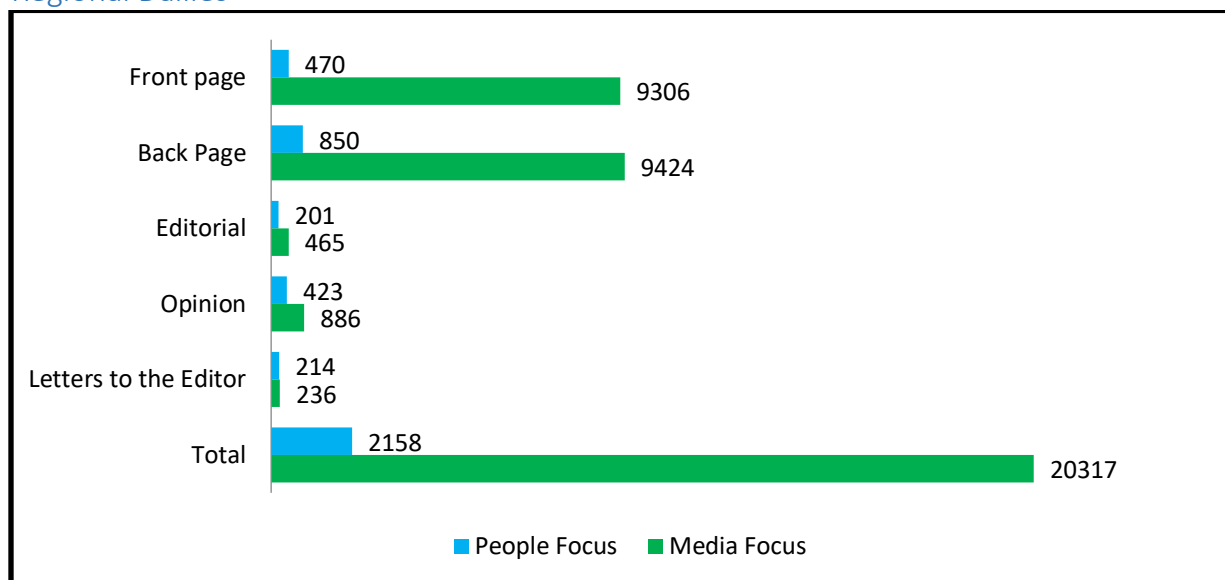


Figure 3: Regional Newspapers

The pattern of not giving space to issues which are critical to the people's lives holds on the front and back pages of the in regional dailies. On the front pages of the regional newspapers, only 4.8% or 470 of the total 9306 news items focused on the issues of health, education, gender, art, culture, climate change, water, etc. There was little more space on the back page as 8.27% or 850 news items out of the total 10274 were about the ten issues. Surprisingly, there was high number of editorials on the people's issues. Editorials (43.2%) were on the people's issues. However, it seems that the regional dailies, especially those in Pushto, were facing lack of content. A number of editorials were found to be repeated. Similarly, nearly half of the articles (47.7) were on the people's issues. Here again it was found that the articles were repeated multiple times, especially in the Pushto dailies. The letters to the editor section in the regional newspapers seemed to be filler. On some of the days, it was missing. However the ten issues identified for this have been given space in the letters to the editor section – 90.6% of

the letters were about the issues of health, education, water, agriculture, food security, etc. It again highlighted the fact that the people want to see their issues discussed in the print news media.

Electronic Media

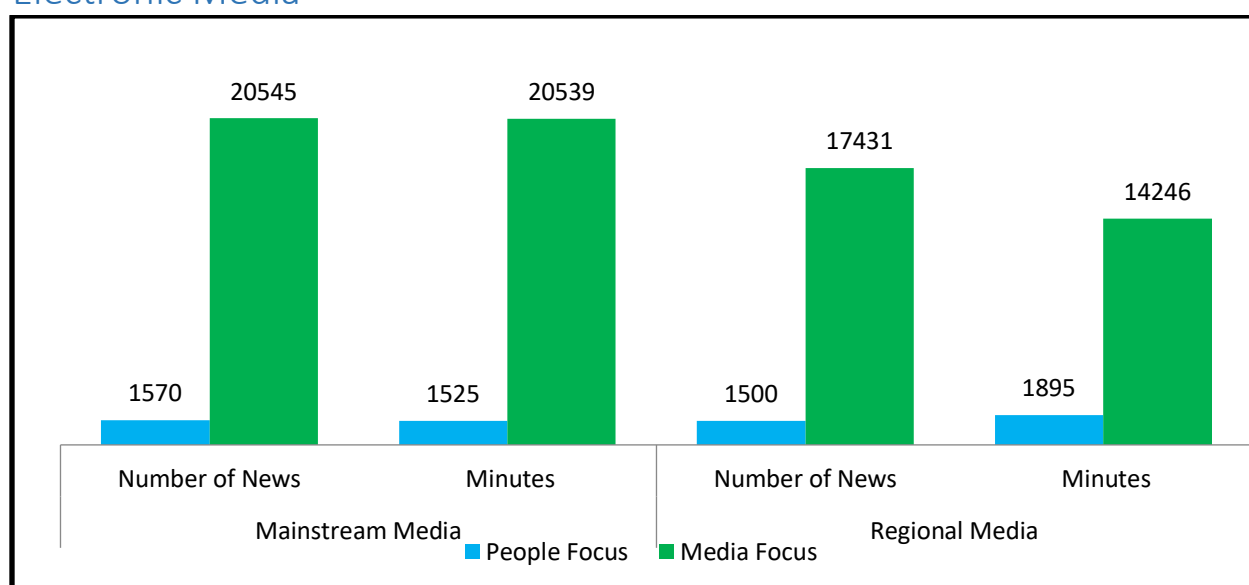


Figure 4: Electronic Media

In the main bulletins and the main talk shows of the day of the mainstream TV channels, there seems to be no airtime for the issues which are critical to the people. In this aspect, the TV channels in Sindhi and Pushto are also not different. In the mainstream TV channels, out of the total 22115 news items included in the main bulletin, only 1570 or 7.09% were regarding issues such as health, education, gender, food security, arts, science and discovery, etc. In minutes this translates into only 6.91% of the airtime of the news bulletin and the talk shows on the people's issues.

Similarly, on the Sindhi and Pushto TV channels, out of the 18931 news items, only 1500 or 7.91% were about the people's issues. However, the situation is slightly better in terms of airtime allocation with 11.74% of the airtime during the bulletins and talk shows given to the people's issues.

On the electronic media also, the focus is on the crisis reporting. The activities and gatherings regarding the Women's Day only make it to the main bulletin and the talk show when there is controversy such as around the slogan *mera jism meri marzi*. The reporting on the TV channels is marked by what is happening at the present now, with little or no background information and context of an issue.

The talk shows discussed the people-focused issues occasionally and superficially. Importantly none of the monitored talk shows exclusively discussed any of the people-focused identified for this monitoring. Additionally a curious trend is that the host may announce to discuss a people-focused issue during the show but would not take it up.

The hosts of the talk shows would take up an issue concerning the people only when it makes it to the daily news agenda. Mostly the controversy forces the talk shows to discuss a people-focused issue. It can be the Aurat March, cases of typhoid in Hyderabad, domestic torture, cheating practices in exams in Sindh, deaths of infants in Sindh, Supreme Court proceedings on fee structure of private educational institutions, loss of crops due to untimely rains in March, negative propaganda about the effects of anti-polio drops on children, increase in the prices of medicines, etc.

People-Focused News in Print Media

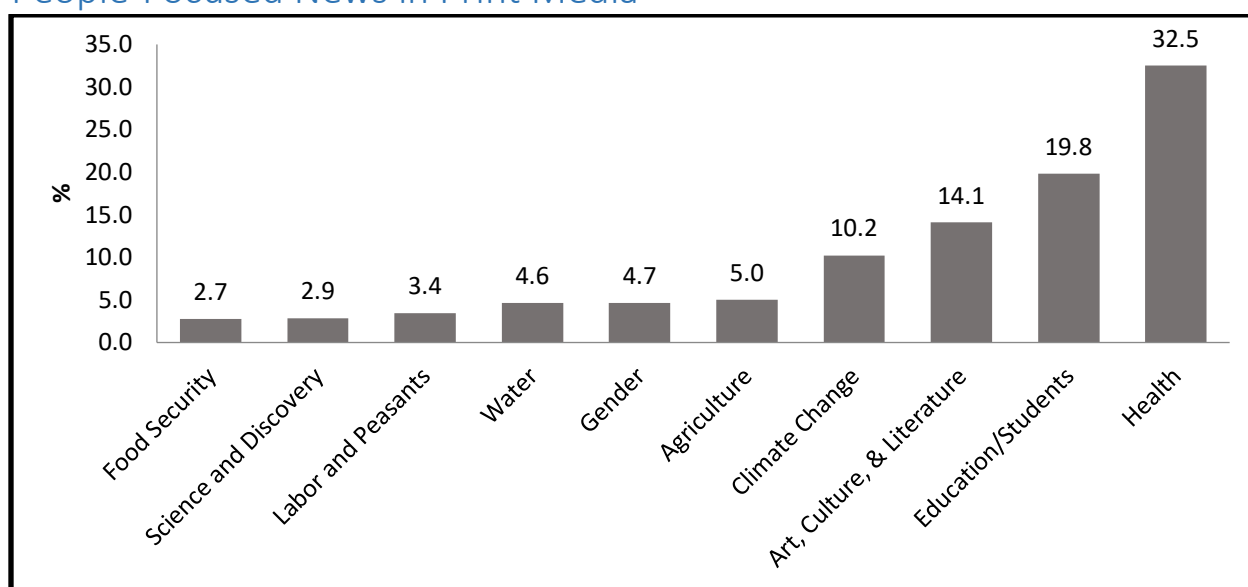


Figure 5: People-Focused News

The news items on the ten issues identified for this monitoring study were also analyzed. Most of the news items were on the health (32.5%), followed by education/students (19.8%) and art, culture and literature (14.1%). On the other hand, the least focus was on food security with only 2.7% news items, articles, editorials or letters to the editor about it, followed by science and discovery (2.9%), and labor and peasants (3.4%).

The high number of news items, articles, editorials and letters to the editor on the issues around health may be attributed to the number polio cases reported in 2019 along with the resurgence of dengue fever cases. Again it is important to note that these were health crises that the print media reported. Similarly, the tradition of holding literary festivals may have attributed to the number of news items, articles, editorials and letters to the editor about art, culture, and literature on the front-back and the opinion pages of the newspapers.

Agriculture would have remained a non-issue for the print media if there would have been no locusts attack in Sindh and Punjab.

Media Focused News in Print Media

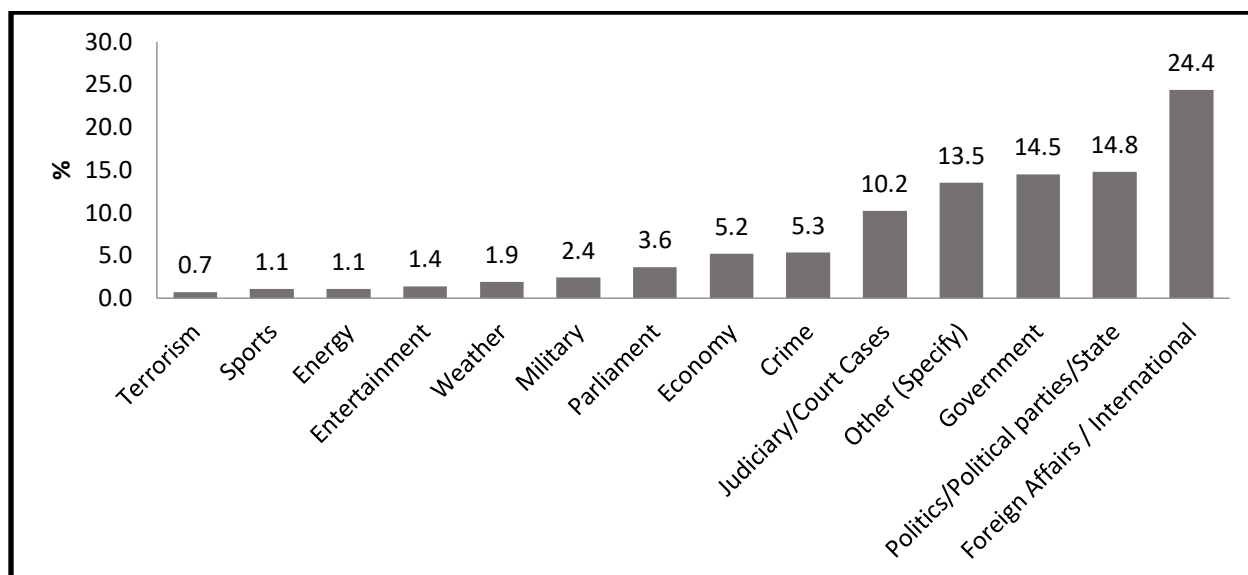


Figure 6: Media Focused News

The focus of the print media, both mainstream and regional, remained on the foreign affairs/international (24.4%), politics/political parties/statements (14.8%) and the government (14.5%). The focus on the foreign affairs/international may be due to Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan peace process and Pakistan's strained relations with India, especially after February 27 Balakot incident. Pakistani print media, especially the Urdu, has remained keenly interested in what the politicians say. Statements make a major part of the coverage of politics in the print media. As Pakistan remains in the grip of the so-called judicialization of politics, 10.2% of the news items, articles, editorials and the letters to the editor in the mainstream and regional print media were regarding judiciary and court cases.

People-Focused News in Electronic Media

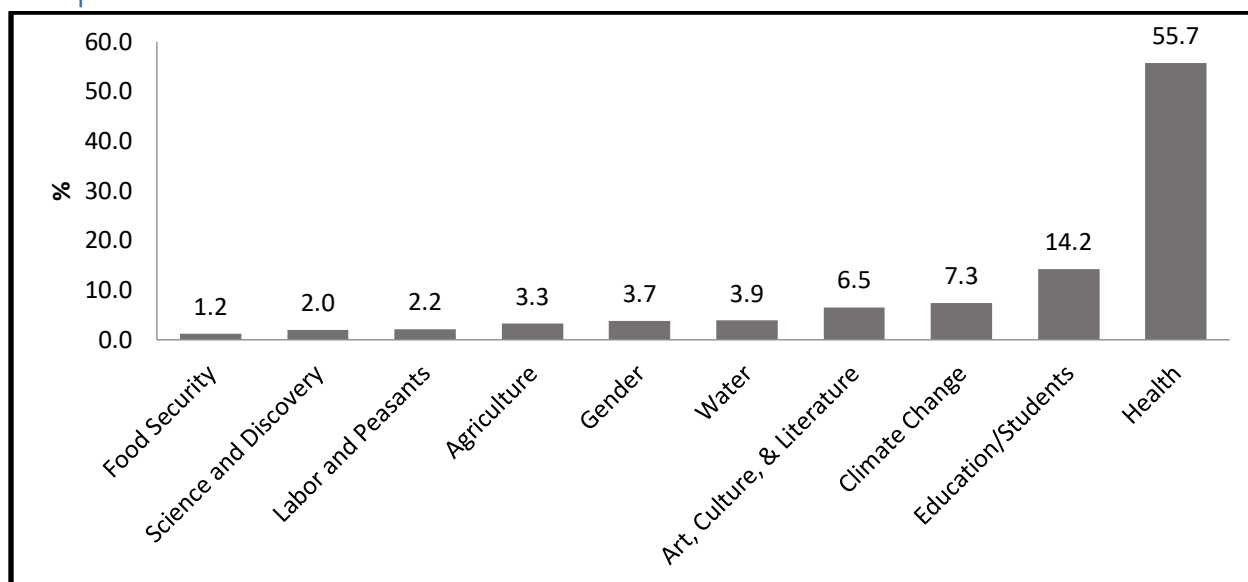


Figure 7: People Focused News

On the electronic media also, the focus was predominantly on the health issues (55.7%), followed by education (14.2%), and climate change (7.3%). Again the least focus was on food security (1.2%), science and discovery (2%) and labor and peasants (2.2%). Again the focus on the health issues can be attributed to the polio and dengue cases. As the media tends to politicize the issues, the news items and the discussion on the polio and dengue cases were reported and discussed more in terms of political and administrative incompetence to deal with them, instead of why these health issues are persisting.

Media Focus News in Electronic Media

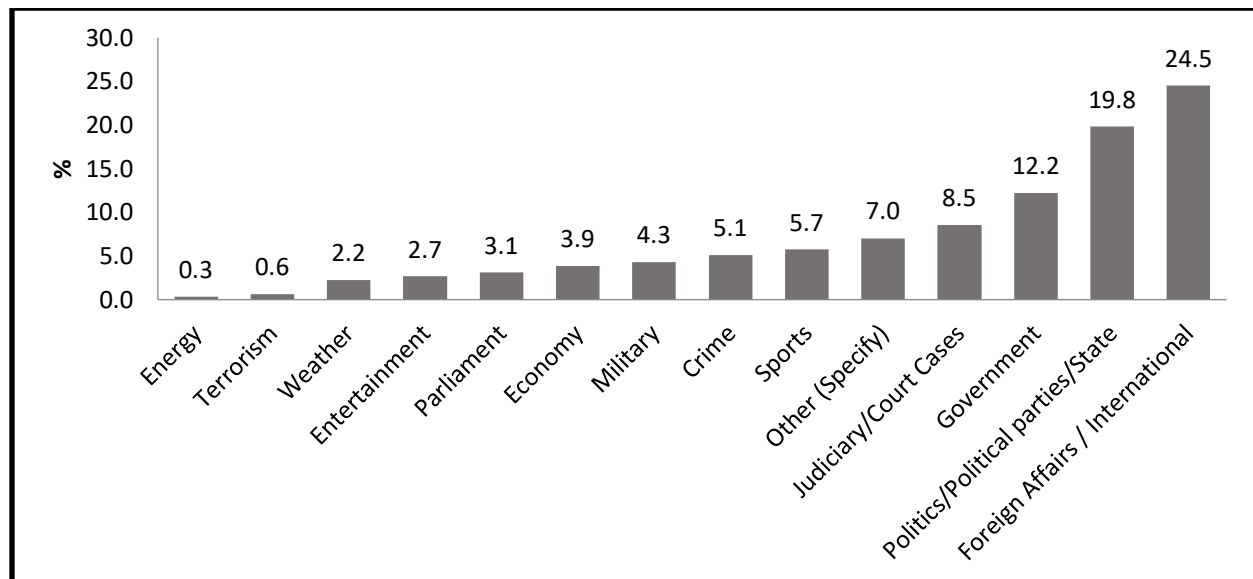


Figure 8: Media Focused News

The focus of the electronic media, both national and regional, during the monitoring period remained on the foreign affairs/international (24.5%), politics/political parties/statements (17.5%), and the government (12.2%). On the other hand, less 1% of the news on the electronic media was regarding the issue of energy and terrorism. The court cases, especially concerning politicians, remained part of the main bulletins on the TV channels and were widely discussed during the talk shows.

Discussion

The people-focused issues do not get the space or airtime they deserve on the main pages or the prime time bulletin/talk shows of the day. The focus of the print and electronic media in Pakistan remains on foreign affairs, international news, politics, statements, political developments, court cases, economy, and the government. The people-focused issues only get space on the front-back pages or a mention in the main bulletin/talk shows when there is a crisis, a scandal, or a clash that leads to the loss of life or property. Talk shows are not inclined to put in extra effort to probe issues related to health, education, climate change, art, literature, food security, etc. The emphasis is on discussing the issue(s) of the day. Climate change would only come into discussion when there is news about untimely rains damage crops.

The people-focused issues get more space and mention on the editorial pages than on the front and back pages. It is evident that the readers of the English, Urdu and regional newspapers want to highlight issues regarding health, education, food security, climate change, water, agriculture, science and technology, etc. Newspapers do give space to the people-focused issues but on the city and national pages. However, here again most of the stories on the people-focused issues are in the form of reporting of events on these issues. These may be seminars, workshops, or launches of reports NGOs or donor-funded projects.