

EXPLORING THE HUMAN RIGHTS PORTRAYAL IN PAKISTAN: A CASE STUDY OF LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPERS

FAIZA KHALID *

PhD Scholar, Media & Communication Studies, RIMS, Riphah.

Lecturer, Media & Communication Studies, NUML. *Corresponding Author Email: fkhalid@numl.edu.pk

Dr. AMNA ZULFIQAR

Assistant Professor, Media & Communication Studies, NUML.

ISMA ANUM

PhD Scholar & Lecturer, Media & Communication Studies, NUML.

Abstract

Human Right is one of the biggest talking points of the world. Scope of this concept is so vast that no one can define it in just few lines. There are varieties of human rights which exist in the world. Some rights like freedom of expression, security, education and health are common among all people regardless of any discrimination. Some rights are preserved for particular community or people of the society like there is special quota of jobs for disable persons. Media act like ear and eye of the society. It is the duty of media to ensure the protection of human rights and educate public in this regard. This paper provides the portrayal of human rights issue in Pakistani Media. A leading daily newspaper has been examined. It is found that basic facilities are the most covered story in newspaper and local page of newspaper give more coverage to human rights issues rather than front page. News Reporter is the chief source of the news stories about human rights and these stories are mostly positively framed which reflects that newspaper maybe quite reluctant to raise the violations of human rights issues.

Keywords: Human Rights, Media, Newspaper, Reporting, Violence, Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human rights are one of the widest constructs in the world (Who, U.N.I.C.E.F, 2023). Many concepts can be fit into this construct (Domaradzki, Khvostova & Pupovac, 2019). According to UNICEF; Human rights are standard that recognizes and protects all human beings' dignity. Human rights govern how individual human beings live in society and with each other, as well as their relationship with the State and the obligations that the State has towards them (Boiliu, et, al, 2022) (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021).

Every person living in this world has these rights; no individual or state can dishonor those rights (Malik, et al., 2021) ... Human rights and democracy are two things related and supportive of each other (Snyder, 2020).

If we talk about Islam, it provides every human a right to live, freedom, security, and justice (Andrabi, 2016). If we study Islam, we will find a variety of concepts related to human rights which can enhance the understanding of the importance of human rights in religion (Cohen, 2017). We can find in Islam the rights of widows, orphans, the poor, wives, husbands, parents, children, citizens of state and the list goes on (Alam & Hussain, 2020).

After the World War 2, there was a need to ensure the protection of human rights across the globe. In 1948, United Nation adopted a declaration of human rights known as Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Momen, 2022). It was crafted by representatives from different legal and cultural backgrounds. This document has been translated into more than 500 languages and contains 30 articles in it. This gives the protection of human rights across the globe. It also helped to make way towards more than seventy human rights treaties which are accepted and adopted at the global level or regional level (Leijten, de Bel, 2020)

Media as a fourth pillar of the state has to ensure the protection and maintenance of human rights within a state and even at the international level as well (Yemek, et, al., 2020). Media can become a voice of those people, whose rights are being violated by a state or powerful people (Norris, 2023). A recent example is Israeli attacks within Gaza. Both mainstream and social media became the voice of Palestinians and in the end, the USA had to pressure Israel to stop the brutalities (Klajnowska, 2022).

According to Nickel (2007), human rights concepts is now recognized around the globe quite widely and journalist reports the human rights violations. Therefore, we can say that it is the media that is able to realize the importance of human rights and give this concept a much-deserved scope (Freeman, 2002). It is important for the media to cover human rights violations so it helps in highlighting the abuses throughout the world (Cole, 2000).

Pakistan has been facing human rights issues for over seven decades now. From the very beginning, this nation has seen so much violence and neglect of human rights

Still in the third decade of the 21st century, Pakistanis are exposed to abuses, violations, lack of fundamental rights, injustice, and lack of freedom (Faraz, Qadri & Khan, 2023). According to the 2020 World Report on human Rights; Journalists, civil society, and lawyers got harassed by the government. In the same reports issues regarding child marriages, child abuse, acid attacks, women abuse, and terrorism in Pakistan have been reported (Bhattacharya, 2020).

Pakistani media's role has become important in the present scenario. The media is the one who can raise the voice of the common man at upper level. Media is the soft target for power groups and individuals to curb the voice of vulnerable section of society. So, reporting of human rights issues has become very difficult in this country (WHO, 2022). Therefore, it is important to know few things about the portrayal of human rights in Pakistani media.

1.1. Problem Statement

Media is the vulnerable institution in Pakistan. There is censorship and other curbs on media in this South Asian country. There is always a debate on the reporting of human rights violation in Pakistan. Even top officials of government indicated that violation reported in media is less as compare to the actual figure. It is important to know the issues which are reported in the media. Due to threats and harassment issues, media style of reporting must be examined. There is always a face behind the case. In our country, many

crimes occur by backing of some influential people. This leads to certain gatekeeping in media. This think has to be studied as well.

1.2. Research Questions

- What are those human rights issues who find their place in a leading newspaper of Pakistan?
- Whether there were more news stories regarding human rights on front page or local page of a leading Pakistani daily?
- Which human right issue gets more prominence in a leading Pakistani daily?
- How categories of human rights issue are being framed by a Pakistani daily?
- What is the main source of news relating to human rights in leading newspaper of Pakistan?

1.3. Research Objectives

- To find those human rights issues who find their place in a leading newspaper of Pakistan.
- To find number of news stories covered regarding human rights on front page and local page by a leading Pakistani daily.
- To explore that human right issue who get more prominence in a leading Pakistani daily.
- To examine how the categories of human rights issue are being framed by a Pakistani daily.
- To know the main source of news relating to human rights in leading newspaper of Pakistan.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is going to provide the news and reporting patterns of human rights issues in the Pakistani Media. This analysis of a leading newspaper of Pakistan can help people to understand the portrayal of human rights issues in the Pakistani media. Civil society, law and enforcement institutions and other stake holders can identify the types of human rights abuses and violations occur in this country. It is going to help in order to compare the presentation of news on front page and on inside page. This research work would highlight the most important human right issue in the eyes of Pakistani media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A paper that is printed and distributed usually daily or weekly which contains news, articles of opinions, features, and advertisements is known as a Newspaper (Kim, Song & Kim, 2020).

So according to this definition, the newspaper must be printed on paper and it has to be distributed in certain areas. Time is also a key factor. Newspaper comes after a certain period. Some newspapers are published daily and some are weekly based. But nowadays majority of newspapers come into the market on a daily basis (Tai, He, & Liu, 2023).

As the name suggested, newspapers contain news of utmost importance. It covers news from all over the country, city, and even from the whole world. Local news stories depend more on the city from where newspapers are published (Vella, 2020).

Articles are written in newspapers which are opinion-based articles. They are also related to the news but contain the opinion of the writer and he includes all the facts and historical background to prove his opinion right (Molina, Sundar, Le, & Lee, 2021). Articles give multiple points of view about an issue and also contain comparisons of different views (Michael Flierl).

The newspaper has many benefits. It provides news about local and international issues which helps you to remain up to date about current affairs. It increases your vocabulary and gives you confidence to participate in debates and discussions. The newspaper is a source where you can find jobs. It improves one's reading and writing capabilities (Prasanna, 2020).

2.1. Front & Local Page of newspaper

Front page is the first page of newspaper where you can see the name of the newspaper and its published date. You can see the biggest news stories of a day at front page of news story but if something more important happens in the world it could also appear at front page (Jeswal, 2017).

Content at front page varies depends on the type of newspaper and magazine. Every type of newspaper and magazine has different type of content at front page (Mathew, 2017). But for a daily newspaper it contains the most important news of the day.

Local page of a newspaper contains news of city and it's around area from where newspaper is published. It contains news of crimes, development projects, seminars, ceremonies, health and education. In Pakistan, leading Urdu newspapers like Jang, Express and Dunya use second page of newspaper for local news. This page is important for those who want to get know how about their surroundings.

2.2. Sources

Sources of news stories are those people or departments from where you can get the latest news about any event or happening. According to Naveed (2011); party headquarters, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, business associations, shipping offices, civil organizations and hotels are some regular sources of information for a journalist.

The communication between journalists and sources of news is the tool of shaping the news (Sigal, 1986). Berkowitz (1987), Sigal (1973), Soloski (1989) and others found in their studies that more than half of news sources push effort to have their own voices

listened in the media. For example, politicians want to be in media all the time so they give statements which become sources for news for journalists.

There are two types of news sources. One is regular news sources like official meeting, news conferences, press releases etc. Others are non-regular news sources which being developed by journalists to have some inside stories. Journalists make news from those sources by getting news worthy information through off the record communication.

Local newspapers have more news come from non-regular news sources than national newspapers (Brown et al). So, from that we can say that local page of a national newspaper also have more news stories from non-regular news sources than from regular news sources.

2.3. Human Rights issues and Media

Media plays crucial role in highlighting the issues of human rights. Media freedom is itself the promotion of human rights (Koomson, 2013). Media provides awareness regarding human rights and their importance. It educates public regarding the rights of human at different aspects.

In a study in Pakistan, 21 percent of responding citizen said that they get information regarding human rights through media and 50 percent said that they get information from all sources that are media, Mosque, home and text books (Sial, 2009).

It is not limited to the common citizen of Pakistan, Sial(2009) found that 33 percent of journalists learn about human right violation through media.

Media gives the coverage of human rights issues especially newspaper provide variety of stories regarding human rights. Saha and Ahmad (2018) found out that two leading Indian daily newspapers; The Hindu and Times of India has covered 105 and 109 stories regarding human rights during studied period.

Inside pages of national newspaper has more news stories regarding human rights than the front page. Just 28 out of 109 stories in Times of India and 12 out of 105 stories in The Hindu were published on front page (Saha and Ahmad, 2018).

The area where media and newspaper is lacking is that they provide stories on violence rather than giving awareness. Saha and Alam (2016) found that main stream English and Hindu newspapers of India has their focus mostly on violence against women rather than their root causes.

There was not a single editorial, column, letter to editor or special story in The Hindu and Times of India at given period of time. State sponsored violence is the most highlighted issue in both newspapers sampled by that study (Saha and Ahmad, 2018).

Reporting of human rights issues is also a major problem. Many journalists lack the capability of reporting human rights issues. Roy Gutman, who covered Bosnia-Serbia war said that some ware crimes does not reported well because many journalists do not know them when they see those crimes (International council of Human Rights Policy Report, 2002).

Sial (2009) concluded after his study that in Pakistan, Journalist lack expertise of reporting human rights issues. They relied on the secondary sources of information. She found that sources of information of many news stories in print media requested anonymity. In her study it was also found that many byline reports lack clear mention of source.

This maybe because in Pakistan, we still lack freedom of expressions and journalists have many security issues regarding reporting of such incidents. In Pakistan Press freedom Report 2019-20, it was found that over 90 cases of assaults and violation against media workers occurred in Pakistan from May 2019 to April 2020. So, there is clear indication of difficulties faced by Pakistani journalists.

2.4. Priming effect of media

Priming theory of mass media deals with emphasizes of media on certain issues. Whenever media covers an issue, it sticks in the mind of public. Any issue which gets prominence from media will get the attention of public. For example, the news on the front page of newspapers has more value than on inside pages because people see front page of newspaper firstly.

Kronsnick and Kinder (1990) measured the priming effect in their study. They selected Iran-Contra announcement as priming event and conducted study at University of Michigan. They asked their respondents to evaluate Ronal Regan performance basis on his domestic and foreign policies and decisions.

They found out that before priming event respondents evaluated on the basis of domestic issues but when priming event occurs they evaluated on the basis of foreign affairs especially on the priming event.

2.5. Framing

Framing deals with how media present an issue. Many factors can influence framing of an issue includes policy of news organization, attitude of journalist, pressure of sponsors and guidelines of some powerful individuals and influential people. Framing educates people how to think about any issue or event.

Sahu and Rao (2013) checked the framing of Times of India and Deccan Chronicles in order to cover the issue of Telangana. They found that newspapers just cover event and statements of leaders. Newspapers did not take the side of truth because they adopted business approach by not hurting sentiments of any side. Newspapers did not show serious behavior on that issue which reflects that issue of Telangana was not on their agenda. They hide truth and did not focus on ground realities.

If we conclude this section, we can say that media plays important role in highlighting right issues. In newspaper, human rights issues appear at inside pages rather than front pages. So, we can say newspapers did not give prominence to human rights issues. Newspaper mostly focuses on violation against women and state terrorism as their core human rights issues in India. In Pakistan, Journalists lack approaches of covering human rights issues. Framing and priming plays important role in grabbing attention of public to issue.

So, in this study, I am going to check the importance given by Pakistani leading daily on human right issues. I will found the sources of those news stories and I also try to find frames on different issue develop by newspaper.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Content analysis technique has been used to carry out this research study. It is going to find out that what is said? And how it is said? Coding sheet is made by identifying different categories of human rights issues and data is feed against that categories. Number of stories about each category of human rights either on front page or local inside page is counted and also frames identified.

3.1. Sample

A leading daily Urdu newspaper of Pakistan “Daily Dunya” has been taken as our sample. In order to squeeze sample more, its front page and local page having local news considered as my sample in this research study.

3.2. Time frame

Time frame of this study is the month of Ramadan. News stories in Ramadan has been examined and studied. It start from 15 April 2021 (2nd Ramadan) to 13 May 2021(1st day if Eid). The reason of one-day delay in the start and end is because the news story appears in the next day of newspaper. I want to study those news stories happen in Ramadan 2021.

3.3. Unit of Analysis

All news stories containing headlines and sub headline regarding human rights issues has been analyzed. Their headline, sub headline and byline has been analyzed thoroughly and found out the results.

3.4. Types of Frames

Following are the types of frames we identify in this study.

- **Positive:** Content which shows the positive behavior towards the issue in order to highlight the positive aspects and draws way forward to solve any issue regard has positive frame. For example, culprit of any human right violation has been arrested.
- **Negative:** Content shows the abuses and violation of human rights issues. For example, a girl faces harassment issue.
- **Neutral:** Content which cannot be regard as either positive or negative categorically. For example, FIR registered against culprit is just a little way forward towards solving the issue but before that some crime occurs too. So, we cannot say whether it is positive or negative frame.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the beginning, the researcher identified the categories of human rights' issue presented in the newspaper. The researcher also found the frame of that particular study. Afterwards, frequency tables were drawn and T-test was done to test the research questions.

RQ1: What are those human rights issues who find their place in a leading newspaper of Pakistan?

Table 1 shows the categories of those human rights which have been covered in news stories of Dunya newspaper for a given period of time. Overall, 228 news stories related to human rights' issues have been covered by Daily Dunya in that specific studied time period. Stories regarding basic facilities like health, education, internet, infrastructure etc., kidnapping, theft/mugging, killing/murder, poor people, consumer rights, orphans, terrorism/security, fraud, land grabbing, physical violence, sexual violence, harassment, refugee rights, rights of disable community, religious freedom, labor/workers' rights, and child protection rights are the categories related to human rights' issues which have been covered by Dunya newspaper.

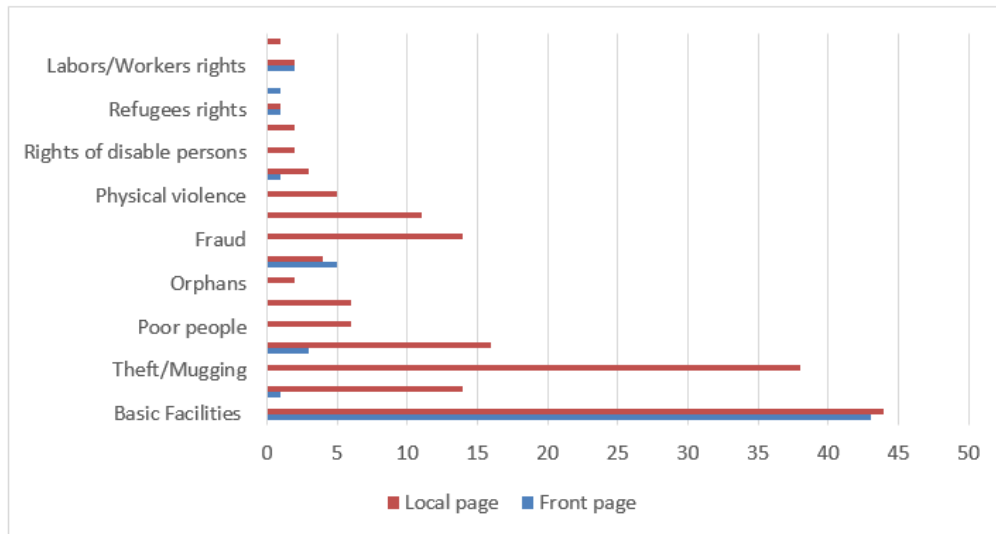
Table 1: Categories of Human Rights

Categories of Human Rights
Basic Facilities (Health, education, infrastructure, internet etc)
Kidnapping
Theft/Mugging
Killing/Murder
Poor People
Consumer Rights
Orphans
Terrorism/Security
Fraud
Land Grabbing
Physical Violence
Sexual Violence
Rights of Disable Person
Harassment/Threats
Refuges Rights
Religious Freedom
Labors/Worker Rights
Child Protection

RQ2: Which human right issue gets more prominence in a leading Pakistani daily?

Stories regarding basic facilities like health, education, internet, infrastructure etc have been covered mostly by studied newspaper. 43 news stories related to this category appeared on front page whereas 44 stories appeared on local page. Thus, it is obvious that basic facilities are the category of human rights which got more prominence by Daily Dunya in specific period of time (see Table 2).

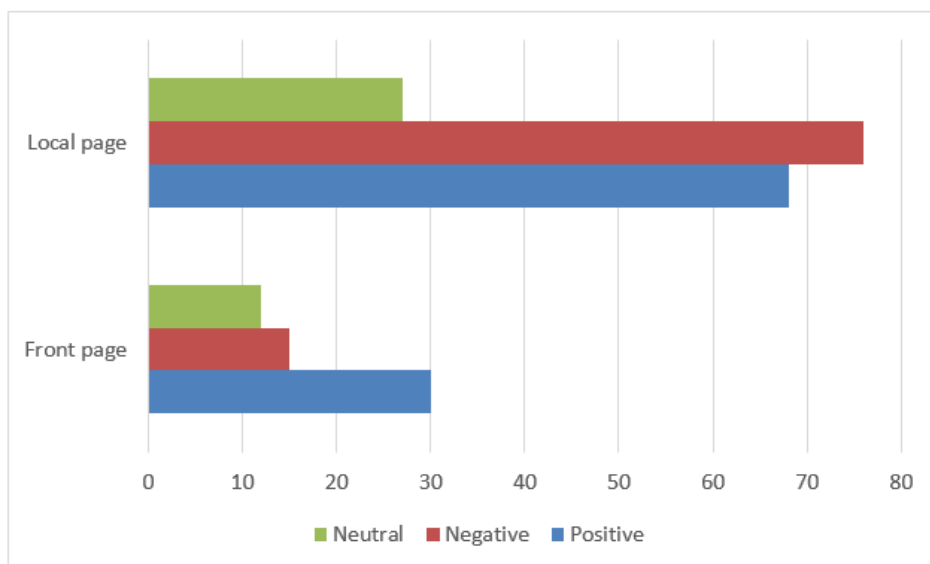
Table 2: Prominence of Human Rights Issue



RQ3: How categories of human rights issue are being framed by a Pakistani daily?

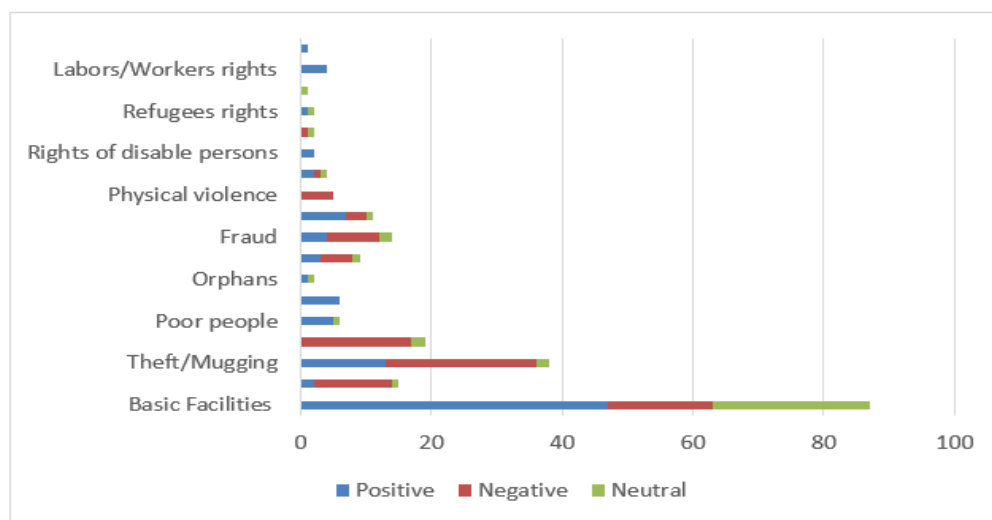
Table 4 depicts that front page had more than positively framed stories than negatively framed. Contrarily, local/city page had more negatively framed stories than positive. 30 out of 57 stories on front page have been framed positively, 15 have been framed negatively, while 12 were neutral. On the other hand, out of 171 stories on local page, 76 have been framed negatively, 68 have been framed positively while only 27 news stories on local page were framed in a neutral way. Thus, it is obvious that front page has more positive news stories than local page.

Table 6: Framing of News Stories on Front and Local pages



Additionally, among all the human rights issue related news stories, stories regarding basic facilities have been most positively framed news stories in the newspaper (See Table 5). Furthermore, this category has found its space in the newspaper as containing most neutral stories as well; 24 out of total 39 neutral stories lie in this category. Contrarily, theft/ Mugging is the category which has more negatively framed news stories in the newspaper than any other category. Hence, it is concluded that among all the categories, news stories related to basic facilities were the most positively framed, while theft/mugging were the most negatively framed news stories

Table 6: Framing of News Stories



Overall, majority of news stories Eon human rights' issues were framed positively by the newspaper, however a few news stories were negatively framed. Out of 228, 98 news stories were being positively framed, while 91 news stories were being negatively framed. Rest of 39 stories cannot be regard as either positive or negative, they were neutral. So, they are recognized as neutral news stories. Therefore, it could be said that majority of news stories related to human rights were framed positively.

RQ4: Whether there were more news stories regarding human rights on front page or local page of a leading Pakistani daily?

Paired sample T-test was conducted to compare the stories on front and local page and results reported a significant difference mean values of stories of front page (M=102.860, SD=5.04854) and local page (M=106.395, SD=8.18487) conditions; $t(47) = 4.924$, $p = 0.003$. Thus, it is acknowledged that more news stories regarding human rights were covered on local page than on local page of leading Pakistani daily (Table 6).

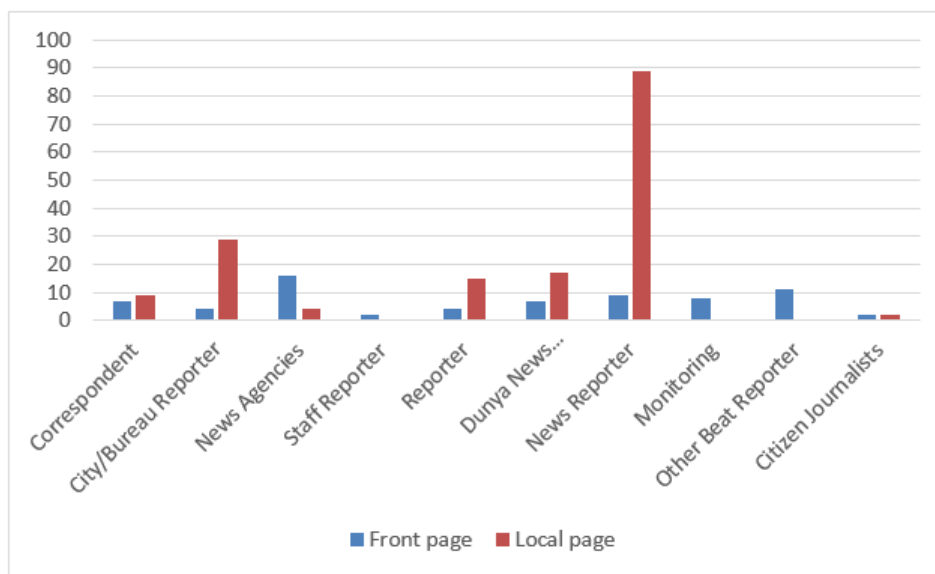
Table 6: Stories covered on Front and Local Page

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Stories on Front page	43	102.860	5.04854			
Stories on Local page	43	106.395	8.18487			

RQ4: What is the main source of news relating to human rights in leading newspaper of Pakistan?

Table 7 contains the main sources of news regarding human rights issues written in the byline of news story. News Reporter turned out to be the leading source of most of the news stories published in Daily Dunya. Additionally, news agencies were the main source of stories published on front page. News reporter was the main source of news stories published on local page of that newspaper during specific period of time. Thus, the main source of news relating to human rights issue was the News Reporter.

Table 7: Sources of Human Right News Stories



5. CONCLUSION

Majority of human rights issues presented in newspaper are related to basic human facilities. Crimes like theft and killing have found their space on local page. Human rights issues like freedom of expression, child abuses, child labor, child marriages, and minority's rights are missing. At front page, stories related to basic facilities can be seen by most of the time. Similarly, local page also concentrated on issues related to basic facilities. It can be concluded that basic facilities are the top most priority of Dunya news. Most of the stories are positive but negative stories' number is very much closer to number of positive stories. But still there are more positive stories. It means that newspaper management is a little bit hesitant to provide more negative stories. Negative stories exist more on local page as compared to positive stories. Front page has more positive stories than negative stories. Neutral stories published more on local page than on front page.

News reporter is the chief source of Daily Dunya to provide news stories related to human rights issues. Overall stats suggest that 171 news stories published on local and 57 were published on front page during month of Ramadan. So, we can say that Daily Dunya gave

a fair amount of coverage to human rights issues but the problem is it covers most stories on basic facilities. Many categories of human rights did not get coverage at all or got covered at minor level. Therefore, diversity is the factor which must be taken to account by the management of Daily Dunya.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Media should exercise full freedom in regard of the coverage of human rights issues.
- Coverage scale should be increased.
- Citizen Journalism must be encouraged.
- Follow-up of the stories must be developed.
- Rechecking of the facts must be ensured.
- Point of view from all the sides must be taken.
- Journalists should remain objective while covering human rights issues.

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