Abstract: The current study is focused to investigate the reporting on the environmental issues and their coverage in Pakistan. The Qualitative content analysis technique is been applied in this research. Direct interviews were held with journalists, it is found that environmental journalists in Pakistan face a number of challenges. Environmental reporting does not rank high among the editorial priorities and newsroom hierarchies across the country. The study concluded that the country going through a state of war and social and political chaos which do not allow for much deliberation of environmental issues. Other than questionable editorials integrity, tensions between governments, corporations and newsrooms have also resulted in serious health and safety threats for journalists. Environmental journalism is not exclusion, especially in least developed and remote areas where corporations and governments or other non-state actors are free to act against international human rights legislation, environmental journalists often face great personal danger as well.

Key words: Environmental Journalism, Reporting, Interview, Health

INTRODUCTION

Environmental journalism carries an assortment of probable meanings and repeatedly embraces several at once. It can be well thought-out an advocate’s beat, journalism with a purpose, or simply journalism about the environment. Essentials of the science and health reporter’s beat also play a part in the environment journalism. At different times, the meanings of environmental journalism has remained different and environmental issues have changed from contemporary world, olden ones to more modern, pollution-related ones and the way the media have covered the environment issues has also variety of changes. Environment issues can range from those linked with the usual environment of earth, or those associated with the environmental intimidation to the health of living things. Today, media coverage of the environment may be confidential as risk reporting or science journalism or as part of a more general field called environmental communication. Till the beginning, environmental journalism has been a complex beat, encircling more than just the environment. Often, politics, economics and social issues play a part. Bearing in mind the definitions of environmental journalism, one may think about the process or purpose of environmental journalism in order to define it.

Environmental issues and problems have become major challenge for universal population. Both the developed and devolving nations show serious concerns over the public awareness of a need for action in addressing environmental problems. Poor reserves management and lack of education from the emergent of Pakistan and ongoing population growth have had very bad impact on the country’s environment. Like other developing countries, Pakistan has paying attention on achieving self-reliance in different areas but not on curtailing pollution or other environmental hazards, consequently, “green” concerns have not been the governments’ priority. The mass media is powerful because it appeals and is actually able to reach so many people from all ends of the social, economic and political spectrum [1]. The media’s influence on social system has been studied and proved time and time again [2]. This influence has been utilized to affect large-scale social change, these studies prove that media coverage does result in and impact the decision making process of the general public [3]. There are also many arguments which speak out that why the media is not actually that powerful of influential communication tool. Mass media outlets must attract the large public audience, they cannot attract and retain advertisers and thus they cannot survive as practicable business. Audience tunes in to mass media
outlets for variety of reasons. One of these reasons is that audience are attracted to the fact they can be active participants in the information they are given and the events they are show through the media audience members can be active participants in the media by calling in to radio stations, choosing to tune in even for advertisements, visiting certain websites and sharing their favorite media outlets with friends, to name a few [4]. In fact, the number of people who do understand the way the media works is such a minority that there is a phrase commonly used to describe them. Media literate audience members are audience members who understand how the media creates meaning about the world [5].

For this study, the researcher identifies some main categories of interest running through the literature on environmental journalism. According to Pauly [6] stated that general news values are suppressed when covering news about environmental. Usually, proximity, timeliness, nearness are the news values. Environment beat cannot get any of such value. So there are chances of ignoring environment news from coverage in print news media. To avoid fear element in covering news is also one reason to negate this field of information from coverage. Corner and Richardson [7] summarized that illness causes death sometimes, so many images and phrases which are to be avoided from coverage because mediates the element of risks. Pharr [8] terms the role of media as “Watchdog”, Media should actively participate in environmental movements; society should also play its pivotal role for environmental betterment [2]. Japanese news media use variety of news sources to correspond the news about environment, health issues [9]. This tendency appears in individual’s articles and sometimes as widespread consonance or uniformity in reporting on particular issues. This determines that either media is pro-government or pro-state [10]. Some argue that the tendency of persuasive mass communication to reinforce existing opinion is anything but reinforcement is a more likely effect of persuasive communication than is conversation [11]. Media affects society as well in much complex way. It is not an individual institute but keeps other social institutes with it. It plays a dynamic worth in cultural element of society. It is never judged in isolated effects [12]. According to Hansen [13] professionals from environment field to public and social groups should have status of hierarchy. Efforts are needed to be activated from top level position to lower. Scientific community can better understand the environmental issues. It can contribute to the environmental development in collaboration with society. There should be hierarchy for the coverage and betterment of environmental development. Paton [14], argues that media create sensationalism amongst audience. She argues that media spread poorly investigated stories and create restless regarding health and environment issues rather solving them. Sometimes stories are covered through opinions by experts of specific field. This can be the best way to cover and highlight the stories. However, Paton claims that this could be seen as news manipulation by scientific. As the doctors or anyone expert of its field can change the interpretation of what is asking to him or her by the journalist. Gomson and Modiliani [15] think that there should be proximity for gaining importance in society for an issue. For example, Fire can cut off environment is not a suitable report or cannot get any importance in desert. One cultural may prefer innovation but ignore environment while others do it in vice versa [16]. In face Ulrich [17] suggests that scientific positivism has accelerated environmental dreadful conditions. Despite this, according to Howson [18], there is logical determination by western scientist about an issue related to environment. Anderson [19] and Hansen [13] citing the findings of opinion poos tends to disagree. Hansen [13] discussed that media coverage and public opinion are two different aspects in term of effects. Sometimes public opinion is based on perceptions and then internal differences of mind and interest also affect the media coverage and its results upon audience.

In recent years, the role of news media in reporting and portraying public issues has been widely recognized by communication research scholars, political scientists and policy analysts [20]. Through repeated coverage of an issue, media can put its influence upon audience [21].

Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze the Pakistani print media organizations perception of environmental issues, both global and regional.
- To analyze the role and practices of Pakistani media in environment protection.
- To explore print media’s responsibilities in the context of environmental reporting.
- To analyze the relationship between the government and the working journalists regarding environmental issues.
- To analyze and evaluate the issues and challenges faced by Pakistani print media journalists.
- To give practicable policy measure and recommendations to meet issues and challenges face by Pakistani print media journalists regarding the environmental issues.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this research personal interviews of the Pakistani journalists were conducted mainly in Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad. People were contacted in news organizations and make appointment with those who were willing to speak. The meetings with journalists were scheduled according to their feasibility meeting them in their office or elsewhere. The interview time was decided which extended up to two hours session.

All the interviews and discussions were recorded. The record of at least of 20 interviews was taken from journalists, working in different print media organizations. Fourteen of the interviews were taken face to face on Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar during the months of March and April 2013. Four interviews were taken via email while two others were conducted by submitting questionnaire to two reporters whom the researcher couldn’t find opportunity to meet in person. Site visits and an inclusive review of relevant academic literature, government documents and media reports were also used for data generation. Focus group methodology was also used to learn or confirm not just the facts, but the meaning behind the facts.

The chosen instrument was direct interview assembling the subjective views and experience of the people. This choice was based on the belief that the data obtained will given an idea of the converge of environmental issues by the media, with emphasis on the difficulties encountered the best way to identify the specific professional journalists in order to identify difficulties in accessing environmental information, problems exists within media organization, status of availability of information on environmental issues in the region and status of professional level local and regional level interactions. This instrument was also useful in analyzing qualifications and knowledge of journalists in specific environmental areas. All those interviews were conducted in a semi-structured interview approach based on open-ended questions. In each instance, detailed notes were taken on the response of the interviews, forming altering my data collection methods as appropriate. It was followed up, when necessary, with news question specifically referencing the interviewee’s previous reply that soured on the new question. Researcher considered all interviews by email and phone, using a semi structured interview approach based in open-ended questions. The phone interviews were limited by the busy schedules of the interviewees. The email interviews were somewhat restrained, as answers were often given without exaggeration and it was not possible for the researcher to spontaneously ask the interviewees relevant follow-up questions. The target journalists were asked to base their answers to the questions in the questionnaire in their personal experience, this happened two times when the researchers couldn’t find a chance to meet them in person. Then data obtained on journalists’ actions and views helped to outline a picture of the media practices, problems and gaps while reporting environment. Additionally, in order to make recommendations of the researcher more relevant to the environmental organization that comprise the target audience for this thesis, the interviews were conducted with the communication leaders and media professionals of several environmental organizations asking them about what their relationships with and views of mass media outlets are currently like. In finding the answers to these questions, the researcher was able to further ensure that final recommendations would be relevant to my intended target audience.

Hypotheses:

- Government is not facilitating media to report and highlight the environmental issues.
- Media itself is not playing positive role to highlight the environmental issues.
- Working journalists are also lacking regarding the awareness of the environmental issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to understand the current status of the relationship of environmental organizations, following were the theme chosen to test the hypotheses. Media organizations agreed that media coverage is an important way to spread knowledge about environmental issues. Because of this belief in the media as an important educational tool, all interviewees told that most of the journalists in the country are covering environmental issues as routine business. They are not having specific training in this regard. Most journalists covering environmental issues were not having specific background as their academic qualification. For most of them even the commonly used terms about environment like acid rain, ozone layer depletion and extinction were heard terms without any meaning. You need trained people to cope with this kind of demand, Javed Aziz (Editor Daily Mashriq). According to Aziz it is more than important to provide these individuals with the resource and opportunities they will need to use their skills efficiently at the end of the day, for the benefit to their
communities and countries. All the media professionals, the researcher interviewed agreed that the main reason for this is that media interests in the country remain disbelieving of the importance of environment; the result has been not only minimal space but also tedious funding. Environmental journalists must work within very limited budgets; the result is coverage usually based on short news stories or clips originating from material that is largely translated from western sources.

News item articles or features about environmental issues are presented insipidly and often have no local relevance. According to Waseem Ahmed Shah of daily Dawn environmental journalists report that although Pakistanis would be interested is seeing coverage of local environmental issues, this can be a difficult job. Many of the country’s scientific institutions, for example, lack the technology to disseminate their finding widely. Extensive computer network, for instance, remain a mere dream in many of Pakistan’s poorly funded scientific institutions and universities. Universities publish their news about environment through published work and that this is not in favor of uneducated audiences. In his words but journalists suffer from lack of resources of information. When they are not getting such information, they are not capable of publishing for audiences, which is so vital to their work. Even the largest of Pakistani print media organizations lack the money to provided computers and internet connections to their reporters and editors. Lack of academic training is also another problem in environmental journalism. Our educational institutes are giving little or no importance to the specialized journalist tools, says Jamshaid Baghwan (senior reporter of Daily express newspaper). Baghwan pointed out that facilitates of journalism in Pakistani universities just teach. Most professors of mass communication focus on the theoretical aspects of journalism rather than practical journalism.

In developing countries where information about jargon is not widely taught, environmental journalism becomes dangerous. Arshad Abbasi, senior reporter pointed out that bureaucracies inherently favor information control and are hesitant to provide records freely for a variety of reasons, some justifiable and others not. But the conditions regarding environmental information remained improved during era of democracy rather dictatorship.

Public opinion is crucial to the resolution of environmental issues in a democratic society, public has the power to support interests groups elect and lobby officials, pay taxes work for companies buy products and support or reject policies. In Pakistan we saw no such attitude from the public towards environmental issues unless it is directly affecting their livelihood, said Ghulam Farooq of daily Shama. To him public concerns about major environmental dilemmas have never been a driving force in Pakistani politics. The interviewees were of the consensus that this is all because of one single reasons and that is lack of public awareness regarding environmental issues. Even at hierarchy level environmental issues are poorly understood. It was suggested that public education on environmental issues is required. Communication if problems to the public must improve to build consensus and understanding on vital environmental issues whether regional, local or global. According to media professionals media environmental groups’ politician’s corporations and government are the stakeholders which are supposed to play their role in environmental conversation. Unfortunately none of them are found active in this regard.

Level of freedom or journalists also remained confusing here in Pakistan. But Javed Aziz of daily news has different opinions about journalist’s boundaries, “yes of course we have freedom we can be honest”. He also said that “Even when I am not writing about the environment, we write everything we want to write about, we can write about everything. While Waseem Ahmad Shah of daily Dawn emphasis that he enjoys many freedoms, he did mention editorials boundaries and pressure: there are a lot of pressure to say things, to put a certain spin on things, which most of us try to resist, nut it is not always possible. I generally push as hard as I can and sometimes an editor comes and says: no you can’t say that and then I argue. It is not like I was reporting in some place where you could easily end up I big trouble, jail or worse. Faqir hussain of daily Mashriq environmental correspondent asserts that environmental journalism has fewer red lines than other subjects and that those that exist are a function of a general lack of a culture of transparency. As pointed out by Jamsaid of Daily express: they now touch the issues. Maybe they find an agency of the government is not working or somebody does something’s, at least they walk about it now. While this analysis should not be seen as representatives of the papers entire coverage, the reviewed material confirms expectations, clearly reflecting the news values and business models outlined above. Daily Dawn’s coverage of the two events mirrored Western journalistic practices of this paper by raising criticism of Pakistan’s environmental policies and focusing on the worldwide scope of climate change, rather than its local perceptions, which were mostly sponsored by government and corporations. The journalists also wants to have complete
information, they want to remain in a position where they should not have any of the effort to get information. It is also an obliged duty of the social members to have special consideration for environmental issues. Society should engage in such matters with administration.

Several interesting themes are observed in this content analysis study. Environmental conditions are improved and changed with last decade. It is happening due to the natural disasters been witnessed. Now, society in collaboration with administration trying to get logic for these natural happenings; Greenhouse gas emissions, industrialization, deforestation were considered the major cause of climate change at global level. National contribution towards global climate change has not been considered of significance by all the newspapers. Deforestation, however, has been considered that major cause of climate at national level and then comes up industrialization.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate that how journalists are covering the environmental issues in Pakistan and what are the issues and challenges do they confront while reporting environmental issues. The study concludes that environmental journalists in Pakistan are working on same lines such as in Asia. Government of Pakistan is also serious in recent to invest in for environmental betterment. Pakistan is amongst best reputation for arranging conferences, seminars and environmental agreements. But yet very low coverage of the overall is denoted for environmental news. It is considered vast field here in Pakistan. Covering the environment in its geopolitical, social and scientific contexts requires expert knowledge and the capacity to frame environmental stories in an attractive way. In Pakistan such general narrative challenges are exacerbated by the lack of journalism professionals. A major challenge facing environmental journalists in the country is the lack of reliable environmental data, the journalists are relying more on data provided by the government officials or other secondary source which reliability has never been checked before going to make it public.

REFERENCES