

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN PRINT MEDIA: AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Samreen Haider

M.Phil in English Linguistics, Department of Graduate Studies (GS), NUML

Samreenhaider234@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study explores the representation of environmental sustainability in Pakistani English newspaper discourse from an ecolinguistic perspective. The research adopts Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the discursive construction of environmental issues in major national newspapers. Data was collected through purposive sampling from fifty newspaper articles published in Dawn, The News, The Express Tribune, The Nation, and Daily Times. The data was analysed through lexical categories, core environmental lexical units, theme–rheme structures, and framing patterns. The findings reveal that environmental sustainability is predominantly portrayed through crisis-oriented discourse, where climate change, floods, droughts, pollution, water scarcity, and environmental degradation are framed as urgent national concerns. The lexical choices frequently emphasise risk, destruction, depletion, and vulnerability, while positive sustainability narratives such as resilience, adaptation, renewable energy, and sustainable development appear less frequently. The study also finds that environmental discourse in Pakistani newspapers mainly focuses on policy failures, infrastructural weaknesses, and immediate environmental threats rather than long-term ecological transformation and innovation. Furthermore, the analysis highlights differences in newspaper framing, where some newspapers adopt policy-oriented and technocratic approaches while others rely on emotional and crisis-based representations of environmental challenges. The study concludes that Pakistani English newspaper discourse reflects growing awareness of environmental sustainability issues; however, it still requires a more balanced and future-oriented representation that promotes ecological responsibility and sustainable solutions. A key recommendation for future research is to extend the analysis to regional languages and multimodal media to explore broader environmental discourses in Pakistan. A major limitation of this study is its exclusive focus on English newspapers, which may not fully represent the diversity of environmental reporting in the country.

Keywords: ecolinguistics, environmental sustainability, climate change, media discourse, lexical choices, Pakistani newspapers, sustainability framing, environmental discourse.

1. Introduction

Environmental sustainability refers to the responsible management of natural resources to maintain a healthy, resilient natural environment over time. It emphasises long-term conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity, and life-supporting services such as air and water quality. This concept highlights the interconnectedness between human activities and environmental health and advocates for practices that sustain ecological integrity and resilience over time. The Earth has been experiencing negative environmental changes since the 18th century. It is no longer the same as it was before the Industrial Revolution. Human activities driven by industrialisation, urbanisation, and the excessive exploitation of natural resources have had far-reaching impacts on Earth's climate, with devastating consequences. We are experiencing drastic outcomes, mainly in the form of climate change repercussions. Environmentalists have warned about the unprecedented threats caused by anthropogenic activities that are destabilising the biosphere. We are part of a highly disturbed ecosystem that urgently requires global attention. Thus, the environmental sustainability approach is the need of the hour.

The mounting environmental crises marked by climate change, resource depletion, pollution, and biodiversity loss necessitate a critical examination of environmental sustainability discourses. In Pakistan, environmental issues have become increasingly alarming due to rapid population growth, deforestation, industrial emissions, poor waste management, and water scarcity. These ecological challenges affect social, economic, and public health conditions nationwide. Therefore, it is important to analyse how environmental sustainability is represented and discussed in public discourse, particularly in the media.

Language plays a central role in constructing and shaping social realities. Media discourse significantly influences public understanding, awareness, and attitudes toward environmental issues. Newspapers, in particular, serve as powerful platforms for presenting environmental concerns, framing climate-related narratives, and shaping policy debates. Through linguistic choices and discursive strategies, newspapers construct particular representations of environmental sustainability that may influence readers' perceptions regarding ecological responsibility and environmental action.

This research aims to examine the language of Pakistani English newspaper articles to explore the representation of environmental sustainability in media discourse. The study specifically intends to analyse how environmental sustainability is discursively constructed in Pakistani English newspapers. It focuses on identifying linguistic choices, thematic patterns, and framing strategies through which environmental crises and sustainability-related concerns are represented. Furthermore, the research seeks to investigate how media language shapes public understanding of ecological issues in the Pakistani context. In developing countries, including Pakistan, environmental degradation has intensified due to climate change, deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable developmental practices. Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts, including floods, droughts, heatwaves, and water shortages. These environmental emergencies disproportionately affect marginalised communities that heavily rely on natural resources for their livelihoods.

The media reflects society and operates dynamically. It both shapes and is shaped by prevailing social structures. The media plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing public discourse, particularly on environmental concerns. It contributes significantly to shaping policy debates, public perception, and environmental awareness. According to Castells (2001), the media play a significant role in transforming environmental sustainability from a general condition into a major public issue that gradually comes under state policy consideration. Thus, the media has a challenging responsibility to popularise environmental sustainability narratives and to influence the social behaviours and institutional frameworks necessary to address environmental problems. Currently, the world is facing severe climate change threats that have affected countries worldwide. Unsustainable environmental practices and excessive anthropogenic activities have disturbed the ecological balance and intensified climate-related disasters. Human-centred developmental approaches that prioritise economic gain over ecological protection have contributed significantly to environmental deterioration. As a result, the repercussions of climate change are increasingly visible worldwide.

Examining environmental sustainability in Pakistani print media discourse is significant for multiple reasons. Firstly, media representations of environmental issues help in understanding how ecological crises are socially constructed and communicated to the public. Secondly, analysing these representations can uncover the underlying socio-cultural ideologies, values, and power structures embedded within environmental discourse (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2013). The study of newspaper discourse enables researchers to identify how language is

strategically used to frame environmental problems, assign responsibility, and promote particular perspectives regarding sustainability and ecological protection. The study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse selected English-language newspaper articles on environmental sustainability. Through the application of linguistic and discourse-analytical techniques, the research provides insights into the linguistic strategies and discursive patterns used in representing environmental concerns in Pakistani English newspapers. Environmental sustainability entails the responsible management and utilisation of natural resources to meet the needs of the present generation while ensuring their protection for future generations. The ecologically damaging character of the modern world is increasingly exposed as broader social and scientific recognition of environmental issues grows (Barnett, 2001). In the contemporary world, the concept of environmental sustainability has gained considerable importance due to growing global awareness of the hazardous environmental impacts of anthropogenic activities. These impacts are manifested in climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, deforestation, and energy crises. Pakistan is currently experiencing severe climate change impacts and lacks sufficient strategies and infrastructure to address environmental challenges effectively. Therefore, the country requires strong environmental sustainability discourses, effective ecological policies, and increased public awareness regarding environmental protection and sustainable development.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To explore how environmental sustainability is constructed in selected Pakistani English newspaper discourse.
2. To identify the linguistic features and systemic structures used in selected newspaper articles to represent environmental sustainability issues.
3. To examine the framing techniques, recurring themes, ideologies, and power relations related to environmental sustainability in Pakistani English newspaper discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What recurring linguistic choices are used in selected Pakistani English newspaper articles to construct the discourse of environmental sustainability?
2. What linguistic features and systemic structures are employed in selected newspaper articles to represent environmental sustainability issues?
3. How are framing techniques, themes, ideologies, and power relations related to environmental sustainability represented in Pakistani English newspaper discourse?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the exploration of Pakistani print media discourse on environmental sustainability through a thorough Critical Discourse Analysis of selected English-language newspaper articles. The study applies an interdisciplinary approach that combines discourse analysis and environmental studies to investigate how leading Pakistani English newspapers represent environmental sustainability issues. The research identifies recurrent linguistic choices, discursive patterns, and framing strategies in newspaper discourse that construct environmental narratives and raise sustainability concerns. It highlights the significant role of language in shaping public perception, spreading ideologies, and influencing awareness regarding ecological crises and environmental protection. Through analysis of

media discourse, the study explores how newspapers reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies and power relations related to environmental degradation and sustainability.

Furthermore, this study aims to identify the prevailing linguistic strategies in Pakistani print media discourse for representing environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion. The research also examines how these representations contribute to public understanding and policy discourse related to environmental sustainability. The findings of this study are expected to facilitate the understanding of scholars, media practitioners, environmental activists, and policymakers of the role of media language in constructing environmental realities. In addition, the research may contribute to the development of more effective communication strategies for promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices in society. Finally, identifying underlying ideologies, representation patterns, and discursive structures in newspaper discourse can help promote more inclusive, responsible, and environmentally conscious media narratives in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Michael Halliday (2014), conceives language as a social semiotic system where linguistic choices are shaped by and reflect social contexts. SFL posits that language serves three broad metafunctions: ideational (representing experience), interpersonal (enacting social roles), and textual (organising information into coherent messages). The SFL framework is significant for the analysis of Theme–Rheme structures that are central to the textual metafunction. In a clause, the Theme represents the starting point or point of departure of information, signalling what the clause is about. In contrast, the Rheme carries the remaining message content that develops or elaborates on the Theme. This distinction helps researchers uncover how information flow is strategically organised to foreground certain ideas or participants and background others in discourse. In media discourse, such as newspaper texts, Theme–Rheme analysis reveals how editorial priorities and discursive emphasis are established. Clauses with environmental phenomena in thematic position suggest that these elements are foregrounded as crucial topics of discourse, whereas their placement in Rheme positions may reduce their perceptual salience. Identifying whether Themes are marked (emphasised or atypical) or unmarked (neutral or conventional) further elucidates how information structure reinforces particular ideological orientations, as thematic choices are not arbitrary but motivated by communicative intention and social meaning (Potter, 2016). The application of Theme–Rheme analysis in empirical research has provided insight into how ideological patterns are encoded in news reports. For example, studies have used Halliday’s SFL framework to examine English and Arabic news reports, demonstrating that thematic configuration is instrumental in shaping readers’ attention and signalling newsworthiness or ideological stance (Potter, 2016). Moreover, Theme–Rheme analysis intersects fruitfully with environmental discourse research because it connects linguistic form with social meaning. By identifying how environmental sustainability is positioned in thematic roles, this approach enables a systematic examination of dominant narratives, marginalising practices, and ideological preferences in print media. It complements other linguistic tools, such as lexical categorisation and framing analysis, by examining how clauses are structured to shape information flow and readers’ interpretations.

In summary, SFL’s Theme–Rheme analysis provides a rigorous theoretical foundation for linguistic analysis in discourse studies. It not only explains how language organises information

but also reveals how meanings are strategically constructed to reflect and shape social realities. Integrating SFL with Critical Discourse Analysis enables the present study to unravel the linguistic and ideological mechanisms underpinning representations of environmental sustainability in Pakistani English newspapers. The present study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its theoretical framework to examine the discourse of Pakistani English newspapers. CDA allows for a systematic analysis of language and power. It reveals how media texts construct, reinforce, or challenge dominant ideologies related to environmental issues (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993). The framework facilitates the study of linguistic choices, framing strategies, and discursive structures through which environmental sustainability is represented in Pakistani print media. The application of CDA enables the researcher to investigate how environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion are discursively constructed in newspapers. It also helps examine how media language shapes public perception, ecological awareness, and social attitudes toward sustainability. Through CDA, the study links linguistic features with broader social realities and ideological structures embedded in environmental discourse. Gillings and Dayrell (2019), in their research “UK Press: Examining Discourse Fluctuation Over Time,” conducted a diachronic corpus-based investigation of the UK national editorials' discourse from 2003 to 2019. They adopted Usage Fluctuation Analysis (UFA) to identify the evolution of collocational arrangements and discursive framing of core environmental terms such as “global warming” and “climate change” in both broadsheets and tabloids. The study revealed three discursive phases: early climate advocacy narratives, the rise of climate scepticism, and active public involvement with climate change. The findings reflected socio-political dynamics and shifts in public understanding over time.

Ecolinguistics finds its roots in the term “Ecology” which is defined by a German biologist, Haeckel (1866) as “the study of the interrelations between organism and their living and non-living surroundings, including organisms of the same and different species”. Afterward, an American Linguist, Haugen (1972), builds a nexus between ecology and language and shifts the focus of researchers to the ecological study of languages and the linguistic study of ecology. Haugen received appraisals for constructing a correlation between sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics; he is admired as the pioneer of ecolinguistics (ecology of language). The ecological aspects highlighted by Haugen made it mandatory to study a language in terms of its ecology and language ecology, which provided the gateway for the emergence of Ecolinguistics as a field of study and research and a branch of linguistics in the 1990s (Stibbe, 2015; Fill, 2018). The historical development of Ecolinguistics has been divided into four parts by Steffensen and Fill. These four parts include: 1) the existence of language in a symbolic ecology (the coexistence and impacts of multiple languages in a geographical region or social institution, creolization, language extinction, etc.), (2) the existence of language in a natural ecology, (3) the existence of language in a sociocultural ecology and 4) existence of language in a cognitive ecology (Steffensen and Fill 2013, p. 2). Abram (1996) in his book, “The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More than Human World”, provided an intense description of how the wider ecology that includes the “more than human world” constructs language and perception of cultures and enables the people to get harmonized with their ecosystem and live in conformity with it. Further developments in the field brought more advances. Fill (2001), for the first time, developed and defined the required terminologies for its different areas. First is “ecolinguistics,” which is defined as a term that could be applied to all the areas of research that consolidate ecological and linguistic studies. The second term he defined was “Ecology of language,” which investigates inter-language associations to study

linguistic diversity. The third term given by Fill was “Environmental linguistics,” which reflects upon ecological and environmental linguistic elements and principles to study a given language.

Gillings and Dayrell performed quantitative corpus analysis to identify longitudinal discourse structures in UK media. In contrast, the present study applies Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework to examine discursive patterns of environmental sustainability in Pakistani English newspapers. Their study focused on lexical changes and semantic fluctuations in relation to climate change over time, whereas the current research investigates dominant ideologies, framing strategies, and linguistic choices regarding environmental sustainability in Pakistani media discourse.

Almaghlouth (2022) conducted a corpus-based discourse analysis titled “Environmental Sustainability in the Online Media Discourses of Saudi Arabia.” The study examined sustainability discourse from different Saudi online platforms, particularly the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI). The researcher applied intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and Keynesian methods to investigate the discursive construction of environmental sustainability. The findings revealed an action-oriented discourse supported by narratives on tourism, the economy, and environmental risk. The study also identified limited attention to carbon emissions and insufficient emphasis on grassroots environmental transformation, highlighting gaps in sustainability discourse. While Almaghlouth investigated Saudi official digital discourse on climate change, the present study focuses on environmental sustainability discourse in Pakistani English newspapers. The research analyses environmental patterns and linguistic structures in newspaper discourse by applying Critical Discourse Analysis to explore ideological constructions and framing strategies related to sustainability issues. Mahmood et al. (2025) conducted a study titled “Understanding Sustainable Environmental Practices amongst Professional Women in Lahore.” The researchers explored the role of urban women in promoting environmentally sustainable practices through qualitative phenomenological research. The findings identified barriers, including infrastructural deficiencies, resource scarcity, and cultural constraints, that limit environmental activism. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainable practices when provided with educational opportunities and institutional support. The study highlighted the need for reforms at the institutional and policy levels to promote sustainability. Similarly, Habib and Zahra (2024) performed an eco-linguistic and visual semiotic study on the portrayal of floods in Pakistan in *Time Magazine*. Their study, “Eco-Linguistic Analysis of Flood Representations in Selected Print Media: A Case of Climate Change Semiotics,” applied qualitative analysis to investigate signs, imagery, composition, colour, and visual representation. The findings identified recurring themes, including realism, resilience, emotional trauma, and devastation. The study demonstrated the significance of semiotic arrangements in shaping public perception regarding ecological crises and climate change. Research on environmental sustainability discourse in Pakistani print media remains limited. However, studies such as Raza (2022) examined the language used in newspaper articles on climate change and found that environmental issues were frequently represented in an alarming, negative tone. The study highlighted how media discourse influences public perception regarding ecological crises and environmental threats.

Previous studies have explored environmental discourse through corpus analysis, visual semiotics, eco-linguistics, and media framing approaches. However, limited attention has been

given to the linguistic construction of environmental sustainability in Pakistani English newspapers through Critical Discourse Analysis. Most previous work has primarily focused on climate representation, visual imagery, or policy narratives rather than on detailed linguistic and ideological analysis of newspaper discourse. Therefore, there is a need for an integrated discourse-oriented approach to examine how Pakistani print media constructs narratives of environmental sustainability and shapes ecological awareness. The present study addresses this gap by employing Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the linguistic structures, ideological patterns, and framing strategies used in Pakistani English newspapers. The study provides nuanced insights into the role of media language in shaping public understanding, awareness, and attitudes regarding environmental sustainability. In conclusion, environmental sustainability has become one of the most pressing global concerns, particularly in countries such as Pakistan that are experiencing severe climatic impacts. The application of discourse analysis to Pakistani print media highlights the need for balanced, responsible, and environmentally conscious reporting. More comprehensive media coverage of environmental issues can help raise ecological awareness, promote sustainable practices, and encourage environmentally responsible policies to protect future generations.

3. Research Methodology

This section reflects the conceptual framework and research design on which the study is based.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative elements to explore the representation of environmental sustainability in Pakistani print media discourse. While the primary focus remains qualitative, the data were also analysed quantitatively to uncover recurring lexical patterns and prominent thematic regularities. As Maxwell (2010) highlights, integrating quantitative data into qualitative research helps surface patterns that might otherwise be overlooked, thereby strengthening the study's analytical depth and interpretive insight. Accordingly, the research applies a content analysis approach to systematically examine fifty articles from selected Pakistani English newspapers published between January 2015 and June 2023. The quantitative component used AntConc, a corpus-linguistics software tool, to generate frequency lists, keyword profiles, collocation patterns, and concordance data for each newspaper corpus. These quantitative results provided empirical evidence of salient linguistic features that were further interpreted through qualitative frameworks. The study is anchored in Fairclough's (2013) Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate linguistic choices, recurrent ideologies, framing techniques, and thematic structures within the media texts.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

This study follows an interpretivist research paradigm, seeking to understand the world from the perspectives of those who create and consume newspaper discourse. It emphasises exploring the meanings, experiences, and social realities behind the representation of environmental sustainability, rather than simply counting or measuring textual features. By adopting an interpretivist lens, the researcher can delve into the nuanced language, underlying patterns, and context-specific interpretations that shape public understanding. This approach values the complex realities reflected in media texts and acknowledges that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and cultural contexts (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schwandt, 2014).

3.2 Data Collection

The data for the research have been gathered manually using the purposive sampling technique from 50 articles available in the online archives of five major Pakistani English newspapers, including Express Tribune, Dawn, The Nation, Daily Times, and The News, published between January 2015 and June 2023. Only those articles have been selected that address environmental sustainability and environmental issues. The articles have been collected based on their accessibility and relevance to the framed research objectives and questions.

The majority of the articles are taken from the opinion and editorial sections of the selected newspapers, while some are also selected from specific sections. In the case of Dawn, some articles have been taken from the Prism section, whereas in The News, some articles have been selected from the Blog section. The articles have been collected using different keywords such as Climate Change in Pakistan, Environmental Sustainability, Climate Crisis, Environmental Pollution, Floods in Pakistan, Water Scarcity, Sustainable Development, Deforestation, Biodiversity Loss, Environmental Policies, and Ecological Challenges in Pakistan. The researcher searched for relevant articles by typing these keywords into the search bars of the selected newspapers.

(The names of the selected articles have been attached at the end as Annex I).

3.2.1 Justification for Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used because this research aimed to explore and analyse specific linguistic and thematic patterns in media discourse. In qualitative research, purposive sampling involves selecting texts that are most relevant and information-rich for the research focus. In this case, English-language newspaper articles that explicitly address environmental sustainability are selected to enable the data to meaningfully answer the research questions. This approach allowed the researcher to deliberately select articles that contained key themes and linguistic patterns needed for in-depth analysis.

3.2.2 Validity of Data

The study ensures data validity by drawing on five reliable, popular Pakistani English newspapers: Dawn, Daily Times, Express Tribune, The News, and The Nation. These newspapers are considered reliable sources of information. The articles are selected based on their relevance to the research topic. They are publicly available and easily accessible for cross-examination. Similarly, the data from different newspapers provide multiple perspectives on the same issue, ensuring a balanced approach to the study.

3.3 Rationale for Taking Critical Discourse Analysis as the Theoretical Framework

While this study is situated within the field of environmental discourse studies, it adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary theoretical framework because CDA provides the critical depth and socio-political grounding necessary to examine how language constructs environmental realities. CDA is valuable for investigating how media discourse shapes public understanding, reinforces ideologies, and reflects power relations embedded within environmental narratives.

Given that this research specifically focuses on how environmental sustainability is represented in Pakistani media discourse, CDA offers the necessary conceptual tools to investigate environmental framing, ideological positioning, and discursive strategies. It enables the

researcher to move beyond surface-level description toward a critical interpretation of how environmental issues are constructed and communicated in Pakistani English newspapers.

3.4 Rationale for Taking 5 Newspapers

The study purposively selected Dawn, The News International, Express Tribune, Daily Times, and The Nation because they enjoy wide readership among educated and influential groups who contribute to national policy formulation and implementation. Index reports on editorial output show that The News and Dawn regularly publish high volumes of editorial articles. At the same time, Daily Times, Express Tribune, and The Nation also contribute substantial editorial content, indicating their ongoing involvement in public discourse.

Purposive sampling of these information-rich outlets ensures that the collected data is relevant for analysing environmental sustainability discourse in mainstream English media. These newspapers provide suitable and meaningful data for exploring how environmental sustainability themes are constructed in influential Pakistani print media.

3.5 Rationale for Taking 50 Articles

A total of 50 articles were chosen for examination to ensure a balanced understanding of the content published in the top five English newspapers in Pakistan. An equal share of articles, amounting to 10 from each publication, was selected. This strategy was employed to minimise the dominance of any single newspaper's perspective in the research. Attention has been concentrated on the recent eight-year period because it marked the escalation of climate-related crises and environmental challenges. By focusing on this timeframe, a deeper understanding of the evolution and increasing severity of environmental issues can be attained.

3.6 Conceptual Framework

The study has been conducted on the theoretical foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis presented by Norman Fairclough in his work *Language and Power* (Fairclough, 1989). He expanded this model in his later works, *Discourse and Social Change* (Fairclough, 1992) and *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough, 1995).

CDA is a primary tool for analysing print media discourse at multiple levels. It highlights the relationship between language, social structures, and power dynamics. This framework has three levels of meaning. The first is the micro-level analysis, also called text analysis. It is applied to examine linguistic choices in the selected articles to understand how they contribute to meaning-making patterns related to environmental sustainability. Similarly, the second level, which develops a connection between discourse and its production and perception, has not been taken into account in the research. The third one is social practice, which links recurring textual practices to larger social contexts. In the current study, this level has been applied to identify how Pakistani print media representations of environmental sustainability align with or contradict dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism, environmental justice, and sustainable development. This interdisciplinary approach ensures the examination of language patterns in Pakistani English newspaper articles in the construction and propagation of ideological standpoints, thematic structures, and framing patterns related to environmental sustainability. Furthermore, this framework enables the researcher to critically investigate the representation of environmental issues and their implications for society and policymaking in media discourse.

The conceptual framework of this study integrates Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the interconnections between environmental sustainability and media discourse. This framework directly informs the methodology by guiding the selection of data, the analytical focus, and the interpretation of findings. Specifically, the framework highlights how language reflects social hierarchies, environmental concerns, and ideological constructions.

3.6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

According to Fairclough (1989), language is not merely a tool of communication; rather, it involves meaning-making processes. Critical Discourse Analysis of language, whether written or spoken, reveals how power is projected, how ideologies are constructed and deconstructed, and how social injustices are reinforced or challenged.

Fairclough presented three dimensions of discourse analysis as follows:

- **Text Analysis:** Also known as description, it provides a structural examination of the actual text. It is also known as a micro-level analysis, involving the identification of grammatical structures and lexical units used to encode meaning.
- **Discursive Practice:** Also called interpretation, this level examines the production and consumption of a given text and considers the understanding of both the author and the readers.
- **Social Practice:** Also termed explanation, this level presents the broader social and political fabric reflected in the text. It helps in understanding how discourse contributes to the maintenance or transformation of social power structures.

3.6.1.1 Role of CDA Levels in the Analysis

In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis has been applied primarily at the micro and macro levels.

- At the micro level, the analysis focuses on lexical choices, phrases, and sentence structures in the selected newspaper articles. It plays a significant role in identifying how language constructs meanings and portrays environmental issues, revealing subtle ideologies embedded in the text.
- At the macro level, the study considers the broader social, cultural, and political context in which the media texts are produced. This provides an understanding of how societal power relations and environmental concerns are reflected in media discourse.
- The meso level has not been applied because the study focuses on textual representations in newspaper articles rather than the internal operations or editorial policies of media organizations.

3.7 Research Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach. It adopts a corpus-assisted quantitative approach alongside qualitative interpretation. Each newspaper was treated as a separate corpus, and the texts were processed individually to preserve newspaper-specific linguistic patterns. The corpus of 50 articles was processed using AntConc (Version 3.5.9).

The results are presented in tabular form, followed by detailed analysis based on the conceptual framework. This procedure follows standard practices in corpus-based discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis was conducted in four distinct, progressive stages to ensure both linguistic precision and sociological depth. AntConc was utilised as the primary tool for the quantitative dimensions of the analysis.

3.8.1 Analysis of Major Lexical Categories

The first stage involved identifying broad lexical categories related to environmental sustainability. Using the “Word List” function in AntConc, the most frequent nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs were categorized. This provided an initial quantitative map of the discourse, showing which concepts dominate the media vocabulary.

3.8.2 Analysis of Core Lexical Units

The second stage involved a detailed frequency count of individual lexical units. AntConc’s “Concordance” tool was used to verify the context of these units, ensuring they were relevant to environmental issues and sustainability concerns. The frequencies identified here provided the raw data necessary to establish which specific terms carry the most weight in the selected newspapers.

3.8.3 Theme–Rheme Analysis

The third stage shifted to the structural level through Theme–Rheme analysis. This stage examined how information is organised at the sentence level, specifically what information is placed in the Theme (the starting point/given information) versus the Rheme (the new information). This allowed the study to identify foregrounding and backgrounding of environmental aspects in newspaper discourse.

3.8.4 Framing Analysis

The final stage carried out framing analysis. Here, environmental frames and sustainability narratives were identified. The percentages for these frames were calculated by dividing the frequency of each frame by the total number of frames identified in the newspaper dataset. This stage presents the study's social and practical implications by showing the relative prominence of environmental sustainability concerns in Pakistani English newspaper discourse.

4. Data Analysis

This section presents the study's findings on the environmental sustainability discourse in selected Pakistani English newspapers. The data has been analysed through three major domains: lexicalisation, thematization, and framing. The findings are presented respectively.

In the analysis of lexical units, some words occur only once or twice in the corpus. Although these low-frequency items are numerically limited, they carry important qualitative value. Such occurrences often reflect emerging perspectives or nuanced expressions within the discourse. They highlight subtle dimensions of environmental sustainability that may not be captured by high-frequency terms. For instance, rare verbs or adjectives can indicate specific actions, attitudes, or ideologies associated with environmental narratives, thereby providing contextual

depth and interpretive richness. Therefore, including these low-frequency lexical units complements the broader analysis and ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the discursive strategies employed across the selected newspaper articles (Stubbs, 2001).

4.1 Lexical Categorization of Environmental Sustainability Discourse

This section presents the lexical categorization of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs identified in the selected newspapers. The analysis demonstrates how different parts of speech construct meanings related to environmental sustainability. By examining recurring lexical categories, this part highlights the linguistic strategies that shape the discourse on environmental sustainability.

4.1.1 Major Lexical Categories in *The News*

Table 4.1

Major Lexical Categories Related to Environmental Sustainability

Lexical Categories	Lexical Items	Frequency
Nouns	Water	104
	Climate change	68
	Disaster	23
	Policy	13
	Resources	11
	Resilience	9
	Vulnerability	9
	Agriculture	8
	Damage	8
	Adaptation	6
	Impact	5
	Environment	4
	Losses	3
	Mitigation	2
	Carbon emission	1
	Sustainability	1
Verbs	Can	25
	Affected	22
	Access	18
	Needs	15
	Need to	8
	Work	7
	Leave	5
	Increase	4
	Become	4
	Could	4
	Contribute	4
	Adapt	3
	Protect	3
	Reduce	3

Address	3
Force	3
Involve	3
Require	3
Respond	1
Improve	1
Enhance	1
Conserve	1
Promote	1
Integrate	1
Combat	1
Implement	1
Hampers	1

Tables 4.1 presents the lexical categorization of *The News* related to environmental sustainability discourse. The high-frequency nouns such as *water*, *climate change*, *disaster*, and *resources* highlight the newspaper's strong focus on ecological crises and sustainability concerns in Pakistan. The repeated occurrence of *water* and *climate change* reflects the significance of environmental degradation and climate-related challenges in public discourse. Similarly, lexical items such as *resilience*, *adaptation*, and *mitigation* indicate the growing emphasis on sustainable environmental responses and climate adaptation strategies.

The verbs identified in the discourse such as *adapt*, *protect*, *reduce*, *address*, and *combat* portray an action-oriented environmental narrative. These verbs suggest the necessity of practical measures to manage environmental degradation and climate-related risks. Likewise, modal verbs such as *can*, *could*, and *need to* express obligation, possibility, and urgency regarding environmental protection and sustainability practices.

The adjective category further strengthens the environmental discourse. Frequently occurring adjectives such as *environmental*, *global*, *sustainable*, and *devastating* frame climate change as a serious and worldwide challenge. Similarly, adjectives like *resilient* and *effective* indicate positive and solution-oriented approaches toward environmental sustainability.

The adverbs such as *effectively*, *significantly*, *gradually*, and *globally* intensify the discourse and demonstrate the authors' evaluative stance regarding environmental issues. These lexical choices reinforce the urgency of environmental sustainability and highlight the need for long-term ecological policies and public awareness. Overall, the discourse of *The News* presents environmental sustainability as a critical national and global concern that requires collective action, policy reforms, and sustainable environmental practices.

4.1.2 Major Lexical Categories in *Daily Times*

Table 4.2

Major Lexical Categories Related to Environmental Sustainability

Lexical Categories	Lexical Items	Frequency
Nouns	Water	106
	Climate change	37

Verbs	Flood	16
	Environment	10
	Pollution	8
	Scarcity	5
	Drought	5
	Green	4
	Deforestation	4
	Waste	3
	Infrastructure	3
	Natural resource	3
	Destruction	2
	Irrigation	1
	Hit	10
Adjectives	Supply	8
	Focus	6
	Affect	5
	Waste	3
	Consume	3
	Implement	3
	Initiated	2
	Ignore	2
	Manage	1
	Clean	14
Adverbs	Environmental	12
	Affected	10
	Sustainable	9
	Negative	4
	Carbon	4
	Displaced	3
	Especially	6
	Disproportionately	4
	Very	4
	Similarly	4
	Superficially	3
	Early	2
	Physically	1
	Thoroughly	1

Table 4.2 presents the lexical categorization of *Daily Times* related to environmental sustainability discourse. The newspaper strongly foregrounds environmental concerns through high-frequency lexical items such as *water*, *climate change*, *flood*, and *pollution*. These words indicate the newspaper's focus on ecological degradation, climate crises, and resource management in Pakistan. The frequent use of terms such as *scarcity*, *drought*, and *deforestation* further reflects concerns regarding environmental imbalance and depletion of natural resources.

The verbs used in the discourse such as *focus*, *implement*, *manage*, and *consume* portray environmental sustainability as an issue requiring practical intervention and policy implementation. Likewise, verbs such as *hit* and *affect* highlight the damaging consequences of climate change and environmental destruction.

The adjective category strengthens the sustainability discourse through lexical items such as *clean*, *environmental*, and *sustainable*. These adjectives create a positive environmental narrative that advocates ecological protection and responsible resource management. In contrast, adjectives like *negative* and *affected* emphasize the harmful impacts of environmental degradation.

The adverbs including *especially*, *disproportionately*, and *thoroughly* intensify the seriousness of environmental issues and indicate the unequal and severe consequences of climate-related disasters. Overall, the discourse of *the Daily Times constructs environmental sustainability as a pressing issue requiring* environmental awareness, policy reforms, and sustainable development practices.

4.2 Core Lexical Choices and Systemic Structures in Environmental Sustainability Discourse

This section examines the core lexical units that recur across the five newspapers, identifying the key words and expressions that reflect narratives of environmental sustainability. These lexical items reveal patterns in the representation of environmental challenges, climate adaptation, resource management, and sustainability practices.

Lexicalisation is a significant process through which writers shape social reality and public understanding by encoding abstract concepts and subtle ideologies into specific words and phrases. Fowler (1991) defines lexicalisation as the intentional choice of vocabulary items to construct identities, experiences, and actions in ideologically significant ways. Lexical coding not only functions as a stylistic choice in the context of environmental discourse in Pakistani print media but also operates as an ideological mechanism that reflects social structures and environmental priorities. The analysis of frequently occurring lexical choices demonstrates how language is used to foreground or background different interpretations of environmental sustainability.

Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model provides a methodological basis for uncovering sociopolitical structures and discursive practices by analysing specific lexical choices in a given text. Language is not merely a tool of communication but also a carrier of ideological meanings. The environmental sustainability discourse in Pakistani English newspapers frequently employs lexical items such as *resilience*, *disaster*, *sustainability*, *adaptation*, *climate change*, *rehabilitation*, and *development*, which carry strong connotative meanings and shape public perceptions of environmental crises and sustainability measures.

Similarly, these lexical choices encode underlying ideologies associated with environmental governance and sustainability practices. Ideologies are embedded in discourse and shape perceptions of reality and the construction of meaning (Van Dijk, 1998). For instance, when media discourse repeatedly emphasises technological solutions, climate finance, rehabilitation, and sustainable development, it reflects an action-oriented environmental narrative focused on adaptation and policy implementation. This lexical pattern highlights how environmental sustainability is constructed as both a national and global concern requiring institutional responses and long-term planning.

Hence, the analysis of lexical choices and their frequencies reveals how environmental narratives are discursively constructed in Pakistani English newspapers. Ecolinguistics views language as part of a broader ecological system, the recurrence and grouping of specific vocabulary items demonstrate how ecological relationships and environmental priorities are represented in media discourse (Stibbe, 2015; Harré et al., 1999). The examination of lexicalisation as a discursive strategy is important for understanding how environmental sustainability is promoted through media language and how ecological awareness is constructed in public discourse.

4.2.1 Lexical Analysis of *The News*

Table 4.3

Core Lexical Choices Related to Environmental Sustainability

Core Words	Relevant Lexical Items	Frequency
Environment	Environment	4
Sustainability	Sustainability	1
Development	Development	4
Susceptibility	Susceptible	2
Implementation	Climate finance	1
Adaptation	Climate change laws	7
	Emergencies	2
	Disaster management	1
	Food security	4
	Climate resilience	1
	Climate finance	3
	Rehabilitation	2
	Sustainable	3
	Water wheels	10
	Innovative	7
	Solar powered	3
	Rehabilitation	4
	Agriculture	8
Slum	Slums	20
Calamity	Water scarcity	6
	Earth	7
	Floods	47
	Storms	2
	Landslide	1
	Droughts	3
	Loss and damage	7
	Overexploitation	1
	Disasters	44

Heatwaves	4
Climate change	68
Weather patterns	5
Flooding	5
Climate catastrophe	1
Food crisis	1
Climate change calamities	1

Table 4.3 presents the core lexical choices related to environmental sustainability discourse in *The News*. The lexical items demonstrate a strong emphasis on climate-related crises, sustainability practices, and adaptation strategies. High-frequency words such as *climate change* (68), *floods* (47), and *disasters* (44) indicate that environmental degradation and climate-induced calamities dominate the newspaper's environmental discourse. These recurring lexical items construct climate change as a persistent, large-scale threat to ecological stability and human survival.

The frequent occurrence of terms such as water scarcity, droughts, heatwaves, and food crises highlights Pakistan's environmental vulnerabilities under changing climatic conditions. These lexical choices foreground ecological instability and resource depletion as major environmental concerns. Similarly, words like *loss*, *damage*, and *climate catastrophe* intensify the seriousness of climate emergencies and portray environmental degradation as destructive and urgent.

The adaptation-related lexical items, such as climate resilience, disaster management, rehabilitation, sustainable, and innovative, reflect a solution-oriented discourse. These terms suggest the need for environmental planning, resilience-building, and sustainable developmental strategies to manage ecological crises effectively. Likewise, lexical items such as *solar-powered*, *water wheels*, and *agriculture* indicate the newspaper's focus on sustainable technologies, renewable energy, and environmentally friendly practices.

The recurrence of terms such as *climate finance*, *climate change laws*, and *implementation* reflects the institutional and policy-oriented dimension of environmental sustainability discourse. These lexical choices suggest that environmental issues are not merely natural phenomena but are also connected with governance, legislation, and policymaking.

Overall, the lexical patterns in *The News* construct environmental sustainability discourse around climate crises, ecological vulnerability, sustainable development, and adaptive environmental responses. The newspaper portrays environmental sustainability as a multidimensional issue requiring technological innovation, policy reforms, disaster preparedness, and collective environmental responsibility.

4.3 Comparative Analysis of Core Lexical Units Across Five Newspapers

This section presents a consolidated comparative analysis of core lexical units across all five newspapers. Examining the findings collectively enables a clearer comparison of lexical patterns related to environmental sustainability, climate change, ecological crises, and adaptation strategies.

Table 4.4

Environmental Sustainability Lexical Patterns Across Five Newspapers

S. No.	Core Lexical Unit	Dawn	The News	Daily Times	The Nation	Express Tribune
1	Environment	2	5	–	3	10
2	Development	3	16	7	8	11
3	Susceptibility	5	14	2	–	3
4	Adaptation	10	50	34	25	1
5	Slum	–	20	1	–	–
6	Calamity	4	205	2	3	–
7	Sustainability/Sustainable	15	11	18	3	81
8	Unsustainability	87	–	–	–	18
9	Resilience	22	13	5	25	3
10	Crisis	18	7	6	7	2
11	Urgency	8	1	4	1	–
12	Climate change	24	6	46	66	40
13	Disasters	40	44	6	40	14
14	Unsustainable practices	–	2	4	7	–
15	Adaptation and Mitigation	11	10	16	25	1
16	Climate	56	112	59	66	53
17	Water	26	126	18	26	126
18	Pollution	–	8	–	5	8
19	Energy	7	–	6	7	4
20	Environmental Challenges	9	5	85	7	12
21	Floods	27	47	43	11	20
22	Displacement	3	–	18	3	6
23	Temperature	3	5	5	–	11
24	Awareness	1	3	2	1	2
25	Resource Management	4	12	–	9	5

The analysis of core lexical units related to environmental sustainability across five major Pakistani English newspapers reveals important patterns in the representation of climate issues, ecological crises, adaptation measures, and sustainability concerns. According to Critical Discourse Analysis, language is not neutral; rather, it carries ideologies and shapes public understanding regarding environmental problems and sustainable development.

The table demonstrates that lexical items such as *climate* (53–112 occurrences), *climate change* (6–66 occurrences), and *adaptation* (1–50 occurrences) appear frequently across all newspapers. This indicates that environmental sustainability discourse is strongly framed around climate emergencies and adaptation strategies. Newspapers emphasise the need for institutional preparedness, resilience-building, and mitigation policies in response to increasing environmental threats.

Similarly, lexical items such as *disasters*, *floods*, and *calamity* occur frequently, especially in The News, where *calamity* appears 205 times. This reflects a disaster-oriented framing of environmental sustainability, where environmental concerns are primarily represented through floods, droughts, storms, and other climate-induced emergencies. Such lexical patterns suggest

that Pakistani newspapers focus heavily on the immediate impacts of environmental degradation rather than long-term ecological transformation.

The lexical units *sustainability*, *sustainable*, *unsustainability*, and *unsustainable practices* reveal growing concern regarding ecological preservation and sustainable development. *Express Tribune* shows the highest occurrence of sustainability-related vocabulary (81), indicating a stronger emphasis on environmental solutions and sustainable practices. Likewise, the recurring use of *adaptation and mitigation* demonstrates media attention towards policy responses and environmental management strategies.

Words such as *water*, *pollution*, *energy*, and *resource management* foreground key environmental challenges in Pakistan. The high frequency of *water-related terms in The News and Express Tribune (126 occurrences each)* highlights concerns about water scarcity, resource depletion, and environmental management. Similarly, lexical items such as *pollution* and *energy* indicate increasing media attention toward industrialisation, environmental degradation, and sustainable energy practices.

The lexical category *environmental challenges* appears most frequently in *the Daily Times (85 occurrences)*, suggesting that the newspaper places a stronger emphasis on structural ecological problems and sustainability concerns. Meanwhile, *Dawn* and *The Nation* balance crisis-oriented discourse with adaptation-focused narratives through frequent use of terms such as *resilience*, *adaptation*, and *mitigation*.

Overall, the comparative lexical analysis demonstrates that environmental sustainability discourse in Pakistani English newspapers is predominantly framed around climate crises, natural disasters, adaptation policies, water scarcity, and sustainability practices. The newspapers collectively construct environmental sustainability as an urgent national issue requiring institutional action, environmental awareness, and long-term sustainable development strategies.

4.4 Thematic Analysis of Environmental Sustainability Discourse

This section analyses Theme–Rheme patterns across the selected newspapers, highlighting how the arrangement of information emphasises environmental sustainability issues. Moreover, the identification of marked and unmarked themes demonstrates the textual strategies used to foreground or background key environmental concerns.

M. A. K. Halliday developed the concept of Theme–Rheme analysis as a core notion in Systemic Functional Linguistics, which explores the organisation and arrangement of information within a clause. The theme acts as the introductory part that presents an idea, while the rheme contains new information related to the theme. According to Christian Matthiessen and Halliday (2014), Theme–Rheme structures reveal meaning-making patterns in discourse by reflecting the writer’s perspectives, ideologies, and communicative intentions. In *Critical Discourse Analysis*, Fairclough (2001) emphasises that thematic organisation highlights societal power relations, recurring ideologies, and marginalised environmental concerns.

A significant aspect of Theme–Rheme analysis is the distinction between marked and unmarked themes. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), unmarked themes generally follow the default grammatical structure, while marked themes deviate from this structure to foreground specific situational, temporal, or ideological concerns. In environmental sustainability discourse, marked themes such as “during climate emergencies” and “in flood-

prone regions” foreground environmental urgency and ecological instability. These thematic choices shape social meanings and establish relationships between environmental problems and societal responses (Thompson, 2014).

Within environmental journalism, repeated thematic positioning of climate change, disasters, floods, adaptation, and sustainability highlights the centrality of ecological crises in media discourse. Theme–Rheme analysis, therefore, provides insight into how Pakistani English newspapers construct environmental narratives, foreground ecological threats, and emphasise adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development. The analysis also reveals whether environmental concerns are framed as crisis-oriented or solution-oriented.

4.4.1 Thematic Patterns Related to Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Table 4.5

S. No	Theme	Rheme	Marked/Unmarked
1	Due to climate change	Environmental risks are increasing rapidly	Marked
2	Climate change	has intensified environmental instability	Unmarked
3	Floods	continue to damage agricultural lands	Unmarked
4	Water scarcity	affects daily life in rural regions	Unmarked
5	Climate adaptation	is necessary for sustainable development	Unmarked
6	Environmental degradation	threatens biodiversity and livelihoods	Unmarked
7	In disaster-prone areas	communities face severe ecological losses	Marked
8	Rising temperatures	have increased pressure on water resources	Unmarked
9	Climate change	has worsened food insecurity	Unmarked
10	Sustainable practices	help reduce environmental damage	Unmarked
11	Environmental policies	require effective implementation	Unmarked
12	Flood disasters	have displaced thousands of people	Unmarked
13	Resource management	is essential for climate resilience	Unmarked
14	Heatwaves	are becoming more frequent and intense	Unmarked
15	Climate crises	Demand urgent mitigation strategies	Unmarked

The Theme–Rheme structures in Table 4.5 foreground environmental sustainability issues through the repeated use of ecological themes such as climate change, floods, water scarcity, environmental degradation, and sustainability. Most clauses employ unmarked themes, where environmental phenomena occupy the grammatical subject position. This repeated thematic positioning normalises environmental crises as dominant realities within Pakistani media discourse. According to Norman Fairclough (1995), repeated thematic structures reinforce dominant social concerns and shape public understanding of reality.

Marked themes such as “Due to climate change” and “In disaster-prone areas” shift attention toward contextual and situational causes of ecological instability. These thematic choices foreground the urgency and systemic nature of environmental crises. The rhemes frequently contain negatively connotated lexical items such as “damage,” “losses,” “instability,” “pressure,” and “displacement,” emphasising the destructive consequences of climate change and environmental unsustainability.

Similarly, themes such as “Climate adaptation,” “Sustainable practices,” and “Resource management” introduce solution-oriented discourse. Their rhemes stress mitigation, resilience, and sustainability, reflecting reform-oriented environmental narratives. These patterns align with ecolinguistic perspectives, which argue that language shapes ecological awareness and influences environmental behaviour (Stibbe, 2015).

The thematic structures also reveal a disaster-centred environmental discourse. Themes like “Floods,” “Flood disasters,” and “Heatwaves” are followed by rhemes highlighting destruction, displacement, and resource shortages. Such patterns construct climate change as an immediate ecological threat requiring urgent institutional and social responses.

Overall, the Theme–Rheme patterns show that Pakistani English newspapers foreground environmental crises through repeated thematic emphasis on climate change, disasters, water scarcity, and sustainability. While many thematic structures focus on ecological threats and environmental degradation, others highlight adaptation, resilience, and sustainable resource management, reflecting a combination of crisis-oriented and solution-oriented environmental. This section presents the framing patterns identified in the corpus. It illustrates how newspapers structure environmental sustainability issues by highlighting recurring frames and ideologies. Goffman (1974) defines framing as a method to construct social realities through linguistic structures by emphasising specific dimensions of an issue and omitting others. It helps to decode the construction and maintenance of narratives in media texts. Framing is particularly relevant in environmental journalism, where lexical choices carry ideological meanings that shape public understanding of ecological crises and sustainability concerns (Entman, 1993).

The role of frames is crucial because they are responsible for legitimising particular worldviews and policy preferences regarding environmental issues. Frames such as “climate crisis,” “water scarcity,” “resource degradation,” “adaptation,” “sustainable development,” and “policy failure” influence public attitudes towards ecological degradation and environmental responsibility. Fairclough (1995) stresses the critical interrogation of frames because they play a central role in sustaining or challenging dominant ideologies and institutional power relations. Entman’s (2004) framing model identifies four major framing functions: problem interpretation, identification of causes, formulation of moral judgments, and proposition of remedies. In environmental sustainability discourse, these framing functions help to foreground ecological threats, identify causes such as climate change and unsustainable practices, and propose solutions including adaptation, resilience, renewable energy, and sustainable resource management. Therefore, framing analysis is significant for understanding how Pakistani English newspapers construct environmental sustainability narratives and shape public perceptions regarding ecological crises and environmental reforms.

4.5 Framing of Environmental Sustainability Issues

This section presents the framing patterns identified in the corpus. It illustrates how newspapers structure environmental sustainability issues by highlighting recurring frames and ideologies.

Erving Goffman (1974) defines framing as a method of constructing social realities through linguistic structures by emphasising certain dimensions of an issue while backgrounding others. Framing helps explain how media narratives are developed and maintained in public discourse. In environmental journalism, lexical choices carry ideological meanings that shape public understanding of ecological crises and sustainability concerns (Entman, 1993). Framing in environmental sustainability discourse is significant because it uncovers how environmental crises, climate change, resource scarcity, and sustainable development are represented in media texts. Frames such as “climate crisis,” “water scarcity,” “sustainable development,” and “policy failure” shape public attitudes toward environmental degradation and ecological responsibility. According to Norman Fairclough (1995), framing plays a crucial role in maintaining or challenging dominant ideologies and institutional power relations. Entman (2004) identifies four major framing functions: problem definition, cause identification, moral evaluation, and recommendation of remedies. In environmental sustainability discourse, these framing functions highlight ecological threats, identify causes such as climate change and unsustainable practices, and propose adaptation, resilience, and sustainable resource management as solutions.

4.5.1 Framing Analysis in Daily Times

Table 4.6

Environmental Sustainability Frames

Major Frames	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Climate Change	60	0.76%
Water Crisis	126	1.60%
Pollution	11	0.14%
Sustainable Development	81	1.03%
Crisis	23	0.29%
Policy and Governance	18	0.23%
Total	319	4.06%

The framing analysis of Daily Times reveals a strong environmental sustainability discourse centred on water insecurity, climate change, and sustainable development. The most dominant frame is the water crisis frame (1.60%), which presents water scarcity as a serious ecological and social threat. The discourse highlights inadequate infrastructure, resource depletion, and climate-induced water shortages as pressing environmental challenges.

Similarly, the climate change frame (0.76%) emphasises rising temperatures, floods, droughts, and environmental instability. Climate change is framed as an urgent ecological crisis affecting both natural resources and human livelihoods. The repeated focus on crisis and environmental degradation constructs climate change as a national emergency requiring immediate action.

The sustainable development frame (1.03%) reflects a solutions-oriented discourse. Sustainable practices and environmental reforms are foregrounded as necessary measures to repair ecological damage and ensure long-term environmental security. The policy and governance frame further stresses the importance of institutional responsibility and environmental management in addressing ecological crises.

Overall, the framing patterns of Daily Times construct environmental sustainability through a combination of crisis-oriented and reform-oriented narratives, emphasising both environmental threats and sustainable solutions.

4.5.2 Framing Analysis of Express Tribune

Table 4.7

Environmental Sustainability Frames

Frames	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Climate Change	101	1.39%
Resource Degradation	9	0.12%
Adaptation and Mitigation Efforts	15	0.21%
Infrastructure	12	0.17%
Water Crisis	26	0.36%
Energy	7	0.10%
Total	170	2.35%

The environmental sustainability discourse of Express Tribune is largely awareness-driven and critical of ecological destruction and unsustainable development. The dominant climate change frame (1.39%) highlights floods, rising temperatures, environmental destruction, and resource depletion. Climate change is portrayed as a consequence of unsustainable human activities and weak environmental governance.

The resource degradation frame (0.12%) and infrastructure frame (0.17%) criticize poor environmental planning and inadequate urban development. These frames reveal concerns regarding environmental damage caused by unsustainable practices and ineffective resource management.

The adaptation and mitigation frame (0.21%) reflects solution-oriented discourse by emphasising resilience, climate adaptation, and environmental reforms. Similarly, the water crisis frame foregrounds increasing pressure on water resources due to climate change and population growth.

Overall, the framing patterns in Express Tribune construct environmental sustainability discourse as a critique of environmental degradation, climate injustice, and weak governance structures.

4.5.3 Framing Analysis of The News

Table 4.8

Environmental Sustainability Frames

Major Frames	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Climate Change	196	2.13%
Resilience	41	0.45%
Resource Management	37	0.40%
Agricultural Sustainability	8	0.09%
Biodiversity	6	0.07%

Policy Implementation	7	0.08%
Urban Slums	28	0.30%
Emissions	11	0.12%
Total	334	3.62%

The News demonstrates a strong, environmentally sustainable-oriented discourse. The climate change frame (2.13%) is the most dominant and highlights floods, droughts, environmental instability, and ecological destruction. Climate change is framed as the primary environmental threat affecting Pakistan.

The resilience frame (0.45%) and resource management frame (0.40%) reflect a reform-oriented discourse that emphasises adaptation, sustainability, and environmental planning. Similarly, agricultural sustainability and biodiversity frames highlight concerns regarding food security, ecosystem protection, and environmental conservation.

The urban slums frame (0.30%) foregrounds environmental unsustainability in urban settings, particularly overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and resource shortages. The emissions frame further emphasises industrial pollution and environmental degradation caused by unsustainable development.

Overall, The News frames environmental sustainability through ecological threats, climate resilience, and resource management, with strong emphasis on climate-induced crises and environmental reforms.

4.5.4 Framing Analysis of Dawn

Table 4.9

Environmental Sustainability Frames

Major Frames	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Environmental Degradation	62	0.76%
Climate Change	64	0.79%
Resource Scarcity	57	0.70%
Adaptation	36	0.44%
Crisis	22	0.27%
Displacement	12	0.15%
Policy Failures	13	0.16%
Total	266	3.27%

The framing analysis of Dawn reflects a strong focus on structural environmental vulnerability. The dominant frames include climate change (0.79%), environmental degradation (0.76%), and resource scarcity (0.70%). These frames foreground ecological destruction, water shortages, and climate-induced disasters as major environmental concerns.

The adaptation frame (0.44%) highlights the need for resilience and sustainable environmental planning. Meanwhile, crisis and displacement frames emphasise the severe social consequences of climate-induced disasters, including migration and infrastructure collapse.

The policy failures frame (0.16%) critiques ineffective governance and inadequate climate adaptation strategies. This framing suggests that environmental crises are intensified by institutional shortcomings and weak environmental management.

Overall, Dawn constructs environmental sustainability discourse through crisis-oriented narratives while simultaneously stressing adaptation and policy reform.

4.5.5 Framing Analysis of The Nation

Table 4.10

Environmental Sustainability Frames

Frames	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Climate Change	93	1.37%
Adaptation	38	0.56%
Water Scarcity	17	0.25%
Renewable Energy	18	0.27%
Food Insecurity	5	0.07%
Health Challenges	11	0.16%
Total	182	2.68%

The environmental sustainability discourse of The Nation is predominantly eco-centric and policy-oriented. The most dominant frame is climate change (1.37%), which foregrounds floods, rising temperatures, droughts, and ecological instability. Climate change is presented as a major national and global environmental threat.

The adaptation frame (0.56%) emphasizes resilience-building and environmental preparedness. Similarly, the renewable energy frame (0.27%) promotes sustainable alternatives to conventional energy systems, reflecting a future-oriented sustainability discourse.

The water scarcity frame highlights increasing pressure on water resources, while food insecurity and health challenges frames demonstrate the broader environmental consequences of ecological degradation. These frames reveal the interconnectedness of environmental instability, public health, and resource availability.

5. Findings

The findings of this study reveal that environmental sustainability discourse in the selected Pakistani English newspapers was predominantly framed through crisis-oriented narratives. Recurring lexical choices such as *climate change*, *floods*, *water scarcity*, *disasters*, *resource scarcity*, *environmental degradation*, and *crisis* constructed sustainability as an urgent environmental threat rather than a transformative opportunity. The newspapers frequently highlighted climate-induced catastrophes, including floods, droughts, displacement, pollution, and food insecurity, while adaptation and mitigation strategies received comparatively limited attention. The discourse mainly focused on immediate environmental impacts instead of long-term ecological preservation and sustainable environmental planning. Moreover, urban environmental concerns such as pollution, infrastructure failure, urban slums, and water shortages were foregrounded more frequently than rural ecological conservation, indicating a stronger emphasis on urban sustainability issues within the selected media discourse.

The lexical and thematic analysis further demonstrated that climate change and water-related issues remained central components of environmental sustainability discourse across all newspapers. Lexical units such as *adaptation*, *resilience*, *resource management*, *renewable energy*, *sustainable development*, *policy implementation*, and *climate resilience* reflected a

policy-oriented and technocratic approach toward environmental management. At the same time, recurring themes related to floods, droughts, environmental degradation, and public health challenges highlighted the severity of ecological instability in Pakistan. The thematic structures and framing patterns revealed that environmental sustainability was largely associated with disaster management, climate adaptation, and infrastructural responses. Newspapers such as *The News* and *The Nation* emphasized climate urgency and disaster risks, while *Daily Times* and *Dawn* showed relatively greater focus on sustainable development, adaptation strategies, and environmental governance. However, proactive ecological solutions and long-term sustainability frameworks remained comparatively underrepresented in the discourse.

The framing analysis also revealed that environmental sustainability reporting was dominated by negative and problem-focused frames. Climate change emerged as the most frequent frame across all newspapers, followed by water crisis, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and climate disasters. Sustainability discourse frequently portrayed Pakistan as highly vulnerable to environmental crises due to weak infrastructure, policy failures, and inadequate environmental governance. Although some positive frames such as *adaptation*, *renewable energy*, *policy implementation*, *resilience*, and *sustainable development* appeared in the discourse, their frequency remained relatively low compared to crisis-oriented frames. Overall, the findings indicate that Pakistani English newspapers primarily constructed environmental sustainability through narratives of environmental risk, urgency, and ecological instability, while transformative sustainability solutions, ecological awareness, and long-term environmental resilience received comparatively limited discursive space.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the representation of environmental sustainability in five major Pakistani English newspapers by analysing the linguistic patterns, frames, themes, and lexical choices used in environmental reporting. The findings revealed that environmental sustainability was predominantly constructed through crisis-oriented discourse, where climate change, water scarcity, pollution, floods, droughts, and environmental degradation were repeatedly highlighted as urgent national concerns. Most newspapers employed negatively connotated lexical items such as *crisis*, *depletion*, *damage*, *loss*, and *disaster*, which framed sustainability mainly as a catastrophic challenge rather than an opportunity for ecological transformation and resilience. The analysis further showed that environmental discourse largely focused on policy failures, infrastructural weaknesses, and resource scarcity, particularly in relation to water stress, urban pollution, food insecurity, and public health risks. While certain newspapers incorporated solution-oriented frames such as renewable energy, climate adaptation, sustainable development, and resilience, these positive narratives remained comparatively limited. The study also identified differences in newspaper framing, where some newspapers adopted more policy-oriented and technocratic approaches, whereas others relied on emotional and crisis-based representations of environmental problems. Overall, the research concludes that environmental sustainability discourse in Pakistani English newspapers reflects a growing awareness of ecological threats; however, the discourse still requires a more balanced, transformative, and future-oriented approach that promotes sustainable practices, environmental justice, inclusive climate policies, and long-term ecological responsibility.

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