

Chapter 6

Climate Change Reporting and the Role of Media in Shaping Public Discourse in Nepal: Evidence From a Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Though the role of media in climate change messaging has been understood in academic and public spheres, limited studies have been conducted and published, especially in the context of Nepal. A review of 65 readings highlights increased focus on behavior change communication than media advocacy, lack of innovation scope in funded media projects, absence of empirical research. The study recommends comprehensive study climate change reporting through framing and factor analysis to identify reasons and incentives.

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INTRODUCTION

The Climate Risk Index statistics shows that Nepal falls under the ten most affected countries in the world, which is a major concern (Eckstein, Kunzel, & Schafer, 2021). Majority of Nepali people (about 80 percent) are vulnerable and likely to extreme heat stress, flooding, and air pollution (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). The risk has aggravated even more due to increasing trends of occurrence of storms, erosion, and landslides, resulting in the loss of life and livelihoods (ADB, 2021). Specifically, when we look at the rise in temperature, the projection is increment by 0.92–1.070C in between 2016–2045; 1.3–1.80C in between 2036–2065 taking the reference of 20-year period between 1981 and 2010 (MoFE, 2019). Predictions also show Nepali people annually affected by river flooding caused by climate change could more than double to around 350,000 in 2030 compared to 157,000 in 2010 (ADB, 2021). Consequently, there is likelihood of great financial loss, due to the flood as the estimates are that the loss could be threefold (ibid).

Climate change has already considerably affected lives of people during the last four decades in Nepal. As 647 people lose their lives each year because of climate-induced disasters (MoFE, 2021). The ‘Climate Change Scenarios for Nepal’ report highlights that in general, climate in Nepal will be significantly warmer and wetter in the coming years. The extremities in terms of temperature and precipitation will directly affect social sectors such as health, water, energy, biodiversity, agriculture, urban planning, and livelihoods (MoFE, 2019). When we see the increasing trend of climate-induced disasters in Nepal, we also need to take into context the current land and forest management. There is only one hydroelectric plant which is run-of-river. The productivity of this plant is very much dependent on river runoff volume and sedimentation, which has been affected by poor land and forest management. All this leads to potential vulnerability in the context of uncertain future precipitation regimes, glacial melting, and potential increases in the risks of landslides and glacial melting.

Media and Development Journalism

Media is a very powerful tool for raising voices against the wrong and empowering lives. In this context, responsible journalism has even greater significance. When journalists act responsibly, there can raise the right kind of questions to initiate public debates, create discourses around the issue, advocate with the people in power and authority to make amendments or changes, and therefore, bring about the change or transformation, which the society is hoping for (Mittal, 2012).

A journalist can play a critical role in laying out facts, figures, and scenarios regarding a matter of public importance. While journalists report about an issue, it

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