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## Climate Change Coverage in News Media: A Case Study of the Nepali Media in the context of COP29

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Abstract— This research examines the representation and framing of climate change in Nepali media during the 29th UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), held from November 11 to 22, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan. By analyzing climate-related news content from two major national daily newspapers, stateowned (Gorkhapatra Daily) and private-owned (Kantipur Daily), published during the COP29 period, the findings reveal that public media provided significantly more coverage and prioritized environmental issues compared to private media. This disparity highlights the dominant role of state-owned media in focusing on climate change, while private-owned media took a more selective and less consistent approach to reporting on the issue. The study underscores the need for both media sectors to enhance their coverage by adopting a more balanced, diverse, and comprehensive approach to climate change reporting, ensuring a more inclusive discussion of climate issues in Nepal.





Keywords— Climate change, COP29, Media coverage, Nepali media

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The discourse surrounding climate change has gained significant attention in recent years, especially during global events like the UN Climate Change Conference. In Nepal, a country highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, media coverage plays a vital role in shaping public perception and influencing policy responses. The way climate change is framed in Nepali media is crucial for understanding the complexities of the issue, as it affects how stakeholders, including policymakers and the general public, address climate-related challenges. Wagle (2024) highlights the need for diverse framing approaches to effectively convey the multifaceted nature of climate change in Nepal, considering the nation's unique geographical and socio-economic context. However, climate research, particularly in the area of climate reporting, remains underexplored within the Nepali context.

Nepal's vulnerability to climate change is exacerbated by its heavy reliance on agriculture, which plays a crucial role in both its economy and the livelihoods of its people. Research shows that climate change has

begun to negatively impact agricultural already productivity, with rural households experiencing increased pressures from a combination of poverty and climaterelated challenges (Chalise et al., 2017). The agricultural sector's sensitivity to climate variability highlights the urgent need for adaptation strategies, with studies advocating for the adoption of climate-resilient practices and technologies (Paudel, 2012; Paudel, 2016). In addition to agriculture, climate change also affects biodiversity, water resources, and national security (Bhattacharjee et al., 2017; Rawal, 2023). The role of media in disseminating information about these impacts is crucial, as it can promote informed public discourse and drive proactive action. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the climate reporting practices of Nepali media both private and public, focusing on their agenda-setting and framing strategies during the specific climate event like the UN Climate change conference 2024- Conference of the Parties (COP) 29.

The COP is a critical platform for Nepal to advocate for its climate priorities on the global stage. As highlighted by Pandey and Dahal (2022), climate

diplomacy is crucial for Nepal due to its limited institutional and financial resources to address climate change effectively. The conference offers Nepal an opportunity to engage with international partners and garner support for its adaptation efforts. The way the media portrays these diplomatic efforts can significantly shape public perception and foster community support for climate action, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive media coverage in the context of climate change. The relationship between climate change, media coverage, and policy response in Nepal is complex and dynamic. This study aims to explore how newspapers portray environmental events and to what extent coverage differs between private and public media outlets. It contributes to a better understanding of the current state of climate journalism in Nepal, focusing on the consistency or discrepancies in the portrayal of climate issues across different media platforms.

For this study, we analyze the coverage of COP29 by two major daily newspapers, one from the private sector and one from the public sector. A content analysis of 53 news articles reveals significant inconsistencies between the two types of media. The findings suggest that state-owned media in Nepal plays a central role in climate change reporting, offering more comprehensive coverage, while private-owned media tends to provide more selective reporting, with a greater emphasis on visuals but less consistency in its climate coverage. Both types of media have strengths and areas for improvement. Addressing these gaps could enhance the overall quality and consistency of climate change reporting in Nepal, fostering a more informed public discourse and encouraging proactive climate action.

In the following sections, we first present the theoretical framework and literature review in Section 2. Section 3 outlines the methodology and data used in the study, followed by the presentation and analysis of the data in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the findings, and finally, Section 6 concludes the study by highlighting the practical implications of the research.

### II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical framework

We draw on two key theories: agenda-setting and framing theory of the media, to guide our analysis of climate-related news coverage during COP29. The agenda-setting theory suggests that media significantly influence public perception by highlighting specific topics and framing them in particular ways. Ibrahim et al. (2019) argue that media coverage correlates with the public's perception of an

issue's importance, shaping public discourse and priorities, especially regarding political and social matters. Yi and Wang (2022) further develop this theory by introducing the concept of the "individual agenda", where personal influences and social media dynamics alter traditional agenda-setting mechanisms, placing emphasis on the role of opinion leaders in shaping individual perspectives and social consensus.

In the context of climate change, agenda-setting theory demonstrates how media coverage shapes public perception and discourse on environmental issues. Horsbol's (2013) study of the "Energy Town Frederikshavn" project illustrates this by analyzing local media's framing of renewable energy initiatives, suggesting that local media may provide a more nuanced and less sensationalized narrative than national outlets, influencing public understanding and engagement with climate action.

Similarly, framing theory explores how the presentation of information influences audience perception and interpretation. Bullock and Shulman (2021) show that varying message frames can alter perceptions of health behaviors, emphasizing the importance of framing in shaping attitudes and actions. This theory highlights that media not only inform the public but also shape the context in which issues are understood, thereby affecting behaviors and attitudes.

Together, the agenda-setting and framing theories provide a framework for understanding how media coverage during COP29 can influence public engagement with climate change. By examining the volume and framing of climate coverage, we aim to analyze how these factors shape public perceptions of global environmental challenges.

#### 2.2 Literature review

Boykoff (2012) highlights that media narratives often prioritize economic opportunities over the adverse economic impacts of climate change, with established political actors dominating the discourse. Dahal (2023) further explores this idea by investigating the influence of clientelism in Nepali media, showing that political affiliations and clientelist structures can shape how climate issues are reported, potentially leading to biased or incomplete narratives. Similarly, Shrestha (2022) examined the framing of climate change in Nepali media, revealing that most coverage portrayed climate change as a national issue rather than a global crisis, limiting broader engagement and understanding.

The framing of climate change, especially during significant events like the UN Climate Change Conference, plays a critical role in shaping public perception and policy discourse. Faisal and Zannat (2014) found that media

coverage of climate change is influenced by the social, economic, and political contexts of each publication. Their study highlighted how different COP events emphasized varying aspects of climate change—COP15 focused on global consequences, COP16 on local changes, and COP17 on the Green Climate Fund supporting vulnerable countries. The literature on climate change media coverage, particularly during international events such as COP27, reveals the influence of political narratives and media framing on public discourse. For example, Mohamed Abdelaziz et al. (2023) found that media coverage of COP27 largely concentrated on climate politics, with a notably positive tone about the Egyptian government's efforts in organizing the event.

Research by Saunders et al. (2018) shows that media coverage of climate change tends to be reactive, peaking around major climate events rather than maintaining consistent focus on the issue. Boykoff (2012) found that major newspapers like The New York Times and The Washington Post adhered to a journalistic norm of balanced reporting, which sometimes gave equal editorial weight to the minority view that global warming is not a serious issue, despite a scientific consensus. This balance can distort public understanding of the severity of climate change. Mulaudzi and Kioko (2022) further argue that focusing events, such as climate-related disasters, often drive media coverage, but the depth and accuracy of reporting on scientific findings are often insufficient, leading to misconceptions and shallow understanding of climate change.

These studies indicate that media coverage of climate change is frequently shaped by political, economic, and social factors, influencing public discourse in ways that can either foster or hinder a deeper understanding. There is a clear need for media coverage that is consistent, accurate, and nuanced, going beyond event-driven reporting to emphasize the long-term, global dimensions of climate change. Policymakers and media organizations must be

aware of the potential biases and framing effects in climate reporting to ensure the public receives balanced, comprehensive, and reliable information for effective engagement with climate issues.

#### III. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach, examining articles and news reports published from Nepal during the COP29. Content analysis method allows researchers to systematically evaluate the presence of specific themes, patterns, or frames within media content, providing insights into how issues are represented and understood by audiences. It is particularly popular due to its efficiency and value in examining text or media content and addressing diverse research questions, particularly in communication research (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006: 150).

We selected two major daily national newspapers, Kantipur Daily (a private media) and Gorakhapatra Daily (a state media), for this study. These newspapers have the longest publication history in Nepal, with wide circulation and strong public acceptance. The study focuses on the COP29 event, which took place from November 11 to November 22, 2024. To account for potential delays in newspaper content, the analysis includes coverage from November 11 to November 23, 2024, encompassing the final day of the conference. Only news and other content related to environmental issues and climate change were considered for analysis. A manual review of daily issues of these newspapers identified a total of 53 climate-related news articles, which were examined from various perspectives, including visual presentation, framing, forms of presentation, and the context of the content.

#### IV. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Total environmental news in the newspaper

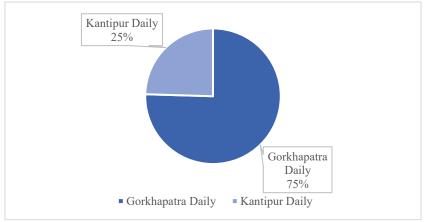


Fig.1 Total number of news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure-1 shows that *Gorkhapatra Daily*, a state-owned newspaper, published about 75% of articles on environmental and climate issues during COP29, while *Kantipur Daily*, a privately-owned newspaper, published about 25%. This indicates that state-owned media gave

significantly more focus to climate-related topics compared to private media.

#### 4.2 Visual presentation of the environmental news

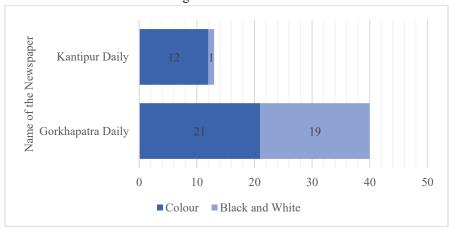


Fig.2 Color forms of news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 2 summarizes the use of color in climate-related news. Among the 40 articles published by *Gorkhapatra Daily*, 21 were in color, and 19 were in black and white. In contrast, of the 13 articles published by *Kantipur Daily*, 12 were in color, and only 1 was in black and white. This

suggests that private media places greater emphasis on using color for presentation, while state-owned media exhibits a more balanced approach between color and black-and-white formats.

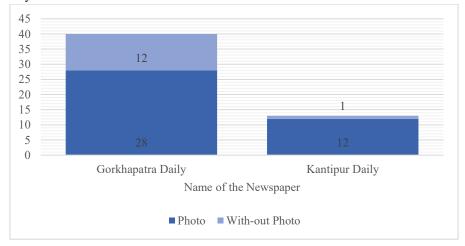


Fig.3 Use of photographs for news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 3 illustrates the use of photos in climate-related news content. *Gorkhapatra Daily* included photos in 28 out of its 40 articles, leaving 12 without visual elements. In contrast, *Kantipur Daily* featured photos in 12 of its 13 articles, with

only one article lacking visual content. This data suggests that while both publications prioritize incorporating photos, private-owned media demonstrates a stronger and more consistent emphasis on visual presentation compared to state-owned media.

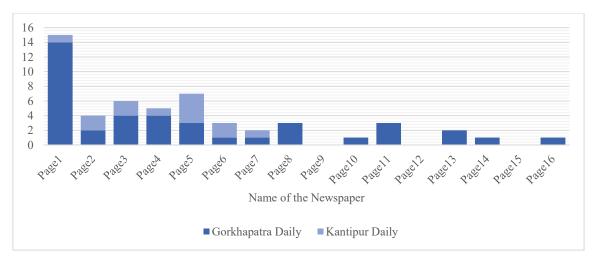


Fig. 4 News placed in pages (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

As shown in Figure 4, *Gorkhapatra Daily* utilized 13 different pages for its climate-related content, with the majority of articles appearing on the front page (Page 1), followed by Pages 3, 4, and 5. In contrast, *Kantipur Daily* published its climate-related content across only the first seven pages, with just one article featured on the front page. Most of *Kantipur Daily*'s climate coverage was

concentrated on Page 5. This indicates that state-owned media places greater emphasis on diverse placement, including prominent front-page coverage, while private-owned media tends to cluster its climate content on specific internal pages.

#### 4.3 Framing of climate news

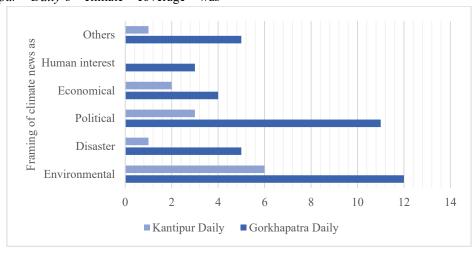


Fig. 5 Framing of news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 5 highlights the framing of climate-related content. *Gorkhapatra Daily* predominantly framed its articles with an environmental focus (12 articles), followed by political framing (11 articles). Other framings included 5 articles as disaster-related, 4 as economic, 3 as human interest, and 5 categorized under other framings. Similarly, *Kantipur Daily* framed 6 articles as environmental, 3 as political, 2 as economic, 1 as disaster-related, and 1 under other framings.

This indicates that both media outlets primarily emphasized environmental and political framings in their climate-related coverage, reflecting a focus on environmental and political agendas in the context of climate change discussions in Nepal.

#### 4.4 Form of presentation

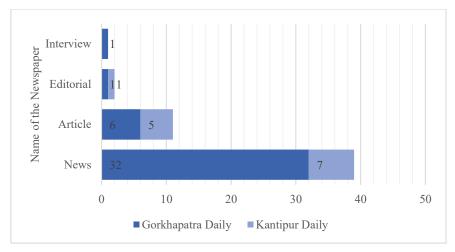


Fig. 6 Forms of presentation (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 6 illustrates the format in which climate-related content was presented by the newspapers. *Gorkhapatra Daily* published 32 pieces as news, 6 as articles, 1 as an editorial, and 1 as an interview. In contrast, *Kantipur Daily* presented 7 pieces as news, 5 as articles, and 1 as an editorial, without publishing any interviews on climate issues during this period. This suggests that state-owned

media relied heavily on news formats, while private-owned media demonstrated a more balanced approach between news and articles. Additionally, the state-owned media utilized a wider variety of presentation formats, including interviews, compared to the private-owned media.

#### 4.5 Context of climate contents

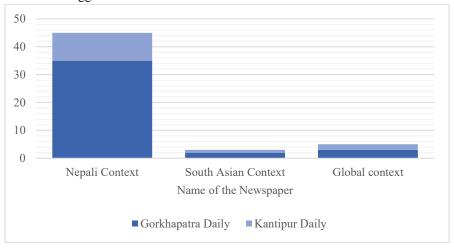


Fig. 7 Total number of news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 7 illustrates the contextual focus of climate-related content published by the newspapers. *Gorkhapatra Daily* predominantly framed its coverage within the Nepali context, publishing 35 articles, while 3 were set in the global context and 2 in the South Asian context. Similarly, *Kantipur Daily* also focused on the Nepali context, with 10 articles, compared to 2 in the global context and 1 in the

South Asian context. This indicates that both newspapers prioritized local issues, although state-owned media had a significantly higher volume of climate-related content across all contexts.

#### 4.7 Coverage over the COP29 period

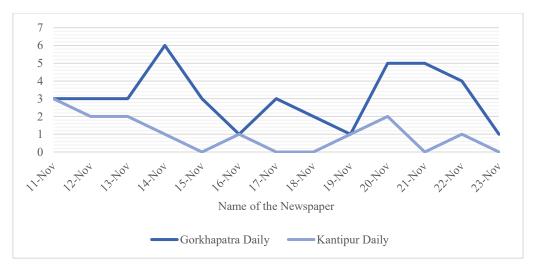


Fig.8 Number of news daily (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 8 illustrates the coverage of climate-related articles published by *Gorkhapatra Daily* and *Kantipur Daily* from November 11 to November 23, with a one-day reporting lag. This means that the coverage on a given day reflects key events that occurred the day before.

On November 10, the President of Nepal traveled to COP29, and both *Gorkhapatra Daily* and *Kantipur Daily* began showing an increase in coverage on November 11. This upward trend continued, particularly as COP29 unfolded between November 11 and 22. On November 13, the President addressed the "High-Level Dialogue: Advancing the Mountain Agenda" at COP29. The coverage of this event appeared on November 14, with a notable spike in articles, particularly in *Gorkhapatra Daily*, which provided more detailed coverage compared to *Kantipur Daily*. *Gorkhapatra Daily*, as a state-owned media,

maintained consistently high coverage throughout the later stages of COP29.

Throughout the duration of COP29, media coverage remained relatively consistent, with state-owned media publishing more articles, especially around key moments of the conference. This pattern likely reflects the state-owned media's focus on national involvement in global issues. In contrast, private-owned *Kantipur Daily* provided less continuous coverage after the initial key events. After COP29 concluded on November 22, media coverage gradually declined, with the final day of reporting, November 23, showing a significant drop in climate-related content. This suggests that while climate-related issues received substantial attention in the Nepali media during this period, the focus was temporary, peaking around major events and tapering off after COP29 concluded.

#### 4.8 Coverage of president news

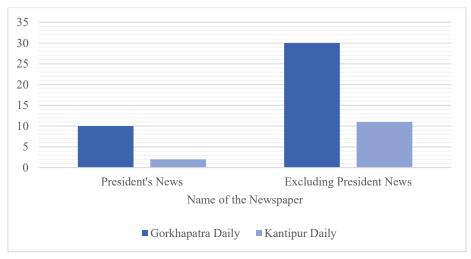


Fig. 9 Total number of news (Source: Content Analysis, 2024)

Figure 9 presents the number of news articles covered, excluding the coverage of the President of Nepal's visit to COP29, to mitigate any potential bias from the state-owned media, which may prioritize government participation in such events. As expected, we observe a higher number of articles related to the President's visit in *Gorkhapatra Daily* compared to *Kantipur Daily*. However, even after excluding the President-related news, state-owned media continues to outperform private-owned media in covering climate news. *Gorkhapatra Daily* covered nearly 75% of the total climate-related news published across both media outlets, a trend that is consistent with the data presented in Figure 1, which includes all news coverage. This highlights the dominant role of state-owned media in reporting on climate-related issues during the specified period.

#### V. DISCUSSION

The analysis of climate-related news coverage from stateowned and private-owned media during COP29 reveals significant differences in how each media outlet approached climate issues. The research highlights that state-media provided 75% of the total climate-related coverage during COP29, far exceeding the 25% contribution by private-media. This trend remained consistent even when excluding coverage related to the President of Nepal's participation at COP29. The stateowned media maintained a high volume of coverage throughout the event, reflecting its focus on national involvement in global climate discussions. In contrast, private-owned media provided less consistent coverage, particularly after the initial key events. This aligns with findings by Boykoff (2012), who noted that state-affiliated media often dominate environmental reporting due to institutional alignment with governmental agendas. However, unlike Boykoff's observation that private outlets sometimes prioritize economic narratives, private-owned media in Nepal demonstrated inconsistent attention to climate issues. This reflects the need for private media to adopt more sustained and systematic approaches to environmental journalism. Furthermore, this disparity in Nepali media can also be explained by Dahal's (2023) findings on clientelism in Nepali media, where political affiliations can influence coverage priorities. While this highlights the state's role in promoting climate diplomacy, it also underscores the need for independent and unbiased reporting to ensure comprehensive narratives.

Wagle (2024) argue that diverse framing is essential for effective communication of climate change complexities. Our research found that state-media adopted diverse framing strategies, incorporating environmental, political, disaster-related, and economic narratives while

private-media primarily framed stories within environmental and political contexts. However, the predominance of locally framed narratives in both newspapers aligns with findings from Wagle (2024) and Faisal and Zannat (2014), who observed that regional media often prioritize local issues over global discourses. The findings also resonate with Shrestha (2022), who observed that Nepali media tend to present climate change primarily as a national issue. This suggests that media in Nepal may need to increase their focus on connecting local issues with global climate change agendas.

The study also highlights a notable trend of event-driven reporting by both state-owned and private media. Coverage intensity peaked during key COP29 events but declined significantly afterward, indicating a focus on major developments rather than sustained reporting on climate issues. This aligns with Saunders et al. (2018), who described similar "attention cycles" in British media that correspond to significant climate-related events. However, the lack of sustained coverage beyond COP29 echoes Mulaudzi and Kioko's (2022) concern about reactive, rather than proactive, climate journalism. A more continuous narrative could help maintain public interest and awareness beyond major events.

In terms of visual presentation, the study found that private-media prioritized visual storytelling through extensive use of color and photos, consistent with Bullock and Shulman's (2021) framing theory, which emphasizes the impact of presentation on audience engagement. State-media, while more balanced in its use of visuals, ensured prominent placement of climate-related stories, such as front-page coverage. This diversity in presentation strategies highlights the differing priorities of state versus private media but suggests room for both outlets to enhance their visual appeal and accessibility.

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, study findings suggest that state-owned media in Nepal plays a central role in climate change reporting, with a focus on national participation in global events like COP29. In contrast, private-owned media provides more selective coverage, emphasizing visuals but offering less consistent reporting. Both media outlets have strengths and areas for improvement, and addressing these gaps could improve the overall quality and consistency of climate change reporting in Nepal.

This study offers some important practical implications. First, to enhance climate-related reporting, both media sectors must prioritize consistent and comprehensive coverage. State-owned media should continue its strong focus on climate issues but could further

engage a wider audience by incorporating more diverse visuals, such as color and photos. While national issues are important, integrating global perspectives and addressing a broader range of reporting—beyond mere news reporting like interviews, discussion forums, expert opinions-will provide a more comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in climate action. Private-owned media should also expand its climate coverage to match the urgency and importance of the issue. Leveraging their strength in visual presentation, private outlets can make climate stories more engaging and accessible to a broader audience. Second, to further enhance reporting quality, media outlets can invest in training programs specifically designed for climate journalism. These programs will equip journalists with the skills and knowledge to effectively cover complex climate change and policy topics. Third, the government should actively collaborate with the media to promote climate literacy and public awareness. This collaboration could include supporting media campaigns, creating educational materials, and organizing public forums or discussions, all of which can be covered by both state and private media. Finally, each stakeholder in the media ecosystem-media outlets, the government, and civil society organizations—plays a vital role in improving the quality and scope of climate change coverage in Nepal. For the media, expanding the consistency and depth of coverage is crucial. The government must support this process by providing accurate data, resources, and incentives for climate journalism. Civil society and journalism associations can hold media accountable and foster collaboration, ensuring effective climate communication. By working together, these stakeholders can create a more informed and engaged public, ultimately contributing to Nepal's climate action efforts.

However, this study has several limitations. First, analyzing news from only two newspapers may not provide a comprehensive reflection of climate coverage in Nepal. However, given the limited number of national newspapers, the study focuses on those with relatively larger readership and social credibility, aiming to offer insights that are generalizable to the broader context of Nepal, if not beyond. Future researchers could incorporate digital media or smaller newspapers for a comparative study. Second, this study focuses on COP29, so the findings should be interpreted with caution in relation to other events or contexts. Third, due to the use of local language newspapers, the study was unable to conduct a more indepth content analysis. Future studies could consider English-language newspapers for a deeper exploration. Finally, this study is exploratory, and future research could extend it by employing quantitative methods to explore specific relationships in more detail.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used Generative AI or AI-assisted technologies in order to improve the readability. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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