

Analysis Study on the News Media Report of Nuclear Events

Jae Beom Park^{a,b}, Soon Heung Chang^a

^aKAIST, Science Journalism, Guseoung-dong, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon, 305-701, Korea

^bKINAC, 1534 Yuseong-daero, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon, 305-348, Korea
jbpark@kinac.re.kr

1. Introduction

From the past, many experts, who is worrying about the future, have said that the nuclear industry could provide a solution to global warming and reduce the high price of crude oil. The majority of these experts believed that the nuclear industry could also improve the human life condition. After South Korean won a contract to provide four nuclear power plants in the UAE, at that time, national newspapers reported that a nuclear renaissance had begun. This renaissance would contribute to the development of new technologies, and improve Korea's standing as a technological innovator. Unfortunately, this belief suddenly changed after the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident in Japan on March 11, 2011. The Newspapers no longer refer to the nuclear Renaissance in their publications. They do not present the positive aspect of the use of nuclear energy any longer. Who made these changes? The newspapers want to get an attention from the public. So, the general trend of newspapers exaggerates the facts regarding the safety and efficiency of the nuclear industry. This trend has greatly effect the growth of nuclear industry.

According to a survey conducted at Mokwon University in 2010, both people and faculty tend to recall easily reading more negative articles in newspapers, rather than positive ones. The nuclear industry has many negative elements associated with it, such as: spent fuel disposal, radiation problems and nuclear weapons. The newspaper should take a prudent attitude to nuclear report on the newspaper due to nuclear industry's negative aspects. The nuclear issue is little different with other unsettled problem like environment issue, starvation, economic concerns. In technical terms, nuclear power can provide a safe and near infinite source of energy, if we use the nuclear power carefully. So, we should approach the problem in way of technology not, political method. The energy problem is related to basic life of mankind, national defense and international competitiveness.

Those relations are very important to survive in this planet as a powered country. So, the ROK should be at the head of countries in the energy problem. But, the nuclear industry in Korea is effected by public media. On this study, I would like to study the way of newspapers report about nuclear issues. This paper could offer journalists recommendations on how to improve their skills in reporting issues related to the nuclear industry. I would like to introduce better ways

of informing the press and public of the benefits and safety of the nuclear industry.

2. The study on media report about nuclear issues

Currently, new technology and business management adopt the assessment of danger, which is the global trend. According to the social amplification theory of the risk, information sender used to make a problem thinking the fact in terms of technical view. This theory can apply to the nuclear. Many people have the bad opinion for the nuclear industry; the bad opinion can influence another people who living in neighbor. Those influences can be enlarged and amplified. We can call it spiral model of silence for nuclear industry. One sample is nuclear-weapon development of North Korea. The many people including Korean can get the information about the Nuclear weapon of North Korea from the open source media such as newspapers as well as TV and radio broadcasters.

According to the survey, which was conducted by Korea Atomic Industrial Forum, the public is depending on the public media to get the complicated information. The main reasons are difficulty to access the nuclear news, which is classified to confidential or secret. So, the people are eager to get the information from the media. If they get the negative information from the media, the mode will be spread to others. Actually, the public does not believe the news completely. Though, people tend to gain belief in a particular news feature if it has been repeated continuously.

3. The general trend of the nuclear

After the Fukushima nuclear accident, there has been a tendency for the news media to hesitate in giving more positive coverage concerning the nuclear industry. Maybe, it might be reasonable not to stimulate the public opinion. But, we saw the tragic accident in Fukushima, Japan on the media every day. The media was trying to use the accident. But, the media should not exaggerate the public opinion to get the attention from the people. The plan to use nuclear energy is dependent on public opinion due to its negative aspect of nuclear energy. Many countries have not begun their nuclear energy projects due to concerns over public opinion. After all, the many countries cancelled their original plan to build the several nuclear power plants. The technology has been evolved not to happen to the disaster, again. But, the newspaper do not concern about reason and measure to solve the problem.

I will provide another example about the nuclear events on the media. In 1994, there was an urgent situation to provoke the war which was prevented by Mr. J. Carter, who was an ex-president of USA. At that time, Many people already knew the situation and the people wanted to know how matters goes on. But, the media could not provide the information in consistent way. I surveyed the newspaper reported the nuclear problem of North Korea within 6 month in past.

I attached the statistics as follows:

Table I: North Korea's nuclear weapon report by newspaper office in specific period

(94.1.1 ~94.6.30)

	Segye-ilbo	Kyunghyang shinmun	Seoul shinmun	Hankyore shinmun	Donga-ilbo
Possession	50	26	17	15	17
No – possession	8	6	5	4	7

This table shows us that newspapers have functioned in such a way as to control public opinion and distribute information that the subscriber prefers to have. At that time, the media don't have their own information channel except quotations from overseas press. Between 2006 and 2009, North Korea conducted two nuclear tests officially. If the news was more accurate than as it was, the ROK could prepare the north Korea's nuclear test in advance.

We can classify journalists' perception of the nuclear industry in three ways:

First, the news organizations tend to place emphasis on events such as accidents and conflicts. Sensational news gets the attention of the public, and in turn can boost the sell of advertisement. In terms of the title and subject material shown, the press tends to focus on accidents, interruptions to power, radiation leaks, and debates about spent fuel disposal rather than the benefits of nuclear energy. It is very important to the press to get the attention from the public. But, the press focuses not the structural relation of the accident or logical connection. These tendencies should be changed.

Second, if the media take a negative situation for the nuclear event, public opinion will be guided to bad consequence easily.

Later, people tend to exaggerate the information they received from the media. As a result, this negative story remains firmly in the public's memory. The press should take greater cautious when reporting nuclear events in order to give the people a change to think more in depth. Actually, the media is trying to show positive aspect but in case of nuclear event, the result looks like negative aspect. We cannot believe everything you read in the media, but negative articles can seriously affect public opinion.

Third, the media has insufficient information regarding nuclear energy, especially nuclear weapon of

North Korea. News coming from the nuclear industry itself tended to be originated toward advertising for business purposes. Many scientists and technicians are trying to overcome the dangerous element in the nuclear industry continuously. But, those efforts of the scientist and technicians have not gained the attention from the media. Therefore people do not believe their government's claim regarding the benefits of nuclear energy. So, the key solution is the truth between the people and government. The media is a significant role for the relationship between the people and government.

Around March 11th, 2012, the media may prepare special article to verify the Fukushima accident. The media and nuclear experts should make a decision for the prospect of nuclear industry in this peninsula by that time. The first anniversary is very important to decide the future public opinion, in especially nuclear accident. We have to save the time disputing against the safety of nuclear power plant. We knew the problem and are trying to solve the technical hurdle. For the benefit of the public, the two parties, media and nuclear professional, should meet the conclusion for the nuclear industry.

4. Conclusion

All products have the certificate to guarantee the quality. All reports from media also have to hold the certificate for their responsibility. If the media could not hold the certification, we can call it irresponsible article. The media can influence to many people in a report. So, the media should present a balanced picture of the nuclear industry. And nuclear industry can prevent the accident thru the technical development and minimize the human error. So, the press should be careful in reporting the nuclear issue.

REFERENCES

- [1] Nuclear Industry 2011, KAIF, ISSN 1229-005X, 2011, 3&4.
- [2] Nuclear Safety White Paper, Ministry of Education & Science Technology, 2011.
- [3] Domestic Newspaper, 1994.1 ~ 1994. 6.
- [4] Nuclear and Reporting thru the Media, Nakamura Masao, 2008, nBook.
- [5] The feature and contents of the Nuclear reporting, Han Dong Sub & Kim Hyung Il, KAIF, 2004.