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a thematic study through critical discourse analysis

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**Distinguishing social actor's representation in online newspapers:
a thematic study through critical discourse analysis**

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper was to explore the social actor's representation and find the themes in Imran Khan's speech presented in four online newspapers delivered during *the Haqeeqi Azadi March* (True Freedom Assemblage) of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) on the evening of 13th August 2022 at the Hockey Stadium of Lahore on the occasion of Pakistan's Independence Day. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Norman Fairclough (1995) was employed to determine the influence of context on the text. The data was gathered from four online newspapers i.e. The ARY News, GEO TV, The Express Tribune, and The News. Additionally, Imran Khan as a social actor was selected based on van Leeuwen's (2005) socio-semiotic analysis as the main opposition leader. Furthermore, the thematic analysis of the speech was performed. All newspapers fairly represented the social actor by giving importance to the event through the main opposition political party in the roles of the 'Sayer' and 'Verbiage'. The speech highlighted the PTI's agenda, efforts, and future plans of raising voice for their democratic right in favor of Pakistan's current situation. The themes and pressing issues of Pakistan that need to be addressed urgently included 'True Freedom', 'Corruption', 'Economic Crisis', 'Fair & Free Election, 'Conspiracy against the Army & PTI', 'Formation of a New Tiger Force', and 'Rejecting PTI's Anti-American Stance'. The study shows the originality in terms of selection of issue with comparison of four online newspapers' representation through the theoretical and analytical framework.
Keywords: Social Actor; Media Representation; Online Newspapers; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); Socio-Semiotic Analysis; Haqeeqi Azadi March Assemblage 2022; Thematic Analysis

Introduction

Generally, the media plays a critical role in maintaining, generating, and disseminating certain ideologies, cultural knowledge, and discourses that influence our perceptions in understanding the surroundings as an audience. Today, the media has taken a role in reflecting, upholding, and distributing certain political and societal discourses. Thus, media text is a social phenomenon and is often a part of our debates regarding social relevance, and the study of media texts provides a better understanding of cultural life (Stokes, 2003).

Therefore, it is pertinent to explore the discourses in four online newspapers of Pakistan i.e. The ARY News, The Express

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Tribune, GEO TV, and The News on the *Haqeeqi Azadi March* (True Freedom Assemblage) that was held on the 13th August 2022 by Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI). Imran Khan as Chairman of PTI was selected as a social actor. It is interesting to compare the discourse of a social activist fighting and demanding a general election after being removed from power. The speech was delivered on the night of the 13th, followed by the 14th of August – the Independence Day.

However, news institutions have long been thought to be linked to politics. A newspaper either serves directly as a voice of governing body for economic survival or plays as neutral or inclined towards one political party (Schudson, 2002). The analysis of text representation by four online newspapers was interesting to perform as Pakistan was going through a political and economic crisis, and Imran Khan as a social actor presented his performances and criticism over the ruling government. Therefore, the text analysis by employing the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method of the data helped in studying social phenomena in de-mystifying ideologies and power through systematic investigation of semiotic data (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

In Pakistan, the political and economic crisis is worsening, and the PTI government was ousted by the vote of no-confidence that was followed by an aggressive response from PTI in the form of nationwide protests, large gatherings, rallies, interviews, the Long March, even the media saw a division of opinion. The clashes of government agencies with PTI were quite prominent, in which people were seen getting harassed, injured, and even killed. Also, in the media journalists were arrested, beaten up, and harassed for speaking in favor of PTI. Two TV Channels i.e., The ARY News and The BOL NEWS were banned for their Live telecast. In these circumstances, PTI endeavoured to reach out to the maximum audience through peaceful mode of collection. For celebrating the Independence Day of Pakistan i.e. 14th August, PTI initiated to arrange a large crowd

in *jalsa* (Assemblage), and in this regard, 13th August was the first organized *jalsa* (Assemblage) with the name *'Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa'* (True Freedom Assemblage) at Lahore Hockey Stadium, Pakistan.

By studying past research, CDA has shown beneficial results in analyzing the ideologies and representation in the media. However, the media has shown itself to be an effective platform for communicating information. In this regard, the analysis and comparison of coverage of four prominent online newspapers in the current scenario were interesting, where media representation was under strict governmental observance. It has been found that so far, there is no research on the topic of *'Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa'* (True Freedom Assemblage) through Critical Discourse Analysis, Socio-Semiotic, and Thematic Analysis framework.

Objectives of the study

The study was aimed to explore the themes in the speech of Imran Khan during *'Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa'* (True Freedom Assemblage) presented in The ARY News, The Express Tribune, GEO TV, and The News. Secondly, to analyse the representation of the social actor in all four newspapers using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method.

Background of the study

In 2022, intense political upheavals were observed in Pakistan. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) political party has been ousted from power following a vote of no-confidence in the National Assembly (NA). The majority of lawmakers were on the point of an economic crunch due to PTI's policies and inflation. These were the main reasons that caused unrest among the citizens of Pakistan at that time and raised voices from time to time. Furthermore, the Pakistan National Assembly has 342 members, whereas PTI had 155-member strength during this notion. PTI needed to reach 177 figures to be in the parliament. At that time, PTI raised the voice of horse trading and observed the shifting of loyalties of its members. Overall,

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PTI was facing a critical phase in politics in those circumstances.

In this regard, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) under Maulana Fazlur Rehman's leadership from Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) started their aggressive opposition along with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Awami National Party (ANP), Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the National Workers Party (NWP), and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP). After ousting successfully PTI from the government with a breath-stopping situation according to the Supreme Court orders, the voting was supposed to be completed before midnight. After the PTI Speaker, Qaiser's resignation, the voting was held on April 9th with the declaration of Shahbaz Sharif as elected Prime Minister by the coalition under the interim Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. Faced with these circumstances, Imran Khan alleged a foreign conspiracy by the US against him in his suspension through a letter received by the Foreign Office.

In this regard, initially, March 25th was considered important, when, PTI held its Long March from province Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to Federal Capital, Islamabad to raise the voice for the fundamental right of a citizen. PTI had raised its voice for an early General Election. The entry of PTI's members into Islamabad's territory was mishandled by the governmental agencies by baton charges, tear gas shelling, scuffles with police, harassment of PTI leaders, and raiding their houses at late night by crossing the residential private boundaries. The whole scenario raised the political temperature and it seemed that citizens were the worst enemies of the government and they were allowed to use all sorts of power.[1] Imran Khan as Chairman of PTI was determined of not accepting foreign imported government. The popular slogan 'absolutely not' by him became audible.

The political temperature was on the rise along with inflation. In July 2022, the government started saying the country was on the edge of collapse. Side by side, the journalists inclined towards PTI were harassed, arrested, beaten up, and court cases were made against them. Journalists, Imran Riaz Khan, Sabir Shakir, Ayaz Amir, and Jamil Farooqui faced the harsh circumstances. Many times, these journalists made responsible Pakistan Army for these circumstances by not playing a neutral role.[2] On the other hand, the Army distanced itself from politics.[3]

However, in July 2022, a flip-flop political situation aroused in Punjab's by-election. PTI contested 20 vacant seats and won 15 seats. The voters' turnout was 45% in this election. PTI had 188 seats including 10 seats from Pakistan Muslim League -Q (PML-Q), and PML-N had 179 seats out of 369 in Punjab Assembly. A dramatic flip-flop situation aroused during an announcement of Deputy Speaker Dost Mohammad Mazari that Shujaat Hussain, President of PML-Q declared not to vote for PTI. In that scenario, Hamza Shahbaz from PML-N was declared Chief Minister (CM). Later after almost three months, Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ahsan, and Justice Elahi declared the election of Hamza Shahbaz null and void, and Pervaiz Elahi was ordered to resume the office of CM. However, PTI swept the election by unpredictable results.

In August 2022, positive steps from the federal government of PML-N were observed by banning imports of various products. Previously, $80 billion were being spent on imports, whereas, $31 billion on exports. The huge financial imbalances were the main cause considered.[4] The inflation reached 25%

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[1] Asad, S. (2022, May 31). Anarchy or Democracy: May 25, *Daily Times*, retrieved from https://dailytimes.com.pk/943896/anarchy-or-democracy-may-25/

[2] Asad, S. (2022, July 14). Uni Knot Practices in Politics, *Daily Times*, retrieved from https://dailytimes.com.pk/966024/uni-knot-practices-in-politics/
[3] Ibid.
[4] Kazmi, S. (2022, August 18). Celebrating 75th Independence Day under Political and Economic Turmoil, *Daily Times*, retrieved from

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in July due to the fulfillment of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) demands. Pakistan secured to achieve $1.2 billion bailout package in this regard from IMF, but, a common citizen has hardly had air to breathe under such high inflation. The dollar rate was decreased to Rs. 218 from Rs. 240 in July, which was also a positive sign, but still expensive to buy. Thus, it is due to unbalanced financial circulation and political instability. On the eve of 14th August, PM Shahbaz Sharif addressed the nation with the promise of providing cheaper electricity through renewable energy sources and lowering petrol prices. On the other side, a record high inflation rate was observed at 27% in August as compared to 25% in July.[5] The political and economic ongoing situation created impatient behavior among the masses and many heard on television the view of shifting their inclination towards PTI due to inflation, which was obvious by voting behavior in Punjab's by-elections.

Regarding media representation, The ARY News and The BOL NEWS were shut down for their views against PML-N. The media is a source of information dissemination and selected news representation on *'Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa'* (True Freedom Assemblage) showed their ideologies. In Pakistan, nowadays, all newspapers and TV channels have their online web portals or online newspapers. Imran Khan's speech in this case was chosen as 'hard news' that provides subtle news coverage of the minute shifts of power associated with the ups and downs of political change (White, 1997). White (2009) stated that hard news is strategic personalization where the journalist's voice is placed backward and the external voice foregrounded. Concerning the online media, it has become a popular platform, and become conscious of defining its online interactive features (Dimitrova & Neznanski, 2006). The usage of innovative digital technologies has re-conceptualized activism (Harlow & Salaverria, 2016), and is widely used as an information source of power (Silva, 2011).

In this regard, for analyzing the representation of selected online newspapers, the data was gathered as 'hard news'. Regarding this, The ARY DIGITAL is having highest viewership with 35% in 2023 in the category of entertainment channel.[6] Its sister channels including The ARY Sports, The ARY News, The ARY Musik, The ARY QTV, The ARY Zindagi, and The ARY NICK UK also have good viewership. By keeping a well-known/popular category channel, The ARY News was selected for gathering data and analyzing its inclination towards PTI during political upheavals which was quite obviously inclined towards PTI. While, GEO TV is a popular private TV channel, and it is being viewed widely.[7] GEO TV is being controlled by the Jang Media Group which started its regular broadcast on 1st October 2002 (Shabir et al., 2013).

However, The Express Tribune is an internationally affiliated newspaper in Pakistan.[8] It is partnered with The International New York Times. The Express Tribune aims to defend liberal values and traditions in terms of information and insight.[9] This newspaper is selected based on well-known unbiased performance. While, The News has a wide audience and is among the top five with a daily circulation of 120,000 copies.[10] It is popularly known as pro-government among media, politicians, and people. Thus, the comparison among each other was interesting based on their inclinations and ideologies. According to

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https://dailytimes.com.pk/983351/celebrating-75th-independence-day-under-political-and-economic-turmoil/
[5] Kazmi, Celebrating 75th Independence Day, *Daily Times*, OP-ED.

[6] Digital Ratings (2023). *Top Entertainment Channels in Viwership Ratings* (Issue August), retrieved from https://www.pakistandigitalratings.com/top-entertainment-channels-in-pakistan/
[7] Ibid.
[8] https://tribune.com.pk/about
[9] Ibid.
[10] Press Reference (2020). *Pakistan Press, Media, TV, Radio, Newspaper Forum,* retrieved from https://www.pressreference.com/No-Sa/Pakistan.html

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Eijaz (2012), Pakistani media operates under economics, politics, organizations, social reference groups, procedures, and professional influences. During the political upheavals, it is beneficial to analyze the media treatment of PTI coverage as a main opposition political party. Nadadur (2007) believed in this regard that Pakistani media treatment of views, ideology, parties, candidates, and campaigns are mostly biased, and it can easily be explored through a projection of certain issues.

Literature review

Having analysed the studies of the last three years (2000-2022), it can be concluded that research has been performed on CDA but not on the selected topic, Pakistani media representation, theoretical and analytical framework. The Muftah's (2022) study stated that social media has effectively and positively impacted English learning in terms of listening, reading, writing, grammar usage, and communication skills during COVID-19. However, Umber and Ghauri (2020) stated that editorials of two Australian newspapers represented Islam and Muslims with two different representations. The Australian portrayed Islam and Muslims as 'securitized', 'them', and 'othered' as negatively, while The Age created a positive image of victims with a 'counter-discourse'.

Zhang et al (2022), based on analyses of lexical variants of Chinese and US media reports on COVID-19, concluded that China universally calls on other countries to strengthen cooperation and exchanges to jointly combat the epidemic. While American media was on the point that Chinese measures will not be suitable for getting corresponding results in Europe and the U.S. On the other side, the U.S. kept on supplying medicines and medical facilities to other countries. The newspapers were portraying to see the epidemic from a scientific point of view, understanding the facts and observing and rejecting the panic among the masses.

Beattie and Priestley's (2021) study suggests that the New Zealand government's communication through newspapers about the elimination of COVID-19 was credible to audiences due to the fact that the 'lockdown' was framed as a meaningful and urgent cause. It mobilized the citizens in supporting public health measures. While, Stjernsward and Glasdam (2021) believed that social media has played a dominant role during COVID-19 in the case of medico-political discourse, where it could be interpreted as power expression and counter-power. According to Sharar and Nawab (Sharar and Nawab, 2020) based on the CDA study, teacher leadership can be enhanced by providing awareness and leadership opportunities that create self-efficacy, self-development, commitment and job satisfaction. Viswambaran and Diwakar's (2021) study shows that learning would be more effective in gender issues by giving them information from a socio-cultural and historical perspective. Pedagogy in this regard is successful as prompts the participants to participate. It is dependent on the curiosity of the participant, and how much he/she is interested to have information and discussion.

Methodology

The three databases of Scopus, Science Direct, and Emerald Publishing were explored from the span 2000-2022 based on the Critical Discourse Analysis research. Scopus had 2 studies, Science Direct had five studies, while Emerald Publishing published one research in the selected category. The keywords for searching were 'Studies of Critical Discourse Analysis in Pakistan', 'International studies of Critical Discourse Analysis, and Studies on Critical Discourse Analysis on Pakistani Media Representation. In this regard, only free access studies in Pakistan and international categories, the latest time frame of 2000-2022, Media Category, Critical Discourse Analysis, and journals' articles in the English language were selected. The data was gathered from four online newspapers i.e. The ARY News, GEO TV, The Express Tribune, and The News comprising hard news coverage of *the Haqeeqi Azadi March*. The words were 484, 552, 1181, and 1141 respectively in the selected news reports. Total in making of 3,358 words as a data set.

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The news stories were selected on the basis of social semiotic selection in which Imran Khan was chosen as the main 'doer', PTI chairman and the main speaker of the event. Critical Discourse Analysis was conducted by studying the contextual effects on text. The themes were taken out to compare the speech representation in all four online newspapers qualitatively and descriptively. Furthermore, a brief description of the study's framework would highlight the theoretical framework.

Critical Discourse Analysis – Norman Fairclough (1995)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged in the 1970s for text analysis and discourse. CDA aims to distinguish the inequalities, and power signaled in the text. Regarding media discourse, van Dijk (1986), Ruth Wodak (1989), and Norman Fairclough' (1995) have performed influential work. According to van Dijk, the perceived perception of the text leads to a cognitive approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Furthermore, he believed that media manipulation shows the ideology of the news media that gives the authorial status. However, Ruth Wodak (1989) supports the historical discourse as stated by Dijk (1989) that every discourse is linked to its historical background, whereas, Norman Fairclough (1995) believed that every practice is socially performed. It includes social identities; social relations; means of production; semiosis elements; consciousness, and productive activity (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

The study employs Fairclough's (1995) framework in which ideology depicts the representation of news in newspapers. The way of representation will lead to determining how the newspapers have placed the social actor. The positive coverage with fair representation places the social actor in a powerful role. In this regard, ideology is the set of relations in a specific time showing a systematic framework for describing the discourse (Foss & Gill, 2009). According to Fairclough (1995), the text has three stages i.e. social-cultural practice, the process of production, and interpretation of the text.

These stages establish a dialectical relation between context, ideology, and discursive event (Wodak, 2006).

Socio-Semiotic Analysis -van Leeuwen (2005)

Social actors are empowered and active agents (van Leeuwen, 2005). Furthermore, the socio-semiotic analysis is a socially situated sign process (Iedeme, 2003). The actor (speaker) is taken as 'meaning potential' in the study. However, the socio-semantic inventory is employed to establish the critical and sociological relation (van Leeuwen, 2008). Imran Khan is taken in the category of the main actor as a speaker or 'doer'.

Thematic Analysis

The reflexive thematic analysis is employed in this study, which allows for identifying themes in a text along with the meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). It is derived from psychology tradition and is theoretically flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The inductive approach is opted by developing themes as directed by the data. The researcher enlisted the help of two other researchers in coding to eliminate the possibility of errors and identified overlapping themes, which explains the reliability and validity of the selected themes through a 'simple agreement' process whereby both researchers made the same decision.

Findings & Discussion

The data was collected from four online newspapers. The representation of Imran Khan's speech at *'Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa'* delivered in the jam-packed Lahore Hockey Stadium was analyzed through thematic analysis along with Critical Discourse Analysis. The gathering was the initial step toward demonstrating and raising voice for democratic rights from PTI on the demand for a fair and free early General Election followed by country-wide planned similar gatherings. PTI was ousted from the government in April 2022, and this gathering and speech were considered crucial in terms of the main opposition political party raising their voices after many aggressive clashes, and arrests by the government. In this regard,

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it was found that the selected online newspapers fairly presented the speech, considering it to be an important one by the main opposition leader and former Prime Minister. The speech is analyzed under various themes.

a. True Freedom

Imran Khan started his speech by explaining the meaning of true freedom. In this regard, The ARY News represented Imran Khan in a 'Sayer' (indirect statement from the newspaper) role instead of placing his statements in quotations (direct statement from the social actor). As explained in excerpt 1;

1) The ARY News: *Addressing the public gathering in the Hockey Stadium, Lahore, Imran Khan said that there are four types of slavery, Muhammad Ali Jinnah freed us from one type of slavery. Slavery diminishes the self-respect of a nation, and injects an inferiority complex into the people, he added.*

He praised the efforts of the Founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, in breaking the chains of slavery by establishing an independent state on the world map. He further explained that slavery diminishes a nation's self-respect by injecting an inferiority complex into the people. Imran Khan stressed his views under the practices of our Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H), who blessed mankind with education and broke the chains of fear. Muslims gained power through their intellectual revolution, he stated.

2) The Express Tribune: *Imran said the incumbent rulers were trying to instill fear among the masses through intimidation and asked people not to be scared of their intimidation tactics in order to achieve "real freedom".*

While The Express Tribune in excerpt 2 places the social actor also in a 'Sayer' role. He is observed giving education to the gathering and how the government is trying to instill fear among them. He pointed out the previous interaction of people with government agencies as on 25th May 2022

during the Long March, followed by arrests, beatings, court cases, etc. In this regard, Janks (1997) believed that all social practices are attached to historical contexts. Additionally, the CDA study helped in analyzing the text by studying the context. Imran Khan was seen giving confidence to people not to be afraid of the government's tactics in achieving 'real freedom'. He explained freedom where people would not be harassed, as observed their houses were raided late at night, they were arrested on fake cases, freedom of speech was taken back, media was restricted from Live telecasts of PTI's speeches, journalists were harassed, arrested and beaten up. Imran Khan was seen referring to the facts and encouraging people to fight for their democratic rights.

3) GEO TV: *PTI chairperson Imran Khan Saturday announced that he will hold country-wide anti-government rallies as he claimed that the "fight for real freedom has entered the final stage".*

GEO TV has presented Imran Khan's views as a call for country-wide protests (excerpt 3). The newspaper placed him as a warrior, who is determined to fight, and the fight for real freedom has reached the final stage. Imran Khan has been portrayed as an 'Actor' ('doer' in action) as well as in the 'Verbiage' (the direct statement/expression from the social actor in a text) role. The newspaper has represented him as a speaker and placed him in quotations. The final warning seems to be represented by a speaker, and in this scenario, the newspaper has taken a safe side to keep a distance by bringing the social actor at the front. It seems that the newspaper shedding its responsibility by making responsible Imran Khan for further circumstances. The word *"fight"* gives a negative impression, and the newspaper sort of shrugs off the negative word.

4) The News: *I am coming out and to the people as the fight for real independence has entered its decisive phase [...] my nation, be ready," the PTI chairman told the people. He announced that he will hold country-wide*

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anti-government rallies as he claimed that the "fight for real freedom has entered the final stage".

The News has also taken the same stance as GEO TV (both come under the same banner of the Jang Media Group). Imran Khan is represented as a fighter, who is fighting and will be responsible for all potential results (excerpt 4). He is represented by his own words in quotation marks. Imran Khan is seen announcing to fight for real freedom and telling people to be ready for the fight, which is in the final stage.

The ARY News and The Express Tribune are sharing the same style of representation, where they are conveying the actor's views in the form of education and guidance. On the other hand, GEO TV and The News are sharing the same ideology by placing the social actor as a fighter, who is announcing his plans and informing people about the phase of the fight in achieving freedom. According to Fairclough (1995), the linguistic choices by newspapers describe social structures and discourse and eventually explains the ideology. The difference in the social actor's representation shows the ideology, and how the actor is framed shows his powerful or less powerful role. According to Foucault (1980), power lies everywhere, and detaching the power of truth shows ideology. Thus, word choice enhances the strength of the attributed moral judgement (White, 1997).

b. Corruption

Imran Khan has claimed previous politicians placed the country in an economic crisis. The following excerpts (5-7) would explain the representation of all four newspapers on the 'Corruption' theme.

5) The ARY News: He said that two families that have ruled Pakistan for over 30 years indebted the country with billions of dollars. He used to be ashamed when he had to beg other countries for loans, he added.
6) The Express Tribune "They have been plundering for the last 30 years, made offshore assets worth billions of

rupees and now they are asking who is responsible for this mess."
7) GEO TV & The News: "For the last 30 years, two families — belonging to the PPP and PML-N — ruled Pakistan and they indebted the nation."

It has been observed in excerpts 5-7 that except for The ARY News, all other newspapers represented social actor in quoted words. The ARY News categorically related the statement with Nawaz Sharif (Pakistan Muslim League-PML-N), and Asif Zardari (Pakistan People's Party-PPP) as corrupt political leaders and head of their political parties, who have looted the country for over 30 years. Due to this, the country is indebted with billions of dollars. Imran Khan as a 'Sayer' is represented, who is the view of feeling ashamed of asking for loans to run the country. In comparison to The ARY News, The Express Tribune, GEO TV, and The News wanted to be on the safer side in representation by placing the wordings of the sayer in quotations. According to Bell (1991), the direct quotation is strong evidence of disowning the statement of a sayer by a newspaper. In addition, Zaidi (2016) believes that quoting a statement is seen by the journalist as an evidentiary stance through which he positions the reader to his point of view.

All newspapers did not conceal the statement of the sayer and seemed to portray the reasons and causes of the economic crunch by associating with the previous political parties. But, the representation is on the safer side through the social actor instead of the voice of the newspaper. However, Imran Khan blamed previous political parties' heads for plundering the country for over 30 years and making offshores personal assets. Imran Khan is seen making them responsible for their corrupt actions on their expensive personal assets that have affected the nation economically.

Imran Khan's representation by the newspaper shows the ideological positioning. Newspapers, with the exception of The ARY News, reported the event from the words of a

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social actor creating a distant role for himself. According to Noor (2017), the role of the media influences the reaction and perception of how the media treated the issue. She found in her study that the Malaysian government and its employees played a positive role in mainstream newspapers and government documents, while alternative newspapers tackled the leftist characters also such as students, teachers, parents, organizations, etc. on the issue of graduate employability. Their concerns were also represented as equal contributing members of society.

However, the research of Asad (2021) on the 2018 General Elections in Malaysia and Pakistan found interesting results regarding social actors' representation in mainstream and alternative newspapers on the issue of corruption. The higher interpersonal realization of social actors was found in 'judgment' attitudinal resource. The study found the high cost of living, 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) corruption, general service tax, and shifting of loyalties of former Barisan Nasional's (BN) leaders proved influential factors in BN's decline in Malaysia, whereas, in Pakistan, corruption of previous governments, and involvement of the military found as the main factors behind the political developments. Thus, social situations revealed the power dynamics underlying the discourse. In this regard, both streams of newspapers in Malaysia found representing social actors mostly in 'Material' and 'Verbal' processes (Verbiage, Sayer, and Actor roles), whereas, in Pakistani newspapers, the sensitive issue was mostly observed represented in the 'Verbal' process under the 'Sayer' role of social actors.

c. Economic Crisis

8) The ARY News: *He added that India bought oil from Russia because it was in its people's interest but our government did not have the guts to do so, despite skyrocketing inflation. If India can safeguard the interests of their people why can not our government do the same? Because they are afraid of their foreign properties, he added.*

9) The Express Tribune: *Referring to PML-N leaders' statements on economic crisis, Imran said the two families — Sharifs and Zardaris — are responsible for destroying the country's economy.*

10) GEO TV & The News: *"I want to ask them, why is the situation like this that we are on a ventilator?*

All newspapers (excerpts 8-10) have represented the current economic crisis, from which, the country is going through. Being the main opposition political leader, Imran Khan is conveying categorically the cause of the economic crisis due to past Sharifs and Zardaris' practices, which burdened the country economically. The ARY News and The Express Tribune have given the comparison of a neighboring country India regarding buying Russian oil. Imran Khan was of the view that if cheaper oil was being bought from Russia by Pakistan with current inflation of 27% in August, why the chaos erupted among the opposition?[11] He tried to pinpoint the conspiracy against him in every action. Both newspapers placed him as a 'Sayer'. In comparison, GEO TV and The News used quotations in conveying the message instead of highlighting the political figures' names. The ideological framing is observed, where clear explanation and pointing to political figures by the social actor is avoided. The words such as *'our government did not have the guts to do so', 'skyrocketing inflation', 'why cannot our government do the same?',' afraid of their foreign properties', 'Sharifs and Zardaris — are responsible for destroying the country's economy', and 'why is the situation like this that we are on a ventilator?'* showing the current problems in a negative representation of the current situation. The social actor blames the PML-N government for the economic crisis, citing inflation.

According to Kazmi (2022),[12] rising commodity prices and a large fiscal deficit

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[11] Kazmi, Celebrating 75th Independence Day, *Daily Times*, OP-ED

[12] Ibid.

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affected the import bill by inflation in Pakistan and making the imbalanced payment.[13] The dollar rate was Rs. 218 in August 2022, which was Rs. 240 in July 2022, whereas in the past, it was much higher. Thus, making the country swing into a see-saw situation. The political instability and imbalanced payments are the main factors behind the economic crisis.[14] In this regard, Pakistan has completed the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to receive the $1.2 billion bailout package. However, the burden came to the shoulders of a common citizen in the form of inflation.[15]

d. Fair & Free election demand

11) The ARY News: *He added that his fight for real independence would continue until the date for a fresh election is not announced.*

12) The Express Tribune: *"I know my nation is ready for sacrifices. The struggle for real freedom will continue until we don't send the imported government packing and have fair and free elections."*

13) GEO TV & The News: No coverage

Excerpts 11 and 12 show the social actor's main demand for fair and free elections. The ARY News and The Express News have taken the statement as the main agenda of PTI and represented it through Imran Khan's (social actor) own words in quotations. Imran Khan portrays his efforts for real freedom. He indicates that the opposition is ready to oust his government on a vote of no-confidence because of its inability to control the economic situation in the country. So far, the country is having record inflation in the current government, which is being highlighted by Imran Khan. The reasons are still there, where his government was ousted with the help of foreign help as indicated in his speech during *the Haqeeqi Azadi March*. Further, he was on

the point of continuing his efforts till the final call of the General Election by the government.

The words, such as '*sacrifices*', *and* '*struggle*' show the determination toward the goal. The social actor is showing his orientation towards a goal, for which, his political party is ready to face sacrifices. He is pointing out towards the Long March of 25th March 2022, where PTI had faced strong resistance from the government in the form of beatings, arrests, tear-gas shellings, filing of court cases, harassment, crossing the private boundaries of residences, filing of criminal cases, etc. All this he calls his actions, his efforts and sacrifices, showing determination with courage to continue to overcome obstacles to their won democratic right to fair and free elections. Imran Khan was represented by giving a road map and energizing the masses to fight for their democratic rights.

In portraying his voice, GEO TV and The News as both newspapers did not use election terms in their representation as compared to The ARY News and The Express Tribune. It shows the ideological inclination, where GEO TV and The News can be seen on the same platform in not representing the social actor. However, The Jang Media group has gained its reputation from the past incidents as pro-government – inclined towards PML-N. As seen in the Lawyers' Movement in 2007. The Lawyer's Movement was initiated on the suspension of the then Chief Justice (CJ) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry by the then President General Pervaiz Musharaff on his judgments. CJ overturned Steel Mills privatization, and 'missing persons' were ordered to be found by the government. The anti-government judgments led to the suspension of CJ which triggered the Lawyers' Movement, and within a few years, CJ was able to get his position back. In this situation, the PML-N also found an opportunity to return to Pakistani politics to raise its voice in the movement after its foreign exile over its illegal move to remove then General Musharraf as army chief and

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[13] Kazmi, Celebrating 75th Independence Day, *Daily Times*, OP-ED
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

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appoint another senior general in his place during his foreign visit. PML-N found another chance to be back again in politics under the umbrella of this movement. The Jang Media Group supported this movement and gave prominent coverage that highlighted its inclination toward PML-N.

The study of Chaudhry and Ashraf (2012) found that in the coverage of the Pakistani General Elections 2002 and 2008, the press analyzed, criticized, and expressed their views on electoral issues. In this regard, The News found pro-government, The Nation had a negative stance, while, The Dawn remained neutral. The News is observed to have the same ideological standing in the current political situation.

e. Conspiracy created between Army & PTI

14) The ARY News: *The PTI Chief added that they are trying to cause a fight between the country's biggest party and the armed forces. Imran Khan would never want to weaken the Armed forces, he added.*

15) The Express Tribune: *Elahi said PTI Chairman Imran and army have cordial ties and added that opponents have failed to create rifts between the two. Imran asserted he will never want the army of this country to be weak, adding that those who strive for "real freedom always want their army strong".*

16) GEO TV & The News: No coverage

In excerpts 14 and 15, The ARY News and The Express Tribune have not missed the important point of speech in framing the Pak armed forces as the social actor, who is the pillar of the country in terms of national interests, safety, and security. Both newspapers have taken Imran Khan in a 'Sayer' role and helped in explaining his point of view. The positive step can be observed as a fight diffuser or a mediator by newspapers. On the other hand, GEO TV and The News have avoided mentioning conspiracy charges between PTI and armed forces. The ARY

News and The Express Tribune have taken a positive stance by highlighting the conspiracy between PTI and the Pak Army. The support for social actor can be seen by the wordings of newspapers such as '*Imran Khan would never want to weaken the Armed Forces*' and '*he will never want the army of this country to be weak*'. While The Express Tribune has taken additional support of attributed social actor Mr. Pervaiz Elahi, Chief Minister of Punjab to support the view in favor of The Pak Army. He was of the view that PTI and the Army are having cordial relations, and conspiracies are being hatched to create misunderstandings. Imran Khan expressed his views also in favor of the Pak Army and cleared his stance by fully agreeing on the standing of this strong organization.

GEO TV and The News didn't mention the Pak Army and PTI relations. Instead of that Gen Pervez Musharraf's aid in the war of terror was mentioned when he facilitated the U.S. The present scenario seems to favor the current stance with the help of previous actions and the role of Pak-forces in the war of terror. The stance of these two newspapers is obvious, where the social actor was not fairly represented even though he spoke about the Pak Army. Against this background, one can see a biased presentation compared to the other two newspapers. According to Silva (2011), the interpretation is biased, where people are positioned in context from the semiotics' perspective. In journalism, a journalist creates an intrinsic connection between the event and a viewer through his write-up for positioning the viewer on his point of view (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, through the newspapers' presentation, the ideological framing can be observed on the theme of 'Conspiracy created among the Pak Army and PTI'.

f. Formation of a New Tiger Force

17) The ARY News: No coverage

18) The Express Tribune: *Imran also announced formation of a new 'Tiger Force' which will follow the footsteps of those who fought for independence before the partition.*

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19) GEO TV: Khan also announced the formation of a new "Tiger Force", claiming that it will work for "independence" as the people did before the partition.

20) The News: The PTI chairman, when he was in power, had established a "Tiger Force" to keep a check on hoarding of edible goods and other items during the coronavirus pandemic, when strict lockdowns were in place.

The theme 'Formation of a New Tiger Force' was observed in The Express Tribune, and GEO TV, while The ARY News missed the representation, and The News described the force from the past performance (Excerpts 18-20). A new announcement from PTI is informed with the description of their future role by comparing them with the 'Force' of independence. Imran Khan is seen energizing the people to fight for their real freedom without foreign interference as through which conspiracy he was removed per his claims. He placed the efforts and role of the PTI's New Tiger Force on the same ideology, which was opted at the time of the country's independence. Imran Khan delivered his speech on the night of 13-14 August 2022 (Independence Day), choosing this day to let the nation know how much struggle and sacrifices were made to gain democratic rights and independence. He is seen as determined toward his goals. In this regard, The Express Tribune, GEO TV, and The News represented the social actor in a quoted statement in the 'Verbiage' process (quoted words from social actor). The ARY News didn't opt to present this news as it seems, the newspaper already presented and acknowledge PTI's present and performed actions. The news on this issue has been represented as 'hard news' based on facts (previous performances). The future performance of the Force is neglected, as the result so far, hasn't been achieved by this Force.

In a comparison of ideologies, The ARY News is observed on different representations based on 'performance-based' as a fact and proof, while other newspapers are represented in quotations by keeping social actor ahead in explaining the Tiger Force's future role. According to White (1997), the choices of words strengthen the attributed moral judgments. Furthermore, the attributed resources in the text influence the reader to understand the positioning of an author or attitudes (White, 2009).

g. Rejecting PTI's Anti-American stance

21) The ARY News: He added that he wants to have good relations with every country including the U.S, but can not accept slavery. He had good relations with former U.S President Donald Trump, he added.

22) The Express Tribune: "They [US] carried out drone strikes on Pakistan but Sharif and Zardari never raised their voice against this oppression," he said, adding that he was not anti-American but will never compromise on national interest.

23) GEO TV & The News: Reiterating that he only wants to look after the country's interests, Khan said that he is not "anti-America" and wishes to have a friendly relationship with the United States. "I know America and the United Kingdom better than most of the Pakistanis [...] I know their psychology; if you beg them, they will use you," the ex-premier said.

All newspapers have presented social actor's views on 'Rejection of Anti-American stance' by PTI (Excerpts 21-23). GEO TV and The News presented the sayings with the same stance on their web portals in quotations. The ARY News has placed the social actor as a 'Sayer', while The Express Tribune, GEO TV, and The News have placed the actor in 'Verbiage' (quoted statement) and 'Sayer' roles. The direct quotes have been written by keeping the actor in the front role. The ARY News seems to represent the actor in a positive role by having good relations with all countries including the U.S. The actor's stance is also being cleared from the point of slavery, as PTI's strong stance on not

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accepting anyone's dictation for their internal affairs from time to time claimed of facing through the letter of the U.S Embassy in ousting the PTI's government. Since then, Imran Khan had a strict stance with his popular slogan of 'Absolutely-Not' by not accepting external interference and placing a coalition government by ousting PTI's elected government through vote of no-confidence. The Express Tribune also presented the actor's point of not acting against Nawaz and Zardari regarding drone attacks, which were also internal security breaches and interference. The PTI's Chairman showed his annoyance with previous governments for giving opportunities and grounds to external actors to use the Pakistan's territory.

The issue has been observed to be taken important from the point of international affairs and relations with a superpower. All newspapers were presented through the actor and kept his stance at the front, which highlighted his point of view. Hence, Wittgenstein (1953, 2001) is quoted that the social actor's presence in the attributed text enhances his presence, whereas, in journalism, the stance-taking practices of the journalist mediate the authorial and non-authorial stances, thus, the journalist adopts particular identities in the form of conformity or resistance to follow the rule of the game (Huan, 2015). The study by Asad et al. (2021) was performed on an attitudinal analysis of the Pakistani alternative and mainstream newspaper text, in which, linguistic features presented their inclination. Furthermore, the quoted statements were found extensively used which indirectly invoked attitudes by providing evaluative grounds. In another study by Asad et al. (2019), The Malaysiakini as an alternative newspaper represented independent views on the presentation of the social actor in the defamation issue before the General Election in Malaysia with neutral coverage, while The New Straits Times as a mainstream newspaper was more inclined towards the Barisan Nasional's (BN) government. In comparison to BN, when seeing the representation of the mainstream

newspaper in Malaysia in another study, The New Straits Times-NST represented Dr. Mahathir as a ruling head in the government more positively in the first 100 days of his tenure. The study indicated that The Malaysiakini had its neutral stance, while NST was seen shifting its inclination from BN to Pakatan Harapan (PH), the government of Dr. Mahathir after the General Election in Malaysia during first 14 weeks of government as first 100 days considered crucial for any government for its effective governance plans (Asad, 2022).

Therefore, in contextual implications, the study highlights the contextual factors as an important event in Pakistan's political upheavals and by the former Prime Minister, which was represented as hard news by the newspapers. From the practical implications, the study highlights the representation of the social actor in political and economic crises, which throws light on media and political study. While, from the theoretical perspective, the study through CDA helped in understanding the contextual factors on text through systematic semiotic analysis. Thus, the study fills the gap in the literature through a comparison of four selected newspapers, issues, and theoretical and analytical frameworks.

For future recommendations, the same framework could be opted by keeping the highlighted issue of Pakistan in the near future as Pakistan is facing political and economic upheavals. The comparison of alternative and mainstream newspapers would highlight their inclination where unpredictable political situations would give an interesting inclination at a particular time frame on a specific issue. The representation of the issue at a particular time would present the ideology of the newspaper. Silva (2011) believed that media ideology is enacted by linguistic choices as power relations in presenting the issue and social actor. According to van Dijk (1989), the symbolic power of media is described by news events and presented through text, and CDA constructs power relations between social

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practices and semiosis through communication that leads to a critical discussion (Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, The ARY News, and The Express Tribune were seen sharing the same stance of giving fair representation to the social actor in expressing his views. Both newspapers have opted to keep the social actor in front instead of portraying newspapers' voices. The positive representation of the actor is observed in these newspapers. On the other hand, GEO TV, and The News represented the social actor with similar ideologies, as in some places, the newspaper explained the actor's views more clearly which shows the inclination. The quoted statements were opted to be placed instead of the newspaper's voice. This suggests that the paper is keeping its distance from the quoted statements. However, all newspapers presented *Haqeeqi Azadi Jalsa* as a prominent event in the form of 'hard news', but the representation of the social actor varies at some points, which shows the different ideologies in a certain period of time that differentiate the position and standing with other newspapers. Furthermore, the contextual factors were analyzed through CDA that affected the text and behind the discourse which enforced the social actor to be represented in the current form.

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