



Representation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistani English Newspapers A Content Analysis of Dawn, Frontier Post, and The Nation

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Abstract: *The study is to analyze the representation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani leading English newspapers. The study attempts to view the stance of the newspaper regarding the project and compares its coverage in its news items and editorials. Content analysis of Dawn, Frontier Post, and Nation was conducted. Moreover, researchers also observe the most highlighted issues associated with this project. The theory of Agenda Setting and Framing was considered. Hence, the study reveals that Frontier Post is one of the newspapers that gave maximum coverage to the issue in its news items and editorials. However, Dawn newspaper represents the issue with maximum frequency under the positive category and Frontier Post under the negative category. It is concluded that most highlighted issues mentioned in the news items and editorials are the issue of transparency concerning the objection from the side of the opposition party and fear of Baloch nationalist.*

Key Words: Representation, economic corridor, coverage.

Introduction

In the contemporary age, the economy of any country is considered its backbone. Now in the era of economic independence, evidence shows that those nations seem dominant over under-developed countries, which focused on upgrading their economy. Focusing upon building Economic corridors among the nations has allegedly proved that it can boost up the economy of

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the country. These Corridors connect economic actors within a defined geography and region that facilitates them to trade and utilize the potential markets in more positive ways. Through these corridors, connections are developed in the form of nodes and hubs (Brunner, 2013).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is also known as the Silk Route, is a considerable developmental project that direct to connect Gawadar port in southwestern Pakistan to China's northwestern region of Xinjiang through networks of highways, railways, airports, and pipelines to transport oil and gas (Sewag, 2015). This economic corridor is considered to be a crucial project for China-Pakistan and will run about 3000 km from Gawadar to Kashgar and overall budget for its construction is estimated at \$46 billion, with the expectations to be completed in 2025. China is working to build the Kashgar a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), and at the same time, Gawadar port is being developed to utilize the resources through and from Pakistan. Chinese Premier Li Qiqiang and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif initially proposed this milestone project on 22nd May 2013 following the meeting on 27th August 2013. Moreover, on 20th April 2015, both countries signed an agreement for this purpose. In this joint endeavour, both countries' initiative is to encourage common development by enhancing connectivity along these routes.

As far as Pakistani Media is concerned, it has treated this project in its coverage through various decorum and direct questions regarding the implementation of the project in terms of security and violence that pervade in Pakistan, including political and economic constraints. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate that how Pakistani Print Media has discussed the different prospectus of these economic corridors and what stance has been taken by the selected newspapers over the issues of potential threats if they exist, extremist militancy, nationalist insurrection, and criminal violence across Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because the CPEC is considered to have a vital role for Pakistan to help for its economic growth. It will provide the connection between nodes and hubs and a large number of resources and actors that are centred on their way. Pakistan being the opening for trade, has become such a hub and attention seeker for trade for all of the countries across the border. Hence, the study will reveal how the media is portraying this project. Whether the project is being represented in the country's interest and all of the constraints faced by the project during the procedure are discussed in positive, negative, or neutral manners. The study will help to understand the role of media in spreading the information as it is enhancing the reader's awareness about the utility of this crucial project.

Objectives of the Study

- The objectives of the study are written below.
- To analyze how the China-Pak Economic Corridor is represented in Pakistani English Newspapers.
- To explore the stance/policy of newspapers regarding the China-Pak Economic Corridor

- To compare coverage of the China-Pak Economic Corridor in Pakistani English Newspapers.

Literature Review

Several researchers have worked on the CPEC project by understanding the conceptual realities and devising the different mechanisms for their maximum and long-term effects. While discussing the challenges and Imperatives of this economic corridor, [\(Parveen & Khalil, 2015\)](#) has scrutinized it and consider it to be a momentous effort if the Pakistani Government plays its positive part in it. Further, researchers argue that if Pakistan does not pay serious attention to this project by not dealing with the internal insecurities, then there could be serious recoil for the country, and Chinese interest can be redirected towards other preferences. On elaborating the Imperatives for Pakistan, researchers discuss that “Pakistani products like cotton, wheat, sports goods, and garments shall be projected in the international markets for the ships anchoring at the port”. Over the construction of this project, [\(Sial 2014\)](#) has associated it with various elements and his main concerns lie on the issues of implementation of proposed strategies and internal/external threats. Political unrest in Pakistani politics and its long-term effects is another constraint that can play its part in the commencement of the project.

[\(Ritzinger, 2015\)](#) has discussed the motivation of the Chinese government behind building this corridor. He says that the motivation behind this promised investment in Pakistan is primarily under three options. For reaching globally, China wants to provide economic support being a long time ally, facilitating trade and building linkages towards the West that can help China to enhance its influence. Under the flagship project, this initiative seeks to link China with Europe through a maritime trade route, including Middle East energy resources and the emerging African market.

[\(Bengali, 2015\)](#) has discussed in a joint report regarding the controversy of the route and its direction. He focuses on the western route that seems shortest and having the least cost in terms of opportunity. He argues that the Eastern route is more likely to be expensive in terms of land acquisition. Therefore, in the whole report, the focus has been given to the western route that will provide Balochistan more opportunities for jobs.

[\(Ranjan, 2015\)](#) has focused on his research study regarding the options for India that can enhance their trade by using this corridor. He mainly focused that with the revitalization of the India-Pakistan peace process and through increasing cooperation using other territories, this project can be of enormous benefits for the economic stability of India. He proposed the idea of constructing the 'mini economic corridors' adjacent with CPEC locating on the border of India and Pakistan and coined the term of trilateral cooperation among Pakistan, China, India with Middle Eastern and further in European countries.

Center for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS) is a think tank and organize CPGS Foreign Policy Roundtables Series and has organized “Pakistan-China Relations- Prospects and Challenges” in its fourth roundtable discussion. Under this discussion, there have been given suggestions on the challenges that could be faced by both governments over the issue of security.

The formation of a special Industrial Security Forcedrawn from trained retired soldiers from the Pakistan Army can be utilized as a human resource to protect the China-Pakistan projects (CPGS, 2014). (Shaikh, 2014) has given the suggestions for the success of this corridor upon the skilful and professional handling of challenges. He believes that taking confidence in all stakeholders of the project and arranging campaigns for the investors of the corridor will surely enhance the chances of positive development in the project.

A report on Pak-China relations (Sultan, 2013) has discussed several factors through which both of the countries can take advantage of bilateral trade, keeping in view the interest of each other. She has given the recommendations in her report to expand these relations and argues that this corridor can help to achieve major targets in the economic sector.

Thus the studies show that this corridor is one of the major milestones and most promising development stretching out economic prospects and innovations in all sectors of life. Therefore this project requires sound management and should be handled with proficiency to gain the maximum outputs.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda Setting

In this study, the Agenda Setting Theory has been applied. One of the core assumptions of agenda-setting is that media do not reflect reality, and they filter it and shape the messages in different meanings.

Relation with the current study

In the current study, it is observed that in the coverage of news items and editorials that how media is shaping the thoughts and opinion of the people. The issues that have been highlighted are of enormous importance, according to these newspapers, and the focus is highly upon converting these issues as part of discussions for the people.

Framing

Framing theory argues that media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. This theory argues that how something is presented to the people influences the choices they make while processing the information.

Relation with the current study

In the current study, it is observed in the content of selected newspapers that few issues have been highlighted prominently, and others have been given less coverage. These news items and editorials contain information regarding political controversies among various political parties but do not focus on how these controversies can be solved. It means the focus is just upon creating hype among the masses but not on real challenges. There are several news items and editorials that contain the information that seems to hide a few of the issues and highlight only desired issues related to the project.

Methodology

Operationalization of Categories

Positive

Coverage of news items or editorials of selected newspapers is selected as positive that is in favor of the government regarding the China-Pak Economic Corridor.

Negative

Coverage of news items or editorials of selected newspapers is selected as negative that is based on criticism from the side of opposition regarding the China-Pak Economic Corridor.

Neutral

Coverage of news items or editorials of selected newspapers is selected as neutral that are balanced and represent the views of government and opposition in constructive ways regarding the China-Pak Economic Corridor.

Representation

It is a specific way in which coverage is given to the China-Pak Economic Corridor Project by the selected newspapers.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions based on which a content analysis of selected news items and editorials was conducted.

How the selected newspapers give coverage to the China-Pak Economic Corridor? (In terms of Positive, Negative or Neutral meaning)

What types of issues are covered in selected newspapers regarding the China-Pak Economic Corridor?

What is the stance/policy of the selected newspapers over the China-Pak Economic Corridor?

Did selected newspapers give coverage to China-Pak Economic Corridor equally?

Variables of the Study

The variables of the study are the following:

Independent Variable

Media coverage of the China-Pak economic corridor in its news items and editorials.

Dependent Variable

Policy/stance of the newspaper under the positive, negative, or neutral category.

Method

This study used content analysis for studying the News Items and Editorials.

Universe of the Study

In this study, the universe of the study is three leading Pakistani English Newspapers that are Dawn, The Frontier Post, and The Nation. The period for the selection of the content of these newspapers is from 20th April 2015 to 20th October 2015. It is based on 6 months.

Unit of Analysis

Unit of analysis for the study is those News Items and Editorials of selected newspapers that contain the discussion on the China-Pak Economic Corridor Project.

Sampling

Front-Page News of all three newspapers and editorials of the same three newspapers was selected.

Sample Size

429 Newspapers from selected periods of 6 months were analysed.

Findings and Date Interpretation

Following are the findings in the form of figures, and its interpretation has been written below each figure.

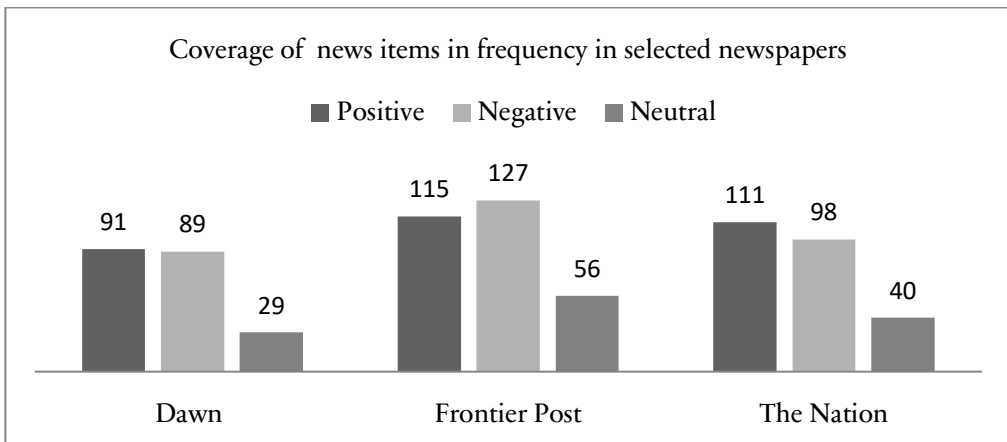


Figure 1.1: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Dawn Newspaper, Frontier Post, and The Nation in the frequency of published news items (News Section)

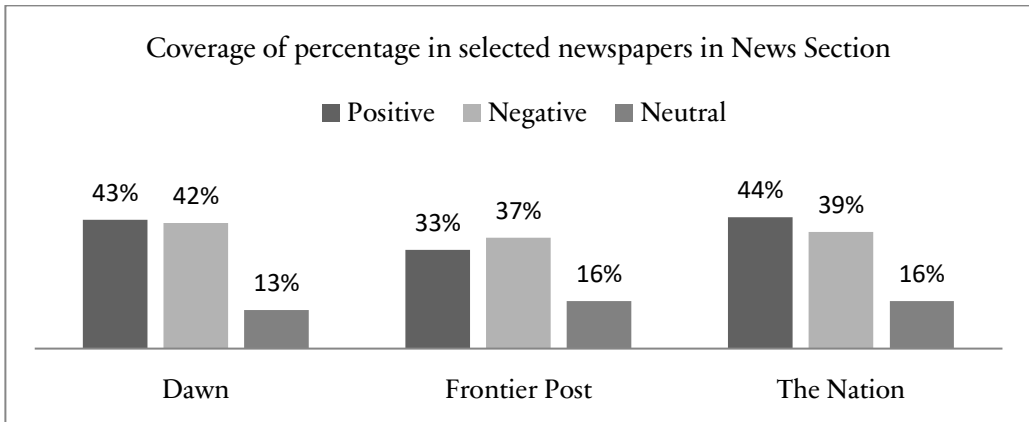


Figure 1: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Dawn Newspaper, Frontier Post, and The Nation in the percentage of published news items (News Section).

Interpretation

content analysis of selected three newspapers reveals that the Frontier Post newspaper has published more news items in the direction of negativity, and The Nation published more positive as compared to other newspapers. Dawn published the second-highest news items in the positive direction that denotes that its stance is more pro towards the government as compared to other newspapers. As far as the direction of negativity is concerned, again, Dawn is on the top of the newspapers which have published more news on negative aspects of the China-Pak economic corridor, and after that, The Nation published second-highest editorials under the same category.

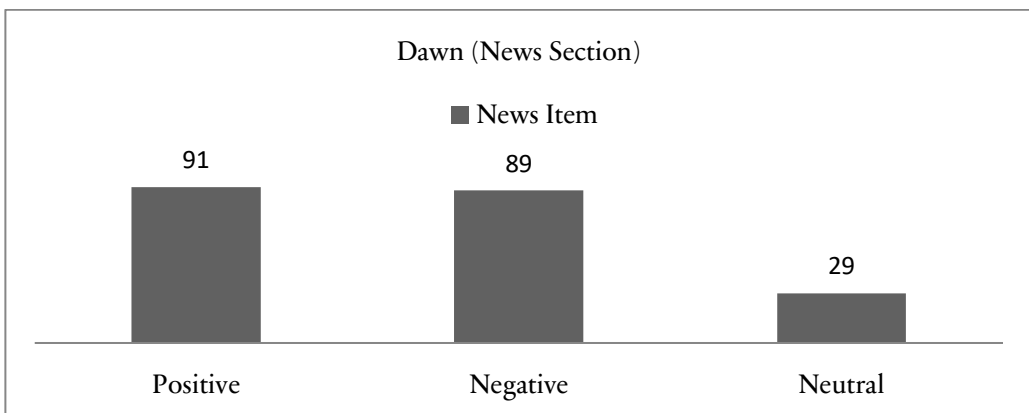


Figure 2: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Dawn Newspaper (News Section).

Interpretation

In the above-mentioned figure, the published news items of Dawn Newspaper are presented

descriptively. It is evident through the figure, that Dawn Newspaper published more news items in a positive direction, which emphasizes the fact that to some extent, the policy and stance of this newspaper favor the government representatives in terms of the China-Pak economic corridor project. The newspaper also criticizes the government and appreciates the opposition party as the negative category shows that its frequency is near to the positive category. There are fewer news items that focus on neutrality.

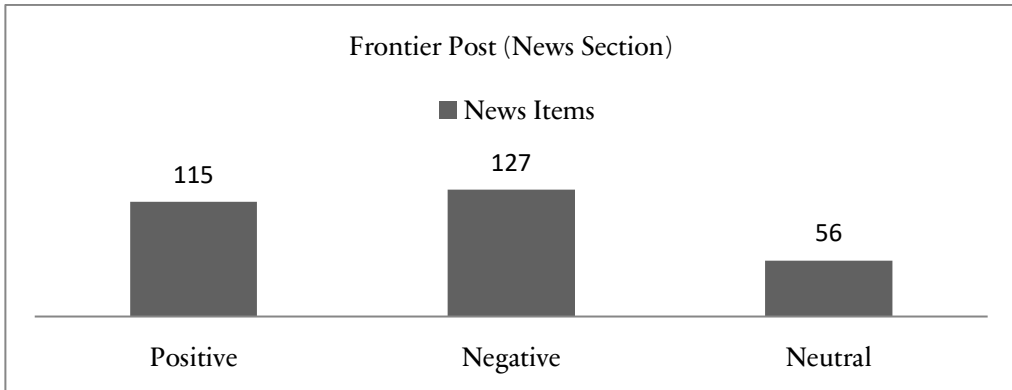


Figure 3: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Frontier Post (News Section).

Interpretation

In the above-mentioned figure, published news items of Frontier Post Newspaper are presented descriptively. Frontier Post Newspaper published more news items in a negative direction, which emphasizes the fact that to some extent, the policy and stance of this newspaper favor the opposition in terms of the China-Pak economic corridor project. This newspaper also appreciates the government in its news items and criticizes the opposition party as the positive category shows that its frequency is near to negative category. There are a maximum number of news items that focus on a neutral perspective.

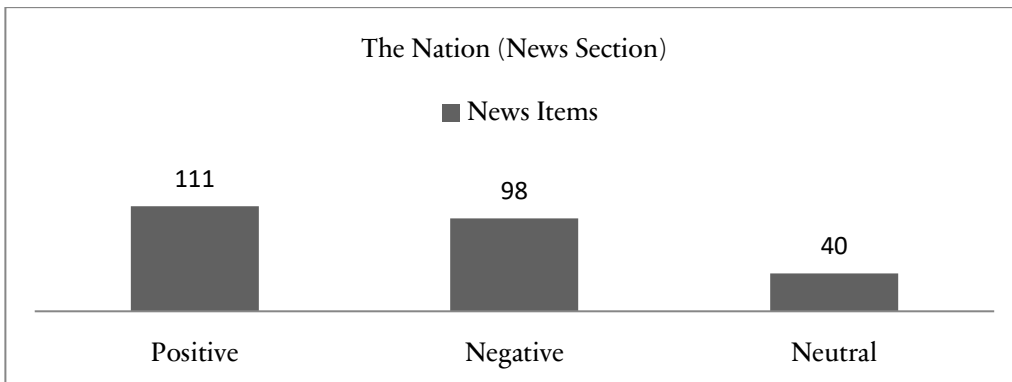


Figure 4: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in The Nation (News Section)

Interpretation

In the above-mentioned figure, the published news items of The Nation Newspaper are given descriptively. The Nation Newspaper published more news items in a positive direction than in any other category that exposes the policy and stance of this newspaper in favor of the government. On the other hand, the newspaper also appreciates the opposition in its news items and criticizes the government as the negative category shows that its frequency is near to positive category. Again like the Frontier Post, there are maximum numbers of news items that focus on the neutral perspective.

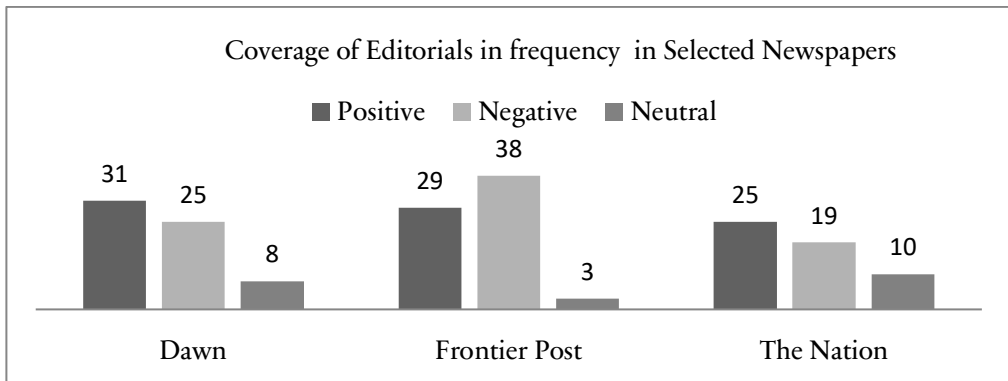


Figure 5: Representation of the China-Pak Economic Corridor in Dawn Newspaper, Frontier Post, and The Nation in the frequency of published editorials (Editorial Section).

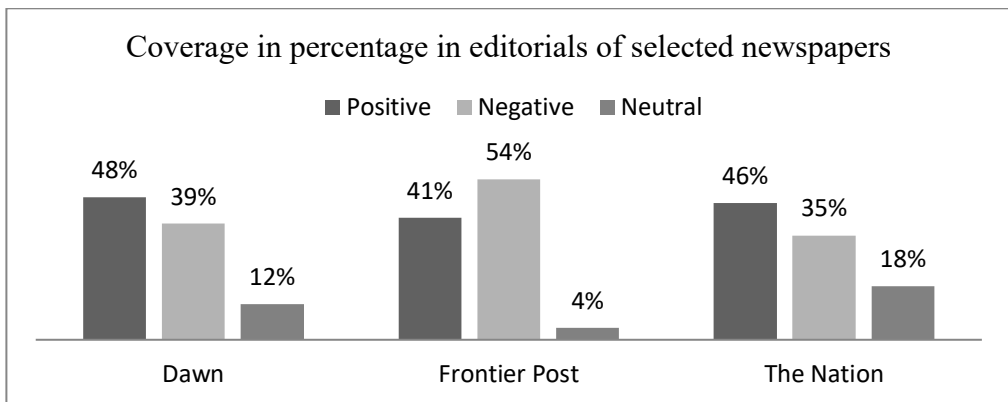


Figure 6: Representation of the China-Pak Economic Corridor in Dawn Newspaper, Frontier Post and The Nation percentage of published editorials (Editorial Section).

Interpretation

In the editorial section, the researchers observe that on overall coverage of all newspapers, Frontier Post is one of the newspapers which published 38 editorials that are of 54% based on the negative category that is more than any other newspaper. The Nation and Dawn published 19

and 25 editorials based on negative category, respectively. Moreover, Dawn and The Nation published the more positive editorials that are 31 and 25, respectively. For the category on neutral elements, Frontier Post seems less neutral, and The Nation seems more neutral than Dawn and Frontier Post.

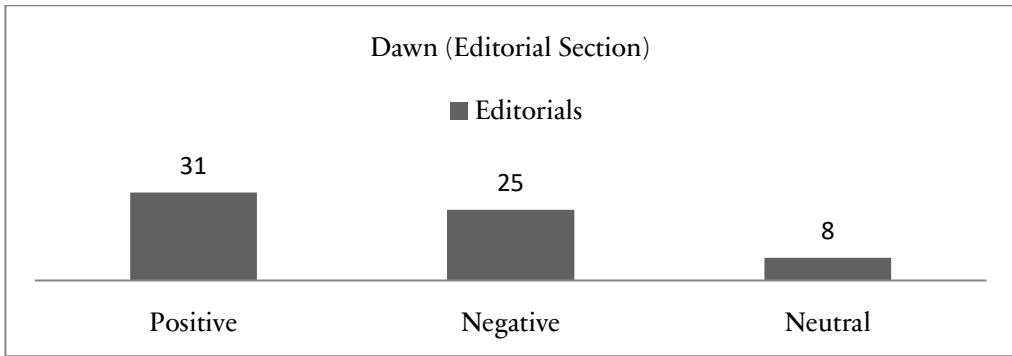


Figure 7: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Dawn (Editorial Section)

Interpretation

In the above-mentioned figure, it is observed that Dawn Newspaper published more positive editorials than negative. However, the frequency of negative editorials is almost near to the frequency of positive editorials that is 25. But overall, it seems that Dawn newspaper is more positive concerning the favouring of the government policies and less neutral towards the project.

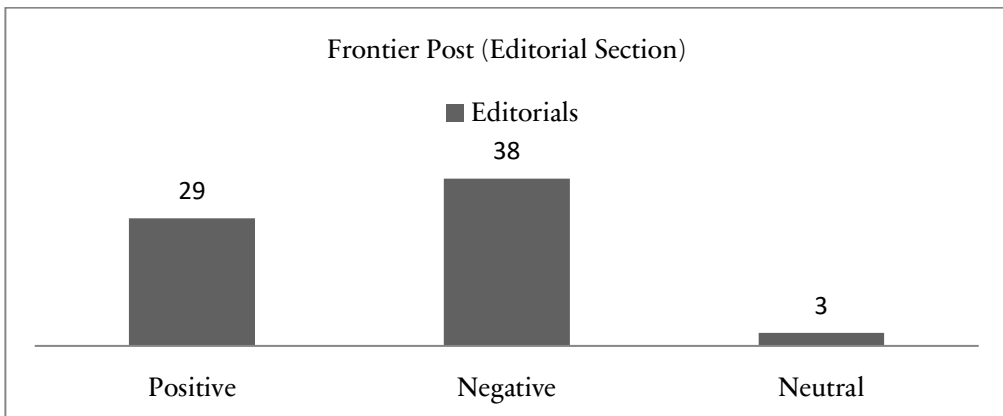


Figure 8: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in Frontier Post (Editorial Section).

Interpretation

The above-mentioned figure illustrates that Frontier Post published more negative editorials than publishing positive ones. Somehow, there seems more or less equal treatment given to this project in terms of frequency of published editorials in positive and negative categories. This newspaper seems less neutral in its editorials as compared to the other newspapers.

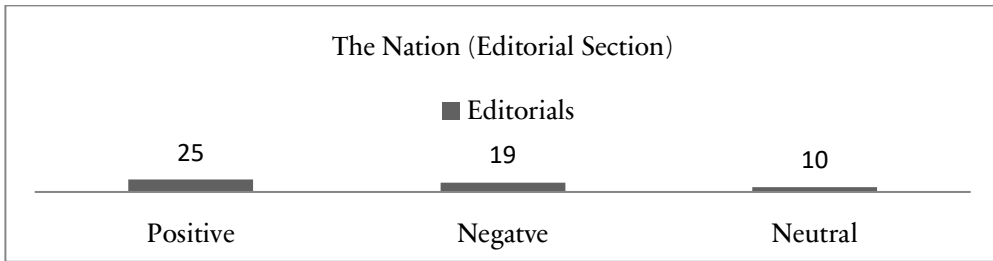


Figure 9: Representation of Pak-China Economic Corridor Project in The Nation (Editorial Section).

Interpretation

The above-mentioned figure explains that The Nation published more editorials under a positive category that are 25 and more or less 19 editorials under the category of negative. But there seems that more coverage is based upon the neutral category that shows The Nation’s policy seems more neutral than any other newspaper.

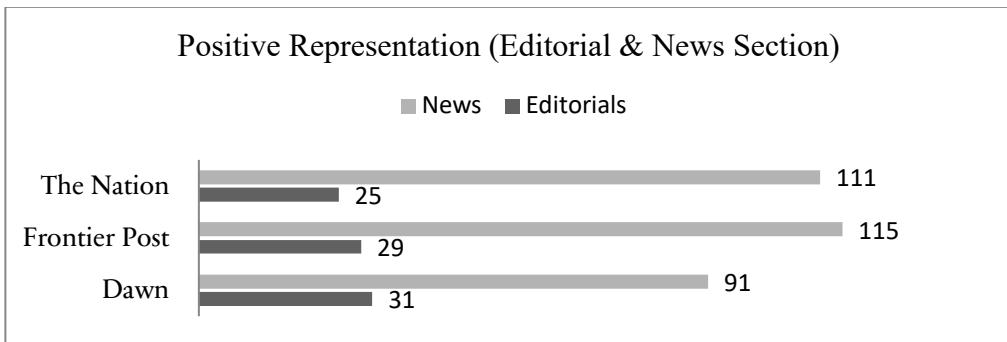


Figure 10: Overall Coverage of selected newspapers in terms of Positive representation.

Interpretation

In the above-mentioned figure, it is observed that for the category of Positive, there are more published news items by Frontier Post than any other newspaper. For the editorials, Dawn published more editorials than any other newspaper concerning the positive category, and at the same time, Dawn published fewer news items than other newspapers.

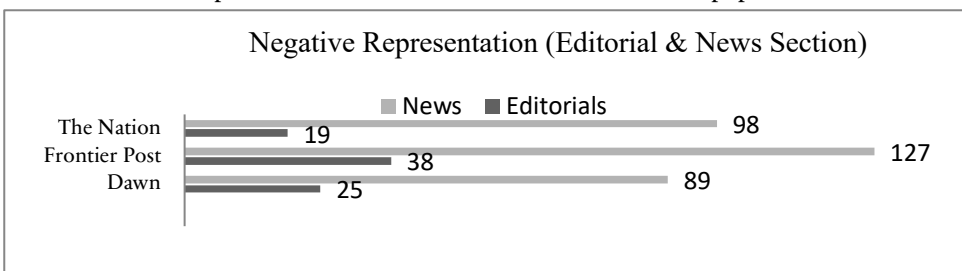


Figure 11: Overall Coverage of selected newspapers in terms of Negative representation

Interpretation

When observed on the whole for the Negative category, it is evident that again Frontier Post is on top of the number that published more news items, and The Nation is on the second number. For the part of editorial’s publication, here, again, Frontier Post gave extensive coverage to the issue by publishing 38 editorials in criticism of the government.

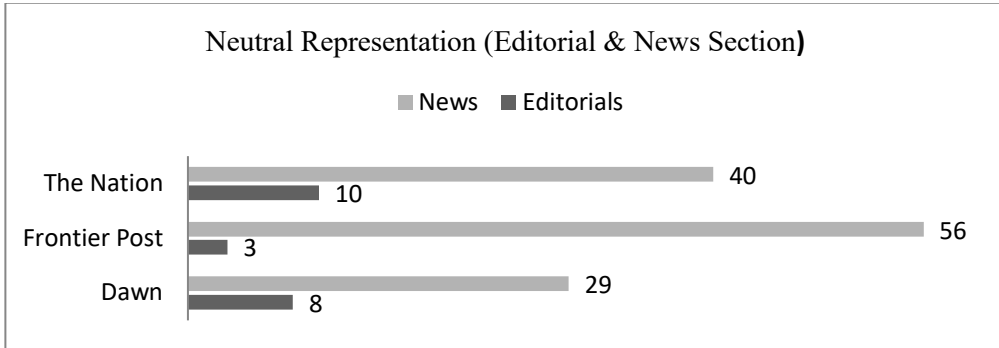


Figure 12: Overall Coverage of selected newspapers in terms of Neutral representation.

Interpretation

For the category of Neutral, the number of news items published by the Frontier Post is more than Dawn and The Nation. However, The Nation seems more neutral in terms of editorials in its policy. Here, Frontier Post seems less neutral in its editorials that show the stance of this newspaper is towards extreme ends that are either positive or negative.

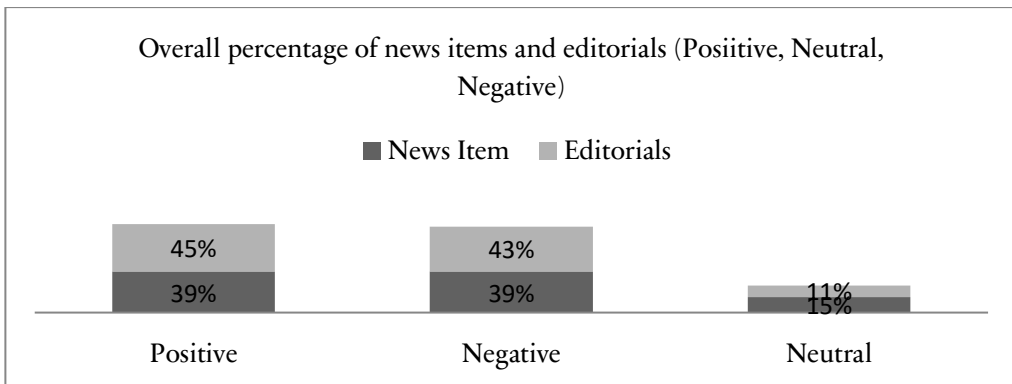


Figure 13: Overall representation of news items and editorials in the positive, neutral and negative category.

Interpretation

For the overall percentage of being positive, negative, or neutral, it is observed that most of the content is published under the category of positive because the percentage of news items is 39% and of editorials is 45% that is the highest among other categories. But still, negative coverage is

more or less the same as the coverage in the positive dimension. The difference seems in an editorial that is 43% of the total number of representatives of the project. For news items, the percentage is the same as the percentage of the positive category.

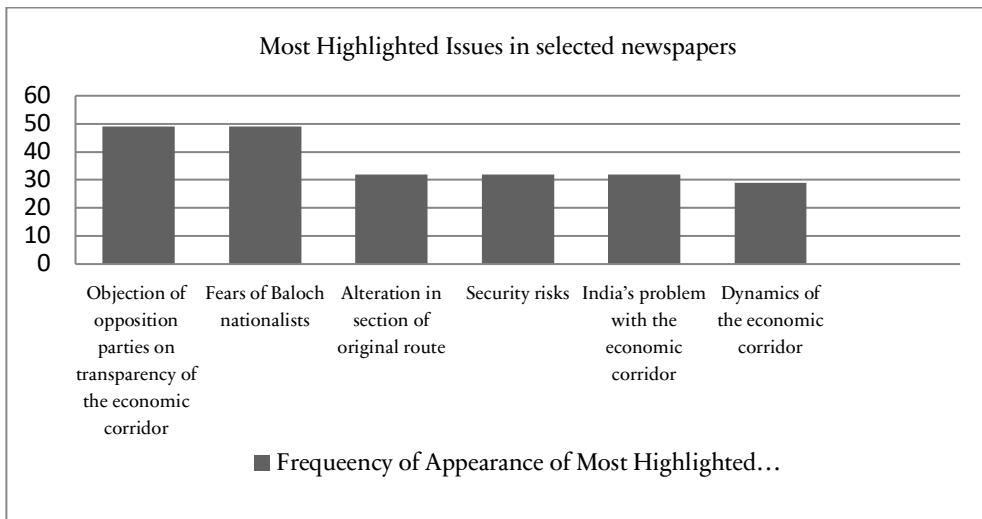


Figure 14: Description of most highlighted issues under the discussion of the China-Pak Economic Corridor.

Interpretation

Through extensive content analysis of news items and editorials of selected newspapers, on the top level, the issue of transparency and objection of an opposition party is the most highlighted. Along with that, the fear of Baloch nationals is also on the same level. There seems discussion on a broader level for these two issues. Three issues are of equal importance and have been discussed in news items and editorials on the second level of priority. One of them is the issue of alteration of the original route, another one is risks in security matters, and the last one is the role of India and its several perspectives related to this project. These issues are mainly concerned with the management of this economic corridor.

Discussion

The current study tries to find out the representation of the China-Pak Economic Corridor in English Pakistani newspapers. Through extensive content analysis of news items and editorials of Dawn, Frontier Post, and The Nation, it is found that all of the newspapers represented the project in their way with different meanings.

Hence, to find out the answer to the question of how media gave coverage to the China-Pak economic corridor under the category of positive, negative, and neutral. The researchers find as on the whole, Frontier Post gave most of the coverage to this project. But Dawn and The Nation newspaper represented the project more positively in its editorials. Frontier Post seems to give

negative coverage to the project, mostly with 54% in its editorials, and Dawn News seems on the second number with 42% of its news items. Somehow, The Nation seems more neutral than any other newspaper, with a percentage of 18% in its editorials.

On the question of equal treatment given to the issue, it is observed that the coverage is given positively with the percentage of 45% in editorials and 39% in news items. But with the same intensity, negatively associated news items are also of 39% and editorials with less percentage of 43%. As far as the neutral category is concerned, selected news media had been neutral 15% in its news items and 11% in its editorials for this project.

Moreover, on the question of the overall stance taken by the newspapers, it is found that there is more content published positively and anticipations are associated highly appreciated in most of the media coverage. However, it is concluded that negative associations with the project are more or less the same as well. There are several news items and editorials that just focused on criticism from the side of the opposition. For the neutral category, there is less focus of news media towards neutrality because the number of published news items and editorials are least in frequency than positive and negative.

Further, on the question of most highlighted issues associated with the project are observed, the issue of the objection of opposition for transparency of the project and security risks at the time of construction and after completion.

Conclusion

The study attempts to find out the media coverage given to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistani English newspapers. The study concludes that most of the coverage is based on content that represents the China-Pak Corridor positively. However, there is negative representation as well that illustrates the fact that the project is being criticized by the side of opposition and newspaper policymakers. Frontier Post published most of the content and Dawn newspaper remained more positive. The Nation seems more neutral than any other newspaper. The most highlighted issues that have been associated with the China-Pak Economic Corridor is the objection on government by the side of opposition for not being transparent under various issues that are related to the cost, distribution of area, and route. Hence, this project is of enormous importance for the prosperous economy of Pakistan, therefore there is a need to handle all of the intricacies wisely and diligently.

Limitations and Future Study

In this study, a time frame of six months was taken. For further study, the time frame can be extended from six months to one year as well. In this study, only content analysis has been conducted to view the stance of news items and editorials of selected newspapers. In the future, discourse analysis of talk shows of electronic media can be conducted to analyze the coverage more closely.

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