

Appeals in Political Rhetoric about Covid19: Political Discourse Analysis of Speeches by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan

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p- ISSN: 2521-2982

e- ISSN: 2707-4587

p- ISSN: 2521-2982

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Abstract

This study is basically an analysis using political discourse, with an angle to investigate the appeals in political rhetoric. This study uses Aristotle's model for persuasion and to find out the ethos, logos and pathos elements in the speeches of Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan. This study is presenting the analysis of Imran Khan's first three speeches on the panic situation of the spread of corona-virus. The study reveals that there is a sizeable use of logos and pathos in the speeches on Covid19. Using pathos in the speeches, there is the use of different appeals, i.e. fear, nationhood, hope and religion. There is significant use of fear and religious appeal in the category of pathos, while the use of logical appeal was also in ample size.

Key Words: Covid19, Corona Virus, Political Communication, Imran Khan Speeches, Discourse Analysis, Aristotle

Introduction

Discourse can be defined in very different ways, in a broader way, it is the overall meaning of the communicated content, ranging from linguistic, psychological, philosophical to sociological context. (Titscher et.al. 2000). Critical Discourse Analysts is to investigate how the text or speech is constructed to give a specific perspective that is expressed delicately and covertly (Batstone 1995: 198-199).

Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) has a vague notion, and it is commonly carried out with the discourse analysis of political content. It is also used to analyze whether the content is political or not. It can be said it is looking at discourse analysis and discourse with a political approach (Fairclough 1995; Van Dijk 1993b). When we are going to apply discourse in the subject of political science, we do not look for the analysis of text and talk but of political communication and rhetoric (Graber 1981, Chaffee 1975, Bitzer 1981). Only a few of political discourses have got discourse-analytical orientation. (Gamson 1992; Thompson 1987). At the level of lexical choice, variation and meaning of words, the same rules are applied as that of global and local meanings. Most of the approaches in political language focus on special words used in politics. (Edelman 1977, 1985; Herman 1992)

Okulska and Cap (2010) coined the term "analysis of political discourse" (APD) and called it as a study of politics that is socially-oriented. APD is situated at the intersection of political/public discourse and political/social institutions". Schaffner (1996) found that political discourse is a branch of discourse analysis. Political discourse is based on two elements: Thematic and functional. It is historically and culturally

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determined that PDA is the outcome of politics. Political discourse is called thematic because it is related to ideas, activities and relations of politics.

It is observed that all the studies on political communication are restricted to only political rhetoric (Billig 1991; Bitzer 1981; [Campbell and Jamieson 1990](#)). At the level of sound, sentence form and meaning, repetition operations are used to draw attention towards a specific meaning. Also, this helps to enhance the construction of meanings, and their memorizations for later recall ([Allen 1991](#); [Cacioppo & Petty 1979](#); Johnstone 1994).

Objectives of the Study

The study is conducted with the following objectives:

- 1: To find out the use of persuasive techniques in political rhetoric by PM Imran Khan.
- 2: To investigate the use of appeals in the political rhetoric of Imran Khan on Covid 19.
- 3: To know the dominant appeal in the political rhetoric of Imran Khan on Covid 19.

Literature

[Shell and Moussa \(2007\)](#) suggested four steps for persuasive communication. Persuasion means to win the others, not to defeat them. To win the others, one must see the topic with a different angle. [Dutton \(2011\)](#) establish that a good persuasive speaker must use certain techniques in a simple way. The message must be kept short; the message must be crispy, simple and clarifying the person's perceived self-interest. The content should be surprising for the audience with ironic comments given with extreme self-confidence.

Critical Discourse Analysis is a common point of view on linguistics, semiotic or discourse analysis, and it's not any school or archetype ([van Dijk 1993b: 131](#)). Discourse itself is very versatile that incorporates a whole range of meanings including linguistics, sociology, philosophy and other areas based on van Dijk's (1977). In simple words, it can be said that political discourse is identified by its actor or author (Politicians). This is the reason that majority of the political discourse studies are analysis of professional politicians, such as president, ministers, members of parliament etc. these politicians are maybe of national, regional or international stature ([Carbó 1984](#); [Dillon et al. 1990](#); [Harris 1991](#); [Holly 1990](#)).

Critical Discourse Analysis stands out from other discourse analysis because it is a crucial factor which presents its secret relations and interference, for example delivering suitable means to accomplish an end to those who might be harmed by alteration ([Fairclough 1992](#)). CDA is aimed to show how texts are generated to represent a special outlook secretly. Due to its hidden nature, it is cagey without interposition. ([Batstone 1995](#))

[Fairclough \(1993\)](#) observed that Critical Discourse Analysis is an analysis that attempts to examine the relations between rambling actions, particular happening, text and social and cultural constructions. It aimed to revel conceptually that how these actions are moulded with strength and exertion over strength. It discovers that non-transparency of these factors, Discourse analysis and its relation to society is saving strength and predominance.

[Van Dijk \(1993\)](#) maintains that ordinary citizens are often seen as a target for political communication. They are rarely seen as a celebrity. But these discourses are exceptional, having a specific rhetorical effect. Latter political discourse type is evident in 'expulsion stories' of political discourse. These are about the immigrants in Western Europe, an individual or a family is taken up by a political party in order to present a positive gesture and goodwill. This act masks rough immigration policies and other police activities.

[Li and Zhan \(2011\)](#) maintain that the communication is done through informal word-of-mouth (WOM) between a communicator and a receiver is highly effective. The Word-of-Mouth had become a powerful tool for persuasion in the marketplace. The marketing companies and public relations experts are using WOM as a major tool of persuasion. Bickart and Schindler (2001) found that WOM is generally considered

more trustworthy and relevant because of the involvement of real-life character. It can create empathy for the audience, and it can significantly reduce consumer resistance.

Research Questions

RQ1: What appeals are used by PM Imran Khan in his speeches on Covid 19.

RQ2: What was the dominant appeal in the speeches of Imran Khan on Covid 19.

Method

This study uses the Aristotle model of persuasion to investigate the appeals in political speeches of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Aristotle (350 B.C.E) proposed a person speaking to influence the audience can use three techniques for persuasion. These techniques are *Ethos*, *Logos* and *Pathos* (Perloff, 2003). *Ethos* is the appeal to credibility of the speaker; *Pathos* is the speaker's ability to control the emotions of the audience, and *Logos* means the facts given in the arguments by the speaker.

Ethos: Foss (1996) found that a speaker must have a very good character in front of the audience to become a persuasive communicator. The good reputation of the speaker makes the content more believable and reliable. It is the trustworthiness and character of the speaker. Murthy (2014) defines the "Ethos" as a combination of two factors: Indigenous factor and adventitious. Indigenous factors are speaking, writing skill and physical appearance. Adventitious factors are the characteristics that are developed with efforts, i.e. character, nobility, wisdom and knowledge.

Logos: The communication is not considered persuasive if it is not based on logic or rationality. The speaker communicates with logic and the audience process that information. Murthy (2014) found that "logos" is when the speaker uses some example, real-life situation or rational argument to persuade the audience.

Pathos: Appealing the audience with sentiments is a persuasive technique used by the communicator. Human is influenced by emotions and can be persuaded with emotional communication. Lanham (1991) Pathos is setting the appropriate mood of the audience, and playing with emotions.

Context of Speech

On 26 Feb 2020 Pakistan confirmed its first Covid 19 case. This was the time when a wave of fear spread across the country. Oxford Analytica (2020) establish that keeping the situation of China and Europe in mind, Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan decided not to impose lockdown in the country but take all possible measures to keep the business of poor people running. There was huge pressure from different political parties and other stakeholders to impose lockdown. But Imran Khan decides to take the nation into confidence and addressed the nation thrice in two weeks.

Results

PM Imran Khan Speech on Covid 19 on March 18, 2020

Table 1: Showing the Appeals Used by Imran Khan in Speech (18 March) on Covid 19 Issue.

Words/ Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
میرے پاکستانیو	My native Pakistanis	Nation	1
مجھے خوف ہے	I fear	Fear	
افرا تفری سی پھیل رہی ہے	Its hue and cry everywhere	Fear	1
یہ وائرس ایک قسم کا فلو ہے	This virus is a kind of flue	Hope / Logical	1
بڑی تیزی سے پھیل جاتی ہے	It spreads quickly	Fear	3

Words/Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
فیصد کمیسر: کرونا کے ۹۷ بلکل ٹھیک ہو جاتے ہیں	98% Corona cases recover fully	Hope	1
خطرناک	Dangerous	Fear	4
اٹلی نے لاک ڈاؤن کر دیا	Italy has locked down	Fear / Logical	1
امریکہ نے شہر بند کر دیے	US had closed the cities	Fear / Logical	1
ہم بڑے مشکل وقت سے نکل رہے ہیں	We are passing through a very tough time	Logical	1
ہمارے یہاں ۲۵ فیصد لوگ تو غربت میں ہیں	65% people are poor in Pakistan	Logical	1
بے روزگاری، مشکل حالات ہیں، بزنس آہستہ چل رہے تھے	Its Unemployment, and tough time, the business has slowed down	Logical	1
لوگ بھوک سے مر جائیں گے	People are dying of hunger	Fear / Logical	1
ہمارے غریب لوگوں کا کیا ہے گا	Poor will be left helpless	Logical	1
ایک قوم لڑتی ہے	A nation fight	Nation	1
اگر یہ بیماری پھیلتی ہے	If Corona outbursts	Fear	4
سانس لینے کے لیے مینٹی لیٹر چاہیے	Ventilators are need for respiration	Fear / Logical	1
وینٹی لیٹر ہم نے آرڈر کر دیے	We have orders to purchase ventilators	Hope	1
چائینہ ہماری مدد کر رہا ہے	China is helping us	Hope	1
کرونا کے خلاف جنگ	War against Corona	Fear / Hope	1
گورنمنٹ اکیلی نہیں لڑ سکتی کرونا کے خلاف جنگ	No Govt can fight the war alone, against Coronavirus	Logical	1
چائینہ نے اس کے خلاف جیت حاصل کی	China has won the battle (against Coronavirus)	Hope	1
ہم نے یہ جنگ جیتی ہے	We have to win this war	Hope	1
عوام نے پوری ذمہ داری لینی ہے	People have to take responsibility	Logical	1
زیادہ لوگوں کے اجتماع پر نہ جائیں	People should avoid gatherings	Fear / Logical	1
بند کر کے میں جدھر زیادہ لوگ ہوتے ہیں ادھر بھی نہ جائیں	don't assemble too many people indoor	Fear / Logical	1
ہاتھ نہ ملائیں	Don't shake hands	Fear / Logical	1
ذخیرہ اندوزی	Hoarding	Fear / Social	1
یہ بیماری ہاتھ بڑھانے سے بڑھتی ہے	(Corona Virus) spreads through hand shake	Fear / Logic	1
ہاتھ کو زیادہ تر دھونا ہے	Was hand frequently	Fear / Logical	1
ہمارا ایمان ہے صفائی کے اوپر	Cleanliness is part of our faith	Religion	1
چیز جو باہر سے لاتے ہیں تو انکو تھوڑی دیر اکیلے رکھے	Place the things coming from outside in quarantine	Fear / Logical	1
خدا کے واسطے سب ٹیسٹ نہ کرانے چلے جائیں	For God sake, everyone should not go for (Covid 19) test.	Religion / Logical	1
جنکو بھی کرونا ہوتا ہے وہ تھوڑی دیر بعد ٹھیک ہو جاتے ہیں	All those who get infected, get recovered after few time	Hope / Logical	1
جو شدت اختیار کر جائیں انکو ہسپتال جانا چاہیے	Only those should go to the hospital who are severely sick	Logical	1
آپ نے گھبرا نا نہیں	Don't be frightened	Hope	1
موت اللہ کے ہاتھ میں	Only Allah can give death	Religion	1
ہمارے رسول صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم واضح کہتے ہیں کہ احتیاط کری	Our prophet (Muhammad PBUH) has preached us to take care	Religion	1

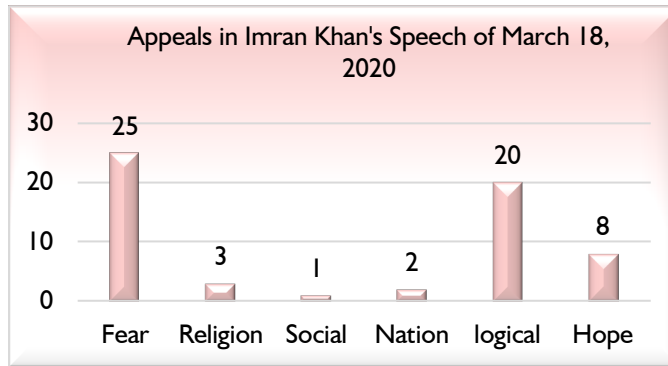


Chart 1: Graphical Analysis of Usage of Appeals in Speech of Imran Khan (18 March) on Covid 19 Issue.

The rhetoric analysis shows that the prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan has used different techniques to persuade the audience. The analysis shows the following elements in speech:

Ethos: As Imran Khan is the prime minister of Pakistan and he has the charisma as famous cricketer and leader of a major political party of Pakistan. He owns an authority as the head of government and credibility as chief executive of all the functioning departments for Covid 19.

Logos: The use of logical appeal is a dominant appeal that is found in the 18th March speech of Imran Khan. In this speech, the prime minister used 20 (34%) logical appeals and only 1 (2%) social appeal.

Pathos: The use of emotions and sentimental appeals were quite abundant in the speech of Imran Khan on 18, March. There were 25 (34%) fear appeals used by Imran Khan, which is dominant in all categories. Results reveal that there were 8 (13.5%) appeals based on "Hope" and 3 (5%) appeals using "Religion" as a base. Persuading the audience by using the "Nation" as an appeal was found 2 (3%) times.

PM Imran Khan Speech on Covid 19 on March 22, 2020

Table 2: Showing the Appeals Used by Imran Khan in Speech (22 March) on Covid 19 Issue.

Words/ Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
میرے پاکستانیو	My native Pakistanis	Nation	1
لاک ڈاؤن	Lockdown	Fear	7
کرفیو	Curfew	Fear	2
شہریوں کو گھروں میں بند کر کے	To close the citizens at home	Fear	1
فوج اور پولیس سے پہرا دلوانا۔	To placing Army and Police at guar	Fear	1
65 فیصد پاکستانی غربت کی	65% people are below poverty line	Fear/ Logical	1
کیر سے نیچے ہیں			
وہ ۲ وقت کی روٹی نہیں کھا سکتے	They (Poor) can take food two times a day	Fear/ Logical	1
ملک کے رکشہ چلانے والے، چھابڑی والے،	Rickshaw-drivers,	Fear/ Logical	1
چھوٹے دکاندار، دھاڑی دار تمام گھروں میں بند	shopkeepers, labourer and Hawker,		
ہو جائیں گے	will be locked down at home		
یہ اپنے بچوں کا پیٹ پال سکیں	They could feed their children	Fear/ Logical	1

Words/ Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
سیلف کو رانٹین کرنا چاہیے	Should self-quarantine	Logical	1
ایک فلو کی طرح ہوگا	It (Covid 19) would be like a flue	Hope	1
چند دنوں میں ٹھیک ہو جائیں گے	They (Covid 19 patients) will recover in a few days	Hope	1
ہمارے بڑے	Our elders	Social	2
بزرگ	Old-ones	Social	2
بیماری تیزی سے پھیلتی ہے	This disease (Covid 19) spreads quickly	Fear/ Logical	2
ظلم	Oppressor	Fear	1
حکمت اور عقلمندی کا استعمال کریں	Use of logic and wisdom	Logical	1
ذمہ داری	Responsibility	Logical	1
خود احتیاط کریں	Take care of yourself	Fear	1
انسان کو اللہ نے کہا ہے اسکے ایمان کو اللہ	Allah has informed that man will be	Religion	1
مشکل وقت سے آزماتا ہے	tested with hardship.		
انسان کے ایمان کے پتہ چلتا ہے	It is a test of man's faith	Religion	1
ایک قوم کا بھی مشکل وقت میں پتہ چلتا ہے	Nations are also tested in a hard time	Nation	1
قوم	Nation	Nation	5
اپنی قوم کو ۲۰۰۵ کے زلزلے میں سیلاب میں	I have seen my nation during the	Nation	1
دیکھا ہوا ہے	flood and earthquake of 2005		
مجھے فخر ہے اپنی قوم پر	I am proud of my nation	Nation	1
ہماری قوم نے بڑی تکلیفیں دیکھی ہیں	Our nation has seen many tough	Nation	1
	times		
ساری قوم نے ملکر مقابلہ کیا	Whole nation faced together	Nation	1
ہم نکل آئے اس وقت سے	We have come out of this (Tough)	Nation	1
	time		
احتیاط	Care	Logical	3
نقصان	Loss	Fear	3
برے اثرات	Bad effects	Fear	1
مشکل	Difficulty	Fear	5
انشاء اللہ	with the will of ALLAH	Religion/ Hope	1
ہم بھی نکل جائیں گے	We will come out (from the tough	Hope	1
	time)		
امید	Hope	Hope	1
مقابلہ	Face/fight	Fear	2
خوف	Fear	Fear	1
اناج کی کمی	Scarcity of food	Fear	1
خطرہ	Danger	Fear	2
افرا تفری	Hue and Cry	Fear	3
اگر لوگ گھبرا گئے	If people got frightened	Fear	1
گھبرا	Frightened	Fear	3
اعتماد	Trust	Hope	1

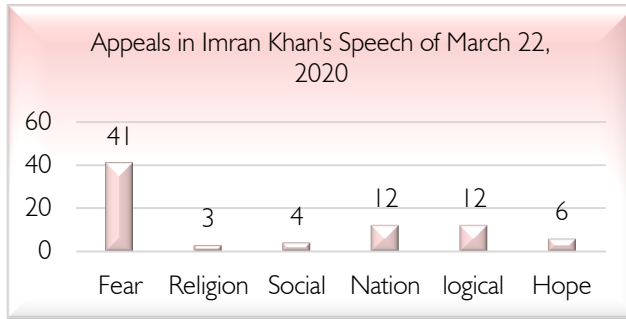


Chart 2: Graphical Analysis of Usage of Appeals in Speech of Imran Khan (22 March) on Covid 19 Issue.

The rhetoric analysis shows that prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan has used different persuasive techniques in speech of 22 March, 2020. The analysis shows the following elements in speech:

Ethos: As Imran Khan is the prime minister of Pakistan and being a famous cricketer and leader of a major political party of Pakistan, he has a great number of followers. He owns an authority as the head of government and credibility as chief executive of all the functioning departments for Covid 19.

Logos: The use of logical appeal is a dominant appeal that is found in the 18th March speech of Imran Khan. In this speech, the prime minister used 12 (15%) logical appeals and only 4 (5%) social appeal.

Pathos: The use of emotions and sentimental appeals was dominant in the speech of Imran Khan on 22, March. There were 41 (52.5%) fear appeals used by Imran Khan, which is dominant in all categories. Results reveal that there were 6 (7.6%) appeals based on "Hope" and 3 (3.8%) appeals using "Religion" as a base. Persuading the audience by using the "Nation" as an appeal was found 12 (15.3%) times.

PM Imran Khan Speech on Covid 19 on March 30, 2020

Table 3: Showing the Appeals Used by Imran Khan in Speech (30 March) on Covid 19 Issue.

Words/ Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
میرے پاکستانیو	My native Pakistanis	Nation	1
جنگ	War	Fear	5
لاک ڈاؤن	Lockdown	Fear	11
بند	close	Fear	4
مسئلہ	Problem	Fear	2
کلیئر سے نیچے ہیں 65 فیصد پاکستانی غربت کی	65% people are below poverty line	Fear/ Logical	1
وہ ۲ وقت کی روٹی نہیں کھا سکتے	They (Poor) can take food two times a day	Fear/ Logical	1
۲۰ فیصد لوگ ایسے ہیں جو غربت کی کلیئر کے ارد گرد ہیں	20% are living near poverty line	Fear/ Logical	1
ایک جھپٹکا انکو غربت کی کلیئر کے نیچے لے آئے گی	They could go below the poverty line within no time	Fear/ Logical	1
بیماری ہے جو غریب اور امیروں میں فرق نہیں کرتی	This disease (Covid 19) does not differentiate between poor and rich	Fear	1
ساری قوم	Whole nation	Nation	1
نہ حکومت اکیلی جیت سکتی ہے	Govt cannot win this battle	Logical	1

Words/Phrase	Translation	Appeals	Frequency
	alone.		
وائرس کے خلاف جنگ	War against virus	Hope	1
جنگ جیت	Win the battle	Hope	2
قابو پایا	To overcome	Hope	1
حالات ایسے بڑے	Worse situation	Fear	1
لوگ بھوک سے مر جائیں گے	People will die of hunger	Fear	1
لوگوں کے پاس کھانا نہیں ہے	People don't have food	Fear	1
بھوک	Hunger	Fear	2
سب سے بڑی چیز ہے ایمان	Biggest thing we have is faith	Religion	1
قائد اعظم	Great leader (Muhammad Ali Jinnah- Founder of Pakistan)	Nation	1
ایمان	Faith	Religion	3
ایمان سب سے بڑی طاقت ہے	Faith is greatest power	Religion	1
نوجوان آبادی	youth	Hope	1
بڑی طاقت	Biggest power	Hope	1
انشاء اللہ	With the will of ALLAH	Religion	1
خیرات	Donation	Social/ Religion	
احساس	Empathy	Social	1
سیلف کوارنٹین	Self-Quarantine	Logical	1
بزرگوں	Old ones	Fear/ Logical	1
بیمار لوگوں کے لیے خطرہ ہے	It (Covid19) is dangerous for already sick people	Fear/ Hope	1
۵ فیصد لوگوں کو ہسپتال جانا پڑتا ہے	Only 5% infected persons have to go to the hospital	Hope	1
کورونا ریلیف فنڈ	Corona Relief Fund	Hope	1

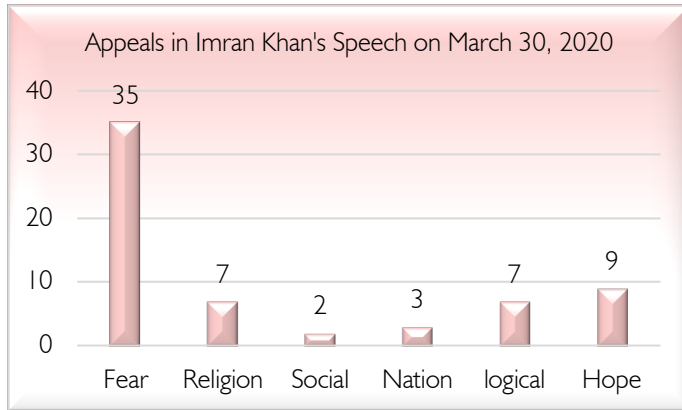


Chart 3: Graphical Analysis of Usage of Appeals in Speech of Imran Khan (30 March) on Covid19 Issue.

The rhetoric analysis shows that prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan has used different persuasive techniques in speech of 30 March, 2020. The analysis shows the following elements in speech:

Ethos: As Imran Khan is the prime minister of Pakistan and he has huge followership, being a famous cricketer and leader of a major political party of Pakistan. He owns an authority as the head of government and credibility as chief executive of all the departments engaged in cure and prevention efforts for Covid19.

Logos: The use of logical appeal is a dominant appeal that is found in the 18th March speech of Imran Khan. In this speech, the prime minister used 7 (11%) logical appeals and only 4 (3%) social appeal.

Pathos: The use of emotions and sentimental appeals was dominant in the speech of Imran Khan on 22, March. There were 35 (55.5%) fear appeals used by Imran Khan, which is dominant in all categories. Results reveal that there were 9 (14%) appeals based on “Hope” and 7 (11.1%) appeals using “Religion” as a base. Persuading the audience by using the “Nation” as an appeal was found 3 (5%) times.

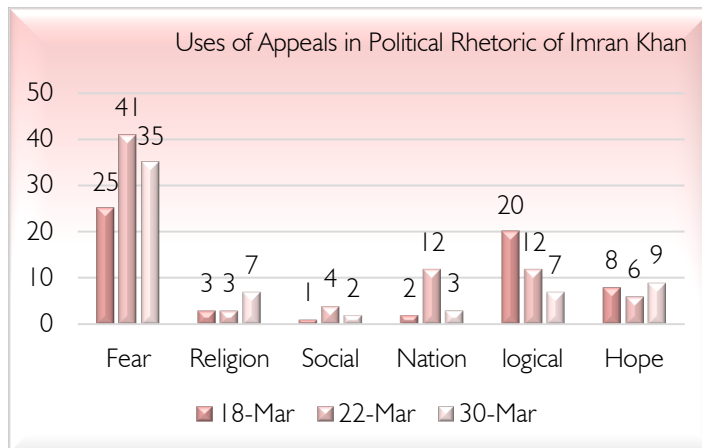


Chart 4: Accumulative Analysis of Use of Appeals in Political Rhetoric of Imran Khan

Conclusion and Discussion

Research Questions

RQ1: What Appeals are used by PM Imran Khan in his Speeches on Covid 19.

The analysis shows that Imran Khan has used different appeals in his political rhetoric on Covid 19. Appeals of Fear, Religion, Social, Nation, Logical and Hope was found in the speeches on Covid 19, delivered in the month of March (see Chart 4). The usage is different in quantity, but all speeches contain the same appeals.

RQ2: What was the Dominant Appeal in the Speeches of Imran Khan on Covid 19.

The analysis shows that different appeals are used in different measure. The “Fear” appeal is dominating in all the speeches making 34% in the speech of 18 March, 52.5% in the speech of 22 March and 55.5% in the speech of 30 March. The result clearly shows that “Fear” was the dominant appeal in the political rhetoric of Imran Khan on Covid 19.

Discussion

The spread of Coronavirus has created panic in China, Europe and USA and the same was the situation when it reached Pakistan. The Pakistani government was reluctant to impose complete lockdown since the beginning. This was the reason that prime minister Imran Khan took the nation into confidence and persuaded the nation to follow SOPs for prevention of covid 19. Imran Khan was of the view that the economy is weak and poor people living below the poverty line would not be able to cope-up with the circumstances. Although there was immense pressure on the federal government to announce complete lockdown, the government waited and took time to plan a smart lockdown.

This thinking of Imran Khan and treasury benches was reflected in the speech of Prime Minister. In the first month of lockdown, PM addressed the nation three times in two weeks. In his political rhetoric, he used the fear appeal to make the people follow the SOPs and keep “Social Distance”. This is an effective tool for persuasion as people tend to follow certain restrictions with some fear of losing health or life.

Next appeal was logical, which was used by Imran Khan using examples of China, USA and Europe. PM guided and argued with the people using logical reasoning and rational approach. One of the important points to be noted that Imran Khan used the “Hope” appeal with much focus. The hope not only helped in reducing the panic among the general public but also was boosted the morale of the public. Use of “Nationhood” was also a good thing to persuade the people and induce them to follow the instructions of the government.

One of the important this to discuss is the use of “Religion” appeal by Imran Khan in the political rhetoric about Covid 19. In the speeches, he used the Islamic sayings and Islamic notions to persuade the audience. This is a smart thing to use in the political rhetoric as people of Pakistan do not ridicule or undermine the Islamic concept. It not only shows the internal feelings of the Imran Khan but also demonstrates the effective persuasive techniques in political rhetoric.

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