

An Analysis of National Political Conflicts in Leading Urdu Pakistani Newspapers during 2015-17

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Abstract

This study investigates Analysis of National Political Conflicts in Leading Urdu Pakistani Newspapers during 2015-17. The main aim of this study was to explore the analysis of national political conflicts in selected newspapers. Framing theory was applied to study the newspaper's treatment of political conflicts as a theoretical baseline. Two leading Urdu newspapers Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt, due to their circulation and readership and a valuable amount of information for researchers and scholars, were selected for content analysis by using purposive sampling from the period of 2015 to 2017. Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 21); hence, the findings revealed that there is a significant association between newspapers analysis and national political conflicts.

Key Words: Analysis, National Political Conflicts, Leading Urdu Pakistani Newspapers, Framing theory, Content Analysis

Introduction

The present study examines coverage of national political conflicts in Pakistani print media. The purpose of the research is to explore the stance of newspapers in representing the major political conflicts of Pakistan. Talking about the concept of “conflict”, various authors and scholars have been defined differently. [Skoog \(2015\)](#), in his study, presented the definition of political conflicts as it occurs as a behavior or action where people act in challenging manners to encourage their own interests and try to discontinue others efforts to achieve their objectives. Pakistan has a multiparty system in which multiple parties can compete for seats in both national and provincial assemblies, and they all have the capability to run for public offices as well. Each political party has its own mandate and ideology, which differs from other political parties, and such difference of thoughts and opinion arise conflicts. The knowledge about national and international proceedings occurring all the time across the world is only possible via mass media. Mass media is defined as any medium used to transfer communication to a large number of audience simultaneously while using a variety of mass medium tools such as radio, television, film, newspapers and internet etc. It informs, educates and entertains the audience. It plays the role of a change agent as well by making the audience informed and aware of the daily happenings. It teaches us to form political opinions and beliefs in the prevailing political scenario ([Pavel, 2010](#)).

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National Political Conflicts 2015-17

In this study following national political conflicts are taken for analysis in newspapers coverage from January 2015-17; Local Government Elections, Panama Gate Scandal, Ehtesab March, and Panama Case Final Verdict.

Local Government Elections in 2015

Local bodies contribute towards better living standards and improve the quality of life at the local level. According to the constitution of Pakistan, the Election Commission is responsible for conducting local government elections in the country. Therefore, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) conducted local bodies' election in all four provinces, Cantonment boards of the country and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, elections were conducted on 30th May 2015. In Punjab and Sindh, these elections were conducted in three phases, i.e. the first phase was held on 31st October 2015, the second phase was held on 19th November 2015, and the third phase was held on 3rd December 2015. Local government elections in Islamabad Capital Territory were conducted on 30th November 2015. On April 25, 2015, local government elections in the country's 42 cantonment areas were held, which maintained the power of PML N as they obtained 68 seats out of 199 wards whereas, PTI bagged 43 seats. Moreover, PML N maintained its position in Punjab and PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Then a blame game between the two parties over money-making, i.e. PTI chief Imran Khan put allegations on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PML N) for doing businesses in India whereas PML N Information Minister Pervez Rashid alleged that "PTI leadership had received funds from US-based "Jewish and Hindu lobbies for anti-state activities" (Dawn, 2015).

Panama Gate Case 2016

Major political conflict that took place over the period was the Panama gate case (April 3, 2016- July 28, 2017); an international consortium of investigative journalists (ICIJ) under the law firm Mossack Fonseca based in Panama investigated and brought forth the hidden offshore companies of the Sharif Family. Panama papers in April 2016 reveal that three of Prime Minister Sharif's children, i.e. Maryam Nawaz, Hussain Nawaz and Hassan Nawaz, have offshore companies which are hidden and not being shown in their wealth statements. Thus, it leads opposition parties, especially Imran Khan and his party, to form his agitation against Nawaz Sharif and his family. This happening has made Imran more reactive over Sharif issues. On the contrary, the Nawaz family refused any of these accusations. Therefore, another bone of contention between the two parties rose.

Ehtesab March 2016

Resulting from the above corruption charges, PTI chairman Imran Khan started an anti-corruption movement known as "Ehtesab March" on August 7, 2016, from Peshawar against Nawaz Sharif government, in fact, the march was comprised of a series of rallies across Pakistan; 13 August in Islamabad, 31 August Jhelum and 3 September in Lahore. The main purpose of the march was to compel Supreme Court, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Election Commission of Pakistan and other law agencies to investigate the Panama case and consequently demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (The News, 2016). Accordingly, the top court took notice of it and assigned its members to enquire about the ruling family's offshore assets.

Panama Case Final Verdict/JIT

An important development came on May 5, 2017, when the Supreme Court of Pakistan formulated jointly investigation team (JIT) consisted of six members headed by Wajid Zia, Additional Director (Immigration) Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) of Pakistan. They presented their report on July 10, 2017, and found the

ruling Sharif family being owners of multiple offshore companies. As an outcome, the SC announced its final decision on the Panama gate case on July 28 and disqualified the Prime Minister from the office (Jahangir World Times, 2017). The case has been described as the most publicized in Pakistan's history, as well as a "defining moment" for the country ([Geo News, 2017](#)). All the media across Pakistan gave extensive coverage and kept an eye on every development of it, thus influenced individuals as well while forming political opinions ([Fair & Hamza, 2015](#)).

Objectives of the Study

- To explore and compare the analysis of National Political Conflicts in Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt during 2015-17
- To check the frequency given to the National Political conflicts over the selected period in the selected newspapers
- To explore the most highlighted political conflict during 2015-17 in Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant association between Newspapers Analysis and National Political Conflicts.

H2: There is a significant difference between Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt's analysis of National Political Conflicts.

Literature Review

This segment is based on various national and international studies on National Political Conflicts and their treatment in media. This literature review provides an opportunity to keep this study on the right track and help the researchers in the authentication of the phenomenon under study.

Hussain and Munawar (2017) highlight the importance of media with respect to war and peace perspective. They analyzed the Pakistani print media narrative on the Taliban conflict from January 2014 to July 2014. For this purpose, four popular national newspapers were selected. Framing theories were applied to support the researchers' stance. After conducting a content analysis of the newspapers, it was found that Pakistani print media is more inclined towards war framing as compare to peace framing of the conflict. The two newspapers which preferred for war frame were the Nawa-i-Waqt and Express, whereas the two newspapers which preferred the peace frame were the Dawn and The News. It was also concluded that the media not only supported this conflict but also suppressed and sidelined the voices which were calling for the non-violent settlement of this conflict.

[Khan and Nawaz \(2015\)](#), in their study titled "Metaphors at work in media discourse: A case of 2014 Islamabad sit-ins" explained the use of metaphors in mainstream English newspapers with reference to August 2014 Islamabad sit-ins. The sit-ins were arranged by two main opposition parties, i.e. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). The researchers pinpointed that the metaphors were used to highlight three main stakeholders- the government, PTI and PAT. The study revolves around the approach of critical linguistics, which says that different political processes rely upon language choices. The researchers have selected four leading English newspapers, which include The Dawn, The News, The Nation and Daily Times, and only those news items were selected in which metaphors were used to constitute the dialogue.

The findings of the analysis revealed that metaphoric expressions used in the mainstream newspapers ridicule the sit-in. Most of the symbolic communication represent the two stakeholders-PTI and PAT (which initiated the sit-in) less powerful and less fortunate in the current scenario of politics.

[Saleem, N. and Hanan \(2014\)](#) discuss the role of media in conflict resolution by presenting their relationship model. They describe the media's role in facilitating the peace process as an escalation agent, an abate agent and as a mirror. The researchers also explain the media relationship with the different

political groups and organizations that how media then play its role as a regulator, lapdog or as neutral agent. They conclude that on the basis of relationship with any political party or group, media increases or decreases the intensity of any issue or conflict. Hence, this particular rapport can sometimes lead to conflict resolution or sometimes deteriorating the situation.

Various forms of mass media and communication can influence and form public opinion and stimulates certain sentiments. At times, media disseminate false information and provocative messages, which create stereotypes and further escalate the tensions. The negative portrayal of conflicts encourages violence. Media emphasize conflicts because conflict attract individuals. Some media organizations overestimate the problem to create hype among the audience. Though, the role of the media demands addressing the real problems and try to resolve them ([as cited in Sen, 2011, p. 95](#)).

[Saleem et al. \(2013\)](#) identified in their article the projection patterns of daily Dawn and The News with reference to PTI political party activities on the basis of agenda-setting and framing theories. Content analysis was used as a research method, while the opinion of the selected newspapers served as a unit of analysis for the study. Two months' period was selected as a sample time period for the study. According to the findings, the two selected newspapers covered the PTI activities differently. The findings also indicate that The News gave news coverage to political activities of PTI and remained subjective throughout the period as compared to Dawn. After having gone through the above literature, it has been established that media treat certain issues according to their set patterns or agendas. The influence of news analysis varies from person to person. There are studies that analyze published content related to different events but very less work done, especially in the context of Pakistan, on how the leading newspapers portray political conflicts. The present study is filling this gap and will explore the depiction of political conflicts of Pakistan in leading Urdu national newspapers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides an introduction and explanation of the theory and tells why the problem or an issue exist. It also assists researchers in deducing and finding the outcomes of problems and results. The study is based on framing analysis which is more appropriate to understand the analysis of National Political Conflicts in media.

Framing Theory

Framing can be defined as "a process in which some aspects of reality are selected, and given greater emphasis or importance so that the problem is defined, its causes are diagnosed, moral judgments are suggested, and appropriate solutions and actions are proposed" (Entman, 1993). Framing theory is applied to this research because, according to this theory, media sets a certain frame for a subject and represents the subject under that framework, which influences the audience and changes their view process. Mass media had created many frames for different work content and placed each subject under that frame for its target audience. Likewise, for every political issue, a particular frame is set in which it is represented. Media has the power to modify issues as they desire, and people start thinking about those issues accordingly. The frame defines certain angles for a story. The theory justified the present study as it talks about the coverage of political issues in selected newspapers. The farming theory describes that media pay attention to some issues and place them within a field of interpretation or meaning.

Research Methodology

The researchers have used content analysis in the present study. It is a method to study and analyze text , whether verbal, non-verbal and written. The researcher used this technique to better examine and analyze Pakistan's political conflicts portrayed in leading newspapers during 2015-2017.

The Pakistani Urdu language newspapers from January 2015 to December 2017 were taken as the universe of the study. The population is the subset of the universe. The population of the study is based on Pakistani Urdu Newspapers the *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* from January 2015 to December 2017, covering National Political Conflicts such as Local Government Elections, Panama Case, Ehtesab March and Panama Case Final Verdict.

For this study, the selected time frame was 2015-17. The reason to select the period is the presence of important and historical political happenings in Pakistan, i.e. the Local Government Elections in the country (tussle between PML N and PTI), major political conflict, the Panama Case (which ultimately lead towards the resignation of PM Nawaz Sharif) and Ehtesab March (series of rallies initiated by Imran Khan against Nawaz government). The researchers have all the material of designated newspapers of the selected period.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to analyze the leading newspapers (*Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*) in terms of front-page news stories and editorials frames of national political conflicts as part of content analysis. The sample size of the study was comprised of the news stories that appeared on the front page and leading editorials of two selected newspapers (*Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*) from 2015-17, which mainly focused on political conflicts such as Local Government Elections 2015, Panama Gate Case and Ehtesab March. The above newspapers were selected due to their largest circulation, readership and popularity (Press Reference, 2018).

The researchers designed the coding sheet containing categories to study and analyze the newspapers regarding political conflicts of Pakistan. To check the inter-coder reliability, a pilot study was conducted. Two coders based on mass communication background coded the same content to yield the same results. However, the inter-coder reliability was measured by applying a percentage agreement or Holsti method (1969). Hence, the agreement between the coders was found 84%, which considers very good.

Findings and Results

The purpose of the study was to find out the coverage and analysis of Political Conflicts of Pakistan during 2015-17 in *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*. Content analysis was used to analyze two main categories (front-page news and editorials) with respect to the following National Political Conflicts from the selected newspapers:

- (a) Local Government Elections
- (b) Panama Gate Case
- (c) Ehtesab March

The following results have been compiled so far by the researcher.

Table I. Frequency of National Political Conflicts in the Front Page and Editorials of Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt during 2015-17.

Newspaper	Local Government Elections 2015		Panama Case		Ehtesab March		Total
	Front page News	Eds.	Front page News	Eds.	Front page News	Eds.	
Daily Jang	67	25	242	62	34	11	441
Nawa-i-Waqt	37	6	475	52	70	11	651

The results show that comparatively, *Nawa-i-Waqt* highlighted all three selected National Political Conflicts, i.e. Local Government Elections 2015, Panama Case and Ehtesab March more than the *Daily Jang* newspaper. This means that *Nawa-i-Waqt* gave more importance to national issues as compared to the *Daily Jang*. The total number of front-page news and editorials on Local Government Elections, Panama Case and Ehtesab March found respectively were 43, 527 and 81 in *Nawa-i-Waqt*.

Table 2. Treatment of Local Government Elections in Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt.

Newspaper	Treatment	Front Page News					Editorials					Total
		H. Unf	Unf	N	Fav	H. Fav	H. Unf	Unf	N	Fav	H. Fav	
Daily Jang	Headlines	22%	1420%	2131%	2131%	913%		28%	312%	1144%	936%	92
	Slant		1319%	2232%	2131%	1116%	14%	312%	624%	832%	728%	92
	Tone		1014%	3146%	1826%	811%	14%	312%	624%	728%	832%	92
	Language	22%	1522%	2029%	2841%	22%		624%	520%	1040%	416%	92
	Intensity of Coverage	11%	22%	1826%	2943%	1725%				1560%	1040%	92
Nawa-i-Waqt	Headlines	410%	25%	38%	1129%	1745%		116%	350%		233%	43
	Slant	410%	25%	38%	1129%	1745%		116%	350%		233%	43
	Tone	38%	410%		1540%	1540%		116%	466%		116%	43
	Language	38%	25%	3188%	1232%	1745%		116%		350%	233%	43
	Intensity of coverage	25%			1027%	2567%					6100%	43

The results show Local Government Elections' treatment in terms of headlines, slant, tone, language, and intensity of coverage by following a 5-point Likert scale (Highly Unfavorable, Unfavorable, Neutral, Favorable, Highly favourable) in the *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*. According to the findings, in the *Daily Jang*, the majority of the treatment given to local government elections was found favorable and neutral in both categories, i.e. front-page news and editorials. In the *Nawa-i-Waqt*, mostly treatment in the front page news and editorials was found between a highly favorable and neutral (unbiased) perspective. The findings also indicate that *Daily Jang* highly covered local Government Elections as compared to the *Nawa-i-Waqt* during 2015-17. *Daily Jang* took Local Government Elections more important.

Table 3. Treatment of Panama Case in Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt.

News- paper	Treatment	Front Page News					Editorials					Total
		H. Unf	Unf	N	Fav	H. Fav	H. Unf	Unf	N	Fav	H. Fav	
Daily Jang	Headlines	83 %	502 0%	1395 7%	3916 %	62%	11%	34 %	3150 %	182 9%	914%	304
	Slant	93 %	492 0%	1014 1%	7229 %	114 %	23%	34 %	1829 %	294 6%	1016 %	304
	Tone		301 2%	1616 6%	5121 %		46%	121 9%	2641 %	162 5%	46%	304
	Language	41 %	502 0%	1345 5%	5422 %			23 %	3048 %	284 5%	23%	304
	Intensity of Coverage		20 %	3213 %	1054 3%	1034 2%				121 9%	5080 %	304
Nawa-i- Waqf	Headlines	163 %	185 38 %	2555 3%	183 %	10%	47%	12 23 %	3057 %	59 %	11%	527
	Slant	142 %	187 39 %	2515 2%	224 %	10%	35%	15 28 %	2650 %	713 %	11%	527
	Tone	142 %	167 35 %	2775 8%	163 %	10%	23%	17 32 %	2751 %	59 %	11%	527
	Language	142 %	152 32 %	2916 1%	163 %	20%	23%	14 26 %	3057 %	59 %	11%	527
	Intensity of coverage	81 %	611 2%	1252 6%	1523 2%	1292 7%		35 %	1426 %	59 %	3057 %	527

The findings discovered that both *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqf* gave overall a balanced and neutral perspective to Panama Case both in front-page news and editorials. This table also indicates that Panama Case was highly covered (total of 527 front-page news and editorials) by *Nawa-i-Waqf* as compared to the *Daily Jang* during 2015-17, which shows that *Nawa-i-Waqf* took Panama Gate Case as a more important issue.

Table 4. Treatment of Ehtesab March in Daily Jang and Nawa-i-Waqt.

Newspaper	Treatment	Front Page News					Editorials				Total	
		H. Unf	Unfv	N	Fav	H.F av	H. Unf	Unfv	N	Fav		H. Fav
Daily Jang	Headlines		720	2058	514			19	327	654	19	45
	25%		%	%	%			%	%	%	%	
	Slant		1029	1029	1338	12		19	436	436	218	45
			%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%	
	Tone		514	2676	38%				654	436	19	45
			%	%					%	%	%	
Nawa-i-Waqt	Language		1029	2161	38%				654	545		45
			%	%				%	%			
	Intensity of Coverage			1338	1441	720				218	981	45
				%	%	%				%	%	
	Headlines	11%	4767	1622	68%		327	654	218			81
			%	%	%		%	%	%			
Slant	11%	4868	1622	57%		327	654	218			81	
		%	%	%		%	%	%				
Tone		3651	3347	11%		19%	545	545			81	
		%	%				%	%				
Lang usage		2332	4665	11%			436	763			81	
		%	%				%	%				
Intensity of coverage	22%	1217	1217	2941	152	19%	436	218		418	81	
		%	%	%	1%		%	%		%		

As per the findings, in *Daily Jang*, the coverage was found neutral and favorable regarding Ehtesab March. Whereas is *Nawa-i-Waqt*, the majority of the treatment in terms of headlines, slant and tone in both the front page news and editorials was found to be given unfavorable and negative coverage. The table also indicates that Ehtesab March was highly covered (total 81 front-page news and editorials) by *Nawa-i-Waqt* as compared to *Daily Jang* during 2015-17.

Hypotheses Testing

H₁: There is a significant association between Newspapers Analysis and National Political Conflicts.

Table 5: To check the Association between Variables, Chi-Square Test was Applied by using SPSS for the analysis.

Chi-Square Test			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.862 ^a	2	.000

As the p value was less than 0.05, therefore Chi-Square test showed that there was a statistically significant association between the variables. So the proposed hypothesis stands approved.

In order to check the comparison of the analysis given to national political conflicts in *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*, two proportions test was applied conflict wise by using the software Minitab.

Local Government Elections during 2015-17

H₂: There is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of Local Government Elections.

Table 6. Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	92	441	0.208617
2	43	651	0.066052

Estimate for $p(1) - p(2)$: 0.142565

95% CI for $p(1) - p(2)$: (0.100113, 0.185016)

Test for $p(1) - p(2) = 0$ (vs not = 0): $Z = 6.58$ P-Value = 0.000

The analysis generated after applying the 2 proportions test as *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* were two independent samples; the p-value is less than 0.05, which showed that there is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of Local Government Elections. So the proposed hypothesis stands approved.

Panama Case during 2015-17

H₃: There is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of the Panama Case.

Table 7. Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	304	441	0.689342
2	527	651	0.809524

Estimate for $p(1) - p(2)$: -0.120181

95% CI for $p(1) - p(2)$: (-0.172862, -0.0675003)

Test for $p(1) - p(2) = 0$ (vs not = 0): $Z = -4.47$ P-Value = 0.000

The analysis generated after applying the two proportions test as *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* were two independent samples, the p-value is less than 0.05, which showed that there is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of the Panama Case. So the proposed hypothesis stands approved.

Ehtesab March during 2015-17

H₄: There is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of Ehtesab March

Table 8. Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	45	441	0.102041
2	81	651	0.124424

Estimate for $p(1) - p(2)$: -0.0223831

95% CI for $p(1) - p(2)$: (-0.0603438, 0.0155775)

Test for $p(1) - p(2) = 0$ (vs not = 0): $Z = -1.16$ P-Value = 0.248

As the p-value is greater than 0.05, which showed that there is no significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of Ehtesab March. So the proposed hypothesis stands rejected.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore and compare the analysis of National Political Conflicts, i.e. Local Government Elections 2015, Panama Case and Ehtesab March during 2015-17 in *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*. Total 441 front-page news stories and editorials appeared in the *Daily Jang*, and 651 front-page news stories and editorials were written in the *Nawa-i-Waqt* regarding National Political Conflicts (Local Government Elections 2015, Panama Case and Ehtesab March). According to the results of quantitative analysis, it was discovered that the majority of the National Political Conflicts were highly covered by *Nawa-i-Waqt* as compared to the *Daily Jang*. This quantitative analysis also stands approved by the hypotheses testing by applying a Chi-Square test of independence. It was found that there is a significant relationship between newspapers analysis and national political conflicts. Moreover, by applying 2 proportions test, it was established that there is a significant difference between *Daily Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s analysis of National Political Conflicts.

The most highlighted conflict was Panama Case, as *Daily Jang* covered a total of 304 front-page news stories and editorials, whereas a total of 527 front-page news stories and editorials were covered by *Nawa-i-Waqt*. Moreover, *Daily Jang* gave overall favorable coverage to the conflicts as compared to the *Nawa-i-Waqt*. The results also supported the stance of framing perspective that media pay attention to some issues and place them within a field of interpretation or meaning. The findings are also backed by previous studies such as [Saleem et al. \(2013\)](#) explained the projection patterns of Dawn and The News with reference to political party activities on the basis of agenda-setting and framing theories.

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