

p-ISSN : 2521-2982 | e-ISSN : 2707-4587

DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gpr

DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gpr/.2024(IX)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX.III)

GLOBAL
Political
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GLOBAL POLITICAL REVIEW
HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

VOL. IX, ISSUE III, SUMMER (SEPTEMBER-2024)


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Double-blind Peer-review Research Journal
www.gprjournal.com
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Article Title

The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers

Global Political Review

p-ISSN: 2521-2982 e-ISSN: 2707-4587

DOI (journal): 10.31703/gpr

Volume: IX (2024)

DOI (volume): 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX)

Issue: III Summer (September-2024)

DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III)

Home Page

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Volume: IX (2024)

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Issue: III-Summer (September-2024)

<https://www.gprjournal.com/Current-issues/9/3/2024>

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Abstract

This study looked at how politicians come about with their political identities using identity markers to communicate their ideology(s) and ideas in political discourse. This study attempted to examine such identifying markers employed by Imran Khan (PTI), Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), Nawaz Sharif (PML-N), and Bilawal Bhutto (PPP) in Dawn and The Express Tribune news between 2018 and 2023. Data was obtained from the sites of a number of newspapers using a qualitative research method, using Fairclough's 3D model. Important markers of identification were phrases such as youth, corruption, accountability, and Naya Pakistan (new Pakistan), as well as cultural symbols, like flags and turbans. The ongoing use of pronouns, metaphors, and authoritative language by politicians helped to make societal topics such as power dynamics, corruption, and development lively. It is found that Fairclough's approach to the analysis of political identity markers can be put to good use.

Keywords: Identity Markers, Political Leaders, Textual, Discursive, Explanation

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Pages: 97-106

DOI:10.31703/gssr.2024(IX-III).10

DOI link: [https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024\(IX-III\).10](https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).10)

Article link: <http://www.gprjournal.com/article/A-b-c>

Full-text Link: <https://gprjournal.com/fulltext/>

Pdf link: <https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rv1olA2.pdf>

Citing this Article

The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers							
10	Author	Arshad Khan Muhammad Farooq Alam Muhammad Umar Razzaq		DOI	10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).10		
	Pages	97-106	Year	2024	Volume	IX	Issue
Referencing & Citing Styles	APA	Khan, A., Alam, M. F., & Razzaq, M. U. (2020). The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers. <i>Global Political Review</i> , IX(III), 97-106. https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).10					
	CHICAGO	Khan, Arshad, Muhammad Farooq Alam, and Muhammad Umar Razzaq. 2020. "The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX (III):97-106. doi: 10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).10.					
	HARVARD	KHAN, A., ALAM, M. F. & RAZZAQ, M. U. 2020. The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers. <i>Global Political Review</i> IX, 97-106.					
	MHRA	Khan, Arshad, Muhammad Farooq Alam, and Muhammad Umar Razzaq. 2020. "The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers", <i>Global Political Review</i> , IX: 97-106.					
	MLA	Khan, Arshad, Muhammad Farooq Alam, and Muhammad Umar Razzaq. "The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX.III (2020): 97-106. Print.					
	OXFORD	Khan, Arshad, Alam, Muhammad Farooq, and Razzaq, Muhammad Umar (2020), 'The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers', <i>Global Political Review</i> IX (III), 97-106.					
	TURABIAN	Khan, Arshad, Muhammad Farooq Alam, and Muhammad Umar Razzaq. "The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers." <i>Global Political Review</i> IX, no. III (2020): 97-106. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2024(IX-III).10 .					



Global Political Review

www.gprjournal.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gpr>



Pages: 97-106

URL: [https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2024\(IX-III\).10](https://doi.org/10.31703/gesr.2024(IX-III).10)

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Cite Us



Title

The Politics of Identity Markers: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani English Newspapers

Abstract

This study looked at how politicians come about with their political identities using identity markers to communicate their ideology(s) and ideas in political discourse. This study attempted to examine such identifying markers employed by Imran Khan (PTI), Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), Nawaz Sharif (PML-N), and Bilawal Bhutto (PPP) in Dawn and The Express Tribune news between 2018 and 2023. Data was obtained from the sites of a number of newspapers using a qualitative research method, using Fairclough's 3D model. Important markers of identification were phrases such as youth, corruption, accountability, and Naya Pakistan (new Pakistan), as well as cultural symbols, like flags and turbans. The ongoing use of pronouns, metaphors, and authoritative language by politicians helped to make societal topics such as power dynamics, corruption, and development lively. It is found that Fairclough's approach to the analysis of political identity markers can be put to good use.

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Introduction

Language is the means of communication in political discourse as well as a means of persuasion. The language that politicians use is a language that satisfies this one group or another group (or all at the same time), which causes the desired feeling, makes the person feel, or strengthens this power the politician is looking for. Often, the language they use ties them to one organization or point of view or

another, and thus they have a political identity. For example, philosophy, leadership style, and ethnicity also influence political identity. (Though) more strategically and more personally (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wodak, 2009). Political discourse is a form of communication, and identity markers determine loyalty to the speech audience in terms of declaring group membership, establishing a coalition against other groups within the political conversation, and



differentiating the political candidates from their political competitors (Mason, 2018; Rashid, 2023).

All of these are shaped by their political speech and identity markers have a huge impact on the definition of these. For instance, people in a group can be brought together using the right language, or speaking in a dialect can gain support. Identity definition has many other significant parts such as social, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, nationality, etc. These factors affect how people see them and how they see them. (Anderson, 2020; Howarth, 2002).

This thesis applies Fairclough's (1995) model of 3D analysis to analyze identity marking in the political discourse of those politicians' statements analyzed in this study. Therefore the study will try to reconstruct when and why politicians use these markers in order to reconstitute their political identities..

Problem Statement

Successful communication in political discourse between politicians and their fans and party workers is a must. Political discourses in their constituents' strategic purpose have a characteristic of using language maneuvers that suit or lead to a good persuasive influence by a politician on their target audience. Or so the decisions of some of these followers seem to form their identities as forcefully as those of politicians do. Along with other rhetorical devices, politicians tend to use identity markers that are most effective as per their political agenda, and this is more common in emerging nations like Pakistan where dynasty politics form an essential part of getting people behind them and coming into power. It may not have been so important element of political identity in recent years, but certainly has cleared the road for various identity politics to become reality. Therefore, this current study aims to examine how elite Pakistani politicians use identity markers both for themselves and against one another using these four prominent political parties in Pakistan. PMLN, JUI F & PPP (Nawaz Sharif), and PTI (Imran Khan).

Research Objectives

The following are the research objectives of this study:

1. I concentrated on looking into the particular identity markers that political leaders use in the selected newspaper.
2. To examine how political leaders use identity markers to create their political identities.

I.e. To investigate why political figures used these identity markers in their speeches.

Research Questions

The following research questions are intended to be addressed by this study:

1. What identity markers do political leaders use in the selected newspapers?
2. What are the means that political leaders use identity markers to derive political identities for themselves?
3. Why do political leaders use these identification markers in their speeches?

Literature Review:

Discourse

Language is used to speak and write to communicate, and it is used to perform events. Discourse, as described by Van Dijk (1977), is a mode of language used in society, necessary for example when debating, hearing the news, going for an interview, listening to a political speech, and so on. In discourse analysis, context is important because it is the person and use of the language that you are analyzing. Discourse is more than syntax or pragmatics, it is about meaning, beliefs, and ideas in societal events (Van Dijk, 2000; Mills, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to language research that focuses on the use of communication for exerting power. According to Wodak (1999), CDA means an application that studies language in social contexts from a critical perspective and gives special attention to how discourse is implicated in power, dominance, and inequality. The view of CDA as a paradigm that links linguistic analyses to social power relations and underlying social change has been reinforced by Van Dijk (1993), who defined the approach as the study of the relationships between language and the power structures of society and how language builds and develops social power structures (Wodak, 2011).

Politics

"Political" comes from the Greek term "politika," which means "affairs related to cities or states." Aristotle's book *Politics* introduced this term. Although initially tied to governance and civic systems, politics is also evident among animals like chimpanzees, as described by Waal (2007) in *Chimpanzee Politics*, where struggles for sex and power mirror social dynamics in human societies. Politics is fundamentally about power and dominance, and it is closely tied to social structures like political, social, and economic systems. At its core, politics refers to activities associated with governance, legislation, and societal organization. However, as Chilton (2004) notes, politics is flexible in meaning and purpose, and its interpretation varies depending on personal understanding and context.

Identity Markers

Identity markers are characteristics or attributes that hold meaning within a society and help define an individual's identity. These markers can include age, nationality, citizenship, religion, political affiliation, or a combination of these, shaping how a person sees themselves and how they are perceived by others (Van Dijk, 1997; Kantner, 2006). Howarth (2002) notes that identities are ways of representing oneself and influencing communication and interaction. Through these markers, individuals can either align with or distinguish themselves from others. Identity is thus a complex concept that can be both biologically determined and socially constructed. In international relations, identity markers help articulate connections and provide insight into how individuals or groups relate to themselves, others, and the world around them (Dijk, 1998). Politicians, for instance, use various linguistic markers in their public discourse to convey symbolic values and to strategically influence their audiences, whether positively or negatively (Dolon & Todolí, 2008; Billig, 2008).

Gaps in the Existing Literature

Critical discourse analysis has been employed as a framework in numerous research to investigate political discourse. A relatively understudied aspect of political discourse, the use of identity markers in discourse, was the subject of few studies. The study

articles cited above examine the speeches and interviews of political leaders. A recent research gap concerns the use of different identity markers as a political identity in Pakistani politics. Identity markers play a significant role as a political information channel in emerging nations such as Pakistan. Since there hasn't been much recognition of this feature, the current study frequently serves as a resource for public awareness campaigns. The politics of identity markers appear to be a gap in the literature, which is filled by the current study, which also offers new insight for future research.

Research Methodology

The nature of the current investigation is qualitative. This research is qualitative since it does not employ numbers or numerical measurements and instead concentrates on the in-depth analysis of topics through the use of qualitative data-gathering instruments, such as online newspaper reporting.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is developed to forecast, clarify, and comprehend the phenomenon being studied. The theoretical framework makes it possible to investigate the reasons behind the existence of the research problem being studied. The three-dimensional discourse analysis model developed by Fairclough (1995) was used in the study to analyze the data.

Fairclough 3D Model

The three-dimensional discourse analysis model was first presented by Norman Fairclough in 1995. He looked at language as a fundamental component of society. He proposed an internal as well as an exterior connection between language and society (Fairclough, 2013). He proposed an internal and external relationship between language and society. He contends that language is a social process in which social phenomena are reflected in linguistic phenomena. The model developed by Fairclough (2013) has three dimensions: Language is a spoken or written text. Discourse practice is the creation and interpretation of texts. Sociocultural practice is the third. "Language a text," also known as the "description stage" or micro-analysis, is the first dimension. Text is merely described at this point. Three tools serve as the foundation for this text description: (I) Linguistic tools, such as sentence

structure and components of speech (Wodak, 2011) (II) Signs, symbols, and other semiotic instruments (Dijk, 1997) (III) Literary figure (figures of speech that include hyperbole and metaphor) (Dijk, 1998). At this point, the study just describes the text rather than delving deeper into its interpretation and explanation. This step was used by the study to highlight the ideological, symbolic, and visual identity markers that politicians used when giving speeches in newspapers (Dolon & Todolí, 2008).

The discursive practice, or interpretation step, is the second dimension. The relationship between the producer and the consumer is used to interpret the text. The speakers who address the public or audience are known as producers. The audience or general public that attends political speeches is known as the consumers (Billig, 2008). Sociocultural practice, the final dimension, is thought of as the explanatory stage. At this point, the speaker's covert goal will be revealed, illuminating the underlying beliefs and the ways in which language affects society (Chilton, 2004; Rashid, 2023).

Data Collection

Based on the Fairclough 3D Model, data was gathered from the chosen sample. The study initially appeared online in the Dawn and Express Tribune newspapers. The Dawn and Express Tribune newspapers published between 2018 and 2023 were the study's primary focus. The investigation concentrated on newspaper reports within the newspaper and meticulously copied all pertinent newspaper items. For these duplicate reports, the

researcher created a distinct folder and stored it. The study ensures that the themes and publishing dates are authentic. After carefully reviewing the reports, the study eliminated all meta-data. The reports that were more pertinent to the study's goals were then the main emphasis. The selection of these newspapers' narratives was based on the need they cover the speeches of these four well-known figures.

Data Analysis

The primary data was decoded using a theme analysis using Braun and Clark's (2006) analytical approach. The data was examined in a number of steps in accordance with this structure. The researcher continued reading the data several times in the first step, familiarisation, to become acquainted with it. The researcher created the first codes in the second step, initial coding, and then arranged the data in a methodical and significant manner. After classifying the themes in the third stage, the researcher looked at the codes found to investigate various themes and thematic patterns that fit the Fairclough 3-D model. The fourth phase involved the researcher going over the themes that had been found. The researcher categorized and recategorized the available topics into suitable groups and subcategories in the fifth step, which is defining and redefining themes. The researcher contextualized the available themes in the data in accordance with the Fairclough 3-D model, a theoretical framework, in the final step of linking the themes into the framework.

General Information

Table 1

General Information

Newspaper Name	The Dawn, The Express Tribune
Genre in newspaper	Newspaper reports
Political Leaders	Imran Khan, Bilawal Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Fazal-ur Rehman
Political Parties	PTI, PPP, PMLN, JUIF
Language	English
Country	Pakistan
Date	2018 to 2023
Audience	Pakistani

Findings

This section deals with the key findings of the study.

Specific Identity Markers Politicians Use

This sub-section deals with the findings of the first question of the study.

Table 2

Specific Identity Markers of Pakistani Politicians

Identity markers of Imran Khan	Identity markers of Bilawal Bhutto	Identity markers of Nawaz Sharif	Identity Markers Of Fazal-ur Rehman
Youth mobilization	Bhutto	Infrastructure	Islam
Anti-corruption	Roti kapra makan (Bread, cloth, and shelter)	Regional connectivity	Anti-Imran Khan
Naya Pakistan (new Pakistan)	Flag	Vote ko izzat do (respect to vote)	Turban
Bat	Family lineage	Lion	Molana(Islamic scholar)
Insaf (justice)	Democracy	Economic growth	Shalwar kameez
Khan	Continuity of Cause	Progress and development	Shariyat (sharia)
Victim of Conspiracy	Political Heritage	Democratic Advocate	Islamic Principles
Champion Of Meritocracy	Social Welfare	Popular Leader	Leadership And Ideological Commitment
Nation-Builder	Women’s Rights	Democratic Values	Human Rights
Champion of Values	Policy Initiatives	Political Mobilization	Moral authority
Policy Leader	Social Welfare	Family Loyalty	Opposition Identity
Religious Guidance	Socialist Ideology	Development	Concern for Country
Resilience	Political Legacy	Champion	Religious and Political Leaders
Religious Conviction:	Democratic Values	Visionary Leader	Organizational Affiliation
Leadership and Resolve	Historical Reverence	Strategic Diplomat	Religious Authority
Victimization	Economic Justice	Political Machinations	Nationalist Stance
Opposition to Western Values	Sustainable Development	Economic Stewardship	Defender of Refugees
Rule of Law	Agent of Change	Statesmanship	Critic of Authorities
	Reformer	Forgiveness and Magnanimity	Human Rights Activism
	Workers' Rights	Honest Politician	Palestinian Cause
		Morality	Islamic Governance
		Vindicated Leader	Political Aspirations
		Fiscal Responsibility	Mobilization of Support
		Moral Critic	Support for Palestinian Unity
		Economic Reformer:	Rejection of the Two-State Solution

Table 2 shows the identity markers used by Pakistani political leaders. These identity markers are associated with the four political leaders, Imran

Khan, Bilawal Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Fazal-ur-Rehman, and their parties.

The Construction of Political Identity through Identity Markers

In this sub-section, the study deals with the key findings of the second question.

Imran Khan's Identity Construction through Identity Markers

Political identity building is deeply reliant on its audience through literary, semiotic, and linguistic cues used to build relationships with them. For example, from a (linguistic) point of view, these are pronouns like 'we' or 'you', declaratives, and modal verbs such as 'will', to unite us under the speaker's authority. Turning to the legal and nationalist narratives, from a semiotic perspective phrases like 'the road to Naya Pakistan' and the symbolism of institutions such as NAB make sense. If we took them literally, then simile for simile such as 'our attack force' and the moral judgments of ethics would simplify complex matters. These identity markers work towards having a vision that alters the acts of viewing Khan as a civic and national identity.

Bilawal Bhutto's Identity Construction through Identity Markers

Using linguistic, literary, and semiotic strategies, Bilawal Bhutto and PPP define their political identity. A constant use of past tense and modal verbs makes the discourse authoritative and coherent. His mother is mentioned and so is Bilawal and the account is put into the context of the past of the party. Symbols with semiotic connotations of the party's main programme are: the two words, the slogan *roti, kapra, makan*, and the 'PPP flags'. The personalities of Zulfikar and Benazir Bhutto cling to the walls, but something more is added by referring to his mother as a democratic symbol opening the party's agenda. Its use of the combination of traditional and modern goals unleashes the personality of PPP in these elements.

Nawaz Sharif's Identity Construction through Identity Markers

Therefore, a semiotic investigation of the strategic language of Nawaz Sharif can only define his political identity. He is now ordered to create rallies, and he is ordered to direct her to Maryam, his language is proactive here as well. By modeling their use of modal verbs such as 'will' and the 'we' pronoun the sense of relatedness increased and

speakers felt an increased learning responsibility. Plush lions: They take on our semiotic symbols of adoption, of unity. By giving it a more emotional resonance — metaphors like his voice echo throughout the country. The thing is, they inherently think that being the mobilizer of the masses is the height, the end of the appropriation of power onto power.

Fazal ur-Rehman's Identity Construction through Identity Markers

Seeking its political identity from the Islamic principles, Fazalur Rahman is derived. But he says 'Islam's economic system is the only solution' and that's what he stands by on bed number one.' In a way, he is referred to as the chief of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, as he is a symbol of a leader. His tale is well fitted into an ideological context in which his critics label him as a 'Western agent' and a 'fitna'. Fazal Ur Rehman as a spokesperson for Islamic principles and to enhance his popularity among followers, traditional Islamic attire, religious discourse, and Islamic jurisprudence are the markers that define him.

The Discourse Behind the Use of Identity Markers

1. In the next section, we explain why Imran Khan is using some identity markers particularly.
2. Imran Khan and other politicians use their identity identifiers to identify them with societal expectations like accountability and transparency in addressing Tony's youth participation, national progress, and corruption issues. 'We' and 'Naya Pakistan' help them to proclaim cultural dreams, to condemn entrenched hierarchies of power, and to invite the public to coact. Khan points out that students make political changes and do so by encouraging them. His anti-corruption campaign and independent NAB support a transparent political identity. Not only is martial terminology full of authority and action, but also opposed to NRO-II it has the position so hard against corruption and compromise..
3. The reasoning behind Bilawal Bhutto's Identity Marker usage

4. Bilawal Bhutto picks identity traits, all those traits, that are in accordance with social justice, gender equality, and democracy. The latter encourages authenticity and continuity by mentioning of Bhutto family legacy. It takes what is relevant from the party's origins and uses modern problems as a starting point. They fan loyalty and recognition through Belongs phrases, party symbols, and the name Bhutto.

I explain why Nawaz Sharif uses identity markers. Nawaz Sharif influences party activities and consolidates his leadership, which urges and guides the family members. Second, its discourse will fit into issues pertaining to socioeconomic and infrastructure although the PML-N will be a more relevant more practical actor. They can only identify themselves by party slogans, flags, and symbols while calling for party loyalty; activism is about building the infrastructure and the economic development toward the story of progress which is consistent with what their society is supposed to represent.

The Argument in Support of Fazal ur-Rehman's Identity Marker Use JUI-F emphasizes Islamic economic principles and resistance to external forces, which is consistent with its ideological stance. Fazal-ur-Rehman uses prestigious titles to further establish his authority. The portrayal of opponents like Imran Khan as "fitna" and "Western agents" shapes political narratives. Citations to Articles 16 and 17 validate the party's protests and prove that they align with democratic principles.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The following study was carried out in order to answer the following research questions: The first research question was, "How do political leaders use identity markers to create their unique political identities?" Which specific markers are used by political leaders in the selected newspapers? This was the second research question. The final research question was, "Why do political leaders use these identity markers in their political discourses?"

The results demonstrated the widespread usage of identity markers in Pakistani political discourse as a tool for politicians to express their opinions and address national concerns. From phrases like "youth," "corruption," and "accountability" to symbolic references like "Naya Pakistan," "moral

authority," and "progress," political figures employed these identity markers with great care in order to engage their audiences. Party flags, insignia, turbans, and shalwar kameez (or traditional clothing) were all means to create an image and an identity for a politician.

Language and semiotics were further studied in the formation of the political identity of the work. Politicians used a host of linguistic strategies for manipulating the modality and mood of communication and pronouncing, code-switching, sentence building, and selecting (purposively) pronouns. Additionally, they used semiotic tools (fonts, colors, and symbols) to visually embody who they were. For other cases when you have to make pivotal subjects or focus the audience toward pivotal subjects, usual literary devices of hyperbole and metaphors are used.

Political leaders' signaling of their party and individual beliefs as well as connection to broader societal values and goals through the identity markers is a principal conclusion of the study. A lot of the marks have to do with accountability, transparency, national development, youth involvement, corruption, and moral governance. In the case of religious political organisations the insignia were sometimes Islamic or used to reject foreign cultural influence. It is through these subjects that politicians are asking questions about the current power structure and the collective hope of the people.

The selected literature had specific identity markers: The words, 'youth,' 'change,' and 'Naya Pakistan.' They were intended to use language that young people understood in order to push a vision of transformation. Other political agendas focused on moral conduct and leadership using other metrics: These were "justice," "corruption," and "accountability." Second, these all were symbolic markers, like, pictures that had visual links were symbolic markers in relation to the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) flag, the legacy of Benazir Bhutto, or Islamic symbols such as turban and traditional attire the political leaders such as Fazal Rehman. These were linked with party ideology, economic growth, regional development, family ancestry, and so on.

In addition, the study reveals that many factors, including the sociopolitical context, do consider the strategic identity markers account, also with regard

to urgent problems like infrastructure needs, regional ambitions, and economic growth. These identifiers also assist politicians in advocating for issues like democracy, gender equality, and social justice, to make their party sound more relevant and themselves credible leaders able to solve urgent problems. Further, religious parties employed symbols that implied that their belief system represented the body of the Islamic economy and resistance to external cultural pressures.

The results show identity markers as used in Pakistani political discourse, particularly as seen in newspaper reports, are strategically created to influence public opinion. While they are surely small, these indicators do their weight's worth in framing how the public hears 'politically'. These protocols are used by politicians to earn praise from their constituents to interest those who are not, and to put themselves up as capable (and helping others be capable) of solving the nation's gravest problems.

The study concludes that identity markers have functioned as the determinants of Pakistani political discourse. As well, these are fine political persuasion methods and good methods for leaders to express his or her values and ideas. They don't constitute the subject matter of political communication, but they do represent the below-the-surface unconscious elements of political communication as they make up peoples' 'way of thinking'. As such, identity markers are conceptually necessary for pointing the public toward understanding who political leaders are and how the more deeply rooted forms are for political language in culture and society. These variables give us cues on how politicians do language crafting and the message they want to be heard and gain new followers in the intricate Pakistani social landscape.

Discussion

This study's findings, however, are partially similar to the findings of Bramley's (2001) study, which investigated how the pronouns help create identities of the "self" and of the "other" and how politicians might strategically use pronouns to impact not only their own identity but also the identity of others. Similarly, language structures are shown to influence political identity when Chilton (2004) explored how nominalization, agentless passives, and vagueness in pronouns with their ambiguous references convey political claims not only

implicitly. Linguistic framing of speeches in German and British political interviews during general elections was investigated by Fetzer (2007). He found distinctive cultural and language patterns as well as how topics are talked about and explained. According to Lefkowitz (2003) in "The Politics of Language and Identity in Israel," Israelis use language choices and rhetorical expressions to demonstrate who they are in front of others and to please voters. The findings of this study are contrary to Lourdes' (2008). He looked into identity politics as a political method and wrote a research dissertation on the subject. It's a tactic, he says, that people who purport to be from a certain gender, religion, race, socioeconomic stratum, or any other kind of category develop political objectives. Politicians' use of metaphors is one area in the research findings of Dvorak (2012) and this study coincides. The particular use of linguistic strategies was investigated. A variety of rhetorical strategies and metaphors were developed to gain the interest of supporters and audience.

Fairclough's 3D model provides a good framework with which to explore how identity markers are used in political speeches and to explain how political identities are influenced and reflected. This paradigm reveals a better understanding of the motivations behind politicians' use of identity markers through its three stages: language, discursive, and socio-cultural text. Besides highlighting the very existence of the actors involved, it openly brings to the surface the socio-cultural factors that affect their use of identity markers. This makes Fairclough's model a very useful tool to figure out how intricate web this political identity building is in discourse.

Limitations of the Study

The closing of this chapter then requires some rules and methods for observing the same thing from various angles. This study can be expanded on by incorporating the analysis of the speeches by the four political leaders and putting the same texts for ideological investigation, by comparing strands and finding their prominence in the use of identity markers in data. Another way to conduct the research would be to compare one year's election campaign with another. It would give a good quick outline of how the identity markers change or not and if so to what degree. Since the study is restricted

to English-language newspapers of Pakistan, the conclusions of the study may not be transferable to other newspapers. The depiction of the identification markers can change according to the mandates of the papers such as editorial philosophies and readership. The way in which identity markers evolve over time, depending on the nature of the political import and wherewithal, will change, as well. However, the study's chronological span may limit a comprehensive comprehension of the way identity indicators vary on the basis of political alterations.

Recommendations for Future Research

In conclusion, I propose that future scholars build on my analysis by increasing the analysis to include

newspapers in regional languages, as well as English. This would result in a much better understanding of the shape and readings of identity markers in different language contexts. The study also suggests that future researchers need to conduct research based on this subject by studying for a long period of time and monitoring the evolution of identity markers and identity for a long time. This would enable us to get beyond the static picture of political discourse and identity formation.

Comparative Analysis: Try to trace trends by identifying the ways in which different publications represent identification markers. This kind of study would be more robust if one considered various editorial positions.

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