



The Interplay of Rhetoric and Voting Behavior in Pakistan: The Perspective of Youth

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Abstract

Political communication is one of the major aspects of any political system. The speeches of politicians, especially the political party leaders', are an important source of political awareness regarding pertinent issues facing any country. However, politicians often rely on political rhetoric to appeal to the emotions of prospective voters. This paper explored the use of political rhetoric in political discourse in Pakistan. Political rhetoric pertains to exaggeration of reality and distortion of facts to change the views and perception of the public. Politicians actively use this as a tool to gain the support of their potential voters in their electoral campaigns. The researchers analyzed the statements of leaders of three major political parties in Pakistan. It has been concluded from this research that politicians focus on populist political rhetoric when they address their voters to garner support rather than educating them about real political, social, and economic challenges. Thus political rhetoric is a significant factor in voting behavior.

Key Words: Political Communication, Rhetoric, Post-Truth Politics, Voting Behavior.

Introduction

The use of rhetoric to influence the thinking and ideas of people is not a new phenomenon. The politicians need the support of the people to get elected in the representative democracy. Since politics involve public decision making, they need to assure people that they would govern skillfully. Moreover, they would solve their individual problem and improve the country at large. It involves a lot of convincing and persuasion. Thus politicians need to address the people to convey their vision and ideas.

The public discourse regarding politics and politicians' talk with the public is studied under the field of political science called political communication. The politics need effective strategies of communication to achieve the convincing that has to be done to get the support of the people. Thus they employ rhetorical techniques in their communication to the public to garner their approval before and after the elections as well. However, it has come to prominence with the technological and digital revolution that has increased communication through social media.

Previously, the politicians used to communicate with the public through public addresses, in the processions, press conferences, and through official statements. The most hyped US presidential elections featured the use of flowery language that showed that rhetoric could sway the elections. The election between a seasoned politician, Hillary Clinton, and a real estate businessman, Donald Trump, seemed in favor of Clinton because of her political expertise and career in the government as a senator and as secretary of state. Hillary Clinton used technical terms and jargon-laden language in her addresses to the public to convey her future policies. However, Trump's electoral campaign focused on making absurd promises like building a wall on the Mexican border so as to stop the refugees from entering the USA. He referred to the refugees from Latin American countries as rapists and

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drug dealers. He used sexist and racist language, which was never expected from a presidential candidate before. Moreover, in the wake of the populist presidential campaign of Donald Trump, the use of political rhetoric was also increased in major elections in other European countries as well.

Research Methodology

The research involved qualitative analysis of books, journal articles and research papers. The quantitative tool of research was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised eleven close-ended questions. All questions were formulated on the basis of research objectives. The respondents were also asked about demographic information, which included age, gender, and educational qualification. The target population for conducting the survey was students enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate programs in the universities who are eligible to vote in Pakistan. The data collected during the 2018 elections. The sample size for this research is 100. A convenience sampling technique was employed to collect data.

Research Objectives

- To explore the use of political rhetoric in the politics of Pakistan.
- To analyze the impact of political rhetoric on voting behavior in Pakistan.
- To evaluate whether the public is influenced by political rhetoric.
- To analyze whether people realize the rhetorical tactics of the politicians.
- To find out the impact of the prevalence of social media on rhetorical speeches.
- To explore the views of youth regarding political rhetoric.

Literature Review

Scholarly work on voting behavior is commonplace; the direct link between voting behavior and political rhetoric has not been established yet in the context of Pakistan. [Thomson \(2016\)](#) explained various rhetorical techniques used by the politicians in the era of post-truth politics, which include Parataxis and presumption of complexity. Politicians actively use this technique to evoke populist sentiments in their voters when they address them in public.

[Condor et al. \(2013\)](#) explored various definitions of political rhetoric and analyzed its importance in the light of psychology, international relations, political science, and cognitive sciences. Many researchers who have tried to define rhetoric have resorted to the conclusion that it makes truth and facts irrelevant. [Rolfe \(2014\)](#) traced the use of rhetoric to evoke the glory of the past in Australia. He pointed out that it goes back to the nineteenth century, and it was prevalent in the UK and the USA. He focused on how politicians give examples of other countries, specifically America, to appeal to their voters. His analysis helps in understanding Imran Khan's references to the French revolution in some of his speeches at the biggest processions. Moreover, Khan also talks about Pakistan's glory on the world stage when Ayub Khan was the president of the country.

[Jahangir \(2017\)](#) wrote about the use of political rhetoric on social media to sway the opinion of youth in Pakistan. She noted that the high turnout in the 2013 general elections owed to e-campaigns. Thus she concluded the young minds are vulnerable to believe the rhetoric circulated on social media as well. Shafiq et al. studied the use of political rhetoric in the parliament by elected lawmakers. They compared the discussion on major political issues like energy crisis and electoral reforms to empty sloganeering and rhetoric that parliamentarians spew in the media and found that they are more interested in tactics that helps them in gaining votes rather than working on major issues that they are elected for. They also highlighted the use of rhetoric in the historical context of Pakistan.

Hopkin and Rosamond (2017) explored the use of rhetoric regarding economic policy in Britain since the financial crisis. They argued that reasons for rising foreign debt in Britain are twisted, and the public believes the false reasons regardless of actual facts. Shehzad (2017) discussed the rhetoric of "revolution" in his article. He explained that political parties use the word revolution whenever they want to channel public anger in the wake of an economic crisis. However, they actually want to perpetuate the same system that exploits the common citizens in the garb of revolution.

[Mieder \(2005\)](#) studied the use of proverbs as a part of political rhetoric in American politics. The writer noted that historically many presidents of the USA have relied on proverbial wisdom in their speeches to highlight the issues. [Jackson \(2009\)](#) wrote how politicians use the rhetoric of redistribution of wealth in a social democratic state. They contended that public discourse on social welfare laced with rhetorical promises could prove effective in implementing policies that favor poor people. They concluded that political rhetoric on redistribution of wealth, when evoked at the national level, had been very effective.

[Soon \(2009\)](#) traced the national narrative in Singapore formed through the use of political rhetoric. The researcher studied the case study of Singapore because it is a relatively young country that has progressed economically. The researcher explored that the national narrative was built in Singapore with the help of academia. [Koch \(2014\)](#) examined the impact of digital technologies on the construction of political subjectivity. According to researchers, the use of the internet will evoke democratic tradition because of sharing of information and ideas among the people. The researcher concluded from this study that online space is not enough to create sustainable democracy.

Most literature is found on the process of generating news and gatekeeping of news in the post-industrial states. Thus there is a need for more research in developing countries.

Theoretical Understanding of Use of Political Rhetoric In The Light Of Political Communication Theory and Agenda Setting Theory

Political communication

Political communication is a significant subfield of political science that involves the study of the impact of information in the wake of technology on politics and the public. It is an interdisciplinary field of study because of its connection with communication studies, political science, and journalism. The scholars who study political communication examine the speeches of political leaders, the media coverage of the political arena and the political discussion between people.

Politicians use many persuasion techniques to popularize their agenda and political standing. Politicians mostly employ the techniques of rhetoric like ethos, pathos, and logos in their speeches to influence policymaking and electoral results. Thus political rhetoric is an important aspect of political communication. Moreover, in the era of the internet, the analysis of rhetorical statements on social media is all the more important. There are various ways to produce information and disseminate it in the wake of the technological revolution.

Bakir (2010) gave the concept of Strategic Political Communication or SPC, which is defined as “political communication that is manipulative in intent, that utilizes social scientific techniques and heuristic devices to understand human motivation, human behavior and the media environment, to inform effectively what should be communicated – encompassing its detail and overall direction – and what should be withheld, with the aim of taking into account and influencing public opinion, and creating strategic alliances and an enabling environment for government policies – both at home and abroad”.

The research on political communication focuses on its production process, the contents of political communication and its effects. The production process starts at the national level in most cases, and it goes down to media personnel. In recent time, the political parties and interest groups have inducted political consultants, pollsters, and advertising executives, for this process for strategic communications.

According to [McNair \(2003\)](#), in the wake of the digital revolution and globalization, “politics has become not only a persuasive but a performance art, in which considerations of style, presentation and marketing are of equal if not greater importance than content and substance”. He concluded that change of politics into persuasive arts had undermined democratic norms. He called it a pessimistic view of political rhetoric and democracy. The liberal view, on the other hand, emphasizes that rational citizens would make a judicious decision when they view political debates and communication on media.

Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda setting is defined as the role of media in impacting the public perception of the importance of a certain topic that it gives coverage to. The concept of agenda-setting gained prominence in the age of mass media.

Researchers of political communication concluded that the issue that was covered more widely by the media gained more prominence in the eyes of the public. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw studied the 1968 presidential elections and came up with the theory of agenda-setting. The issues that were given more coverage before the elections were considered to be a more pertinent public-policy issue by the people. For example, terrorism is one of the global issues that is considered a significant threat to the lives of the people. However, the research has concluded that more people die in car accidents than terrorist attacks.

The influential policymakers and politicians can make great use of agenda-setting because of their connection and power. Moreover, the government-run news channels portray certain issues in the light of the government's favourable stance. This agenda-setting is a manipulative technique that utilizes influence, connection, and strategy to engineer public opinion. Critical information can be withheld from the public so as to mislead the people about it.

Political Rhetoric

The politicians express their thoughts, ideas, and vision directly in front of the public. Political rhetoric is a strategy of communicating with the public so as to influence their thinking, ideas, and beliefs. Political rhetoric is defined as the “use of language skills to appeal to emotions of the people regarding political matters and to exaggerate certain matters rather than using facts and reality” ([Condor et al., 2013](#)).

[Thomson \(2016\)](#) wrote, “From the fall of Athens to the rise of totalitarianism, observers from Thucydides to George Orwell have associated a breakdown in public language – or rhetoric, to give it a more traditional name – with the failure of democracy, loss of freedom, civil strife and, ultimately, tyranny and murder”. He argued, in the context of Brexit and US presidential elections, that the new generation is seemingly enlightened one the digs the truth and facts. However, the present scenario shows that public language has been distorted by the use of political rhetoric.

Another major way of communication between political leaders and people in the modern world is social media. The famous social media websites like Twitter and Facebook give politicians a platform the express their views about every issue instantly and as many time a day as they want. According to the Global Digital report compiled at the end of January 2018, 22 percent (44.6 million users) of the population in Pakistan uses the internet. The country's active social media users stood at 35 million (Farooq, 2018).

The electoral campaign is one of the major components of democratic political systems. It involves direct and indirect interaction with the people who elect the politicians to government positions. The politicians display their best behavior during this time and also make speeches to the public regularly to explain their agenda and plans for the people who will vote for them. Their utmost priority is to show that they would work for the benefit of the people once they would get elected.

Thus the politicians use language very carefully and craft-fully to appease their potential voters. The rhetoric analysis involves the use of ethos, pathos, and logos to check the use of effective communication. However, political rhetoric involves the use of emotional symbols and distorted facts to change the perception of people.

Mostly the politicians focus on populist political rhetoric because common people are concerned about their immediate needs. So they promise to address their grievances once they would be elected. According to [Rolfe \(2014\)](#), the politicians use terms like “back then” to trace people's memory back to good old times and then contrast them with the present supposedly bleak situation.

Political Rhetoric in Pakistan in the light of Pakistan's Political culture and Voting Behavior

Right after the creation of Pakistan, the people in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were galvanized to support the language movement. Quaid e Azam's decision of having one national language was largely contested in East Pakistan. The student leaders played an important role in making the public aware of threats to their culture and identity in the wake of a language crisis. The bickering and lack of cooperation between the political parties led to the first military coup in the country.

The rhetoric of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in erstwhile West Pakistan and Sheikh Mujib ur Rehman's rhetoric in erstwhile East Pakistan determined the result of the first general elections held in Pakistan and also led to the

breakup of the country. Thus it is imperative to analyze how politicians rely on political rhetoric rather than factual evidence during their communication to the public and media.

Moreover, voting behavior is another important aspect of politics as it determines the fate of nations during the elections. The era of representative democracy demands free and fair elections and the politicians appeal to their voters to vote for them to come into power. Thus, it is imperative to explore the extent of the impact of these speeches on the voting behavior of the public.

Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) RHETORIC

Before the 2013 general elections, the leadership of PMLN made many lofty promises to the electorate. They claimed that they would end the load shedding in five years without giving any plan to deal with the energy crisis. Load shedding is one of the major issues in the country which resulted from an energy crisis. The failure to make dams is one of the reasons for the continuance of this problem which has affected small businesses and industries. The use of generator has increased the cost of manufacturing for many small businesses.

Moreover, Nawaz Sharif also gave a plan to make a bullet train from Lahore to Karachi if he got elected. Bullet train is a feature of developed countries with very strong economies. The first step to achieve this target would have been to completely transform the economy. However, when it was elected by the people with majority votes, it could not deliver these promises.

Regardless of the failure to deliver the aforementioned promises, PMLN kept reiterating its rhetoric of development in every public address ([Hassan, 2017](#)). PMLN came into power in the 2013 general elections in Pakistan. The conviction of Nawaz Sharif in the Panama gate case was vehemently contested by Nawaz Sharif, who started using the phrase “mujhe kyun nikala” to question the credibility of the verdict of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The political party could not cite facts or reality to dismiss the decision of the Supreme Court. Thus they resorted to sloganeering and rhetoric. The political rhetoric of victimization was used to garner the support of voters before the elections ([Jamal, 2018](#)). The new slogan “vote to izzat do” was popularized by PMLN politicians in the wake of the 2018 general elections in Pakistan.

Social media is actively used by the daughter of Nawaz Sharif, Mariam Nawaz and his brother Shahbaz Sharif. They have perpetuated the rhetoric of victimization frequently on social media. The term “khalai makhloq” used by Nawaz Sharif in one of his speeches to refer to the establishment was picked by his family members during the election campaign and frequently used in their tweets regarding the elections. Thus, the PML N leaders and politicians had run their election campaign on the basis of anti-establishment rhetoric ([Abrar, 2018](#)).

Moreover, PMLN leadership also resorted to the rhetoric of character assassination wherein Nawaz Sharif labelled “Larkana throne the sole reason for miseries of Sindh” ([Hassan, 2017](#)). He also chided Imran Khan for failing to transform Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa at various occasions.

[Shafiq et al \(2017\)](#) studied the contribution of PMLN parliamentarians in the law-making process in the parliament and found that its leader Nawaz Sharif remained absent during discussions on critical issues. Moreover, the party failed to exploit the sources that could help in resolving the energy crisis, for example, hydro energy and solar energy. However, the parliamentarians continued to raise slogans and gave statements regarding the energy crisis in the media, but when it came to parliament; they did not pay attention to the issue significantly.

Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) Rhetoric

Imran Khan galvanized most urban-dwelling middle class before the 2013 general elections, and his powerful rhetoric helped in making PTI the third-largest party in Pakistan. Khan’ use of rhetoric includes references to the past glory of Pakistan. He popularized the slogan of “tabdeeli” to galvanize his voters. Khan’s use of rhetoric and political songs in his processions attracted a huge audience. He often referred to himself as a savior of Pakistan, and the political songs played in his processions include phrases that imply he could single handedly resolve issues facing the country. Khan promised to make a “naya Pakistan” devoid of corruption if he got elected.

Imran Khan repeatedly referred to Sharif family as “mafia” in his speech in Mandi Bahaudin. He also pointed out corruption and criminal activities by Bhutto and Zardari. He promised to end corruption and inflation in the country which is primarily caused by money laundering. Khan claimed the Sharif family played major role in

inflation because of their corrupt practices. In the same speech Khan referred to Zardari as “beemari”. Moreover, he also called Shahbaz Sharif’s action “drama”. Thus Khan often uses the rhetoric of change and character assassination in his speeches.

However, Imran Khan has also outlined his vision for transforming the country at various occasions. Imran Khan gave eleven-point agenda that he would implement if he got elected at his huge public procession in April 2018 at Minar-e-Pakistan. He outlined his mission of “one system of justice, reduce poverty and elevate the living standards of the poor that he wanted to achieve if he got elected (Rehman, 2018). The eleven-point comprised of his solution to educational, health, infrastructural problems. Moreover, he also assured to end corruption and consolidate the institutions for the betterment of the country. Haq (2018) noted that Imran Khan has often repeated his rhetoric of making Pakistan a welfare state and an egalitarian society, but it been a rallying cry of all political parties since the independence of Pakistan who failed to deliver on their promises once they were elected.

Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Rhetoric

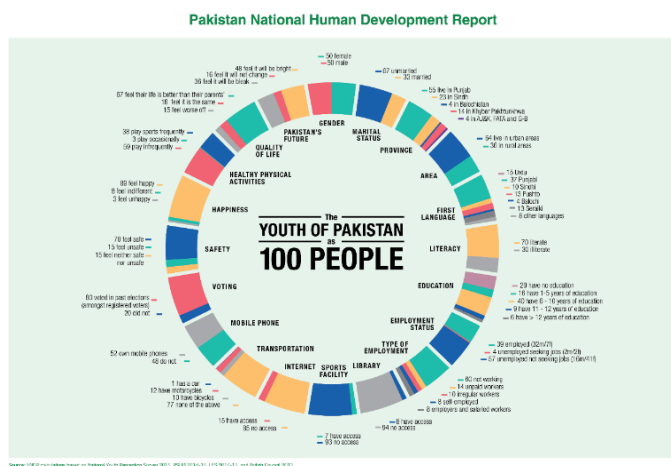
PPP’s founder, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was an eloquent person who garnered the support of the people with his fiery speeches. Bhutto was considered a populist leader who raised the slogan of “roti, kapra, makan” to appeal to his voters. Bhutto’s populist political campaign proved to very successful for not only himself but for the heirs of his party as well. The charismatic personality of Bhutto garnered the support of common people, and the jiyalas of the party still remain loyal because of their affiliation with party’s ideology propagated By Bhutto.

Bhutto legacy was taken forward by his daughter Benazir Bhutto after his death in a presumably sham trial orchestrated by president Zia-ul-Haq. Thus, Benazir promised to continue his legacy of populism and also propagated Bhutto’s sacrifice as a rallying cry before the 1988 elections, which is won successfully. She was elected again in 1995 because of her fierce campaign. Before the 2008 general elections, she had returned to continue her political career in Pakistan, but she died in a terrorist attack. Her death galvanized the people, and PPP was elected as the majority party. The current leadership belongs to her son, Bilawal Bhutto.

Bilawal Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari continued to question the involvement of the establishment in Benazir’s death even when there was the government of PPP in the centre at her death anniversaries and at his public addresses. The current leadership of PPP often cites the murder of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto to mobilize their voters and followers in their processions. The sacrifice of Bhutto and Benazir is cited as a reason to vote for the party. Thus they often appeal to the voters of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto.

Results and Discussion

The target population of the survey was youth studying in educational institutions in Pakistan. According to the Pakistan HDI report, “29 percent of Pakistan is between 15 and 29 years of age and as much as 64 percent is below the age of 30. According to the findings of report “only 24 will say they trust political leaders, 90 per cent of males and 55pc of women will say they intend to vote in the next elections”. Thus, the report highlights the importance of the decision of youth regarding politics in Pakistan.



Source: Retrieved from <http://www.pk.undp.org/content/dam/pakistan/docs/HDR/PK-NHDR.pdf>

The first question refers to the party affiliation of the respondents. The respondents were given three options PTI, PPP, and PMLN. They were given a fourth option to write any other political party that they support. The results show that majority of the respondents selected PTI as the political party they support. The second major party that was selected by the respondents was PMLN.

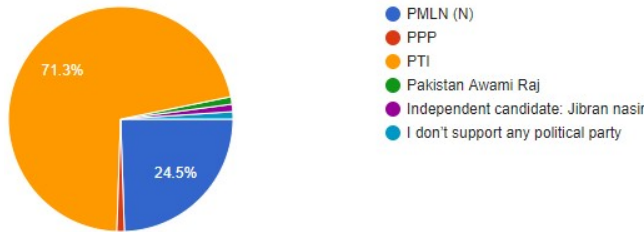


Figure 1: shows the political party affiliation of the respondents

In the second question, the respondents were asked the question about how much do they agree with the views of the political party leader that they support. This question is meant to understand the reasons why people follow the certain leader. The result shows that 56% of respondents answered that they strongly agree with the political party that they support. 39% of respondents answered that they partially agree with the political party leader who they support. The results show that majority of the people support the political party leaders whose views align with theirs, and they subscribe to the vision and ideology of that leader.

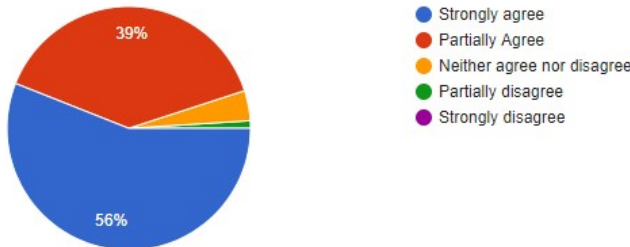


Figure 2: shows how much do the respondents agree with the views of the political party leader that they support

The third question was about how much the people think their favorite political leader's statements are based on truth and facts. This question is meant to gauge whether the followers of political leaders blindly trust them or do they also question their vision in certain matters. The results show that 49% of the respondents think that the statements of their favorite political leader are based on truth and facts. Another 31% expressed that they partially agree with the fact that their favorite political party leader speaks truth in their statements. The results show that majority of the respondents trust their political party leaders' statements.

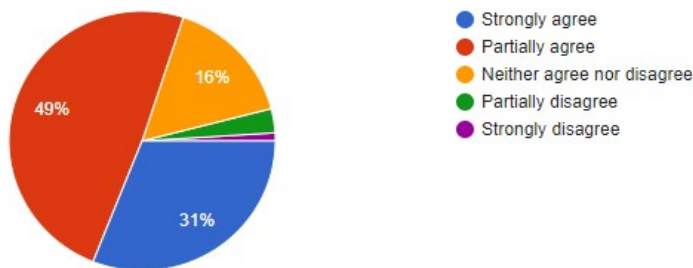


Figure 3: shows how much the people think their favorite political leader's statements are based on truth and facts.

The fourth question was about how much they verify the statements of their favorite political leader. This question was asked to understand whether the people research issues that their leaders talk about or they just take their word for it. In a democratic political culture, people should look at the issues critically and educate themselves about those issues rather than blindly believing what they hear their favorite leaders say. 45 % of the respondents said that they verify the statements of their favorite political party leader. 44% said that they sometimes verify their statements. Whereas 11% said that they do not verify. The answers show that not a majority of people always check the veracity of the claims of their favorite political party leader.

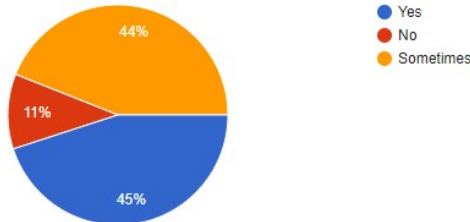


Figure 4: shows how much the respondents verify the statements of their favorite political leader

The fifth question was about whether the respondents feel that political leaders make some promises and claims that they cannot fulfil. This question was meant to analyze whether the people are aware of the fact that not every policy can be turned into reality and that doing is much more difficult than simply saying something. Since politicians can only make promises before the elections and the real work starts after they elected, which requires a lot of discussions, negotiation, and compromise. Thus, it is imperative to learn whether the electorate is aware of the fact that making policies requires overcoming many obstacles. The answers show that 57% of the respondents partially agree with the fact that that political leaders make promises that they cannot fulfil. 21% strongly agree with the fact that politicians are not able to accomplish the goals they claim to achieve. The results show that people are aware of the fact that politicians rely on huge promises to gain the support of the people.

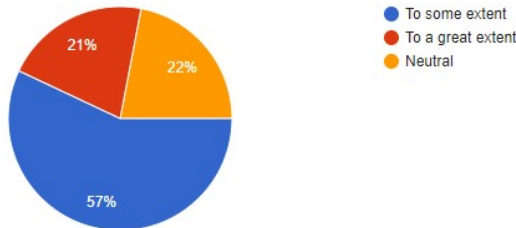


Figure 5: represents whether the respondents feel that political leaders make some promises and claims that they cannot fulfil.

The next question was about whether people think that political party leaders can fabricate facts to sway public opinion. This question is meant to learn whether the people are aware of agenda-setting strategy in the current political arena. The results show that majority of the respondents are aware of the fact that politicians rely on concoctions in their election campaigns and in their public addresses.

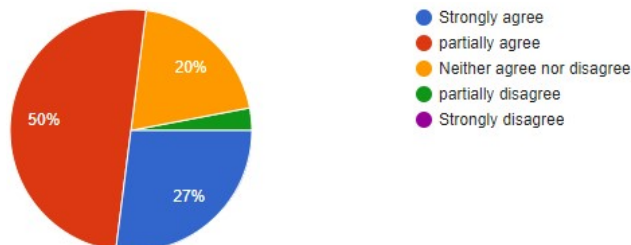


Figure 6: whether people think that political party leaders can fabricate facts to sway the public opinion

The next question was about the perception of people about the party, which reflects more on actual issues facing the country in their speeches and statements. This question is meant to explore the view of people about the political party, which is not using post-truth politics to distort the truth. The results show that majority of the respondents think that PTI talks about real and urgent issues facing the country. A sizeable number also shows that people also believe PMLN reflects on imminent issues facing the country.

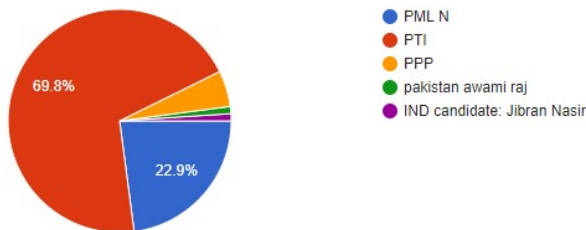


Figure 7: represents the perception of people about the party, which reflects more on actual issues facing the country in their speeches and statements

The next was about whether people think that politicians use political rhetoric as a tool of political communication to get the support of the people. This question is meant to understand whether people are aware of the fact that the charisma of political leaders can make people overlook the fact that they are deliberately appealing to their emotions by exaggerating the truth so as to get elected. The charisma and rhetoric can help in building a cult of personality that makes people overlook the factual evidence. The results show that majority of the respondents are aware of the fact that politicians employ political rhetoric as a strategy of communication to garner the support of people.

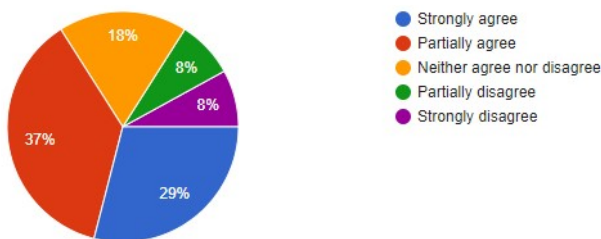


Figure 8: represents whether people think that politicians use political rhetoric as a tool of political communication to get the support of the people.

The next question is about whether the respondents have read the manifesto of the political party that they support. This question explores whether people are aware of the party’s ideology and strategy by researching and reading or they just believe what they listen to on their television screens and social media websites. The results show that 68.7 percent of people have read the manifesto of the political party they support. Thus they are aware of their party’s stance on major issues facing the country.

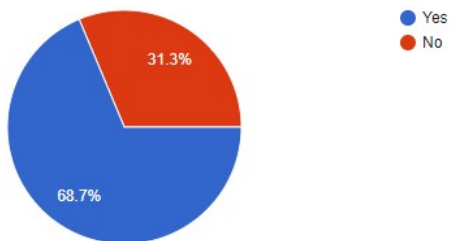


Figure 9: represents whether the respondents have read the manifesto of the political party that they support.

Next, the respondents were asked whether they follow the political party leader who they support on social media. This question was meant to understand whether social media is replacing electronic media as a source of political communication and how many people use social media to directly read the statements of the politicians they follow. The results show that 84% of people follow their favorite political party leader on social media. Thus social media is a prominent way of communication between the politicians and the people, and what they write on their social media profiles can have a significant impact on the voting decisions of the people.

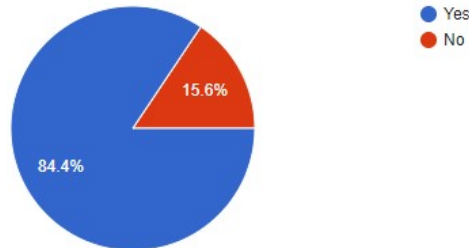


Figure 10: whether the respondents have read the manifesto of the political party that they support.

The last question was about whether people believe that politicians should use social media responsibly since what they write on social media can have a significant impact on how people perceive policymaking. The results show that the majority of the people that is 65 % believe that politicians should use social media carefully and write responsible statements on social media. 17.9 partially agreed with the fact that politicians should use social media responsibly, being the public figure that they are.

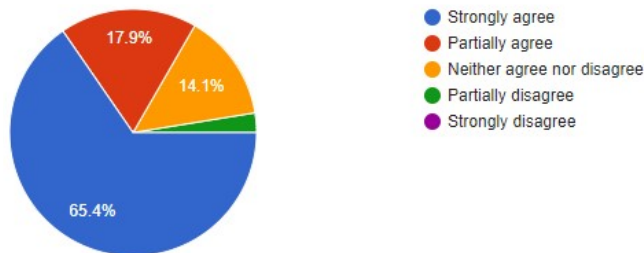


Figure 11: shows whether people believe that politicians should use social media responsibly.

Conclusion

The politicians in Pakistan often resort to rhetoric rather than real facts when they are facing accountability or when they face a certain crisis. Moreover, speeches at the processions to their supporters are commonly laced with rhetorical promises and claims regarding public policies. The politicians intend to influence the voters by making electric and passionate speeches regarding their achievements and their vision to transform the country.

The research proves that politicians emphasize more on rhetoric during their addresses to the potential voters. In Pakistan’s political culture, it has proven to be an effective source of garnering support given the success of Bhutto in 1970, the success of PPP in 2008 general elections, and the recent rise of PTI. The political rhetoric mostly falls into three categories, populism, victimization, and character assassination. Populist rhetoric helps in gaining the support of common people by pandering to their conservative views. [McNair \(2003\)](#) noted, “In the liberal critique, mediated or performance politics lack rationality and substance, breeding voter apathy and shallow populism”. The rhetoric of victimization helps in maintaining the support of voters in the face of corruption charges or political challenges. The rhetoric of character assassination helps in degrading and maligning the opponents in the elections so as to swing the votes of other party’s supporters.

The politicians also resort to personal attacks to demean their opponents in their speeches and their social media posts. The aim was to undercut the credibility of their opponents before the elections. The continuance of hereditary politics regardless of allegations of corruption shows that post-truth politics are prevalent in Pakistan

as well. The politicians conveniently dismiss the facts to permeate their agenda in public. Social media has emerged as a prominent tool to evoke emotional responses from the people through the use of rhetoric. The politicians also target their opponents on social media by deriding their policies and vision in their social media posts.

According to the results, the followers of major political parties also believe that what their favorite political leader says is based on truth. However, the majority of the respondents claimed that they often or sometimes check the veracity of the statements of the leader they follow, which shows the prevalence of participant political culture wherein the public is aware of major political issues and actively seeks knowledge about politics.

Recommendations

- Politicians should base their political statements on facts rather than rhetoric.
- The people should be more politically aware of gauging the authenticity of the statements of the politicians.
- The media should call out politicians for distorting facts.
- A fact-checking website should be made to verify the claims of the politicians.

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