

Political Upheaval in Pakistan and the Indexing of National Political Leaders in the Press



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Abstract: In April 2022, Pakistan went through another political and constitutional crisis. For the first time in Pakistan's history, a democratically elected Prime Minister was removed from office by a no-confidence motion. Although no Prime Minister could complete the constitutional five-year term due to the influential military and judicial interventions, this instance was unique in its kind. In Pakistan, the press produced political debates as much as political narratives. Drawing on the Indexing theory proposed by Lance Bennett (1990; 2016) this research is an effort to explore how to have the Dawn, The Express Tribune, The Nation, and The News International index Mr Imran Khan, Ms Maryam Nawaz, and Mr. Bilawal Bhutto during May to October 2022. It is pertinent to identify the key indexing elements within the news coverage of the selected political leaders by the selected newspapers. The results indicate that there is a considerable variation in the indexing of political figures across the selected newspapers, suggesting the presence of potential biases in their reporting.

Key Words: No-Confidence Motion, Regime Change, Political Upheaval, Indexing Theory, Imran Khan, Maryam Nawaz, Bilawal Bhutto

Introduction

Political Upheaval in Pakistan (May 2022 to Oct 2022)

The time span encompassing May 2022 to October 2022 in Pakistan is characterized by substantial political turmoil, which has extensive ramifications for the country's political framework. In April 2022, Pakistan went through another political and constitutional crisis. For the first time in Pakistan's history, a democratically elected Prime Minister was removed from office by a no-confidence motion. Although no Prime Minister could complete the constitutional five-year term due to the influential military and judicial interventions, this instance was

unique in its kind (Aljazeera, [2022](#) April 09; BBC, [2004](#) June 26; Javid, [2014](#)). The nation underwent a sequence of occurrences that resulted in a constitutional crisis, alterations in leadership, demonstrations, and societal turmoil, thereby engendering a politically charged and unpredictable atmosphere. The exacerbation of the government's challenges and the perception of political instability were fueled by the dissolution of the National Assembly, the ruling party's defeat in the Azad Kashmir elections, and the voluntary resignations of key government officials (Afzal, [2022](#)). The unfolding of these events occurred within the context of economic challenges, judicial disputes, and increasing security

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apprehensions, rendering it a pivotal period for Pakistan's political course.

The political upheaval during this period was instigated by the 2022 Pakistani Constitutional Crisis, which emerged as a significant event. The country's state of uncertainty was brought about by President Arif Alvi's choice to dissolve the National Assembly subsequent to the Deputy Speaker's refusal to conduct a motion of no-confidence against Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Prime Minister, Mr Khan, found himself in a delicate situation due to the increasing pressure from the opposition and internal disagreements within his own party, ultimately resulting in the initiation of a motion of no-confidence. Nevertheless, the decision to dissolve the National Assembly elicited extensive demonstrations and allegations of anti-democratic conduct, thereby intensifying the preexisting politically charged atmosphere (Zaman, 2022). The current crisis has prompted inquiries into the condition of democracy and governance in Pakistan and has sparked discussions regarding the government's approach to managing political opposition.

The inclusion of the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections in July 2022 introduced further intricacies to the political terrain of Pakistan. The electoral outcome in Azad Kashmir, wherein the opposition PML-N emerged victorious while the ruling PTI party, under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, suffered defeat, has been widely regarded as a notable setback for the incumbent government. The electoral outcomes exhibited an escalating discontentment with the governing party's performance and policies, thereby precipitating additional political upheaval. The resignation of the Finance Minister in August 2022, prompted by economic challenges such as inflation and economic instability, contributed to a prevailing atmosphere of instability and uncertainty regarding the government's economic policies (The Express Tribune, 2023 April 20). The convergence of political, economic, and leadership obstacles during this particular era engendered a profoundly charged and fluid political atmosphere that necessitated prudent manoeuvring and resilient governance.

Furthermore, Pakistan encountered security concerns, specifically in the province of Balochistan, alongside its internal challenges during the aforementioned period. The increasing levels of violence and deliberate assaults perpetrated by

separatist factions and insurgents against security forces and critical infrastructure have prompted apprehensions regarding the government's capacity to uphold stability and effectively counteract terrorism (Moorman, 2023). The aforementioned security challenges have contributed to the increased complexity of the political landscape, emphasizing the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach to effectively tackle both political and security concerns.

In Pakistan, the press produced political debates as much as political narratives. Drawing on the Indexing theory proposed by Lance Bennett (1990; 2016) this research is an effort to explore how to have the *Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, *The Nation*, and *The News International* index Mr Imran Khan, Ms Maryam Nawaz, and Mr. Bilawal Bhutto during May to October 2022. It is pertinent to identify the key indexing elements within the news coverage of the selected political leaders by the selected newspapers.

Literature Review

According to Lance Bennett's indexing theory, media coverage is shaped by the preferences and objectives of political and economic elites within society. The theory posits that media organizations have a tendency to reflect the viewpoints of individuals in positions of authority, prioritizing the coverage of events and topics that hold significance for the privileged few, while minimizing or disregarding matters that do not align with their vested interests. Numerous studies have provided empirical evidence in favour of employing indexing theory as a framework for comprehending media portrayal of political leaders. Additionally, in the specific context of Pakistan, it is plausible that the depiction of political leaders by the media could be subject to influence from the prevailing political climate and the vested interests of the ruling elite within the given timeframe. Research has indicated that during election periods, media organizations frequently prioritize the examination of political leaders' personalities and campaign strategies, thereby diverting attention away from the discourse surrounding their policies and qualifications (Aalberg, Strömbäck, & De Vreese, 2012). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the media frequently highlights the favourable qualities of political leaders, irrespective of any contentious policies or debatable performance (Bennett, 1990). The concept of "hero framing" can be understood within the framework of indexing theory, as it serves to strengthen the existing dominant elite

consensus and presents leaders in a positive manner in order to sustain public backing.

According to various research findings on media biases, newspapers that are controlled by people or groups with diverse political ties have a tendency to display partiality in their coverage. According to the findings of Gentzkow and Shapiro (2010), newspapers that are owned by conservatives are more likely to have a conservative bias, and newspapers that are owned by liberals are more likely to have a liberal bias. It has also been pointed out that the media has a tendency to have a negative attitude toward political scandals, with the majority of their attention being placed on instances of misconduct. According to Puglisi and Snyder (2011), this emphasis has the potential to harm the public's trust in politicians as well as in the political system as a whole. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), one method by which the media can affect public opinion is through the process of agenda-setting. This involves elevating or lowering the profile of particular issues in the eyes of the public. The impact of media is especially noteworthy during electoral periods, as it has the potential to shape public opinion and voting patterns through its coverage of political figures (Gentzkow Shapiro, 2010).

Moreover, the influence of online news sources on journalists' perception of credibility can also affect media coverage of political leaders. According to Grigore and Roman (2014), newspaper journalists generally perceive online news as having less credibility compared to traditional print or broadcast sources. The advent of digital news platforms presents journalists with difficulties in determining the credibility of online sources, which may have implications for the precision and impartiality of media reporting. The utilization of indexing theory in examining the representation of political leaders in Pakistani newspapers underscores the necessity of implementing media literacy initiatives and public awareness campaigns aimed at fostering the public's ability to engage in critical analysis of media narratives. The comprehension of the impact of media bias and indexing on public opinion can provide individuals with the ability to make well-informed choices and promote conscientious consumption of media. Subsequent investigations ought to delve into the correlation between media coverage and political attitudes across temporal dimensions, employing longitudinal studies as a means to evaluate the enduring consequences of media framing on public perception. Furthermore, comparative studies can

offer an analysis of the variations in media depiction of political leaders across diverse regions and demographic groups within Pakistan, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive comprehension of the matter.

Nyhan (2012) discusses the correlation between the media and political figures, citing "A Measure of Media Bias" (2005) by Tim Groseclose and Jeff Milyo. According to the study, the media exhibits a pronounced liberal bias in portraying political figures. The research employed an innovative metric of partiality referred to as the "Groseclose-Milyo Index" to assess and quantify the partiality exhibited by diverse media establishments. According to the study, most prominent news sources exhibit a pronounced liberal inclination, while Fox News is a notable exception, displaying a marked conservative inclination. The study revealed that a significant liberal bias was present in the coverage of the candidates by most major news outlets during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. The research discovered that the news above sources portrayed the Republican nominee unfavourably while favourably depicting the Democratic nominee. The assertion made by the user aligns with the conclusions drawn from Groseclose and Milyo's research, which posits that the media exhibits a pronounced liberal inclination in its portrayal of political figures.

The authors employ indexing theory to comprehend these trends, which posits that media organizations frequently conform their coverage to the perspectives and concerns of the government and other influential entities (Bennett, 1990). Bennett asserts that the depiction of Pakistani society by the mainstream U.S. media is prejudiced and functions to advance the interests of the U.S. government and financial elite rather than providing an accurate portrayal of the actual situation. The present study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature concerning the depiction of foreign cultures in media and the influence of media on the formation of societal attitudes towards foreign nations. Through an analysis of the media's depiction of Pakistani society, the authors offer valuable perspectives on how the portrayal of foreign nations by the U.S. media may be shaped by domestic priorities and the objectives of those in power. This study holds significance for policymakers and scholars who seek to comprehend the media's function in moulding public perception and exerting influence.

The topic of "Newspaper coverage of political scandals" has been extensively researched and analyzed in various scholarly studies and literature reviews. The research endeavours have centred on how the media reports on political improprieties and the consequential impact of such coverage on the general populace's perceptions and dispositions towards political figures and governance. A significant discovery in the scholarly literature regarding this subject matter is that media portrayal of political scandals tends to be more pessimistic than coverage of other political matters (Puglisi & Snyder, 2011). Numerous academic investigations have consistently revealed that the media portrays politicians and political parties implicated in scandals more unfavourably, frequently emphasizing malfeasance or impropriety rather than policy stances or other matters. The adverse portrayal of politicians and government in the media can potentially reduce public confidence, thereby posing detrimental implications for democratic societies.

A significant observation is that the magnitude and length of media attention towards political scandals can exhibit considerable fluctuations. Certain scandals garner significant media attention for an extended duration, whereas others are comparatively less covered or tend to lose public interest swiftly. Several factors can impact the magnitude and longevity of media coverage, such as the offence's gravity, the controversy's perceived significance, and the inclusion of visual or dramatic components. According to Puglisi and Snyder (2011), media coverage of a scandal may vary in intensity and duration depending on the severity of the misconduct or wrongdoing by a high-ranking politician compared to a less prominent politician involved in minor wrongdoing. Scholarly research about this subject matter has also recognized several variables that can impact the media's portrayal of political controversies. Several factors influence the coverage of a scandal by media outlets, including the outlet's political orientation, the event's perceived significance, and the accessibility of relevant information. Research has indicated that media sources exhibiting a higher degree of partisan inclination may exhibit a greater propensity to report on scandals involving politicians affiliated with the opposing party. Conversely, media sources with a more impartial stance may be more inclined to report on scandals involving politicians from both parties. Moreover, it is plausible that media organizations are inclined to report on scandals perceived as being more

noteworthy or possessing striking or theatrical components.

So, the available literature serves as a piece of evidence that the indexing of political leaders and politics in the newspapers is a worth studying topic. Therefore, considering the significance of the precarious political situation in Pakistan it is pertinent to explore how the leading newspapers in Pakistan index the political leaders during this situation.

The main research question of this study is; how have the *Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, *The Nation*, and *The News International* indexed Mr Imran Khan, Ms Maryam Nawaz, and Mr Bilawal Bhutto from May to October 2022? And, the basic objective of this research attempt is; to identify the key indexing elements within the news coverage of the selected political leaders by the selected newspapers during the time period under study.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Keeping in view the research question and the research objective, we have employed the Indexing theory as a theoretical and methodological framework to analyze the coverage of the selected newspapers regarding the selected political leaders of Pakistan. The theoretical framework of indexing, as posited by Lance Bennett (1990; 2016), offers a significant contribution to comprehending the influence of media coverage on public discourse and perceptions. According to this theoretical perspective, media entities have a tendency to align their coverage of events and matters with the dominant consensus among the elite in society. Within the scope of the present research paper, which is based on English newspapers in Pakistan, namely; *Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, *The Nation*, and *The News International*, during the time period from May 2022 to October 2022, the application of Indexing theory offers valuable insights into the potential impact of elite perspectives on media narratives and priorities during this specific timeframe.

Based on the tenets of Indexing theory, it can be observed that newspaper organizations have a tendency to reflect the diverse array of viewpoints and perspectives articulated by influential actors and institutions, including but not limited to political figures, governmental authorities, and prominent interest groups. The phenomenon of mirroring, commonly referred to as "indexing," is widely recognized in academic literature. The media has the potential to magnify the voices and viewpoints of individuals in

positions of authority, while simultaneously marginalizing or inadequately representing alternative perspectives that deviate from the dominant consensus held by the elite.

So, keeping in view the suitability of the indexing theoretical framework and considering the significance of the precarious political situation in Pakistan it is pertinent to explore how the leading newspapers in Pakistan index the political leaders during this situation.

Data Collection and Sampling

We have employed census sampling to get the data organized. After employing census sampling the researchers have found 80 news stories from *Dawn* newspaper, 68 news stories from *The Express Tribune* newspaper, 146 news stories from *The Nation* and 86 news stories from *The News International* during the time frame under study i.e. May 01, 2022, to October 31, 2022. We have organized the news stories in chronological order to apply systematic sampling to get an equal number of stories from the selected four newspapers. Since the data was huge and keeping in view the space limitations, researchers have selected five news stories from each newspaper. For that purpose, the researchers have selected every 16th story from *Dawn* newspaper, every 13th story from *The Express Tribune*, every 29th story from *The Nation* newspaper and every 17th news story from *The Nation* newspaper as a sample of the study. So, the total sample size is 20 news stories from the four newspapers.

Findings of the Study

Analysis of the Dawn

"Imran narrative spurned by opponents." *Dawn*, 2022 June 03.

By applying indexing theory to the hypothetical news titled "Imran narrative spurned by opponents" from *Dawn*, it is possible to discern that the news conveys a potentially unfavourable viewpoint. The phrase "Imran narrative spurned by opponents" implies that Imran Khan's opponents have dismissed or rebuffed his narrative or perspective. The aforementioned framing potentially portrays Imran Khan's narrative in a negative manner, emphasizing a dearth of acknowledgement or endorsement from his opponents (Khan & Yasin, 2022 June 01 p.1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that the news tends to exhibit a bias towards

negative content. The prioritization of adversaries disregarding Imran Khan's discourse suggests a repudiation or disregard of his concepts or assertions. The utilization of negative framing in the given context implies a possible obstacle to the credibility or influence of Imran Khan, thereby situating his narrative in an unfavourable light. Undertaking a thorough examination of the entirety of the news piece, encompassing its language, tone, and contextual elements, is crucial in ascertaining the news's overarching perspective within the context of indexing theory.

"Imran declares by-polls test of neutrality for power that be" *Dawn*, 2022 July 10.

Examining the theoretical news report. The news "Imran declares by-polls test of neutrality for power that is" as reported by *Dawn* can be analyzed through the lens of indexing theory, which suggests that it may indicate a purportedly impartial viewpoint. The utilization of the term "neutrality" implies a demand for impartial and equitable conduct from the governing authority in the context of the by-elections. The framing in question is not intrinsically associated with a favourable or unfavourable connotation, as its interpretation is contingent upon the circumstances and conduct of the governing authority (*Dawn*, 2022 July 10, p.1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that the news exhibits a tendency towards a neutral perspective. The statement made by Imran Khan regarding the by-polls being a measure of neutrality underscores the significance of unbiased and equitable behaviour from individuals occupying authoritative positions. The utilization of a neutral framing implies a presumption for impartial conduct and a preference for equitable conditions throughout the by-elections. Conducting a thorough analysis of the entirety of a news piece, which encompasses language, tone, and contextual factors, is crucial in order to accurately ascertain the news's overall perspective within the framework of indexing theory.

"Imran granted protective bail in a terror case" *Dawn*, 2022 August 23.

By applying indexing theory to the news "Imran granted protective bail in terror case" published in *Dawn*, it can be inferred that the news indicates a possibly impartial viewpoint. The terminology "protective bail" implies that Imran Khan has been granted bail as a safeguard against possible danger or

detention in connection with a case involving terrorism. The framing in question does not possess an inherently positive or negative connotation, as its interpretation is contingent upon the contextual and substantive elements of the particular case (Asad, 2022 August 23, p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that the news exhibits a tendency towards a neutral perspective. The statement emphasizes that Imran Khan has been granted bail in a terrorism case, implying a legal process associated with the issue. The utilization of neutral framing implies a presentation of the event in an objective manner, devoid of any explicit expression of positive or negative evaluation. Conducting a thorough analysis of the entirety of a news piece, which encompasses language, tone, and contextual factors, is crucial in accurately ascertaining the news's overall perspective within the framework of indexing theory.

"Maryam chides own government over leeway to Imran." *Dawn*, 2022 October 02.

By applying indexing theory to the news titled "Maryam chides own government over leeway to Imran" published in *Dawn*, it is possible to derive the conveyed perspective. The title of the news appears to adopt a critical stance by emphasizing Maryam's disapproval of her government's perceived leniency towards Imran. This statement suggests a sentiment of discontent or discordance towards the actions taken by the government (Tahir, 2022 October 02, p. 1).

From a critical standpoint, the news highlights Maryam's criticism of her government's decision to grant leniency to Imran. This suggests a discerning perspective towards the governmental determination or conduct concerning Imran Khan. The news tone may accentuate the negative viewpoint by emphasizing the possible inadequacies or incongruities in the government's strategy.

"Buoyed by polls success, Imran admits 'backchannel' is open." *Dawn*, 2022 October 18.

Utilizing indexing theory to examine the news "Buoyed by polls success, Imran admits 'backchannel' is open" published in *Dawn*, one can derive the conveyed perspective. The news's title and body imply that Imran Khan, subsequent to achieving electoral triumph, has recognized the presence of a covert communication conduit. This disclosure suggests the possibility of undisclosed negotiations or discussions

taking place in the background (Junaidi, 2022 Oct 18, p. 1).

From a neutral standpoint in terms of indexing, the news report provides readers with information regarding Imran Khan's admission of a backchannel. However, it refrains from expressing any overtly positive or negative sentiment. The statement presents information in an objective manner without overtly expressing either approval or disapproval of Imran Khan's admission.

Analysis of The Express Tribune

"US wants 'expend ties' with Pakistan, Blinken assures Bilawal." *The Express Tribune*, 2022 May 19.

Utilizing indexing theory to scrutinize *The Express Tribune's* news titled "US wants 'expend ties' with Pakistan, Blinken assures Bilawal," it can be inferred that the news implies that Antony Blinken, the Secretary of State of the United States, has provided assurance to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, a notable political personality, regarding the US's intention to enhance its relationship with Pakistan. The document is expected to furnish particulars concerning the character of the assurance, any particular domains of collaboration deliberated upon, and the probable consequences for the two-way association between the United States and Pakistan (Yousa, 2022 May 19, p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that news media tends to convey a positive outlook. The title suggests that the United States is seeking to enhance its connections with Pakistan, thereby implying a favourable assessment of the partnership. The terminology employed in *The News International*, specifically the usage of the word "assures," connotes a favourable attitude towards the assurance proffered by Blinken to Bilawal. Nonetheless, a thorough examination of the complete news report, encompassing both its substance and manner, is imperative to validate the overarching viewpoint communicated.

"Imran insists the US orchestrated his ouster from power." *The Express Tribune*, 2022 July 02.

Utilizing indexing theory to scrutinize the news entitled "Imran insists the US orchestrated his ouster from power" published in *The Express Tribune*, it can be inferred that Imran Khan, a notable political personality, persists in his conviction that the United States was involved in his expulsion from authority. The forthcoming news is expected to expound on

Imran Khan's assertions, the evidence he presents to support his claims, any particular incidents or actions he emphasizes, and the potential ramifications for the diplomatic ties between Pakistan and the United States (Shehzad, [2022](#) July 02, p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that news media tends to convey a negative perspective. The title connotes a notion of imputation or collusion as Imran Khan maintains that his removal from authority was engineered by the United States, indicating an unfavourable assessment of outside intervention or control. The terminology employed in *The News International*, specifically the usage of the word "orchestrated," suggests a perception of intentional efforts directed towards the removal of Imran Khan from his current position. Nonetheless, a thorough examination of the complete news report, encompassing both its substance and manner, is imperative to ascertain the complete scope of the unfavourable viewpoint expressed.

"Gill subjected to sexual abuse, Imran." *The Express Tribune*, 2022 August 20.

Utilizing indexing theory to scrutinize the news titled "Gill subjected to sexual abuse, Imran" as reported by *The Express Tribune*, it can be inferred that the news conveys that an individual named Gill has been a victim of sexual abuse, and there may be a possible association or involvement of another individual named Imran in the incident. The document is expected to furnish particulars concerning the accusations, any substantiating evidence or witnesses, and the possible ramifications for both Gill and Imran (Shehzad, [2022](#) August 20, p. 1).

Drawing a definitive conclusion regarding the perspective of indexing theory based solely on the news can be a challenging task. Considering the gravity and delicacy of sexual abuse, it is rational to infer that the media may present an unfavourable viewpoint. The act of sexual abuse is widely regarded as morally reprehensible, and the title suggests that Gill has experienced negative consequences as a result of it. Additional examination of the aforementioned subject matter, encompassing its substance, presentation, and manner, is imperative to determine the comprehensive viewpoint and its correlation with a pessimistic, optimistic, or impartial position regarding the matter at hand.

"Maryam demands raid on Banigala to recover cipher." *The Express Tribune*, 2022 October 02.

Utilizing indexing theory to scrutinize the news titled "Maryam demand raid on Banigala to recover cipher" published in *The Express Tribune*, it can be inferred that the news implies Maryam Nawaz has advocated for a search and seizure operation to be conducted in Banigala, a locality primarily used for residential purposes, with the objective of recovering a concealed document or cipher. The aforementioned source is expected to furnish comprehensive information pertaining to Maryam's request, the underlying rationale, and the possible ramifications of the proposed operation (Khan, 2022 October 02. p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it is possible for the news to convey a negative perspective. The utilization of the phrase "demand raid" connotes a coercive measure or incursion into Banigala, which may be perceived as an invasive or contentious tactic. The reference to the retrieval of a cipher connotes a clandestine or conceivably indictable manuscript, which could insinuate unfavourable consequences for the parties concerned. Nonetheless, it is imperative to conduct a thorough examination of the complete news coverage, encompassing its substance, framing, and demeanour, in order to ascertain the precise viewpoint being conveyed.

"Maryam's exoneration may pave the way for Nawaz's acquittal." *The Express Tribune*, 2022 October 28.

Utilizing indexing theory to scrutinize the news titled "Maryam's exoneration may pave way for Nawaz acquittal" published in *The Express Tribune*, it can be inferred that the title implies the absolution of Maryam Nawaz, which may serve as a precursor to the absolution of Nawaz Sharif. The document is expected to furnish particulars regarding Maryam's exoneration, the possible ramifications for Nawaz's case, and the legal or political aftermaths stemming from this advancement (Shehzad, [2022](#) October 28, p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it is possible for news to convey a positive perspective. The utilization of the term "exoneration" connotes a positive resolution for Maryam Nawaz, indicating that she has been absolved of accusations. The reference to this exoneration potentially serving as a precursor to Nawaz's absolution denotes a favourable progression in his legal predicament. A thorough examination of the complete news report, encompassing its substance, presentation, and

attitude, is imperative to ascertain the precise perspective conveyed.

Analysis of The Nation

"Imran has virtually destroyed the country's economy, Maryam." *The Nation*, 2022 May 18.

From an indexing theory standpoint, the news "Imran has virtually destroyed the country's economy, Maryam" implies that both Imran Khan and Maryam Nawaz are being highlighted in the news. The focus of the analysis is on the prominence given to these individuals within the context of the news. The title emphasizes the statement made by Maryam Nawaz, portraying her as a significant individual with a crucial perspective on the economic effects of Imran Khan's leadership on the nation (*The Nation*, 2022 May 18, p.1).

The available data suggest that the news may be construed as exhibiting a pessimistic outlook from the vantage point of indexing theory. The statement made by Maryam Nawaz can be interpreted as a strong critique of Imran Khan's economic policies and their purported adverse impact on *The national* economy. *The nation's* prominent inclusion of the accusation against Imran Khan's economic performance serves to highlight a negative perspective. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that obtaining a comprehensive evaluation of the news's overall perspective is a difficult task in the absence of a thorough examination of its tone, framing techniques, and accompanying context.

"NA condemns Imran's anti-state remarks." *The Nation*, 2022 June 07.

From an indexing theory standpoint, the news "NA condemns Imran's anti-state remarks" implies that The National Assembly's censure of Imran Khan's purportedly anti-state comments is receiving significant attention in the news. The news underscores The National Assembly's collective expression of disapproval and portrays it as a central entity denouncing Imran Khan's statements (Javed-ur-Rehman, 2022 June 07, p.1).

The available data suggest that the news may be construed as possessing a potentially unfavourable outlook from the vantage point of indexing theory. The reference to condemnation connotes a forceful denunciation of Imran Khan's purported statements that are perceived to be against the state. The news

appears to adopt a critical perspective towards Imran Khan, highlighting the widespread disapproval expressed by The National Assembly. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that obtaining a comprehensive evaluation of the news's overarching viewpoint is difficult in the absence of a thorough examination of its tone, framing techniques, and accompanying context.

"Marriyum castigates Imran for demanding CEC's resignation." *The Nation*, 2022 July 20.

By applying indexing theory to the news titled "Marriyum castigates Imran for demanding CEC's resignation" from *The nation*, it can be inferred that the news highlights Marriyum's disapproval of Imran Khan's call for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to step down. The utilization of specific language and the ascription of the critique to Marriyum conveys a pessimistic viewpoint regarding the actions of Imran Khan. Through the act of emphasizing Marriyum's castigation, the speaker seeks to underscore her perspective and elevate her status as a significant participant in the discourse (*The Nation*, 2022 July 20, p.1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that the news media tends to present a negative outlook. The employment of the term "castigates" implies a forceful and discerning evaluation of Imran Khan's request for the resignation of the CEC, denoting an unfavourable categorization of his determination or methodology. Nonetheless, in order to precisely ascertain the comprehensive viewpoint of *The News International*, it is imperative to take into account the substance, manner, framing methodologies, and contextual elements encompassed within the entirety of the piece.

"Imran links political situation with army chief appointment." *The Nation*, 2022 August 20.

Using indexing theory to analyze the news "Imran links political situation with army chief appointment" from *The Nation*, we can see that Imran Khan connects the political environment to the selection of the army chief. This verbiage highlights Imran Khan's viewpoint on the connection between politics and the nomination of the army chief and indexes him as a central actor. The highlights Imran Khan's impact and viewpoint on this topic by putting him as the subject of the news and stressing his opinions (Niaz, 2022 July 20, p.1).

According to indexing theory, the news appears to be delivering an unbiased viewpoint. The news reports Imran Khan's statement without specifically giving it a favourable or unfavourable review. It emphasizes his viewpoint on the relationship between the political climate and the nomination of the army chief, which is open to interpretation or analysis. However, a thorough examination of the news content, tone, framing strategies, and supporting context is crucial to completely grasp the news' overall perspective.

"IHC CJ shows concern over Imran's remarks about COAS." *The Nation*, 2022 September 06.

By applying indexing theory to *The Nation's* news titled "IHC CJ shows concern over Imran's remarks about COAS," it becomes apparent that the primary emphasis is on the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court expressing apprehension regarding Imran Khan's comments about the Chief of Army Staff (COAS). The news underscores the response of the Chief Justice (CJ) to Imran Khan's statements and frames it as a subject of apprehension. *The nation* highlights the importance of Imran Khan's statements and their potential implications on the judiciary, as well as the dynamic between the executive and military factions of the government, by emphasizing the Chief Justice's response (Rao, 2022 September 06, p. 1).

From an indexing theory standpoint, it can be argued that the news carries a negative connotation. The statement emphasizes the Chief Justice's apprehension, suggesting that Imran Khan's comments regarding the Chief of Army Staff had the potential to be problematic or unsuitable. The emphasis placed on the response of the Chief Justice (CJ) implies that the judiciary regards such statements with gravity and prompts inquiries into their potential ramifications. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that conducting a thorough evaluation of the news' overarching viewpoint is a complex task in the absence of a deeper examination of its tone, framing strategies, and contextual factors.

Analysis of The News International

"Imran calls by-elections as a test of neutrality for power." *The News International*, 2022 July 10.

Examining the speculative news using indexing theory, we can see that the title "Imran declares by-polls test of neutrality for power that is" from *The News International* indexes a possibly neutral perspective.

The term "neutrality" implies a request for fair and unbiased behaviour from the "powers that be" during the by-elections. This framing does not have an inherent good or negative connotation because it is dependent on the context and acts of the power that be (Rizwan, 2022 July 10, p. 1).

From the standpoint of indexing theory, the news can be considered as leaning towards neutrality. Imran Khan's assertion that the by-elections will be a test of neutrality highlights the significance of impartiality and fairness from those in positions of power. The neutral framing implies an expectation of impartial behaviour and a desire for a level playing field during the by-elections. To accurately evaluate the news's overall perspective within the framework of indexing theory, a full analysis of the entire, including language, tone, and contextual variables, is required.

"Sherry slams Imran 'two-faced' approach toward US" *The News International*, 2022 August 19.

By employing indexing theory, we can interpret the conveyed perspective of the news titled "Sherry slams Imran 'two-faced' approach toward US" from *The News*. According to reports, Sherry has expressed her disapproval of Imran's approach towards the United States, characterizing it as "two-faced." The source presumably offers additional information regarding Sherry's critique and the contextual background of Imran's methodology (Alvi, 2022 August 18, p. 1).

From an impartial indexing standpoint, the news presents Sherry's criticism in an objective manner, refraining from expressing any positive or negative stance. The passage provides an account of Sherry's comments and her portrayal of Imran's stance towards the United States as being duplicitous.

The news may be interpreted as presenting a pessimistic viewpoint, as Sherry's utilization of the term "two-faced" conveys a significant criticism of Imran's approach. The statement implies that Sherry expresses discontent with Imran's approach to managing diplomatic ties with the United States, while also alleging that he displays inconsistency or hypocrisy in his actions.

"IMF charges Imran govt with fiscal indiscipline." *The News International*, 2022 September 03.

By employing indexing theory, we can interpret the perspective conveyed in the news titled "IMF charges Imran govt with fiscal indiscipline" from *The News*. According to recent reports, the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) has made allegations of fiscal indiscipline against the Imran Khan administration. Continue reading for an investigation into the specific allegations made by the IMF and background information on the fiscal policy of the administration, as reported by the press (Haider, 2022 September 03, p.1).

When viewed from the point of view of indexing theory, it is possible to assert that news reports almost always adopt a negative tone. The tenor and choice of words used in the media give the impression that the International Monetary Fund has a negative opinion of the way the Imran Khan administration has managed the nation's finances. It is likely that the document will include specifics that lend validity to the allegations of fiscal irresponsibility that have been made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These specifics may include direct comments from IMF officials or supporting proof.

As a result, a pessimistic outlook is taken when the indexing theory framework is applied to the reporting of the news. The assertions that the IMF has made against the government are reiterated in the statement, which can be regarded as a criticism of the fiscal policies that have been implemented by the administration of Imran Khan.

"Imran offers belated apology before IHC." *The News International*, 2022 September 23.

The news titled "Imran offers belated apology before IHC" from *The News* can be analyzed through the lens of indexing theory. It indicates that Imran Khan, a prominent political figure, has presented an apology before the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Notably, this apology appears to have been made after a certain period of delay or at a subsequent stage. The document is expected to offer comprehensive information regarding the circumstances surrounding the apology, the factors contributing to the delay, and the potential ramifications for the ongoing legal proceedings (*The News International*, 2022 August 03, p.1).

From the standpoint of indexing theory, it can be argued that news media has the potential to convey a neutral perspective. The utilization of phrases such as "belated apology" suggests that the act of apologizing occurred after the anticipated or appropriate timeframe. Nevertheless, the neutral standpoint is evident through the lack of explicit favourable or unfavourable implications in the news.

"Bilawal never approached USE for Arshad Sharif extradition; FO." *The News International*, 2022 October 30.

The news titled "Bilawal never approached USE for Arshad Sharif extradition; FO" from *The News* can be analyzed using indexing theory. According to *The News International*, the Foreign Office (FO) has made a statement asserting that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, a prominent political figure, did not make any attempts to approach the United States of America (USA) regarding the extradition of Arshad Sharif, who is presumably a person of interest. The document is expected to offer additional details regarding the background of the Foreign Office's statement, any prior assertions or conjectures, and the ramifications for the process of extradition (Baabar, 2022 August 03, p.1).

From the standpoint of indexing theory, it can be argued that news media has the potential to convey a neutral perspective. Without expressing any opinion one way or the other, the news article offers the Foreign Office's position on Bilawal's extradition request from the United States. The writer must remain objective throughout, providing only the facts about the FO's statement and its background without presenting an opinion either way.

Discussion and Conclusion

The investigation was carried out within the framework of indexing theory, which holds that media coverage is determined by the tastes and aspirations of a society's political and economic leaders. The results suggest that the selected newspapers' portrayal of political events and personalities during the time period under study exhibited a wide range of perspectives and frequently exhibited a biased inclination. The coverage of the then Prime Minister Imran Khan in the *Dawn* newspaper often exhibits a tendency towards negative connotations. The news articles frequently emphasized the critiques voiced by his adversaries, thereby raising concerns regarding the veracity of his narrative and the efficacy of his policies. In contrast, *The Express Tribune* provided a combination of favourable and unfavourable coverage regarding Imran Khan, contingent upon the particular matter at hand. Nevertheless, both newspapers exhibited a clear emphasis on individual leaders such as Imran Khan and Maryam Nawaz, underscoring their notable roles within the political sphere.

The Nation newspaper appeared to adopt a discernibly critical perspective towards the government led by Imran Khan, emphasizing allegations and critiques put forth by opposition figures. Furthermore, the aforementioned incident brought attention to the reaction of the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court towards Imran Khan's statements regarding the Chief of Army Staff, thereby emphasizing the significance of the judiciary's perspective on such issues. In contrast, *The News International* presented a diverse array of viewpoints, spanning from impartial to critical. The article discusses the allegations of fiscal indiscipline made by the International Monetary Fund against the government led by Imran Khan, highlighting a critical assessment. However, *The News* also reported on Imran Khan's apology before the Islamabad High Court in a manner that refrained from conveying explicit positive or negative sentiments. While, *The News International* presents a neutral viewpoint toward Bilawal Bhutto Zardari focusing on providing objective and factual information, without displaying any overt bias or preference.

In conclusion, the utilization of indexing theory in the examination of news stories yields significant perspectives on the depiction of political events and leaders in Pakistan by the selected newspapers within the specified period. The results indicate that there is considerable variation in the media portrayal of political figures across various newspapers, suggesting the presence of potential biases in their reporting. The *Dawn* newspaper exhibited a tendency to prioritize the examination of unfavourable aspects pertaining to political leaders, with a particular emphasis on Prime

Minister Imran Khan. In order to accomplish this, the government focused attention on the many difficulties that the administration was having to deal with and emphasized the criticisms that were being levelled by the opposition. *The Express Tribune* presented a more objective point of view by demonstrating greater objectivity when it gave Imran Khan and other lawmakers a comprehensive profile that covered both positive and bad characteristics. *The Nation* has shown an obvious propensity toward adopting an anti-government attitude by devoting a greater amount of space to the charges and critiques voiced by the opposition. On the other side, *The News International* offered a combination of news that was positive, negative, and impartial. While some news articles covered events and remarks in a more objective manner, others offered critical analyses of the occurrences.

By applying indexing theory, we were able to acquire a more in-depth understanding of how political elites generate media narratives, which in turn influence how the general public sees and reacts to political events. The findings bring to light the importance of doing critical analyses of the media as well as the requirement for a landscape within the media that embraces and values a wide diversity of voices and ideas while also questioning the status quo. It is essential to point out, however, that both the sample size and the amount of time allotted for this inquiry are very limited. It is necessary to conduct additional study and analysis in order to get a more in-depth grasp of the trends and biases that are present in media coverage across a variety of media platforms and over a longer period of time.

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