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Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Government through the Lense of Print Media: Exploring the Predominant Narratives

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Abstract

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was a significant political alliance formed in 2020, comprising major opposition parties in Pakistan. The PDM came into power as a result of a 'no-confidence-motion' (NCM) against the then Prime Minister Mr Imran Khan in April 2022. The NCM and its consequences are very interesting given the fact that this 'political move' was very first of its kind in the history of Pakistan which resulted in the toppling of a democratically elected PM. The move and its subsequent political result i.e. the formation of the PDM government received a variety of coverage in the media. This study is an attempt to explore the coverage of PDM government-related issues by dailies The Dawn and The News International from February 2022 to August 2022. This research is an attempt to determine and analyze the predominant narratives produced by the selected newspapers regarding the PDM government in their editorials.

Keywords: PDM, No-Confidence-Motion, Imran Khan, Content Analysis, Framing

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Title

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Government through the Lense of Print Media: Exploring the Predominant Narratives

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Abstract

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was a significant political alliance formed in 2020, comprising major opposition parties in Pakistan. The PDM came into power as a result of a 'no-confidence-motion' (NCM) against the then Prime Minister Mr Imran Khan in April 2022. The NCM and its consequences are very interesting given the fact that this 'political move' was very first of its kind in the history of Pakistan which resulted in the toppling of a democratically elected PM. The move and its subsequent political result i.e. the formation of the PDM government received a variety of coverage in the media. This study is an attempt to explore the coverage of PDM government-related issues by dailies *The Dawn* and *The News International* from February 2022 to August 2022. This research is an attempt to determine and analyze the predominant narratives produced by the selected newspapers regarding the PDM government in their editorials.

Keywords: [PDM](#), [No-Confidence-Motion](#), [Imran Khan](#), [Content Analysis](#), [Framing](#)

Introduction

The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was a significant political alliance formed in 2020, comprising major opposition parties in Pakistan. Each party within the coalition brought its own leadership and key figures to the forefront,

contributing to the collective efforts of the PDM (Kugelmann, 2023). A key party in the coalition was the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), which was nominally led by Shahbaz Shareef but was ultimately subordinate to Nawaz Sharif. Three times as Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif had a major impact on the PDM's goals and narrative



(Arab News, 2023). With the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) gave the PDM a historical legacy. The son of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, was instrumental in defining the party's position inside the partnership.

The Awami National Party (ANP), headed by Asfandiyar Wali Khan, brought his seasoned leadership to bear on issues pertaining to democracy and administration on behalf of Pashtun interests inside the PDM. Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F) gave the PDM a religious-political component. An important factor in rallying support and outlining the alliance's objective was the political and religious experience of Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman. Mahmood Khan Achakzai is the leader of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), which advocates for the rights of the Pashtun community in the province of KPK. Mahmood Khan Achakzai contributed to the PDM's efforts to address regional concerns and promote democratic values. Focusing on the representation of Balochistan, the Balochistan National Party (BNP), led by Sardar Akhtar Mengal, contributed to the alliance's efforts to address issues specific to the Balochistan region (Rais, 2022). Later it has been seen many times that the political landscape changes and no one is permanently a friend or enemy in politics.

The primary objective of the PDM was to challenge the government led by Imran Khan (Pakistan Country Report, 2022). The alliance aimed to dismiss the government with having the narrative to improve the current economic instability of Pakistan. Although the PDM government was not an active political party by itself, as it is led by many political parties it aimed to look for the easy towards its governance (Mahar et.al 2021). It has a clear narrative against the PTI government's policies and decisions. It aimed for electoral reforms and aimed to conduct free and fair elections (Cookman, 2022). The PDM-led movement gained attention for its attempts to unite diverse opposition forces under a common banner, reflecting discontent with the incumbent government's performance (Hussain, 2023).

As evident from the history different parties were not inclined to do their rework in the best interest, so they moved towards the agenda (Sulehria, 2022).

While the alliance aimed for a collective opposition against the PTI, differences in strategies and priorities sometimes led to fractures within the PDM. The overall aims and agenda of PDM were therefore not clear (Kugelman, 2023). The movement strategically organized public rallies, impassioned addresses by key leaders, and tactical political manoeuvres to effectively communicate its narrative to the masses. However, PDM faced many problems due to internal disharmony on many levels. It was evident that every party rolling in PDM has its own merits and demerits of joining PDM. Therefore, their consensus was not always supported. Print media emerged as a powerful force in shaping and disseminating the narrative of the PDM (Strikingly, 2023). Newspapers have always been central to the role that narrative building plays (Hussain, 2023). Many reporters and journalists took the battle from the front foot to extract the dismissal of the PTI government and PDM's objectives within the broader political landscape.

Print media outlets' editorial environments have developed into active forums for the expression of many viewpoints on the PDM (Mahnoor, 2023). Editorials and essays explored the movement's political ramifications and provided a platform for specialists and important PDM personalities to express their opinions. This multipronged strategy not only enhanced the national conversation but also gave rise to a thorough grasp of the PDM's effects. Through opinion pieces and letters to the editor, public participation was encouraged, enabling residents to actively shape the story around the PDM (Zaid, 2016).

Direct communication between the people and the media emphasized the democratic nature of the conversation and reflected the range of viewpoints and emotions that were the symbiotic relationship between the PDM, and the media remained important to the democratic discourse as the movement continued to traverse the difficulties of Pakistani politics (Waseem, 2022). Print media narratives not only reflected the fluid character of politics but also had a significant impact on public opinion and perception (Happer & Philo, 2013). Comprehending the complex interaction between the PDM and the media is crucial in order to grasp the wider political terrain and the dynamic

storylines that mould Pakistan's democratic dialogue.

The following are the research questions of this study;

- How did the selected newspapers portray the PDM government during the time period under study?
- What issues did the selected newspapers highlight the most during the PDM government time in their editorials?

The following are the research objectives of this study;

- To explore the coverage of PDM government-related issues by the selected newspapers.
- To determine and analyze the predominant narratives produced by the selected newspapers regarding the PDM government in their editorials.

Literature Review

The main opposition parties in the nation got together to form the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), which was formally established on September 20, 2020. Demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his cabinet was the coalition's main goal (Almeida, 2022). To take on the administration, the opposition parties unveiled a three-phased "action plan" (Dawn.com, 2020).

October of the same year marked the start of the action plan's first phase, which included planning public gatherings, protests, and rallies around the nation in December. After the Senate elections, the opposition organized a "decisive long march" toward Islamabad ("Pakistan's Opposition Alliance Announces No-Confidence Motion against Government"). That was the result of their operations. The main opposition parties in the nation got together to form the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), which was formally established on September 20, 2020. Demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his cabinet was the coalition's main goal (Almeida, 2022).

To take on the administration, the opposition parties unveiled a three-phased "action plan" (Dawn.com, 2020). October of the same year marked the start of the action plan's first phase, which included planning public gatherings, protests, and rallies around the nation in December.

After the Senate elections, the opposition organized a "decisive long march" toward Islamabad ("Pakistan's Opposition Alliance Announces No-Confidence Motion against Government"). That was the result of their operations.

The PDM parties signed a 26-point declaration that was put up as a resolution to formally state their position. Among the demands was an end to political meddling by the establishment and the holding of fresh, free, and fair elections following the implementation of electoral reforms without the use of the armed forces or intelligence services. The National Action Plan against Terrorism, the release of political prisoners, the dropping of cases against journalists, the acceleration of projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the establishment of universal accountability through a new accountability law were among the other demands ("Opposition parties form an alliance to oust govt," 2020).

A previous study that looked at the hybrid democracy under the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) from 2022 to 2023 revealed intricate relationships between the military and the civilian population as well as covert military actions. The results point to an authoritarian and unstable system that causes economic crises and stifles opposition, which presents serious obstacles to Pakistan's democracy in the future (Katohar, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory is quite popular for communication research studies. It assists researchers in understanding how real-life events are portrayed in the media discourse. It investigates the relationship between stakeholders and the media. Framing is done through the size and placement of a news item, through the narrative form and tone of the presentation, and through particular details included in the media coverage. Framing involves selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them prominent in the communication text. Framing theory explains the mechanism adopted by the elite press in Pakistan during the War on Terrorism to understand the treatment given by the English Press of Pakistan. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). We can find frames in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. Vreese defines Frame-building to be done within the text by interaction

between the elites, journalists and social movements and then frame-setting occurs through further interaction between the frames and the individual's pre-dispositions.

Iyengar (1991) articulates that frames may be classified into two types. Thematic frames provide insight into the context, focus on the general trends, and describe the key role in this process. Episodic frames emphasize solid situations and events and the responsibility is set to the individuals. Generic frames are on general topics while issue-specific frames are on specific topics. They have no limitations on the theme. They are identified by different topics in cultural contexts and time. For example; conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. The US media coverage is defined by their foreign policy and controlled by the government (Merrill, 1995). Framing is like the second level of agenda setting where one aspect is highlighted while the other is dismissed.

Both theories are based on the message transferal model of media effects. Individuals learn about society from the media. It impacts their perception and knowledge. The other information such as prior knowledge, interpersonal communication and experiences impact the process. Discussing the issues highlighted by the media with people provides a second exposure. Sometimes issues not mentioned in the news are discussed. Resultantly, the effect of Agenda-setting weakens. All media contains salience cues. Media uses cues to make a topic important in the eyes of the public. It defines issues that are important and what factors are important for evaluation.

These theories are based on memory activation which makes the activation model of media effects relevant (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). The memory is activated based on the importance of the issue which is proportional to the frequency of exposure and cues in the media. In Priming, there is a disconnection between news coverage and memory activation. Individuals are concerned with the most recent relevant information they can find in their memory lane.

So, keeping in view the suitability of this theory with the scope and objectives of this study, we have employed

framing theory as the theoretical underpinning of this study.

Research Design and Methodology:

Data Collection

The researchers have selected the following editorials as a unit of analysis from *Dawn* for this research paper, the editorials are included:

- SC vs PDM (Published April 14, 2023)
- Election dates (Published on April 28, 2023)
- Politics of Vengeance (Published on April 30, 2023)
- Control. pk (published on July 28, 2023)

The researchers have selected the following editorials as a unit of analysis from *The News International* for this research paper, the editorials are included:

- PDM legacy (August 10, 2023)
- Relief galore (May 13, 2023)
- PDM's troubles (Feb 22, 2023)
- Timely elections (June 7, 2023)

Four editorials from each newspaper have been selected randomly as a sample among the editorials published in these newspapers from February 2023 to August 2023 regarding the PDM government. Initially, we found 23 and 31 editorials published in the *Dawn* and *The News International* respectively having the keyword 'PDM' during the time period under study. However, after data cleansing, we found out that these selected four editorials actually discussed various aspects of and issues related to the PDM and its subsequent government. So, all four editorials from each newspaper have been selected as a sample of this study.

Data Analysis

A procedure that is designed to analyze the information that has been recorded is known as content analysis (Walizer & Wienir, 1978). For measuring the variable, communication is analyzed in an objective, systematic, and quantitative manner and this technique is known as content analysis (Kerlinger's, 2000).

According to the above definition, there are three concepts associated with the content analysis. First of all, analyzing the data in a systematic manner

means there must be some clearly defined rules according to which data is selected for the analysis and all the data and content that is selected for the analysis is considered of the same importance and same set of procedure and guideline is used throughout the analysis process (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

Then the content is analyzed objectively means that the findings of the analysis must not be based on the personal hunches and feelings of the writer and the results of the analysis should be the same even if the study is recreated by another writer (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Lastly, the content analysis should be quantitative meaning that the body of the message should be represented accurately, and it should be the goal of the content analysis. For pursuing precision in the process, quantification plays a vital role (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

The content analysis is used for different purposes in different sectors. Following are some of the purposes for which content analysis is used (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013):

- To identify what exists within a certain study, research, or communication.
- To understand the relationship between the source and the message conveyed or produced by the content.
- To compare the actual situations of real life with the phenomena, traits, or characteristics described in the study.
- To analyze how a certain group of societies or minorities are portrayed by the media and how the media changes its policies for those certain groups.

So, keeping in view the relevance and suitability of the content analysis as a methodology with the scope and objectives of this study, we have employed it qualitatively in this study.

Findings and Analysis

The following pages contain the analysis of the editorials taken from *Dawn*:

Editorial number 01; “SC vs PDM”: This editorial discusses Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial's actions regarding the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill which was passed by PDM. The formation of an eight-member bench and the

subsequent decision on the anticipatory injunction are highlighted. This section also mentions criticism of Chief Justice Bandial for being perceived as arbitrary and attempts to diversify the perspectives on benches. The chief justice's direct engagement with state officials for the Punjab elections matter emphasizes the possibility of charging the federal government with contempt for disobeying the apex court's deadline. There is a reference to the escalating standoff between the federal government and the Supreme Court.

This section of the editorial consists of 423 words. Where 33 expressions are against the PDM and 24 are in the favor of PDM. Quantitatively there are 33 words which have been used against the PDM. “Arbitrary”, “criticism”, “too regularly”, “too arbitrary”, “criticism”, “unapologetic”, “stand-off”, “uglier turn”, “crisis”, “refuse to act”, “climb the escalation ladder”, “toxic”, “crisis”, “protracted”, “rigid elements”, “hardliners”, “nothing to do with”, “inching towards”, “perpetual instability”, “destructive politics of vengeance”, “poison the atmosphere”, “unwarranted show of brute force”, “terror charges”, “pretense of the rule of law”, “flimsy pretexts”, “hounded”, “revenge politics”, “perpetual instability”, “selfish, bare-knuckle”. Moreover, it contains following expressions in favour of PDM i.e., “negotiated solution”, “successful vote of confidence”, “rump parliament”, “defuse the ticking time bomb”, “democratic solution”, “impasse”, “flexibility”, “respond in kind”, “parliament alone has the mandate”, “operating in legal limbo”, “early polls”, “democratic solution”, “impasse”, “negotiated settlement”, “powerful quarters”, “answer to the people”, “swift and condemnatory”, “economic turnaround hope”, “growth in the country's nascent IT industry”, and “empower the industry”.

Editorial number 02; “Election dates”: It discusses the chain of events linked to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's vote of confidence, the Supreme Court's hearing of the elections delay case, and the meeting between PTI and PDM representatives. Reference is made to the political atmosphere being toxic over the past year and the hope for a negotiated solution to the constitutional and political crises. The editorial emphasizes the need for democratic solutions, mentioning the rigidity within the PDM and the importance of finding a way out of the impasse. There's a suggestion for both sides to find

a democratic solution and highlights the legal limbo of caretaker governments in KP and Punjab.

This editorial contains 361 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is seven, whereas eight expressions are against PDM. Moreover, five expressions have been used as neutral concerns. There are expressions such as "Political atmosphere", "Negotiated solution", "Baby steps", "Democratic solution" and "Recovery" used which could be considered Neutral expressions. Moreover, there are the following expressions "Negotiated solution", "Successful vote of confidence", "Democratic solution", "Parliament alone has the mandate", "Caretaker governments", "Legal limbo", and "Early polls" used in favour of PDM. Furthermore, there are following expressions used "Ticking time bomb", "Rigid elements", "Hardliners", "Nothing to do with PTI", "Insist", "Extra-constitutional means", "Politicians will have to answer to the people" against PDM.

Editorial number 03; "Politics of vengeance": The editorial contains 407 words. Upon analysis, the number of expressions in favour of PDM is five, whereas nine expressions are against PDM. Moreover, eleven expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The positive discourse in this section includes "Wholesale Witch-Hunt", "Pretense of the Rule of Law", "Demonstrating Maturity", "Consolidate the Country's Future" and "Civility in the Political Environment". While the negative discourse in this section includes "Destructive Politics of Vengeance", "Unwarranted Show of Brute Force", "Arrests on Flimsy Pretexes", "Heavy-Handed Tactics", "Existential Tussle", "Eliminated from the Political Arena", "Selfish, Bare-Knuckle Revenge Politics", "Temptation of Paying Back in the Same Coin" and "Chosen a Path of Perpetual Instability". Moreover, the neutral discourse in this section includes "Anti-Corruption Establishment and Punjab Police Officials", "Armored Vehicle", "Main Gate of PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi's Residence", "Pre-Arrest Bail in a Corruption Case", "New Case and Terror Charges", "Pretense of the Rule of Law in the Government's Conduct", "Heavy Machinery to Break Into Imran Khan's Residence", "Detained for Months by NAB Without Evidence", "Hounded Through the Courts on Various Charges", "Style of Politics in the 1990s" and "Contributed to the Downfall of Several Elected Governments".

Editorial number 04; "Control.pk": The focus is on criticizing two bills, namely the 'Personal Data Protection Bill' and 'E-Safety Bill,' approved by the federal cabinet. The editorial consists of 349 words. The number of expressions in favour of the PDM government is nine, whereas eighteen expressions are against the PDM government. Moreover, sixteen expressions showed neutral concern. Qualitative Analysis: The expressions showing the positive narrative towards PDM include "economic turnaround hope", "growth in the country's nascent it industry", "empower the industry and unlock its potential", "swift and condemnatory reaction", "observers fear", "same control over online publishing platforms", "PTI learnt after its ouster", "Islamabad high court striking down similar rules" and "PDM should not repeat the same mistake". While the expressions showing opposing narrative towards PDM include "little interest in protecting civil liberties", "surrendering civil liberties", "bringing under state control online media and digital platforms", "last remaining spaces for freely expressing", "legislation prepared in secrecy and passed in haste", "reeks of nefarious designs", "curb the rights and liberties of citizens", "bills must not be passed", "falls short of international standards", "creates unnecessary complexities", "increase the cost of doing business" and "dampen foreign investment", "government clearly has no clue", "legislative interventions, "hurriedly passed", "unable to shut down unbridled ridicule and criticism", "same control over traditional media", "had it not been for the Islamabad high court striking down similar rules". Moreover, the words/expressions showing neutral stance towards PDM government include "Two Bills", "Personal Data Protection Bill", "E-Safety Bill", "Federal Cabinet's Nod of Approval", "Internet Rights Activists", "Statement Circulating on the Internet", "Industry Pioneers and Digital Rights Activists", "Managing Director of the Organization", "Additional Barriers to Digital Trade", "Critical Time for Pakistan's Economic Growth", "Pressing Public Concern", "Manner in Which the Two Bills Were Quietly Drafted", "Tabled Before the Cabinet", "Government's Allies Unaware of Their Existence", "State Unable to Shut Down Unbridled Ridicule and Criticism Online", "Same Control Over Online Publishing Platforms as Traditional Media".

During the time under study, *Dawn* produced negative narratives regarding PDM. The narrative of the PDM is explained with the term "Anti-Establishment Agenda". Quantitatively, the editorials from *Dawn* demonstrate a commitment to in-depth analysis, reflected in substantial word counts for each discussed topic. However, the quantitative data alone does not distinctly favour or oppose the PDM government. Qualitatively, the tone and content of the editorials vary across different subjects. The "SC vs PDM" editorial suggests a confrontation between the Chief Justice and PDM, with a narrative indicating potential bias against the PDM. The second editorial on election dates maintains a balanced perspective, trying to reflect optimism about the political atmosphere but ends up criticizing the PDM government. The third editorial, "Politics of Vengeance," criticizes the government's actions with an alarmist tone, expressing concern about potential repercussions. The fourth editorial, "Control.pk," critically examines bills approved by the PDM government, emphasizing concerns about civil liberties. Overall, *Dawn* newspaper somewhat consistently opposes the PDM government.

The following pages contain the analysis of the editorials taken from *The News International*:

Editorial number 01; "PDM legacy": This section of the editorial provides an overall analysis of the PDM coalition government's tenure, focusing on key events, challenges, and outcomes. It characterizes the situation inherited from the PTI government as an "unhappy situation" and highlights the impact of the PTI's false foreign conspiracy narrative. The mention of diplomatic relations with the US suggests an international dimension to the challenges faced by the PDM government. The reference to the judiciary being "not very sympathetic" implies a strained relationship between the government and the judiciary. The overall tone is critical, describing the end of the PDM government as "unceremonious" and suggesting confusion about its legacy.

Upon looking at this section of the editorial quantitatively the introduction of the editorial consists of 180 words. Six expressions expressed unease with the PDM while two expressions were into sympathetic attitude towards PDM. Moreover, one expression clearly showed an unbiased approach towards PDM. The

words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used against PDM include "A dithering mess of indecisions", "A mixed-bag", "16 months of political turmoil", "economic meltdown", "alarming ceding of parliamentary space", and "unceremonious end". However, while looking at the word which shows the positive attitude towards PDM includes "sympathetic judiciary", and "people lapped up the conspiracy narrative". Moreover neutral narrative towards PDM includes expression such as "mix of some good, some bad, a lot confused".

It evaluates the challenges faced by the PDM, focusing on factors such as Imran Khan's long marches, an antagonist judiciary, political uncertainty, and economic mismanagement. The analysis touches on the economy, foreign policy, CPEC initiatives, and climate change. Specific achievements mentioned include securing an IMF deal, maintaining ties with China, receiving positive signals from the US, and successful handling of climate change issues on international platforms.

This section of the editorial consists of 163 words. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used in favour of PDM were eight while negligible expressions have been used for the negative and neutral portrayal of PDM. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used against PDM were legible in this section. However, looking at the narrative through the use of words which show the positive attitude towards PDM includes "two long marches by a popular Imran Khan", "an antagonist judiciary, political uncertainty", "PDM's own mismanagement of the economy", "perform well enough", "good foreign minister", "still managed it well", "enthusiasm" and, "negotiate a fund" Moreover neutral narrative towards PDM was not evident in this section.

It highlights the media-related issues during the PTI's time and contrasts them with the PDM government's actions. It included amended Pemra law and health insurance for journalists and criticism of attempts to pass certain cyber laws and concerns about legislation in parliament this section of the editorial contains 229 words. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used in favor of PDM were three while eight expressions were used for negative narrative and no expressions have been noted for the neutral portrayal of PDM. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used in favour of PDM were "amended PEMRA law", "health

insurance steps for", and "welcomed". However, looking at the narrative using words which show the negative attitude towards PDM includes "unnecessary curbs ", "disturbing legislation, "desisted from the organized trolling of journalists", "face the censor", "obsessive way", "bulldozed legislation in parliament", "terrible precedents" and "surrender will not go down well". Moreover, a neutral narrative towards PDM was not evident in this section.

Editorial number 02; "Relief galore": It provides details about legal developments involving Imran Khan, including relief granted by the courts. The newspaper mentions the Supreme Court's decision and the Islamabad High Court's actions related to the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case. It also highlights the court's prohibition on arresting Imran Khan in any new case until May 17. Indicates the PDM's reaction, mentioning Maulana Fazlur Rahman's announcement of a sit-in outside the Supreme Court on Monday.

This section of the editorial contains 215 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is two, whereas three expressions are against PDM. Moreover, two expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used in the favor of PDM were "Stumped from all sides", and "Battle between two establishments". However, while looking at the narrative against PDM we have expressions like "Violent Protests", "Judiciary's Intervention" and "Battle between Two Establishments". Moreover, neutral discourse includes "PDM's Reaction" and "Political Observers".

It provides an overview of Project Imran, spanning more than a decade, and mentions the recent vote of no-confidence that ousted Imran Khan's government. Raises concerns about the perception within the legal fraternity that the judiciary is soft on Imran Khan. It also questions the judiciary's actions, suggesting that it provided VIP treatment and a blanket bail to Imran Khan. Moreover, it poses questions about whether constitutional norms are being broken to facilitate one individual. Later, it also mentions Imran Khan's statement about the PTI's response in case of his re-arrest.

This section of the editorial contains 113 words. The words showing a positive narrative towards

PDM include "Project Imran". However, the narrative in this section was more against the PTI government than directly targeting the PDM. This section of the editorial introduces the concept of "Project Imran," implying a long-term plan involving various institutions. It expresses concerns about the judiciary's perceived leniency toward Imran Khan and questions the handling of legal matters. The use of phrases like "under the garb of constitutionalism" suggests a critical perspective on the actions of the judiciary. However, the narrative towards PDM was not directly touched on in this section of the editorial, thereby focusing more on the negative narrative towards Imran Khan.

This section of the editorial captures a sense of urgency and concern about the current political situation in Pakistan. Presents contrasting opinions on the PDM government's strategy, with some considering it inadequate and others viewing it as the right approach. It also highlights the perceived consequences of Imran Khan's actions and the impact on governance and institutions. Addresses the potential imposition of an emergency, suggesting a heightened state of political tension. It also raises questions about the fate of the people amid the power struggles among political and institutional elites.

The editorial contains 108 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is three, whereas seven expressions are against PDM. Moreover, six expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The positive discourse regarding the PDM includes "right approach", "aggressive stance" and "decision to be aggressive". While talking about negative discourse the newspaper presented expressions such as "too little, too late", "consequences of Imran Khan's lust for power", "government's incompetence", "institutional interference", "rumours of emergency being imposed", "survival of the elite groups" and "taking away every amenity and right". Moreover, as far as neutral discourse is concerned, these expressions "seen as, "some believe", "rumours denied by the interior minister", "battle of survival", "people of Pakistan must wonder", "forever wait for breadcrumbs" and "political and institutional elite" were highlighted.

Editorial number 03; "PDM's troubles": It discusses the theatrical saga of PTI Chair Imran Khan's appearance in a protective bail hearing, highlighting

the party's strategic approach to turning the event into high-stakes drama. It also mentions the delayed appearance and the perception of PTI's media and justice system privilege. Moreover, it describes the event as a win for the PTI due to effective optics.

This section of the editorial consists of 190 words. Altogether the whole paragraph focuses on the privileges enjoyed by PTI with no direct narrative towards the PDM government. This section of the editorial portrays the image of PTI, in terms of unique privilege enjoyed in media coverage and the legal system. It highlights the strategic delay in Imran Khan's appearance and the impact on the gathering crowd and media attention. Moreover, it conveys a sense of success for the PTI based on the favourable optics generated during the court appearance. Thereby the specific words to show the narrative towards PDM were not presented in this section.

This section of the editorial provides a critical assessment of the PDM government's current state, emphasizing its perceived shortcomings and challenges. It highlights the strategic skills of Imran Khan, characterizing him as a master of narrative, optics, and playing trump cards. Moreover, suggests a contrast between the PDM government's perceived shifty and clueless attributes and the assertive approach of the PTI. It also raises a question about the PDM's prospects in fighting back against the PTI, indicating a sense of uncertainty or scepticism. Altogether qualitatively this section provided the negative viewpoint about PDM.

This section of the editorial comprises 160 words. Out of 160 words, the expressions against PDM were ten. While minimal expressions have been attributed to the positive and neutral narrative towards PDM. Altogether quantitatively this section provided a negative viewpoint about PDM. It characterizes the government as "rudderless", "no narrative", "no sellable optics", "plans that won't make sense to an impatient audience", "challenges that keep piling up", "not the most stellar attributes", "faced with a force", "bad karma" and "shifty and clueless". Moreover, while looking at the positive expressions that have been used by the newspaper were negligible for the part of PDM.

It started with a discussion of the potential impact of elections in Punjab and KP, suggesting the PTI's advantage and the potential reluctance of voters to

support PMLN. It also speculates on the formation of governments in Punjab and KP by the PTI. Moreover, it mentions the likelihood of PPP's success in Sindh and Balochistan. Also, it raises questions about the PDM's preference for simultaneous general elections and constitutional provisions regarding election timing.

This section of the editorial comprises 269 words. It includes eight expressions in opposition to PDM. However, positive and neutral were not prominent in this section. The expressions which took negative discourse towards the PDM narrative include "Rising inflation", "Not many takers", "Spin the narrative", "Not delivering", "Far too early to call", "Difficult for political parties", and "Delayed election". However, the expressions which show positive discourse regarding the PDM government were not highlighted by the newspaper. Moreover, neutral discourse was not evident in this section.

Editorial number 04; "Timely elections": Discusses the Supreme Court's appreciation for political parties' efforts to reach a consensus on simultaneous elections. It highlights the differing views within the PDM and PTI regarding the progress in the dialogue on election dates. It acknowledges the importance of comprehensive dialogue between political forces for issue resolution. It also indicates the PDM's confidence in reaching a resolution and the government's commitment to holding elections in October or November.

This section of the editorial consists of 249 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is six, whereas five expressions are against PDM. Moreover, five expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The expressions of the positive discourse of PDM include "Supreme Court Appreciates", "Consensus Achievement", "Hopeful Dialogue", "Positive Sign", "Confident Resolution", and "Willingness for Dialogue". The expression of negative discourse includes "PTI Dissatisfaction", "Disagreed Date", "PTI Likely to Form Government", "Narrative Spin", and "Not Delivering". The expressions of neutral discourse include "Political Issues", "Series of Dialogues", "Identified Concerns", "Serious about holding Elections" and "Hope".

It discusses the importance of agreeing on an election date and criticizes the government for the 90-day election issue in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It raises concerns about the

significant cost of elections during a period of high inflation and increased poverty. This section emphasizes the necessity of holding elections to navigate political challenges and economic difficulties. Moreover, it also advocates for elections to serve as a platform for conflict resolution rather than exacerbating conflicts.

This section of the editorial consists of 134 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is six, whereas six expressions are against PDM. Moreover, five expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The positive discourse in this section includes "Recognition of Importance", "Timely Elections", "Democratic Claim", "Resolution of Concerns", "Way Forward" and "Conflict Resolution Focus". The negative discourse in this section includes "90-Day Election Taint", "Political Mess", "Economic Meltdown", "Inflation Challenges", "Rising Poverty", and "Cost of Elections". Moreover, the neutral discourse in this section includes "Agreement on Election Date", "Political Differences", "Addressing Important Questions", "Beyond Political Arena", "Country's Responsibility", and "Conflict Resolution Emphasis".

It highlights the importance of resolving the census issue to prevent disputes, particularly in urban areas of Sindh. It also discusses challenges faced by provinces due to economic constraints and emphasizes the need for an amicable resolution. It also mentions the emergence of new political groups, including democrats, haqiqi, and JKT, amid the PTI's disarray. It speculates on the possibility of another coalition government, possibly including parties from the current PDM government and new groups. Predicts that the PPP may secure most seats in the centre, especially in Sindh, Balochistan, and southern Punjab. It identifies Punjab elections as particularly interesting due to splinter groups from the PTI and notes the uncertainty surrounding Imran Khan's future and legal cases. It also stresses the importance of holding elections for stability after a turbulent year.

This section of the editorial consists of 287 words. This section of the editorial consists of 134 words. The number of expressions in favour of PDM is seven, whereas six expressions are against PDM. Moreover, twelve expressions have been used as neutral concerns. The positive discourse in this section includes "Resolve the Issue", "Way Forward",

"Resolved Amicably", "Chance of another Coalition Government", "Parties Already Part of the PDM Government", "PPP Getting Most Seats" and "Stability in the Aftermath". The negative discourse in this section includes "Far Too Many Disputes", "Economic Crunch", "PTI in Disarray", "Splinter Groups of the PTI", "Future of Imran Khan and His Cases" and "Turbulent Year". Moreover, the neutral discourse in this section includes "Issue of the Census", "18th Amendment", "NFC Award", "Provincial Resources", "PDM-Type Government", "New Groups", "Agreement on Election Date", "Political Differences", "Addressing Important Questions", "Beyond Political Arena", "Country's Responsibility" and "Conflict Resolution Emphasis".

Overall, the analysis provided by *The News International* appears to offer a mild inclination toward the PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) government's performance. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses present a comprehensive overview of various aspects, including challenges faced, achievements, media-related issues, legal developments, and potential election outcomes. The selected editorial does exhibit a clear bias towards or against the government qualitatively however on the grassroots level, more content has been found against PDM. It acknowledges both positive and negative facets.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this study, we aimed to gain an understating of the media's portrayal of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government we have viewed the selected editorials of *Dawn* and *The News International*. The year in which these editorials were published is 2023 (Feb- August) which was crucial for the (*Dawn/ The News International*) newspaper to hold a narrative with respect to the PDM government spanning Feb 2023 to August 2023. Evaluations that are both quantitative and qualitative help to provide a complete picture of the editorial environment of the newspaper. The editorials' word counts demonstrate their dedication to in-depth study, with a significant amount of text devoted to each topic of discussion.

Nevertheless, depending exclusively on numerical statistics fails to provide a definitive indicator of partiality or disapproval of the PDM administration. Qualitatively, the editorials' tone and content

fluctuate greatly depending on the topic, which furthers the intricacy of the newspaper's position. A reasonably regular pattern that indicates a tendency to oppose the PDM government can be seen when analyzing the overall tone and content of the editorials published in Dawn newspaper. Some of the words which have been used against PDM in Dawn are "Arbitrary", "criticism", "too regularly", "too arbitrary", "criticism", "unapologetic", and "stand-off". Expressions such as "Political atmosphere", "Negotiated solution", "Baby steps", "Democratic solution" and "Recovery" were used which could be considered Neutral expressions. Moreover, there are the following expressions "Negotiated solution", "Successful vote of confidence", "Democratic solution", "Parliament alone has the mandate", "Caretaker governments", "Legal limbo", and "Early polls" used in favour of PDM.

The year in which these editorials were published is April 2023- July 2023. In contrast, *The News International* presents an alternative viewpoint of the performance of the PDM government. This newspaper's study seems to indicate a slight bias in favour of the PDM. The editorial content provides a thorough summary of several topics, such as difficulties encountered, successes, media-related matters, legal advancements, and probable election results. The words/expressions/adjectives/adverbs used against PDM include "A dithering mess of indecisions", "A mixed bag", "16 months of political turmoil", "economic meltdown", "alarming ceding of parliamentary space", and "unceremonious end". while looking at the word which shows a positive

attitude towards PDM include "sympathetic judiciary ", and "people lapped up the conspiracy narrative", "two long marches by a popular Imran Khan", "an antagonist judiciary, political uncertainty", "PDM's own mismanagement of the economy", "perform well enough", "good foreign minister", "still managed it well", "enthusiasm" and, "negotiate a fund".

Moreover, a neutral narrative towards PDM includes expressions such as "mix of some good, some bad, a lot confused". The selected editorial presents a balanced assessment of the PDM government's actions, acknowledging both their positive and negative aspects. A more complex picture of the government's performance is provided by the acknowledgement of both strengths and flaws, which indicates a tendency towards a more balanced viewpoint. The year in which their editorials were published is Feb 2023- August 2023. In conclusion, the variety of viewpoints on the PDM government is highlighted by the media environment, which is mirrored in these editorials. The Dawn exhibits a slightly oppositional stance through a range of tones and critical evaluations. This is particularly evident in stories such as "SC vs PDM" and critical analyses of measures that have been adopted by the government. *The News International*, on the other hand, acknowledges the complexity of the government's performance and offers a more measured review. These findings are sophisticated, which highlights the significance of considering both quantitative and qualitative factors to have a thorough picture of the media's position with the PDM government.

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