



Power On Pages of Newspapers: A Political Contestation in Pakistan

Received: 13-Sep-20 | Accepted: 13-jan-2021

Dr. Muhammad Yaseen,¹  Nadil Shah,² 

Abstract

The key objective of this study was to examine the influence of the political parties on the pages of the Pakistani newspapers and especially on daily Express Urdu newspaper. Keeping in view the importance of newspapers as the leading source of communications, this paper examined power politics and contestation is occurring through newspaper among the different political parties in Pakistan. The existing sources shows that newspaper is one of the tools used by political parties to propagate their political ideologies to the common masses. The researcher has read the Daily EXPRESS Urdu newspaper highlighted headlines for the year of 2016. The newspaper of January to December 2016 were read thoroughly by keeping view on the objective of the study. Those Headlines were highlighted which were showing that political parties issued them for the attainment of their political goals. In current study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches of research were used to carry out this study. The collected data were analyzed through connotative and denotative perspectives. The result of the study shows that newspaper is a big source for political parties to promote their ideologies among either uni or multi- cultural diversity to gain their political gain rather than focusing the interests and benefits of the common masses.

Keywords: Critical theory, Political Ideology, Newspapers, Power, Political contestation, Daily Express

Author's Affiliation:


Institution: | University of Karachi¹⁻²,

Country: | Pakistan

Corresponding Author's Email: yaseendashti.soc@gmail.com

The material presented by the author(s) does not necessarily portray the view point of the editors and the management of the ILMA University, Pakistan.

2707-8906 (Print) ©2020, published by the ILMA University, Pakistan.

This is open access article under the  license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

1) INTRODUCTION

Media is the sources by which people get information and news about social issues and state affairs as McCombs (2002) said that through media people would be able to know the important issues of the state. Moreover, it is also used by state to bring political and social harmony in society. There are different mediums such as Radio, Television, newspapers and so on by which information are discriminated to the mass.

Media is playing a pivotal role in this modern era by disseminating news and information all over the world within seconds because of media and internet Marshall McLuhan (1964 and 1962) called world is a global village. Kenneth Newton (2006) has said that media has a great impact on social and political life of the people but he said that instead of showing the real duties and obligations of the political parties rather it is more interested in sensitive topics such as scandals, dramas and conflicts to attract the viewers. It is crystal clear that media is not doing the real jobs which are important for the public. It is dealing the public as consumer rather than audiences. Moreover, each media is made or supported by a political party which set the agenda and served the interest of that specific party.

Despite of these ideas, there are some controversy statement about media and its effects. Some researchers believe that media is completely neutral and independent. As McCombs (1991) said that media reports those which are currently debated in politics and government independently. Further, Kleinnijenhuis (2003) also gave the similar argument about media. He said that media has limited impact on politics. It is also believed that media highlights the social issues due to which there is high chance of resolving those issues because it motivates and gives awareness to the public about their problems and compel the politicians to take serious step to solve them. Walgrave and Aelst (2006) cited Cobb and Elder that “the media can also play a very important role in elevating issues to the systemic agenda and increasing their chances of receiving consideration on institutional agendas (1971, p. 909).” Muhammad (2011) has viewed that in democratic societies media plays very important role in shaping the agendas through integration with audiences and make the policies about the society. Moreover, Newspapers are very important for public opinion making.

Newspaper is one of the main tool by which every individual has access to updates about daily news. It is accessible and readable for most of the citizens of a country. It is also used by political parties to gain their political goals. From the editorials to news, images to cartoons political ideology exists. As Walker said that Cartoons which portrayed in the newspapers are also supporting an ideology (2003).

Walker (2003) said that these Cartoons do not only shapes the public opinions and convey messages rather they usually represent and serve the interest of powerful class and suppress the interest of powerless. These political cartoons help the elites to maintain their ideology and status quo in the society. Further he said that these political cartoons is that these graphic editorials simply offer an absurd commentary on the current social and political issues (2003). But, Tehseen and Bokhair gave contrary statement about Cartoons and said that they sometimes challenge the

status quo and raise voice against injustice, prejudice etc because it depends on cartoonists and media ownership (2015).

Moreover, McCombs conducted a theoretical study and said that media shapes the picture of the world by the way of journalists frame their news which is known the agenda setting function of media (2002). Jan et al cited Broyde Sharone (2008) said that there is no objectivity in journalist profession rather journalist always influence by the external norms and values and the story is disseminated through the eyes and ears of person (journalist) who is covering it. Millar (2002) also carried out a theoretical study on news framing which he said that media shows the one side of the picture. It only displays that side of the picture to the audience which fill the agenda of powerful party and hide that real situation which is very necessary to be highlight by the media.

There are some critical theorist believed that media only serves the interest of elite. Gatlin (1980) viewed that media gives the coverage and promote the opinion of the elite class due to which the media frame is very powerful. It molds the public opinion and promote the ideology and opinion of the ruling class.

Moreover, Matthew Diamond (2002) carried out a research on No laughing Matter: Post-September 11 Political Cartoons in Arab/Muslim Newspapers. He found U.S is portrayed in Cartoons of newspapers as slaughtering the innocent sheep of Iraq and Afghanistan. In other cartoon U.S is shown a Cowboy setting on map of the world and controlling it. So, he concluded that newspapers are the tools by which political parties portrayed pictures and cartoons to defame opposite parties. Despite these researches, many studies have been conducted in Pakistan on politics through newspapers.

Tazanfal Tehseen and Zahra Bokhari have conducted a multimodal discourse analysis study on political Cartoons portrayed on Pakistani newspapers (The News and The Nations) and said that these Cartoons spoil the face of one party and save the other's. The Nation supports PTI and defaming Pakistan Muslim League (N) because the shown cartoons (i.e. Nawaz Sharif is giving speech to the public and public are handing slogan "Go Nawaz Go"). On the other hand, The News supports PML (N) and defaming PTI in cartoons (i.e. Imran khan sets behind the table and two trays are kept on the table, one tray is labeled allegation which full and second is labeled evidences which is empty). An addition to this, Jan et al conducted a study on print media political coverage on opinion pages of DAWN and THE NEWS and founded that The News published 61 articles about Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and DAWN only 14. Moreover, The News published 37 articles in favour of PTI and DAWN has only 3 articles in favour of PTI. These empirical data clearly depicts that there is also politics in cartoons which are displayed on newspapers. These cartoons have a great power to influence the public and by them political parties inject their ideologies (2013). They further said that one aspect of political cartoons are usually satirical because they construct social reality satire, metaphor and symbolic etc. These convey the messages which difficult to convey it through words or sentences (Gilmartin and Brunn, 1998).

For instance, Pakistan People's Party launched Masawat newspaper in 1970 to

promote their political goals even by this medium they had ran the 1970 election campaign. Similarly, Jamat-e-Islami launched Jassarat newspaper with other monthly and weakly magazines, and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazlur Rahman's Party) also launched their monthly magazine named Al-Jamiah by which they promote their political ideology (Jan et al, 2011).

Iqbal et al, (2013) stated that press considered more credible in Pakistan and further he said that Print media is more credible than electronic media because print media is playing pivotal role in highlighting national and international issues. Media also plays vital role setting the agendas and public opinion making process (Iqbal et al, 2013, Jan et al, 2013).

Overall study concludes that media is used by political parties to defame other political parties, create supporters, promote their political ideologies and mold the public opinions. This paper examines how these actions are practiced through newspapers in Pakistan.

2) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed by conflict analysis of mass media. The term conflict theory crystallized in the 1950s as sociologists like Lewis Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf criticized the dominant structural functionalism in sociology for overly emphasizing the consensual, conflict-free nature of societies. Therefore, they put forward conflict theory as an independent paradigm of sociological theory with a distinct focus on phenomena of power, interests, coercion, and conflict. Basically, conflict theory assumes that societies exhibit structural power divisions and resources inequalities leading to conflicting interests. According to conflict theorists like other institutions of society media is also controlled by the elites and they use it for the propagation of their ideology and agenda. Critical theorists see media more powerful than other institutions as it shapes minds of the public in a way as it is wished to be by the ruling class. There are certain critical theorists who believed that media only serves the interests of elite. Gatlin(1980) viewed that media gives the coverage and promote the opinion of the elite class due to which the media frame is powerful.it molds the public opinion and promote ideology of the ruling class. Walker (2003) said that the cartoons and portraits shown on media do not only shapes the public opinion and convey messages rather they usually represent and serve the interest of the of the powerful and suppress the interest of powerless. These political cartoons help the elites to maintain their ideology and status quo in society. The cartoons spoils the reputations of one political party and save the other's. To truncate the discussion the researchers believe that newspaper are the tools by which political parties discriminates and propagate messages to defame opposite parties and achieved the desired goals by molding the minds of the public and shaping it in their own favor.

3) METHOD OF THE STUDY

The study aimed at finding the political contestation in Pakistani Urdu Newspaper "Daily Express". Quantitative and qualitative, both analyses are applied. Both methods are practiced to conduct the study because, content will required to be analyzed through both connotative and denotative lenses. To get clear picture of

the phenomenon, it is essential to find both expressive and underlying meanings of the news content. Purposive Sampling Technique has been used for selecting the sample size in this study. Purposive sampling technique is the nonrandom sample in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of highly specific and difficult to reach population (Newman 1993). This sampling technique was preferred because the study required cases that are relevant to political contestation in Pakistani print media. The data have been collected from Daily Express newspaper because it is amongst the most prominent Urdu newspaper being read by majority middle class masses across the country. All the editions of January 2016 to December 2016, were reviewed thoroughly. Year 2016 was full of political contestations, which on various occasions turned to violent turmoil. It is significant to learn how mainstream print media respond to such political environment, and how different political groups manipulate public opinion in their favor. Both quantitative and qualitative Content analyses has been used to analyze the Data. In quantitative content analyses, objective and systematic counting are used to describe content. Whereas in qualitative content analyses researchers take the statement of political parties and used critical approaches to examine the larger context of content's creation, distribution and reception. Berelson,(1952) defined content analyses as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of the communication.

Following are the research questions

How political wars are practiced through newspaper among political parties?

How Political parties gain and set their political agenda through media?

To what extent Media serves the interest of elite and suppress the powerless?

How political parties defaming opposite parties through newspapers?

4) Result and Data Interpretation

Table No: 1. Total political Statements according to months												
Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
19	20	59	58	48	93	25	68	78	41	45	37	591

The above shows that there are total 591 statements issued by different political parties of Pakistan. These all statements were given by different parties against other political parties in the country.

Table No: 2. PTI statements against PML (N)													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of Statements	16	11	9	19	20	25	10	18	21	22	20	11	202



The above table shows that there were total 202 statements were given by PTI against PML (N) in 2016. 16 were given in Jan, 11 in Feb, 9 in March, 19 in April, 20 in May, 25 in June, 10 in July, 18 in August, 21 Sept, 22 in Oct, 20 in Nov, and 11 in December 2016.

Table No: 3. PML (N) statements against PTI

Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements	3	4	5	29	13	20	6	18	27	18	14	8	165



The given table shows that PML (N) has given total 165 total statements against PTI in 2016. There were 3 statements given in Jan, 4 in Feb, 5 in March, 29 in April, 13 in May, 20 in June, 6 in July, 18 in August, 27 in Sept, 18 in Oct, 14 in Nov and 8 in December in 2016.

Table No: 3 PAT statements against PML(N)

Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements						13		6			1		20

قاتل حکمرانوں کو اقتدار میں رہنے کا کوئی حق نہیں: طاہر القادری

حکومت نے پرامن احتجاج میں روڑے اٹکائے تو نتائج کی ذمہ دار خود ہوگی: لندن میں گفتگو

جب تک موجودہ حکمران رہیں گے لاشیں اٹھتی رہیں گی، طاہر القادری



The given table shows that there were total 20 statements were given by PAT against PML (N). There were 13 statements in June, 6 in August, and 1 in November in 2016. The recent of the months, there were no political statements by PAT against PML (N).

Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements			6								6	3	15

The above table shows that there were only 15 statements given by PPP against PTI in 2016. 6 statements were given in March, 6 in Nov, and 3 in December in 2016. There were no statements given by PPP against PTI in recent of the months.

Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements		3	8		4	14	7	8	6		1	6	57



The above table shows that there were total 57 statements given in 2016 by PPP against PML (N). There were 3 statements in Feb, 8 in March, 4 in May, 14 in June, 7 in July, 8 in August, 6 in Sept, 1 in Nov and 6 in December in 2016. There were no political statements given by PPP against PML (N) in Jan, April, and Oct.

Table No: 6 PML(N) statements against PPP													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of			6			5	2	2			1	4	20



The given table demonstrates that there were total 20 statements given by PML (N) against PPP in 2016. In March 6 statements were given. 5 statements were given in June, 2 in July, 2 in August, 1 in Nov and 4 in December 2016. There were no political statements in rest of the months by PML (N) against PPP.

Table No: 7 JI statements against PML(N)													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements		2	4	4		6		6	8		1		31

ملک میں امریکی ایجنٹوں اور وفاداروں کی حکومت ہے: سراج الحق
 حکومت ملک کرپشن فری بنانے میں سنجیدہ نہیں، صرف اپنی کمال پچانے کی فکر میں ہے
 پاناما، لندن، دہلی اور سوئس لیکس سے کوئی نہیں بچ سکتا: اسلام آباد میں پریس کانفرنس

The above table illustrates that there total 31 statements issued by JI against PML (N) in 2016. From them 2 statements were given in Feb, 4 in March, 4 in April, 6 in June, 6 in August, 8 in September and 1 in November 2016. There were no political statements by JI against PML (N) in Jan, May, July, Oct and December 2016.

Table No: 8 PML(Q) statements against PML(N)													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements			3	5					2		1	2	13



In given table there were total 13 statements by PML (Q) against PML (N) in 2016. Out of which 3 were given in 3 march, 5 in April, 2 in Sept, 1 in Nov and 2 in December 2016. There were no political statements given in reset of the months in 2016.

Table No: 9 PPP statements against MQM													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements			11										11

The above table depicts that there were total 11 statements given by PPP against MQM in 2016. These statements were given in March 2016 only. PPP has not given by statement against MQM in rest of the months in 2016.

Table No: 10 PTI statements against PPP														
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	
No of statements			7							1		3	11	

In given table there were total 11 statements were given by PTI against PPP in 2016. Out of which 7 statements in March, 1 in Oct and 3 in December 2016. There were no statements issued by PTI against PPP in the rest of the months in 2016.

Table No: 11 ANP statements against PTI														
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	
No of statements						10							10	

In given table, there were total 10 statements issued by ANP against PTI in 2016 and these total 10 statements were given in June 2016 only. There were no political statements by ANP against PTI in other months of 2016.

Table No: 12 PML(N) statements against MQM													
Parties	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements								10					10

In above table, there were total 10 political statements issued by PML (N) against MQM in 2016 and these were given in August 2016 only. There were no political statements by PML (N) against MQM in rest of the months.

Table No: 13 AML statements against PML(N)													
Months	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No of statements										10			10

حکمرانوں نے ضد نہ چھوڑی تو سب کچھ سمیٹ دیا جائیگا: شیخ رشید
 راہداری آپریشن ہونے سے پہلے سپرپاور کی شہ پر آپریشن ہو تا دیکھ رہا ہوں: خطاب
 سپیکر ایسا سکھ جس کے دونوں طرف نواز شریف ہیں: شیخ رشید

The above table shows that there were total 10 statements given by AML against PML (N) in 2016 and these all were given in October 2016 only. No political statements had been issued by AML against PML (N) in rest of the months.

5) DISCUSSION

Media is the fifth pillar of state and one of the social institutions in the society. Media can be print or electric. The print media are newspapers, magazines and other published materials. The newspapers are the only print media which is circulated among publics and source of information for them. These news and information great influence the public opinion. The newspapers would determine to think and what to not about the political, social, and economic conditions of the state. These newspapers are also used by political parties to promote their ideologies among the masses.

In modern days, newspaper is one of the most powerful weapon used by political parties to manipulate the public opinion. Political parties used the newspapers to promote and propagate their political ideologies among common masses. Pakistani newspapers always promote and protect their ideologies of political parties rather than focusing the public interests.

In present study, the research went through Urdu newspaper Express Urdu by focusing the political contents. The researcher has found that the Express Urdu is giving great coverage to the political parties where political parties found contesting with each other. As Gatline (1980) said that media promote the agenda of elites and these elites are politician in Pakistan. The political parties never discuss the major social, political, economic, educational, or health issues. They are only issuing statements against each other.

Walker (2003) studies that powerful class manipulate the ideas of public through printed media cartoons. The above statistics and statements clearly depict that the political parties of Pakistan are only contesting with each other. Pakistan People's Party issues statements against Pakistan Muslim League (N), PML (N) against PPP. Likewise, PPP against Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and vice versa. PAT against PML (N) and Jameet-i-Islami, Pakistan against PML (N) and vice versa.

So, from the data of the present study is clear that political parties are struggle for personal interests rather than focusing the public. The ideas and mind of the common masses are manipulated and made busy through their statements.

6) CONCLUSION

This paper examined the political contestation among different political parties in Pakistan through newspapers. The findings suggest that there is a political war among different political parties in Pakistan and one political party gives statements against other political party to degrade it. This political statements not only creating confusion among audiences rather they are breaking the trust of public from politicians. We can argue that newspapers are playing the role of arbitrators by publishing statements of politicians and informing the public about the political war among different political parties. These political parties are promoting their ideologies through these newspapers and they are making political supporters through the help of newspapers. As Gatline (1980) said that media gives coverage and promote the ideology of the ruling class. We can say that newspapers are the main sources of news and updates about country as common people such as shopkeepers, drivers, and government employees have access and they develop their political ideologies and social world through these newspapers and these should be taken serious. This political contestation is become normal in print and electronic media of Pakistan. Therefore, the government should have check and balance on media particularly on print media because most of the public have access and use it for the source of information.

7) RECOMMENDATIONS

The newspapers are propagating the ideology of political parties' rather than public interests. So, this study gives below recommendations for controlling this system. It is recommended that the government should make independent organizations which surveillance the media both print and electronic. Like PEMRA government should have another organization for print media censorship and that should not be influenced by any political parties. The materials published on print media should be censored regularly. Those newspapers which are supporting or promoting the ideology of a particular party should be questioned.

8) REFERENCE

- Diamond, M. (2002). No laughing matter: Post-September 11 political cartoons in Arab/Muslim newspapers. *Political Communication*, 19(2), 251-272.
- Fenton, Natalie. 1999. *Sociology, Issues and Debates*. London, UK: Macmillan Education UK
- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making & unmaking of the new left*. Univ of California Press.
- Jan, M., Riaz Raza, M., Siddiq, M., & Saleem, N. (2013). *Print media on coverage*

- of Political parties in Pakistan: Treatment of opinion pages of the ‘Dawn’ and ‘News’. Gomal University Journal of Research, 29(1), 118-128.
- Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2003). Het publiek volgt media die de politiek volgen. *Medialogica*. Over het krachtenveld tussen burgers, media en politiek, 151-212.
- McCombs, M. (2002, June). The agenda-setting role of the mass media in the shaping of public opinion. In *Mass Media Economics 2002 Conference*, London School of Economics: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/extra/McCombs.pdf>.
- McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media*.
- MARSHALL, H. (1962). *Gutenberg Galaxy. the Making of Typographic Man*. University of Toronto Press.
- Newton, K. (2006). May the weak force be with you: The power of the mass media in modern politics. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(2), 209-234.
- Newman, Lawrence. 2014. *Social Research Methods*. United State Of America: Pearson Education Limited.
- Shoeb, N. F. (2008). An analysis of Urdu and English editorial coverage of the 2007 emergency from Pakistani newspapers. ProQuest.
- Tehseem, T., & Bokhari, Z. (2015). Spoiling or the saving faces in Pakistani newspapers: A multimodal discourse perspective on analyzing political cartoons. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(2), 1-14.
- Walgrave, S., & Van Aelst, P. (2006). The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory. *Journal of Communication*, 56(1), 88-109.
- Walker, R. (2003). Political cartoons: now you see them!. *Canadian Parliamentary review*