

Framing Of Cpec In English And Urdu Newspapers: From Analysis To Public Perception (2020-2021)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the recent newspaper coverage patterns about CPEC through different frames and then focuses on investigating the consequent perception about CPEC among the newspaper readers. The research has been conducted in the light of “Framing Analysis” by Goffman to explore the representation of CPEC in mainstream newspapers of Pakistan in the years 2020 and 2021. News stories about CPEC published on front and back pages of the daily Dawn and Jang have been explored. For this purpose, adopted methodology was Content Analysis. In the second part of this research, the public perception about CPEC has been analyzed with the help of Survey Method on a purposive sample of (n = 300) newspaper readers. The study indicates that since January 2020, the selected newspapers have been framing positive image of CPEC through their news stories. Moreover, frames of news categorization were mainly in a favorable tone, admiring and appreciating CPEC. Dawn was in leading position to publish news about CPEC as compared to Jang. Moreover, majority of newspaper readers find CPEC as a very positive project for the progress of Pakistan. Hence, media has evoked a sense of contentment among the audience through a favorable coverage of CPEC.

Keywords: Content Analysis, CPEC, Framing Theory, International Relations, Newspapers of Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

State of Pakistan has been ruled by Democratic as well as Dictatorial forms of governments, that is why the economy of Pakistan has gone through numerous ups and down. Issues related to domestic politics and situation as well as to that of region and globe have greatly influenced the economy of Pakistan. After 9/11, the economy of Pakistan was severely impacted. Internal as well

as regional disability reduced the foreign investment. Even the local industries were shifted to safe havens. In all these troublesome situations, the project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was a fresh blow of wind for the economy of Pakistan. CPEC is a combined ground plan between Pakistan and China to prescribe a bunch of developments including power projects, transportation infrastructure, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) etc throughout Pakistan. Through these projects, it is envisioned that the economy of Pakistan will be boosted. CPEC was officially inaugurated by President of China Xi Jinping during his visit to Islamabad in April 2015. Initially, under this flagship program, a 46\$ billion US dollars of investment in different projects of Pakistan was promised which later on was increased to 64 billion US dollars.

The massively allocated amount was planned to be invested in energy projects, transportation infrastructure, upgradation of Gawadar Port, construction of Special Economic zones (SEZs) etc in the form of loans and investment for a period of almost 15 years. Two-thirds of the total projects of CPEC would be covered through Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and one-fourth of these projects would be covered through loans. Since the independence of Pakistan, this project (CPEC) is marked as the largest economic venture by any country in Pakistan. China has remained a good friend in any situation and because of this the friendship between the two is described as “higher than the mountains, stronger than iron, deeper than the ocean and sweeter than the honey”.

South Asia has been a centre of world’s attention due to its geographical and demographical features. This area generally and Pakistan specifically comes under spotlight as it started the flagship project of One Belt One Road (OBOR). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a lead project of “One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative” formally announced in April 2015. The multibillion US Dollar project of CPEC offers much-needed avenues of economic growth and political stability for Pakistan and the region at large. One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative is the grand strategy of China to connect Eurasia, South East Asia, South Asia and Africa through roads, railway lines, maritime routes and energy infrastructure. An HSBC research report shows countries along the OBOR account for 64% of the global population and 29% of the World GDP.

Both the governments of Pakistan and China announced a series of project agreements and MOU’s centered on energy development and infrastructure improvement within Pakistan On April 20th, 2015. Pecuniary worth of the total project funding of this China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is likely to reach over 64 billion dollars, of which at least 35 billion is committed to the energy sector. It is worthy to mention that if all of these investments turn up, CPEC would equal all the foreign direct investment inflows into the country from 1970 to the present.

Media is indispensable in today’s world. Its effects vary from individual to groups and nations to globalization. Mass media’s content is the vital source of eventual changes in individuals’ as well as community’s preferences about foreign policy and relations among nations. On one side, the mass media are the prime channel between community and

policymakers. Policymakers consult media content on public opinion; on the other, the media are the people's major source of information on what policymakers are doing.

This triangulation makes media a strong stakeholder in influencing both the public and the policies. Much work has been done to understand the relation of mass media and the public opinion about the events happening far away from the locale of the reader. Lippmann (1922) said that "the press makes the images of the outer world in the heads of people; they perceive the outer world through press". As Ross (2006) also says, media play a decisive role in international affairs and conflicts because of the people are dependent on mass media to give timely, trustworthy information about distant events.

Print Media has its revered effects in motivating the change in tightly held ideas and rigid attitudes. According to Galtung and Ruge (1970:260) as cited (Saleem, Ahmad, 2015) this medium is powerful instrument and can create an image. In Pakistan, print media has been passing through different transitions. The rapid developments in social and electronic media are affecting it in so many ways. However, contrary to a common misconception, this growth has not reduced the importance of print media.

Newspaper is one of the most important and effective print medium of mass communication and preliminary communication tools of the society. They have been the most usual and a generally received medium to be used in conveying the local, regional, international and national news to readers and it is a valuable service to the community. Newspapers in Pakistan are also of great significance in this regard and are at the forefront to meet certain objectives of the society. The main feature of the press in Pakistan is the stipulation of adequate information regarding latest or recent incidences of society in order to let the people know about their surroundings in a very effective manner. (Azeez, 2009)

Hence, in the light of above described phenomenon, it is important and worthy to investigate the role of the press in handling the coverage of the CPEC. Several studies have been conducted to explore the role of media during the ongoing CPEC project; however, it is important to analyze how the print media of Pakistan framed this project during the crucial time of the years 2020 and 2021. At the same time, it is also significant to understand how the national newspaper readers have received and perceived the content about CPEC project, and, whether the newspapers were successful in conveying those frames among the local masses or not. This study deals with both the researchable aspects simultaneously.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of this research are enlisted below:

1. To compare the frequency and placement of CPEC news in Daily Dawn and Jang from January 2020 to June 2021
2. To inspect the coverage given to CPEC project in Daily Dawn and Jang in terms of direction, stance and tone of the news from January 2020 to June 2021

3. To analyze the relationship between the recent newspaper coverage of CPEC and public perception regarding the project

1.3 Research Questions

RQ₁ What is the comparative frequency of CPEC news in Daily Dawn and Jang from January 2020 to June 2021?

RQ₂ How is the comparative placement of CPEC news in Daily Dawn and Jang from January 2020 to June 2021?

RQ₃ What is the nature of coverage given to CPEC project in Daily Dawn and Jang from January 2020 to June 2021?

RQ₄ Is there a significant relationship between the recent newspaper coverage of CPEC and public perception regarding the project?

1.4 Hypotheses

H₀ CPEC news frequency in Daily Dawn is not more than the CPEC news frequency in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₁ CPEC news frequency in Daily Dawn is more than the CPEC news frequency in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₀ Placement of CPEC news is not more prominent in Daily Dawn than prominence given to placement of CPEC news in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₂ Placement of CPEC news is more prominent in Daily Dawn than prominence given to placement of CPEC news in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₀ Coverage of CPEC is not more favorable in Daily Dawn than the coverage of CPEC in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₃ Coverage of CPEC is more favorable in Daily Dawn than the coverage of CPEC in Jang from January 2020 to June 2021.

H₀ There is no significant relationship between exposure to recent CPEC newspaper coverage and positive public perception about CPEC project.

H₄ There is a significant relationship between exposure to recent CPEC newspaper coverage and positive public perception about CPEC project.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is aimed at reviewing the literature, which is related directly or indirectly to the research, to explore what other researchers have written about topic under study.

2.1 Media Coverage of International Agreements of Pakistan

In order to understand the concept and practice of framing of CPEC by English Newspaper (Dawn and The Nation) and Urdu Newspaper (Jang Group and Express), several resources were studied

to serve as a foundation for this research. Rana (2016) conducted an elaborate study for describing the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) deal that took place between Pakistan and Qatar. This LNG deal was a 16 Billion US Dollar sale and purchase project. He called this project as a “game changer” as per the coverage given to it by the local media. Sherani (2016) described the LNG agreement between Pakistan and Qatar as a mammoth deal as according to his research this agreement will be a source of about 200 percent increase in the gas prices for the users in Pakistan. This deal was properly analyzed and framed by media, resulting in dissatisfaction from National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and in the political spheres of the country. Because of this framing and analysis by media of Pakistan, this deal resulted in cases against the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, and, as a result of these cases, he was put into the jail. (Sherani, 2016)

Mohsin (2009) conducted an elaborate study for describing the media coverage of Rental Power Project. Because of increased deficiency in energy sector and due to increase in load shedding, rental power plants were installed in Pakistan during the government of Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in 2007. These plants are installed even in developed countries like UK for emergency and short requirements of the state. This project was analyzed and framed by Media of Pakistan. According to Mohsin (2009), due to wrong analyses and framing, this project was not utilized in a proper way.

2.2 China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

Zeb (2013) described the friendship between the two neighboring countries China and Pakistan, delineated by the leadership of the two countries as higher than mountains, deeper than the oceans, and of late, sweeter than honey, is an exceptional case in the international system of states we dwell in, nevertheless the cooperation is based on firm realistic and geostrategic measurements. Awan (2020) explained that on May 21, 1951 formal and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China took place. Just after three months of its liberation, it was on January 4, 1950 that the high-level delegation from the Republic of China visited its neighboring Pakistan. The roots of this friendship between Pakistan and China can be traced back centuries ago, when traders reached to Europe and Middle East via the land (Pakistan). Fa Xian and Xuan Zang who were the renowned monks of China passed almost 2000 years ago via areas which later on became country known as Pakistan.

Jargad (2021), while explaining the relations between Pakistan and China, quoted that the 70 years of long lasting and evergreen diplomatic relations between the two neighbors was celebrated on May 22, 2021. On the same day, while inaugurating the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant Unit-2 (that works on the Hualong One reactor constructed by Republic of China), glorified the standards of this long lasting and evergreen partnership and the developmental aspects of the extraordinary project China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Amir (2020), while describing the relations of Pakistan and China points out that according to media reports, the complexion of this ever-green and long-lasting partnership rotates around cooperation of

economic aspects, there is also evident an overwhelming military collaboration between the two neighboring states engaging in arms agreements, combined exercises, and defense accords.

While researching on the need of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Aslam, Li and Baig (2019) stated that it is evident that China is the second largest economy of the world. China transports 40% percent of its goods to other parts of the world through South China Sea, which is not a safe route because of tensions over it and the presence of United States of America (USA) forces near it. Moreover, this route is long, which takes much time and is costly. For this purpose, they need a short and secure route. Through Gawadar China can export its goods to world in short span of time and with least cost. For this purpose, China envisioned China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). (Aslam, Li and Baig, 2019)

Haider (2021), in his article while describing about the total cost of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), states that Kanwal Shauzab, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Development told the lower house of the Parliament that total cost of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has reached to approximately 50 billion US Dollars. ML-1 project is included in this amount. According to the author, projects costing 11 Billion Dollars are already completed. Thirteen projects, which are of 18 Billion dollars of cost, are in the process of development. Moreover, 22 projects are in the pipeline. Ramay (2020), in his research shed light on the energy projects that will take place under the umbrella of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). China through CPEC project is largely investing in the hydroelectric power, solar and wind power projects. 1595 megawatts that will be generated from hydroelectric power will be part of national grid by 2022.

In a comprehensive research that was carried on to tackle the infrastructure projects that has to be completed under the umbrella of CPEC, Muhammad Muzammil Zia (Policy Head Job Growth, Centre of Excellence CPEC) and Shuja Waqar (Research Assistant, Job Growth, Centre of Excellence CPEC) (2017) shed light on the developments of several infrastructural projects. These include the Mulatan-Sukkur Section of Pechawar-Karachi Motorway is described as the biggest project regarding transportation infrastructure under the beacon of CPEC.

CPEC will create number of jobs for the population of Pakistan, according to Sulleri (2020) China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has the capability to create more than 2.3 million jobs by 2030. There are eighty-eight projects that will be carried under the umbrella of CPEC costing billions of dollars. Eighteen out of eight-eight projects are completed, 28 projects are in the process of completion and the remaining 41 CPEC projects are in the pipeline. Even during the era of pandemic of Covid-19, 47000 Pakistanis were working in different CPEC projects. (Sulleri, 2020)

Mirza and Ullah (2019) did an elaborate study to find out the impact of CPEC on the Economy of Pakistan, ultimately increasing its GDP. According to their study, the targeted increase in the GDP of Pakistan by 2030 is 7.5% comparing it to the inauguration of CPEC back in 2013 that was only 2.3%. According to this study, there will be an increase of about two million jobs in the market by 2030. Moreover, there will be (50 to 60%) rapid Urbanization by 2025. Hurley, Morris, and Portelance (2018), in their research work on CPEC described that OneBelt One Road Initiative OBOR was formally adopted under the constitution of People's Republic of China on 24th of October 2017. It means China wants to enhance its global powerby the use of

soft power i.e., trade rather than the coercive measures. Irshad, Xin and Arshad, (2015) did an elaborated study on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor and its impact on the socioeconomic and political aspects of Pakistan. According to their study, CPEC will boost the economy of Pakistan as according to the design of CPEC a number of Industrial and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will be constructed.

Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, (2018) are working in a well reputed think tank “Center for Global Development” which is based in Washington did research regarding BRI and its implications on the economy of the investing country. They examined the various countries where several projects of BRI are completed and various are under process. In their study, they examined the 68 countries where these projects either are completed or are in the process of completion. In these 68 countries, 23 are facing severe danger of debt distress and shows that further eight countries are on the brink of Chinese debt trap diplomacy. Marlow, (2018) conducted an elaborate study on the investment on China in CPEC and various other projects. According to his study, China is keeping all the investments in secrecy, which are raising doubts on the intentions of China in these projects. According to this study, China was officially invited to the Paris Club many times, where China was asked to tell about the investments so that it can be published and made accessible to the public. Nevertheless, China refused to do so. Here, the doubt of debt trap diplomacy arises and in practical cases this doubt in given a practical shape by China when Sri Lanka and African countries were not able to give back the debt so that their ports were taken by China on cease for about 100 years.

Scott and David, (2015) carried elaborated study on Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC. According to their study, President Xi Jinping has given lots of importance to BRI. This is the vision of President Xi and because of this vision, he is considered as the rebirth of Mao. After adopted in the constitution, BRI has given the center place in the foreign as well as national policies in China.

2.3 Framing Analysis and Print Media

Framing clarifies that effective communication has the ability to construct realities (Entman 1993). Agenda setting theory revolves around the axis of framing. Khabaz (2018) did researches during and after the Brexit issue in the United Kingdom. Through his several researches, he describes that according to the analysis of content of several leading and most circulated Newspapers in United Kingdom (UK), evidences are found that there was substantial level of support for the pro-exit movement. This took place to determine that whether United Kingdom should stay in European Union (EU) or should leave the union. The influence of national newspapers of UK through the use of reiterate frames that accentuated long-established concerns that circulated around sovereignty, democracy etc. can be seen on the outcome of Referendum. (Khabaz, 2018) Research shows that Brexit was framed by media from the perspective that the people called for referendum and as a result of this referendum, they voted infavour of a formal exit from the European Union. Hence, media framing is considered as an essential tool in this regard.

Gheorghiu (2019) conducted research regarding the British exit from the European Union and the role of media framing in this exit. According to his research, the formal and long- standing

relations between European Union and United Kingdom (UK) took place in 2016 after a public referendum against this bond between the two. The important aspect, according to Gheorghiu (2019), which should be carefully observed, is the causes that led to a referendum against this EU membership. It is urged that the British media especially newspapers led to framing that enabled the citizens to be a part in the construction of this sociological process that have grave impacts and outcomes on them. Media played enormous job in choreographing the masses' preferences.

Dekavalla (2016) analyzed the referendum that took place in Scotland for the purpose of independence from United Kingdom (UK) and the role of press in framing the campaigns that took place during the referendum debate. Delineating from an empirical analysis of the coverage given by leading newspapers during the referendum in Scotland in 2014 and from earlier elaborated studies that were carried regarding the campaigns in various contexts, it comes to conclusion that frames related with elections, similar to the policy frames and strategic games, were also prominent in the framing of the referendum. It induces that by framing the freedom argument in same terms as other electoral contests, the press (newspapers) advanced an understanding of this occurrence as being about realistic decision-making on political contest and policy, rather than merely a decision about constitutive questions of independence (self-determination).

McNair (2015) did an elaborated study regarding the role of framing in injecting certain type of specified agenda in the minds of audience. This study concluded that press plays a very pivotal role in framing of certain policies and agendas of the government and also guides the masses in a desired manner so that they may align their thoughts, behaviors and actions in favor of or against specific ideologies and policies.

2.4 Framing of CPEC through international Newspapers

In this section, a comprehensive review of literature has been carried out in order to find out the Framing of China Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) by international leading newspapers of different countries about different aspects of CPEC that will be carried on under the umbrella of CPEC like power projects, issues related to economic growth, debt trap diplomacy, regional and international peace and security, employment opportunities, access to Central Asian Republics (CARS), reaction of neighbors and international society towards CPEC, etc.

Xiaiquang (2017) working in China Daily a well reputed and circulated newspaper of China wrote in his story in Daily China regarding CPEC that China and Pakistan shares a long history of good relations now through CPEC will be more closer. This project will not only enable China to reach to the markets of the world but will also benefit Pakistan through numerous projects of energy that will fulfill the needs of Pakistan, similarly through a series of transportation projects the infrastructure of Pakistan will be upgraded enabling its war-torn economy to rebuild.

Aslam, Ali and Farooq, (2018) examined the leading Newspapers of India (Indian Express and The Hindu) and analyzed framing of CPEC from 2016 to 2018 in these Indian newspapers. According to the content analysis of the two above mentioned newspapers, Pakistan and China are trying to undermine the regional position through the project of CPEC. India is making CPEC

controversial by arguing that CPEC is passed through the disputed region between India and Pakistan and that China want to achieve its illegitimate motives in the region through CPEC. Moreover, on many instances, Indian print media (The Hindu and The Indian Express) framed propaganda against CPEC in term of the deployment of Chinese Army in Gawadar and tried to link it as a preparation of future possible raids on India.

Ranjan (2015) is optimistic about CPEC and argues that if India like the other (almost sixty countries) endorses CPEC and becomes its part it can be a source of stability of the region in the longer run. Moreover, India can become a family of more than sixty countries of republics and can benefit from its markets. According to a study that was carried by Hameed and Shehzad (2020), the content of several international newspapers were analyzed. The New York Times, which is a leading newspaper of the USA, wrote only six articles in the year 2013 and two articles in the year 2014 on CPEC. After analysis of its data, it was observed that they had

positively framed CPEC calling it a step towards regional prosperity and an effort to eradicate poverty.

The review of existing literature points out the importance of newspaper-induced framing for building public opinion in a certain manner. However, the literature also indicates that there is a dearth of academic research about the relevance, framing and reception and reception of newspaper content related to CPEC in general, and, particularly in Pakistan.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research has been conducted in the light of Goffman's idea of 'Framing' that how this CPEC project is being represented in mainstream English and Urdu newspapers of Pakistan.

3.1 Framing

The Framing theory is proposed by Goffman (1974) that elaborates a "systematic description regarding our uses of expectations to make sense of everyday life situations and the people in them" (Baron & Davis, 2003:274 as cited Saleem and Ahmad). Social experience is managed by frames, which he defines as principles of organization, which govern the subjective meanings we assign to social events (Goffman, 1974:11 as cited Saleem & Ahmad). Framing is a significant concept, assisting us in understanding; how an incident or event is represented or portrayed in the media content. According to Gitlin (1980), media frames are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual". He proposes that if the media are considered as mirrors, "it ought to be as "mirror in a fun house". In addition, according to him, framing of an event is inclined by which many parts of information are included in or excluded from a story. He (1980) says, "Media are mobile spotlights, not passive mirrors of the

society; selectivity is the instrument of their action. A news story adopts a certain frame and rejects or downplays material that is discrepant. A story is a choice, a way of screening from sight” (Gitlin, 1980 cited in Iqbal (2007). In the words of Tankard et al. (1991) “framing stems from a process of “selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration,” (p.3). According to Entman (1994), “Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in communication text in such a way to promote certain problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” Iqbal (2007). Hence, the concept of framing provides a particular direction to news story accounting definite meanings to its readers regarding an issue.

3.2 Relevance of Framing Theory to the Research

The concept of “framing” is considerable for this study because, it assists to understand the representation of CPEC in selected newspapers of the recent times. Pakistani media has been portraying CPEC project from its commencements by establishing different frames of its contents, which provide an environment to let the public consider this project as a critical initiative. Thus, researchers have implemented this idea of “Framing” and divided news stories about the project published on front and back pages of selected mainstream newspapers i.e. DailyDawn and Jang into various frames to analyze how these newspapers framed this project from January 2020 to June 2021. The second part of the research has been conducted to analyze whether there is a resonance between the newspaper-induced framing of CPEC and the perception of people about the project.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the current study consists of two parts, the research has been conducted in two steps by using two different quantitative research methods. The research techniques employed in this study are Content Analysis and Survey Method.

4.1 Content Analysis

Content Analysis is a method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from the text (Weber, 1990). It (content analysis) permits and objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication. (Besrison, 1952: cited in Gul, 1998) Kerlinger (1986) has defined it as; "Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (Cited in Wimmer, 1994: 163-164 as cited in Chaudhry, 2008). Content analysis is perhaps the most widely used starting point in analyzing, media texts. This type of research is concerned with the frequency of words and expressions in selected texts, and the task for the researcher is to categorize and count the news systematically in order to reveal bias in the text material. It is frequently assumed that content analysis is exclusively quantitative, but the method is used for qualitative purposes as well. This method is popular with mass media researchers as it provides an efficient way to investigate the content of the media qualitatively and quantitatively such as news, editorials, advertisements etc in print media. The purpose of the method is to

identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, and through this, to be able to say something about the message, representations of such texts and their significance. Berelson (1952) defines quantitative content analysis as, "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (cited in Chudhry, 2008).

4.1.1 Steps executed for Content Analysis

In studying and analyzing news representation of CPEC in two mainstream newspapers of Pakistan from January 2020 to June 2021, the researchers have followed the sequence of steps adopted from Wimmer, (1994:167-168) as cited in Chaudhry, (2008):

1. Research Questions and Hypotheses were designed to explore the newsrepresentation of CPEC in Daily Dawn and Jang
2. The two mainstream newspapers of Pakistan (Daily Dawn, Jang) were defined as "universe" for the treatise
3. All news stories published on the front and back pages of selected newspapers are considered as "population" of the study.
4. All news stories related to CPEC is sample of the study; during selected time period i.e. 1st January 2020 to 30th June 2021
5. Each news story about CPEC published on the front and back pages of selected newspapers during specified time period is considered as "unit of analysis"
6. "Categories" were designed and operationalized for each news type
7. "Directions of the contents" were defined as "favorable", "unfavorable" and "Neutral"
8. Pilot study and the "Coding of the contents" were done on a purposefully designed coding sheet. Following are the major variables that were identified for Coding purposes:
 - a. The name of the newspaper being examined
 - b. Sources: (A. reporters, B. correspondents, C. agencies, D. multi, E. monitoring, F. online)
 - c. Picture: (A. with-picture, B. without picture)
 - d. News story placement: (A. upper-half, B. lower-half)
 - e. Columns in news story: (A. single, B. double, C. Triple, D. four, E. five, F. six)
 - f. News categories: (A. trade and economy, B. energy and power sector, C. regional peace and security, D. corridor to CARS, E. response of national and international stakeholders)
 - g. Direction/ tone of news (A. favorable, B. unfavorable, C. neutral)
9. The collected data was presented (in logically arranged tables) and analyzed
10. In the last, the "conclusion" was derived from the findings of the study

4.1.2 Research Questions

A research question is a formally stated question intended to provide indications about something, and it is no limited to investigate relationships between variables (Wimmer, 1994:24 as cited in

Chaudhry, 2008). Two research questions were formulated regarding representation of CPEC in selected newspapers and time period.

4.1.3 Universe of the Study

By clearly specifying the topic area and the time period, the researchers have provided a basic requirement of content analysis: a concise statement that spells out the parameters of the investigation (as cited in Chaudhry, 2008). This study considers the news contents of two major newspapers of Pakistani press, Daily Dawn, Jang from 1st January 2020 to 30th June 2021.

4.1.4 Sample of the Study

Due to the nature and requirement of the study, the researchers have considered all news stories published regarding CPEC project as sample; on front and back pages of selected newspapers (Daily Dawn and Jang) within the specified time period i.e. from January 2020 to June 2021 for adequately drawing meaningful inferences.

4.1.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis and unit of coding in this study is "news stories" regarding CPEC project; published on front and back pages of Daily Dawn and Jang during selected months.

4.1.6 Categorization, Operationalization, Direction

CPEC is considered to be a very vast project. Therefore, it was needed to categorize the diverse range of issues into mutually exclusive, exhaustive and reliable categories before quantitative analysis. For evaluating the nature, degree, extent, frequency and stance of the news regarding CPEC project, the researchers have constructed the following categories:

A. Trade and Economy:

It includes all news regarding projects that will boost up the economy of Pakistan. Moreover, the benefits, expenditure and completion of trade and economic projects of CPEC are also included in this category.

B. Energy and Power Sector:

It includes all news consisting of energy and power sector. The progress, outcome, and pros and cons of the power sector of these projects will be included as well.

C. Regional Peace and Security:

It includes all news related to regional peace and security. It will be covering all news that discuss this flagship project will affect regional peace and security.

D. Corridors to CARs:

It includes all news about the project expansion to Central Asian Republics (CARs). Moreover, the benefits after linking CPEC with CARs will be included in this category.

E. Response of National and International Stakeholders:

Here the various positive, negative and neutral responses of government, opposition, military, traders and Chinese representatives/government towards CPEC project will be included.

Direction of the Contents for Category (A, B, C, D and E)

The researchers mainly relied on the 'over-all tone' of the news to find out the direction or stance. To determine the 'total impression', different phrases, frames, ideologies, idioms, catchy words, themes, adjectives, slogans and tone (favorable, unfavorable, neutral) were observed in the content of news stories. This textual analysis is an interpretative approach ahead to take forth the meaning of both manifest and latent contents formed within a specific text and appearing from a particular culture and time. (Elul, 2000: 54 as cited in Chaudhry, 2008). To determine the direction of the news content, data was evaluated on a three-point scale as "Favorable", "Unfavorable" and "Neutral".

a. Favorable:

Any news appeared on front pages of Daily Dawn and Jang during the study period, regarding CPEC project will be considered "Favorable" if its general stance supports directly government, by its content and is against the spoilers of CPEC project.

b. Unfavorable:

Any news appeared on front pages of Daily Dawn and Jang during the study period, regarding CPEC project will be considered "Unfavorable" if its general stance is negatively portray, criticize the issue in its analysis along with suggestions, against CPEC project through its content and support agenda of the proxies that are against the CPEC project.

c. Neutral

Any news appeared on front pages of Daily Dawn and Jang during the study period, regarding CPEC project will be considered as "Neutral" if its general stance is simply interpretative without having any favorable or unfavorable posture.

4.1.7 Coding and Reliability:

In this study, researchers designated the task of performing the coding to only one researcher in order to ensure that no issues of reliability arise during the research. The researchers also studied the news stories about CPEC, to recognize the categories, their directions and analyze them. In order to have, classification mutually exclusive, decisions were made based on contents potentially about the topics and assessments of the coders. Some news sometimes falls in some other category, which is directly, or indirectly related to its main subject. For such news, decision about the contents was made on the basis of headline, frequency of ideas, words, sentences on a particular topics and (central theme) or central idea or the overall impression of the coder based on attributes mentioned in the previous lines. Mostly, the headline also helped in finalizing the category of the contents (Wimmer and Dominick, 1991:165 as cited in Chaudhry, 2008)

4.2 Survey Method

In the second part of the study, online Survey Method was used to explore and analyze the perception of the public about the CPEC project.

4.2.1 Research Tool

For this study, a questionnaire has been used as the Research Tool developed mostly at Five Point Likert Scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” Likert scale is the most common scale used in mass media research. It is also known as ‘Summated Rating Approach’ or ‘Additive Scales’. The carefully designed questionnaire was used to gather data from the sample.

4.2.2 Population

The Population of the research is defined as the complete group of people or objects to which the researcher desires to generalize the findings of the study. The people belonging to Pakistan who categorize themselves as newspaper readers are considered to be the population of this research.

4.2.3 Sampling

Sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them and estimate characteristics of the whole population.

Different sampling methods are widely used by researchers in their research so that they do not need to research the entire population to collect actionable insights. It is also a time-convenient and a cost-effective method and hence forms the basis of any research design. The sample of this study was based upon 300 respondents. The researchers adopted Purposive Sampling Technique through which data was collected from social media users. A purposive sample also referred to as a judgmental or expert sample, is a type of non-probability sample. The main objective of a purposive sample is to produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population. The criterion of choosing the sample for this research involved a Pakistani newspaper reader who has been exposed to the Daily Dawn and Jang in the past 2 years.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics were used to analyze the data in an elaborate manner. Significant interpretations were extracted once the data collection was completed.

5. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Framing of CPEC in Dawn

According to the data, 43 news stories were published on CPEC project by “Dawn” from January 2020 to June 2021. 11 news are published on upper-halves and 32 on lower-halves. 13 of the news stories had pictures and 30 were published without pictures. These news stories varied in columns as: 9 news were presented in double column, 4 in triple columns, 27 in four columns, 3 in five

columns, and none in one and six columns. The sources of 31 news were found to be reporters, 1 news was collected from agency and 11 news were gathered from correspondences, no news was gathered from monitoring and online sources. During this time, total favorable, unfavorable and neutral news were 32, 5 and 6 respectively. The further division of categories revealed that news stories about trade and economy were 10 with 7 favorable, 3 neutral and no unfavorable in stance. There were about 24 news reported on energy and power sector in which 10 were favorable, 2 unfavorable and 2 were neutral in nature. While 8 news were published about regional peace and security with 8 favorable and no news as unfavorable and neutral. Moreover, 5 news stories were reported on Corridor to CARs with 4 in favor, 1 unfavorable and none as neutral. There were 6 news reported about response of national and international stakeholders with 3 as favorable, 2 unfavorable and 1 as neutral.

The descriptive statistical analysis also showed the data in percentages; the sources of 72.09 % news were reporters, while 25.58 % news stories were filed by correspondences, 2.32 % news were collected from agencies. 30.23 % news stories were published with pictures and 69.76% were without pictures. 25.58% news items were published on upper-half and 74.41% on lower-half. 20.93% of news were published in double columns, 9.30% in triple columns, 62.79% news in four columns and 6.97% in five columns. The news categorization reflected that there were 23.25% news on trade and economy with 16.27% favorable and 6.97% as neutral. 32.55% news stories were about energy and power sector 23.25% as favorable, 16.27% as unfavorable and 4.65 as neutral. 18.60% news items were on regional peace and security with 100% as favorable. Similarly, 11.62% news stories were published on corridor to CARs with 9.30% as favorable, 2.32% as unfavorable. 13.95% news stories were on response of national and international stakeholders with 6.97% as favorable, 4.65% as unfavorable and 2.32% as neutral. However, there are 74.41% favorable news, 11.62% unfavorable and 13.95% neutral in nature.

5.2 Framing of CPEC in Jang

Data gathered through the coding sheet reveals that 19 news related to CPEC project were published on the front and back pages by “Jang” from January 2020 to June 2021; 2 news stories were published with pictures and 17 without pictures. 10 news were noticed on upper-halves and 9 on lower-halves. 6 news had single columns, 5 had double columns, 8 had four columns and no news was presented in three, five and six columns. 11 news are filed by reporters, 8 by correspondence, and no news was acquired from multi, monitoring and online sources. Moreover, stances of these news stories presented 17 favorable, 2 unfavorable and none as neutral news in nature. On the other hand, category of trade and economy demonstrated 6 news with all as favorable. Category of energy and power sector demonstrated 4 news with all the 4 news as favorable in nature. Total news on regional peace and security were 4 news with 3 as favorable, 1 unfavorable and none as neutral. Moreover, 2 news were published about corridor to CARs with all favorable in nature.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis showed the data in percentages; the sources of 57.89% news are reporters, while 42.10% news stories have been filed by correspondents. 10.52% news

stories were published with pictures and 89.47% without pictures. 52.63% news items were published on upper-half and 47.36% on lower half. 31.57% news stories were published in single columns 26.31% in double columns, 42.10% in fourth columns. The news categorization reflected 31.57% news on trade and economy with 100% favorable stance. 21.05% news items were on energy and power sector with 100 % favorable framing. 21.05 % news stories were on regional peace and security with 15.79 % as favorable and 5.26 as unfavorable coverage. Moreover, 10.52% news items were published on corridor to CARs with 100% favorable coverage. The category of response of national and international stakeholders had 15.78% news with 10.52% as favorable and 5.26 as unfavorable stance. It is also important to notice that among the total news stories, there were 89.47% favorable news, 10.52% were categorized as unfavorable news and none as neutral in nature.

5.3 Perception Analysis: Findings of Survey

After conducting the survey more, the descriptive statistical analysis revealed that more than 80% of the respondents marked that they knew about the CPEC project. This means that people who were reading Dawn and Jang regularly were more inclined about knowing CPEC project. Similarly, the findings suggested that more than 80% of the respondents believed that the CPEC project would boost up the economy of Pakistan. This means that people who were frequent readers of Dawn and Jang strongly believed that the CPEC project would enhance the economy of Pakistan. Moreover, a massive majority of the respondents (92.5%) believed that the CPEC project would enhance regional peace and security. The findings suggested that 91.7% of the respondents were more inclined towards the stance that the CPEC project would be a positive step to the development of power and energy sector of Pakistan. A key finding of the survey suggests that 86% of the respondents believed that CPEC is garnering favorable support from all the political parties of Pakistan. This means that people who were reading Dawn and Jang regularly were more adamant on the notion that CPEC gets massive support from all political parties of Pakistan.

5.4 Interpretation

In the light of findings it can be interpreted that H_1 has been proved as the Dawn has given more coverage to news about CPEC as compared to Jang. Similarly, H_2 and H_3 have also been accepted as Dawn has given more favorable and more prominent coverage to CPEC news in its contents of front and back pages. However, these findings should not mean that the coverage and prominence given to CPEC news by Jang was insufficient. As far as H_4 is concerned, the frequent readers of Dawn and Jang were found to be more satisfied, more hopeful and more ambitious about the benefits and implementation of CPEC project in Pakistan. This means that there is a relationship between the way these papers framed CPEC through their news and the favorable ways in which the readers of these newspapers have received and understood CPEC as a project. Therefore, H_4 has been accepted and the null hypothesis has been rejected, as there is a clear and significant relationship between the two variables.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the comprehensive research about framing of CPEC in daily newspapers of Pakistan and the consequent public perception about the project, it can be inferred that even during the crucial times of Covid-19, the press of Pakistan has been giving sufficient amount of coverage to CPEC on the front and back pages of mainstream newspapers. In addition to this, the framing of these news stories has been highly favorable to the agenda and implementation of the project. Another noteworthy inference is the striking difference between the number of news stories published on the front and back pages of English and Urdu newspapers of Pakistan. The English newspapers give more coverage to such projects of multilateral importance as compared to the mainstream Urdu newspapers of the country. This factor is a clear insight into the distinctive policies and different orientations of readers of English and Urdu newspapers. Regardless of the difference in the number of news related to CPEC in English and Urdu newspapers, the framing of the project has been executed in an extremely positive manner. The success of this framing has also been proved with the help of survey conducted on the readers of these newspapers. Majority of the readers of the newspapers showed a positive stance about the economic, strategic and national importance of the CPEC project. Therefore, it can be concluded that framing through newspaper content is not only effective but can also be brought about in crucial times faced by the world. Through this study, it can also be deduced that despite the evident boom of electronic and digital media, the relevance and significance of the newspaper as a tool of mass communication cannot be denied. If consumed in a planned and organized manner, print media can still play a pivotal role in informing, educating, entertaining and shaping the opinions of masses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend that a longitudinal study, on CPEC project since its inception, can be very effective in understanding the concept of framing among the newspaper readers of Pakistan in a better manner. Moreover, more research work should be conducted in order to comparatively analyze multilateral projects in other parts of the world. In addition to this, electronic media content and digital media content should also be analyzed to complement the research of framing of CPEC through national and international media content.

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