

A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the 2024 Pakistani Election Manifestos

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Abstract

Manifestos are important for the public as they convey the perspectives and unique preferences of politicians. The present study aims to investigate how Pakistani politicians use election manifestos as manipulative tools to control the public cognitively. Adopting a mixed-method approach, we utilized a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach to critically examine the manifestos of major Pakistani political parties (PPP, PML-N, and PTI) published in "The Dawn" newspaper during the 2024 election. Using Sketch Engine, corpus data were analyzed in terms of Keywords, concordance, and frequency. The analysis in the light of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model revealed that political leaders use manifestos schematically to control public perception about essential issues and perpetuate their discursive ideologies and false promises. Political parties strategically leverage gender and religious issues to consolidate power and marginalize certain groups, using these topics not for genuine reform but to gain voter support while failing to deliver substantive changes. This study highlights the implications for future research on the enduring effects and comparative analyses of political rhetoric across various contexts.

Keywords: Manifesto, discursive practice, ideology, concordance, frequency, keywords

Introduction

Language is one of the crucial tools for the exhibition of power goals to achieve hegemonic influence in political actions (Chilton, 2004). Keeping with this perspective, the politicians practice power by using specially written discourse in the form of political party manifestos during their election campaigns. Manifestos are often perceived as straightforward declarations of policy and intention issued by political parties or candidates before elections. However, they serve as meticulously crafted instruments of ideological persuasion and cognitive control, designed to shape and manipulate public perception with calculated precision (Taylor, 2022).

Manifestos affect voter turnout, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (2008) reported, “There is a continuous decline in voters' turnout falling from 61.45% in the 1970 elections to 45% in the 2008 election” (Malghani, 2019, p.1). Although their role in political discourse is crucial, existing scholarship on political discourses often ignores their potential for manipulation, treating them as simple communication tools rather than sophisticated tools of political influence. This research argues that manifestos function as complex mechanisms for ideological manipulation and are crafted to embed political ideologies deep within the public consciousness to influence voter perceptions and reactions.

Recent developments in political communication underscore the need for a deeper examination of how language is employed not merely to reflect ideological positions but to shape and manipulate public opinion actively. Recent research suggests that technological advancements and evolving communicative practices have brought transformative shifts in political discourses. For instance, Charlotte Taylor (2022) has pointed out that traditional analytical methods may no longer adequately address the complexities of contemporary political language. Since modern political figures utilize an array of discourses, advanced corpus linguistics tools such as concordance, collocations, and keyword comparisons can be helpful for how language constructs persuasive narratives and manages public perception.

To fully grasp the role of manifestos in constructing and maintaining power dynamics, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a vigorous framework by situating discourse within its sociocultural context to reveal how language reinforces political hierarchies and manipulates public awareness. In particular, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model illustrates how politicians strategically use language to sustain and legitimize their political status, presenting

their agendas as objective realities. The integration of Corpus Linguistics (CL) with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has the potential to enhance the analytical rigor of studies on political discourse significantly. This methodological synergy blends qualitative insights with quantitative precision (Baker et al., 2008), a combination that Hardt-Mautner (1995) aptly describes as a “natural match” (Haider, 2016, p.3). While previous research has examined Pakistani political discourse through CDA (Malghani, 2019) and CL (Mushtaq, 2021) separately, there is a pressing need for research that combines these methodologies. Such research is essential for dissecting the manipulative strategies embedded in political manifestos and providing a more comprehensive understanding of their impact.

Our study seeks to address this research gap by conducting a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the 2024 election manifestos of major Pakistani political parties—PPP, PML-N, and PTI—as published in *The Dawn*. This analysis will examine how these parties strategically employ language to exert cognitive control over the electorate. By employing corpus-driven techniques such as concordance, frequency analysis, and keyword examination in conjunction with van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model, we aim to reveal the sophisticated methods used to shape and manipulate public opinion through these manifestos.

Problem Statement

Political manifestos play a central role in shaping civic opinion and persuading electoral outcomes. However, these credentials seem candid pronouncements of politicians’ policy intents, but in reality, they are potent tools to disseminate ideology. Manifestos are neutral, apparently, and assist as mechanisms to implant embedded political ideologies in the public consciousness, subtly inducing their perceptions and behaviors. This questions the transparency and ethicality of political parties in present democratic societies. This is a need for research in the context of a lack of inclusive understanding regarding the manifesto’s manipulative ideological perspectives and the range of influence they have upon voters. The study will examine the artful strategies employed in crafting these manifestos and disentangle their complex role in ideological manipulation, which will be further helpful in contributing to their provocative part in creating a more conversant political discourse that has effective implications for the democratic process.

Research Question

Our research will address one question: How do Pakistani political manifestos employ strategic language to shape public consent and advance political goals, as revealed through concordances, frequency analysis, and keyword patterns?

This study shed light on the role of manifestos in shaping public perception and reinforcing ideological influence within political communication by critically examining the manipulative strategies embedded in Pakistani political manifestos.

Literature Review

The Synergy of Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Studies

Corpus linguistics is “the study of language based on examples of ‘real life’ language use” (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 1). The introduction of personal computers in the 1990s made this method popular. Corpus linguistics (CL) has chiefly been recognized as one of the crucial techniques for examining language in diverse fields. CL is a quantitative method used to analyze and process extensive, representative collections of texts. This approach supports developing more distance between the data and the researcher. However, CL also utilizes statistical tools to provide generalizable descriptions of the analyzed data, which is often decontextualized and may pose a risk to the reliability of the findings (Haider, 2016). The advent of corpus-assisted analysis has revolutionized our understanding of political and media discourse by offering insights into how language can manipulate public perception and reinforce power structures. This methodological development provides researchers with the tools to uncover hidden biases and strategic language use in discourse, which are often overlooked by traditional analytical methods (Mahlberg, 2014).

One seminal example of corpus-assisted analysis is the work of Paul Baker and Tony McEnery (2005), who used a comprehensive dataset from British newspapers and the UNHCR website to explore how discourses related to refugees and asylum seekers are circulated to shape the public. They utilized qualitative techniques to identify linguistic patterns associated with terms such as "refugee(s)" and "asylum seeker(s)"(p.1), revealing how these terms are embedded within semantic patterns that shape public perception. Building upon earlier corpus linguistics methodologies, Baker et al. (2008) expanded the scope of corpus-assisted discourse analysis by integrating it with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the representation of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (RASIM) in

British news media. They constructed a 140-million-word corpus of newspaper articles spanning several decades. They employed keyword analysis, collocation patterns, and concordance lines to assess how language shapes public perceptions and policy discourses regarding migration. Baker et al. (2008) found that RASIM groups were often constructed negatively in the press, and the discourses of threat, criminality, and economic burden dominated media representations. Findings revealed the use of lexical patterns such as “flooding” or “swarming” to reinforce fears of an uncontrollable influx and the use of the metaphorical language of natural disasters, such as “wave,” “flood,” and “influx” to suggest a crisis-oriented portrayal of migration. Also, collocational analysis revealed that terms such as “illegal” and “failed” were commonly associated with asylum seekers, reinforcing narratives of illegitimacy and suspicion. The study also found that right-leaning tabloids tend to depict RASIM more negatively than left-leaning broadsheets.

Furthermore, Baker et al. observed diachronic shifts in how RASIM groups were discussed and found an increasing polarization in media coverage, with some outlets adopting more sympathetic tones while others amplified securitization rhetoric, framing migration as a national security risk. Recently, there has been a growing scholarship that documents the use of corpora for analyzing representations of different social groups and issues, such as the representation of mental illness and obesity. Brookes et al. (2021) examine how UK newspapers frame obesity-related risks. Using a 36-million-word corpus (2008–2017); they identify ideological differences in risk representation across political affiliations and newspaper formats. For instance, right-leaning papers stress personal responsibility, whereas left-leaning ones critique institutions. The study reveals an increasing use of fear-based discourse to amplify individual accountability. These researchers argue for paying attention to media-driven public perceptions of health risks and how this discourse reinforces neoliberal ideals of self-regulation.

Recently, Price (2022) has employed corpus linguistics to analyze how mental illness is framed in UK newspapers, exploring linguistic patterns that shape public perceptions. The study uses keyword analysis, collocations, and concordance lines to reveal dominant narratives that often reinforce stigma, sensationalism, and medicalized discourse. Price highlights how specific linguistic choices contribute to either the pathologization or normalization of mental health issues. The researcher argues for paying attention to the role of language in shaping societal attitudes and policy approaches toward mental illness.

Hence, corpus-assisted analysis has proven essential in revealing how language reflects and perpetuates power dynamics and biases. This approach enhances our understanding of discourse and provides valuable tools for dissecting political and media narratives. Our research will extend these methodologies to analyze political manifestos, aiming to uncover how similar manipulative strategies shape public opinion and advance political agendas. Our approach includes analyzing concordance lines to explore contextualized political terms, their frequency, and their relational significance.

Decoding Political Power: Language in Manifestos

Political manifestos, as central documents in political discourse, offer critical insights into the exercise of power and manipulation through language. Widdowson (2000) asserts that manifestos reveal “the underlying prejudices and exercise of power within the text” (p. 157). According to van Dijk et al. (2023), manifestos are persuasive and strategic, employing rhetorical and discursive techniques to establish legitimacy, define collective identity, and delineate opposition. Meanwhile, political party manifestos focus on policy commitments and electoral strategies. These documents frequently construct a Us vs. Them dynamic, reinforcing ideological positions and advocating social or political change. Despite their significance, manifestos have been understudied as a discourse genre, with most analyses emphasizing their content rather than their structural and rhetorical properties. A critical discourse approach to manifestos reveals how they function as statements of belief and performative acts that shape public discourse and political engagement.

Internationally, there is a growing interest in digitalizing manifesto corpora. Merz et al. (2016) compiled a Manifesto Corpus, a digital resource that provides access to a multilingual, annotated collection of electoral manifestos from 40 countries. The authors highlight its utility for political scientists engaged in computational text analysis, allowing for large-scale studies of party ideologies, campaign rhetoric, and discursive strategies. The corpus provides meta-information such as party affiliation, election year, and language, facilitating cross-national comparisons.

Several scholars have paid attention to the use of election manifestos by political parties in Pakistan to propagate their ideas. For instance, Nadeem et al. (2014) examined how Pakistani political parties constructed ideology and persuasion in their election manifestos from 2008 to 2013. Their study focused on linguistic features such as agentless passive voice, pronoun usage (we/them), and thematic word frequencies, emphasizing recurring terms like

policy, growth, country, party, and health. They also highlighted how different political parties prioritize specific issues, noting that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) frequently uses words such as women, emphasizing gender inclusion and development. However, while the study provides valuable insights into rhetorical strategies and lexical choices, it remains primarily quantitative. It does not fully engage with the broader structural, ideological, and discursive patterns that define manifestos as a genre. Van Dijk et al. (2023) critique such approaches for being limited to word-level analysis without exploring the deeper ideological frameworks and argumentative structures embedded in manifestos.

Malghani et al. (2019) adopted a qualitative CDA approach to analyze how Pakistani political manifestos construct political identities, power relations, and ideological polarization. They focused on vagueness, pronoun usage (us vs. them distinctions), active and passive constructions, adjectives and adverbs, presuppositions, and modal verbs, illustrating how parties strategically frame their positions while attacking opponents. A key finding is that ideological polarization is a defining feature of Pakistani manifestos, where positive self-presentation of the party (ingroup) and negative portrayal of the opposition (outgroup) are recurrent themes. The study also discusses how parties manipulate discourse to appeal to nationalistic sentiments, align themselves with religious and democratic ideals, and justify policy proposals.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Farrukh and Masroor (2021) examine how Pakistani political manifestos legitimize authority using linguistic strategies. Drawing on Chilton's (2004) concept of legitimation and Van Leeuwen's (2008) authority legitimation framework, the authors analyze how political actors use language to justify dominance and reinforce ideological positions. The study reveals that power-holders strategically employ discourse to construct legitimacy, shape public perception, and strengthen ideological narratives.

Our research builds on these foundational studies by applying corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to Pakistani political manifestos. We aim to explore how Pakistani politicians employ manipulative language strategies in their manifestos to exert cognitive control over the public. By leveraging similar methodologies, we seek to uncover how language is used to influence public opinion and advance political agendas in the Pakistani context.

The Socio-Cognitive Approach

The Socio-Cognitive approach to discourse analysis offers a transformative lens for understanding the intricate relationship between language, power, and ideology. Van Dijk's 2017 analysis unveils a compelling dimension of discourse: the often-hidden assumptions and implicit knowledge that subtly shape public perception. At the heart of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1993; 2005) are three interlinked components: society, cognition, and discourse. Society operates at a macro level, examining the power dynamics between local actors and broader societal structures. Discourse functions on a micro level, where language structures encapsulate and communicate ideologies. Central to this framework is cognition, precisely ideology, which serves as the vital connection between societal contexts and discursive practices. Understanding this interplay is crucial for grasping how ideologies are shaped by and shape discourse.

The socio-cognitive approach is helpful in the context of political manifestos as it examines not only the content of political texts but also the cognitive mechanisms behind their creation and interpretation. This approach provides crucial insights into how politicians employ language to shape public perception and manipulate opinions through strategic discursive practices. By scrutinizing persuasive language and intentional omissions in manifestos, we aim to delineate how political messages are crafted to assert control and influence.

Methodology

Corpus Description

For this study, we compiled a specialized corpus consisting of political manifestos from the three major Pakistani political parties—the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)—as published in *The Dawn* newspaper during the 2024 election cycle. The total word count is approximately 14309 words.

We employed a corpus-based methodology to conduct a critical discourse analysis of election manifestos from the major political parties in Pakistan. For this study, fifteen manifestos of the PPP, PML-N, and PTI from the 2023 to 2024 election cycle were chosen through the purposive sampling method. These manifestos represent three dominating

political towers of the country, and their overall discourse manifests the typical political outlook and strategically ambiguous nature of political leaders to reign over the masses' minds to achieve their hegemonic goals. These manifestos, published in *The Dawn* newspaper, underscore how media discourse supports and propagates political agendas.

Our study employed quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze the assimilated data from the selected manifestos. We conducted a quantitative analysis using corpus-driven data from Sketch Engine, which provided us with statistical insights into language patterns. Concurrently, we supported this quantitative analysis with Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, applying it to interpret the manifestos' manipulative and strategic dimensions. This model enabled us to explore how politicians' condition and control public opinion through hegemonic language practices. We have utilized Sketch Engine to retrieve corpus-assisted data, including concordance lines, frequency distributions, and keywords, to uncover the political manifestos' underlying messages and manipulative strategies. By examining the concordance lines, we calculated frequency distributions. We related them to the list of keywords, which allowed us to extract relevant meanings and identify strategic language used in the manifestos. Apart from these, visualization functions as one of the unique tools of Sketch Engine, which helps visually explore and analyze linguistic data and assists qualitative analysis with the lens of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model. Our exploratory study aims to identify similarities and differences between the manifestos of various political parties. By leveraging corpus data, we effectively addressed our research questions and verified the strategic tools and tactics used by politicians.

Data Analysis

In the present study, we have retrieved frequency corpus data of lemmas from Sketch Engine for critical discourse analysis, employing an integrated research model as illustrated in Figure 1. This study concentrates on high-frequency lemmas, particularly pertinent to addressing the research questions.

Frequency of Nouns in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifesto (2024)

Figure 1

Frequency of 'Nouns' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Lemma	Frequency ² ↓	Lemma	Frequency ² ↓	Lemma	Frequency ² ↓	Lemma	Frequency ² ↓
1 the	910 ***	14 manifesto	141 ***	27 not	68 ***	40 this	51 ***
2 ,	809 ***	15 have	135 ***	28 as	67 ***	41 plan	48 ***
3 .	566 ***	16 on	133 ***	29 pti	65 ***	42 more	47 ***
4 to	473 ***	17 their	118 ***	30 by	65 ***	43 from	47 ***
5 and	450 ***	18 "	112 ***	31 also	62 ***	44 pml-n	46 ***
6 of	412 ***	19 woman	100 ***	32 pakistan	61 ***	45 would	46 ***
7 be	388 ***	20 election	99 ***	33 its	56 ***	46 education	44 ***
8 a	307 ***	21 political	92 ***	34 promise	54 ***	47 policy	44 ***
9 in	263 ***	22 with	91 ***	35 at	53 ***	48 do	43 ***
10 party	201 ***	23 '	86 ***	36 economic	52 ***	49 he	43 ***
11 for	179 ***	24 they	85 ***	37 -	52 ***	50 which	41 ***
12 that	149 ***	25 will	73 ***	38 but	52 ***		
13 [number]	146 ***	26 it	71 ***	39 say	51 ***		

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency analysis of nouns in Pakistani election manifestos, emphasizing the key themes and priorities highlighted by political parties. The terms *manifesto*, *women*, *election*, *political*, *Pakistan*, *economic*, *education*, and *policy* exhibit high frequencies. These terms reflect key ideological components within the political discourse, illustrating how politicians prioritize certain issues to shape public perception and garner support. The frequent use of these terms signals their strategic importance in framing ideological narratives and influencing voter opinions.

The term *manifesto* appears with the highest frequency of 141 occurrences, highlighting its central role in articulating the core ideological framework and policy promises intended to attract public attention. The emphasis on *education* and *economy* underscores their significance as fundamental components of political agendas, while *Pakistan* represents a focal point of national identity and unity within the manifestos.

Additionally, other terms such as *empowerment*, *challenges*, *campaign*, *change*, *commitment*, *implementation*, *inflation*, *electricity*, *rights*, *constitutional*, *social*, *moral*, *strategy*, *plan*, *violence*, *power*, and *equality* are used to construct public ideology and address various campaign issues. The variation in the frequency of these terms suggests their strategic use in highlighting specific ideological concerns and policy proposals.

A detailed concordance analysis will further illuminate how these high-frequency words are employed in various contexts, revealing politicians' underlying discursive

strategies and ideological practices. This analysis will provide a more nuanced understanding of how discourse is constructed to influence public opinion and achieve electoral success.

Frequency of Words in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifesto (2024)

Figure 2

Frequency of 'Words' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Lemma	Frequency ? ↓	Lemma	Frequency ? ↓	Lemma	Frequency ? ↓	Lemma	Frequency ? ↓
make	41 ***	64 what	33 ***	77 ?	25 ***	90 some	21 ***
voter	38 ***	65 issue	32 ***	78 power	25 ***	91 dawn	20 ***
government	38 ***	66 year	32 ***	79 right	24 ***	92 however	20 ***
country	38 ***	67 other	32 ***	80 social	24 ***	93 publish	20 ***
these	37 ***	68 :	32 ***	81 than	23 ***	94 measure	20 ***
need	37 ***	69 only	31 ***	82 ensure	23 ***	95 come	19 ***
address	37 ***	70 all	31 ***	83 them	22 ***	96 over	19 ***
ppp	36 ***	71 can	29 ***	84 day	22 ***	97 candidate	19 ***
there	36 ***	72 one	29 ***	85 focus	22 ***	98 include	19 ***
(36 ***	73 how	28 ***	86 development	22 ***	99 national	19 ***
)	36 ***	74 about	27 ***	87 no	21 ***	100 health	18 ***
or	35 ***	75 while	27 ***	88 give	21 ***		
should	34 ***	76 if	26 ***	89 system	21 ***		

Figure 2 illustrates the most frequently occurring nouns in the corpus of Pakistani election manifestos from 2024, as analyzed using Sketch Engine.

Comparative Lexical Frequency

Figure 3

'Comparative Lexical Frequency' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Lemma	Frequency ? ↓	Lemma	Frequency ? ↓	Lemma	Frequency ? ↓
01 minister	18 ***	118 law	16 ***	135 hold	15 ***
02 add	18 ***	119 people	16 ***	136 when	15 ***
03 pledge	18 ***	120 propose	16 ***	137 good	15 ***
04 after	18 ***	121 during	16 ***	138 commitment	15 ***
05 general	18 ***	122 gender	16 ***	139 through	14 ***
06 leader	18 ***	123 up	16 ***	140 reform	14 ***
07 his	18 ***	124 per	16 ***	141 area	14 ***
08 khan	17 ***	125 into	16 ***	142 empowerment	14 ***
09 such	17 ***	126 rally	16 ***	143 take	14 ***
10 go	17 ***	127 access	15 ***	144 base	14 ***
11 may	17 ***	128 before	15 ***	145 public	14 ***
12 increase	17 ***	129 we	15 ***	146 vote	14 ***
13 time	17 ***	130 improve	15 ***	147 out	14 ***
14 electricity	17 ***	131 well	15 ***	148 who	14 ***
15 implement	16 ***	132 price	15 ***	149 consider	14 ***
16 like	16 ***	133 three	15 ***	150 many	13 ***

Figure 3 presents a comparative lexical frequency analysis of Pakistani election manifestos from 2024. A Comparative Lexical Frequency analysis in Sketch Engine makes it possible to compare the frequency of words or phrases across multiple corpora or sub corpora. The frequency list of words indicates that in alignment with their manifestos, party leaders (such as those from PPP and Khan) are focusing on strategic government reforms to advance social and national development. By framing themselves as "reformers" and the general populace as passive recipients, these leaders are shaping power dynamics to reinforce their positions. Their discourse prominently features women's empowerment, gender equity, electricity reforms, and healthcare improvements. These issues are strategically emphasized to align with their political vision and secure electoral success. By showcasing their proposed reforms, they aim to build credibility and garner support from voters.

The leaders also highlight improvements from previous government tenures as evidence of their capability to effect change. They seek to persuade the public to endorse their vision for political and national transformation. Media outlets, such as Dawn newspaper, are amplifying these narratives, presenting past developmental policies that influence public opinion and promote positive voting behavior. While publicly advocating for respect for voting rights, these leaders effectively function as "consent manufacturers," utilizing media discourse to subtly shape and control public perceptions to consolidate their power. Through strategic communication and commitment to their political agendas, they establish a firm hold on public opinion, utilizing the power of narrative to reinforce their influence and sway voter sentiments.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Manifestos'

Figure 4

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Manifestos' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Feb2024 In the five-year marriage of the 'hukamraan' and the 'awaam', **manifestos** are the wedding vows. Published February 6, 2024 With just tv
n political parties have finally unveiled their rather ambitious election **manifestos** – a list of mostly empty promises. An election manifesto is a
ion manifestos – a list of mostly empty promises. An election **manifesto** is a list of policies that a political party vows to enact if it is voted into
t simply, in the five-year marriage of the 'hukamraan' and the 'awaam', **manifestos** are the wedding vows. If crafted smartly, they can bridge the g
ered voters in the country. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, election **manifestos** have become more of a strict ritual than a meaningful exercise. The
a large segment of voters do not bother much about reading election **manifestos** to make up their mind on voting or not voting for a party. "The
parties including the PML-N, PPP and PTI only recently unveiled their **manifesto** , a few days before the elections. And, as usual, they lack an a
PML-N, which has been dubbed the 'king's party' this year, its election **manifesto** on January 27. Among several other promises, the party, with
Will create 10m jobs' Another pledge that Nawaz made in his **manifesto** was to bring the unemployment rate to 5pc by creating at least 10 mi
PML-N, none of the parties had given an action plan along with their **manifestos** , which he stressed was the most important. "Will they go to th
in the right positions to drive the nation forward," the party's election **manifesto** says. However, Dawn's Islamabad bureau chief Amir Wasim sa
eau chief Amir Wasim said that no matter what the PTI writes in their **manifesto** , the reality is that the party would not have any representation in the
ore the general elections in 2018, Imran Khan had unveiled his party's **manifesto** that carried an elaborate plan to transform the country into 'Naya Pak
FI, and JI have a section dedicated to women's empowerment in their **manifestos** . Notably, the PPP has pledged to establish a 'code of conduc
d political analyst Amber Rahim Shamsi tells Dawn.com that election **manifestos** are like "fine print-in contracts" that no one reads in detail, and politici

Figure 4 presents a concordance analysis of the word *manifesto*, illustrating how it is strategically used across different political party documents to support their electoral narratives and objectives. The concordance technique in Sketch Engine allows for examining the word in its immediate textual context by displaying keyword-in-context (KWIC) lines. The concordance analysis of the word "manifesto" highlights its strategic use in meeting the political objectives of various parties. It reveals how the term functions not only as a promise to the electorate but also as a rhetorical tool designed to serve the politicians' interests. In their discourse, political leaders compare their manifestos to a "wedding vow" for the "*awaam*" (general public), presenting it as a promise or treat for the people. However, this comparison is strategically employed to manipulate public perception and secure votes rather than genuinely addressing public needs. Despite the appearance of generous ambitions to serve the public, Van Dijk (1998) argues that such discourse often serves to relate the power of ambition to rhetoric, ultimately deceiving the public.

The manifestos are portrayed as a "*hukmaran-awam marriage*" with a material five-year term, suggesting that these promises are designed for short-term political gain rather than long-term commitment. Leaders encourage the public to vote based on pledges such as PML-N's promise to create 10 million jobs to address unemployment and meet public demands. They also emphasize "new reforming action plans," claiming that this time, there will be no "poor strict relation" between politicians and the public. Manifestos are thus presented as containing detailed action plans aimed at bringing "revolutionary change." However, these documents are likened to "fine print in contracts," which are often subject to interpretation and may not fully align with public concerns. Imran Khan's pledges to transform the country into "Naya Pakistan" and PPP's focus on women's empowerment are examples of how political slogans are used discursively to advance each party's agenda.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Pakistan'

Figure 6

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Pakistan' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)



Figure 6 presents a concordance analysis of the word *Pakistan*, highlighting its contextual usage across political manifestos. In political discourse, the term "Pakistan" is employed to project the image of a robust economy solely under their control. Politicians emphasize a departure from past practices, highlighting their commitment to legislative development aligned with their manifesto's principles. The frequent use of the term underscores their focus on economic stability and addressing issues such as inflation, with the average inflation forecast from the State Bank supporting their agenda to reduce inflation for public benefit. The slogan "*istehkam-e-Pakistan*" (stability of Pakistan) is a priority, yet PTI's promise of "*Naya Pakistan*" appears increasingly distant and forgotten by the public. Key issues such as power generation and electricity crises are top priorities for political leaders aimed at resolving public concerns. However, no party demonstrates genuine grassroots efforts to improve the country, reflecting a discursive practice characterized by grandiose promises that often fail to materialize after elections. The prosperity of Pakistan is used as a strategic card to win public trust, with the primary aim of securing votes and political placement.

The visualization of the term "Pakistan" encompasses both major and minor parties, as manifestos are influenced by the roles of minority and opposition groups. Opposition parties exert pressure on major political entities to fulfill their pre-election promises, acting as watchdogs and social reformers. The discursive practice of power also incorporates trade

factors, with leaders referencing successful foreign and national trade policies and the disciplined army's role to reinforce their past governance achievements.

Visualization of the Word 'Pakistan'

Figure 7

Visualization of the Word 'Pakistan' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

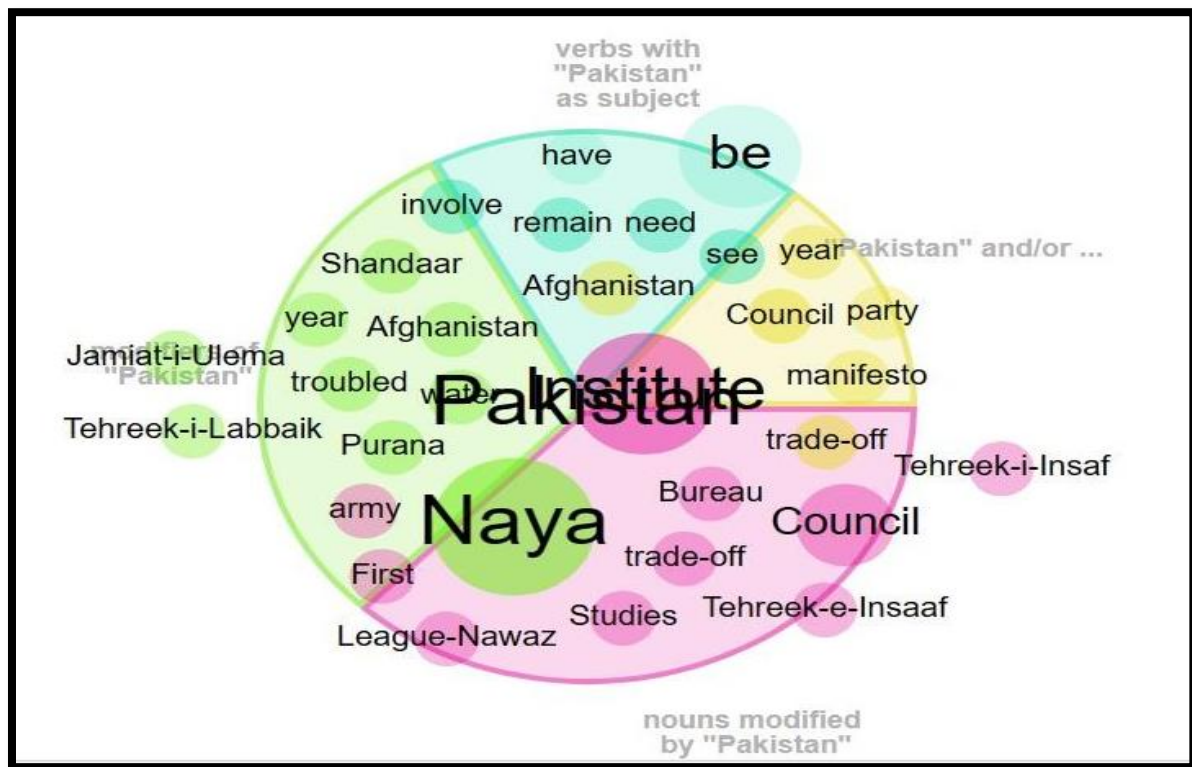


Figure 7 employs visualization techniques, such as word clouds, collocation networks, or frequency distribution graphs, to represent the prominence and relational patterns of the word *Pakistan* within the corpus.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Promise'

Figure 8

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Promise' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

led their rather ambitious election manifestos – a list of mostly empty promises .
An election manifesto is a list of policies that a political party
voters is no longer content with the traditional politics of slogans, tall promises , opponent-bashing and communicating with voters on issues only dur
it and analyses the plausibility of some of the 'will dos' and 'won't dos' promised .
'Will bring inflation down to 6pc' After multiple delays, the PM
ear, its election manifesto on January 27.
Among several other promises , the party, without going into detail, vowed to introduce a series of me
at least 10 million jobs during his five years in power.
A similar promise was previously made by incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khe
inced by the government, it is possible for the government to fulfil this promise , he says.
Meanwhile, Muhammad Sohail, chief executive of Ka
cunningly crafted to woo the awaam.
But among several other promises Bilawal has made in recent days (we will come to those later), one tha
ree million homes.
Ex-PM Imran Khan had also made a similar promise of constructing five million houses across the country, which was also
of them are still homeless and waiting for the government to fulfill its promises .
Some languish in Karachi's slums while others live under the (
s>Wouldn't it be better to first house these people and then make new promises ?
'Will criminalise enforced disappearances' When he launched
t that cannot be done alone by any political party.
'Will fulfil the promise of Naya Pakistan' The promise of 'Naya Pakistan' has followed the pec
any political party.
'Will fulfil the promise of Naya Pakistan' The promise of 'Naya Pakistan' has followed the people into 2024.
Just day
government launched several projects for the fulfillment of some of its promises under the slogan, the progress on these pledges and, in some cases, v
udly : "Welcome back to Purana Pakistan."
Two years later, the promise of 'Naya Pakistan' has resurfaced yet again.
Istehkam-i-Pakista
a team more or less similar to Imran's, will Tareen be able to fulfil the promise ?
In the current scenario, it hardly seems possible.
In th

Figure 8 presents a concordance analysis of the word *promise*, utilizing the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage across different political manifestos. Traditionally, politicians have employed "promises" in their manifestos as a strategy to capture public attention and secure votes. However, contemporary voters are increasingly skeptical of such promises and demand more concrete agendas to be convinced to vote. Politicians are now under pressure to address pressing issues like inflation and unemployment promptly. Yet, PTI's failure to deliver on its pledge to create 10 million jobs and the collapse of its five million houses project exemplifies how such promises can fall short of expectations. The public's trust in these promises erodes as they perceive the reality of political failures and become disillusioned with parties that have not met their commitments. For instance, the promise to "criminalize enforced disappearance" remains unfulfilled, and the public's acceptance of such promises is declining as they critically evaluate past performances of political parties.

Politicians often manipulate public perception by presenting their plans as trustworthy, but the disillusionment that follows the failure to deliver reveals the disparity between promises and reality. In analyzing the visualization of the word "promise," it is evident that politicians frequently make new and often trivial promises to achieve temporary public approval without intent to implement them. This practice is widespread across all political parties, which use "promise" as a strategic tool to secure votes by appealing to public

commitment. These "tall promises" are often driven by personal ambitions rather than genuine efforts to serve the public, transforming promises into national slogans that reflect a broader pattern of manipulation and unmet expectations.

Visualization of the Word 'Promise'

Figure 9

Visualization of the Word 'Promise' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

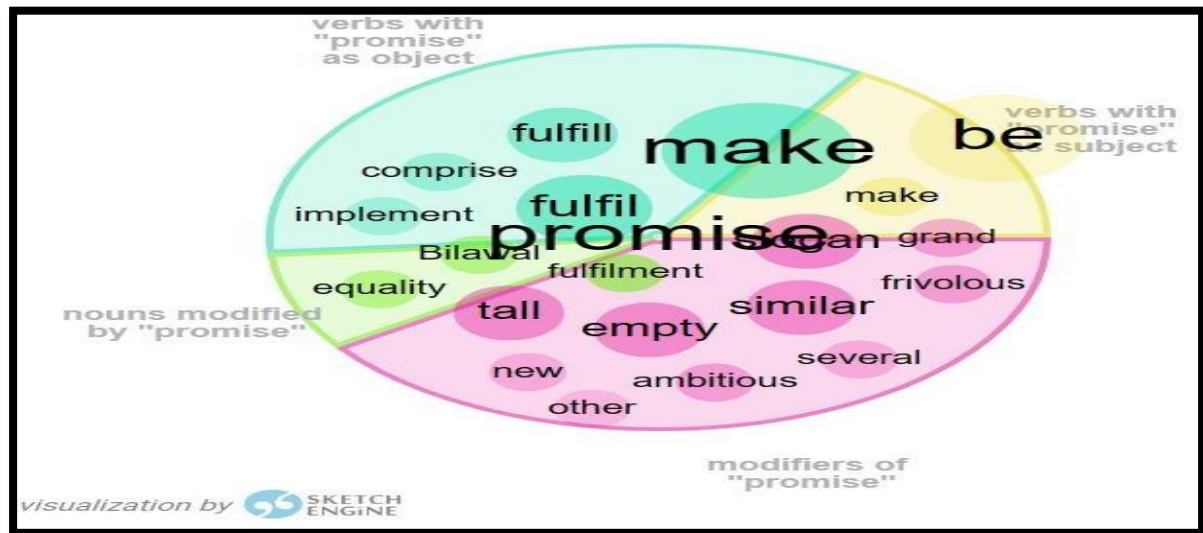


Figure 9 employs visualization techniques to represent the occurrence and associative patterns of the word *promise* within the corpus.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Elections'

Figure 10

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Election' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

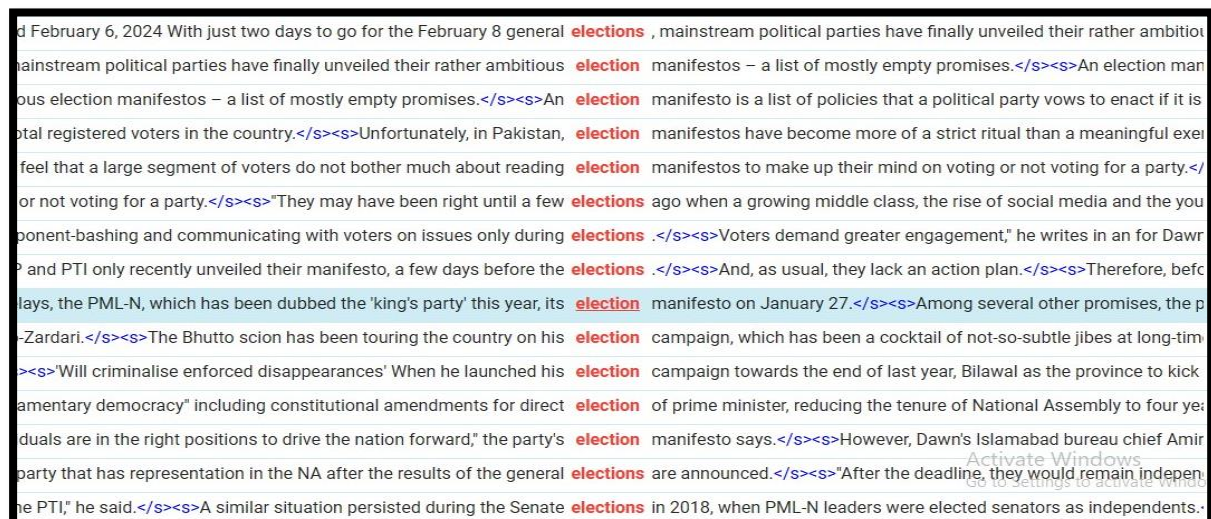


Figure 10 presents a concordance analysis of the word *Election*, utilizing the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage across political manifestos. Election campaigns have become a significant feature of the political landscape in our country, with parties unveiling their manifestos in a bid to secure votes. These manifestos often contain grand promises to capture public support, yet many remain unfulfilled. Politicians have turned manifestos into a ritualistic tool, focusing on their future benefits rather than addressing public or national concerns. Social media has emerged as a powerful instrument for promoting election campaigns, with a noticeable increase in middle-class engagement on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Despite this, election manifestos frequently lack concrete action plans, and voters increasingly demand more substantial engagement from politicians on their issues. Social media also plays a role in raising public awareness, allowing voters to question and critique the shortcomings of past election promises.

Parties like PPP argue that they are well-positioned to advance the nation, citing recent constitutional changes as evidence of progress. However, contemporary politicians must address their previous failures to regain public trust and enhance their chances of success in future elections. The manipulative use of discursive power in election campaigns has historically undermined public confidence. Nonetheless, there is growing participation from the "youth," actively involved in election processions and demanding accountability and positive feedback regarding their democratic right to vote. In analyzing the term "elections," the focus on "economy" highlights its role as a central theme in party manifestos. Parties that succeed in presenting a strong economic vision are often viewed more favorably by the public. Recent statements from the IMF and World Bank about an increased growth forecast for the last fiscal year reflect this manipulation, as such information is used to persuade voters. Economic instability, which includes issues like poverty, unemployment, inflation, illiteracy, power abuse, violence, terrorism, and inequality, is often cited as a key concern addressed in election promises.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Economic'

Figure 11

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Economics' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

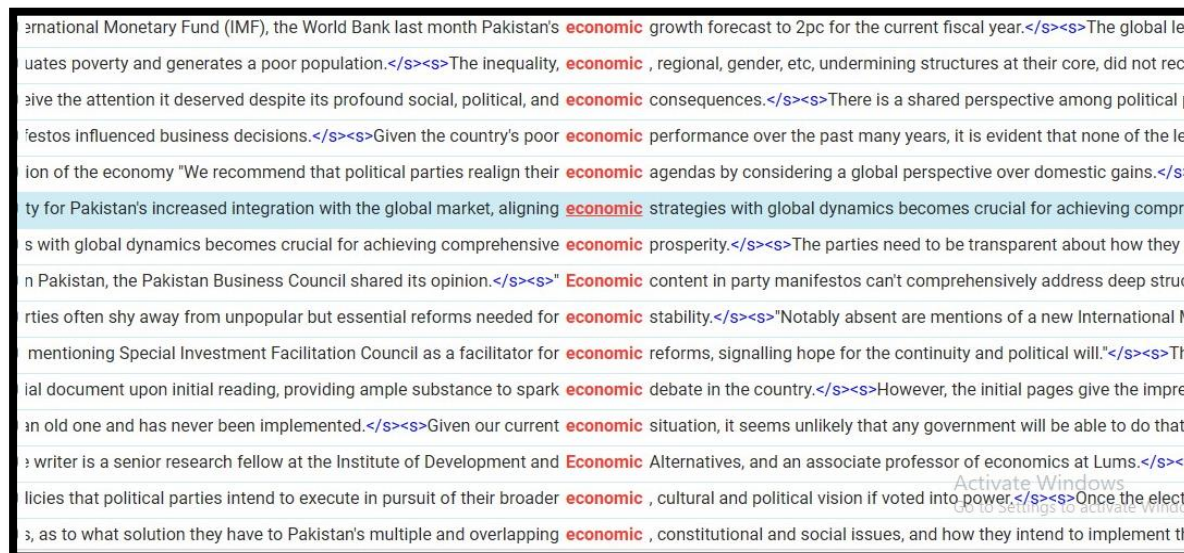


Figure 11 presents a concordance analysis of the word *Economic*, utilizing the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage across political manifestos. Global market demands necessitate dynamic strategies to achieve sustainable economic growth. Politicians frequently frame their promises within this context, pledging economic reforms to influence public opinion. These promises often include ambitious plans to build new housing, create jobs, establish educational institutions, and provide investment support and youth reform initiatives. Such proposals are typically part of a manipulative strategy designed to attract voters. Politicians link their political vision to the "economic vision" of the country to enhance their electoral appeal. In a country like Pakistan, which faces significant economic challenges, economic instability becomes a central issue in political manifestos and reform plans. These manifestos' ability to comprehensively address economic issues is crucial for electoral success. If they fail to offer viable solutions, their election prospects are jeopardized.

Politicians often present plans that appear to address declining economic standards, but the effectiveness of these plans in improving social and economic conditions during and after their tenure remains questionable. The broader the alignment between their economic, cultural, and political visions, the higher their chances of electoral success. Given Pakistan's complex and overlapping economic, constitutional, and social issues, manifestos serve as a strategic tool for manipulation, reflecting patterns observed in previous electoral cycles.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Education'

Figure 12

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Education' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

aged and neglected, competing in concession and subsidies in health, education , housing and utilities if voted to power.
s a bit of a guessing game.
I had the opportunity to look at the education sections of the manifestos of four political parties: the , , and the (JI).
All four have promised they will raise government expenditure on education to four to five per cent of GDP.
Current government expenditure
GDP.
So, all of them are promising at least a 100pc increase in education expenditure.
Four per cent of GDP is what is usually recommen
of GDP is what is usually recommended as minimum expenditure on education that countries should commit to.
But we have never really gone
When the country raises only about 9-10pc of GDP in taxes, how can education spending reach 4pc?
Are all parties just parroting what they are
Are all parties just parroting what they are expected to say about education expenditure?
Seems to be more than a possibility.
The
Seems to be more than a possibility.
The promise to raise education expenditure to 4-5pc of GDP is an old one.
The PPP seems to l
one that has given some thought to the implementation of the right to education .
The say they will 'implement Article 25A of the Constitution in
elaborate but the most disturbing as well.
They do say they want education to be for all but they also say they will have a uniform system of educ
ation to be for all but they also say they will have a uniform system of education for everyone.
They do not elaborate on what this means.
They do not elaborate on what this means.
They want education to be a federal responsibility and not a provincial subject.
They
ini ideology at the centre of our curriculum and want to ensure that all education is in accordance with the requirements of the Quran and Sunnah.
Also added.
What more does JI want?
How do we make education more Islamic and Pakistani?
There are many educationists wh
eady turned mainstream schools into madressahs.
For higher education , it is all about more universities.
The PTI and PPP promise a u

Figure 12 presents a concordance analysis of the word *Education*, utilizing the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage across political manifestos. Politicians often prioritize education, health, housing, and utilities in their manifestos to persuade voters to support them. They frequently highlight increases in GDP expenditure on education during their previous terms as evidence of their commitment, aiming to appeal to an electorate with varying literacy levels. These promises are strategically designed to leverage the issue of illiteracy, which remains a powerful tool for political manipulation. Politicians discursively promote slogans about constitutional reforms and new action plans related to education. For example, PTI's introduction of the single national curriculum and PML-N's "Parha Likha Punjab" initiative both aim to create uniformity in the education system. However, the sustainability of such reforms is often questionable, as they are primarily designed to enhance the success of election campaigns rather than effect lasting change.

Education and health are fundamental needs, and their treatment in political manifestos is highly manipulative. For instance, PTI's "Sehat Card" and PPP's "Women Health Worker" and "Benazir Income Support Program" are showcased as key elements of their electoral promises. The establishment of additional universities is also presented as a federal responsibility, though this approach is contentious and subject to various discursive interpretations. Moreover, some

political actors emphasize Islamic education, such as integrating "Sunnah" and "Quran" to appeal to religious sentiments and sway public opinion. This use of religious context is intended to enhance their electoral appeal but does not address underlying issues such as religious disparity, violence, and disputes. Thus, the focus on education within political manifestos often reflects a strategic attempt to gain public support through educational and religious rhetoric.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Power'

Figure 13

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Power' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

fect when a larger change in absolute prices – that affects purchasing	power	– shows a smaller percentage as the base price.</s><s>Will create 10
it rate to 5pc by creating at least 10 million jobs during his five years in	power	</s><s>A similar promise was previously made by incarcerated forme
agan after Nepra, the federal authority that sets electricity prices for all	power	consumers, announced a revised electricity tariff.</s><s>The tariff for
prices as one of their pledges.</s><s>It must be noted that Pakistan's	power	generation heavily relies on conventional energy sources (eg imported
by Bilawal.</s><s>Given the predominance of security in the country's	power	structure, it will not be possible for a civilian government to hold intellig
ul night of April 9, 2022 – the day Imran was successfully booted from	power	– Bilawal had proudly : "Welcome back to Purana Pakistan."</s><s>Tw
ns have been devolved to the provinces.</s><s>A party might not be in	power	both at the centre and in all the four provinces at the same time.</s><s>
the implementation of the manifesto's aims if and when they come to	power	, and describe such a system in the manifesto.</s><s>There would be
ples' Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), each, having been in	power	before, is well aware of the challenges facing Pakistan.</s><s>"Party n
sion and subsidies in health, education, housing and utilities if voted to	power	</s><s>However, none of them offer a workable plan to alter the syste
rships over privatisation for loss-making state-owned enterprises, with	power	distribution companies' privatisation being an exception.</s><s>"All pa
suit of their broader economic, cultural and political vision if voted into	power	</s><s>Once the elections are over, the voters might use the manifest
es do not have "any concrete blueprint to work on if they are voted into	power	", which underlines their myopic approach to governance as well as the
ddressing the news conference, PTI leader Gohar Khan said if voted to	power	his party would introduce a number of constitutional amendments to r
election manifesto are protection of the rights of women, devolution of	power	to the union council level and extend all possible support to the oppres

Figure 13 presents a concordance analysis of the word *Power*, utilizing the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage across political manifestos. According to Van Dijk (2008), language serves as a potent tool for social control, and politicians leverage media discourse to enhance the manipulative power of their rhetoric. Political manifestos, in this context, function as powerful instruments of persuasion, often transformed to serve the interests of the public while furthering the politicians' own agendas. Manifestos frequently utilize the concept of "power" to appeal to voters. For instance, political parties may promise to enhance the public's purchasing power through economic reforms or vow to create 10 million jobs to empower the youth. They may introduce changes in electricity tariffs to benefit power consumers and propose improvements to critical power structures, such as the military and atomic agencies, to address security concerns. These promises are strategically designed to align with their broader agendas and reinforce their positions of authority. However, the

discourse surrounding "power" often reveals a more manipulative intent. The PPP, for example, has linked its power regeneration plan to the slogan "Welcome Back to Purana Pakistan," which appears to prioritize party politics over genuine public welfare. Similarly, political parties frequently connect "power" to their own interests, suggesting that voting for them will result in benefits such as subsidies for health, education, housing, and utilities.

Privatization is presented as a means of distributing power, but it often consolidates power within a select few. The slogan "Any concrete blueprint to work on if voted into power" reflects a narrow and potentially ineffective approach to governance. PTI's promise of "constitutional amendments" contingent on their electoral success and their advocacy for devolution of power to local councils exemplify how power is portrayed in their manifestos. Overall, these slogans and promises predominantly reflect a subjective approach to power, emphasizing the manipulation of public perception to secure electoral success while maintaining control over key power structures.

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Women'

Figure 14

Concordance Analysis of the Word 'Women' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

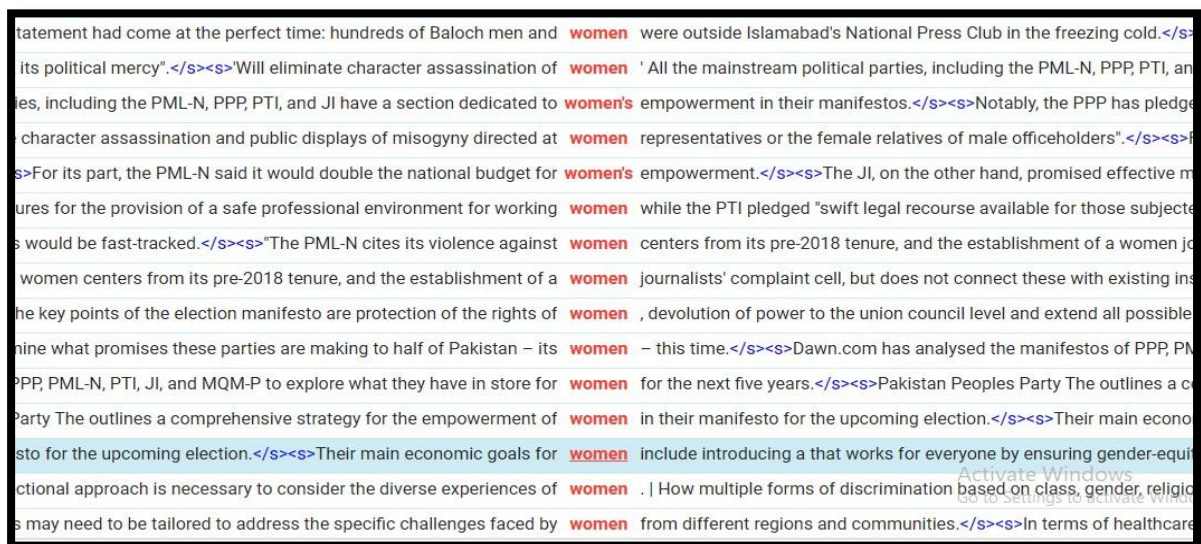


Figure 14 presents a concordance analysis of the word *women*, using the keyword-in-context (KWIC) technique to examine its usage within Pakistani election manifestos. Following van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive approach, it becomes evident that political parties like PPP, PTI, PML-N, and Jamaat-e-Islami manipulate discourse to influence voters' cognitive models about gender equity. The manifestos' repeated use of "women's empowerment" can be

seen as ideological manipulation, wherein political elites perpetuate a cycle of dependence on political support to continue these programs. This reflects how discourse shapes and reinforces social hierarchies, with political parties maintaining control over women's rights through discursive practices prioritizing electoral gains over substantial societal change. The discourse surrounding women's empowerment in these manifestos serves as a vehicle for legitimizing existing power relations while maintaining the façade of progressive politics.

The analysis of the word "women" reveals a prominent focus on "Women Empowerment" in political manifestos, which is frequently used as a strategic tool to attract female voters. Political parties such as PPP, PTI, PML-N, and JI (Jamaat-e-Islami) dedicate significant portions of their manifestos to the issue of women's empowerment, aiming to appeal to women by emphasizing their commitment to addressing gender inequality. Each party showcases promises to enhance women's status and rights to garner support. For example, PML-N increased its budget for women's education to underscore its dedication to empowering women through educational opportunities. PTI vowed to create a safe, professional environment for working women, framing this as a way to bolster their own political influence. All parties include key points in their manifestos concerning the protection of women's rights and the promotion of gender equity, pledging to introduce job opportunities and address gender-based discrimination and challenges faced by women.

However, these promises often serve as temporary measures rather than long-term solutions. Despite their commitments, political parties themselves contribute to systemic discrimination across various sectors, perpetuating gender inequality. The emphasis on women's issues in manifestos frequently functions as a manipulative strategy to secure votes rather than a genuine effort to enact lasting change. Politicians condition women, who constitute over half the population, to align their votes with the party's agenda under the guise of securing their social liberties and protections. Consequently, women's welfare programs become contingent on electoral success, implying that genuine progress in women's rights depends on continued political support. This creates a cycle where promises of empowerment are used to manipulate voter behavior rather than effecting substantive, lasting improvements in gender equality.

Keyness Frequency

Figure 15

Keyness Frequency in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 pml-n ***	11 naya ***	21 privatisation ***	31 sharif-led ***	41 macroeconomist ***
2 manifesto ***	12 ji ***	22 islamabad ***	32 shandaar ***	42 bannu ***
3 pti ***	13 pide ***	23 sharif ***	33 movement-pakistan ***	43 qaumi ***
4 ppp ***	14 kakar ***	24 commendable ***	34 buledi ***	44 muttahida ***
5 bilawal ***	15 lpp ***	25 siddiqui ***	35 pakistan ***	45 shamsi ***
6 tlp ***	16 awaam ***	26 misogyny ***	36 tahaffuz ***	46 gender-based ***
7 mqm-p ***	17 baloch ***	27 hukamraan ***	37 empowerment ***	47 gender-responsive ***
8 imran ***	18 ecp ***	28 policy-2024 ***	38 karachi ***	48 micro-finance ***
9 nawaz ***	19 amin ***	29 sabook ***	39 peshawar ***	49 crackdown ***
10 jamaat-i-islami ***	20 loss-making ***	30 opponent-bashing ***	40 tareen ***	50 wasim ***

Figure 15 presents a keyness analysis, a technique used to identify words that appear significantly more frequently in one corpus compared to a reference corpus. The Keyness frequency underscores fundamental "terminologies" that reflect the discursive manipulation of power by politicians. Key terms such as "ideology" and "marginalization" are pivotal in analyzing manifestos, highlighting how these documents serve as instruments for consolidating political power. Politicians use "ideology" to frame issues like education, health, unemployment, economy, inflation, electricity, women empowerment, power, and gender equity as central to their agenda. This strategic framing enables them to marginalize the "awaam" (general public) while advancing their ideological power structures. These ideologies are not merely rhetorical but are employed to address perceived challenges and push for institutional changes that align with their discursive agendas.

The manifestos are crafted to project a vision that contrasts with past performances and promises. Politicians present themselves as the solution to pressing issues, creating action plans that compete with those of other parties. This strategy involves thinking globally while acting locally, aiming to reinforce their power structures. The media plays a crucial role in highlighting the discrepancies between current promises and past performance, revealing the manipulative nature of these political strategies. The contrast between lofty campaign slogans and the lack of substantial future commitments exposes the superficiality of these promises, illustrating how politicians use rhetoric to obscure their true agenda.

Frequency of Adjectives

Figure 16

Frequency of 'Adjectives' in the Corpus of Pakistani Election Manifestos (2024)

Adjective	Frequency ² ↓	Adjective	Frequency ² ↓	Adjective	Frequency ² ↓	Adjective	Frequency ² ↓
political	92 ***	14 least	12 ***	27 prime	9 ***	40 major	7 ***
economic	51 ***	15 foreign	12 ***	28 federal	8 ***	41 former	7 ***
other	28 ***	16 constitutional	12 ***	29 next	8 ***	42 only	7 ***
more	24 ***	17 several	11 ***	30 educational	7 ***	43 digital	6 ***
social	24 ***	18 public	11 ***	31 large	7 ***	44 inclusive	6 ***
[number]	16 ***	19 financial	10 ***	32 various	7 ***	45 broad	6 ***
good	15 ***	20 female	10 ***	33 same	7 ***	46 private	6 ***
general	14 ***	21 last	10 ***	34 significant	7 ***	47 electoral	6 ***
such	14 ***	22 reproductive	10 ***	35 few	7 ***	48 mainstream	6 ***
many	13 ***	23 key	9 ***	36 past	7 ***	49 diverse	6 ***
current	13 ***	24 local	9 ***	37 systemic	7 ***	50 direct	6 ***
new	12 ***	25 similar	9 ***	38 provincial	7 ***		
legal	12 ***	26 equal	9 ***	39 national	7 ***		

Figure 16 illustrates the frequency of adjectives used in Pakistani election manifestos, shedding light on the rhetorical strategies employed by political leaders. The frequency of adjectives in the manifestos reveals significant insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by political leaders. The predominant use of terms like "political" underscores the emphasis on the role of political leaders in promising economic, social, and legal changes aimed at both provincial and national levels. Political leaders frequently deploy slogans to advocate for constitutional reforms, particularly in education. They promise to bolster the private sector and amplify women's rights, positioning themselves as champions of transformation. Terms such as "systematic," "significant," and "mainstream" highlight their commitment to enacting comprehensive changes, exemplified by slogans like "Naya Pakistan."

These adjectives also reflect manipulation of public sentiment, as leaders capitalize on economic vulnerabilities by promising numerous job opportunities and asserting a commitment to gender equality. By emphasizing adjectives like "financial" and "discriminatory," the manifestos aim to appeal to a broad electorate, promising equal rights and substantial reforms. In summary, the frequent use of adjectives in political manifestos is strategically employed to project an image of comprehensive and inclusive change, reinforcing the leaders' commitment to addressing economic and social issues while manipulating public expectations to secure electoral support.

Findings and Discussion

This study analyzes the manifestos of PPP, PTI, and PML-N through a corpus-driven critical discourse analysis guided by Van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive model. The findings reveal how these political parties use their manifestos as instruments to manipulate public opinion and direct voters' cognitive processes. The analysis shows that key terms such as "education," "health," "economic," "women empowerment," "power," "Pakistan," "election," "promise," "plan," "strategy," "implementation," "commitment," "change," "constitutional," "gender-equity," "policy," "goals," and "rights" are central to the manifestos. These terms are not neutral but are strategically used to construct ideological narratives that align with the parties' agendas. Each term is a building block of their political discourse, reflecting underlying ideologies and power dynamics. By analyzing these terms through keyword analysis, concordance, visualization, and frequency tools, the study exposes how politicians employ discourse to reinforce their ideological and hegemonic control.

The study reveals that parties like PPP, PTI, and PML-N employ empty promises and superficial reforms to secure votes. The study critically evaluates the discrepancy between the promises made in the manifestos and their real-world impact. For instance, PTI's promises to provide 10 million jobs and to criminalize enforced disappearances in NWFP are highlighted as unfulfilled. The manifestos also manipulate gender and religious discourses to marginalize certain groups and consolidate power. For example, the emphasis on women empowerment in manifestos is critiqued as a strategic move to appeal to voters while failing to deliver substantial legislative changes. The study cites "Dawn Newspaper" as an example of media discourse that showcases past government performances and policies, shaping public opinion and voting behavior. Van Dijk (2008) argues that language and media are potent instruments for social control, evident in how media discourse supports political manipulation.

The comparative analysis reveals that PML-N has successfully leveraged discursive practices to influence public opinion in the 2024 election campaign. Their strategic use of promises, such as doubling the women's empowerment and education budget and implementing the "laptop" scheme for youth, effectively controls voter consent. However, the study notes that past government performance often contradicts these promises, highlighting a persistent gap between political rhetoric and action. This study is well aligned with Nadeem et al. (2014); they also utilized frequency and keyword lists to analyze parts of speech in the comparative analysis of manifestoes to expose covert meanings of politicians.

Further, this study distinctively analyses concordances to reveal the persuasive use of politicians' ideological strategies and discursive practice of power manipulation (Haider, 2016) to verify the effectiveness of their relevant components.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that PML-N has been particularly effective in influencing public opinion through its strategic rhetoric. This study underscores the importance of critically evaluating political manifestos and promises, shedding light on how language and rhetoric are often used to manipulate public opinion. By recognizing these discursive strategies, voters can make more informed decisions and hold politicians accountable for their commitments. Understanding the nuances of political language enables citizens to scrutinize political claims more rigorously, empowering them to challenge misleading promises and demand greater transparency and accountability from their leaders. The significant role of media in shaping public perceptions of political agendas is another key takeaway from the study. It highlights the necessity for enhanced media literacy among the public, who must navigate the often complex and biased information presented by politicians and media outlets. By developing a critical awareness of how media discourse can reinforce political ideologies and influence public opinion, citizens can better assess the credibility of political messages and resist manipulative rhetoric.

For researchers and critical linguists, the study provides valuable insights into discourse analysis methodologies and ideological constructs. It demonstrates the effectiveness of corpus- assisted critical discourse analysis (CDA) in examining political texts, suggesting that further exploration of language's role in power dynamics is warranted. The application of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model offers a robust framework for understanding how language perpetuates ideological control. Additionally, the study opens up avenues for future research into the long- term effects of political rhetoric, comparative analyses across different contexts, and evaluating how well political promises translate into real-world outcomes. The use of corpus tools like concordance, frequency, and keyness proves beneficial for analyzing large datasets and uncovering subtle patterns, underscoring the need for continued development and refinement of these methodologies.

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