

RANKING OF IMRAN KHAN'S POPULARITY IN PAKISTAN'S MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed Imran Khan as the populist leader's ranking in Pakistan's media prior to and after becoming Prime Minister of Pakistan. The election was held in 2018, and Imran Khan was considered the most popular leader among the people of Pakistan. The content analysis of four mainstream English Newspapers (Express Tribune, DAWN, The News International, and The Nation) was carried out. The total number of news stories framed in four newspapers was 1158 (N=1158). The study aimed to analyze the ranking of the popularity frames of Imran Khan in newspapers. For this purpose, popularity frame's categories were operationalized into five themes, Personality, People's Leader, The Savior, Poise Reformer, and Crisis Manager. These were further divided into ten subthemes with negative and positive connotations attached. The findings revealed that the hypothesis, "ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election in 2018 is higher than after election in Newspaper of Pakistan," is not supported, i.e., Spearman correlation $r_s(p) = .125$ and value of $p = .568$, that is not significant at level 0.05.

Keywords: Crisis Manager, People's Leader Personality, Populist, Poise Reformer, The Savior

INTRODUCTION

Imran Khan (IK), the Kaptan, the Champion of the 1992 world cup, struggled to end the corruption mafia from Pakistan and became The Dharna leader, the most popular politician of Pakistan after his victory in the election of 2018 (Yilmaz and Saleem, 2021, p.4). The graph of popularity increased as he promoted the concept of "Riyasat-e Madina". The populist communicator became the flag bearer of "Change" and "Youth the Pakistan", which mobilized the Youth. The other aspect was to end Inherited Politics which provided hope to the people of Pakistan (Mulla, 2017, p. 4184). The ideology to eliminate the Elite culture and Elitism from the country was a breakthrough that also shook the International community. The next major step was using online media to become a family member. Even the marriage with Ms. Bushra increased the voter's bank carrying the conservative Islamic values (Hassan, 2019, p.216). The populist leader Imran Khan gained sympathies by founding the Cancer Hospital in significant cities of Pakistan. Any act, movement or rally can form populists (Garzia, 2020). Populism is by the media and also through the press (Esser in 2017, p.13). Media populism originates from mediating communication using media outlets to achieve specific objectives (Peicheva, 2017. p.13). The spin leader is the most popular in political history (Barisione, 2009, p.473). The rally leaders gained popularity among the masses (Baker & Oneal, 2001, p.661). People are against typical politics and want to end Elitism. By introducing slogans, leaders mobilise the specific social segment (Foti, 1982, p. 326). Charisma is used in politics as leaders usually do to seek attention (Bligh, 2004, p.212).

Numerous pieces of research expressed populist leaders and populism in the western context. In contrast, the populist leaders of Asia are fewer studies. Some researchers defined populism as an ideology in the United States of America and Europe (Mudde, 2014, p.363).

Media played a very integral role in promoting the populist leader by the slogan us vs them or corrupt elite vs people. There is a distinctive proposition of the Populist leader (Hartley, 2018, p.2018). The other type was shared by Taggart, who considered a populist leader as an outstanding personality (1995,

p.34). All these researches qualitatively analyzed the content. This research examined the content of populist leaders' ranking in English Newspapers quantitatively before and after the election held in 2018 in Pakistan. Populist approach themes are applied to analyze the framing, which has not been examined yet in the Asian context. The research aimed to investigate the framing popularity in print media of Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election 2018 is higher than after the election in Newspaper of Pakistan.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Populism is not a novel view. Liberal democracy is supported by the populist view (Hanspeter and Pappas, 2015). The Latin word "populism" means Populus, which ideologically differentiates ordinary people from the elite class (Oxford dictionary online, 2020). Stanley described populism as a combination of various isms like liberalism and Socialism (2008, p. 14). Krammer (2014) and Canovan (1982) expressed that populism is a combination of political drive and communication (1982, p.23). People who supported the Populist view were more progressive (Freyburg and Mohrenberg, 2019). In actuality, populism revolves around us vs them (Mudde, 2004, p.543). In comparison, Nelson identified populism as a broad term (2018).

Populists can be a movement, a person, an organization, or a political leader have an outward style (Aslanidis 2006, p.88). The magnetic leader represents the ordinary people (Canovan, 2002, p.25). A magnetic or charismatic person is defined by Weber as a person with exceptional character and characteristics (1947, p.23). Bourdieu further expressed the dominancy of the magnetic or charismatic personality who promotes ideology and change and becomes a voice of people (1994, p.78). It is also a relationship between people and political leaders (Hawkins, 2010, p.27).

Slogans and punch lines disseminate particular views like corrupt elite vs innocent people. Lexical defines the populist leader (Hameleers, 2021, p. 491). Media outlets act as a display for the populist (Moffit, 2016, p.10). The populist leader seeks attention by using various forms of media outlets. Media mediate people's interest in a salient manner in the news to seek attention and support (Valkenburg, 1999, p.551). The press frame the populist's communication as a political leader's day activity, communication style, dressing and eating behaviour in the form of a story (Kellner, 1990, p.33). The populist leader is pro-economic and pro-society (Laclau, 1997, p.7). According to Manucci, the media is Pro-Elite and support the elite viewpoint (2017, p.470). Media highlights specific characteristics. These are unique words, phrases, slogans or name-calling visuals (Entman, 1993, p.52). Patterson represented that the media frame the complex issue into simpler ones for the populist leader (1993, p.2). Cause and treatment frames focus on image and make the populist ones accountable (Iyenger, 1991, p.8-9). Gamson argued that the impact frame makes issues impactful and drives the people (1992, p.75). Populist leader manipulates patronage voters to achieve vested interest (Weyland, 2001, p.22). Iyenger illustrated that populists use the events for episodic frames, whereas detailed frames are thematic (1999, p.172). In populism, the crisis frame highlights specific issues, whereas diagnostic frames provide solutions to problems (Robert, 2006, p.121).

Theoretical Framework

Frame recreates reality like the stereotypical frames, political figure representation frames, human interest frames, episodic and economic. The other is social constructions and reference frames. The interpretative schema provides the sense to evaluate the things around (Goffman, 1974, p.12). The interpretation is made through lexical and visual analysis (Entman, 1993, p.424). Frames can also be identified through journalistic norms (Vreese, 2005, p.54- 55). There are diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing that identify the problem, find the solution and enforce to do the action (Bale, 2011, p.111). Considering the above researches, the populist statement constructed by the media through framing is identified in the form of themes.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to the election in 2018 is higher than after the election in the Newspaper of Pakistan.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent the ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to the election in 2018 is higher than after the election in Newspaper of Pakistan

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study titled "Ranking of Imran Khan's Popularity in Pakistan's Media" before and after the election in 2018 analyzed the content of four newspapers (Express Tribune, DAWN, The News International, and The Nation) quantitatively. The popularity is operationalized into five themes and ten sub-themes (positive and Negative) along with content categorization rules, i.e., Personality, People's Leader, The Savior, Poise Reformer, and Crisis Manager. The sub-themes and content categorization rules are as follows;

Theme 1: Personality

Sub-themes: Two sub-themes

1. Magnetic: News story related to Imran Khan's Magnetic or Charismatic personality is coded as Magnetic
2. Anti-Magnetic: News story related to Imran Khan's Anti-Magnetic or Anti-Charismatic personality is coded as Anti-Magnetic

Theme 2: People's Leader

Subthemes: Two sub-themes

1. Youth's Leader: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan as Champion / Kaptan and leader of Youth is coded as Youth's Leader
2. Youth's Exploiter: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan as misleading youth and increasing vote bank is coded as Youth's Exploiter

Theme 3: The Savior

Sub-themes: Two sub-themes

1. Political Hope: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan as a hope to change the inherited political status quo is coded as Political Hope
2. Political Dismay: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan as hopeless political strategies and moves that could not break the inherited political status quo is coded as Political Dismay.

Theme 4: Poise Reformer

Sub-themes: Two sub-themes

1. Anti-America: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan's politics taking a stand against America's dictations for reforming domestic policies is coded as Anti-America.
2. Pro-America: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan's politics as conforming with American's dictations for reforming domestic policies as an America's Agent is coded as Pro-America

Theme 5: Crisis Manager

Sub-themes: Two sub-themes

1. Employment: News story containing information regarding Imran Khan's promises for employment opportunities programs is coded as Employment.
2. Unemployment: News stories containing information regarding Imran Khan's failed promises for employment opportunities programs are coded as Un-Employment.

The number of stories published in the media of Pakistan before and after the election in 2018 is 1158 (N=1158).

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Kerlinger has identified that in quantitative assessment, content analysis is objective (2000). Literature review revealed that in social sciences, content analysis is applied to find out the populist rhetoric and dialogue

Previous studies also used content analysis to analyze the populist discourse, rhetorical style, and strategies. Hamleers et al. used content analysis to explore blame attribution during elections (2019, p.1). This study also applied content analysis to find Imran Khan's popularity.

Sample of the Study

Four leading English (Express Tribune, DAWN, The News International, The News International and The Nation) were selected purposively due to circulation and reached and retrieved from archives (Online, National Library and Lexis Nexis).

The period selection was made in two eras. The first era was four (4) months before the election 2018, i.e. 1st April 2018, to analyze the popularity ranking. The other era was the post-victory period, i.e., after completing a hundred (100) days from 25th November 2018 till 1st April 2019. This time period

election was due to the extensive coverage given to the IK before the election of 2018 and after the completion of 100 days of Imran Khan's Government. The total number of news stories framed was 1158 (N=1158).

ANALYSIS

The analysis of newspapers framing Imran Khan's Popularity prior to the election in 2018 was 430, i.e., 37.1% of the total and 728 (62.9%) after the election was held, and Imran Khan became Prime Minister of Pakistan and completed 100 days.

Table No. 1 The popularity of IK in News Coverage in Pakistan's Media Prior and After election 2018

Media Type	Frequency (100%)		Total
	Prior Election 2018	After Election 2018	
Express Tribune	135 (11.6%)	147 (12.6%)	282(24.3%)
The Nation	98 (8.5%)	131 (11.3%)	229((19.8%)
DAWN	94 (8.1%)	201 (17.3%)	295(25.5%)
The News International	103 (8.9%)	249 (21.5%)	352(30.4%)
Total	430 (37.1%)	728 (62.9%)	1158(100%)

In table 1. Frequency of news stories published in four selected newspapers prior to and after the election in 2018 on the popularity of Imran Khan. Express Tribune published 282(24.3%) news stories, out of which 135 (11.6%) were before election 2018 and 147 (12.6%) after the election. The total number of news stories published by The Nation was 229((19.8%), 98 (8.5%) prior to the election in 2018 and 131 (11.3%) after the election. 295(25.5%) published by DAWN prior to the election were 94 (8.1%), and after election 201 (17.3%). The News International published 352(30.4%) news stories, and prior to the election 2018 were 103 (8.9%), and after were 249 (21.5%).

Table No. 2 Frequency of Popularity Sub-Themes Prior and After Election 2018

Frames/Themes	Sub-Frames/ Sub-Themes	Media Coverage	
		Prior to Election 2018	After Election 2018
Personality	Magnetic	48(4.1%)	43(3.6%)
	Anti-Magnetic	48 (4.1%)	99 (8.5%)
People's Leader	Youth's Leader	56(4.8%)	71 (6.8%)
	Youth's Exploiter	45(3.8%)	123(10.8%)
The Savior	Hope for Change	64(5.5%)	81(6.9%)
	Political Dismay	29(2.4%)	141(12.2%)
Poise Reformer	Anti-America	31(2.6%)	38(3.24%)
	Pro America	32(2.7%)	46(3.8%)
Crisis Manager	Employment	48(4%)	28(2.3%)
	Unemployment	34 (2.9%)	50(4.2%)
		430(36%)	728(64%)

Table 2 revealed that the media framed Magnetic personality 48(4.1%) prior to the election 2018 and after 43(3.6%). Anti-Magnetic media framing before the election remained the same 48 (4.1%), but after the election, media framed Imran Khan as Anti-Magnetic 99 (8.5%). The results showed that the Anti-Magnetic frame remained dominant.

Media framed Imran Khan as Youth's Leader 56(4.8%) and after 71 (6.8%). Whereas Youth's Exploiter frame before the election was 45(3.8%) and after was 123(10.8%). The results revealed that Youth's Exploiter frame remained dominant in the People's Leader frame. The media framed Imran Khan as a Hope for Change, 64(5.5%) before the election and after 81(6.9%). The political Dismay frame before the election was 29(2.4%), and 141(12.2%) after the elections. In The Savior frame, Political Dismay remained dominant. The Anti-America frame before the election was 31(2.6%) and after 38(3.24%), whereas the Pro-America frame was 32(2.7%) and after the election was 46(3.8%). The results revealed that the Pro-America frame remained dominant in the Poise Reformer frame. The Employment frame before the election was 48(4%), and 28(2.3%) after the election. Whereas Unemployment framed before the election was 34 (2.9%) and 50(4.2%) after the election. In the Crisis Manager Frame, the Unemployment frame remained dominant.

Table No. 3 Ranking of Popularity Sub-Themes Prior and After Election 2018

Ranking	Prior Election 2018		After Election 2018	
	IK Popularity		IK Popularity	
1	Hope for Change	64(5.5%)	Political Dismay	141(12.2%)
2	Youth's Leader	56(4.8%)	Youth Exploiter	123(10.8%)
3	Magnetic	48(4.1%)	Anti-Magnetic	99(8.5%)
4	Anti-Magnetic	48(4.1%)	Hope for Change	81(6.9%)
5	Employment	48(4.0%)	Youth's Leader	71(6.8%)
6	Youth's Exploiter	45(3.8%)	Unemployment	50(4.2%)
7	Unemployment	34(2.9%)	Pro America	46(3.8%)
8	Pro America	32(2.7%)	Magnetic	43(3.6%)
9	Anti-America	31(2.6%)	Anti-America	38(3.2%)
10	Political Dismay	29(2.4%)	Employment	28(2.3%)

In table 3, Hope for Change frame ranked higher before the election 2018, i.e., 64(5.5%). In contrast, Political Dismay ranked highest after the election, i.e., 141(12.2%). The Youth's Leader ranked 2nd before the election, i.e., 56(4.8%); after the election, 2nd ranked Youth Exploiter, i.e., 123(10.8%). The 3rd ranked popularity theme before the election was Magnetic, i.e., 48(4.1%), and after the election, 2018 the 3rd ranked was Anti-Magnetic, i.e., 99 (8.5%). The Anti-Magnetic before the election was ranked 4th, i.e., 48 (4.1%). Whereas, after the election, Hope for Change ranked 4th, i.e., 81(6.9%). The 5th ranked popularity theme prior to the election 2018 was Employment, i.e., 48(4.0%); after the election, Youth's Leader was ranked 5th, i.e., 71(6.8%). The Youth's Exploiter ranked 6th before the election was 45(3.8%), and after the election, Unemployment was ranked 6th, i.e., 50(4.2%). Before the election, Unemployment was ranked 7th, i.e., 34 (2.9%) and after the election 7th ranked popularity theme was Pro America 46(3.8%). Pro America was ranked 8th before election 32(2.7%), and after election 8th ranked was Magnetic 43(3.6%). Anti-America was ranked 9th before the election 31(2.6%), and after the election, Anti-America 38(3.2%). The last ranked popularity theme was Political Dismay before election 29(2.4%), and after the election, Employment was ranked 10th, i.e., 28 (2.3%).

Table No. 4 IK Popularity Between two Time Periods (Prior to Election 2018 and After Election 2018)

Frames	IK Popularity		Spearman Correlation Coefficient (rs (p))	Sig.(2-Tailed) P Value
	Prior to Election 2018	After Election 2018		
Personality	96(8.2%)	142(12.2%)	.132	.311
People's Leader	101(8.7%)	194(16.7%)	.821	.231
The Savior	93(8.03%)	222(19.7%)	.501	.171
Poise Reformer	63(5.4%)	84(7.2%)	.712	.111
Crises Manager	82(7.0%)	78(6.7%)	.681	.421

The Spearman Correlation test to find the ranking between two time periods showed that no relation exists between the two selected eras.

Considering Hypothesis 1: The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election in 2018 is higher than after the Newspaper of Pakistan that examined the ranking of popularity before and after election 2018. The relation between the two time periods does not exist in ranking Imran Khan's popularity. The personality of Magnetic and Anti-Magnetic is $r_s(p) = .132$, which is not significant, i.e., the value of $p = .311$. It means that the popularity ranking is not higher after the election.

The other frame was People's leader, with the positive frame as Youth's Leader, and the negative frame as Youth's Exploiter tested in two time periods is $r_s(p) = .821$, which is not significant, i.e., the value of $p = .231$. As, The Savior frame with two subframes, hope for change and political dismay, was tested in two eras prior to and after the election, the $r_s(p) = .501$, which is not Significant as well, i.e., the value of $p = .171$. It showed that popularity was not ranked higher after the election. Poise Reformer has two subframes, one positive Pro-America and Anti-America test with two eras that resulted in $r_s(p) = .712$, which is not significant, i.e., the value of $p = .111$. The last frame was Crisis Manager with two subframes, Employment and Unemployment, tested with two eras prior to and after the election is $r_s(p) = .681$, and it is not significant, i.e., the value of $p = .421$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined Imran Khan's Popularity ranking before and after the election held in 2018. For this purpose, two eras were selected. The first era was four (4) months before the election 2018, i.e. 1st April 2018, and the other was the post-victory period, i.e., after completing hundred (100) days from 25th November 2018 till 1st April 2019. Total news stories framed were 1158 ($N=1158$) by four mainstream English Newspapers (Express Tribune, DAWN, The News International, and The Nation). The result showed that Imran Khan extensively framed the popularity of the Newspapers of Pakistan. News International gave the highest coverage before the election was 103 (8.9%), and 249 (21.5%) after the election. The second ranked newspaper was DAWN, which framed Imran Khan's popularity before election 94 (8.1%) and after election 201 (17.3%). Whereas Express Tribune ranked third in covering the popular leader before the election 2018 was 135 (11.6%) and after was 147 (12.6%). The last ranked newspaper was The Nation which framed Imran Khan before election 98 (8.5%) and after election 131 (11.3%). The results revealed that all four Newspapers framed Imran Khan's popularity almost at a lesser difference. It has been observed that after the election of 2018, coverage was higher than before the election.

The hypothesis, "The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election 2018 is higher than after election in Newspaper of Pakistan", was not supported because the popularity of Imran Khan framed in Newspapers ranked differently in selected two eras.

Prior to the election of 2018, hope for change was the top priority of the leader and ranked at the top, i.e., (5.5%) of the total. In contrast, Newspapers framed political Dismay 12.2% as a top-ranked item. This lapse showed that there was ample time given to Imran Khan to deliver, but he failed. That is why he was extensively criticised after the completion of a hundred days. Before the election Youth leader gained fame among about 4.8%, but after the election, he was framed as Youth's exploiter, i.e., 10.8% as PM promised to introduce youth plans for education, foreign adjustments and compensations but failed to do so. Newspapers framed Imran Khan as a Magnetic personality, ranked 3rd before the election, i.e. 4.1%. In contrast, the PM was framed as Anti-magnetic 8.4% of the total news stories due to his failed political strategies and policies. Newspapers of Pakistan framed Anti-Magnetic 4.1% before elections and considered him to remain a player, not a politician. Because politics is not standardized and not even democratic in Pakistan. After the election of 2018, Imran Khan was still considered a hope for change 6.9%, which revealed that all professionals and people wanted him to bring change as he had promised. Newspapers framed Imran Khan as providing Employment as there was an increase in inflation worldwide. People waited for his new policies to be launched after becoming Prime Minister of Pakistan. After the election, hope for change was still there, along with the critics. Before the elections in 2018, newspapers framed Imran Khan as Youth's Exploiter 3.8%, Unemployment 2.9%, Pro America 2.7%, Anti-America 2.6%, and Political Dismay 2.4%. The results showed that after the election of 2018, the newspaper's stance also changed. Unemployment 4.2%, Pro America 3.8%, Magnetic 3.6%, Anti-America 3.2%, Employment

2.3%. Only Anti-America remained at the same rank, i.e., 9th. Otherwise, all did not match and negative framed remained high after the election of 2018.

Table No. 5 Ranking of IK Popularity Prior to Election 2018 and IK Popularity After Election 2018

Hypothesis	Spearman's Rho Between n	Correlation Coefficient (rs (ρ))	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength of Relationship (Ranking)	P-Value
The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to the election in 2018 is higher than after the election in Newspapers of Pakistan	IK Popularity Prior to Election 2018 and IK Popularity After Election 2018	.125	.568	No Relationship	P > 0.05 Correlation is not Significant.

The results of this study support the Iyenger study of casual responsibility that in the election news coverage media promotes both treatment and responsibility frame accurately (1991, P.15). The episodic and thematic coverage of individual attributes is supported in this study as IK faced criticism of being Kaptaan, Khilarrri, tsunami, Champion and negative attributions Anarii, Taliban khan. Mazzoleni elucidated that in establishing phase, the populist leader loses Magnetic personality and appeal (2008, p.61). This study also supported the same. Motif and Tormey expressed that people's leader uses notions like us vs them to mobilize the supporter that gains their attention. In this study, the same is supported as a hope for change before the election, which ranked on the top and ranked 4th even after the election because of Imran Khan's political move about corrupt elite vs innocent people. Though PM faces the criticism of Go Imran GO, Corrupt leaders and U-turn have higher coverage in the press of Pakistan before and after the election in 2018. Neuman and Nicole presented a discursive frame of visibility, resonance and legitimacy of populist actors (2019, p.33). This study showed the same result for the Anti-American frame that resonated with socio-economic issues and ranked 9th before and after the election. Hence, the results revealed that the research question, "To what extent the ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to the election in 2018 is higher than after the election in Newspaper of Pakistan" and hypothesis, "The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election in 2018 is higher than after election in Newspapers of Pakistan", is not supported rs (ρ) = .125 and value of p = .568. The dynamics of Pakistan's press and people differ from the rest of the world. People are becoming more politically conscious and extroverted. They can assess better, which favours them.

Moreover, Youth is easily manipulated and exploited. In Pakistan, populists' leaders used youth, underprivileged and marginalized people to increase the vote bank. No long-term beneficial plans and strategies were adopted in Pakistan to relieve the lower, middle and upper middle class. Education, health and basic facilities like gasoline, petrol and electricity are never covered. The tax rate and inflation increased to screw the middle class. Such tricks are exposed to everyone, which is why Imran Khan lost popularity after winning the elections.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that "The ranking of Imran Khan's popularity prior to election in 2018 is higher than after election in Newspapers of Pakistan" is not supported. The popularity decreased, and criticism increased due to political rifts, unrest in the country, high inflation rate, vulnerable domestic policies and derailed democracy. Socio-economic instability, lack of long-term policies for the people of Pakistan and involvement of corrupt politicians in the senate lowered the graph of Imran Khan's popularity. The media played a part in society and supported various politicians for vested interests, framing Imran Khan as a failed Politician.

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