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A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis Across News Media, Political Speeches, and Social Media

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Abstract

In this systematic literature review, the issue of how power is constructed, legitimized, and challenged through language use in Pakistani media discourses will be analyzed. Relying on the theoretical constructs of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially Fairclough's model of CDA and Van Dijk's ideological square, this literature review analyzes 50 publications that proved highly pertinent in the context of this study from the 103 candidate articles. Political power is frequently constructed in Pakistani media discourses using the language of ideology, metaphors, personal pronouns, and legitimization language, which are primarily employed by elites. Moreover, the dichotomy of "us versus them" is evident in Pakistani communicative discourses; according to the discourse analysis results, sociopolitical polarization is reproduced in all three mediums, whereas the counter-hegemonic discourse appears to be absent in Pakistani discourses. The language of ideology is employed through the use of metaphorical expressions, such as "stolen mandate" and "puppet government," providing both moral and nationalist legitimacy to the message. The comparison results show that political ideologies are reproduced in traditional media, whereas in the case of social media, there is more emphasis on political polarization and mobilization. Several limitations can be outlined based on the analysis of this literature.

Keywords:

Critical Discourse Analysis, Power Narratives, Pakistani Media, Political Communication, Ideological Framing, Social Media, US vs. them, Legitimation.

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1. Introduction

The issue of relations between language and politics attracts much attention in the discourse, media, and political communication scholarship community. Given the specifics of Pakistan unstable political environment, military interventions, cultural diversity, and the process of digitalization the importance of researching this topic becomes apparent. The role of language as means of building, legitimizing, and challenging power relations should be examined within the contexts of Pakistan. Researchers interested in studying media studies, political communication, and linguistics are supposed to pay due attention to such processes in different contexts.

There is an increasing interest in investigating power narratives in news media, political discourse, and social media in the context of Pakistan. Academics have started shifting their research approach from exploring power narrative in individual speeches and media representations to comparing power narrative strategies employed through multiple platforms with taking into account the effect of traditional media and social media on political developments in Pakistan (Farrukh & Masroor, 2021; Ali, 2017; Tariq et al., 2020). The evolution of this research area is associated with the worldwide change in political communication research in the context of convergence of traditional and digital media systems.

Unfortunately, there is a gap in the existing literature. Scholars mostly conduct studies focused on analyzing power narratives from one platform or during one political event and thus fail to provide a holistic overview of power narratives creation, legitimization, and contestation through diverse communicative platforms. Moreover, the issue of whether media and political rhetoric use public consent manipulation to reproduce hegemonic narratives or promote resistance remains open to discussion. Some academics favor the former viewpoint (Ali, 2017; Nasr et al., 2025), while others study the latter phenomenon (Sulehry, 2024; Jan, 2023). Thereby, the controversy has several negative consequences, such as the spread of ideological bias and impediment of democracy (Ghauri, 2023).

The theoretical framework of the planned systematic review will be based on Critical Discourse Analysis as the main methodology that sees language as the means of creating and challenging power, ideology, and identity (Nawaz et al., 2024; Qadeer & Shehzad, 2017). Authority legitimization, ideological framing, and "us versus them" narratives will be among the major processes to investigate. The most common methods of discourse analysis applied by scholars include a three-dimensional model of discourse proposed by Fairclough (1992), as well as socio-cognitive perspective and ideological square suggested by Van Dijk (1998). They have proven useful for analyzing political discourse in Pakistan (Ali et al., 2025; Tariq et al., 2020).

As a result, the goal of the proposed systematic review is the analysis of the processes of power narrative creation, legitimation, and contestation in terms of news media, political speeches, and social media. In addition, it is important to unveil implicit ideologies in language and develop benchmarks for the discursive patterns characteristic of all the platforms mentioned above in order to gain insight into media effects and political communication processes in Pakistan's socio-political environment.

2. Methodology of Literature Selection

This review employed a systematic and transparent approach to literature identification, screening, and synthesis in alignment with established protocols for qualitative systematic reviews in the social sciences.

2.1 Search Strategy and Query Transformation

The research question was expanded and divided into a number of specific queries to cover both breadth and depth of the subject matter. The topics covered by search queries included: (1) critical discourse analysis of power within Pakistani political discourse; (2) comparison of authority representation across different platforms and ideological framing in political discourse; (3) metaphorical and lexical aspects of political discourse; and (4) political communication using social and digital media platforms in Pakistan. By doing so, it became possible to include highly specialized publications containing specific terminology and focusing on particular platforms used for communication.

2.2 Screening and Selection

In order to collect data, three database searches with precise queries led to 59 suitable studies. Backward and forward citation searches resulted in an additional 44 publications, bringing the total up to 103. Evaluation criteria for these 103 studies included: a focus on Pakistani political discourse; usage of CDA or its modified forms as an analytical framework; inclusion of at least one platform in the research process (news media, political speeches, and social media); and credibility (peer-reviewed journal articles or other credible sources of information). As a result, 50 publications were chosen due to their high relevance and become the core of this review.

2.3 Analytical Framework

The review applies a thematic synthesis method, organizing findings into five analytical categories: (1) representation of political authority; (2) “us versus them” framing and identity construction; (3) ideological language, metaphors, and lexical choices; (4) platform-specific discourse strategies; and (5) techniques used to shape public perception. Additionally, a chronological analysis was conducted to map developments in the field from 2017 to 2025.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Overview of the Literature

There are 50 primary studies in the period from 2017 to 2025, featuring a rapid rise in output since 2020. It is mainly qualitative studies focusing on critical discourse analysis that are used here, with some employing a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in their research design (Ali et al., 2025; Afzaal et al., 2022). News media and political speeches (Imran Khan in particular) along with social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are analyzed within selected publications. A summary table highlighting different aspects of political communication is provided later in this literature review.

Table 1. Thematic summary of representative studies across analytical dimensions.

Study	Represent ation of Authority	Us-vs-Them Framing	Ideologica l Language & Metaphors	Platform - Specific Strategies	Public Perception Techniques
(Faru kh & Masroor, 2021)	Authority legitimation via linguistic resources in party manifestos	Limited focus; implicit in party positioning	Use of legitimizing vocabulary and ideologica l framing	Focus on political manifestos as discourse sites	Agenda-setting and ideological persuasion through manifestos
(Ullah et al., 2025)	National identity constructed as resilient and moral leadership	Strong dichotomy between Pakistan and “others”	Metaphors of victimhood, moral superiority, nationalism	Comparis on of English newspapers and digital journalism	Lexical choices sustain elite narratives and moral hierarchies

(Nasr et al., 2025)	State narrative legitimizes authority by labeling groups as terrorists	Clear 'us vs. them' between state and Baloch groups	Ideological polarization in media portrayal	Contrast between Pakistani and international media discourses	Media framing shapes public opinion and legitimizes power
(Ahmed et al., 2025)	Media headlines reflect power dynamics favoring government or opposition	Us-vs-them evident in sensational vs. neutral headlines	Sensational lexical choices in Urdu vs. restrained English	Comparative analysis of Urdu and English newspapers	Manipulation of public opinion via headline language
(Anam & Ahmed, 2024)	Political leaders use hate speech to assert dominance	Polarizing rhetoric intensifies in-group/out-group divides	Religious, nationalist, populist rhetoric fuels hostility	Analysis of speeches and social media by major parties	Hate speech as a tool to contest and consolidate power
(Sulehry, 2024)	Rearticulation of leadership identities in counter-hegemonic discourse	Reframing of power relations between President and judiciary	Discursive transformation through historical and cultural metaphors	Focus on news media's role in social movement discourse	Media discourse influences cultural and political change
(Tarar & Tarar, 2025)	Leadership rhetoric constructs legitimacy in conflict narratives	Us-vs-them framing between national and foreign actors	Strategic use of narratives to justify military action	Political speeches analyzed in conflict context	Language shapes geopolitical agency and public support
(Idrees & Idrees, 2025)	Metaphors and modality encode power and resistance in political letters	Dichotomy of military dominance vs. democratic resistance	Metaphors like "stolen mandate" frame ideological struggle	Political speeches and social media texts analyzed	Modality asserts authority and legitimizes defiance
(Batoori, 2025)	Populist leader constructs national identity via civilizational discourse	Us-vs-them embedded in civilizational populism	Religious and cultural metaphors reinforce identity	Public addresses analyzed for populist discourse	Shifts in discourse reflect power transitions
(Nawaz et al., 2024a)	Political slogans construct leadership through patriotic appeals	Slogans create clear in-group/out-group boundaries	Use of repetition, religious symbols, and adversarial lexicon	Campaign slogans as media discourse	Slogans shape collective identity and political loyalty
(Nawaz et al., 2024b)	Political speeches use language to assert and maintain authority	Us-vs-them framing through nationalism and religion	Metaphors and lexical choices manipulate ideology	Speeches analyzed for power and ideology	Language shapes public opinion and controls perception
(Nawaz et al., 2024c)	Politicians manipulate language to consolidate power	Construction of "other" to unify in-group	Ambiguity, repetition, and slogans as manipulative tools	Political speeches as sites of ideological control	Emotional manipulation to maintain authority

(Ali et al., 2025)	Use of actor description and authority to reinforce leadership	Us-vs-them via ideological square model	Frequent use of burden and authority metaphors	Political speeches analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively	Persuasive devices enhance ideological positioning
(Tariq et al., 2020)	Leadership asserts authority through pronoun use and narrative	Pronouns emphasize “us” vs. “them” in global issues	Ideological dichotomies in climate, Islamophobia, Kashmir	Political speeches at UNGA analyzed	Language constructs ideological divides and appeals
(Bibi et al., 2024)	Power exercised through discursive practices in speeches	Self-positivity and ideological supremacy reinforce in-group	Selective term usage related to corruption and media freedom	Political speeches analyzed for power stretches	Discursive control over audience cognition
(Mehmood et al., 2024)	Headlines legitimize political marches through linguistic choices	Us-vs-them in exclusionary media discourse	Metaphors, modality, and lexical choices in headlines	News media headlines analyzed	Discursive regulation of public opinion
(Azam, 2024)	Victory speech uses speech acts to assert leadership	Us-vs-them implicit in persuasive rhetoric	Rhetorical devices and speech acts for persuasion	Political speeches analyzed pragmatically	Persuasive intentions dominate communication
(Mehmood, 2021)	Persuasive strategies in pandemic speeches assert authority	Us-vs-them less explicit, focus on public compliance	Rhetoric and discourse strategies for control	Political speeches during COVID-19 analyzed	Persuasion to enforce health measures
(Iqbal & Mahmood, 2022)	Slogans embed ideological power to legitimize parties	Us-vs-them in political rally slogans	Hidden ideological meanings in slogans	Political slogans analyzed critically	Manipulation of public judgment
(Ali, 2017)	Elite press constructs authority through polarized discourse	Us-vs-them between Pakistan and India in media	Ethnocentric and nationalistic metaphors dominate	National elite press discourse analyzed	Media reproduces ideological polarization
(Rashid, 2023)	Power struggle depicted through metaphors and modality in headlines	Us-vs-them in institutional conflict framing	Metaphors and nominalization highlight power dynamics	Newspaper headlines analyzed	Ideological framing of institutional power
(Bashir et al., 2022)	Talk shows reveal power issues via linguistic manipulation	Us-vs-them through character portrayal and critique	Sophisticated vocabulary and discursive strategies	TV talk shows analyzed	Language games expose political manipulation
(Mulla, 2021)	News production shaped by sensationalism and state influence	Us-vs-them in populist and sectarian narratives	Media professionals negotiate ideological constraints	Ethnographic study of TV news	Self-censorship and sensationalism shape discourse

(Sharif et al., 2023)	Political speeches legitimize conflicting Kashmir positions	Us-vs-them in nationalistic and oppositional rhetoric	Emotion, rationality, and expertise metaphors used	Speeches analyzed for legitimization strategies	Language reveals ideological contestation
(Tehseem et al., 2025)	UN speech constructs leadership through ideological discourse	Us-vs-them in global Muslim solidarity themes	Repetition and phraseology promote peace ideology	Political speeches analyzed	Language generates ideological effects
(Alam, 2021)	Social media mobilizes participatory divides and nationalism	Us-vs-them in digital activism and repression	Online discourse polarizes and silences opposition	Social media content analyzed	Digital platforms shape political participation
(Saleem et al., 2022)	Opposition speeches assert ethical dominance and power	Us-vs-them in opposition vs. ruling party discourse	Ideological powers embedded in speech choices	Political speeches analyzed	Discursive legitimization of opposition authority
(Jan, 2023)	Military constructs enemy identity to legitimize power	Us-vs-them in military vs. civil rights movement discourse	Enemy othering and normalization metaphors	Military discourse analyzed	Discursive regime sustains militarization
(Ghauri, 2023)	Twitter discourse reflects political polarization post-regime change	Us-vs-them in political party narratives on social media	Themes replicate political leader's discourse	Social media political discourse analyzed	Public response shaped by political narratives
(Saeed et al., 2020)	Victory speech uses ethos, pathos, logos to assert power	Us-vs-them in positive self and negative other presentation	Rhetorical and predication strategies employed	Political speeches analyzed rhetorically	Language transforms political perceptions
(Afzal et al., 2021)	Political campaigns violate SOPs, undermining authority	Us-vs-them less explicit, focus on political responsibility	Discourse on health and political behavior	Media coverage of political events analyzed	Political discourse impacts public health compliance
(Afzaal et al., 2022)	Media discourse shifts from populist support to critique	Us-vs-them in media portrayal of political party	Corpus-based analysis of linguistic devices	Media discourse analyzed longitudinally	Media influences public opinion dynamics
(Iqbal et al., 2024)	Political speech deforms opponent identity to assert power	Us-vs-them in identity construction and opposition delegitimization	Use of taboo and stable vocabulary	Political speeches analyzed for persuasion	Language used to dominate political opponents
(Tahsin, 2019)	Economic recovery discourse constructs hopeful leadership	Us-vs-them implicit in economic and foreign relations	Repetition and figurative expressions used	Political speeches analyzed for economic rhetoric	Language attracts investment and public optimism

(Sadaf & Siiton en, 2022)	Social media discourse constructs gendered 'other' in activism	Us-vs-them in gender and religious identity debates	Polarizing storylines and positioning theory applied	Social media discourse analyzed	Online discourse shapes social movement narratives
(Shah, 2018)	First PM speech asserts leadership through narrative and references	Us-vs-them in pronoun use and historical allusions	Religious and national metaphors reinforce authority	Political speeches analyzed textually and socially	Language controls public opinion and builds legitimacy
(Rizwan, 2019)	Social media debates construct national identity and patriotism	Us-vs-them in patriotism and treason discourses	Religious-nationalistic premises embedded	Social media discourse analyzed	Discursive practices enforce national security narratives
(Tehseem et al., 2021)	Political slogans manipulate reality to legitimize parties	Us-vs-them in slogan crafting and semiotic resources	Semiotic and verbal exchanges analyzed	Political slogans analyzed critically	Language legitimizes political environment
(Qader & Shehzad, 2017)	Parliamentary speech uses pronouns and lexical choices for power	Us-vs-them in pronoun use and ideological positioning	Lexical repetition and modality for victim ideology	Political speech analyzed for power relations	Language creates reality and controls audience
(Butoo, 2021)	News headlines reflect editor's ideological inclinations	Us-vs-them in newspaper portrayal of political movements	Ideological square reveals bias in headlines	News headlines analyzed	Media subjectivity influences public perception

3.2 Thematic Synthesis

3.2.1 Representation of Political Authority

Political authority is shown to be established via a combination of linguistic elements such as the use of pronouns, metaphorical expressions, modal language, and legitimacy-related lexicon in more than 30 scholarly studies (Farrukh & Masroor, 2021; Nawaz et al., 2024; Shah, 2018). The purpose of the mentioned strategies is to demonstrate the legitimacy of the authority in terms of leadership, moral superiority, and ideology (Farrukh & Masroor, 2021; Nawaz et al., 2024; Shah, 2018). Political speeches and manifestos appear to be the main context of authority construction where nationalism, religious themes, and historical references play an important role (Farrukh & Masroor, 2021; Nawaz et al., 2024; Shah, 2018). Media discourses also contribute to the establishment of political authority in reproducing either national/state/political parties' or their opposites', as is the case in counter-discourse, authority (Nasr et al., 2025; Ali, 2017; Butoo, 2021). A few studies point to the importance of identity construction of rivals to delegitimize opposition and thus build their own authority (Iqbal et al., 2024). In turn, social media discourses are characterized by a wide range of practices: some are hegemonic, while others resist the hegemony.

3.2.2 'Us Versus Them' Framing and Identity Construction

Of the total of 50 studies examined, about 29 studies use "us versus them" framing as a prevalent narrative device on the three platforms analyzed. The binary construction occurs in various ways: between nations versus foreigners (Ali, 2017; Tariq et al., 2020), between power holders versus the opposition (Saleem et al., 2022), between mainstream communities versus minorities (Nasr et al., 2025; Jan, 2023), and between religious versus secular/Western forces

(Batool, 2025; Nawaz et al., 2024). Van Dijk's ideological square narrative approach which highlights in-group positive qualities and out-group negative traits is widely used and strongly validated by the reviewed research (Ali et al., 2025; Saeed et al., 2024). Online platforms exacerbate such divisions via the echo chambers phenomenon and the role of algorithms in spreading divisive narratives (Alam, 2021; Ghauri, 2023). Importantly, however, there are not many studies that explore how such narratives are questioned and challenged within alternative voices.

3.2.3 Ideological Language, Metaphors, and Lexical Choices

A number of 24 articles have recorded frequent uses of ideological lexicons and metaphors in Pakistani politics. These metaphors include "stolen mandate," "puppet government," "ship of state," and "enemy of the nation." They carry meanings about ideological battles as well as politically loaded realities (Idrees & Idrees, 2025; Sharif et al., 2023). Religious and nationalistic metaphors are used as mechanisms of moralizing politics by invoking affective affiliations (Batool, 2025; Iqbal & Mahmood, 2022; Shah, 2018). Lexical strategies such as nominalization, passivization, and selective term usage to position ideas ideologically have been highlighted (Bibi et al., 2024; Qadeer & Shehzad, 2017). In addition, election campaign slogans have been separately discussed, recognizing them as concise but powerfully ideological discourses that contain rich cultural, religious, and partisan content (Nawaz et al., 2024; Tehseem et al., 2021). Notably, however, most of the studies that examine metaphors in politics have done so by concentrating on speech acts while ignoring metaphors in the form of digital content such as memes, hashtags, and social media abbreviations.

3.2.4 Platform-Specific Discursive Strategies

One of the key insights arising out of comparative analysis is the fact that various platforms have their own unique affordances and power reproductions dynamics. Conventional forms of news media be it printed or broadcasted are likely to show their alignment in terms of ideologies with respect to the views held by the officials or elites within the state or political parties, although there is variation across English and Urdu newspapers in terms of their sensationalism (Mulla, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025; Ullah et al., 2025). Ethnography of television news in Pakistan highlights how various pressures along with self-censorship and profit motive influence ideological productions (Mulla, 2021). The political speeches are marked by sophisticated use of rhetoric through ethos, pathos, logos, modality, and deixis (Saeed et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2025; Nawaz et al., 2024; Tariq et al., 2020). Social media discourse is distinctive due to its participatory nature and ability to create division among people through polarization as well as promoting hegemonic messages while empowering marginalized groups (Alam, 2021; Sadaf & Siitonen, 2022; Ghauri, 2023).

3.2.5 Public Perception Shaping Techniques

Among all the sources reviewed, discursive tactics employed by political actors to construct their image before the general public include such techniques as repetition, slogans, ambiguity, emotionality, and manipulation (Nawaz et al., 2024; Azam, 2024; Saeed et al., 2020). Modality, defined as the language used to represent necessity, probability, and desire, has been found to be an important strategy employed by politicians in order to claim moral superiority and restrict audience choices (Idrees & Idrees, 2025; Qadeer & Shehzad, 2017).

On the one hand, media framing, sensation journalism, and selective news reporting are identified as instruments of ideological filtering that support existing power relations and suppress any oppositional voices (Ahmed et al., 2025; Butoo, 2021). On the other hand, social networks have become battlegrounds for the circulation of different versions of reality with the processes of polarization and mobilization happening simultaneously (Alam, 2021; Ghauri, 2023). In spite of that, the issue of the public reception of those strategies remains largely unexplored in the whole source pool.

4. Chronological Development of the Field

The literature reflects a clear evolutionary trajectory from foundational single-platform analyses toward more nuanced comparative and cross-platform investigations.

Table 2. Chronological development of research on power narratives in Pakistani discourse (2017-2025)

Period	Research Direction	Key Characteristics
2017-2018	Foundational Studies	Political speech CDA, construction of national identity, populism, and parliament discourse analysis. Theorization around CDA in the Pakistani political landscape.
2019-2020	Political Speeches & National Identity	Thorough examination of political speeches, particularly in international conferences like UN General Assembly. Ideological positioning, polarization, and discourse strategies used for constructing national discourse and political authority.
2021-2022	Media Influence & Digital Discourse	Extension of research beyond print media to include digital media and television discourses. Studies on media hype, talk show debates, digital polarization, and political social media use.
2023-2024	Comparative Linguistic Strategies	Increased attention to language-based processes of political manipulation. Various studies conducted through CDA on speeches, headlines, and social media posts; interest is increasing in political happenings.
2025	Advanced Cross-Platform Analyses	Advanced socio-cognitive discourse analyses. Examination of political discourse metaphors, ideological squares, and modality within conflict and social movements context. Comparative studies on traditional and digital political media.

5. Critical Analysis and Synthesis

5.1 Areas of Scholarly Consensus

There is significant agreement among the reviewed literature regarding a number of key issues. First, the language used in political communication in Pakistan is not simply a passive tool for conveying messages but a vehicle for power creation and ideology. Second, political legitimacy is constructed using linguistic tools such as vocabulary, metaphors, and pronouns to create identity. Third, the "us versus them" paradigm permeates Pakistani political communication through all channels, functioning as the primary tool for creating solidarity and opposition. Fourth, each channel operates with its own unique discourses, although there is considerable overlap.

5.2 Points of Divergence and Debate

Nevertheless, key differences are noted. The degree of intensity and form of how authority is established differ greatly depending on the platform under study, the political environment being considered, and the nature of the actor analyzed. Research examining Imran Khan's speeches, which make up the bulk of the corpus examined, find that the civilizational and populist discursive tactics deployed by him have their own unique qualities (Batool, 2025; Idrees & Idrees, 2025) that might not necessarily be transferable to other political leaders or organizations. There are also key differences in terms of whether or not social media can enable the emergence of an authentic counter-hegemonic discourse.

Methodological divergences complicate direct comparison across studies. The predominance of qualitative CDA with limited sample sizes, varying in the linguistic features foregrounded (metaphor, modality, pronoun, slogans), and focus on different political events introduce significant variation in findings. The relative absence of audience reception studies means that claims about the effectiveness of discursive strategies in shaping public opinion remain largely inferential.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Literature

Table 3. Strengths and limitations of the reviewed literature across key analytical dimensions

Dimension	Strengths	Limitations
Methodological Approaches	Robust application of established CDA frameworks (Fairclough, Van Dijk); some mixed-method designs enhance analytical depth (Ali et al., 2025; Tariq et al., 2020).	Predominance of qualitative CDA limits methodological diversity; small, selective samples constrain generalizability; cross-platform comparisons often superficial or absent.
Representation of Authority	Effective uncovering of how political leaders particularly Imran Khan construct authority through metaphors, religious discourse, and positive self-presentation (Batoool, 2025; Idrees & Idrees, 2025).	Overemphasis on elite figures overlooks alternative, oppositional, and grassroots leadership discourses, limiting understanding of the broader political communication landscape.
Us vs. Them Framing	Robust application of Van Dijk's ideological square reveals dichotomous framing across platforms (Ali et al., 2025; Tariq et al., 2020); the mechanism is well-documented.	Limited exploration of how these narratives are contested or resisted, especially on social media; emotional and affective dimensions of polarization receive insufficient attention.
Ideological Language & Metaphors	Strong focus on metaphors and lexical choices encoding power; campaign slogans and media headlines analyzed for religious and emotive language (Nawaz et al., 2024; Sharif et al., 2023).	Linguistic features often analyzed in isolation from socio-political contexts and audience reception; metaphorical analysis largely confined to political speeches.
Cross-Platform Comparison	Some studies contrast traditional and digital platforms, highlighting sensationalism differentials and social media's polarizing role (Ahmed et al., 2025; Nasr et al., 2025).	Systematic cross-platform studies integrating all three platforms within a unified analytical framework remain rare, restricting comprehensive understanding.
Socio-Political Relevance	Studies effectively situate discourse within Pakistan's specific political landscape military influence, ethnic conflict, democratic fragility (Jan, 2023; Sulehry, 2024).	Limited engagement with evolving political contexts; intersectionality of identity factors (gender, ethnicity, class) remains largely neglected.

6. Theoretical and Practical Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The synthesised results provide strong support for the theoretical hypothesis underpinning CDA, which holds that discourse is both a reflection of and a construction of power dynamics in society (Fairclough, 1992; Van Dijk, 1998). A number of theoretical implications can be drawn from the synthesis. Firstly, the results expand current theories on media-political dynamics by showing that the distinctive affordances of platforms lead to different yet intersecting patterns of discourse formation, thus requiring new theoretical frameworks sensitive to particular platforms in political communication. While traditional media tends to reproduce narratives of the political elite, social media serves to amplify polarisation and counter-hegemonic discourse.

Secondly, the widespread presence of ideological metaphors, especially religious and nationalist metaphorical representations, in Pakistani political discourse shows that political discourse is deeply rooted in culture. The application of conceptual metaphor theory must consider the national, religious, and historical context in order to explain its political significance. Thirdly, the findings refute simplistic theories on media neutrality and show the significant ideological role of the news media in either reinforcing or challenging the power dynamics in society. Finally, the preponderance of studies on elite political actors provides theoretical grounds for developing frameworks that incorporate grassroots, subaltern, and counter-hegemonic political discourse.

6.2 Practical Implications

The implications for media professionals and regulatory agencies include the need to practice balanced journalism that is not marred by ideological bias and sensationalism, especially in situations that are politically divided. The differences in frames found in the two types of media indicate the possibility of initiating media literacy programs that are tailored to the language being used.

For practitioners in political communication, there is a need to recognize the power of metaphors, modes of discourse, and ideology in framing public opinion. It is important to recognize the dangers of hate speech and oppositional discourses in politics so as to ensure their monitoring and prevention.

Finally, the implications for educators and researchers in media and politics include the use of interdisciplinary approaches that combine linguistics, political science, and media studies. There is a need to ensure that media literacy programs are initiated with an understanding of the dynamics associated with the digital environment.

7. Research Gaps and Future Directions

The review identifies several significant gaps in the existing literature. These are organized below by research priority.

Table 4. Research gaps and future directions in the study of power narratives in Pakistani political discourse

Gap	Description	Recommended Directions	Priority
Limited cross-platform comparative analysis	Studies predominantly analyze single platforms without integrating news media, political speeches, and social media within unified analytical frameworks.	Systematic comparative studies using mixed methods that capture both platform-specific and cross-platform dynamics simultaneously.	High
Underrepresentation of grassroots discourse	Corpus dominated by elite political figures and mainstream media; grassroots, oppositional, and marginalized voices receive limited attention.	Research on marginalized communities, grassroots activists, and oppositional parties, particularly on alternative digital platforms.	High
Absence of audience reception studies	Few studies empirically examine how audiences perceive, interpret, and respond to power narratives and ideological language.	Audience reception studies, surveys, and ethnographic methods assessing the effectiveness of discursive strategies on public opinion and behavior.	High
Methodological homogeneity	Predominance of qualitative CDA limits insights available from multimodal, ethnographic, and computational approaches.	Integration of multimodal discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, computational methods (sentiment analysis, topic modeling), and ethnographic fieldwork.	Medium
Neglect of affective dimensions	Studies document dichotomous narratives but rarely analyze the emotional and affective mechanisms reinforcing or contesting polarization.	Affective discourse analysis examining emotions, affective language, and audience emotional engagement in political communication.	Medium
Limited digital metaphor analysis	Metaphor and ideological language	Analysis of conceptual metaphors, slogans, and	Medium

	analyses largely confined to political speeches; social media metaphors (memes, hashtags) underexplored.	ideological lexicons in social media content, including visual and multimodal dimensions.	
Intersectionality gaps	Few studies consider how gender, ethnicity, class, and other identity markers intersect with power narratives in political discourse.	Intersectional discourse analyses examining how multiple identities are constructed and contested across platforms.	Medium
Insufficient longitudinal analysis	Most research provides event-specific snapshots without tracking changes over time across election cycles or regime transitions.	Longitudinal studies examining how power narratives evolve across political cycles and in response to major political events.	Medium

8. Conclusion

The present systematic review identifies a total of 50 scientific papers on discursive power in Pakistan, including studies of its articulation and legitimation through language, its resistance in news media, political speeches, and social media, as well as its negotiation in different types of platforms. Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that language serves as one of the major ways through which discourses about power operate in the political context of Pakistan, defined by fragile democracy, military rule, interethnic tensions, and technological innovation.

Based on the reviewed literature, four main themes could be found in the field of Pakistani political discourse studies. First, the power of political elites in Pakistan is constantly constructed through ideological discourse, metaphoric statements, pronoun usage, and legitimizing rhetoric, with elite politicians during times of crisis relying heavily on complex rhetorical tools to prove their superior morality and gain more power. Second, "us versus them" discourse is the major structural element of political discourse in Pakistan, simultaneously functioning as tools for in-group consolidation, out-group delegitimization, and populist politics. Third, traditional media tends to reproduce official political discourses and discourses of elite politicians, while social media tends to polarize audiences and provide a space for alternative counter-hegemonic discourses, thus producing a divergence that raises important theoretical questions regarding democratic communication and public sphere studies. Fourth, comparative analysis of discourses across several platforms is under-researched, and the inclusion of reception studies, intersectionality studies, and methodological diversity represents the future research agenda of this field.

As seen from the above discussion, despite significant progress in Pakistani political discourse studies made over the past few years and its increasing interest in the analysis of digital discourses, there are still some important aspects that require more attention in future research. For example, the strong emphasis on elite politicians and their discourse, particularly Imran Khan, as well as the predominance of qualitative critical discourse analysis should be changed. Instead, future research needs to focus on non-elite political actors and adopt mixed-method and computational approaches.

Conclusively, the current systematic review demonstrates that language in Pakistan does not merely reflect political identities and power dynamics but plays an active part in the process of their formation and transformation. Thus, advancing knowledge in how languages contribute to power sustainability or resistance is a meaningful task for ensuring the establishment of democratic and critical political communication.

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