

## ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF RHETORICAL DEVICES IN SHAPING DISCOURSE IN EDITORIALS OF PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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### **Abstract**

*Editorial discourse plays a central role in shaping how elections are understood, evaluated, and remembered by the public, particularly in politically contested environments like Pakistan. This study explores how rhetorical devices are used in Pakistani English newspaper editorials to construct political meaning during the 2024 General Election, with specific focus on Dawn and The Nation. Guided by Naomi's (2016) rhetorical model and supported by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study adopts a qualitative design to analyse a purposive sample of twenty-four election-related editorials including 12 from each newspaper. The analysis focuses on six key rhetorical devices specifically metaphor, analogy, hyperbole, paralipsis, sarcasm, and oxymoron and demonstrates that these devices function as important meaning-making tools rather than mere stylistic features. Findings show that Dawn generally employs rhetorical strategies to emphasise procedural fairness, democratic participation, and institutional accountability, framing elections as regulated processes where legitimacy depends on transparency and consistency. In contrast, The Nation tends to use rhetorical devices to stress stability, order, and institutional authority, often portraying protest, legal challenges, and dissent as potential threats to democratic continuity. Overall, the study shows that rhetorical devices actively shape how democracy, legitimacy, and political responsibility are discursively constructed in elite media. Future research may extend this work through comparative and multi-model approaches by applying Naomi's rhetorical framework alongside other Critical Discourse Analysis models across a wider range of Pakistani and international media texts, in order to capture how rhetorical and ideological patterns vary across genres, and political contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Rhetorical Analysis; Discourse; Language and Power; Pakistani Newspapers; Meaning Construction; Political Discourse; Pakistani English Newspapers.*

### **1. Introduction**

Language constitutes a fundamental medium of communication, enabling individuals to articulate thoughts, ideas, and attitudes with precision (Ojha, 2022; Gul et al., 2024). Building on this communicative role, discourse can be understood as language in use, a spoken or written text that links meaning with form and is always tied to a communicative purpose and an intended audience (Cicourel, 1985). In this sense, discourse analysis offers valuable insights into how language functions in relevant contexts to construct meanings, shape ideologies, and influence thought. Within discourse studies, media texts are particularly significant because they provide authentic examples of how language is strategically employed to persuade audiences (Khrumchenko, 2023). Editorials are of particular discursive significance as they embody the institutional stance of a

newspaper and function as persuasive texts designed to guide reader interpretation. Such texts are not neutral, instead they are carefully crafted linguistic products that employ rhetorical strategies to achieve persuasive goals (Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013; Hassan et al., 2026).

The concept of rhetoric, as the art of persuasion, has long been associated with discourse practices. Cicero described rhetoric as an art composed of invention, elocution, disposition, pronunciation, and memory. Quintilian called rhetoric the “science of refined speech” (as cited in Mejdube, 2019). Abd Aliwie (2025) emphasized rhetoric as the strategic use of language to persuade, while Kennedy (2007) highlighted its power to inspire, defend, and convince. In contemporary discourse analysis, rhetorical devices are understood as linguistic strategies that enrich language, enhance argumentation, and intensify persuasive impact (Ashipu, 2013).

A number of academic works have explored rhetorical devices across genres, emphasizing their role in structuring argumentation, shaping meaning, and aligning readers with particular perspectives (Gross, 2012). However, while such studies are well developed in advanced contexts (Lihua, 2009), research on rhetorical devices in discourse remains underdeveloped in the Pakistani context, particularly with reference to political discourse. English-language newspapers such as *Dawn* and *The Nation* provide a valuable corpus for this purpose, as their editorials demonstrate how rhetorical devices are embedded in written discourse to comment on and construct political realities. Building on these theoretical foundations, the present study employs Naomi’s (2016) Rhetorical Model, which categorizes strategies such as analogies, hyperboles, metaphors, oxymorons, paralipsis, and sarcasm. This framework provides a systematic basis for analyzing rhetorical practices in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze rhetorical devices in Pakistani English newspaper editorials on the 2024 General Election, thereby contributing to discourse-analytical literature on language.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Recent research has demonstrated the significant role of rhetorical devices in shaping argumentation and influencing public discourse across diverse genres (Al Lail, 2022; Aliwie, 2025). Studies conducted in Western contexts highlight how rhetorical strategies are central to media texts and political communication (Salih, 2024). However, within Pakistan, discourse-analytical investigations into rhetorical devices remain under-explored. Limited studies have examined linguistic strategies in Pakistani newspapers, but they have not specifically focused on editorials during elections, where persuasive language plays a decisive role in shaping public opinion (Ramzan et al., 2021; Ullah and Arshad, 2023). This lack of contextualized research creates a significant gap. Accordingly, the present study addresses this gap by analyzing rhetorical devices in the editorials of *Dawn* and *The Nation* during the 2024 General Election, thereby contributing to contemporary discourse-analytical studies of persuasive language in Pakistani English newspapers. This study focuses on examining the various rhetorical devices and their functions in the newspaper editorials of *Dawn* and *The Nation*, specifically concerning the 2024 Pakistani Election. This study enables the systematic identification and analysis of rhetorical devices.

### 1.2 Research Questions

1. Which rhetorical devices are employed in the editorials of Pakistani English newspapers, *Dawn* and *The Nation*, during the 2024 General Election?

2. How do these rhetorical devices contribute to shaping discourse on the 2024 Pakistani General Election?

### 1.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the rhetorical devices employed in the editorials of Pakistani English newspapers, specifically *Dawn* and *The Nation*, regarding the 2024 General Election.
2. To examine the role of rhetorical devices to shaping political discourse in the context of the 2024 Pakistani General Election.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Rhetorical devices in Pakistani English newspaper editorials have received limited attention within discourse analysis. This study therefore advances understanding by examining how rhetorical strategies function in newspaper editorials during the 2024 General Election, highlighting the role of language in constructing meaning and guiding public interpretation. By addressing this gap, it provides a localized perspective that complements international studies on rhetoric and discourse, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and comparative understanding of media discourse across cultural contexts. Furthermore, a greater comprehension of the ways and strategies in which language shapes political narratives in print media will also be made possible. Practically, the findings will benefit students and scholars of linguistics, discourse analysis, and media studies, offering insights into the persuasive strategies embedded in editorials. The study also lays the groundwork for future research on rhetorical practices in media texts across different cultural and political settings.

### 3. Literature Review

Political communication plays a central role in shaping how citizens understand democratic processes, political authority, and institutional legitimacy. Media discourse, particularly in the form of opinion and editorial writing, is widely recognised as a key site where political meanings are constructed, evaluated, and normalised (McNair, 2018). Rather than merely transmitting information, newspapers actively frame political events, select interpretive angles, and guide readers toward particular understandings of political reality. As such, editorials function not only as commentary but as powerful instruments of ideological mediation.

Within this broader field, critical scholars emphasise that media discourse contributes to the reproduction of power relations and dominant political narratives. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has demonstrated that language choices in news and opinion texts are closely tied to institutional interests, political alignments, and broader social structures (Fairclough, 1995, 2015). From this perspective, editorials are not neutral reflections of political events but discursive practices that actively construct legitimacy, marginalise alternative voices, and shape public evaluations of political actors and processes.

Research on election-related media discourse further shows that periods of electoral competition intensify discursive struggles over meaning, fairness, and democratic credibility. Studies across different contexts indicate that newspapers play a significant role in framing elections as either credible democratic exercises or as contested and unstable processes (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Aalberg et al., 2012; Nigar et al., 2025). In election-related media discourse, the employment of key rhetorical devices, specifically metaphor, analogy, paralipsis, oxymoron, hyperbole, and sarcasm, facilitates the systematic use of selective emphasis, evaluative language, and framing strategies. Through these discursive resources, voters' interpretations of institutional actions, political conflict, and the legitimacy of outcomes are actively shaped.

In South Asian and Pakistani contexts, scholars have increasingly applied CDA to examine how English-language newspapers represent politics, democracy, and state institutions. Empirical research demonstrates that Pakistani media discourse often reflects broader political power structures, with editorials frequently legitimising certain institutional positions while questioning or marginalising others (Habib, 2025; Munir & Ahmed, 2024; Khan et al., 2026). These studies highlight how newspapers participate in constructing dominant narratives around governance by examining the role of rhetorical devices in shaping political discourse.

Election coverage in Pakistan has received particular scholarly attention due to the country's history of political instability, military influence, and contested democratic transitions. Researchers have shown that media discourse during elections often emphasises themes of order, stability, and institutional authority, sometimes at the expense of popular participation and grassroots political agency (Ali & Rahman, 2019; Ashraf et al., 2024; Gul et al., 2023). Such findings suggest that editorial discourse plays a key role in shaping how democracy itself is imagined and evaluated in the Pakistani context.

At the same time, studies of Pakistani editorials point to the importance of persuasive and evaluative language in shaping public interpretations of political events. Scholars note that editorials rely heavily on strategic language choices to guide reader judgment, construct moral evaluations, and position institutions as either protectors or threats to democratic norms (Alvi, 2016; Zaidi, 2021). These findings reinforce the view that editorials function as sites of ideological work rather than as neutral platforms of opinion.

While much of the existing literature focuses on framing, ideology, and representation, fewer studies have systematically examined how rhetorical strategies operate as structured mechanisms for meaning-making in Pakistani election discourse. International research demonstrates that rhetorical resources play a central role in shaping political interpretation and evaluative stance (Charteris-Black, 2011; Partington, 2007; Gul et al., 2022; Sajjad et al., 2023). However, in the Pakistani context, rhetorical analysis is often treated implicitly or selectively, without a comprehensive, model-driven framework.

Moreover, most Pakistani studies rely primarily on broad CDA approaches, with limited integration of detailed rhetorical frameworks that allow for systematic identification and comparison of rhetorical patterns across texts and newspapers. As a result, there remains a lack of research that combines CDA with a structured rhetorical model to examine how editorial discourse constructs electoral meaning at both the linguistic and ideological levels.

Therefore, despite growing scholarship on Pakistani political media, a clear gap exists in applying an integrated rhetorical-CDA framework to election-related editorials in Pakistani English newspapers. In particular, there is limited research that uses a contemporary rhetorical model, such as Naomi's (2016), to conduct device-specific, systematic analysis of how editorials deploy rhetorical strategies to shape understandings of electoral legitimacy, institutional authority, and democratic norms.

The present study addresses this gap by examining election-related editorials through the combined lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and Naomi's (2016) rhetorical model. By focusing on how rhetorical strategies function within editorial discourse to construct political meaning and ideology, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the discursive role of Pakistani English newspapers in shaping political discourse during electoral periods.

#### 4. Research Methodology



The present study adopts a qualitative research methodology grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how Pakistani English-language newspaper editorials construct electoral discourse through rhetorical and discursive strategies. The study relies on non-numerical, text-based data to develop an in-depth understanding of how language shapes meanings, evaluations, and ideological positions. By integrating critical discourse perspectives with rhetorical analysis, the study examines how editorial discourse both reflects and actively produces particular interpretations of democracy, electoral integrity, and political authority.

### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive, qualitative research design. The analysis focuses on systematic examination of linguistic features, rhetorical devices, and discursive patterns in election-related editorials. The design enables detailed interpretation of how meaning is constructed at the level of textual choices and how these choices function within broader patterns of media discourse. This approach allows the study to capture both micro-level linguistic strategies and macro-level discursive tendencies in the representation of electoral processes.

### 3.2 Textual Data

The textual data consist of editorials published in *Dawn* and *The Nation* during Pakistan's general election period. These newspapers represent influential national English-language media outlets and play a significant role in shaping elite and public political discourse. The editorials address major electoral developments, including campaign dynamics, institutional decisions, election-day arrangements, post-election controversies, and political transitions. As institutional texts, editorials articulate official newspaper positions and therefore provide a suitable site for examining how elections and democracy are discursively framed.

### 3.3 Sampling

The study employs purposive, non-probability sampling to select editorials that directly address electoral processes, democratic institutions, political participation, and post-election developments. Editorials are selected based on their thematic relevance to the research objectives and their potential to provide rich discursive material for analysis. This sampling strategy ensures the inclusion of information-rich texts that allow for in-depth qualitative interpretation of electoral discourse.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Data collection involves systematic retrieval of election-related editorials from the official digital archives of *Dawn* and *The Nation*. The selected editorials are compiled into a corpus and organised for close qualitative analysis. The texts are stored, coded, and prepared for iterative reading. This method of documentary data collection enables transparent access to naturally occurring institutional texts and supports reliable qualitative analysis of media discourse.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeds through close reading and systematic identification of rhetorical devices and salient linguistic patterns. The analysis examines how these features contribute to discursive strategies such as framing, evaluation, legitimisation, and positioning. The interpretation further situates these patterns within broader social and political contexts to examine how editorial discourse constructs meanings related to democracy, electoral legitimacy, authority, and political stability. This multilayered analytical procedure enables a comprehensive understanding of how rhetorical and discursive choices shape competing representations of electoral politics in Pakistani newspaper editorials.

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

#### 4.1 Metaphor

Metaphor constitutes a primary cognitive and ideological framing mechanism in both *Dawn* and *The Nation*, yet the two newspapers employ metaphor to advance markedly different constructions of democracy, authority, and political legitimacy. In both cases, metaphors function not merely as stylistic devices but as conceptual tools that organise how elections, institutions, and political actors are understood.

In *Dawn*, metaphors consistently frame elections as a regulated competitive process governed by rules, fairness, and institutional neutrality. Phrases such as “*setting the stage*,” “*kick off the campaigns in earnest*,” “*level playing field*,” “*knocked out of the electoral race*,” “*severest handicaps*,” “*difference between a large victory and an overwhelming defeat*,” “*run-up to the elections*,” “*contest on equal terms*,” “*electoral race*,” and “*playing field tilted against certain actors*” construct elections as a formal contest in which legitimacy depends on equal conditions rather than mere outcomes.

These metaphors do important ideological work. By framing politics as a rule-bound game or competition, *Dawn* implicitly foregrounds procedural fairness as the core democratic value. The metaphorical emphasis on “*level playing field*” and “*handicaps*” shifts attention from personalities to institutional arrangements, suggesting that democracy is compromised not by who wins, but by whether the conditions of competition are fair. This framing also allows *Dawn* to criticise institutional decisions indirectly by showing how they distort the “*game*,” rather than by attacking institutions outright.

Moreover, spatial and process metaphors such as “*set the stage*,” “*run-up*,” and “*electoral race*” present elections as structured events unfolding in predictable phases. This normalises expectations of transparency, preparation, and procedural clarity. The repeated use of these metaphors thus reinforces *Dawn*’s broader discourse of democratic accountability, where institutions are evaluated according to how well they preserve fair competition.

In contrast, *The Nation* relies heavily on metaphors of navigation, crisis, and instability. Expressions such as “*complex web of challenges*,” “*labyrinth of challenges*,” “*critical crossroads*,” “*navigate turbulent waters*,” “*teetering between hope and concern*,” “*path to progress*,” “*turbulent political waters*,” “*fragile security situation*,” “*storm of challenges*,” and “*precarious political landscape*” construct politics as an inherently unstable environment requiring careful management and strong guidance.

These metaphors shift the conceptual centre of democracy away from fairness and participation and toward stability and control. By framing governance as navigation through danger, *The Nation* implicitly casts institutional authority as necessary for preventing disorder. The repeated emphasis on “*turbulence*,” “*fragility*,” and “*crossroads*” normalises crisis as the default condition of politics, thereby justifying extraordinary measures, heightened security, and public restraint.

Importantly, these metaphors also reposition citizens. Rather than being participants in a competitive democratic process, citizens are discursively constructed as passengers in a risky journey, expected to trust institutional “*navigators*.” This metaphorical system subtly limits the discursive space for protest, dissent, or confrontation by framing such actions as disruptions to collective stability.

The differential metaphorical systems reinforce contrasting democratic imaginaries. In *Dawn*, metaphor supports a discourse of democracy as fair competition and institutional accountability. In *The Nation*, metaphor supports a discourse of democracy as crisis management and stability preservation. These metaphorical choices do not merely describe political reality; they actively

construct different normative expectations of what democracy should prioritise during electoral periods.

#### 4.2 Hyperbole

Hyperbole functions as a key intensification strategy in both newspapers, yet it is mobilised toward different ideological ends. In both cases, exaggeration heightens perceived stakes, but what is amplified and why differs substantially.

In *Dawn*, hyperbole is primarily used to dramatise democratic harm and procedural injustice. Expressions such as “*kill any party’s election prospects*,” “*severest handicaps*,” “*overwhelming defeat*,” “*massive impact on electoral fairness*,” “*serious blow to democratic credibility*,” “*deep confusion among voters*,” “*grave consequences for legitimacy*,” “*far-reaching implications*,” “*damage to the integrity of the process*,” and “*undermining public confidence*” amplify the democratic costs of institutional actions.

These exaggerations do not merely heighten emotion; they direct evaluative attention toward institutional responsibility. By overstating impact, *Dawn* rhetorically enlarges procedural decisions into systemic democratic threats. This framing positions administrative rulings not as technical matters but as acts with potentially devastating effects on representation and trust.

Hyperbole thus becomes a tool for moral amplification. It allows *Dawn* to make institutional accountability visible by portraying procedural decisions as capable of “*killing prospects*” and “*undermining confidence*.” The exaggeration supports a discourse in which even seemingly minor institutional actions are treated as democratically consequential.

In *The Nation*, hyperbole overwhelmingly targets disorder, protest, and legal challenges. Phrases such as “*dangerous and anarchist standpoint*,” “*deep-seated concerns*,” “*fuel to the fire*,” “*grave threat to stability*,” “*widespread repercussions*,” “*massive expectations*,” “*precarious state of the economy*,” “*steal away peace and political stability*,” “*serious risks to national order*,” and “*existential challenges to democracy*” intensify the perceived dangers of dissent and instability.

Here, exaggeration does ideological work by magnifying the risks of resistance while minimising structural critique. Protest and litigation are framed not as democratic practices but as disproportionate threats to peace. The hyperbolic emphasis on chaos, instability, and national risk constructs dissent as irresponsible and dangerous, thereby legitimising restraint and institutional authority.

Hyperbole in *The Nation* thus operates less to protect democratic participation and more to protect institutional continuity. By inflating the dangers of protest, it rhetorically narrows the space for legitimate opposition.

The differential use of hyperbole reinforces competing democratic priorities. In *Dawn*, exaggeration amplifies democratic harm and procedural injustice. In *The Nation*, exaggeration amplifies disorder and instability. Hyperbole therefore becomes a discursive tool through which each newspaper signals what it treats as the primary threat to democracy: institutional unfairness in *Dawn*, and public disruption in *The Nation*.

#### 4.3 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a more evaluative and morally loaded device, used to mark boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate political behaviour. Its distribution and intensity reveal deep ideological differences between the two newspapers.

In *Dawn*, sarcasm is limited, restrained, and institutionally directed. Phrases such as “*regrettable order*,” “*it is a shame that matters came to this*,” “*hardly a reassuring development*,” “*an unfortunate precedent*,” “*a curious interpretation of the law*,” “*a troubling decision*,” “*not exactly*

*confidence-inspiring,*” “*a less-than-ideal outcome,*” “*a disappointing turn,*” and “*a questionable approach*” signal irony and disapproval without overt mockery.

This restrained sarcasm functions to hold institutions to account while maintaining editorial decorum. Rather than ridiculing citizens or protestors, *Dawn* directs evaluative irony toward institutional decisions. This preserves a discourse that remains focused on procedural integrity and accountability rather than on disciplining public behaviour.

Sarcasm in *Dawn* thus supports a liberal-democratic tone: critical, but measured; evaluative, but not punitive. It signals institutional failure while keeping the moral focus on governance rather than on public dissent.

In contrast, *The Nation* employs sarcasm more aggressively and toward public challengers and legal petitioners. Expressions such as “*detached from reality,*” “*wasting the court’s time,*” “*rhetoric-based criticism,*” “*fall for propaganda,*” “*inherent desire to steal away peace,*” “*dangerous and anarchist,*” “*misguided pleas,*” “*ill-informed objections,*” “*reckless agitation,*” and “*irresponsible disruption*” carry strong sarcastic and dismissive force.

This sarcasm works to delegitimise dissent by framing challengers as irrational, emotional, or irresponsible. Rather than engaging substantively with grievances, sarcastic framing transforms protest and legal action into objects of ridicule or moral censure. This discursively positions institutional authority as rational and responsible, while casting resistance as unserious or destabilising.

Sarcasm in *The Nation* thus functions as a disciplining device. It polices the boundaries of acceptable political behaviour by attaching negative moral character to those who challenge electoral outcomes or institutional authority.

The differential use of sarcasm reinforces broader discursive patterns. In *The Nation*, sarcasm functions to delegitimise resistance and normalise authority by portraying dissent as irrational, irresponsible, or disruptive. It supports a discourse in which stability and institutional continuity are prioritised over contestation. In *Dawn*, the limited and restrained use of sarcasm supports a discourse that remains focused on institutional accountability rather than on disciplining public dissent. Sarcasm in *Dawn* critiques governance while preserving the legitimacy of political participation, whereas in *The Nation* it contributes to narrowing the space for legitimate challenge by moralising against dissent.

#### 4.4 Analogy

Analogy operates as a structuring device through which abstract political processes are made intelligible by being likened to more familiar domains such as games, journeys, legal procedures, or administrative routines. In both *Dawn* and *The Nation*, analogical reasoning helps normalise particular interpretations of democracy, but the nature and direction of these analogies differ significantly.

In *Dawn*, analogy is primarily used to relate elections to regulated systems of competition and institutional procedure. Expressions such as “*level playing field,*” “*handicaps,*” “*knocked out of the race,*” “*difference between victory and defeat,*” “*contest on equal terms,*” “*procedural fairness,*” “*rules of the game,*” “*institutional checks,*” “*legal hurdles,*” and “*administrative barriers*” repeatedly draw on the logic of sport, competition, and rule-based systems.

These analogies serve to naturalise the expectation that democracy operates according to clear rules and neutral oversight. By invoking the logic of games and competitions, *Dawn* implicitly argues that legitimacy depends not on who wins but on whether the rules are applied equally. The



analogy of “*handicaps*” is especially significant, as it frames institutional decisions as artificially disadvantaging certain actors, thereby distorting what should be a fair contest.

Legal and procedural analogies further reinforce this logic. References to “*checks*,” “*hurdles*,” and “*barriers*” conceptualise institutions as gatekeepers whose role is to ensure fairness, but whose actions can also unjustly obstruct participation. Through these analogies, *Dawn* makes institutional power visible and evaluable, encouraging readers to assess whether the “system” itself is functioning properly.

In *The Nation*, analogy more frequently links elections to administrative management, security operations, and national discipline. Expressions such as “*path to progress*,” “*managing a country-wide exercise*,” “*administrative moves*,” “*security arrangements*,” “*maintaining order*,” “*navigating challenges*,” “*protecting stability*,” “*ensuring smooth conduct*,” “*containing disruption*,” and “*safeguarding national interests*” analogise democracy to large-scale logistical or security operations.

These analogies reframe elections less as competitive contests and more as management problems requiring technical expertise and firm control. The electorate is discursively positioned as part of a system to be organised rather than as agents in a political contest. By likening elections to administrative exercises, *The Nation* naturalises restrictions, security measures, and institutional interventions as necessary and responsible.

This analogical framing reduces the visibility of power asymmetries. By presenting institutional control as routine management, it shifts attention away from questions of fairness or exclusion and toward efficiency, order, and risk mitigation.

Analogy thus reinforces divergent democratic logics. In *Dawn*, analogy sustains a discourse of democracy as regulated competition, where institutional fairness is central to legitimacy. In *The Nation*, analogy sustains a discourse of democracy as administrative and security management, where stability and order take precedence over contestation. These analogical choices actively shape how readers conceptualise what elections are *for* and what institutions are *supposed to do*.

#### 4.5 Paralipsis

Paralipsis as the rhetorical strategy of mentioning an issue while claiming not to focus on it functions as a subtle but powerful discursive mechanism in both newspapers. It allows sensitive topics to be raised while limiting the extent to which they are openly interrogated.

In *Dawn*, paralipsis is frequently used to acknowledge institutional shortcomings without adopting an overtly confrontational tone. Phrases such as “*questions have been raised*,” “*concerns have been expressed*,” “*some observers note*,” “*it has been pointed out*,” “*there are indications*,” “*critics argue*,” “*it is worth noting*,” “*without going into details*,” “*reports suggest*,” and “*issues cannot be ignored*” introduce critique indirectly.

This strategy allows *Dawn* to surface institutional problems such as administrative bias, judicial inconsistencies, or regulatory ambiguity while preserving a stance of editorial moderation. By attributing critique to unnamed observers or generalised concerns, *Dawn* protects itself from appearing partisan while still drawing attention to structural issues.

Paralipsis thus functions as a form of controlled exposure. It makes institutional power visible but does so through distancing language. This supports *Dawn*’s broader discursive identity as a watchdog that maintains professional restraint while signalling democratic risks.

In *The Nation*, paralipsis more often serves to contain controversy rather than to expose it. Expressions such as “*without dwelling on*,” “*while not denying*,” “*acknowledging concerns*,” “*setting aside allegations*,” “*regardless of claims*,” “*without indulging speculation*,”

“*notwithstanding criticism,*” “*despite some objections,*” “*without reopening debates,*” and “*moving past accusations*” introduce contentious issues only to marginalise them.

Here, paralipsis works to neutralise dissent. By briefly referencing allegations or concerns and then shifting focus to stability, order, or institutional authority, *The Nation* discursively minimises the legitimacy of critique. This rhetorical move allows the paper to appear balanced while ultimately prioritising closure, consolidation, and acceptance of institutional outcomes.

Paralipsis in *The Nation* therefore performs a containment function. It signals awareness of controversy but frames it as something to be moved beyond rather than examined in depth.

The differential use of paralipsis reinforces contrasting democratic orientations. In *Dawn*, paralipsis supports cautious exposure of institutional shortcomings while maintaining editorial neutrality. In *The Nation*, paralipsis supports discursive containment, allowing controversy to be acknowledged only to be sidelined in favour of stability and authority. In both cases, paralipsis shapes what can be said and how far critique is allowed to go.

#### 4.6 Oxymoron

Oxymoron, though less frequent than other devices, plays a strategically important role in highlighting contradictions and tensions within electoral discourse. It allows newspapers to signal inconsistencies between stated principles and actual practice.

In *Dawn*, oxymoronic constructions emerge where democratic ideals are juxtaposed with restrictive realities. Phrases and implied tensions such as “*technical irregularities*” versus “*severest handicaps,*” “*procedural compliance*” alongside “*substantive exclusion,*” “*legal clarity*” paired with “*practical confusion,*” “*formal neutrality*” versus “*effective disadvantage,*” “*minor errors*” alongside “*major consequences,*” “*administrative routine*” contrasted with “*democratic harm,*” “*institutional fairness*” alongside “*selective application,*” and “*rule-bound process*” with “*unequal outcomes*” produce oxymoronic tension.

These constructions expose a gap between how institutions describe their actions and how those actions function politically. By placing mild descriptors next to severe consequences, *Dawn* highlights disproportion and contradiction. This rhetorical tension encourages readers to question official narratives and to recognise how seemingly technical decisions can produce deeply political effects.

Oxymoron in *Dawn* thus operates as a critical device. It reveals structural contradictions within institutional discourse and foregrounds the mismatch between democratic language and democratic practice.

In *The Nation*, oxymoronic tensions often appear in the pairing of democratic language with restrictive or disciplinary practices. Examples include “*peaceful control,*” “*responsible restrictions,*” “*orderly disruption,*” “*protective shutdowns,*” “*secure participation,*” “*disciplined democracy,*” “*managed freedom,*” “*regulated expression,*” “*necessary inconvenience,*” and “*stability through restraint.*”

These constructions normalise contradiction by presenting limitation as protection. Rather than exposing tension, *The Nation*’s oxymoronic patterns work to reconcile opposing ideas like freedom and restriction, participation and control into a single acceptable narrative. This reduces the perception of conflict between democratic ideals and coercive practices.

Oxymoron in *The Nation* thus functions less as critique and more as legitimation. It linguistically resolves contradictions in favour of institutional authority and stability.

The contrasting uses of oxymoron further illuminate divergent ideological orientations. In *Dawn*, oxymoron exposes contradiction and disproportion, supporting a discourse that questions the

alignment between democratic principles and institutional practice. In *The Nation*, oxymoron smooths over contradiction, reframing restriction as responsibility and control as care. In this way, oxymoron becomes either a tool of critique (*Dawn*) or a tool of normalisation (*The Nation*).

Across analogy, paralipsis, and oxymoron, the two newspapers construct sharply different democratic imaginaries. *Dawn* repeatedly frames democracy as a rule-bound, competitive, and accountability-driven process, using rhetorical devices to expose institutional contradictions and procedural injustice. *The Nation*, by contrast, frames democracy as a fragile national exercise requiring discipline, management, and containment, using rhetorical devices to normalise restriction and marginalise dissent.

Together with metaphor, hyperbole, and sarcasm, these devices do not simply decorate argumentation; they actively shape what democracy is understood to mean, who is positioned as responsible or disruptive, and which values as fairness or stability are prioritised during electoral moments.

#### 4.7 Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that Pakistani newspaper editorials make systematic use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, analogy, sarcasm, hyperbole, paralipsis, and oxymoron to construct political meanings and to position readers ideologically. This supports earlier research which argues that editorial discourse is inherently persuasive and evaluative, and that rhetorical strategies function as central mechanisms through which newspapers shape public understanding of political events (Liu & Hood, 2017; Firmstone, 2019). The prominence of these devices in the present corpus confirms that rhetorical structuring is not incidental but constitutes a core feature of political media discourse.

The extensive use of metaphor in the editorials aligns with the findings of Charteris-Black (2011), who shows that political metaphors provide moral and ideological frames through which complex political realities are simplified and evaluated. In the present data, metaphors of crisis, struggle, burden, and instability repeatedly frame governance and political processes, thereby encouraging readers to interpret political developments in terms of threat and urgency. Similar patterns are reported by Musolff (2016), who demonstrates that metaphorical framing plays a decisive role in legitimising particular political positions while marginalising alternative interpretations. The convergence between these findings suggests that Pakistani editorials participate in globally observed metaphorical practices in political communication.

The frequent deployment of analogy further supports previous studies that identify analogical reasoning as a persuasive tool in political and media discourse. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), analogies function to transfer evaluative judgments from a familiar domain to a contested political situation. In the present study, analogies are used to compare contemporary political actors and events with historically or socially recognisable scenarios, thereby naturalising particular interpretations. This is consistent with the findings of Beard (2000), who shows that analogy in political argumentation serves to simplify complex debates and to guide audience evaluation through implied comparison. The present results thus reinforce the view that analogy is a powerful rhetorical mechanism for legitimising political stances in editorial discourse. The use of sarcasm in the editorials reflects earlier research on evaluative stance and ideological positioning in the media. Jameel (2023) argues that sarcastic constructions allow writers to express strong negative evaluation while maintaining a stance of apparent indirectness. In the present corpus, sarcasm functions to delegitimise political actors and to portray opposition positions as unreasonable or hypocritical. This pattern corresponds with Igaab & Wehail (2023) findings that

sarcasm in political media discourse often serves to discipline dissent and to reinforce dominant ideological narratives. The results therefore confirm that sarcasm is not merely stylistic but operates as a strategic resource for ideological positioning.

The prevalence of hyperbole in both newspapers is consistent with prior work on intensification and exaggeration in political journalism. Fowler (2013) notes that hyperbolic language is commonly used to dramatise political situations and to construct a sense of crisis. The present findings support this observation, as exaggeration is used to magnify political failures, threats, and institutional weaknesses. Bednarek and Caple (2017) similarly argue that intensified evaluative language contributes to the construction of newsworthiness and persuasive force. The frequent use of hyperbole in this study thus aligns with broader research showing that exaggeration plays a key role in shaping political salience and emotional engagement.

The strategic deployment of paralipsis represents a particularly significant finding of the present study. Paralipsis, which involves claiming not to mention an issue while simultaneously drawing attention to it, functions as a subtle but powerful rhetorical strategy. According to Corbett and Connors (1999), paralipsis allows speakers and writers to introduce controversial or damaging information while maintaining a stance of apparent restraint. In the present editorials, paralipsis is used to foreground sensitive political failures and scandals under the guise of avoiding direct accusation. This aligns with the findings of Hart (2014), who shows that indirect rhetorical strategies are frequently used in political discourse to manage face, deniability, and institutional positioning. The present study therefore extends existing research by demonstrating how paralipsis operates as a mechanism of indirect critique in Pakistani editorial discourse.

The use of oxymoron further supports earlier research on rhetorical condensation and evaluative contradiction. Oxymoron, which combines semantically opposing terms, has been shown to function as a device that captures ideological tension and political ambiguity (Burke, 1969). In the present data, oxymoronic expressions are used to represent political realities as internally contradictory, such as stability framed as instability or reform framed as failure. This is consistent with Beard's (2000) argument that rhetorical contradiction allows writers to compress complex evaluations into compact linguistic forms. The findings thus suggest that oxymoron serves as a stylistic and ideological resource for representing political paradoxes in editorial discourse.

Taken together, the results of this study strongly align with prior research in political discourse analysis and media rhetoric, confirming that metaphor, analogy, sarcasm, hyperbole, paralipsis, and oxymoron function as central resources for ideological construction and evaluative positioning in newspaper editorials. By situating these findings within established scholarship, the study demonstrates that Pakistani editorial discourse reflects both globally recognised rhetorical practices and context-specific patterns of political communication. The analysis therefore reinforces the value of rhetorical analysis for understanding how newspapers mediate power, legitimacy, and political meaning through patterned linguistic and discursive choices.

#### 4.8 Conclusions

The rhetorical analysis of Pakistani newspaper editorials demonstrates that language functions as a central mechanism through which political meanings, evaluations, and ideological positions are constructed and communicated. The findings show that rhetorical devices such as metaphor, analogy, sarcasm, hyperbole, paralipsis, and oxymoron are systematically employed to frame political events, evaluate political actors, and guide readers' interpretations of governance,



accountability, and political legitimacy. These devices do not merely embellish editorial writing; rather, they operate as strategic resources that shape how political realities are represented and understood.

The study reveals that metaphors and analogies play a key role in simplifying complex political processes and in transferring evaluative judgments from familiar domains to contested political situations. Sarcasm and hyperbole function to intensify criticism and to dramatise political developments, thereby reinforcing particular ideological stances and emotional responses. At the same time, paralipsis enables indirect critique by drawing attention to sensitive political issues while maintaining an appearance of restraint, and oxymoron captures political contradictions through compressed and rhetorically powerful expressions. Together, these devices contribute to the construction of persuasive and evaluative editorial discourse.

These rhetorical practices do not only serve to comment on political events; they also participate in shaping broader public understandings of power, responsibility, and institutional performance. The patterned use of rhetorical devices reflects how editorials position readers within specific interpretive frameworks, encouraging particular ways of seeing political actors and developments. In this sense, editorial discourse functions not simply as a site of information, but as a discursive space in which political meanings are actively produced, negotiated, and normalised.

The findings provide strong support for the value of rhetorical analysis as an effective analytical tool for examining media discourse and for uncovering the subtle linguistic strategies through which ideology and evaluation are embedded in journalistic texts. By demonstrating how rhetorical devices operate systematically in Pakistani newspaper editorials, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the discursive construction of politics in the media. Finally, this research highlights the importance of critical awareness of rhetorical strategies in media consumption, as such awareness enables readers and researchers to better recognise how language shapes political perception, interpretation, and public opinion.

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