

INVESTIGATING THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IMMIGRANT IDENTITY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

The study uses the socio cognitive framework of critical discourse analysis by Van Dijk (2006) to inspect the ways in which immigrant identity is constructed in Pakistani English language newspapers. Immigrants are often viewed as a social burden and it has become imperative to understand how media texts reflect and alter the public perception of immigrants. Newspapers due to its vast readership help in exploring whether it reinforces and challenges the said ideology about migration. The present research aims at exploring and interpreting the discursive techniques such as lexicalization, metaphor, number game, polarization, presupposition, victimization to unveil the hidden biases and prevalent ideologies embedded in the Pakistani English language newspaper discourse. The data for this study comprises ten newspaper articles selected from The Dawn and the Express Tribune, two well-known English language newspapers in Pakistan. The data is analyzed at three levels using Van Dijk's (2006) framework of critical discourse analysis. The results show that newspapers 'portrayals of immigrants reinforce the dominant ideology of prioritizing government and other social actors over immigrants' voices. Moreover, immigrant identity is reduced to passive victims who often suffer at the hand of smugglers. While both newspapers employ analytical tone, it criticizes the attitude shown by host culture and explores the push and pull factors behind illegal immigration. The research underscores the importance of presenting immigrants in a balanced way without undermining their honor, dignity, and agency.

Keywords: immigration, critical discourse analysis, illegal immigrants, print media, English newspapers

Introduction

In the recent past, migration has become one of the most significant and apprehensive topics in the world. The history shows how individuals have crossed borders in search of refuge, security and improved lifestyle. The Migration World Report (2014) shows that cross border immigration has notably increased in the previous few years. Undoubtedly, numerous studies have explored the main factors causing cross border immigration that includes globalization, climate change, political instability, economic turmoil, and personal choice. Consequently, migration has become an important topic of discussion and people from different parts of the world have discussed it in multiple ways and from various viewpoints. Migration is explored in connection with culture, politics, society and education. The continuous debate and discussion have made migration an integral part of modern life around the world. It does not happen once a year or it is not a onetime occurring event. Immigrants keep relocating and entering the host cultures until they get settled economically, socially, politically and culturally. Although migration appears as a positive initiative for immigrants, struggling to build an improved lifestyle, host cultures perceive it as one of the most pressing issues of the 21st century. This negative view about immigrants is reflected across media platforms globally. The western media presents immigrants as outsiders, other people, social threat, burden, danger, and monetary liabilities. Moreover, such biased and one-sided portrayals of immigrants across the media has shaped the public way of viewing immigrants. As a result, immigrants keep struggling and battling the challenges and difficulties they come across being a part of the host culture, where their identities are frequently shaped and questioned in different ways.

1.1 Background of the Study

Considering the context of south Asia, migration contributes significantly in comprehension of the intricate and multifaceted history of the South Asian countries. South Asians have been migrating across the regions in different times. Immigrants from this area not only relocate but their identities also move with him. They not only carry bags on their shoulders but also psychological, emotional, social, political and economic loads. Among South Asian countries, Pakistan has witnessed huge waves of migration since 1947. Immigrants with hope of living a better life have entered and escaped the Pakistani territory. Amid the inward and outward migration, multiple factors continue to push Pakistani immigrants to exit their original place and find shelter abroad. However, immigrants not only change their place but their identities also accompany them. Moreover, the host cultures often redefine, dominate, negotiate, marginalize, and resist the cultural, ethical, and religious identities carried by immigrants. Many studies have critically investigated the issue of immigration and the way immigrants are presented in newspapers creates a different picture in the mind of a reader or a viewer. Therefore, the newspapers play a vital role in reporting and constructing an immigrant identity and such representations often reflect prevalent ideological frameworks of a society.

There is a gamut of scholarly work on western media representation of immigrants' identity that often links Islamophobia, cultural diversity and immigration control (Van Dijk, 2000; Wodak & Boukala, 2015). On the other hand, there is limited work done on the construction of immigrant identity in Pakistani print media. The current scholarly work only focuses on Bengali immigrants (Ahmed, 2020) and Afghan refugees (Kan, 2019), leaving a significant gap for researchers to comprehensively investigate the discursive construction of immigrant identity in Pakistani English Print media. Therefore, this study aims at exploring how Pakistani English print media construct the immigrant identity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Migration has become a global issue and different media platforms across different parts of the world view it as an alarming threat. In Pakistan, mass media has given attention to Bengali and Afghan refugees' immigration but Print media construction of immigrant identity remains overlooked. Therefore, there is a dire need of understanding how immigrants are depicted in Pakistani English Print media for newspapers are considered a powerful tool of promoting or challenging ideological frameworks. This study is also an attempt to explore how Pakistani English print constructs immigrant identity and to what extent such portrayals promote or challenges the said ideology about immigration.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the discursive strategies employed to construct immigrant identities in Pakistani English newspaper
2. To what extent an immigration stance of different English newspapers is similar or different from each other

1.4 Research Questions

1. What discursive strategies are employed in Pakistani English newspapers to portray immigration?
2. How far is the immigration stance of different English newspapers similar or different from each other?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study significantly fills the major research gap by investigating the construction of immigrant narratives in Pakistani English language newspapers and it enriches immigration perspectives when combined with critical discourse analysis. The study reveals underlying power dynamics and biases often considered central to migration discourse and in what ways

identities of immigrants are influenced by social, economic and racial perspectives. Considering the context of increased internal and external displacements, the immigrant experience is seen as a reality embedded within socio-political structure. However, this study helps in exploring whether print media representation of immigrants aligns with normative perspectives or if they deviate from established ideological frameworks. The research employs the socio-cognitive framework (2008) of CDA to explore in what ways linguistic choices contribute to the intersection of identity, power and language. Therefore, this study is important for scholars and media practitioners who seek to understand how media discourse constructs and distorts identity. Moreover, it supports the use of socially cohesive language choices at national and academic level in order to produce balanced and humanistic portrayals of Pakistani immigrants.

1.6 Delimitations

The study solely focuses on ten immigration related news articles chosen from two most prominent Pakistani English language newspapers, known as the Dawn and The Express tribune. Moreover, the current study is delimited to news articles excluding other content forms such as letters, cartoons, editorials, images and other visual elements. In addition, the study considers English newspapers excluding Urdu language sources that may offer different insights. Since it is limited to a certain timeframe between 2022 and 2025, it does not explain how print media narratives change over time. However, the study mainly focuses on newspaper construction of immigrant identity and it excludes the first-hand experiences of immigrants.

2. Literature Review

In our society, language is an important tool of exchanging information and it shapes our interaction with others in a unique way. It is through language, we communicate our feelings, beliefs, opinions, and issues and problems. This is the starting point of CDA since it seeks to determine the connection between opaque elements of social life. According to Hernandez (2008), CDA explores the social nature of language and how it mirrors the social life of a community. It is defined as analytical research that focuses on social and political issues of a society and it studies the way text and talks implement, promotes and challenges injustice, power imbalances and inequality (Van Dijk, 1998).

Critical discourse analysis operates between discourse and society at large. It inspects ideological, social, and cultural factors behind certain utterances and actions. Therefore, linguists not only examine the linguistic structures instead they indulge deeper into an analysis of a particular social issue in order to significantly contribute to a society (Davies et al., 1996; Fairclough, 2003; Mills, 2004). Wodak and Meyer (2001) highlighted an important dimension of CDA that it effectively examines the linguistic choices, specifically used to convey ideological positions in an institutional discourse like a newspaper.

The scholarly inquiry has shed light on media portrayals of immigration and immigrant identity over the period of time. Previous studies revealed the dehumanization of immigrants through the use of selective language in media discourse. According to Liu (2021), the employment of stereotypical frames in newspapers found across Hong Kong, The United Kingdom, Taiwan and the United States has contributed in reproduction of power hierarchies and marginalization of immigrants. Moreover, another research conducted in the Netherlands revealed how unauthorized immigrants were linked to criminality and it fostered the negative public perceptions and strict policy measures (Brouwer, Woude, & Leun, 2017). However, it is seen how such ideological representations significantly influences the immigration and raises questions about immigrant identity. In addition to it, KhosraviNik (2009) investigated how using linguistic choices like negative metaphors aided in discursive construction of refugees as threats to national security. Similarly, media discourse negatively framed the refugee crisis in

the UK, Greece and Germany by depicting the refugees as a threat and burden (Mike, Keery, & Inaki, 2016).

In relation to the South Asian countries, media narratives are viewed as one of the most prominent sources of conveying information. It is found that mass and print media representations of immigrants reinforce local and international ideological frameworks. According to the Khan (2021), language acts as a tool of constructing identity within the host culture. She employed critical discourse analysis to explore how historical trauma and marginalization often shapes the autobiographical narratives of Urdu immigrants. Similarly, Jehangir (2020) critically analyzed the media representations of Afghan refugees in Pakistani English print media and it was found that Afghan refugees were represented in an hostile way and this gradual shift reflects the influence of dominant ideologies on media narratives.

According to Arshad and Khan (2021), language is consistently used to depict refugees as an outsider, burden to the host society, and incompatible to fit in the host culture. They elaborated the concept of ‘othering’ used in immigrant narratives while doing the comparative analysis of American and Pakistani English newspapers. Moreover, they explained that the othering of immigrants takes place under the influence of larger nationalistic discourses. Another important study by Sarhandi and Bhutto (2020) investigated the contribution of Pakistani English newspapers in the construction of national identity with the help of discursive strategies that significantly excluded the ethnic minorities and immigrants from the host community. More additional insights were provided by Shahzad (2022), who solely focused on representation of minorities in Pakistani English newspapers. She analyzed the employment of passive voice and marginalization techniques used for depiction of minorities and the same discursive strategies are used to portray immigrants who are seen as others.

In conclusion, there is a majority of work done on media construction of immigrants worldwide, while leaving a significant research gap for scholars to critically analyze the role of Pakistani English newspapers in construction of immigrant identity. Therefore, drawing from the socio-cognitive framework of CDA (2008) by Van Dijk, the present research fills the research gap by exploring the discursive construction of the immigrant identities within the Print media discourse. Moreover, the researcher carefully considers the ideological square embedded in Van Dijk’s (2008) socio-cognitive model to unveil prevalent national narratives and marginalized voices of immigrants. It seeks to explore the integration of language, ideology and power within media discourse and how it shapes social attitudes toward immigration. Consequently, the findings of the research would benefit the future researchers, policy makers, educators and print media representatives in comprehension and production of a more balanced and neutral immigration stance.

3. Research Methodology

The qualitative research design is employed in this study to examine how immigrant identity is constructed in Pakistani English language newspapers. Qualitative research allows a researcher to understand the details, interpret the context, and comprehend the process of generating meaning, especially while examining the link between language and representation. Moreover, it helps a researcher to explore how text contributes in promoting the dominant ideologies and social frameworks. In the light of above stated reasons, qualitative research is considered the most suitable approach to investigate the English language newspaper construction of immigrant identity and to find the desired results. Moreover, within qualitative research, this study is interpretive in its nature since it seeks to interpret the discursive techniques used in the construction of immigrant identity and how such portrayals reflect socio-political frameworks.

3.1 Method of Data Collection

In Pakistan, there are hundreds of newspapers published in both the languages English and Urdu. The qualitative data for the current research is collected from two leading English language newspapers, specifically The Express Tribune and The Dawn. All the manually selected editorials addressed the themes of immigration, migrations, migrant identity, cross borders, politics and refugees. No digital scrapping tools were used to collect the data since qualitative research focuses on selection of contextually appropriate and purposeful data.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, newspaper agencies publish more than 500 newspapers in Pakistan and two newspapers The Dawn and The Express Tribune are considered more authentic and reliable for its wide readership and high publication standards. Therefore, ten newspaper articles are collected directly via the official websites of the newspapers. In order to identify the relevant articles, keywords like immigration, migrants, refugees, borders, illegal migration were used by the researcher to carefully select the articles for accurate and authentic results. In addition to it, the study exclusively relied on specific and relevant articles skipping other irrelevant editorials since the main aim was to explore immigration stance.

3.2 Population

Newspaper articles addressing immigration and migration stance are used as a population for this research. All articles are selected from two prominent Pakistani English language newspapers. Newspapers articles significantly contribute in reflecting the ideological stance of the publication and it drastically invokes the sentimental reactivity in a reader. Therefore, by selecting articles, the research aims at unveiling the process involved in construction of the immigrant identities within Pakistani context.

3.3 Sample

The sample size of this qualitative research includes ten articles selected from two most well-known English newspapers. First five articles related to immigration are taken from The Express Tribune newspaper and another five articles from the Dawn. The articles are selected through purposive sampling since the study solely focuses on construction of immigrant identity in Pakistani English newspapers. These two newspapers are widely read for many reasons that include factual reporting, in depth analysis of issues, and affiliation with New York Times. Therefore, these two newspapers stand in line with the objectives of qualitative research.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

Critical discourse analysis (2008) allows in depth exploration of the link between language, ideology and power. Within critical discourse analysis, there are three most prominent frameworks proposed by three famous figures. For example, three dimensional models given by Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2003), socio cognitive framework by Van Dijk (1991, 1995, 1998, 2006) and discourse historical approach by Wodak (1989, 2001) Each one of the models works distinctly at different levels. Fairclough's (2003) model of critical discourse analysis allows researchers to examine the textual features, production of text, and consumption of text, social factors, and cultural factors that all together shape the discourse. Wodak (2001) explored discourse in the context of history and proposed a framework that helps in analyzing how discourses evolve over time. Teun A. van Dijk (2008) considered the role played by cognition in apprehending the link between society and language. For this study, the socio-cognitive framework by Van Dijk (2008) is most suitable since it aims at investigating and interpreting the way immigrant identity is constructed in English language newspapers within Pakistani context. This model is appropriate to study media discourse and it offers in-depth analysis of linguistic features, mental processes, and broader social context of a particular discourse.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

The study employs a three-layered socio cognitive approach of critical discourse analysis proposed by Van Dijk (2008). This framework helps in analyzing the relationship between language, cognition and society. No discourse is free from personal bias. Therefore, it is imperative to understand and explore how certain discourses are produced and interpreted based on different ideologies. According to this model, discourse can be analyzed at three different levels. First level deals with textual analysis of lexical items, structure, and content of a text. At this level, linguistic analysis is done in order to unveil the hidden ideologies. The second level of this framework deals with the interpretation of mental models involved in production and consumption of a text. Finally, the third level of this framework provides in depth analysis of the link between discourse and social context within which it is produced. Therefore, this framework is suitable to investigate the construction of immigrant identity in English language newspapers.

4. Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of news articles on immigration selected from two English language newspapers.

The current article published in Express Tribune talks about illegal immigration. Firstly, the use of powerful words like ‘obsession’, ‘tragedy’, ‘life-threatening’, ‘victims’, and ‘mass graves’ frame immigrants as suffering victims who cannot make decisions on their own. These word choices portray immigrants surviving the desperate situations created by criminal networks. There is a blame shift towards the ‘human smugglers’ who play a significant role in the ‘exploitation’ of immigrants. Moreover, immigrants are shown relying on ‘illegal migration’ instead of taking legal means to cross the borders. The use of the word ‘Dunki’ for immigrants embarking on illegal migration normalizes the dangerous and unauthorized way of entering another country. This stance reflects how Pakistani immigrants have accepted this harsh and arduous mode of migration as a normal practice.

The framework by Van Dijk (2008) sheds light on critical use of lexical contrasts and in what ways it helps a reader to understand the distinction between insiders and outsiders. Similarly, here in this newspaper article, the use of lexical contrasts like ‘hope vs. despair’ and ‘legal vs. illegal’ has created a binary view about the immigrants who considers the illegal migration beneficial but it ends into moral and emotional extremes. Moreover, the mentioning of immigrants’ personal narratives has emotionally appealed to the reader and to feel more connected to the immigrants. The phrases like ‘lack of opportunities’, ‘family pressure’, and ‘a better life’ emphasize the repetition of the key idea that migration has become a social necessity and immigrants are bound to embark on this arduous journey. In addition, passive voice is used to explain how bad things happen to immigrants for they ‘are cramped’, ‘are detained’, and ‘are encouraged’ to put their lives in danger in hope of finding a better future. Moreover, the Pakistani state is not held responsible for pushing these immigrants out of the country. Additionally, throughout the article, the use of third person pronouns ‘they’, and ‘many Pakistanis’ has othered the immigrants who are not seen as insiders anymore and their sense of belonging is being stripped off.

Van Dijk model of CDA (2006) examines the mental modes and how these mental modes shape the discourse. The current article under investigation sheds light on the cognitive schema of young Pakistani males, who view illegal migration as the only possible way to escape economic and social problems. For example, the phrase ‘one leap can change the dimensions of the families’ unveils the collective mindset influenced by the opportunistic side of England, systemic pressure and social inequality. The repetition of phrase ‘family pressures’ points towards the group ideology that legitimizes the act of selling family lands to embark on

migration at any cost. However, it is shown that immigrants respond irrationally due to structural failure.

The third level of Van Dijk's (2008) model of CDA examines how discourse is shaped by wider cultural, economic, social and institutional frameworks. The current article under investigation explores how the systemic inequalities within Pakistani society force immigrants to embark on illegal migration since youth is facing many issues like unemployment, inflation, political instability and these structural issues have created a stressful environment in which illegal migration is seen as the only way to seek justice and social balance. In addition, success stories about migration have glorified and reinforced the breadwinners, who develop the pressure of society and normalize the act of embarking on an illegal migration through illegal routes. This editorial unveils how immigrants from Punjab are often misled and exploited by human smugglers. Consequently, it is observed that social, political and economic realities of Pakistani society are deeply embedded in the immigrant media narratives.

Another article was published on 25 June 2023. The title of the article is deadlier than the sea: gaps in Europe's migrant response. In this news article, the use of specific lexical items such as 'smuggled' and 'locked in holds' portrays immigrants as if they are isolated from society, immigrants are seen as 'other' people different from normal people. Moreover, it reveals difficulties and dangerous situations faced by immigrants since they are continuously harmed by human smugglers throughout the migration. Moreover, the phrase 'had been believed to be locked' presents the immigrants having no control and mere objects. The immigrants are not shown as a subject but as passive receivers. Furthermore, the lexical contrasts like 'good Ukrainian refugees' versus 'bad radicalized ones' reveals how European media narratives brutally discriminate against the immigrants on the basis of their socio-cultural background. It reflects how host culture refuses to show empathy and fails to protect the non-European refugees. Moreover, the NGOs use reported speech in their narratives to speak on the behalf of immigrants that shows how immigrants are perceived as voiceless entities relying on external help. Altogether, above explained textual strategies represent immigrants struggling in an oppressive host culture, experiencing victimhood instead of being resilient in the face of adversities.

Using Van Dijk's (2008) model of critical discourse analysis, this news article frames immigrants as innocent victims who are affected by unfair socio-political systems of Pakistan. The immigrants suffer mistreatment at the hands of human smugglers and authorities. The reader can easily point out the unfair treatment of immigrants by investigating the words like 'miraculously survived' and 'an insult to human rights'. Moreover, it has been observed multiple times that different and fair treatment of Ukrainian refugees on the basis of their race and Pakistani immigrants are recognized as bad ones and unwelcomed by the host society. Such print media portrayals of immigrants foster the mindset that states should not be responsive towards the problems created by immigrants themselves.

The macro level analysis of the article shows how the influence of institutions and dominant social beliefs construct the immigrant identity. It is evident in the article that non-European immigrants are othered and seen as a danger to the guest and host society. The article reinforces the othering of immigrants, the concept discussed by Van Dijk (2008) in his work on migration discourse. Therefore, immigrant identity is discursively constructed in a way that places power in the hands of social systems while excluding immigrants

The article titled 'Families mourn a year after migrant shipwreck' is taken from The Express Tribune e-paper and it was published on June 16, 2024. Van Dijk's model of critical discourse analysis examines the construction and organization of text at the textual level that helps a reader to understand the role of a language in the meaning making process. The use of lexical items like 'deadliest shipwrecks', 'overloaded trawler', 'disappearance', 'we live and die every

day', and absolutely nothing in this country' reflects the contrast between emotional disturbance and silence maintained by the society at large. The author refers to dead immigrants and their families as 'they' and 'they're' throughout the narrative, suggesting widespread oppression. Consequently, illegal migration is seen as a survival strategy since the social and economic factors environment urges it.

According to Van Dijk (1998), mental modes help people to analyze speech and writing. The description reinforces the idea that immigration is the only way people can survive the harsh realities instead of doing something wrong. The line "since his brother disappeared the family's finances have deteriorated" shows that migration is the only solution to all economic and family problems and it informs the reader how immigrants get pressurized at both the levels including social and family level. Moreover, they are not free to make any personal decision since poverty and economic instability of Pakistani society compels immigrants to migrate through illegal routes. Finally, the way this newspaper article constructs the immigrant identity makes it easier for a reader to psychologically relate with the immigrants who are compelled to view immigration as undesirable but the only possible solution.

The third level of Van Dijk's (2008) model of critical discourse analysis reveals how the particular discourse maintains the power structures. The current article criticizes the system failures and economic troubles compelling immigrants to depart their countries in the search of better life. However, it is observed that many human smugglers are being arrested but the human trafficking does not stop and immigrants keep immigrating. This article shows that economic injustice marginalizes the immigrants and the popular discourses around the world instead of raising the questions overlook this exploitation.

The Van Dijk (2008) model of CDA provides a three-level framework which analyzes text, cognitive models, and broader social themes. The application of this framework on this news article shows how specific words are employed which helps in the process of meaning making. Such as the phrase "at least 12 dead including women and girls after a migrant boat sink in the English Channel" creates sympathy for the dead immigrants. Moreover, the article includes the mentioning of words "women and girls" instead of "people" which lead others to sympathize with the immigrants and think of this event as a human tragedy. In addition, passive structure is used to conceal the reasons for the shipwreck as it is evident in the line "after a migrant board carrying dozens tore apart", rest of the details are missing and the cause of the shipwreck remains unexplained. Similarly, phrases like "French Coastguards rescued more than 65 people" depict the government officials as responsible helpers who responded to the situation efficiently instead of backing out. Moreover, the article uses numerical data to show the critical nature of the issue in a normal way while replacing immigrant stories with numerical data.

The article reflects the collective cognitive ideology who views immigrants as a people with a high number of problems since UK officials called the event 'horrifying'. Such descriptions lead the reader to criticize the powerful people urging them to sympathize and feel connected with the immigrants. The article strictly adheres to the concessions of journalism and it is also influenced by institutional perspectives. There is focus on authoritative voices while immigrant perspectives are diminished. The selected details like "lifejackets" reflect the policy failure. The immigrant voices are silenced and objectified within the narrative since there is no direct statement by immigrants.

The western ideology of immigration is reflected throughout the article and it shifts the blame toward immigrants who are seen from the lens of criminalization. For example, the phrase "there is an urgent need to dismantle smuggler networks" clearly depicts the state as a reactive force trying to control the situation.

The Express Tribune article "135,000 Pakistanis seek asylum abroad" published on 4 June 2025 refers to the Pakistani immigrants who applied for political asylum in the west. Critical

discourse analysis of this article reveals that specific discursive strategies are used to portray immigrants as valuable and problematic. For example, the positive actor description is seen in the line such as “the DG observed many skilled Pakistani professionals working abroad”. This positive portrayal places a group of immigrants as significant contributors to the nation’s wealth and social prestige. On the contrary, few immigrants are portrayed through ‘negative other representations’ and are referred as “beggars” and “criminals”. Using such words and phrases has a purpose since it categorically reinforces the social rankings by classifying immigrants. Moreover, the use of euphemism in phrases “tightened eligibility criteria” downplays the discriminatory attitude of host countries towards Pakistani immigrants. Few immigrant groups are seen as criminals or beggars who entered the host nation through illegal and unauthorized ways. The article constructs contrasting identity of Pakistani immigrants through the use of specific lexical choices.

It is found that the article reflects the print media connection with authoritative state and administrative voices since it records the statements put forward by governments like the Directorate General of Passports, lending the official credibility to the news. It shows that the newspaper's stance is influenced by official perspectives. Therefore, it is seen how print media selectively contextualize the migration within a controlled narrative of national interest. Certain phrases or words are repeated like “deported”, “blocked passports”, “strict punishments” and “criminals” that not only promotes the illegal portrayal of immigrants, but also shapes the act of migration.

According to Van Dijk (2008), discursive strategies like positive self-representation and negative other representation validates the power inequalities between insiders and outsiders. The article establishes the dichotomy between the worthy immigrants who successfully contribute to national pride and undeserving immigrants, who are portrayed as criminals and an additional burden to the host culture. Moreover, the text stresses more on victimization of immigrants instead of highlighting the push and pull factors that often compels the immigrants to embark on this arduous journey. It omits the immigrants’ voices by solely focusing and upholding the institutional stance and sidelines them as objects of policy instead of showing them as active agents struggling with class disparities.

The article from Dawn on migration published in May 2025 poignantly represents Pakistani immigrants working as laborers in the Gulf. It unpacks how specific lexical items and language techniques strengthen the ideologies of suffering and resilience. For example, it is mentioned in the article how immigrants are “trapped” by the agents who lie about everything, leaving no option for immigrants than to become “fugitives” to escape jail. This description reflects the vulnerability immigrants suffer at the hands of agents and host cultures, while phrases like “triple what could I earn” and there was “not an option to return” reveals the unfair treatment and internalized fear. Moreover, the statistical framing of citizens who migrated to Saudi Arabia as “45000 immigrants in the last five years” emphasizes on numerical significance and it diminishes the hardship and pain endured by immigrants. In addition, the thorough mentioning of migration as the only solution to escape poverty reveals the ‘presupposition’ that normalizes the sacrifice and loss among immigrants as an important rite of passage.

The article reflects subjugation instead of empowering immigrants in the form of individual stories such as a recruiter betrayed Faraz and Alam were doing an underpaid job in Saudi Arabia. Such illustrations subjugate the immigrants instead of empowering them such as the lexicalization “beg your employer to release you” mirrors the structural oppression. The article amplifies the voices of selective immigrants and journalists develop empathy while criticizing the systemic failures. By doing so, the article includes the evidentiality by quoting the Human Rights Watch stance that grants credibility to the narrative. Moreover, Pakistan bureaucracy is

presented using ‘negative other representation’ for showing silence over the unfair treatment of immigrants like “treat us like criminals” and “understaffed and underfunded”.

The macro level analysis of the article unpacks the common theme of “economic survival through sacrifice” that pushes Pakistani immigrants to face exploitation in the name of seeking better opportunities abroad. It also highlights the economic instability and that Pakistan fails to provide its people basic ways of earning livelihood. The statistical figures are mentioned repeatedly like “\$ 4.1 billion in May 2025 alone” that presents immigrants in a positive way who overcome the situation on their own and it reveals the inactivity shown by the government. Moreover, Van Dijk’s concept of polarization is evident in this article, where home is viewed as “helpless” and “abroad” appears harsh but necessary for the immigrants.

The Dawn article published in February 2025, explains the crisis faced by Pakistani immigrants who embarked on a journey from “GT Road to Europe”. In this article, immigrants are portrayed as “dreamers and gamblers” who recklessly risk their lives under the lure of wealth. The host cultures, specifically Europe is criticized for exploiting the immigrants, terms like “proverbial greener pastures” and “thriving smuggling networks” acts as metaphors that symbolizes the entrapment of immigrants. All the immigrants died in the tragic boat incident that sank on its way to Europe, the phrase “boat capsized and bodies were returned” shows victimization of immigrants in a very twisted way. The immigrants are not shown as innocent but they intentionally risked their lives and actively participated in this complicit act. The language employed throughout the article references the institutional viewpoints more likely the UNODC and EU who spoke on the behalf of immigrants and the original voices of immigrants are silenced. Van Dijk’s concept of “evidentiality” and “number games” is emphasized in the article that amplifies the credibility of the narrative through citing figures like “280% surge in migration” is observed in the recent years.

The article shows the migration discourse is influenced by the prevalent ideologies. The immigrants are not only portrayed as helpless or powerless victims of poverty but they actively participate in illegal immigration to compete with the challenging environment. This newspaper construction of immigrant identity repositions Pakistani immigrants as primary social actors while challenging the widespread global narrative. Without a doubt, the blame is shifted from the systemic failure to individual agency since all Pakistani immigrants are viewed as risk takers driven by personal ambition, reinforcing the idea of “generalization” and “actor description” by Van Dijk (2008).

The article published on 16 March 2025 presents a thought-provoking reflection on the social cost of immigration. This article under investigation unveils the biased representation of immigrants. It is observed that use of rhetorical devices and metaphors has helped the journalists to induce the sense of nostalgia and loss. For example, the phrases like “mediocrity”, “most dynamic citizens emptied the country”, and “faded from memory” reflect the problems and complexities faced by immigrants who not only move from one place to another place but also carry the burden of broken identity and lost connections. The lexical items employed throughout the article align with Van Dijk’s idea of lexicalization, constructing immigrant identity in relation to systemic failures. Moreover, innumerable intertextual references are taken from historical events including 1970s migration that reflects the influence of power structures and dominant ideologies on immigration discourse. The cultural norms and institutional viewpoints are redefined through the integration of examples from different fields of life like arts, education, and music. At one point in life, intellectuals, artists, musicians and creators get pushed away by society, leaving them with the only option of immigration.

The article brings the attention of the reader towards the factors pushing immigrants to leave their home country. It aligns with the ideologies of mutualism and interdependence that suggest how immigration removes vital individuals from the society. The article draws on the concept

of “ideological square” put forward by Van Dijk, establishing the contrast between positively portrayed home country and negative corrosive forces causing immigration. Moreover, immigrants are shown as “most dynamic citizens” who often fail while struggling with corrupt systems and make their way to host culture.

“Mass Exodus” from the Dawn newspaper offers critical insights into mass migration. The article begins with an overview of increase in immigration trends and then explores the causes behind it. The youth is shown “hopeless” as they cannot see “light at the end of the tunnel”. Inclusive pronouns including ‘we and our’ are used to blame government and society at large for causing immigration. As shown in phrases “we have failed” and “our policymakers”. Immigration is portrayed as a social crisis and immigrants carry emotional and psychological weight on their shoulders. The argument is further strengthened through the use of connectors to state the causes of immigration that includes political instability, poor wages and over taxation.

The thorough referencing of empirical data and scholarly work reinforces the academic stance. It also targets the intellectuals and policymakers who produce and promote the biased narratives of immigration. The article criticizes the global patterns that normalize the immigration for Pakistani people, who view it necessary rather than optional. It unveils the systemic failure causing loss of talent and sympathizes with the youth. By suggesting the possible ways of preventing immigration, the article advocates the reintegration of skilled immigrants. Moreover, celebration of remittances as a national success is frequently challenged and the concept of talent retention is strengthened throughout the article. However, instead of promoting ideological perspectives, the article categorically portrays immigration as a national emergency with its roots in governance failure that urges a swift shift from drain to gain.

The “sinking dreams” from Dawn newspaper specifically employs certain lexical items to evoke empathy and stir emotional responses in readers. The article critically details the process of illegal immigration and how it shatters the dreams of the immigrants along the way. The immigrants are seen from the lens of victimhood, having “gruesome fate” who decides to endure “deadly risks” at the cost of their lives. Such print media portrayals of immigrants draw on Van Dijk’s concept of lexicalization that helps in unveiling the power dynamics. There is a variation in sentence structure, exposition of the article is filled with important information and gradually emotional appeal is created that keeps the reader engaged both cognitively and emotionally. Moreover, immigrants are represented by using the pronoun “they”. It draws on Van Dijk’s (2008) ideological square that focuses on representation of “us” versus “them”. It means, immigrants are viewed as outsiders.

The article aligns with the common practice of constructing print media discourse. The author draws on intertextuality by bringing in the authentic and official reports from National Commission for Human Rights and the EU Asylum Agency. These references stand in line with Van Dijk’s (2008) concepts of social knowledge and group knowledge. The article strictly follows the structural conventions of journalistic writing as it begins with proper hooks, authentic details and ends with a call for action. It offers a blend of institutional critique and audience engagement while portraying Pakistani English print media as a forum for challenging dominant ideologies.

Collectively, the article reflects the broad social and political issues of Pakistani society. It highlights the inability of the government to address issues like human trafficking, migration crises, and depravity. The ideological conflict between government and social welfare is revealed by emphasizing systemic failure and political turmoil. In accordance with the concept of ideological square, the article challenges the dominant power structures by constructing positive ingroups (victims) with negative out groups (political officials).

5 Findings and Discussion

5.1 Findings

The current research has critically analyzed the newspaper articles on immigration. It reveals multiple discursive strategies are used to construct the immigrant identity in Pakistani English language newspapers. Moreover, social, cultural and political factors influence the ideological stance and immigrants are presented as victims. The study unveils the recurring use of metaphors in terms like “waves”, “flood”, and “influx” associated with immigrants. These metaphors are used to represent immigrants as external pressures and outsiders who often actively participate in illegal migration. It stands in line with the concept of ideological polarization by Van Dijk, which depicts host culture as systematic and legal while constructing immigrants as a national threat. Moreover, passive voice is used to depict immigrants as victims of economic and political forces.

Highly emotive language is used to entail the narratives of asylum seekers who suffered exploitation at both the ends. Such portrayal constructs the independent identity for immigrants who passively endure hardship. Simultaneously, government or policymakers are viewed as active agents, rescuing the immigrants. In addition, the print media discourse constructs deviant identity of immigrants with the help of lexical bundles like “illegal entry” and “fake documents” who take illegal or irregular routes. Despite being presented as victims, the in-depth exploration of immigrants' own narratives remains highlighted that reduces them to mere objects than subjects.

The immigrant voices are marginalized through the consistent use of statistics and number games. Categorization, a discursive strategy is prominently used throughout the articles to portray Pakistani immigrants as social burdens and European immigrants as foreign workers. Across the articles, ‘othering’ of immigrants is clearly visible that excludes them from the guest culture. Moreover, euphemism, hyperbole and evidentiality in the articles construct immigrant identity through the biased and ideological perspectives of social security and nationalism.

5.2 Discussion

The study employs a socio-cognitive framework of CDA by Van Dijk (2008) to critically inspect the construction of immigrant identity in Pakistani English language newspapers. For this purpose, two prominent English language newspapers are chosen for the investigation of the data and multiple discursive strategies are identified that includes lexicalization, metaphor, hyperbole, and victimization, us versus them, euphemism, number game, evidentiality generalization, and presupposition. These discursive techniques are used to depict the seriousness of the issue and highlight the tragic and negative outcomes of illegal immigration. These devices serve the purpose of representing immigrants caught in life demanding circumstances while reinforcing the global patterns and said ideology of immigration. Moreover, the employment of such discursive strategies allows a print media to reflect ideological undercurrents oscillating between security concern and humanitarian sympathy. Both the newspapers suppress the immigrant agency and use passive constructions that align with Van Dijk’s (2008) idea of actors positioning in discourse. A top down framework extends primacy to state control and sidelines the voices of immigrants.

The study explores similarities and differences reflected in immigration stance of both the selected newspapers the Dawn and the express tribune. Both newspapers offer critical insights into immigration and factors pushing the immigrants to exit the guest society. Similar destructive strategies are used in both the newspapers while constructing the immigrant identity. Systemic issues like political instability, less opportunities for youth, state inactivity are explored in both the newspapers. Moreover, dominant power structures are also challenged

and criticized within newspaper construction of immigrant identity. The considerable similarity is seen in both the newspapers, especially the way immigrants are represented, the use of discursive strategies, criticisms of ideological perspectives with only minor differences. Despite the similarities, few differences are explored by the researcher. Firstly, the express tribune emphasizes the law enforcement response towards illegal immigration, while reinforcing the ideological perspective without critiquing the power structures. Moreover, it associates risk, danger, and illegality with immigrants who are seen as criminals and others, different from the society. Secondly, it focuses on tragic outcomes or issues faced by immigrants on their journey to foreign countries. For example, it covers tragic boat incidents and acts of illegal immigration. On the other hand, the dawn adopts a critical tone while analyzing and reflecting upon immigration. It often interrogates the role played by state, government, and policy makers in eradicating the problem. Overall, both the newspapers agree with each other on the immigration stance with the only difference of structure, organization and critique.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study explores the significant role played by Pakistani English language newspapers in constructing and shaping the ways people understand immigration. Although media reports reflect objectivity and neutrality, the subtle use of discursive strategies helps in exploring the hidden biases embedded within immigration discourse. The study demonstrates how critical discourse analysis helps in understanding how newspapers not just narrates the immigration stories but they also build perceptions and evokes emotional responses in a reader. Such media portrayals question the concepts of belonging, power and national identity. The immigrant identities are actively constructed through the use of various discursive strategies proposed by Van Dijk (2008). Moreover, the research brings the attention of the reader towards the journalistic framing of humanitarian issues. Since immigrants are seen as silent, receptive and powerless objects who suffer at the hand of host and guest cultures. It is two ways exploitation for home culture fails to protect its citizens and host culture refuses to accept them. Ultimately, this study contributes to the production of a more ethical and reflective immigration stance. Words not only deliver the meaning but have power and carry emotional weight. For immigrants, whose lives are influenced by challenges, struggle, displacement and uncertainty, the narratives about them should reflect in sensitive handling of the issue and in-depth analysis. The main aim is to convey information and report events while preserving the honor and dignity of immigrants involved.

5.4 Recommendations

The future research might focus on investigation of other media platforms in order to compare and analyze the portrayals of immigrants across mass media. Moreover, immigrants' personal narratives or firsthand experiences can be considered by the future researchers to illustrate how immigration is internalized by the immigrants and how the public negotiates it externally. Another direction for future research involves analysis of visual elements like pictures, photographs or images that also influences how immigration is perceived by audiences. Finally, the study solely focuses on recent immigration stances put forward by newspapers, leaving room for future researchers to uncover the evolving trends in the portrayals of immigrants. However, these approaches can foster inclusive and balanced immigration narratives.

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