

A CORPUS BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF COVID-19 POLICIES PUBLISHED IN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE NEWS AGENCIES, PAKISTAN

Rayna Batool

Ph.D. Student

raayna.batool@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

This study reflects on the news content disseminated by public and private news agencies in Pakistan. There is only one public news agency Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) that publishes news on behalf of the government. It also provides raw data to private news agencies because it has the facilitation and capacity to cover most of the population in the country. The News (TN) is selected as the private news agency, which is a very well-known and trusted private news agency in Pakistan. This study is corpus-based, and I built two corpora-based on national news featured on government policy to control COVID-19 published by Associated Press of Pakistan and The News. The word limit in the selected featured news/article is between 400 to 500. The researcher has selected 25 articles each from APP and The News. The featured news articles were selected randomly from June 2020 to June 2021. The corpus of APP has based on 12750 linguistic items, and the corpus of TN is 12743. The results showed that public news agency structured positive narratives towards the towards government agenda and private news agency is prone to criticize government planning more. The research is not only helpful to create a comparison regarding government decisions about any policy but also how such journalistic criticism can bring authentic changes in the policies that reform the pandemic, social and cultural dysfunctions. The future political decisions and their effects could easily be calculated through the corpus-based analysis of contemporary narratives.

Key Words: *Corpus analysis, discourse analysis, Covid-19 policies, public news agencies, private news agencies*

Introduction

News broadcasting is a systematic phenomenon encompassing numerous stages before the final distribution of the information. Reporters are the rudimentary building structure of a news activity because they collect, or eyewitness news/incidents first and then send them to the news agency. According to Forde and Johnston (2013), journalists play a fundamental part because they gather the raw news, process it through writing stages, and broadcast the polished product through print media, television, or social media. They further claimed that those journalists working for government news agencies are bound to obey the government laws for news dissemination and vice versa.

In developing countries like Pakistan, news agencies are much concerned about wide circulation of their prints to spread their motives and get maximum profits. Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) is the national news agency of Pakistan, and all the news disseminated by this news agency is inclined towards government policies. The News (TN) is a private news agency in Pakistan, and it is more critical towards government policies. During Covid-19, both these news agencies broadcasted the information about the government policies towards the control of Covid-19. Both the news agencies used different lexical items to show their motives towards the policies.

Research Questions

1. How does TN and APP used collocations with the lexeme 'government' to frame public policies?
2. How does the keyness analysis of lexical items differentiate the framing of government policies through selected discourse of APP and TN?

Limitations

This study is based on one year data from June 2020 to June 2021 because of the time constraint. The study has only included data from one public news agency and one private

news agency, and the study has only considered government, govern, and governmental lexemes to understand the frequently used collocations

Literature Review

Qadeer, Shehzad, and Chishti (2017) analyzed the different patterns of political discourse in Pakistani print media especially, *The Dawn* and *The News*. It talks about how print media in Pakistan construct political realities. Data was collected from leading newspapers, namely, *The News*, *The Dawn*, *The Express Tribune*, based upon the speeches of political leaders of Pakistan. Macro-structure and schematic structure like intensification, mitigation, and organization of the text, selection of question, and beginning and ending of text are used for this analysis.

Rantanen and Boyd-Barrett (2000) mentioned that the credibility of national news agencies is declining day by day because national news agencies get support from the government during the financial crisis and political involvement. They mentioned that the changing role of the state and its relation to news agencies is linked with the political crisis. This study aims to understand why national news agencies of Europe are declining and the issues that have plagued the status quo of news agencies through different methods. They collected data through interviews and analyzed the news discourse of national news agencies in Europe.

Riaz Raza and Akbar (2012) analyzed print media discourse based on the personality of Previous Pakistani presidents Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, and Imran Khan—major political figures of Pakistan. They collected data from *The Dawn* and *The News*. Data is lexical items used with these major political personalities and how these newspapers are framing the political figures of Pakistan for public understanding of them.

Gulnaz and Awan (2017) compared the Pakistani and Indian newspapers' discourse based upon Barack Obama's visit to India. The results revealed that Indian newspapers negatively framed Pakistan's image by associating it with the regional security crisis by using lexical items and phrases. They massacred the international image of Pakistan by tagging negative lexical items like terrorism, extremism and security concerns in Pakistan to exploit why Barack Obama didn't visit Pakistan.

Gunaratne (1970) claimed that after the resignation of Ayub Khan (second president of Pakistan), the media in Pakistan was free up to some extent because his policies were soft towards the press. On December 28, (1968) information minister declared the Press Code of Ethics, and it is stated in those codes that the ministry would dictate the news agencies any more about code and conducts and broadcasting of news. Gunaratne (1970) further claimed that Pakistani media has been enjoying the freedom unknown in the past ten years, and one of the major reasons behind this freedom is adverse court decisions. He analyzed the news discourse and Press Code of Ethics to claim that the media in Pakistan is enjoying emancipation.

Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and *The News* (TN) are considered credible news agencies of Pakistan. APP is a government institute, and the ministry of government controls information, and the administration of this institute. Additionally, TN is a private news agency, and Jang Group of Newspapers owns it. APP mostly published news on government policies, and frames Government policies as developing and constructive for public affairs. However, TN frames information critically and analyzed government policies unfavorably.

The researcher has cited these research works because these studies are based on discourse analysis of print media. It is discussed in the studies that how the discourse of different news agencies constructs or distorts motives of government. Pakistani news agencies construct the image of government and political personalities through different syntactical and morphological choices. Current research is significant because corpus-based

comparative study on the discourse of public and private news agencies gauges the policies critically and provide constructive suggestion for future planning. This research would understand how public and private news agencies frame the government through its policies.

Methodology

Corpus

This study analyses the collocations used with government, governing, and governmental in national news published by the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) and The News (TN). I built two corpora—based on national news featured on government policy to control COVID-19 published by Associated Press Pakistan and The News. The word limit in the selected featured news/article is between 400 to 500. The researcher has selected 25 articles each from APP and TN. The articles were selected randomly from June 2020 to June 2021. The corpus of APP has based on 12750 linguistic items, and the corpus of TN is 12743.

Instruments

I have used the concordance (AntConc) to examine the collocations used at both sides of the lexemes—government, governmental and governing. Verbs, adjectives, and adverbs used at both nodes of the word government are particularly identified. In addition, the concordance was used to find the frequency of these lexemes and the strength of more frequently occurring collocations used by both private and public news agencies.

This study is based on the comparison of two sub-corpora. The researcher computed the frequencies of selected lexemes (keywords) in both sub-corpora and then compared the frequencies of keywords using different keyness measures. This analysis is conducted to see the difference of frequencies to show which news agency is more concerned about government policies either positively or negatively.

Procedure

The data selected for this study was copied from the websites of the selected news agencies and then pasted onto word documents. After that, the data is converted to plain text, and these files were uploaded on AntConc to compute the frequencies of the selected lexeme. The frequencies of the targeted lexemes were computed first. I have identified collocations as verbs and adjectives and some other linguistic elements.

The range of my collocation is five words on the left side of the node and five on the right side—this helped a better understanding of the context in which targeted lexemes are used. Secondly, the frequencies of collocations are also computed that occurred frequently. The researcher has also identified the positive and negative collocations used by APP and TN and saved the data. Positive collocations are lexical items that support the government policies like APP has used the collocation strategy with positive meanings like ‘governments’ effective strategy, ‘government comprehensive strategy’ etc.

The research is based on two sub-corpora, so the research has conducted a comparative analysis through keyness. While running one discourse through AntConc, the keyness used the other sub-corpora as reference corpus to identify the difference between the frequencies of selected lexemes and strong collocations. This computation helped to see which news agency supports government policies and which one is more critical. The data collected was organized into figures and then analysed.

Type of Data

The quantitative data was the frequency of the targeted lexemes *government*, *governmental*, and *govern*, and these lexemes are also used as nodes to identify the collocations. The frequency of strong collocations used with the selected lexemes is computed as quantitative data. This study computed the frequency of positive and negative collocations used with the targeted lexemes as quantitative. The frequency of the selected

lexemes is computed from both sub-corpora and then compared through keyness. The result frequencies are also used as quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

The Results showed in the Figure 1 are the quantitative data about the selected lexeme and the most frequent lexemes.

Figure 1

Table of Concordance

News Agencies	Targeted Lexeme	No. of Concordance Hits
APP	Govern*	139
	Government	127
	Governmental	0
The News	Govern*	150
	Government	131
	Governmental	0

The concordance hit for the word govern* (including all the lexemes of these words) is 139 in the corpus of APP and 150 in the corpus of 150. The results indicate that the private news agency is more prone to talk about government and its policies related to Covid-19. The public news agency is more positive towards the government policies related to Covid-19. Normalization is used in comparative analysis of corpus to make an accurate comparison. The corpus of APP has based on 12750 linguistic items, and the corpus of TN is 12743. So, the norm value of word govern* in both corpora is following:

Norm frequency of word govern* in APP= $139/12750*1000=10.90$

Norm frequency of word govern* in TN= $150/12743*1000=11.77$

The norm values signify that govern* is used more frequently in private news agencies, and the difference is significant to conclude that TN is more concerned about government strategies.

Norm frequency of word government in APP= $127/12750*1000=9.96$

Norm frequency of word government in TN= $131/12743*1000=10.28$

The difference is again significant.

Figure 2

Table of Collocation

News Agencies	Frequently occurring collocations	Frequency
The News	not	14

	Economic	5
	Employee	3
	Incapable	2
	Protesting	2
APP	strategy	10
	Measures	7
	committed	6
	Decisions	5
	effective	4
	reform	5

The frequency of functional words is very high, but I focus more on collocating content words. The above Figure 2 shows the data of the most frequently used collocations with the word ‘government’. Data shows TN has used more negative words with lexeme government to show its critical concern for government policies. The frequency of ‘not’ is 14, and it is used with the government to show the inability of the government to work properly. The following screenshot shows ‘not’ as a frequent collocation with the lexeme government.

Figure 3

Screenshot of TN Collocations

Shazia said the minister did not tell us why the government employees are pro al consensus but the federal government did not respond positively, he said. Th the corona crisis the federal government did not give a single rupee to Sindh e cooperative partnerships. It is not enough to have local government institutions l in the example of Sindh. It is not enough to have local governments for the sake of in the presence of a local government system, albeit not an exemplary one. f tion in consumption but the government did not even try correcting that with a dget, he pointed out. But the government does not seem optimistic about lower ind focused response by the government is not only dictated by the rampant in deficit targets may push the government to discontinue, at least not expand, fis avirus. He regretted that the government did not create awareness among peop aid it is unfortunate that the government has not allocated even a single penny spitals if the contagion were not controlled. But government complacency near

The Figure 3 shows that TN has used the word ‘not’ more frequently to frame public policies critically. The illustrated examples prove that TN reporting is more likely, ‘government did not give a single rupee,’ the government did not even correct’ etc.

On the other hand, APP has used more positive words with the government. Strategy is a frequently used collocation with the lexeme government in APP. The frequency of this collocation is ten, and it is used very positively to frame government policies constructive and future oriented. The Figure 4 shows the collocation ‘strategy’ which is used positively like, ‘the government had adopted a comprehensive strategy’, ‘the government was evolving a comprehensive strategy’—these collocations not only frame government policies constructively but also agree with the past projects of government. The past tense shows that the public news agency has always been pro-government and improves government confidence by disseminating positive information.

Figure 4

Screenshot of APP Collocations

ue to reddie strategy of modix92s government. Acknowledging Pakisi
mark of the government strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic,\x94
He said the government had adopted the comprehensive strategy for
He said the government was evolving a comprehensive strategy, undi
day said the government\x92s strategy of smart lockdown proved ver
said that the government\x92s effective COVID-19 strategy including t
ng upon the government\x92s successful strategy to deal with the cha
e world. The government\x92s strategy of smart lockdown and caring
aths. Due to government\x92s effective strategy the cases of corona w

I calculated the norm frequency of each corpus's collocations, 'not' and 'strategy'.

Norm frequency of not in APP=14/12750*1000=1.09

Norm frequency of not in TN=0/12743*1000=0

The difference is significant because the adverb 'not' is frequently used in private news agencies, but the public news agency did not use the adverb a single time. APP used another lexeme 'non' for one time. Norm frequency concludes that TN is more critical towards the government policies of Covid-19.

Norm frequency of word strategy in APP=10/12750*1000=0.78

Norm frequency of word strategy in TN=3/12743*1000=0.23

The difference is significant because the corpus is almost the same. This difference is revealing that App is more positive towards government strategies for controlling Covid-19 as compared to TN.

Keyness Analysis

Keyness analysis is calculated to compare the data of both news agencies. It shows that the word 'will' is used more frequently in the news than APP. The context of this word 'will' show that TN is not satisfied with the government's current policies and expecting more from the government for public projects. The Figure 5 shows that the word 'not' is used more frequently in the corpus of TN as compared to APP, which means TN does favours government decisions; rather, it presents its point of view or critically supports the agenda of opposition.

Figure 5

Keyness Analysis

Freq	Keyness	Effect	Keyword
78	+ 49.89	0.0121	will
113	+ 34.88	0.0174	is
27	+ 31.44	0.0042	if
20	+ 28.68	0.0031	children
45	+ 27.95	0.007	but
19	+ 27.25	0.003	bn
61	+ 23.76	0.0095	not
14	+ 20.07	0.0022	n
14	+ 20.07	0.0022	opposition
14	+ 20.07	0.0022	pc
14	+ 20.07	0.0022	pml
24	+ 19.6	0.0037	debt

The word opposition is also frequent in the corpus of TN, but this word has 14 occurrences as collocation with the word govern in TN discourse. Opposition in any government opposes and contradicts government decisions; hence, if a news agency frames opposition significantly over the public issues—they support opposition more than running government.

Figure 6

TN Framing of Opposition

ckdown. the opposition leaders on the other hand ignored t
ernment and opposition may have a negative impact on Paki
assailed the opposition parties for continuing to hold their r
gn by the 11 opposition parties from the platform of the Pak
ort of all the opposition parties, however, as the pandemic h
n saying that opposition parties will continue to be hobbled b
; and not the opposition's job, in which it failed
the wake of opposition's ongoing agitation against the c

Figure 6 shows that the opposition is not happy with government strategies, and TN is more concerned about reporting the opposition in their discourse than APP.

Conclusion

It is concluded through the data analysis that private news agencies framed the image of government negatively by using negative lexical items. The adverb is 'not' is used more frequently in the private news agency TN which means the news agency is not content with the government policies. Other words like incapable and protesting are also used more frequently in TN. Through the discourse analysis of APP, the corpus showed that

government-owned news agencies are more inclined towards the government's policies and use positive lexical items to support the government's agenda. However, the public news agency is content with the previous government performance. Through keyness analysis, the data is compared, and it is concluded that the discourse of TN has used more lexical items that are showing distrust on the government policies through words like, will, debt, but, and opposition. These words are more frequent in the corpus of TN as compared to the corpus of APP.

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