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Constructing National Identity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Political Campaign Slogans

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Abstract: This study explores the role of political campaign slogans in shaping national identity in Pakistan, where political discourse is a critical tool for consolidating public opinion and reinforcing collective identity. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research examines how major political parties employ linguistic strategies to evoke sentiments of patriotism, unity, and religious identity through their slogans. The analysis draws on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA to explore the relationship between the slogans' language, the context of their production, and the broader socio-political environment. Additionally, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach helps reveal how these slogans shape public perception by constructing "us" versus "them" narratives. The findings show that Pakistani political slogans are designed not only to inspire loyalty and national pride but also to construct adversaries, whether they be political rivals or external threats. Slogans like "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan) or "Vote ko Izzat Do" (Respect the Vote) invoke nationalistic and



democratic values while positioning opposing parties as threats to these ideals. Through the use of repetition, religious symbols, and appeals to cultural values, politicians aim to consolidate their support base and foster a sense of collective identity. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that political slogans are potent tools for shaping national identity in Pakistan. By analyzing their linguistic structure and socio-political impact, the research highlights the power dynamics and ideologies embedded in these slogans, showing how they shape public consciousness and reinforce or challenge national narratives.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, National Identity, Political Campaign Slogans, Ideology, Pakistan

Introduction

Political discourse is a central component of any democratic system, functioning as a medium through which political ideologies, beliefs, and strategies are communicated to the public (Reyes, 2011). One of the most impactful forms of political discourse is the slogan—short, memorable phrases that encapsulate a political party's message. In Pakistan, a country marked by its diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious composition, political slogans play a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing national identity. National identity in this context refers to the shared sense of belonging and unity among the people of Pakistan, shaped by historical, social, and ideological factors. Pakistan's political landscape has been shaped by periods of democratic governance, military rule, and significant geopolitical challenges (Shah, 2002). Throughout its history, political slogans have been used as tools to rally support, mobilize the masses, and create collective consciousness. These slogans are more than just campaign rhetoric; they reflect deeper societal values and aspirations, and often act as symbols of resistance, hope, or continuity. Political parties in Pakistan, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), frequently employ slogans that resonate with themes of patriotism, religion, democracy, and national progress, each with the intent to unify their support base around a common identity (Feinberg, 1998).

In a nation as socially and politically fragmented as Pakistan, the challenge of creating a cohesive national identity is significant. Political slogans thus become a critical arena where competing visions of Pakistan's identity are articulated. These slogans often appeal to sentiments of nationalism, religious solidarity, and political reform, aiming to resonate with a broad spectrum of the population (Smith, 2013). Moreover, the use of linguistic strategies to construct "the other"—whether external enemies or domestic political rivals—further serves to solidify a sense of national unity against perceived threats. This study seeks to analyze the ways in which political slogans contribute to the construction of national identity in Pakistan. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research explores how language and discourse in slogans are used to convey ideological messages that shape collective perceptions of what it means to be Pakistani (Batoool, Khan, & Janjua, 2023). Critical Discourse Analysis provides a lens through which to examine the power relations embedded



in language, revealing how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures, ideologies, and identities. Specifically, this study draws on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which focuses on the relationship between text, discourse practices, and social practices, and Teun Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, which emphasizes the role of mental models and ideologies in shaping discourse (Van Dijk, 2011). By examining the textual and contextual elements of political slogans, this research aims to uncover the ways in which these slogans reinforce or challenge dominant narratives of national identity, particularly in a society as complex and multi-layered as Pakistan's.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the relationship between language, politics, and national identity in Pakistan (Ayres, 2009). In a country where political campaigns are often emotionally charged and ideologically driven, slogans act as powerful tools for shaping public consciousness. This research not only highlights the linguistic and ideological mechanisms behind these slogans but also provides insights into how political discourse in Pakistan reflects broader societal struggles over identity, power, and unity (Khan & Zaki, 2022). By exploring how political parties use slogans to propagate their visions of Pakistan's national identity, this study aims to contribute to the broader field of political communication and discourse analysis (Afzaal, Naqvi, & Raees, 2022). It also provides valuable insights into the dynamics of Pakistani politics, where language serves as a key instrument in the construction and dissemination of political ideologies. In doing so, the research will shed light on how political leaders in Pakistan leverage slogans to mobilize public support, reinforce political authority, and shape the nation's collective identity.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore how political slogans in Pakistan serve as a tool for constructing national identity. Specifically, it aims to:

- Analyze the linguistic features of Pakistani political slogans.
- Uncover the underlying ideologies and power dynamics within these slogans.
- Examine the role of religion, nationalism, and other identity markers in shaping public perception.

Research Questions

1. How do political slogans in Pakistan contribute to the construction of national identity?
2. What ideologies are embedded in these slogans?
3. How are linguistic strategies used to evoke a sense of unity or division?



Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (Yahya, 2020). Fairclough's model emphasizes the relationship between text, discourse practice, and social practice, making it suitable for exploring how political slogans both reflect and shape societal beliefs and identities. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, which focuses on the cognitive dimensions of ideology and discourse, is also applied to understand how political slogans influence public perceptions and reinforce certain ideologies (Baradat & Phillips, 2016).

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model

Fairclough's model analyzes discourse on three levels:

- **Textual analysis:** Examines the linguistic structure, vocabulary, and grammar of the slogans.
- **Discourse practice:** Investigates how the slogans are produced, distributed, and consumed by political parties and the public.
- **Social practice:** Looks at how the slogans reflect and shape broader social structures, including issues of power, ideology, and identity.

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach

Van Dijk's approach emphasizes the role of cognition in shaping ideologies and discourse. In the context of political slogans, this approach helps explore how these slogans are processed by the public, reinforcing certain national identities and ideologies (Eze & Amoniyani, 2022).

Methodology

This study employs qualitative CDA to analyze the political slogans of major Pakistani political parties, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Data were collected from official party materials, speeches, social media, and media coverage during the 2018 and 2023 general elections (Baig et al., 2023). The analysis focuses on the most prominent and widely circulated slogans from each party.

Data Collection

The slogans were collected from public campaign speeches, party manifestos, election rallies, and media advertisements. A total of 30 slogans from major political parties were selected for analysis, focusing on those that had significant media coverage and public visibility during elections.

Data Analysis

Each slogan was analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model. First, the textual features were analyzed to understand the linguistic choices made. Then, the discourse practices surrounding these slogans were examined, including how they were disseminated and interpreted (Akbar, Agasi,



& Yowata, 2019). Finally, the social implications of these slogans in the context of Pakistani national identity were considered.

Analysis and Discussion

Nationalism and Patriotism

One of the most common themes in Pakistani political slogans is the emphasis on nationalism and patriotism. Slogans such as PTI's "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan) and PML-N's "Vote ko Izzat Do" (Respect the Vote) reflect attempts to evoke feelings of national pride and identity. "Naya Pakistan" symbolizes a call for reform and change, presenting an image of a progressive, unified nation. The use of "Pakistan" in the slogan reinforces a collective identity that transcends ethnic and regional differences, positioning the party as a representative of the entire nation.

PML-N's slogan, "Vote ko Izzat Do," emphasizes the democratic rights of citizens, tying the respect for voting to a larger narrative of national dignity. It positions the party as the guardian of democracy and national honor, tapping into sentiments of national pride and political responsibility.

Religion and Identity

Religion plays a significant role in Pakistani political discourse, and this is reflected in many slogans. The use of religious references in slogans like "Roti, Kapra, aur Makaan" (Bread, Cloth, and Shelter), which has roots in socialist ideology but also taps into Islamic concepts of social justice, resonates deeply with voters. PPP's slogan combines religious values with political promises, thus reinforcing the image of Pakistan as an Islamic welfare state.

Constructing the 'Other'

A key strategy in political slogans is the construction of an 'other' to solidify in-group identity. In Pakistani political discourse, this 'other' is often the political rival or, in some cases, external threats. PTI's slogans frequently position the party as fighting against corruption, indirectly labeling other political entities as corrupt and unworthy of leadership. By constructing the 'other' in this way, political parties create a narrative that positions themselves as the saviors of national identity and moral integrity.

Manipulation through Ambiguity and Repetition

Another notable feature of political slogans is the use of ambiguity and repetition. Ambiguous slogans such as "Tabdeeli" (Change) by PTI allow for multiple interpretations, enabling the slogan to resonate with a wide range of voters. Similarly, repetition, as seen in PML-N's "Vote ko Izzat Do," reinforces the message through constant exposure, ensuring that the slogan becomes a part of the collective consciousness.



Conclusion

The analysis of Pakistani political slogans through the lens of CDA reveals the complex ways in which national identity is constructed and reinforced in political discourse. Politicians strategically use language to evoke nationalism, patriotism, and religious sentiments, while also constructing rival parties as threats to the nation's identity. These slogans are not just catchy phrases but are embedded with deep ideological meanings that shape how the public perceives their role in the nation. As Pakistan continues to evolve politically, understanding the power of political slogans in shaping national identity remains crucial for both scholars and voters alike.

Implications for Future Research

Future studies could expand this analysis by including slogans from minor political parties and regional movements to explore how local identities interact with national identity. Additionally, comparative analyses of political slogans across different election periods could reveal how changing political landscapes influence the construction of national identity in Pakistan.

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