CONTENT ANALYSIS OF STUDIES ON CPEC COVERAGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PAKISTANI AND CHINESE NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

This paper analyses contents of two scholarly articles focusing on the examination of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) coverage in newspapers from Pakistan and China. The study aims to elucidate the portrayal of CPEC in leading publications such as Dawn, China Daily, The News International, and other selected newspapers included in the content analysis. The research posits a hypothesis suggesting that print media from both nations tend to present a positive image of CPEC. However, this study endeavors to empirically substantiate this hypothesis through a meticulous content analysis. The comparative examination encompasses a thorough assessment of objectives, hypotheses, content, methodologies, references, statistical data, findings, summaries, and conclusions presented in the selected papers. The findings aim to contribute to a

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nuanced understanding of the framing and representation of CPEC in the media discourse of both countries.

Keywords: CPEC, Newspaper, Dawn, China Daily, image of CPEC, Strength, Weaknesses.

Introduction

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) represents a significant and transformative project with far-reaching implications for both nations and the region. Serving as a cornerstone of the Belt and Road Initiative, this initiative has garnered extensive media coverage in China and Pakistan, shaping its narrative and public perception. This study explores the realm of media discourse, specifically concentrating on the coverage of CPEC in two distinct contexts – China and Pakistan. To gain a comprehensive understanding of how the project is framed, a content analysis of two comparative studies is undertaken.

The selected studies, found in the media of both countries, offer valuable insights into the portrayal of CPEC, dominant discourse themes, and the varying perceptions held by each nation. This introduction sets the stage for an exploration of these comparative studies and the ensuing content analysis, seeking to unveil the nuances and variations in how CPEC is presented and understood

in the media of both China and Pakistan (Naseer et al., 2023). Through this investigation, the aim is to illuminate the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing the perception of mega-projects like CPEC (Ahmad et al., 2020).

The population of this paper consists of two published articles: 'Comparative Analysis of the Framing of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the Dailies of Pakistan and China,' authored by Hassan Naseer, Syed Ali Hassan Shah, and Abdul Ghani in 2023, hereafter referred to as 'Paper X,' and 'CPEC through the Lens of Print Media: Comparative Analysis of English Newspapers of Pakistan and China,' written by Waqar Ahmad, Sajjad Ali, and Zahid Yaseen in 2020, hereafter referred to as 'Paper Y.'

These articles were selected through purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique used in research to deliberately select specific individuals, cases, or elements based on predefined criteria or characteristics relevant to the research objectives. This method stands in contrast to random or probability sampling, where every element in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Obilor, 2023).

Methodology

Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research and case studies, where the goal is not to make statistical inferences about a larger population but to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon or to target specific groups or individuals of interest like, "Content Analysis of Comparative Studies on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Media Coverage". Researchers use their judgment and expertise to select participants or cases that will provide the most valuable information to address their research questions or objectives (Obilor, 2023). There are various types of purposive sampling methods, including Maximum Variation Sampling, Homogeneous Sampling, Snowball Sampling, Expert Sampling, and Critical Case Sampling. This paper focuses on critical case sampling (CCS), which involves concentrating on extreme or unique cases that are expected to reveal critical insights.

Purposive sampling allows researchers to focus on the information most relevant to their research, but it can introduce bias into the study if not carefully executed. Researchers must maintain transparency regarding their sampling methods and the selection criteria used to ensure the credibility and validity of the study. For this research, the primary criteria for paper selection was those papers authored by Pakistani researchers that compared and contrasted media coverage of CPEC in China and Pakistan.

This selection aimed to gain a detailed understanding of the content of newspaper articles about CPEC.

Strengths & Weaknesses **of Selected X and Y Research Papers**

First and foremost, it is attempted to examine what expectations the title sets for article reviews. The title of Paper Y suggests that it will analyze the entire print media coverage of CPEC in Pakistan and China and then narrow its focus to specific newspapers. However, the paper immediately introduces 'The News International' and 'China Daily' in its abstract, introduction, and content (Ahmad et al., 2020). The title of Article X also follows a similar pattern, being more or less synonymous with its predecessor.

Description of X & Y

Article X has 8 contents, while article Y have 11 contents, see Table. 1. However most of them seem alike. The pattern of X and Y are presenting two different perspectives, however the subject matter of both articles is CPEC media coverage.

Contents of paper X (Naseer et al., 2023)	Contents of paper Y (Ahmad et al., 2020)
Time Frame (Jan 1, 2021 to Dec 31st 2022)	Jan 1, 2018 to Jun 30, 2018

i. Abstract	i. Abstract
ii. Introduction	ii. Introduction
iii. Statement of the problem	iii. Importance of study
iv. Review of literature	iv. Statement of Problem
v. Theoretical grounding	v. Objectives of study
vi. Methodology	vi. Research Hypothesis
vii. Analysis of the data and findings	vii. Literature Review
viii. Conclusion	viii. Theoretical Framework
	ix. Research Methodology
	x. Results and Discussion
	xi. Conclusion

Table 1. Table of Comparative Contents

Interpretation of Data

To assess the authors' arguments, both articles' abstracts are summarized, aligning with one of the research questions posed by Queen's University for research in the Social Sciences and Humanities(Queen's-University, 2023). Article Y's main argument asserts that 'The media in Pakistan and China consistently portrayed CPEC in a positive manner and contends that CPEC will enhance the economies of both countries.' On the other hand, Article X argues that 'The media in both countries

presented CPEC in a favorable light, examining it through a positive lens.

Comparison of Theoretical Backgrounds:

Article X refers to it as 'Theoretical Grounding,' while Article Y labels it as 'Theoretical Framework.' Both articles claim to have employed the 'Agenda Setting Theory (AST),' yet this theory is not explicitly observed in the text; it was not followed in the contents of the articles. Conversely, Article X mentions more than six media frames without using them to support its argument or refute certain claims. This suggests that some authors may use certain terms for the purpose of attracting readership, but they do not provide a thorough explanation.

Comparative Analysis of Methodologies:

Article Y referred to it as 'research methodology,' while Article X only mentioned 'methodology.' Both articles claimed to have employed the 'content analysis methodology'; however, neither of them followed any established format, as recommended by (Brereton et al., 2007),(Iden & Eikebrokk, 2013), (Kitchenham et al., 2009) and (Følstad & Kvale, 2018). The framework employed by(Brereton et al., 2007),(Iden & Eikebrokk, 2013), (Kitchenham et al., 2009) and (Følstad & Kvale, 2018) encompasses the analysis of citations in selected sources, ranking and rating of these sources, discipline/major-wise analysis of selected sources, institutional research analysis, analysis of research authorship, analysis of CPEC paper methodologies,

financial support/funding of CPEC papers, and keyword analysis. These elements constitute the primary components of the aforementioned research.

Hypothesis & Data Analysis:

Article Y formulated five hypotheses, while Article X developed eight hypotheses. These hypotheses were not based on any literature review but rather on the authors' positive assumptions. Article X claimed that the positive portrayal of trade development and the economy of Pakistan in both Pakistani and Chinese newspapers are supported by data. Out of the 29 pieces of news and editorials, 14 were focused on CPEC's trade and economic development, while 15 were related to editorials. Similarly, the key hypotheses, including the energy and power sector, the corridor to Central Asian Republics, employment opportunities, regional peace and security, the response by national stakeholders, and the gateway to international waters, were supported by data. Article Y presented five hypotheses related to positive coverage on revenue and the economy, transportation and infrastructure, energy and power, services and employment, and investment and security. The authors substantiated these hypotheses with data, confirming their positivity.

Analysis of Articles Data

References Analysis:

Article Y cited 30 sources, and among them, six studies supported the framework and theoretical background of the paper. This work drew inspiration from patterns observed in similar studies such as Mengal et al. (2018), Nazir et al. (2020), and Yousaf et al. (2018). Notably, the title of Yousaf et al. (2018) bears a close resemblance to that of Ahmad et al. (2020). Paper Y relied on the most recent research.

Article Y referenced(Mirza et al., 2019) to support its argument, which suggests the existence of similar studies, such as 'Comparative Analysis of Newspapers' CPEC Coverage. However, it's worth noting that (Mirza et al., 2019) did not mention the newspapers 'The News International' and 'China Daily' throughout their paper. Therefore, Article Y's citation of these newspapers is potentially fictitious or inaccurate. Employing such false citations hinders an independent reader's ability to verify the referenced material, which also reflects on the credibility of the author (Rajendra Babu, 2019). Furthermore, there is another statement in Article Y that posits, 'Free media can play an essential role in reducing corrupt practices, increasing economic stability, enhancing governance, and potentially instigating social and environmental changes in society.' However, the citation for this argument is missing in Article Y,

despite the presence of an in-text citation 'Website 2014.' Regrettably, the information for this citation is absent in the references section.

Paper Y cited Yousaf et al., 2018 for an argument stating, 'After analyzing various stories in Pakistani and Chinese newspapers, it has been revealed that the coverage of CPEC is positive, with some issues covered and others not.' However, there is no Yousaf, 2018 in the references section of Paper Y. Instead, there is Yousaf et al., 2018, which is not mentioned with 'et al.'. This discrepancy in citation style does not adhere to uniform citation guidelines. Additionally, Bennett, Scott's Pi, Fleiss's, and Cohen's Kappa, 2014, have been cited in the in-text citations by Article Y, but their details are not provided in the references section. In reference section it mentions the study of Nazir et al., 2018, however there are two studies conducted by same author one is (Nazir et al., 2019) and the other is (Nazir et al., 2020). The authors of paper Y don't know which one they are referring to.

Another point of surprise is that when one opens the PDF version of Nazir et al., 2019, one can find a URL (http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019(IV-IV).39) at the top of the paper. If one copies and pastes this URL into a browser, it leads to a different article titled 'Children, Gender, and Television: An Analysis of Heavy Viewers' Behavior Regarding Gender-Specific Roles and Characteristics' by (Zaheen & Khan, 2019).

Article X cited more than 20 sources, however (Soroka, 2003), and (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) only supports its argument. The most recent citation is 2017 (Hussain, 2017) which is a Master Thesis and (Miller, 2017). The oldest citation is(Lippmann, 1922). None of reference is recent one, although this article published in 2023. It is one of authors' weaknesses or strategy that they did not mention the targeted newspapers links.

Article X mentioned Ress, 2010; Van Gorp, 2010; Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Reese, 2007; Tankar, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, Ghanem, 1991; Gamson, 1992; Iyengar, 1991; Scheufele & Tewksbur, 2007; Lugalambi, 2006; Nelson & Weily, 2001; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Berger, 2011; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006; Bertran & Huges, 2005; Paisley, 1964 and Berelson, 1952. In article X, there are 17 in-text citations that lack detailed information in the references. This makes it difficult to validate whether these citations are accurate or not. It is unfortunate that there is very little focused research on fake or false citations in Google Scholar, with the exception of(Liu, 2018).

This research aimed to verify all the evidence in Article X that lacked references in order to address the missing sources. By doing so, it was intended to confirm the validity of the mentioned citations and prevent scholars from engaging in malpractices. Such scholarly malpractices can impede the evaluation of the credibility of research work(Liu, 2018).

Opinion Analysis:

The question is, 'Is the information in both articles based on facts or opinions?' In this regard, it is found that both X and Y papers used statistical tables to verify their hypotheses. The information they used was collected exclusively from newspaper coverage and then tested for its validity using SPSS. The data from both X and Y supports the claims and arguments made by the authors of their respective papers.

Article Y's assertion that the media plays a vital role in shaping and influencing society, as well as acting as a reflection of society, is corroborated by the original article (Mengal et al., 2018). Another study conducted by Yousaf et al. (2018) also supports Article Y's argument that the leading press in Pakistan is playing an important role in promoting the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by reporting on it positively.

Organization Analysis:

The organization of an article depends on the authors' understanding and whether they choose to follow an already established pattern that aligns with their research data, methodology, or convenience. Table 1 illustrates that both X and Y papers structured their contents based on their convenience. However, it is not evident from Articles X and Y whether following such structures was advantageous or not following a different structure was disadvantageous. To analyze this in detail,

it is necessary to understand the reasoning of authors X and Y when they organized their papers in this existing style.

Article X contains a total of eight sections and spans eight pages. In an effort to validate its nine hypotheses, the article focused primarily on statistics that supported its claims. The author adopted a concise and straightforward structure for the paper. Despite the claim of using software or graphic applications, the paper lacks any critical analysis or comparative assessment of their work in relation to other research. As a result, the content is limited to the following sections: Abstract, Introduction, Statement of the Problem, Review of Literature, Theoretical Grounding, Methodology, Data Analysis and Findings, and Conclusion(Naseer et al., 2023).

Article Y consists of a total of 11 sections and spans 10 pages. It establishes five hypotheses, and to substantiate these, the authors structured the article with sections including Abstract, Introduction, Importance of Study, Statement of the Problem, Objectives of the Study, Research Hypothesis, Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, Research Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion (as outlined in Table 1). The authors of Article Y organized their paper in a manner similar to how Yousaf et al. (2018) and Mengal et al. (2018) did. However, Article Y also lacks digitalized analysis, graphs, and charts. It does not feature comparative analysis or critical analysis (Ahmad et al., 2020). These papers, X and Y, do not appear to bring

innovation or contribute significantly to existing knowledge. They seem to be following a well-established pattern prevalent in Pakistan

Keywords Analysis:

Article X utilized three keywords: 'Corridor,' 'Framing,' and 'Agenda.' Despite the article's focus on CPEC, media, China, and Pakistan, these four keywords were conspicuously absent. Article X collected data from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, covering nearly a year. During this period, the article gathered more than 207 relevant news articles and editorials from both China Daily and Dawn. Out of these 207 sources, Daily Dawn allocated 65% of its coverage to positive reporting on CPEC, while China Daily dedicated 34% to positive CPEC reporting.

Article Y employed seven keywords: 'Assessment,' 'Agenda Setting,' 'CPEC,' 'Comparison,' 'The News International,' 'China Daily.' However, it did not include 'China,' 'Pakistan,' and 'Media' among its keywords. The study's time frame spans from January 1, 2018, to June 30, 2018, covering a period of six months. During this time, a total of 90 sources, including news articles and editorials, were examined, all of which portrayed CPEC in a positive light. Article Y found that 'The News International' presented CPEC positively in 63.4% of its coverage, while China Daily did so in 35.7% of its reporting.

Both articles produced keywords, which directly are linked with CPEC, China and Pakistan Economic growth. Two articles noticed a bunch of key words (Figure, 1). Analysis of words shows that there is strong desire from mainstream media side about the positive contribution of CPEC.
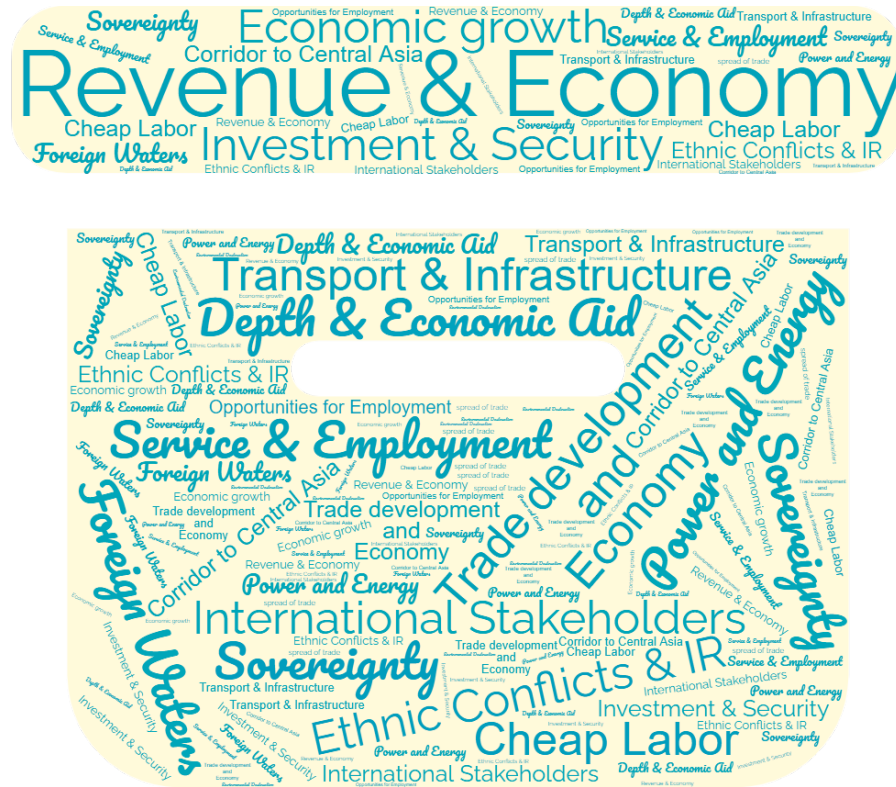

Figure 1. CPEC Key Words Analysis: A collection from 2 articles, developed with the help of WordClouds

Key Findings

Both Articles used same methodology of Content Analysis.

1. Authors of both articles are from same background, they all are from Communication Studies.
2. Study X authors are from the Province of Punjab, while authors of Y article are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan.
3. The focus of study of both Papers was China Daily and Dawn and The News International.
4. Both articles have taken help from Agenda Setting Theory for theoretical framework.
5. Both Articles proved their hypotheses in reporting positive about CPEC.
6. Both Articles found that the targeted newspapers for analysis were English language.
7. Both articles did not use critical analysis or comparative studies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that both article X and article Y portrayed the behavior of the media towards CPEC in Pakistan and China very positively. They promoted CPEC as an opportunity for both investors and citizens of both states. Additionally, media coverage fueled discussions among the general public and policymakers about its short-term and long-term benefits.

Through Agenda Setting (AS), Daily Dawn, The News International, and China Daily have a significant influence on the public. With the help of Agenda Setting, these newspapers presented CPEC in a manner that captured the attention and importance of their target audience. Agenda Setting (AS) prioritized positive news about CPEC, shaping how the audience perceives it. Both papers argued that these newspapers emphasized the significance of CPEC's contribution.

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