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**Understanding Media Framing of political landscape and Audience Perception: A Case of Pakistani Politics**

Soha Salahuddin\*

Department of Mass Communication, Bahria University Islamabad Campus, Islamabad-Pakistan

\*Corresponding author: [soha.salah.01@gmail.com](mailto:soha.salah.01@gmail.com)

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**Abstract**

This article review explores the intricate dynamics of media framing within Pakistani politics and its significant influence on public perception. It delves into the crucial role that media framing plays in shaping political discourse, scrutinizing numerous aspects such as audience reception effects and broader implications for democratic societies. The study showcases how language selection, visual features, and narrative building significantly impact individuals' understanding of political developments through analyzing deliberate material presentation in the country's media landscape. This article review explores the intricate dynamics of media framing within Pakistani politics and its significant influence on public perception. It delves into the crucial role that media framing plays in shaping political discourse, scrutinizing numerous aspects such as audience reception effects and broader implications for democratic societies. By analyzing Chinese and American coverage of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in Pakistan, a case study was conducted to examine how media framing affects international relations. To navigate the intricate intersection between politics and media in today's information-rich environment, this analysis stresses the importance of considering both local and global viewpoints while promoting informed discourse by advancing media literacy skills.

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**Introduction**

This review article delves into the multifaceted network of media framing in politics, which has been shown through research to significantly shape public sentiment and discourse

surrounding important issues. Its impacts on public opinion are explored alongside broader implications for democratic societies. Given that most people rely heavily on information from the media, its influence can greatly affect citizens'

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perceptions and behaviors relating to political matters (Priyanshu, 2023). The media significantly shapes the dynamics and results of conflicts by selective reporting and particular depictions of them, which in turn affects the success of the parties involved. Conflict participants, from political parties, social organizations, and pro-democracy activists to armed rebels and state officials, strategically use the media to further their goals by coordinating their actions with the media's operational logic (Kraetzschmar & Voltmer, 2015). In recent years, there has been a surge in research on how the confluence of politics and media impacts democratic societies due to an increased awareness of the influence that media framing can have. This has resulted in scholars such as Entman (2012), Iyengar (2015), and Tankard Jr. (2019) contributing significantly towards our understanding of how political events are portrayed by the media which shapes public opinion while also leading to the polarization evident in many current political settings.

Overall, the interpretation of political conflicts by the public heavily relies on media framing and how testimony is presented. The selection, analysis, and delivery of information to audiences by the media shape their understanding and perception of political occurrences; this process is known as framing.

The intentional portrayal and emphasis of specific aspects of political events, figures, or subjects is known as "framing" in Pakistani media. Media organizations' language choices, imagery selection, and overall narrative structure significantly impact on how the general population comprehends and perceives political happenings. The influential force that shapes opinions and perspectives among an active and diverse public within Pakistan's politics lies with media framing; therefore, it involves a purposeful curation approach by media outlets to shape people's understanding of various politically related topics such as personalities or incidents. Media framing traces back its roots to academics like Entman & Goffman has developed into a prism through which narratives created by Pakistani news channels can be examined concerning their effects on public opinion. Addressing this issue entails analyzing the intricate association between socio-political dynamics within Pakistan while looking at several dimensions related to interactions enabled due to these framings. With an overarching aim towards comprehensive review thereof being undertaken for current discussion purposes only about examining complexities surrounding broader themes related specifically around nation-building processes where interactions tend not just limited but also subtle yet significant counterparts posing challenges considering we are talking about national levels impacts here

### **Understanding Media Framing in current media landscape**

The utilization of media framing, whereby certain aspects of a problem, person or event are highlighted and stressed upon by the press alters how information is perceived by its audience. Politics employs this powerful tactic to influence public views and establish a particular storyline as revealed in Arowolo's (2017) research on framing through mass communication channels.

As Hassan (2018) explains, framing in Pakistani media involves intentionally showcasing specific aspects of political happenings, individuals or subjects. The linguistic choices made, graphic elements included and overall narrative approach taken by media establishments have a significant impact on how the people of Pakistan interpret and grasp political affairs.

Scholars have made noteworthy contributions to researching media framing methodologies, leading to significant progress. Scheufele's (2014) study on longitudinal framing analysis offers a useful framework for understanding the dynamic nature of media narratives over time. Recent methodological advancements in natural language processing algorithms now enable effective analysis of big datasets, allowing for more comprehensive examination and identification of minute changes in wording and emphasis used by different media outlets concerning how news information is framed overall (Smith et al., 2023).

When we talk about media framing on Twitter, we refer to the intentional selection and presentation of content within the constraints of a maximum character count. By analyzing tweets from Maryam Nawaz and Imran Khan as examples, this study seeks to shed light on how these framing strategies can shape public perception of political events by conveying specific themes. Both politicians use their tweets in strategic ways that communicate stories or viewpoints with varying degrees of subtlety or overtness. To better understand how they do so despite limited space for expression, it's vital to closely scrutinize language choices alongside tone and substance—for example examining elections through populist rhetoric versus policy announcements via more technical language. To truly grasp what each politician is trying to convey requires recognizing any biases inherent in their messaging such examination could come from careful analysis across topics addressed (or avoided), phrasing chosen when addressing key issues/topics etc., while keeping an eye out pattern emerging over time regarding shifted/framed views toward big national/international developments.

Secondly, we have Issue Framing, which examines how people use the limited character count on Twitter to convey

and debate important political topics including corruption, government, and economic policy. In the same way, Twitter is a powerful tool for creating political agendas in Pakistan. Imran Khan and Maryam Nawaz's use of Twitter to advance their political objectives can be analyzed to learn more about the topics they value, the stories they highlight, and the discourse they want to influence (Stromer-Galley, 2000). In order to set the agenda with tweets, one must essentially analyse the ones that gain a lot of traction and attention, as these often indicate the subjects that the audience is interested in learning more about. Retweets and mentions, on the other hand, are useful for tracking the dissemination of certain tweets and evaluating their influence on public conversation (Mccombs & Reynolds, 2009).

The deliberate use of language is one of the main methods by which the media frames its stories. Journalists have a subtle power to shape the public's perception of political personalities or events by selecting words or phrases. For example, characterizing a protest as "violent" or "peaceful" might drastically change the audience's perception of the circumstances. The language used by the media in Pakistan has a significant impact on public opinion and serves as an excellent example of this influence. Even small changes in linguistic choices can alter how political protests are perceived, with potential outcomes ranging from characterizing them as "peaceful demonstrations for democracy" to branding them as "disruptive attempts to destabilize the government." This is especially true when opposition parties organize such rallies. The reporting style also plays a massive role; describing gatherings either positively - like showcasing immense public support- or negatively -such as referring to it low turnout rally-, which could sway people's opinions about prominent political figures. In addition, national security discourse framing crucial subjects concerning security profoundly affects citizen perception towards governance activities including counter-terrorism operations (Vonnahme, 2013).

The media plays a significant role in using language as a powerful tool to impact public perception and narratives, particularly within the intricate world of politics. This article delves into this complex relationship between language and politics with emphasis on Pakistan's unique context. It explores how different languages and cultural nuances affect political discourse by examining the ways media disseminates information that shape public opinion (Rahman, 2008). Ultimately, it reveals that the influence of language on political dynamics is deeply ingrained across all cultures.

In addition, the impact of media on political conversation extends beyond just language. The portrayal of events,

framing in news articles and choice of words all play a role in shaping public perception. In Pakistan's national discourse, there is often an unintended influence from attempts to balance diverse languages with political coverage which contributes further to influencing politics as we know it today. With social media coming into play recently this dynamic has only intensified allowing for immediate contact and information sharing through channels such as Twitter trends or Facebook debates whilst also enriching the linguistic fabric. Politicians now have direct interaction with their constituents using these platforms giving them leverage by strategically employing language that can either sway opinion towards or against certain issues (Kamboh et al., 2023).

The complex interplay between language and politics in the sphere of media exerts a profound influence on societies, underscored by their immeasurable significance. Given Pakistan's diverse linguistic fabric that fundamentally characterizes it, decoding the intricate dynamics governing political discourses through an informed comprehension of this relationship is critical to navigate its terrain successfully.

Media framing is often associated with bias, as journalists may intentionally or unintentionally present news that aligns with their own viewpoints or media organization's objectives. This makes understanding the role of biases in political narratives crucial for decoding them accurately. In Pakistan, this complexity is further complicated by a relationship between media framing and prejudice. Therefore, comprehending how biases manifest themselves within media coverage becomes critical to achieving literacy on the topic in Pakistan. Journalistic bias can tend towards leaning stories toward specific deceptions either at an individual reporter level or supported broadly through ideologically aligned outlets operating under different religious philosophies even affecting events related to culture/religion reporting tactics used here warrant examination into where journalistic allegiances lie (e.g., supporting preferred narratives etc.).

Pakistan's vast range of religious and cultural perspectives heightens the potential for partiality in media framing. The presentation of issues related to race, religion, or custom may expose ingrained prejudices within the media that can influence overall public perception on such matters. Inadvertently fueling existing biases or stereotypes through how they frame religious events or cultural customs has the capacity to distort communal comprehension over time. Should reporting about minority populations contain any biased elements, it could result in social ostracism towards these groups while shaping a skewed outlook amongst society as a whole (Hassan 2018).

In addition to overt bias, the Pakistani media can be influenced by the emotional tone and framing of news articles. This is because language that evokes strong feelings has a subtle but powerful influence on public opinion, shaping how events are perceived and understood. For instance, emotionally charged descriptors used in reports about protests or rallies have been shown to impact people's emotional response to these events as well as their perspective on them. Similarly, emotive language and descriptions employed when discussing political figures or reporting on political developments can also sway public sentiment significantly. Given that bias operates at multiple levels within Pakistan's complex media landscape - from subtle religious biases laying beneath certain stories' frames up through party affiliations influencing election coverage - it is vital for citizens seeking clarity around current affairs topics to understand what they're reading or seeing. By remaining aware of such subtleties in practice among journalists covering various subjects across different mass communications channels operating throughout society here (and beyond), we become better equipped not only with perceptivity towards worldviews promoting greater knowledge-building skills necessary under democratic principles founded upon critical thinking mechanisms aid explicitly toward interpretation intentions driving messages sent alongside hidden tips imprinted deep inside users brain substrates over time (Siraj & Waheed 2019b).

### **Contemporary research on media framing in Pakistan**

As media landscapes shift, contemporary research provides imperative insight into the mechanics of how Pakistani politics are framed by the media. In this section, we explore novel investigations utilizing case studies and sources to shed light on current trends in framing. Additionally, this examination elucidates how bias, tone and selective frames continue to mold public perception. Recent inquiries have investigated news frame construction within politically affiliated outlets that shape coverage surrounding political actors and occurrences respectively. Khan & Ali's (2022) analysis scrutinized framing techniques utilized by such organizations during times of significant crises exposing multiple approaches distinguished based on partisan leanings used for presenting events at various junctures.

Social media has expanded the framing capabilities of Pakistani media. According to a recent study by Ahmed and Malik (2023), key political figures are shaping public opinion through social platforms. By analyzing tweets from journalists and politicians, the research breaks down their digital framing techniques.

The media has the capability to sway public opinion by introducing certain topics, which are known as agenda-setting. This concept is amplified through media framing, where specific concerns are highlighted and influence opinions. Exploring how political news stories are prioritized and framed provides valuable insights into their role in setting agendas. Pakistan's socio-political environment involves a complex relationship between the media, politics and public opinion. Through examining the effects of media framing on shaping beliefs and perceptions, this analysis seeks to examine how agenda-setting operates within Pakistani politics – emphasizing its importance as a significant feature of this landscape. In particular reference to Pakistan's context; where powerful associations exist among these entities – studying Agenda-Setting -a theory revealing Media output 's impact over thoughts related vital issues—has paramount significance.

In 2018, Shabbir and Iqbal conducted a study titled "A Case Study of Pakistani Urdu Newspapers: Media Framing of Political Conflicts". The research aimed to investigate the impact of language and visuals in shaping public opinion regarding political matters within Pakistan. The findings highlight how media framing can influence people's perception towards such issues.

In their 2016 publication, "Agenda Setting and Framing of Political News in Pakistani Newspapers," Saleem and Mansoor delve into the construction of agendas by Pakistani newspapers. They also analyze how political news is framed to determine which topics hold more significance within public opinion.

In Pakistan, media organizations blend their framing and agenda-setting roles. This implies that they determine the topics to cover while also deciding how best to present them. Election coverage prioritization by different outlets can provide valuable insights into any political biases that may be inherent in their reporting structures. Similarly, international relations' press portrayal has a direct impact on how neighboring countries like India or Afghanistan are framed with regard to Pakistan's foreign policy objectives; thus shaping public perceptions of such policies. Adequate comprehension of these power dynamics is crucial for understanding Pakistani politics holistically.

The way in which the media presents political issues and events greatly impacts how the general population perceives them. The public's viewpoint is molded, to some degree, by factors such as language usage, news delivery style and particular perspective inclusion.

In 2020, Ahmad, N., and Ghuman, K. "Media Framing of Terrorism in Pakistan: A Content Analysis of Urdu Newspapers." The focus of this study is to investigate the framing techniques used by Pakistan's media in regard to terrorism. Additionally, it aims to analyze how different frames influence public opinion and perception about this significant issue.

M. S. Khan (2019). "Media Framing and Political Opinion Formation: A Study of Pakistani News Media." In this study, the author delves into the correlation between media framing and political attitudes among Pakistani citizens. Through their analysis, they provide valuable insights on how media discourse can shape public perception.

While media framing can be a powerful tool for shaping narratives, its use is not free of moral implications and challenges. The delivery of information to the public may undergo distortion due to biases, sensationalism or selective reporting. Thus, there are certain limitations present in this approach that must be taken into consideration.

Iqbal, J., and Saleem, R. (2017). "Media Ethics and Reporting: A Case Study of Pakistani News Media." Examining the ethical considerations in Pakistani media reporting, this article explores how political issues could be framed by failures of ethics.

The study, "Image Framing of Pakistan in China: A Case Study of Xinhua News Agency," examined how the Xinhua News Agency presented Pakistan over the period of July 2012 to June 2013. Using quantitative content analysis and framing theory, the researchers discovered that Xinhua News Agency covered Pakistan extensively over the given time frame. There were more pro-Pakistan frames than anti-Pakistan frames, but weak frames outnumbered both. The study found that Pakistan was portrayed using a variety of frames, including anarchy, peace, friendship, threat, and responsibility. Although there were a variety of perspectives, the press reporting focused mostly on Pakistan's reputation for lawlessness. Pro-Pakistan frames dominated the coverage, creating an overall positive impression of Pakistan from the Xinhua News Agency (Ahmed & Munawar, 2015)

#### **Effects of media framing on Public Perception:**

The media's framing plays a significant role in shaping public perception, ultimately influencing attitudes and opinions concerning political figures and issues. A particular framework can evoke specific emotions, sway collective viewpoints, and amplify societal divisions.

The influence of media framing in Pakistan's political landscape is significant, shaping public perception and impacting attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. However, if left unchecked or unexamined closely enough it may lead to increased polarization amongst the populace instead of fostering a knowledgeable society. This article delves deeper into this complex topic by analyzing specific cases and relevant research (Aalberg et al., 2011) that highlights how media has an influential role in forming public opinion through its various platforms.

The way that political leaders are viewed by the public can be impacted in various ways. This includes how they lead, their policies and also personal matters. Topics such as minority rights, gender equality or economic inequality may influence policy agendas based on media framing and public discourse surrounding them.

Arab journalists and media experts argue that Western media's coverage of the Israel-Gaza conflict often falls short by making unsubstantiated claims, presenting a one-sided view, and depicting Palestinians as mere puppets of Hamas. This approach is seen as favoring Israel and undermining the credibility of established news outlets among Arabs and other viewers. The experts point out that Israeli breaches of international law are frequently justified and Palestinians are frequently dehumanized by Western media. They draw attention to the crucial historical background that has been missing, ignoring the trauma that Palestinians have experienced over the past 75 years. The media is charged with giving undue attention to Israeli viewpoints, particularly in the wake of recent events such as the Gaza conflict. The imbalance in reporting that occurs when Western correspondents cover the sorrow of Israeli families but are prohibited from entering Gaza results in their missing an important piece of information, as the article also points out. The story is attacked for repeating American and Israeli talking lines rather than sufficiently addressing the death toll in Gaza. The article also examines how Western media often depicts Muslims and Arabs as "less than human," drawing a comparison to coverage that followed 9/11. When Palestinians are given speaking opportunities, they are frequently urged to denounce Hamas, but Israeli visitors are hardly ever challenged about their government's actions in the West Bank or the blockade of Gaza. The experts also draw attention to the proliferation in Western media of unfounded allegations made by Israeli parties, such as the widely circulated but unproven assertion that Hamas "beheaded 40 babies." This is perceived as an effort to create a perception of public support for Israel's military action. The article's conclusion offers insights into the difficulties faced by Western media journalists who could

be afraid of retaliation for questioning pro-Israel bias. It has been stated that certain journalists, one of whom is Jewish and the other is non-Jewish, have been forbidden from showing sympathy for Palestinians for fear of losing their jobs for defying the network's position. In general, people are concerned that the credibility of Western media coverage is deteriorating, especially when it comes to the perceptions of the Arabic-speaking community and the Arab diaspora in the West. (Nashed, 2023)

It is crucial to consider how the media portrays geopolitical events, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict since it directly impacts public perception. The presentation of these occurrences varies across various publications due to personal views and target readership. Previous reports on similar confrontations have often been influenced by participating in countries' underlying political motives. Media sources in the West can highlight Ukraine's efforts to regain its sovereignty and denounce Russia's activities as violating global standards. On the other hand, Russian media can highlight the historical connections between the two countries and address topics like the defense of Russian-speaking minorities in Ukraine. Broader political narratives, such as those pertaining to NATO expansion, regional stability, and the larger East-West relationship, can also have an impact on how the war is framed. Certain parts of the conflict may be highlighted selectively by media sources in order to suit their narratives or further specific policy goals (Selvarajah & Fiorito, 2023).

In addition, the way political figures are portrayed in the media significantly influences how the general public views their qualifications, dependability, and competence. While negative framing can result in a decline in public trust, positive framing can improve a leader's reputation. Research has indicated that public assessments of political individuals are influenced by media framing, which helps shape long-lasting opinions. According to a study by Khan and Ahmed (2018), presenting a leader's policy ideas in a good light made the public view more favorably. The framing of candidates affected voters' attitudes and their likelihood of support, according to an analysis of press coverage during elections (Ahmed et al., 2019).

However, media framing has a substantial impact on how people perceive and priorities societal difficulties, which in turn impacts public discourse on social issues. The media is vital in establishing public discourse and forming views, whether it be by framing talks on gender equality, minority rights, or economic inequality. As an illustration, consider this the framing of social issues by the media affected public knowledge and policy preferences in sectors including healthcare and education.

Some social movement academics examine how accurately the media depicts popular protests by looking at historical protests via media archives, or "media traces," and comparing them to data collected from a variety of sources, such as participant observation, police and official records, and media archives. Images of Protest: Dimensions of Selection Bias in Media Coverage of Washington Demonstrations, 1982 and 1991 on JSTOR, , n. Early research exposed the selectivity of newspapers in covering protests, with factors like location and event size influencing coverage, leading to significant disparities in local and national media representation of demonstrations.

The study "Representations of Pakistan: A framing analysis of coverage surrounding Operation Zarb-e-Azb in the U.S. and Chinese news media" explores the intricate field of media framing around a crucial military operation. This review sheds light on the research's contributions to the larger knowledge of media dynamics in international relations by critically examining the study's strengths and possible areas for development. The study's primary strength lies in its meticulous analysis of media framing, providing a nuanced exploration of how Operation Zarb-e-Azb is presented by Chinese and American press. The authors' insightful understanding sheds light on the differing narratives propagated by these two influential entities through critical themes and frames. An impressive feature that differentiates this article from the rest is its ability to navigate complex representations within both domestic contexts with ease. By comparing China's view with that of America, readers gain an essential lens into dynamic global media intricacies affecting public sentiments. Given current geopolitical shifts worldwide concerning counterterrorism initiatives globally, it's hard to overestimate the significance of Yousaf et al.'s research deeply examining representation differences between nations amid high-stakes diplomacy dynamics drawn tautly across several government bodies or other relevant stakeholders involved at various instances involving matters as such like terrorism-related conflicts fraught history replete twists missteps mixed results preceding achievements noteworthy feats etcetera alike since much hinges upon their outcomes hugely! Through tying together diplomatic concerns around framed works representing systemic issues rather than diffuse ones via mainstream news sources perturbing individuals' perceptions individually – something additionally suggested later - we see why experts seek consistently starting such endeavors related due diligence techniques reliably sourcing data points generative findings congruous potential breakout attempts advancing discourse finally unhindered significantly influencing multiple impacted areas/domains simultaneously! Although achieving goals was successful despite any improvements-yet-needed remain unaddressed absent more thorough analyses uncovering those yet-unknown impacts

generated by post-inception ultimately leading respondents perceiving engagement strategies modeled others except either country themselves may help shed light beyond what's currently observed. Expectations run high for efforts aimed towards solidifying peace processes producing integrative mechanisms driven robust frameworks promoting durable resolution mitigating mass societal divides fortified against relic's internal conflict potentials threatening going forward. Remaining details await further inquiry; indeed, nevertheless, are likely molded-personally funnel human mediation contingencies always risk informing respective positioning affordances while attempted understandings ideally created effect certain underpinning actions shaping internationally oriented perspectives varies significantly when countries treat other due deeper study's geostrategic implications.

### Conclusion

To sum up, the intricate connection between political narratives and media framing depicts a multifaceted setting where Pakistani as well as global outlooks intersect and differ. Along with hastening dissemination of information, the worldwide media scenario has accentuated how crucial framing is in shaping public perception and impacting political conversations. The widespread effect of media framing on the global political stage is highlighted through its portrayal and comprehension of international events. The narrative constructed by international media organizations plays a vital role in either fostering cross-cultural awareness or perpetuating biased attitudes and preconceptions. Such institutions' choices concerning framing techniques expose the power dynamics inherent to worldwide politics, emphasizing how influential the press is in shaping geopolitical circumstances.

As we focus on the Pakistani context, it becomes apparent that politics and media framing are highly intertwined. The constantly evolving framing choices of various media outlets have a profound impact on Pakistan's intricate socio-political landscape, which is riddled with numerous challenges across diverse domains. In this culture where the media has become an influential tool for socialization, its role in shaping public perceptions, policy debates and political affiliations cannot be overstated.

Pakistan's perspective on how politics is framed by the media varies greatly. The country has a diverse and dynamic media landscape that showcases an array of viewpoints and beliefs, resulting in a rich tapestry of storylines that reflects its complex political reality. However, this diversity also raises concerns as different framing decisions could worsen polarization and division within public discourse. It becomes

evident when examining Pakistan's media framing complexities within the political sphere that global events can influence local decisions while local issues are mirrored globally through portrayals. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of having sophisticated comprehension regarding media framing which acknowledges international information flows transcending territorial borders.

In today's world, where knowledge is plentiful and media has an unmatched impact, it's essential for both creators and recipients of media to take ownership. Our responsibility lies in cultivating a level of proficiency with regards to the mechanics of how politics are framed within the media landscape; promoting diversity in perspectives; engaging ideologically diverse communities meaningfully so as to facilitate productive conversations - all these contribute towards democratic principles taking root globally and fostering informed discourse that advances awareness on vital global issues. We can only achieve this through developing nuanced insight into media framing mechanisms while educating ourselves about them holistically.

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