



RESEARCH PAPER

Coverage of the Arrest of Imran Khan and the Subsequent Political Unrest in Pakistan: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The research at hand is an attempt to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the arrest of Imran Khan, former Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and subsequent events in the *Daily Times* and daily *The Nation*. The arrest and subsequent protests along with the context of military establishment involvement made the incident highly significant for the media in Pakistan. However, given the political dynamics and historic political economy of the media in Pakistan, the newspapers opined on the incidents very carefully. We have employed thematic analysis as a theoretical and analytical tool to determine what kind of the editorial themes have been produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests. Our findings show that both the newspapers produced editorial themes that not only criticized the violation of human rights by the authorities but also opposed the vandalism committed by the protestors.

KEYWORDS Arrest of Imran Khan, , May 09 Riots, PTI, Thematic Analysis

Introduction

The May 9 riots are the series of hostile and destructive incidents that occurred on May 9, 2023 in Pakistan. These incidents were the aftermath of the arrest of Imran Khan, former Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), from the premises of Islamabad High Court. The supporters of PTI held demonstrations which further led to violent riots across Pakistan. Extensive damage was done by the aggressive protestors to the government and military installations. PTI's supporters protested across the country on Imran Khan's imprisonment including major cities like Rawalpindi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Gujranwala (*Geo News*, 2023 May 30). As a result of which government blocked mobile and internet services and arrested not only PTI's workers, leaders and supporters but also their perceived supporters in media fraternity (Shah, S. A. 2023; Shah, A. A. 2023). Cases of civilians in military courts were initiated, which were challenged in Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Government claimed to have proof about Imran Khan being the mastermind behind the attacks. More than 50 Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) were established by Interior Ministry. These JITs were composed up of police personnel to investigate registered cases in relation to May 9 riots, also they were provided with prosecutor of prosecution department (*Dawn*, 2023 May 28; 2023 June 02; *The Nation*, 2023 June 02). More than thousand rioters were arrested in connection to May 9 riots only in Lahore. According to Punjab Police above five thousand people were arrested across Punjab. Most badly affected cities were Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Gujranwala, and Sargodha. Majority of the cases were covered by anti-terrorism regulations (*The Express Tribune*, 2023 June 01; *Pakistan Today*, 2023 May 15).

Pakistan's overall political climate was significantly impacted by the riots on May 9. by and large the political climate of Pakistan was drastically affected by the riots on May 9. After which there was major crackdown against PTI's supporters and hundreds and thousands of people were arrested. Civil society and right groups raised their voices regarding arrests, tortures in custody and sourced disappearances (*Al Jazeera*, 2023 May 11). Mobile network was suspended across Pakistan after 9th May incidents and was fully restored on May 13th. Many online businesses were suspended and bear the loss in millions (*The Nation*, 2023 May 13). Pakistan's telecom sector also faced the loss in billions. Social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and You tube were also restricted. Government blamed these social media sites as the platform where the aggression was built and script was prepared for the May 9 violence incidents (Khan, 2023).

Media was given directions by the government authorities to ban all the coverage related to Imran Khan. His speeches and other communication with the people through media were totally stopped and his name from print and electronic media disappeared overnight (*NewsNCR*, 2023 June 07). Many journalists who seemed aligned with Imran Khan were detained or targeted by the authorities. Imran Riaz Khan, one of the famous journalist was captured from the outskirts of Sialkot Central Jail. Till date he is missing and Punjab Police puts the blame on military agencies for his disappearance. Another Journalist, Sami Ibrahim, head of BOL News was detained in Islamabad on May 24, 2023 and later released at May 30, 2023 (*The Express Tribune*, 2023 May 25).

International Federation of Journalists and Reporters without Borders have raised their concerns regarding missing journalist and insecurities they are facing (*Reporters Without Borders*, 2023 May 25). Due to seriousness of the crimes committed during May 9 riots the administration transferred the cases to military courts. Four accused involved in targeting defense sites were transferred by anti-terrorism court Faisalabad, whereas, accused of attack on General Headquarters(GHQ) were transferred to ATC in Rawalpindi (*Geo News*, 2023 May 30; *The Express Tribune*, 2023 June 01). Later on, more than 100 defendants involved in attacks on military sites were transferred to military courts (*The Express Tribune*, 2023 June 21).

Numerous petitions were files in Supreme Court of Pakistan to declare these trials in military courts unconstitutional, including prominent lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan who called it as "a complete anathema to the constitutional separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, the inalienable right of every Pakistani to be treated in accordance with law, and the fundamental rights of life, liberty, fair trial, and due process". Justice Jawwad S. Khawaja believed it as "militarization of justice" (Shah, A. A., 2023). Besides journalists, Lawyers were also targeted especially those who demanded the termination of cases in military courts and upholding of constitution of Pakistan. Prominent Lawyers were arrested who supported PTI or were against the trials in military courts. Uzair Bhandari and Latif Khosa are the major names among them (*Dawn*, 2023 June 18; *Pakistan Today*, 2023 June 18).

Conclusively, people from all segments of society supporting PTI in one way or the other were affected by the decisions of administration after May 9 riots. Many workers, members of PTI who were working even at the lower scale were forced to quit the party or bear the brunt of supporting Imran Khan. The whole situation including the political polarization and the power dynamics involved in the scenario attracted media attention. However, given the political dynamics and historic political economy of the media in Pakistan, the newspapers opined on the incidents very carefully. The research at hand is an attempt to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the incidents in the *Daily Times* and daily *The Nation*. We have employed thematic analysis as a theoretical and analytical tool to determine what kind of the editorial themes have been produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests.

Therefore, our main research objective is to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the May 09 incidents (the arrest of Imran Khan and subsequent events) in the

Daily Times and daily *The Nation*. We also intend to determine what kind of the editorial themes have been produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests.

Literature Review

Political parties are the basic element of any democratic structure with different agendas and manifestos. Additionally, these political parties established communication with masses through media to get assimilation of their objectives and to get public acceptance. Further, in Pakistan media covers the political meetings, corner meetings, processions and rallies for better perception and acceptance in public. Moreover, political leaders of all parties try to get maximum presence in talk shows in prime time so that their political opinion reached to masses more effectively. Contrary to this, media also act as watch dog to the political activities of the parties. Further, it is not possible for media to cover every event occur in a social and political system or sometime media intentionally or by law ignore the occurrence and try to miss lead or control the public perception. In addition to this, some big media organizations or media houses has more effective coverage to the different areas of Pakistan and also has bigger share in transmission of different events. Moreover, these media houses have some vested interests or political affiliations so they disseminate the information according to their own version of event and try to control or mold the public opinion (Yousafzai et al., 2014).

A study conducted by Qadeer et al. (2017) “print media practices in the representation of political discourse in Pakistan” highlighted that media discourse has been a major place for the discursive production of subjective realities. Print media practices in the representation of political discourse in Pakistan play a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing the political process. Pakistani newspapers have a wide reach, and their coverage of political speeches and events is often the primary source of information for many citizens. However, print media in Pakistan is also subject to a number of constraints, including government censorship, ownership by powerful business interests, and the ideological biases of journalists and editors. These factors can influence the way that political discourse is represented in the media, and can lead to certain voices and perspectives being amplified or marginalized.

Qadeer et al. (2017) stated in their study that one of the most common print media practices in Pakistan is to focus on the personalities of political leaders, rather than their policies or ideas. This can lead to a superficial and sensationalized coverage of politics, and can make it difficult for voters to make informed decisions. Another common practice is to frame political issues in terms of conflict and rivalry. This can create a negative and divisive atmosphere, and can make it difficult for politicians to work together to solve problems. Print media in Pakistan also often gives more coverage to the views of the ruling party and its allies, while marginalizing the voices of opposition parties and civil society groups. This can create an imbalance in the public debate, and can make it difficult for citizens to hold the government accountable. This study examined that print media in Pakistan also plays an important role in promoting democracy and good governance. By providing a platform for different voices and perspectives, the media can help to inform and empower citizens, and can hold the government accountable

In their article “Media Construction of PTI: An Analysis of Public Perception” Yousafzai, Mehmood and Tabassum (2014) highlighted the role of electronic media to build public perception about Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Moreover, media is key player for perception building about what is happening around us and about different events or incidents happen. Likewise, it is the source of information about the happenings around the world. Further, media can mold or change the views about any event through repetition and excessive information. Furthermore, repetition and excessive information regarding different events makes the viewer believe in the truth and accuracy of the information and perception. Moreover, use of electronic media especially TV as source of information and

awareness is increasing day by day. Hence, Gallup Survey of Pakistan showed that viewership of different T.V programs turned to 83 million in 2009.

The researchers concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between TV and people perception. Further, political parties like PTI are fully aware of importance of media for formulation of public perception. Media also act as watch dog to the political activities of the parties but it could not cover all events occur in a social and political system. Further, sometime media intentionally or by law ignore the occurrence and try to miss lead or control the public perception which is contrary to the research questions in this article. In addition to this, some big media organizations or media houses has more effective coverage to the different areas of Pakistan and also has bigger share in transmission of different events. Moreover, these media houses have some vested interests or political affiliations so they disseminate the information according to their own version of event and try to control or mold the public opinion. Furthermore, media is controlled by media owner, editors or journalists. So, gate keeping theory illustrated that information, signals or messages got manipulation and public perceptions got controlled and molded by media owners.

Jan (2013) in his study has examined the coverage of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) in the daily *Dawn* and daily *The News* during and after political rallies, party politics, and expected elections. The primary objective of his research study was to examine the manner in which *The News* and *Dawn*, two prominent newspapers, have addressed the topic of party politics and anticipated elections within the context of their opinion pages. This investigation was conducted through the use of agenda setting, framing, and priming theories. The researcher discovered a total of 75 articles that are pertinent to the topic of PTI. Among the total of 75 articles analyzed, the *Dawn* newspaper featured 14 items, while *The News* newspaper covered 61 pieces pertaining to the rallies and political activities of the PTI. The *Dawn* exhibited a less frequent release of articles pertaining to the subject matter, whereas *The News* dedicated a single item on a daily basis to address the topic. *The News* allocated over 45,000 words to the subject matter, whilst *Dawn* dedicated approximately 9,000 words to the identical issue. The findings indicated that *The News* allocated a larger amount of area compared to the *Dawn*.

Jan (2013) identified a discernible pattern of favorable thematic content suggesting the utilization of agenda-setting strategies by *The News* which featured 37 items in support of the PTI. In contrast, the *Dawn* published a mere 2 stories in favor of the PTI. Prominent characteristics observed in *The News* included the utilization of speculative language and the inclusion of adjectives to describe the party leaders. Several scholarly works discuss the concept of framing division within the field of discourse analysis. *The News* showed a clear bias towards supporting the PTI campaign by consistently publishing a greater number of pro-PTI elements compared to anti-PTI elements. The *Dawn* provided coverage of PTI gatherings in a manner that exhibited neutrality and caution, maintaining an impartial stance in the majority of its pieces.

The newspaper, *The News*, predominantly featured its stories pertaining to a certain problem on the upper half of its opinion pages. In contrast, the *Dawn* covered the same issue in a more impartial manner, positioning its pieces on the lower half of its pages. There exists a subtle distinction between the editorials and articles produced by analysts while examining the PTI. The media often highlights the optimistic expectations expressed by the aforementioned political party, although *Dawn*, in the majority of its stories, maintains a more pragmatic and unbiased approach. The subject was favorably covered by the news. *The News* employed speculative arguments in favor of the PTI to attract readers, whereas the *Dawn* highlighted facts. *The News* controlled the agenda with 61 pieces while Daily Dawn published only 14. Most neutral News pieces are letters to the editors, while favorably published articles are from the editors and regular authors (Jan, 2013).

In the context of Pakistani media, Riaz's (2008) work, "The Relationship between the Public and Print Media Agendas on National Issues in Pakistan," is an important addition

to the body of knowledge. It has introduced a novel perspective in understanding print media's role in shaping general population's agenda. It also offers insight on the print media's agenda-setting role in the Pakistani landscape. The author successfully illustrates that the print media have great influence in building national agenda. The content analysis highlights an important connection between media coverage and public awareness about particular issues. The findings reveal media's significant influence as a national agenda-setter. The research exposes bias in media's selection of issues. It reveals how political and sensational matters frequently take precedence in the media, potentially overshadowing other crucial national challenges. This research highlights the need for diversity in the methods media use to set their agendas.

Riaz (2008) argues that a large section of the public believes the media helps to shape their opinions and also influence their priorities. Media both reflect and shape public sentiments. This finding reveals that there is a strong relationship between the public and the media. This paper makes a significant contribution to our understanding about public and print media relationship. Also, it offers a thorough analysis of print media's agenda-setting in Pakistan. It has offered a unique perspective on media public relations without ignoring the influences that shape media agenda. The scholars, media professionals, and policymakers can build upon this study in myriad media environments around the globe to understand to understand the complex relationship between media and public.

Keeping view the reviewed literature it can be claimed that the role Pakistani within the context of national politics is pertinent to examine. Therefore, we have attempted to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the incidents in the *Daily Times* and daily *The Nation*. We have employed thematic analysis as a theoretical and analytical tool to determine what kind of the editorial themes have been produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests.

Material and Methods

Thematic Analysis: A Theoretical and Methodological Tool;

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of resources to help analyze data collected using qualitative research methodologies, which this article highlights. Innumerable theoretical and epistemological arguments favor the use of this methodology, yet when it comes time for analysis, social science researchers are left high and dry. Mostly, researchers need to explain their methods in their reports. This article outlines a process for performing thematic analyses of textual data by using well-established methods in qualitative analysis. The method facilitates the disclosure of each stage of the analytical process and gives realistic procedures for completing an analysis. The research argues that thematic networks, which are web-like images (networks) that encapsulate the important meaning of the text, can be utilized for thematic analysis and communication. Many different types of qualitative research have common ground with the analytical tool thematic networks. However, this method's historical development is linked to argumentation theory (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

When studying the connections between overt assertions and covert underpinnings of discourse, argumentation theorists look to the formal components of arguments. Accepted evidence is transferred from a warrant to a claim in this type of argumentation. An argument's claim is its last assertion; it must be proven before it can be accepted as valid. The term "data" refers to the bits of evidence used to support an argument. Warrants are the underlying premises and rationale of the arguments that support the claim. As claims may not always follow logically from the facts and warrants at hand, it is helpful to have various supporting arguments, qualifiers, rebuttals, circumstances that invalidate the claim, and alternative claims at one's disposal. Since the purpose of thematic networks is to investigate the meaning of an issue or a concept rather than to reconcile conflicting interpretations of that problem, Toulmin provides the background logic but not the final solution.

Attride-Stirling (2001) explains that theme networks are used to organize the results of a thematic analysis of qualitative data. A thematic network is an attempt to simplify the process of organizing and presenting such information. The purpose of a thematic analysis is to isolate the key ideas of a text. Extraction of (i) the text's lowest-order premises (Basic Themes) is arranged into (ii) categories of basic themes linked together to incorporate more abstract Principles (organizing themes) and (iii) super-ordinate themes expressing the text's main metaphors are also arranged into (iv) thematic networks (Global Themes). These are then shown in the form of web-like maps, delineating the essential concepts across all three levels and illustrating their interconnectedness. All these networks do is facilitate analysis; they don't provide any conclusions. Once the theme network has been established, it will serve as a streamlined framework within which to conduct the interpretation, as well as an illustrative tool for doing so.

The researchers' awareness of the vastness, contingency, and vulnerability of meaning is a valuable resource in qualitative data analysis, which is an inevitably subjective process. The subjective experience of social life is one of the primary reasons for employing this strategy. In order to fully realize its potential as an exploratory and explanatory tool, qualitative research necessitates a high level of rigor throughout the whole research process, beginning with its design and continuing through its execution in the field and analysis. In qualitative research, there is a need for interpretative tools, as well as the development of procedures, standards, and procedures. Researchers have taken a big step in the right direction by disclosing their interpretation process. This article has attempted to provide one such tool by discussing theme networks, which are a component of and seek to contribute to the growth of qualitative methodologies and, more specifically, to the development of the research process's most enigmatic stage: analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Given the suitability and the appropriateness of the thematic analysis with the objectives of this study, we have employed it inductively to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the incidents in the *Daily Times* and daily *The Nation*. We have employed thematic analysis as a theoretical and analytical tool to determine what kind of the editorial themes have been produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests.

Data Collection and Sampling

Drawing on the research objectives of this study, we have selected three editorials from each newspaper. We have purposively selected initially published editorials from both the newspapers as sample of this study. So, the total sample size of this study is the six editorials i.e. three editorials from the *Daily Times* and three editorials from daily *The Nation*.

Results and Discussion

Analysis on the *Daily Times*

First editorial within the sample of the *Daily Times* was published on May 10, 2023, under the headline; "Imran Khan's Arrest". This editorial covers the incident of Imran Khan's arrest on 9th May 2023. The editorial gives the details of that day as a painful memory as in words "heart wrenching account of torture". The article talks about how Imran Khan was taken into custody by rangers and how illegal this act was as mentioned in phrase like 'arrest before conviction'. The article describing the "sourest note of the sordid tale" mentioned the torture and violence on Imran Khan during the event which caused a massive outcry among his voters and people started protesting on streets. The overall tone of the article is positive towards Imran Khan.

Following are the words, and phrases that were considered as codes to establish the predominant theme of the editorial; 'entire state machinery'; 'tightening its claws'; 'unimaginable has finally happened'; 'arrested by Rangers'; 'extraordinary siege'; 'sourest note of the sordid tale'; 'heart wrenching account of torture'; 'blurring of jurisdiction';

'supremacy of civilian powers'; 'arrest before conviction'; political victimization'; 'butcher's knife (referring to establishment)'; 'the public has spoken'.

The second editorial within the sample of the *Daily Times* was published on May 11, 2023, under the headline; "To Sanity". The editorial opens describing the scenes of the second day after the arrest of Imran Khan in words like "deadly riots" that created "disorder gripping the whole country". It discussed how the plans of the government turned upside down with the mentioning of the phrase "the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry." The editorial gave figures of both the government estimates and the PTI statistics while reporting about the number of people died. The article mentioned that the "uproar" of the public has been taken up by the media across the world and our political leaders need to "open their eyes" to the "perfect disaster" that is lurking on our country. While discussing about the human rights violations that have been inflicted on people it mentioned that "internet restrictions continue" and there is "suspension of fundamental human freedoms".

Following are the words and phrases considered as codes which indicate the overall theme of the editorial; 'deadly riots'; 'disorder gripping the whole country'; 'the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry'; 'death toll to be much, much higher' ; 'heart-wrenching scenes of enraged mobs'; 'uproar'; 'political elite to open their eyes'; 'perfect disaster staring in their faces'; 'Internet restrictions continue'; 'calling for peaceful demonstrations'; 'human rights organizations express alarm'; 'exemplary punishment'; 'lighting up tinderboxes'; 'dystopian narrative'; 'nefarious designs'.

Third editorial among the sample of the study was published by *Daily Times* on May 12, 2023, under the headline; "Leaks Bonanza". The overall tone of the editorial seems positive towards Imran Khan as the title of the editorial "Leaks Bonanza" also hints at the sudden increase of "sensational audio leaks" that occurred in the wake of shocking scenes of protestors showing "vandalism" towards the public installations and the "Lahore's Corps Commander House". The editorial described the nefarious nature of audio leaks that suddenly started appearing on the internet with phrases like "dreaded videos" with "black background" and "green soundwaves" which were "punctuated with subtitles" of PTI leaders who were instigating their people very carefully to damage the property. The editorial calls this the "so called masterplan" and mentions the "government mouthorgans" who are "desperately trying to turn the narrative around" but the PTI leadership remain "steadfast" although they have been accused of "training the rioters" by the government.

Following are the words and phrases considered as codes that show the editorial has a positive theme about the PTI and Imran Khan; 'vicious onslaught'; 'Dreaded videos'; 'black background'; 'green soundwaves'; 'punctuated with subtitles'; 'crossing the t's and dotting the i's'; 'so-called masterplan'; 'government mouthpieces'; 'desperately trying to turn the narrative around'; 'accused remain steadfast'; 'doctored campaign'; 'breaches of fundamental rights'; 'combination of disinformation'; 'twisted information manipulates the public'; 'dramatic conversations'; 'pre-planned training'; 'sensational audio leaks'.

So, drawing on the careful and detailed thematic analysis of the selected editorials we can argue that the *Daily Times* in its initially published editorials regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent political protests have produced themes in favor of Imran Khan, PTI workers and have criticized the authorities for 'so-called masterplan', 'breaches of fundamental rights', 'heart-wrenching scenes of enraged mobs', "disorder gripping the whole country", 'heart wrenching account of torture', and 'blurring of jurisdiction'. Therefore, it can be claimed that the *Daily Times*, in its first three editorials published on the issue under study, has produced the predominant themes such as oppression by the authorities, violence and torture on civilians, violation of human rights, and poor governance.

Analysis on daily *The Nation*;

First editorial within the sample of daily *The Nation* was published on May 10, 2023, under the headline; "Imran Khan Arrested". The editorial seems to have a neutral tone. The

article mentions both sides of the story how the arrest of Imran Khan raised questions in phrases like “manner in which it was carried out” and suspicions in words like “extremely concerning” because of the use of Rangers and their rough tactics also adding that there was “no NAB officer present” when they brought “damaged to the court”. And contrasting to this it also mentions how Imran Khan’s “incendiary and irresponsible rhetoric” has brought institutions into clash and damaged the political atmosphere of the country as explained the editorial in words like “bringing disrepute to country’s institutions”. It further says that the way government have handled PTI and Imran Khan is only going to make the situation worst and this basically is giving support to PTI’s narrative and will make more chaos and unrest as described in the words “increasing polarization”

Following are the words, and phrases that were considered as codes to establish the predominant theme of the editorial; ‘redline of the PTI camp’; ‘manner in which it was carried out’; ‘resulting unrest’; ‘extremely concerning’; ‘poly-crisis’; ‘prioritizing short term interests’; ‘applicable across the board’; ‘no NAB officer present’; ‘damaged to the courts’; ‘Mr. Khan’s irresponsible and incendiary rhetoric’; ‘arrest can be argued to be legal’; ‘legalizing a laundered amount’; ‘routine tirade’; ‘increasing polarization’; ‘bringing disrepute to country’s institutions.’

The second editorial within the sample of daily *The Nation* was published on May 11, 2023, under the headline; “Violent Protest”. This editorial describes the 9th May 2023, incident of Imran Khan’s arrest and the reaction from the public. The editorial narrates the accounts of “multiple reports of violence” and damage to “public infrastructure and state assets”. The editorial further details about the violent outcry with escalating situation becoming critical that” federal government sanctioned the deployment of army troops”. The article describes the worsening situation in Peshawar city “three bodies and 20 people” hospitalized and further mentions the PTI protesters “lobbing petrol bombs” and “throwing stones at officers” and “Edhi ambulances”. The article at the end mentions the “critical situation” between “the state” and “the protestors”. The overall tone of the article is negative towards PTI

Following are the words and phrases considered as codes which indicate the overall theme of the editorial; ‘multiple reports of violence’; ‘damage to public infrastructure and state assets’; ‘deployment of army troops’; ‘public property being set on fire’; ‘scale of devastation and violence’; ‘lobbing petrol bombs and throwing stones’; ‘rage’; ‘indiscriminate as Edhi ambulance’.

Third editorial among the sample of the study was published by daily *The Nation* on May 12, 2023, under the headline; “More Chaos”. This editorial describes the aftermath of 9th May 2023, incident of Imran Khan’s arrest and sequentially the instances of the fourth day of the protest. With the Supreme Court declaring “Imran Khan’s arrest illegal”, but the former Prime minister spent the night in “makeshift jail” at police lines Islamabad. The article further describes the “final verdict” remains in the hands of the “court”. The article states that “violence committed” during the protest was “unacceptable “which led to the “destruction of state property,” historical building” and “damage to the public infrastructure”. The article impresses on an “approaching point of no return” between the state and PTI calls for an “immediate de-escalation”. The article lastly elaborates upon the “government must exercise restraint” due to “many unconfirmed reports of death”, furthermore, stresses upon the “protecting innocent citizen and property” instead of reacting to the protest by “shutting down the internet” and “blocking all cellular services and social networking sites”. The overall tone of the article is neutral towards PTI with criticism towards the government’s attempts in controlling the protest.

Following are the words and phrases considered as codes that show the editorial has a positive theme about the PTI and Imran Khan; ‘Imran Khan’s arrest illegal’; ‘violence on display’; ‘attack on state property’; ‘condemned by all’; ‘still looking to fight’; ‘point of no return’; ‘distance itself from anyone who endorses or carries out any violence’; ‘shutting down the internet’; ‘blocking access’; ‘only makes thing problematic’.

So, drawing on the careful and detailed thematic analysis of the selected editorials we can argue that daily *The Nation* in its initially published editorials regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent political protests have produced themes in a more neutral manner without showing particular slant towards PTI and Imran Khan or towards the authorities. The newspaper produced themes in favor of Imran Khan, PTI workers and have also criticized their violent protests. Similarly, the newspaper has produced themes criticizing the authorities for their 'illegal actions'. Therefore, it can be claimed that daily *The Nation*, in its first three editorials published on the issue under study, has produced the predominant themes such as oppression by the authorities, violence and torture on civilians, violation of human rights, and poor governance. Along with that, the newspaper has also produced the predominant themes such as 'riots', 'violent protest', and 'vandalism'.

Conclusion

The study at hand was set out to explore and analyze the editorial coverage of the May 09 incidents (the arrest of Imran Khan and subsequent events) in the *Daily Times* and daily *The Nation*. We also intended to determine what kind of the editorial themes were produced by the newspapers while commenting on the arrest and the subsequent political protests. After the careful and detailed thematic analysis of the selected editorials we can conclude that the *Daily Times* in its initially published editorials regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent political protests have produced themes in favor of Imran Khan, PTI workers and have criticized the authorities for 'so-called masterplan', 'breaches of fundamental rights', 'heart-wrenching scenes of enraged mobs', "disorder gripping the whole country", 'heart wrenching account of torture', and 'blurring of jurisdiction'. Therefore, it can be claimed that the *Daily Times*, in its first three editorials published on the issue under study, has produced the predominant themes such as oppression by the authorities, violence and torture on civilians, violation of human rights, and poor governance.

However, daily *The Nation* remained comparatively neutral in its editorial themes regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent events on and after May 09, 2023. After the careful and detailed thematic analysis of the selected editorials we can argue that daily *The Nation* in its initially published editorials regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent political protests have produced themes in a more neutral manner without showing particular slant towards PTI and Imran Khan or towards the authorities. The newspaper produced themes in favor of Imran Khan, PTI workers and have also criticized their violent protests. Similarly, the newspaper has produced themes criticizing the authorities for their 'illegal actions'. Therefore, it can be claimed that daily *The Nation*, in its first three editorials published on the issue under study, has produced the predominant themes such as oppression by the authorities, violence and torture on civilians, violation of human rights, and poor governance. Along with that, the newspaper has also produced the predominant themes such as 'riots', 'violent protest', and 'vandalism'.

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that both the newspapers produced editorial themes that not only criticized the violation of human rights by the authorities but also opposed the vandalism committed by the protestors. The *Daily Times*, however, predominantly opposed and criticized the method of arrest and the way the authorities handled the situation. This newspaper apparently produced themes in favor of PTI workers and Imran Khan. On the contrary, daily *The Nation* remained comparatively neutral in its editorial themes regarding the arrest of Imran Khan and the subsequent events on and after May 09, 2023.

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