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**PORTRAYAL OF NARENDRA MODI IN NEWSPAPERS: A CASE
STUDY OF *DAWN* (PAKISTAN)**



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Abstract

This research paper focusses to analyze the preferred status of Pakistani English-language newspapers reporting on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The study intends to accomplish three aims; analysis of the dominant representations of Modi in *Dawn*, identification of the discursive strategies of the portrayal of Modi and news coverage in *Dawn*, and evaluation of the effect of the selected strands of newspapers in the portrayal of Modi in *Dawn*. The study considers Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as both theoretical and analytical framework through which the language constructs meaning and ideological position within the media texts. Purposive sampling type is utilized to identify a sample of 10 news articles published in *Dawn* in April and May 2025 with the requirements that the chosen texts were contextually representative of the current geopolitical situation and valuable in that respect. The analysis has shown that the patterns of an adversarial framing, securitization of Modi policies, and the construction of a threatening other through lexical choices, metaphors, and intertextual references became recurrent. Most remarkably, Modi was often portrayed as assertive, intractable, and ideologically oriented, and the focus was made on the danger that his policies may pose to stability in the region. These findings indicate that the subject covered by *Dawn* is both suggestive of geopolitical confrontation between India and Pakistan and reproduces it, as well as national identity and ideological constructs of the Pakistani society. The research paper has demonstrated the ways in which media discourse reflects and constructs perceptions of politics and how the language used shapes and reshapes the perception of international actors by the people. In a gist, this research paper has emphasized on the importance of critical dissection of media texts for

understanding of the interplay of language, politics, and ideology, providing insights into how media representations can influence political consciousness and inter-state perceptions.

Key terms: *Narendra Modi, Media representation, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pakistani press, Framing, Political Discourse*

Introduction

News media do not just report a state of affairs or factual happenings; they actively make them by their framing, diction and their use of evaluative language. Media makes a critical contribution to the process of perception, politics, and international relations by choosing what and how to report and frame the given events. In South Asia, specifically the most politically sensitive regions, media is not only reporting news but also plays an active role in making and popularizing the ideological narrative, which affects the national ideology and identity (Hassan, 2018; Shah & Aziz, 2020). The history of Pakistan-India relations in South Asia is full of the mediation of antagonist discourse about news, especially at the time of escalation of conflict situations. Pakistan and India have a complicated past of political, territorial, and cultural conflict, which often influences how their media depict the leaders of one another. These representations tend to capture more general geopolitical processes, nationalistic interests, and security-related issues, which means that the analysis of the media can be used as a significant device to study the formation of political images (Arshad, 2021; Wasim et al., 2023).

Moving on to the second variable of this paper, Narendra Modi has been a particularly prominent character in the Pakistani media because of his political inclination, policies and contributions to the Indian spirit of the regional posture. The leadership style of Modi has been lauded and criticized, being more assertive in nationalism and policy decision in nature. Media perspectives of Modi in Pakistan are based on the ideology and nationalistic views, as they

highlight the political tensions, military affairs, or perceived threats to stability of the region (Ahmed et al., 2022; Khan & Khan, 2021). Appreciation of such representations is vital in describing the role of the media discourse in the shaping of the attitude of the population of both countries towards foreign political actors and stories about cross-border transgression.

Similarly, in the case of the present research, *Dawn*, being one of the most prominent English-language newspapers in Pakistan, plays two roles of providing information to people and presenting it in the context of their interpretation and analytical commentary. The coverage of Modi sheds light on the language, thematic and ideological tactics adopted to build his image as a newsmaker in Pakistan.

However as far as the latest research paper is concerned, it deals specifically with how *Dawn* depicted Modi in April and May 2025 at times when border incidents and military threats were also rising again. Employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) this study explores the relationship between language, ideology and power to provide a multifaceted understanding of media representation and its influence on public perception.

Research Objectives

This research paper is aimed to achieve the following primary objectives;

- i. To analyze the portrayal of Modi in *Dawn* Newspaper.
- ii. To identify discursive strategies employed for representation of Modi in *Dawn* newspaper.
- iii. To assess the role of genre in portrayal of Modi in *Dawn* newspaper.

Research Questions

This research paper intends to achieve the aims by answering the following framed questions;

- i. How is Modi portrayed in *Dawn* newspaper?

- ii. What discursive strategies employed for representation of Modi in *Dawn* newspaper?
- iii. What is impact of selected genres in portrayal of Modi in *Dawn* newspaper?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become a significant way of explaining how the news media reproduce ideology and power. Fairclough (1995) provided the foundation by commenting that discourse links language to wider social practices, whereas Van Dijk (2001) noted that media tend to be ideologically square, appreciating those in-groups and noting the evils of out-groups. These theoretically informed understandings help in analyzing how the Pakistani media frame a narrative on India.

A number of researchers have analyzed newspaper discourse in Pakistan with reference to wars. According to the study conducted by Hassan (2018), articles in Pakistani news bulletins were very extreme and based on the evaluative terms, which interpreted India as an aggressor. In the same vein, Arshad (2021) demonstrated how Pakistani newspaper headlines implied a nationalistic prejudice via choice of words and focus on topic. A discussion of Pulwama-related coverage by Akram et al. (2021) likewise provides an indication of how extremist ideologies were reproduced in the Indian and Pakistani editorials. Following this line of argument, Wasim et al. (2023) showed that the Pulwama attack coverage in both nations showed a selective use of self-images that ignored the legitimacy of the other side.

On closer observations *Dawn* does not look like a paper that is free of ideology even the most liberal English daily of Pakistan. Taskeen and Saleem (2014) in a discourse analysis of *Dawn* concluded that the newspaper had a regular pattern of framing its political reporting, and a study conducted by Ghouri et al. (2023) concluded that the newspaper presented a biased

representation of instances of forced religious conversions. Previous studies support this statement, as Pakistani media sources also tend to use metaphors of war and securitization in their depictions of India (Shah & Aziz, 2020), as it provides the necessary justifications to support the narrative of incessant hostile relations.

As well as outside Pakistan, Modi has become the object of international academic interest himself. As Aryal and Bharti (2022) point out, the period of Modi as prime minister has reshaped the Indian media arena to the extent that there is less room left to speak out against the government. The Berkley Center (2023) exhibited a similar trend where journalists increasingly find themselves under pressure in the Modi-era where media became less independent in their reporting. John (2023) also examined Indian media enclosing of religious conversions and found that coverage often aligned with Hindu nationalist discourse, linking Modi's government to narratives of "love jihad" and threats to Hindu identity. Comparative research is also available on Indo-Pakistani coverage and it is also helpful. To take one example, a study of the editorials on Article 370 published by Ahmad et al. (2022) reveals extreme opposites of Modi in each other, between Indian and Pakistani sources. Recently, a linguistic review of reporting of the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack of 2025, Noor and Saifi (2025) reported such patterns whereby Indian publications placed blame on Pakistan and Pakistani publications blamed Modi as inciting and irresponsible.

The further study of personality politics supports this portrait. Modi also has developed a reputation as a charismatic strongman, as described by Jaffrelot (2019), which, again, has various cross-border implications. According to Chacko and Jayasuriya (2018), the leadership style of Modi combines populism with neoliberal development discourses, which helps bring forth contradictions in the international framing of the Modi persona. These character traits are likely to be redefined, in the case of Pakistan, as aggressiveness or

authoritarianism.

Collectively, the above studies show that Pakistani media tend to present Modi in a negative light at large in media with *Dawn* swinging between critical discourse and editorial reportage. This literature dictates the relevance of using CDA to understand how such inclinations were manifested in the period of April-May 2025 when the conflict narratives re-prevailed in the region.

Other works done by scholars also show the significance of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research-unifying theory in media studies. The implications of DA on the study conned by the researchers is that they can gain insights into how political identities are built through the discursive strategies in the media texts the researchers consult (Fairclough, 1995; Wasim et al., 2023). Along with purposive sampling of relevant articles, CDA may be used by the researchers to reveal the textual and contextual aspect of media representation, such as repeated themes and motives, frames, and political and social implication thereof.

This research extends this body of work by analyzing *Dawn* newspaper's reporting of Modi over April and May 2025. It helps shed light on how Pakistani media portrays foreign chiefs, employing CDA to trace out discursive frameworks that embody a wider range of ideational, political and nationalist narrative.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in the study is qualitative and examines how Narendra Modi is represented in *Dawn* newspaper. Qualitative methods are especially appropriate when one is trying to investigate the more complicated social phenomenon of media representation, as this style of research allows one to study language, discourse, and thematic patterns in depth (Hassan, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2022). The paper employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theory and framework of analysis and follows the three-dimensional model

proposed by Fairclough (1995) and includes the textual presentation, discursive practice, and socio-cultural context. DA is also suitable to this work since it allows the researcher to reveal how texts of media have ideological and power factors and how language creates meaning and influences mass perception.

Sample and Sample Method

Purposive sampling technique was employed to identify a sample of 10 news Reported in *Dawn* in April and May of 2025. The technique used was to choose the articles that were relevant to Narendra Modi and covered political, diplomatic or security events involving Indians and Pakistanis. Purposive sampling helps to make the choice of the texts to be analyzed information-dense and reflect a variety of discourse to be analyzed, as it is possible to thoroughly analyze each sample (Khan & Khan, 2021). Selection criteria of the present study was based on:

- i. Articles About Narendra Modi
- ii. Incorporation of a variety of genres: news report, editorials, op-eds and letters.
- iii. Access to whole-text material in order to do intensive linguistic study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The chosen articles were downloaded on the official web site of *Dawn*. The CDA was applied to each article in three levels:

- i. Textual Analysis: This section explores the use of vocabulary, metaphors, choices in words and patterns of syntax that define the image of Modi.
- ii. The Discursive Practice Analysis: This is used to examine how the news articles were produced, disseminated and consumed, references to other texts and sources that are cited.
- iii. Socio-Cultural Context Analysis: Placing the coverage in the greater context of the geopolitical, ideological and nationalistic discourses

going on in Pakistan, which can be observed during the time of the coverage.

Critical discourse analysis of each article has been done to identify:

- Lexical options (use of words and phrases which expresses judgment or prejudice)
- Transitivity and agency (in what to place Modi as actor or object?)
- Framing and securitization (associated Modi with danger or war)
- Genre variations (the way representations are affected by news vs. opinion content)

Ethical Considerations

Sources were all publicly documented, with appropriate citation being given. The paper was not biased and followed an objective approach since it employed the systematic framework of the CDA and was based on scholarly objectivity and openness.

FINDINGS

Through genre-based analysis of the ten purposively sampled articles of *Dawn* (April - May, 2025), a pattern has been identified in the portrayal of Narendra Modi. Also, in the news articles about the deployment of additional troops along LoC amid rising tensions (05-Apr-25), and about the meeting of Modi with world leaders, to discuss trade and security (15-May-25), Modi is given a rather neutral position. The news stories are factual based, employing passive voice or playing down individual actions on the part of Indian authorities by using a more general phrase. Neutral lexical considerations such as the use of the words deployed, discussed, or meetings predominates and several sources quoted are cited, which is a journalistic standard of *Dawn* in its practice of covering delicate Indo-Pak affairs.

Editorials and op-eds on the other hand deliver an anti-Modi stand nearly always. As may be seen in the editorial "Modi's Policies and the Escalation

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of Border Conflicts" (08-Apr-25), strong evaluative terms like reckless, aggressive are used when presenting him as the key factor behind regional volatility. Just as op-eds, such as "The Perils of Hardline Nationalism in India" (12-Apr-25) or "India's Strongman Politics and Its Regional Impact" (08-May-25) personalize Modi by relating his leadership style to militarization, nationalism, and increased conflict risk. These editorials often directly attribute actions to Modi, a major responsibility in cases where actions are provocative, and use the securitization tactic to tie his policy to threats to Pakistan.

The letters to the editor additionally contribute to the critical discourse, with public perception and ideological staging most likely going into the letters. Another example of the citizen voices that add weight on the image of Modi as a destabilizing power is the article, "Modi's Approach Threatens Regional Peace" (20-Apr- 25). These are usually qualified in emotionally affecting or evaluative terms which reinforces the account of Modi as one of the key players in the tensions in the region.

In all ten articles, genre turns out to be a major factor of representation. The news reports are neutral and factual whereas the uses of discursive strategies of the editorial texts, op-eds, and letters create the image of Modi as a forceful, militaristic, and political controversial leader. However, even in neutral news material, there was framing carried out by selection of quotations, context, and highlighting of specific events, as *Dawn* balances the dominance between journalistic objectivity and ideological standpoint.

To conclude, the results show that Modi is made an individual in a more complex manner, as the news coverage presents the facts or objective situation and the opinion coverage has incorporated evaluative (comparative), securitized (threatening), and personalized (acknowledging) discursive tactics. These patterns form a basis of critical discussion, illustrating how the discourse of *Dawn* influences the readers to develop a certain attitude toward Modi whilst

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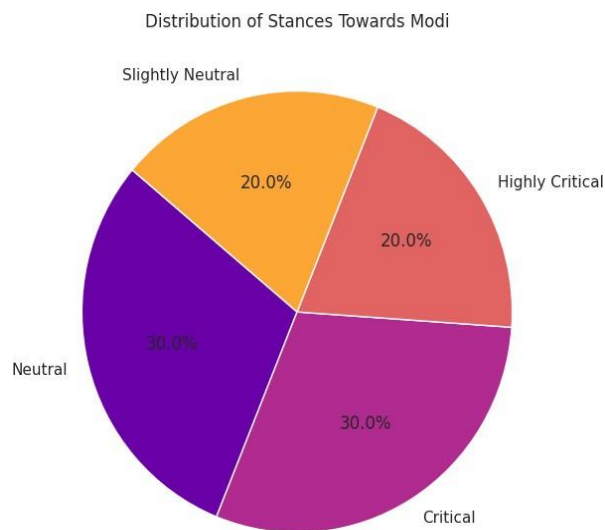
having to balance the credibility of their journalistic work.

Tabulated Representation of the Data

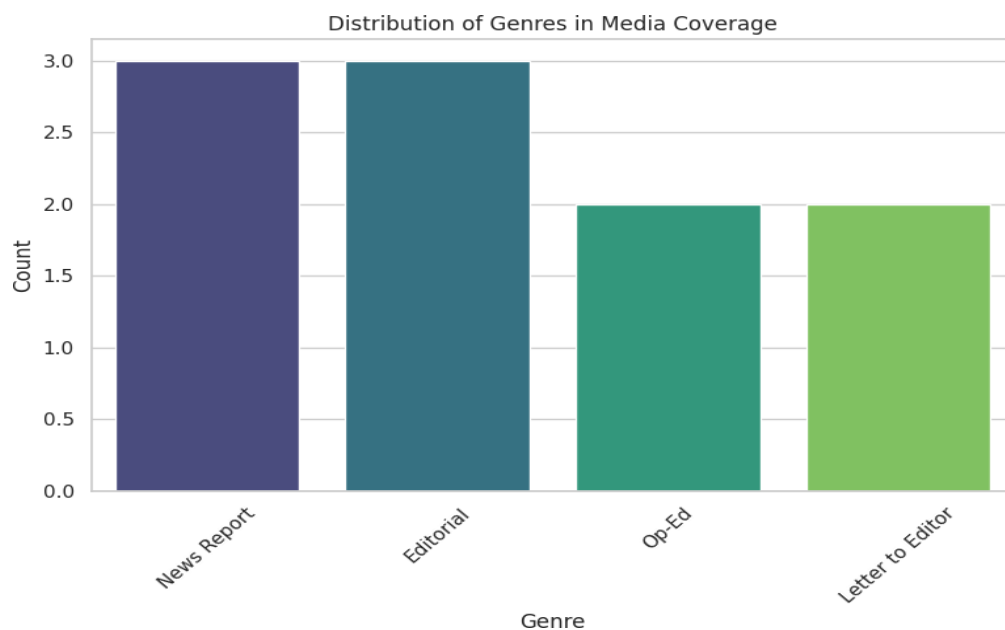
The following table represents the data in table form;

No.	Date	Genre	Headline	Stance Towards Modi
1	05-Apr-25	News Report	<i>India Deploys Additional Troops Along LoC Amid Rising Tensions</i>	Neutral, factual, reports military movement
2	08-Apr-25	Editorial	<i>Modi's Policies and the Escalation of Border Conflicts</i>	Critical, frames Modi as aggressive
3	12-Apr-25	Op-Ed	<i>The Perils of Hardline Nationalism in India</i>	Highly critical, delegitimizes leadership
4	15-Apr-25	News Report	<i>Trade Talks Continue Despite Indo-Pak Tensions</i>	Neutral, descriptive reporting
5	20-Apr-25	Letter to Editor	<i>Modi's Approach Threatens Regional Peace</i>	Critical, emphasizes provocation
6	25-Apr-25	News Report	<i>Indian Government Responds to Accusations on Pahalgam Attack</i>	Slightly neutral, quotes Indian sources
7	02-May-25	Editorial	<i>Modi and the Militarization of Diplomacy</i>	Critical, securitization framing
8	08-May-25	Op-Ed	<i>India's Strongman Politics and Its Regional Impact</i>	Critical, links personality to policy aggressiveness
9	15-May-25	News Report	<i>Modi Meets World Leaders to Discuss Trade and Security</i>	Neutral, diplomatic/economic focus
10	28-May-25	Op-Ed	<i>The Risk of Escalation: Modi's Policies on Kashmir</i>	Critical, emphasizes conflict escalation

Visual Representation of the Data



The figure above represents the graphical illustration of the attitude and position the chosen sample holds towards Modi presentation and image.



The figure illustrated above is a graphical presentation of the influence of genres on the overall portrayal and illustration of Modi by the *Dawn* newspaper.

DISCUSSION

This section critically elaborates the findings of this research in terms of the objectives of the study, so that it is easily perceived.

The aim of the first objective was to analyze the coverage accorded to Modi by *Dawn* in April and May 2025. The analysis of the ten sampled articles reveals that Modi was framed as a confrontational, militaristic, and politically aggressive person. Reporting the event such as the deployment of troops by India along the line of control published on 05-Apr-25 under the title- India Deploys Additional Troops Along LoC Amid Rising Tensions indicated that the news was written in a dry tone without any bias, giving facts to the readers in a straightforward way. Conversely, op-eds and editorials often evoked moral and political judgment in the form of evaluative language such as the key words of "aggressive," "reckless," and/or "hardline" to frame Modi as the political and moral source of regional instability. This is consistent with past studies, which noted that various Pakistani media outlets have tended to frame the figure of Indian political leaders as an enemy when discussing conflict scenarios (Hassan, 2018; Arshad, 2021).

The second objective involved the identification of discursive strategies used by the selected paper to build the image and narrative around Modi. The results indicated that there are various strategies that are employed whereby *Dawn* built an image of Modi. As follows;

- Lexical Choice: Words like militarization, provocation, and incursion were strategic terms used to highlight the presence of conflict whereas trade talks or diplomatic engagement was also used to indicate a non-committal stance in some situations.
- Transitivity and Agency: Use of Modi as a direct agent is prevalent in opinion pieces where we find statement like, Modi escalates tensions, whereas in news items, we stick to the assertive in passive or attributive voice like, troops were deployed.

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- Securitization: A substantial number of articles placed Modi in the category of security cases by connecting his direction with danger to Pakistan, as Shah & Aziz (2020) found on Pakistani.
- Intertextuality: Articles made constant references to previous events, like the attack on Pahalgam, establishing a chain of provocation events.

These discursive strategies illustrate how language use in both news and opinion texts also helps create the image of Modi as a key player in the regional conflict.

In addressing the third objective that required the impact of genre in the perspective of the current study. The results in itself point out the influence of genre on the portrayal of Modi. The news coverage did not take sides, and it contained an objective article of the events, or it quoted different people. These include, "Trade Talks Maintained amidst Indo-Pak Tensions" (20-Apr-25). Even in dealing with a sensitive topic such as the conflicts on the border, these articles did not adopt a judgmental tone. It was found that editorials and op-eds on Modi were very judgmental, either in the nature of his aggressiveness, patriotism, or his ethical guilt. Moral and ideological framing of opinion such as the headline of a paper on 08-Apr-25, Modi policies and the escalation of border conflicts, is indicative of opinion genres. Letter to edit should have worked as extensions of mass communication and publicity, and in many cases, they have varied in favor of the critical opinion and reinforcement of a securitized image of Modi. In conclusion, the genre difference supports Van Dijk (2001) idea that the use of discourse tactics is mediated by the social as well as institutional text use. Neutrality in news writing has been coexisting with the managerial and opinion side in editorials and letters and *Dawn* retains the scope of credibility in news writing and still holds the ideological standpoint.

In addition, the findings indicated that the extent to which *Dawn* covered

the events align with the trend in other media in Pakistan. The poor reputation that Modi has had in many media outlets is in line with Arshad (2021) and Wasim et al. (2023), who have found that Pakistani newspapers characterize Indian political figures as a threat. Meanwhile, the economic and diplomatic news sections include some neutral reporting, which indicates that a complete ideologically colored discourse is absent, the calendar and the ideological chosen by the newspaper as the English-language disseminator of liberal content. With the use of quotations of the Indian opposing voices or multi-sourcing of the opinion genre, *Dawn* brings in a sense of balance to an otherwise tilted opinion genre inclined to negative framing. This contradiction prompts the question of identity politics and journalistic practices in the Pakistani media, in which a context-sensitive CDA would be critical.

Based on the general discussion, it can be seen that the *Dawn* portrays Modi in a multidimensional and complex manner. Though opinion content has given people a very negative picture, sometimes news coverage moderates such a perception with its neutral and factual coverage. The deployment of discursive features (lexical choices, agency, securitization, etc.) as well as those of intertextuality serve to depict Modi as a political and symbolic actor of the regional tension. Genre is important because it functions as a mediator in the sense that it determines the way in which the readers interpret the persona of the Prime Minister. All the research objectives are met by these findings that answer the formulated research questions identifying who is represented since when, how, in what form, and to what ideological effects.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper analyzed the depiction of Narendra Modi in the *Dawn* newspaper articles written in April-May of 2025 using Critical Discourse Analysis and a purposive sampling of ten articles. This study concluded that an analysis of the multiple facets of Modi image demonstrate that it is constructed through

the interplay between genre, discursive tactics and ideological positioning of him. The results revealed that news reporting was relatively objective bearing on the concern of truthfulness and using more than one source as an authoritative source though news on editorials, op-eds, and letters were highly critical and showed a critical face of Modi as an agent of militarization, nationalism, and regional unrest. This points to the intermediary capacity of genre in the determination of the societal consciousness. Further, CDA analysis demonstrated the systematic deployment of the lexical preferences, agency, securitization and intertextuality to link Modi to Indo-Pak tensions as a principal player. These tactics were more exploited in opinion genres to judge the leadership of Modi morally and politically. Additionally, the research paper is backed by the fact that *Dawn* sometimes offers balanced views in disinterested news-reports, and the prevailing critical framing in opinion writing gives expression to the national practices of Pakistani media, which tend to render Indian political figures as opponents. The paper supports the claim that *Dawn* tries to tread the line between journalistic ethics and ideological stand. Similarly, the results also emphasize the value of genre-sensitive CDA in the interpretation of media discourse, specifically politically delicate circumstances. They also point out the possibility of newspapers sustaining credibility and using foreign leaders, at the same time, in securitized accounts. In short, the paper introduces a depth of insight in regard to the way that Modi is discussed in the Pakistani press, showing that discourse is not homogenous but influenced by the textual maneuvers, editorial conventions, and overarching political-cultural issues. The results can be added to the knowledge of the media representation, conflict discourse, and South Asian political discourse, as well as a stepping stone of future studies on the cross border discourse of media in presentation of political figures.

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