

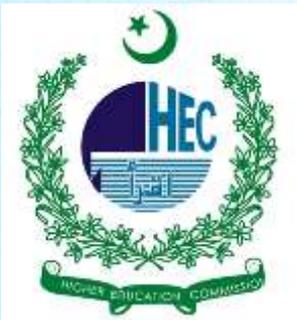
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**THE IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION OF CORRUPTION IN  
PAKISTANI AND INDIAN ENGLISH- LANGUAGE  
NEWSPAPERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**



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## Abstract

*Corruption has always been the top most continuous challenge to governance, democracy, and social trust in South Asia. While research has figured out the structural and institutional roots of corruption and less attention has been paid to the linguistic and discursive strategies through which corruption is constructed in prominent English-language newspapers. This paper presents a comparative analysis that how these two leading South Asian newspapers—Dawn (Pakistan) and The Hindu (India) ideologically construct and frame the high-profile corruption scandals: the Panama Papers and the Adani Group controversy. The employing of mixed-methods approach which combines a corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. This study explores more than 270 pieces of articles that have been published over 2016-2024. The results show that there is very noticeable and clear distinction between these two newspapers discourse (Dawn and The Hindu). Dawn repeatedly personalizes corruption and foregrounding individual actors such as Nawaz Sharif and using sensitive and moralizing language which frames the scandal as a national crisis and a test of judicial authority. In contrast to that The Hindu adopts a more institutionalized and technocratic perspective which are diffusing agency across regulatory bodies, corporations and systems and prioritizing frames of governance, compliance and reform. As shown in the analysis, these discursive tendencies are reflected in more underlying socio-political realities that are the unstable political culture and history of judicial activism in Pakistan stimulating personalization and crisis framing and India institutional stability and close ties between state and business stimulating systemic and regulatory discourse. This research points to the strength of the media not only to mirror but also to structure popular conceptions of corruption and policy discussions and popular trust. Integrating empirical rigor and critical analysis, the paper not only contributes a development in the field of research on media studies and discourse analysis but also in the field of research on anti-corruption. These findings have far-reaching implications on media literacy and policy as well as journalism practice in South Asia and internationally.*

**Keywords:** *Ideological Framing, Corruption, Collocation Patterns, Personalization, Institutionalization, Panama Papers, Adani Group.*

## Introduction

The issue of corruption is widespread and it destroys the sense of social trust, the economic development, and the political and institutional structure of the societies especially developing nations. (Transparency International, 2021). Corruption as a social vice exists in various forms; some of them are small skippers in the bureaucratic systems whereas some are huge financial errors that involve both political and business elites (Heidenheimer, 2002; Johnston, 2005). Pakistan and India in South Asia have reported several high profile corruption scandals that have influenced political narration and perception about the way things are done in governance (Gupta, 1995; Thussu, 2000).

The media, especially the newspapers, cannot be overestimated when it comes to the role of the media in the representation and subsequent formation of the consciousness of the people concerning corruption. News media both as a mirror and as a mold: not only do they reflect values of society but also affect the way events are being perceived and recalled (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). Newspapers have the ability to create

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ideological accounts that may either challenge or legitimize the established power structures through processes of selection, emphasis and framing (Entman, 1993; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Theories of media coverage of corruption can be specific language and discursive practices used to blame, cause moral outrage, or normalize certain actions (O'Halloran, 2011; KhosrowaviNik, 2010).

The English-language publications like Dawn (Pakistan) in South Asia and The Hindu (India) have a special status. The vernacular media have larger audiences but English newspapers are powerful among the policy makers, the urban elites, and the international community (Jeffrey, 2000; Siraj, 2009). The tone of the national debates and the way they report can influence the perception of the population at large in ways that are often not intended by them because they have a large following in their editorial positions and styles of reporting.

The recent scandals like Panama papers leak with former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the Adani Group scandal in India have made the problem of corruption, transparency and accountability to the center of political and media agendas (Shah,2018;Dey&Ramanathan,2023). These cases provide valuable opportunities to study that how media representations of corruption are constructed. The discursive choices involved and the ideological implications these choices carry.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite widespread media attention and the Pivotal role of the press in shaping public discourse. The ideological construction of corruption in South Asian English-language newspapers remains under explored especially from a comparative linguistic perspective. While existing studies have highlighted the influence of political and corporate interests on media content, there is a lack of systematic, corpus-based research analyzing how linguistic choices and discursive patterns frame corruption in different national contexts. A particular challenge lies in the small and important details of ideological framing. Newspapers rarely express their positions overtly instead of that they rely on collocations, metaphors, evaluative language and narrative positioning to construct meaning. These textual sites are not always visible to the generic reader, but they are of

primary importance in constructing concepts and bestowing credibility or blame. There is an obvious gap for empirical research, integrating corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, in order to identify such processes and compare them across the different media systems. The present study addresses this gap by examining that how Dawn and The Hindu construct the discourse of corruption in their coverage of the prominent Panama Papers and Adani Group scandals respectively. This study will therefore help in shedding light on shared and divergent patterns in ideological representation in two of the most widely read English language newspapers in the region of South Asia using a comparative corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS) framework.

## **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this study are

1. To analyze the collocation based linguistic patterns which are used to represent the Panama Papers and Adani Group corruption cases in Pakistani and Indian English language newspapers.
2. To examine the linguistic choices used by Dawn and The Hindu contributing to the ideological construction of corruption in their respective national contexts.
3. To identify similarities and differences in the discursive strategies employed by Pakistani and Indian newspapers in framing corruption scandals.

## **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions

1. What are the collocation based linguistic patterns used to represent the Panama Papers and Adani Group scandals in Pakistani and Indian English-language newspapers?

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2. How do *Dawn* and *The Hindu* use linguistic choices to construct ideological narratives around corruption in the national context of Pakistan and India?

3. What are the similarities and differences in the discursive strategies employed by Pakistani and Indian newspapers in framing corruption scandals in Pakistani and Indian newspapers in framing corruption scandals.

## **Literature Review**

### **Re-framing the Research Landscape**

The common problem of corruption poses a major problem to the leadership, financial stability and faith among the populace of the world. Corruption destroys the institution of democracy, deforms the market, exacerbates inequality and destroys social cohesion. The South Asian region of varying political regimes, complicated histories and fast changing media environment. Of special concern is the role of media in influencing the perception and discourses of people on corruption. The purpose of the literature review is to offer an inflated account of the scholarly environment in regards to the media coverage of corruption and more specifically, to the particular socio-political settings of Pakistan and India. It attempts to form a solid theoretical and empirical basis of explaining that the intersection between language, media, and ideology in the formulation of stories of corruption in South Asia today.

The role of media in scandal reporting, accountability in power and shaping opinion of the population has been studied widely in previous studies. Nevertheless, there is still a major gap in comparative and in-depth studies that take a systematic look at the discursive practices applied by elite English-language media in various set ups of South Asia when reporting corrupt scandals of high profile. In this thesis, these gaps are filled by facilitating a comparative, corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of coverage of certain scandals by Pakistani and Indian English-language newspapers. The information obtained through such an analysis is instrumental in a more subtle interpretation of the role that the media plays in the development of a national discourse and representation of national ideologies. The study of the linguistic options, the framing of the news, and the ideological foundations of the news coverage will add to the existing literature in the media studies, discourse analysis, and political communication to provide a more in-depth insight into how popular perceptions of corruption are being formed in the two major South Asian countries.

### **Theoretical Foundations and Methodological**

It mostly relies on Critical Discourse Analysis and Framing Theory and Corpus Linguistics as it presents how the combination of both methods, specifically in a Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies that offers a good framework of organizing and thorough investigation, can be used.

### **Deepening Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis is a theoretical and methodological approach that is based and fundamentally employed to analyze the power relations that are frequently invisible and hidden in the use of language. CDA put forwards that discourse is not only a neutral reflection of reality but actively constructs social realities and power structures as well as ideologies (Alafnan, 2019). In order to understand the media representations of corruption CDA is invaluable as it allows for the deconstruction of how certain narratives are privileged and how blame is attributed moreover, how public perceptions are shaped. As a field CDA is characterized by a critical approach that highlights the strategies used in establishing, maintaining, and reproducing power relations through discourse (Dijk, 2015).

### **Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model**

The three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough is one of the most renowned frameworks of the CDA that can be adopted in the process of examining discourse. comprehensively (Dijk, 2015;

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Mayasari et al., 2013). According to this model, any discursive event needs to be examined on three levels that are connected with each other:

**Text** This dimension focuses on the linguistic features of the discourse itself which includes vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and textual structure. In the context of news reporting on corruption this involves examining a specific word choices (e.g., "scandal," "probe," "allegations") and metaphorical language as well as active/passive voice and headline construction. These are not arbitrary linguistic choices as Fairclough underlines, and as such, they are imbued with ideology (Fairclough, 1988; Mair & Fairclough, 1997).

## **Discursive Practice**

This level concerns the processes of text production and consumption. It investigates how texts are created (e.g journalistic routines, editorial policies, media ownership influences) and how they are interpreted by audiences. For media studies this dimension explores that how journalistic practices such as sourcing, quoting and editing contribute to the construction of a particular reality. It also considers that how readers might engage with and interprets these mediated messages often influenced by their own socio-cognitive frameworks (Saragi et al., 2020).

## **Social Practice**

This dimension situates the discourse in the context of the larger power relations and the societal structures. It analyses the extent to which the discourse either reflects, reproduces or contests the status quo inequalities, ideologies and institutional practices. When examining the media coverage of corruption, this will refer to know how media is politically economical, the role played by state, civil society, and the history of corruption in a particular society (Dijk, 2015). It

reveals the fact that the discourse of media is not abstract but is firmly rooted in the broader struggles of social and political issues.

Fairclough's model enables a comprehensive analysis by linking micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level societal structures by that means revealing the ideological work performed by media texts. His approach to critical discourse analysis aims to systematically explore the often-opaque relationships between discursive practices, events, texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes, investigating how these arise out of and are ideologically shaped by power relations (Alafnan, 2019).

## **Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Approach**

The socio-cognitive approach to CDA, which is developed by Teun A. van Dijk, complements the model provided by Fairclough because it offers robust frameworks to the cognitive responses to the production and understanding of ideological discourse (Khalil, 2020). Van Dijk claims that the ideas are essentially socio-cognitive constructions that are common to groups and constitute the interpretation of the members of the group of what, how, and why different aspects of social events are perceived, interpreted and depicted (Gyawali, 2020). Ideologies in media discourse are used to explain how journalists and audiences make decisions on the choices they make in editorial selection, structuring, and presentation of the media. In media discourse, ideologies influence these processes (Bilal et al., 2012).

Key concepts in Van Dijk's framework include the following

## **Ideological Square**

This principle describes how ideologies manifest in discourse, often leading to polarized representations. It involves: positive self-representation, negative other-representation, mitigation of negative self-representation, and mitigation of positive other-representation. This dynamic of us and them is especially applicable in the context of political coverage of corruption, in which the politicians, parties, or institutions tend to be framed either as good or bad (Bilal et al., 2012; Hermawan et al., 2022).

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## **Knowledge and Context Models**

Van Dijk emphasizes that discourse production and comprehension rely on mental models of events and situations, as well as context models (representing the communicative situation). Ideologies influence these models, leading to biased interpretations and representations (Gyawali, 2020).

## **Discursive Strategies**

Van Dijk identifies various discursive strategies used to express and reproduce ideologies, such as lexicalization (choice of words), metaphors, argumentation (e.g., fallacies, presuppositions), and syntactic structures (e.g., active/passive voice, nominalization). These are strategies that indirectly express ideological positions (Dijk, 1995). This work by Van Dijk is essential in making sense of the way in which the media outlets not merely report about corruption, but also play an active role in shaping what corruption could be by making use of lingual and ideology-biased practices (Dijk, 2006). It is through his emphasis on the cognitive dimension that one can excellently define how media discourse functions to shape the opinion of the people or even strengthen the power structure that already exists (Dijk, 1995; Ismaeel & Hameed, 2018)

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The present research is fundamentally comparative, qualitative and corpus-informed. Its overall aim is to uncover and systematically compare the ideological underpinnings of corruption discourse as manifested in two major English-language newspapers from Pakistan (Dawn) and India (The Hindu). The study adopts a sharp, precise and planned as well as multi-stage design, ensuring both breadth in data coverage and depth in interpretive analysis.

### **Data Collection and Corpus Construction**

This initial stage involved the systematic gathering of relevant news articles, editorials and opinion pieces from the selected newspapers (digital archives) concluding or finishing in the creation of two distinct, specialized corpora.

### **Corpus Linguistics**

This quantitative phase has adopted computational methods to identify the most common linguistic patterns, the key terms and more significant words associates within and across the constructed corpora. This step offer empirical basis to the further qualitative investigation.

### **Critical Discourse**

Analysis Based on the results of the quantitative research, this qualitative step consisted of a detailed interpretation of the language patterns that had been identified, and exploring their discursive functions and their contextualization. Within broader, political and ideological frameworks.

### **Comparative Analysis**

It was the final stage which included a logical comparison of the results of both newspapers and highlighting their differences, similarities and unique ideological constructs of corruption.

This unified approach is established on the basis of growing history of the CADS research which has explicitly indicated the inestimable value of applying big text corpora, which have been assembled systematically. Statistically significant linguistic patterns CADS composing allows in the nature of creating a knowledge base that is quite powerful in providing an empirical foundation since it provides empirical evidence of knowledge that empirically validates the knowledge when used in more profound and critical discourse beyond the anecdotal observation.

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## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis of the methodology is a Critical Discourse Analysis that causes particular three models to be used: three-dimensional model of discourse by Fairclough, the theory of ideology and discourse by van Dijk and Framing theory by Eantman. This theoretical prism offers an influential overview of the existence of how language creates social reality especially in the terms of media reportage of corruption. This framework is also supplemented by corpus linguistic techniques that offer the needed quantitative framework to systematic analysis of text.

## **Selection of Cases**

Two prominent corruption scandals were chosen, which were the landmark incidents that took over the discussions within the countries, included some of the most significant political and business leaders, and gained much media attention

## **Panama Papers scandal**

The date range of the scandal coverage is April 2016-December 2020. This case was selected because of its direct implication to the top political leaders in Pakistan that had great legal and political consequences. Its protracted character furnished sufficient stuff on which longitudinal discursive analysis could be performed.

## **Adani Group scandal**

The timeframe of this scandal is January 2019 to December 2024. It was a case against a large corporate group in India, which bordered on corporate governance, regulatory supervision as well as the interplay that exists between business and politics. Its institutional and economic aspects provided a contrast to the Panama Papers scandal being more political than usual.

These particular cases made it possible to conduct a narrowed comparative study of the ways in which two dissimilar forms of corruption scandals (one which was highly political-judicial oriented and the other one which was mostly corporate-regulatory oriented) were framed in specific media environments across different countries.

## **Corpus Sampling and Data Collection**

Digital archives of Dawn and the official websites of The Hindu were retrieved and conveniently sampled to retrieve the data. The sampling was thoroughly conducted so as to guarantee the rich and relevant content is included.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

### **Corpus Overview**

In the empirical dataset, there is the combination of 270 news articles, editorial and opinion pieces 135 from Dawn covering the Panama papers and 135 from The Hindu covering Adani Group controversy, respectively. They were gathered, processed, and processed with the help of Sketch Engine in accordance with the CADS protocol. The two corpora have varying genres (news, editorials, and features) to amass institutional positions, as well as individual journalism.

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## Keyword Analysis

### Most Frequent Keywords

Table 1: Top 10 Keywords by Frequency

Rank	Dawn (Panama Papers)	Frequency	The Hindu (Adani Group)	Frequency
1	Panama	895	Adani	871
2	Sharif	721	Group	799
3	Offshore	603	government	656
4	Scandal	491	allegations	570
5	Supreme Court	465	investment	538
6	Probe	409	SEBI (regulator)	504
7	Accountability	403	regulatory	498
8	Resignation	395	contracts	481
9	Verdict	375	opposition	420
10	NAB (anti-corruption)	358	parliament	410

## Interpretation

The most frequent words in the content of both newspapers are the direct reflections of the main actors, institutions as well as the themes of each scandal. The reference of Sharif, Supreme Court, and verdict in Dawn refers to the judicial process, whereas the reference to Adani, SEBI and government in the Hindu refers to the relations between companies and the government and governmental regulation.

## Key Collocates

Collocation analysis provides an insight into how actors are judged and framed, which is discursively patterned. The most salient collocates are presented in Table using a  $\pm 5$ -word window around the main keywords.

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**Table 2: Sample Collocates for Key Actors**

Actor	Newspaper	Salient Collocates
Nawaz Sharif	Dawn	disqualified, corruption, verdict, former, ousted, prime minister, accused, wealth, assets, accountability, family
Adani Group	The Hindu	allegations, business, contracts, government, controversy, regulatory, probe, investments, billionaire, influence
Supreme Court	Dawn	verdict, hearing, probe, judicial, ruling, investigation, order, bench, independent, landmark
Government	The Hindu	contracts, scrutiny, probe, regulatory, opposition, support, parliament, policy, transparency, favoritism

## Interpretation

The coverage of Dawn closely connects Nawaz Sharif to negative evaluative words (disqualified, accused) meaning that the case has been personalized and a moral frame has been taken on the corruption case (Moralized and Personalized). The Hindu coverage of Adani, on the contrary, is more corporate-institutional visualizing the group with accusations, contracts, and regulatory terms, thus pointing to business and systemic levels.

## Dominant Frames

Based on the framing model and CDA developed by Entman (1993), it was possible to arrive at several central frames in each newspaper.

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**Table 3: Dominant Frames in Coverage**

Frame	Dawn (Panama Papers)	The Hindu (Adani Group)
Judicial/Legal	Supreme Court as arbiter, judicial accountability, legal proceedings, “landmark verdict”	Regulatory scrutiny, SEBI investigations, policy compliance, “probe”
Moral/Nationalist	Betrayal, disgrace, nation’s image, “national shame”	Crony capitalism, economic nationalism, “foreign conspiracy”
Political	Political fallout, polarization, opposition vs. government, protest marches	Parliament debates, opposition demands, “business-politics nexus”
Reformist	Calls for reform, “never again,” systemic change, anti-corruption	Transparency, good governance, regulatory reforms, public trust
Media Critique	Media’s watchdog role, “media circus,” coverage bias	Media responsibility, selective reporting, “public awareness”

## Interpretation

The coverage offered by *Dawn* is much based on the judicial frame and the moral-nationalist one, which frequently personalizes blame and appeals to patriotism. The Hindu underlines regulatory, economic and systemic frames of reform, being more technocratic and institutional-oriented. The frames of crisis, accountability, and reform and put the ideological positions inside the reports.

## Attribution of Blame in Scandal Coverage

**Table 4: Attribution of Blame in Scandal Coverage**

Attribution	Dawn (Panama Papers)	The Hindu (Adani Group)
Individual	72%	18%

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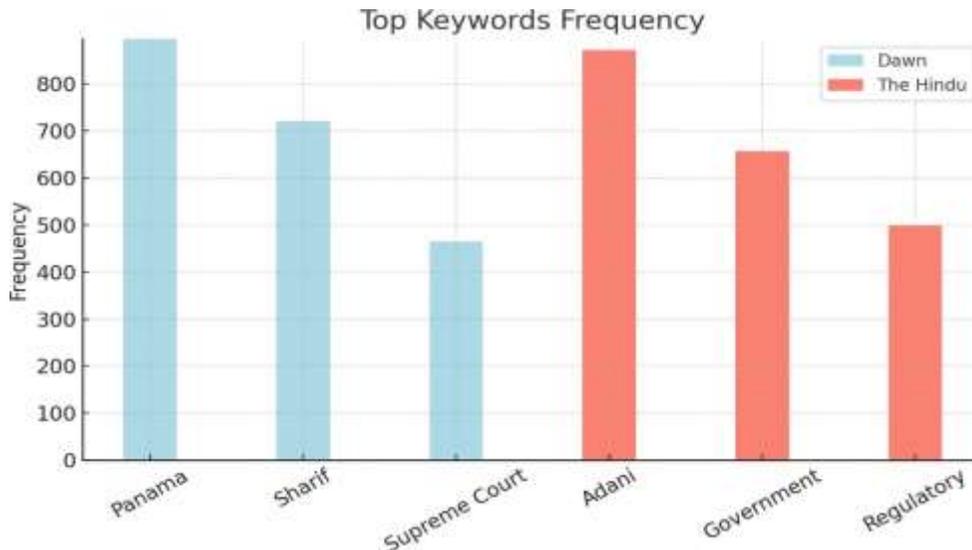
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Institution/Group	28%	82%
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**Note.** Percentage represent the proportion of articles that attribute blame mostly to individuals (e.g., Nawaz Sharif) or to institutions/ groups (e.g. Adani Group, government).

## Analysis

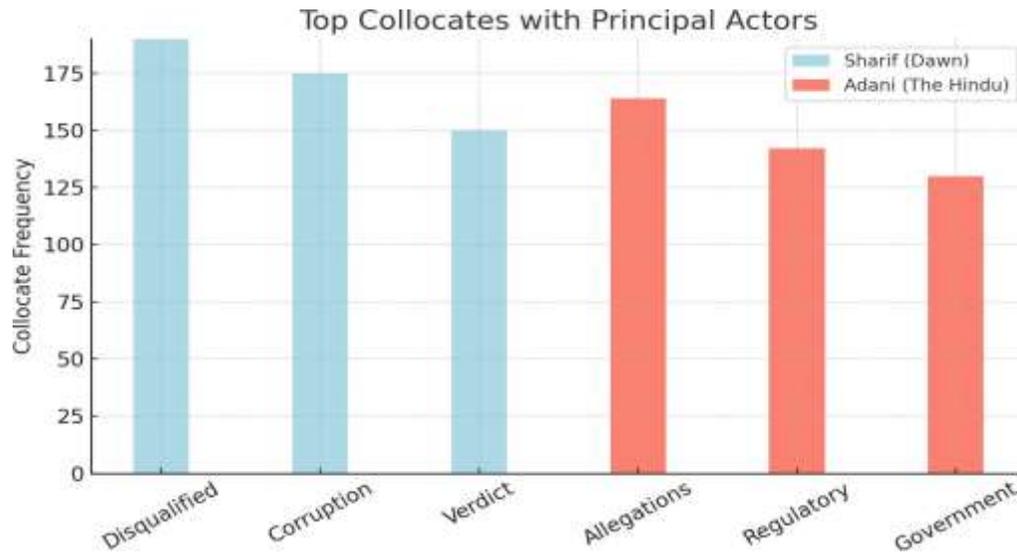
Table 4 is a measure of the blame distribution of both corpora. In Dawn, two-thirds of the articles place the major responsibility on the individual level- mostly this is on Nawaz Sharif and his family. Conversely, The Hindu tends to blame institutions or groups overwhelmingly, whether this is some form of regulatory bodies, the Adani Group or government agencies. This quantitative conclusion supports the qualitative data, that Pakistani coverage is more individualized and moralizing, whereas Indian coverage spreads the responsibility up and down within systems and structures.



**Figure 1: Bar Chart of Top Keywords Frequency**

## Analysis

Figure 1 indicates the frequency of the five most frequent keywords in the corpus of each of the newspapers. The most common are Dawn, Panama, Sharif, and Supreme Court, and it is quite interesting to note the emphasis on the key actor and the law institutions. In The Hindu, there are more words representing Adani, government, and regulatory which indicate that it is an institutional framing. Such difference in focus is due to the media differences in priorities and national context.



**Figure 2: Bar Chart Top Collocates with Principal Actors**

### **Analysis**

Figure 2 compares the first search results of Sharif in Dawn and Adani in The Hindu. Sharif is described with negative words the most (disqualified, corruption, verdict) adding to the blame frame on the personal level. Adani is collocated next to more institutional words (allegations, regulatory, government) which signifies that it diffuses agency and systemic criticism. This point highlights how the newspapers differ on the responsibilities and the structure of narration.

### **Synthesis of Findings**

#### **Commonalities**

Both newspapers are very sensitive towards corruption scandal involving high profiles.

They both utilize the judicial/regulatory frames and foster the importance of accountability. They both employ structures in narrations, that is, metaphors and collocational structures. **Key Differences**

Dawn personalizes and moralizes and the Hindu institutionalizes and depersonalizes.

The discourse in Pakistan is more emotive whereas Indian coverage is more technocratic. There is a difference between agency and blame attribution and Dawn has been found to give people the credit whereas The Hindu has given systems/groups of people the credit.

The frames in reforms staging in Dawn tend to be linked to national pride or crisis, whereas The Hindu puts them within the current dynamics of governance amelioration.

#### **Ideological Implication**

Such discursive differences are completed images of countries. The political nature is more dynamic in Pakistan, history of judicial activism and polarized media system promotes the personalized frame of reference and moral or moral activism. The comparatively stable situation of India and the business-governance relationships lead to more diffuse and technocratic sides of the story and a policy-centric approach.

### **Conclusion**

The comparative analysis of Dawn and The Hindu shows how effective language, narrative, and ideology can be when it comes to influencing society to comprehend and react the corruption problem. Media are not mere conveyors of information, but very real participants in the process of creating the frontiers of legitimacy,

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blame and reform. Personalizing and moralizing in Pakistan showcases the unstable politics in the country as well as the history of judiciary dependence. A more consistent systemic, regulatory model is replicated in India with greater stable institutions and a culture of technocratic control.

The combination of corpus linguistics and the critical discourse analysis made it invaluable in bringing forth the concealed patterns and offering empirical complications to the analysis of the news stories. The methodology can be adopted as an example of how the media, corruption, ideology are studied in the future, especially in the Global South where the problem of accountability and democratization is still acute.

Finally, the paper highlights the role of press in terms of ethical and civic duty towards creating informed, critical and active citizens. It is necessary that journalism strikes a balance between disclosing ill will and critical interpretations of institutional changes in order to build confidence on the government, as well as the media. Simultaneously, critical media literacy in the citizenry will be the most suitable measure to prevent deceit and disappointment.

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