

Investigating Stance Projection through Social Media: A Discourse-based study of PTI protest and sit-in

Abstract

This research work is an attempt to investigate stance projection through social media regarding Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf's (henceforth PTI) protest held in 2014 against the elected government after the general elections of 2013. Our objectives were to analyze the (non) linguistic patterns employed on social media to convey a particular political stance and user's feedback. Sixteen considerable posts from the official page of Imran Khan on Facebook were selected for analysis. Since many historical references were found in the data, Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) of Wodak (2014) was applied in order to explain the historical references as well as the context. In order to check Imran Khan's political influence over the public the number of likes, comments and shares on the posts before and after the protest were taken into account and a clear difference was noted, which revealed that Khan did indeed get popularity among the public and his political stance influenced Facebook users.

Key Words: *Stance projection, social media, linguistic patterns, Discourse Historical Approach*

INTRODUCTION

Since the rise of the Internet in the last couple of decades, the world's networked population has grown from millions to billions. Over the same period, the world entered the age of technology and advancement. Fast means of communication have turned the world into a global village. Social media is not only a source of communication, but also a source of awareness for people. In the political sphere, social media has played an important role. Pakistan is also a part of this global social media network where people use social media to disseminate opinions regarding social and political issues. From a political point of view, social media forums are used in Pakistan by political parties to carry their voters. The idea is to target the

Dr. Tazanfal Tehseem

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

E-mail: tazanfal@ymail.com

young population who has never cast votes in any elections. The PTI is known as one of the popularity of Imran Khan increased enormously because of social media and he has been able to convey his perspective and party agenda successfully. This study is an attempt to investigate stance projection through social media and is therefore, a discourse-based study on PTI's protest to wake up the nation.

Background of the Study

According to the All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) **Azadi March**, also known as the **Tsunami March** was the largest protest in the history of Pakistan: it started on August 14, 2014 and ended on December 17, 2014. It was organized by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf against the then Prime Minister Mr. Nawaz Sharif. The claims of this protest were based on the governmental manipulation of the 2013 general elections with allegations that the elections were not free and fair and the then government was involved in the rigging process. Goals of the protest were the dismissal of the government and resignation of the then Prime Minister of Pakistan as well as electoral reforms. The protest was called off due to the terrorist attack on Army Public School, Peshawar.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook is the most important social network site because maximum of internet users have an account on this site (Dijck, 2012). Social media is affecting lives as people participate and interact with each other on the posts and statuses given by mass media and share their opinions and ideologies. Brook and Locher (2015) have explored the identity construction of youth through status updates on Facebook, which to them are 'Acts of Positioning' in Facebook and for this they have applied the theoretical concept of 'Act of Positioning' (Davis and Harré, 1990). Lee (2011) refers to tweets or status updates as instances of micro-blogging i.e. short messages on the web designed for self-reporting about what one is doing, thinking or feeling at any moment (Lee 2011). They used two frameworks: Davis and Harre's (1990) Positioning Theory and Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) Post-Structuralism which states that identity is developed and constructed when individuals engage themselves in social behavior, including communication.

Irene (2015) investigated the (Para) linguistic reception of birthday wishes with the aim to investigate ways that people employ wishing birthday to their friends, project polite persona as well as those people who access and read those wishes through 'politic behavior' which means 'the knowledge of which linguistic structures are expectable in a specific interaction, under specific contextual circumstances' (Watts, 2003). This politic behavior investigates how and whether people respond to the

wishes, which Watts (ibid) has termed ‘linguistic politeness’ whereby individuals construe their social world as well as embody a view of social reality as ‘a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation’ (Bryman, 2001). Therein, contextualization cues are characterized as ‘metapragmatic signs’ (Lucy, 1992), which highlight ways in which the speaker informs the interlocutors about the usage of language in specific interaction. Locher et al. (2015) positioned their work around interpersonal pragmatics by reviewing different research papers on relational work and politeness. Politeness is seen as a technical concept as to why people use different expressions while communicating with different interlocutors. Lakoff (1973) proposed ‘rules of politeness’ (p. 298) that affect language in use: (a) ‘Don’t impose’ (b) ‘Give options’ and (c) ‘Make [alter] feel good—be friendly’. Researchers in the recent times have focused on the importance of online social relationships, negotiation of norms, notions of community and identity construction and viewed online text as a ‘mask’ (Danet, 1998). In addition, Camp and Bog (2015) aimed to call a strike as protest and investigated how many people have followed a strike and what was its impact. In doing so they (Ibid) calculated the number of likes, comments and shares on posts regarding strike as compared to other issues. A quantitative analysis was conducted with the conclusion that general strike was the topic for more than the 80% of published messages.

Similarly, Safranek (2012) studied the different role that media played in the ‘revolutionary fervor’ that swept the Middle East and beyond. Astounding images were captured by citizens and the scenes were viewed by people around the world, courtesy of distribution by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and mainstream media provided the best impact. Umar and Rasul (2014) deal with the multifaceted identities of Pakistani youth which they construct and represent as religious students, national and personal interests, youth, educational and gender identities by sharing different kinds of pictures on their Facebook profiles. Bernays (1928) states that intelligent people must comprehend that propaganda is the modern tool by which they can struggle out of chaos. Public relations use the media to form a public figure for business, politics and organizations. On the analytical framework, Wodak proposes four concepts found within CDA: critique, power, history and ideology and that it can be differentiated from other linguistic approaches by its central focus on the ‘mediation between language and social structures’ (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Political actors use different genres in different social and institutional contexts, discourse practices can be analyzed on the basis of how these actors exploit different genres to express their ideas and opinions, and legitimize their own policies, (Chilton and Schäffner, 2002). Therefore, in politics it is particularly fruitful to study

how discursive practices are relocated or re-contextualized through various genres and political fields (Wodak and Wright, 2006).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to check stance projection through social media; we selected the social networking site “Facebook” because it is most popular among social media users in Pakistan. The data was collected from the PTI Official Webpage posts from August 14, 2014 to December 16, 2014 addressing the Pakistani Youth. In total 16 significant posts were selected for the analysis which were considered representative of the variables in focus that construe political stance. The findings of this research are significant in terms of understanding the powerful role of social media in the shift of youth support in political stance. The reason for the selection of the source is that the official page has maximum number of members and a lot of people participate in discussions on the page. We wanted to select a source where people would have varying opinions and observe how this issue has acquired media attention and therefore, attracted a diverse population of communicators (Fairclough, 2003).

For research model, we found Wodak’s (2014) model of DHA (Discourse Historical Approach) suitable for our work because *‘History Constructs Discourses* (Wodak, 2014)’ and there are many historical references in our data. The central point in DHA is the importance of bringing together the textual and the contextual levels of analysis i.e. how the linguistic choices influence the context. The multi-level model proposed embraces the notions of text, genre and discourse as paramount to understanding both discourse and social practice (Boyd, 2009) and examines historical, cultural, social and ideological expressions through the analysis of specific linguistic, paralinguistic and pragmatic features (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). In this model of context, we understand the historical knowledge in terms of four layers: 1. Linguistics Co-text, 2. Inter-textual and inter discursive level, 3. Extra linguistics level, 4. Socio political and historical level. Wodak’s (2001) model also presents six strategies in order to identify the ideological positions i.e. what sort of choices are being used to develop an argument: Nomination, Prediction, Argumentation, Perspectivation, Intensification and Mitigation are helpful in order to identify the linguistic items related to our data.

This research has been implemented to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do social media effectively impact the viewer’s perception about the PTI campaign?

2. What (non)linguistic patterns are employed on the social media to convey a particular political stance?

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The posts selected are the speeches that Imran Khan made during the PTI protest. All these texts are inter-textually related to the broader debate about the resignation of Prime Minister and assurance of devotion to the public in order to give them their rights. Before discussing the texts individually, we have classified them in terms of discourse, genre and text.

Discourse	Proactive approach to change present circumstances and upcoming problems
Genre	Political speeches to general public/ interviews of Khan with private TV channels
Texts	As mentioned below

Classification of data in terms of themes presented

1. Theme of justice



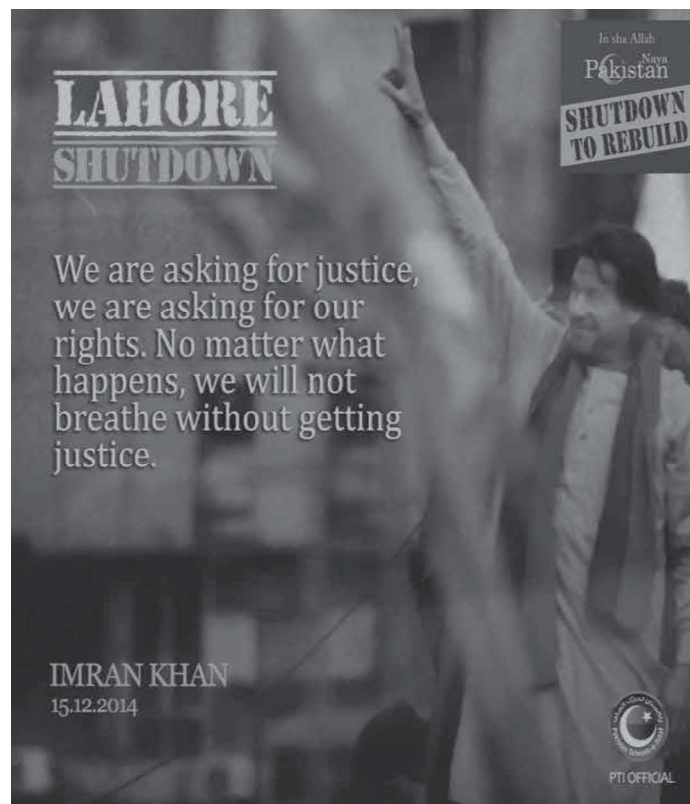
In this post, Khan is referring to the 2013 election rigging after which he demanded re-opening of the election results of 4 constituencies. There was no response from the government but he continued his struggle. His words show power and determination. His manner is advising to his nation: never give up if you are right, go and grab your rights, there is no vice in it. Contextually, an informal manner of communication is employed here and the communicative event takes place between

leader and public. If we view this intertextually “Extremism’ and ‘Moderation” are used as intensifying expressions. “Vice and virtue” antonyms are used in order to make the talk more inspiring and powerful. Phrases like “quest for justice” and “pursuit of truth” show his values.

Interpretation

This speech primarily aims to encourage the public to make effort in order to gain justice. This is their national right and there is no evil in it, but if they show restraint in the search for truth, they will all suffer.

2.

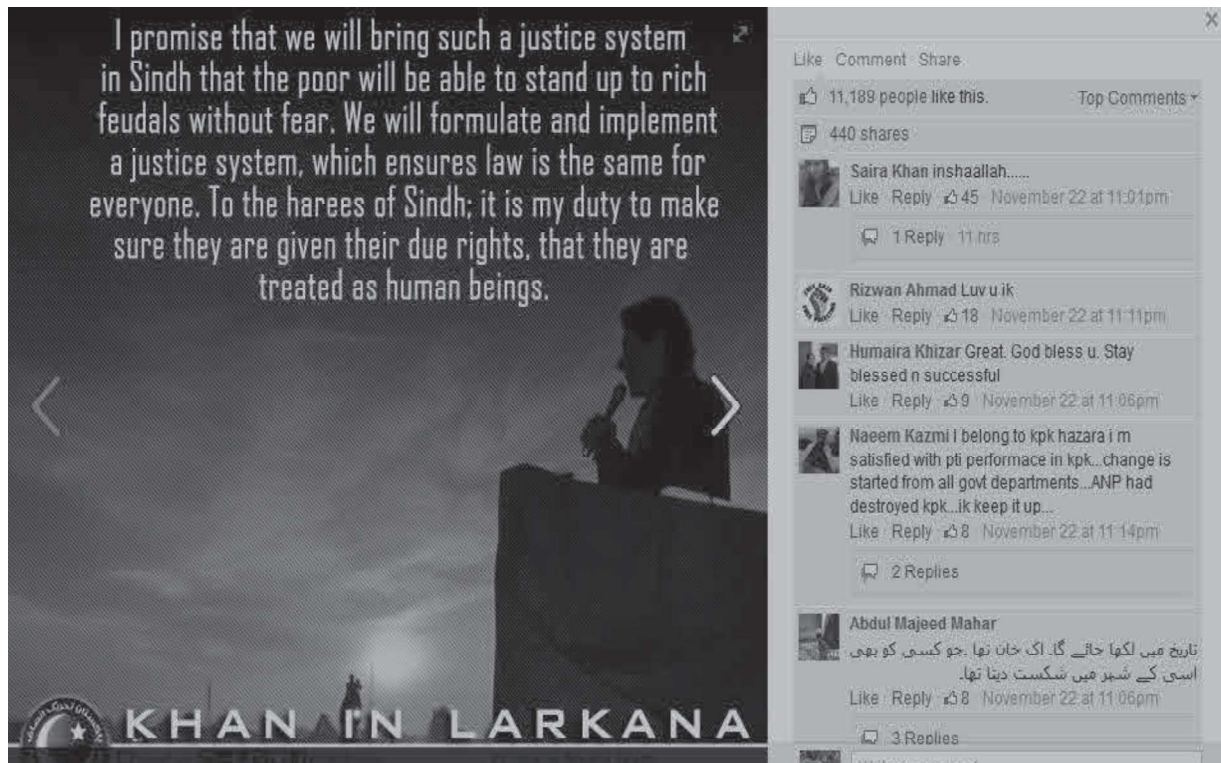


This is the post from December 12, when Imran Khan called for a massive strike in Lahore. On his official page, instead of writing posts on the timeline, he used semiotic expression by using picture quotes in order to exert influence on the readers (Van Leuween, 2005). If we look historically, Imran said that he would shut-down all of Pakistan in order to put pressure on the government. He used the slogan “shutdown to rebuild” which had enormous significance. The purpose of this plan C “to shutdown all of Pakistan” was to halt the system for people to wake up from this monotonous life. While announcing plan C, a political site supporting PTI updated

its status: “We tried at least, we tried in parliament, we tried with peaceful protests, we tried with election commission, and we tried with Supreme Court. Pakistan under the current system cannot offer any justice, it protects injustice. We must shut down this system. This is a final call- Shut down to rebuild” (Siasat.pk, December 09, 2014). This slogan is actually an oxymoron. “Shutdown” and “rebuild” have opposite meanings - Khan intensified both words, showing that it is necessary to stop this system and introduce a new one. The resultant enthusiasm observed in the general population about this particular slogan was due to the extreme disappointment found in the public regarding the earlier regimes. Therefore this persisting anger and disappointment trickled down to condense itself in the form of immense support for the slogan of PTI that was based on the concept of change. One may ask why the populous who had strong vote banks of the earlier regimes had suddenly become so lethargic of their respective regimes and how it came to pass that such a huge pole shift occurred in favor of PTI on their slogan for change. The answer can be found in the political evolution of the Pakistani theater of power where political murders, u-turns and continuously exacerbating economic situation had rendered the general population impervious to further false promises by their respective political leaderships and in the duration of the past two decades a new generation, the so called millennial, had grown up which instead of blind following, questioned each move their leadership made.

Social media had made them self-aware to an extent that they would question economic and foreign policies and when no satisfactory answer was found they soon changed their political affiliations. It was for such people that the oxymoronic slogan of PTI catered both weight and appeal and in retrospect was seen as their own opinion about the current regime. In the given poster, Khan is showing the sign of victory with a smile on his face, which indicates that he is confident of the steps he has taken and he is getting a positive response from the public. He has a party ensign around his neck and the PTI flag in the background is used to appeal to the public on social media. In this picture’s text, Khan used the pronoun “we” showing solidarity with the public. He used this pronoun repeatedly, as a rhetorical technique to create an emotional dimension in speech or writing. Indirectly, he is accosting the government for their rights by intensifying the words “justice” and “rights”. Khan seems determined to use the phrase “no matter what happens” that he can do anything for nation; he can go at any level in order to get their rights; ‘breathe” is used as metonymy here, since he is advising his nation not to rest until they get their national rights and common justice.

3.

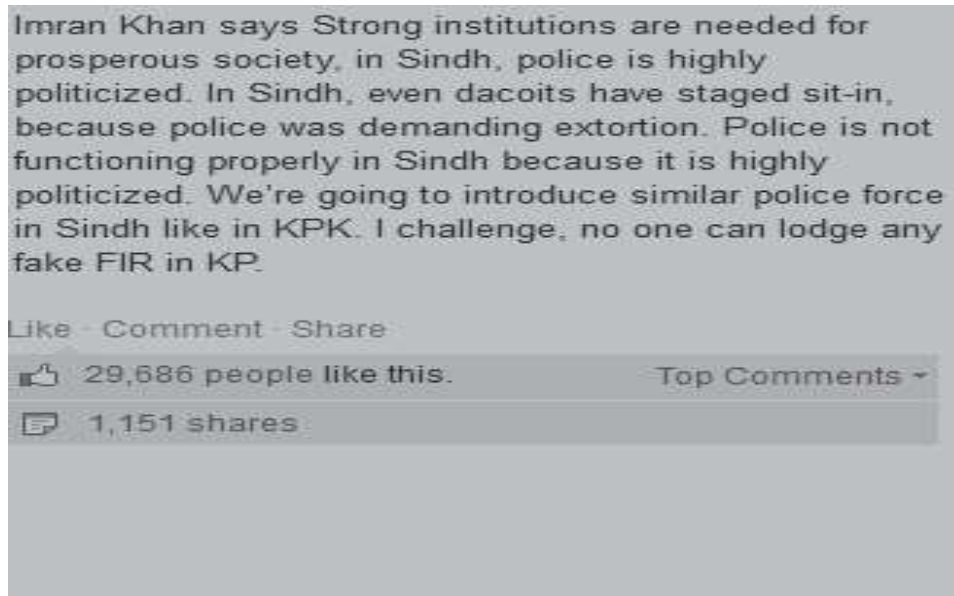


Historically, Khan seems to be referring to the murder of Shahzaib Khan that happened in Karachi, Sindh, on December 24, 2012. Shahrukh Jatoi, son of feudal Sikandar Jatoi was the murderer. He and Siraj Talpur, from the Talpur clan, were sentenced to death while Ghulam Murtaza Lashari and Sajjad Talpur were awarded life imprisonment for supporting the two killers. All these people were involved in the murder. However in September, 2013, Shahzaib’s parents, Aurangzeb Khan and Ambreen Aurangzeb, decided to file the sworn statement with the court pardoning all four accused and requesting their release.

Contextually, Khan is concerned with the community of Larkana and his manner is promising. Intertextually, he used the pronoun “we” in order to indicate the whole team of PTI has sympathy for poor people. At the same time, he is assuring his audience by using words like “formulate” and “implement”. He is assuring that he will introduce a system which would be able to provide justice to rich and poor alike and the poor and the feudals will be treated the same. He seems to show his devotion for the affected people of Sindh by using expressions like “my duty” to convey that he will give them justice and their rights which are not available to them. Implicitly, he is targeting the government that it has failed in treating poor people as human beings and that men’s basic needs and their national rights are not available to them.

The picture background shows a luminous sun on the dark canvas, as a ray of hope for a better future which is idealized by Imran Khan. Almost all comments are in the favor of Khan.

4.



In terms of context, Khan is explaining his perspective that the establishment of a successful and flourishing state is possible only when there would be well-built institutions. Historically, he is referring to the processions of PPP and sit-in by MQM in Sindh. They did this because the police was demanding extortion money. Implicitly he is attacking on the Sindh Government by using the word “dacoits” for “Pakistan People’s Party” that is ruling political party of Sindh and “MQM”. According to his point of view, both parties are dacoits but they also organized processions because of the malfunction in the department of police. “Dacoits” is used as metonymy here since he is intensifying the “function of police”. Explicitly he is praising the police in KPK because he organized the police in KPK. The use of “We” shows the power and solidarity of PTI to the public and by uttering this pronoun; he identifies himself with the audience. He shows confidence when he uses the word “challenge” to show that he has settled the police of KPK in such a manner that no one can lodge bogus FIR in KPK.

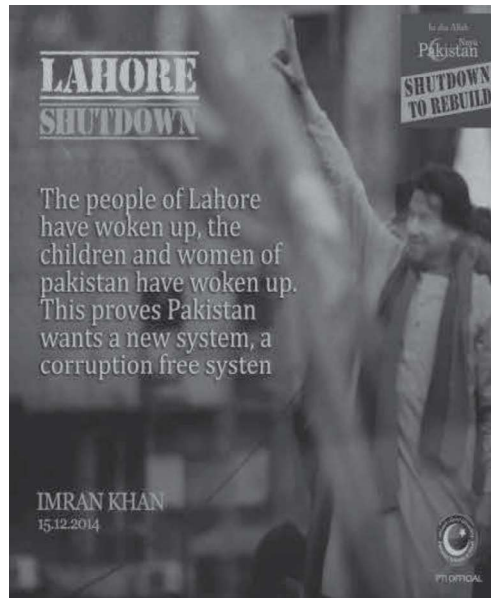
2. Theme of corruption free system

5.



Historically, Khan is referring to the 1951 novel “Old Man and The Sea” by Earnest Hemingway. It is the story of the fisherman “Santiago” who made great effort to catch a massive fish “Marlin” which gave him a tough time but he never lost hope. Imran Khan compares himself with Santiago to show that he is as determined and as powerful as Santiago. He re-contextualized the statement used by Hemingway while giving the interview in order to show his willpower. In other words “a man can be killed, but as long as he does not give up, he cannot really be defeated”. On the left side of the picture, there is a direct quotation uttered by Khan: contextually, it seems to be uttered as a result of his deep thinking while intertextually, he is intensifying “brighter future” and “elimination of corruption” from Pakistan. The pronoun “I” shows that he is the one who takes the prevailing issues seriously as an honest leader. Semiotically, Khan’s picture shows the power and fervor in his eyes. On the broader and socio-political level, he wants to lead Pakistan towards a brighter future where there would be peace and prosperity. He aims to end terrorism and corruption. “Must fight” illustrates that it becomes necessary to be united with each other in order to fight corruption because now it is the only solution of all the problems. Basically, Khan is exhibiting his ideology.

6.



In this quote, Khan is communicating with the people of Lahore. He is giving importance to “women” and “children” and the repetition of “woken up” has been used in order to energize the public. Khan believes that women and children are equally important for the progress of the country. If they work hard, the country can progress by leaps and bounds. Khan demonstrates the “new system” as a “corruption free system” which directly links with the PTI’s slogan of “New Pakistan”. On the broader socio-political level, Khan seems to see women working side by side with men, which is also the ideology of Quaid-e-Azam.

7.



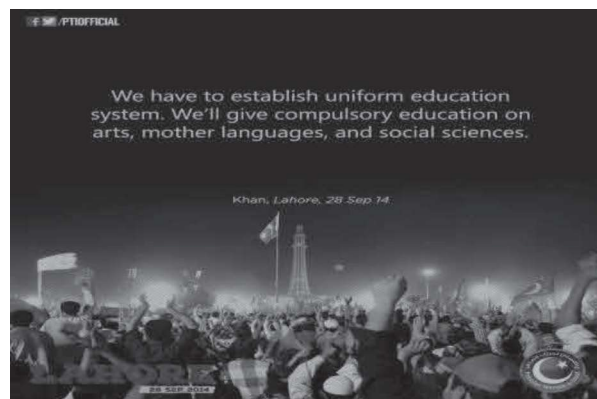
Historically, Khan is referring to the ex-chairman of NADRA, Tariq Malik, who was forced to resign and leave the country by the Government. After the general

elections of 2013, Khan claimed that elections were not free and fair. He demanded the recounting of votes by means of thumb verification. Tariq Malik claimed that NADRA could verify the votes. The government took steps against him and laid false allegation on him; the allegations leveled against him by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar were that without approval of the authority he had undertaken over 100 foreign visits in five years by violating PPRA rules, telling lies about his educational qualifications and that he possesses the nationalities of four countries. Tariq Malik had denied having undertaken 100 foreign trips and he also said that all his foreign visits had been approved by the Prime Minister. The Interior Ministry, in the last week of December 2013, issued a four-page show-cause notice to Tariq Malik, leveling charges against him of concealing facts, abuse of official powers and financial indiscretion. Malik had said that the issue of his dismissal was being heard in the Islamabad High Court, but the interior minister chose to level “baseless allegations” in a press conference. On December 12, Malik had insisted that no rules were violated upon his conjecture of office, dismissing a government claim that his appointment was illegal.

Contextually, Khan discussed this issue while giving interview to the local TV channel when the anchor asked him about rigging in elections. Inter textually, there is a direct quotation articulated by Khan. He is giving positive attribute to Tariq Malik as “honest” man. He mocked the situation of the country and the government when he said that corrupt heads do not want a sincere leader in Pakistan. We can also see that maximum numbers of likes on this post reveal that the general public is also supporting Imran’s point of view.

3. Theme of Education

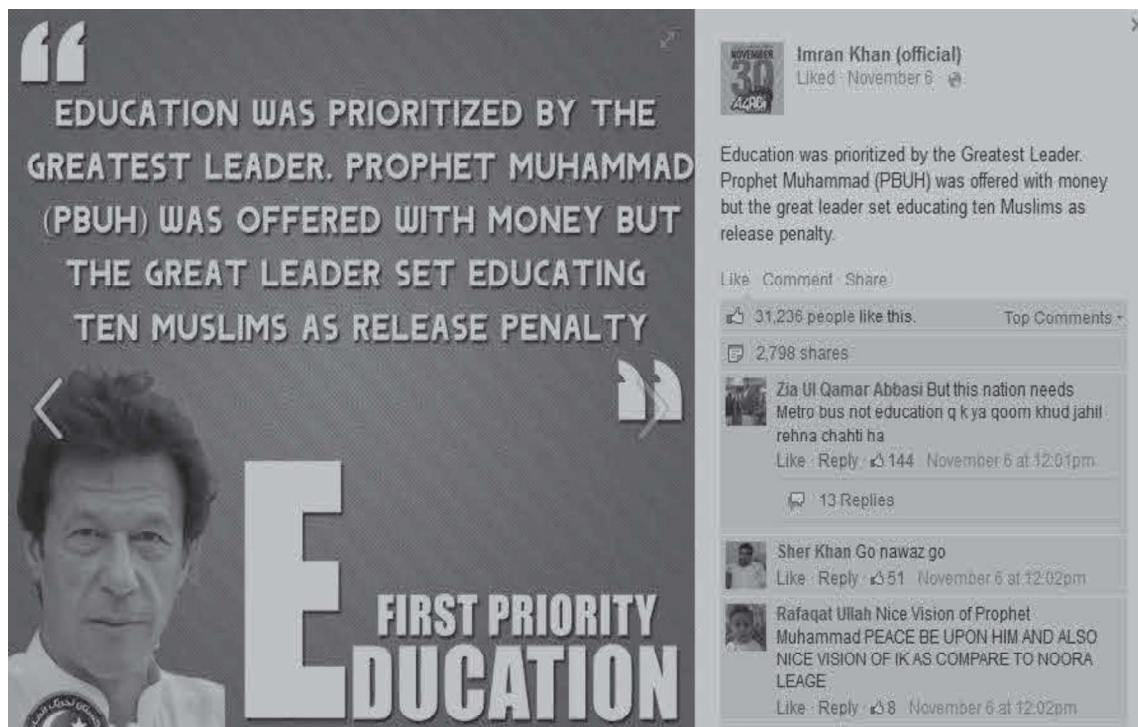
8.



Contextually, Khan is trying to involve the audience in his communication by using the pronoun “we” which is showing the solidarity and fortitude. Intertextually,

“Have to” is screening his strength of mind that he is very determined to establish such a system. He seems to intensify the “uniform education system” which is very necessary for the progress of nation. Extra-linguistically, the picture shows the excitement and enthusiasm of the public and their faith in their leader Imran Khan. He seems to be giving much importance to the social and cultural aspects like arts, mother language and social sciences. Urging social and cultural norms, clearly exhibits the ideology that he considers cultural knowledge as very significant and it should necessarily be a part of the education system.

9.



In this post, Imran Khan is giving the historical reference of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW). After the battle of BADR, some non-Muslim were taken prisoners and Prophet Muhammad settled the condition that prisoners could get freedom if each one of them would teach ten Muslim children. Obviously, this condition was not for religious knowledge but for worldly knowledge. It also shows that Islam never prevents the attainment of worldly knowledge. Here, Khan is intending to promote this ideology and importance of education. He used the adjective “greatest leader” for Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and intensified the expression “education” by showing that He promoted education, so it is clear that education is necessary and important for a nation. Khan gave “first priority” to education and 31,236 people liked this post. In comments, people appreciate him

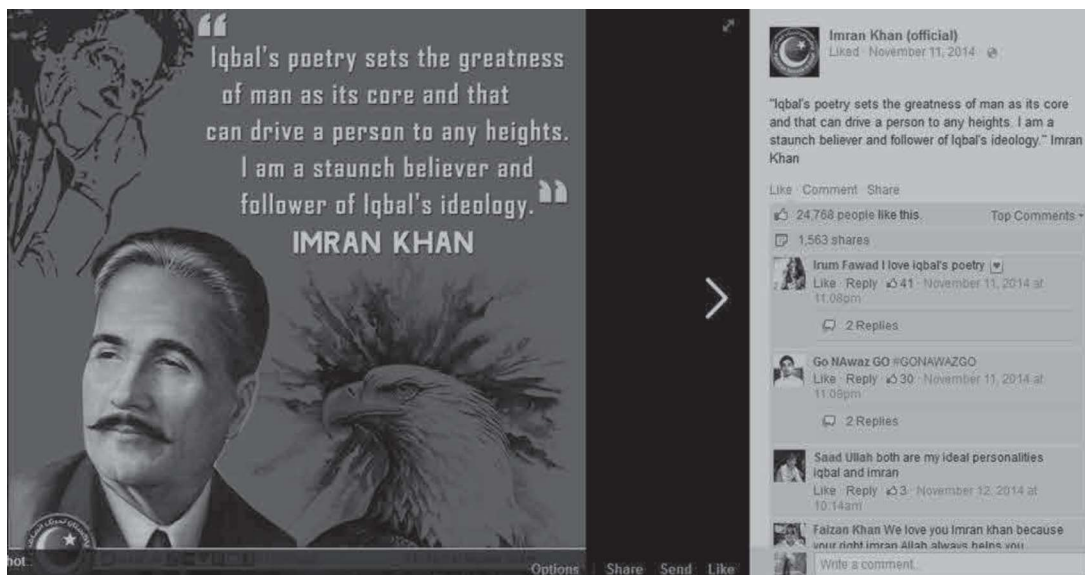
and mock the PMLN (the then ruling political party) of Pakistan by giving sarcastic comments on their Metro Bus plan and that they are not focusing on education and other major issues but have introduced the Metro bus in Pakistan.

4. Theme of infusing Quaid and Iqbal's spirit in public 10.



In this picture, Khan is compared with Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. In the top corner of the banner, is the Quaid's picture on one side and Khan's picture on the other side, which conveys the impression that Khan is going to rebuild the Quaid's Pakistan. Historically speaking, Khan seems to compare himself with Quaid and that he will re-establish the same plans and systems which the Quaid wanted to introduce in Pakistan. In another portion of the picture, we can see that the women of Pakistan are taking equal interest in politics. They are qualified and energized now and want to participate in the progress of the country. A large section of women is with Imran Khan and their color coordination reflects their love for PTI.

11.

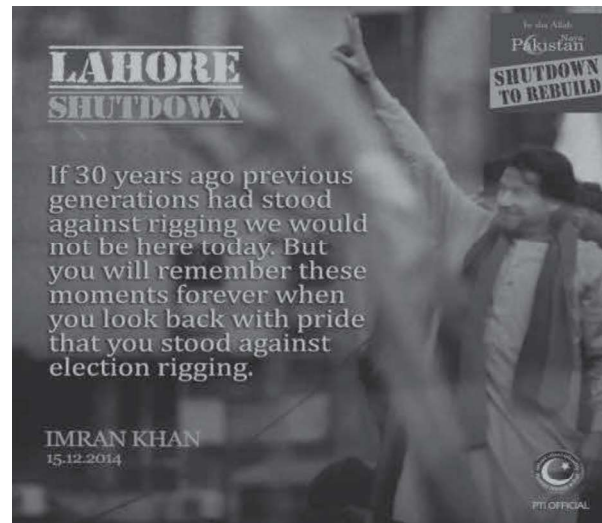


If we do a semiotic analysis of this post, the picture of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Pakistan's National Poet) has been used with his concept of "SHAHEEN" (Falcon in English). Iqbal introduced the very dynamic and potent symbol of "SHAHEEN" in his poetry and Khan seems to emphasize the message of Iqbal which exhibits courage, self-reliance, excellent aerial skills, great strength and spectacle. In his poetry, "SHAHEEN" stands for self-respect and courage, purity of soul and character, dedication and devotion, endurance, struggle & perseverance and prestige. The main quality of the falcon is "transforming" according to needs and necessities. This quality Iqbal wanted to develop in his nation so that they may transform themselves according to modern needs and demands. Imran Khan's portrait here shows passion and hope for a better future.

The direct quotation by Khan promotes the ideology of Dr. Iqbal and the fact that his poetry can sublimate a person. Iqbal used the symbol of "SHAHEEN" as a metaphor since he wanted to see the same attributes in the Muslim youth. He seems to intensify the expression "greatness of man", which is hidden in the philosophy of Iqbal. Again he gave his own point of view by intensifying the expression "staunch believer" and "follower" of Iqbal's ideology. In his speeches, he also demanded the addition of a subject titled "Iqbal's poetry" in Matric and higher education classes. Khan seems to believe that, if our students just try to read Iqbal's work, they can get much courage and spirit in order to fight the present circumstances.

5. Theme of making people enthusiastic

12.



Historically, Khan is pointing to the previous governments and systems prevailing in Pakistan. Implicitly, he is attacking the law and political structures of Pakistan since there have never been free and fair elections. But due to the inattention of the previous generations, we are facing these circumstances. Intertextually, he seems to intensify the word “pride” in order to make his nation feel pride in that they were part of “Azadi March” and they struggled to get justice against election rigging.

13.



In this post, the picture represents the ideology of the PTI. If we analyze the signs of the human triangle, the first thing that strikes our mind would be “we need to join

hand in hand in order to rebuild the new Pakistan”. The background is the same as the PTI flag which reflects that this is the belief of PTI. In the upper left corner, there is a stamp with the star and crescent, which is a sign of the Pakistani flag and reflects that PTI’s aims and agendas are for national interest. Thus through the use of signs and symbols, a particular point of view has been promoted through social media.

Linguistically, there is a general appeal by the public to support the PTI campaign. “NAYA PAKISTAN” is nominated as the one who can give a better future to the public. Intensifying expressions are “NAYA PAKISTAN” and “RESPECTFUL FUTURE”. Implicitly, it means that if prevailing conditions remain, the future of the country is insecure. Phrase “don’t blame or cry” signifying the ideology that you have to stand on your own in the future, if you do not, you cannot cry or blame anyone for your fortune, since you are yourself responsible for it.

User’s feedback

If we look at the comments, positive expressions have been used by the public. “Very nice”, “we are ready”, “do it by hook or crook”, “Jeay Imran (long live) and “yes” show the public’s interest showing that it has been influenced by this ideology. In social media it is not necessary for every particular user to commit to the keyboard and type a specific word or phrase to show their support. It is understood that their retweeting, sharing and liking of a post are sufficient to reflect their support for that particular cause. The response and feedback that the researchers are talking about, along with supportive comments including the number of likes, shares and comments have steadily grown. This reflects how far the influence of KHAN’s word grew through social media.

6. Theme of unity

14.



These are the opening words of Imran Khan's speech at the Larkana procession. Historically, he is explaining the ideology of Quaid-e-Azam who gave a historical speech on 21st March, 1948 in Dhaka. He called for unity and addressed his nation not to make divisions on the basis of cast and sects. He said "We are not Sindhi, Blochi, Punjabi or Pathan. We are Pakistani." Khan appears to deliver the same idea to his nation. Contextually, he is attacking the dominant politics of Pakistan in his public speech. Intertextually, he is intensifying the expression "unite you all". He accused current "politics" to be "dividing the nation" into sects and the adjective "divisive" for politics. On a broader level, he seems to propagate that, we should respect out minorities because they are also a part of Pakistan, and we should boycott the discordant politics responsible for the present condition.

Para-linguistically, 38,221 people liked this post and 2,884 shared this. If we look at comments by the general public, people are appreciating his speeches and ideologies. In the last comment, the reader used adjectives like "prince", "pride",

“courageous leader”, “tiger”, ‘ultimate warrior”, “ brave heart”, “honest”, “trustworthy”, “admirable human being”, “only hope” and “king” in order to associate positive attributes with Khan. It shows that people consider him a true leader.

7 User’s feedback

15.1.



A teenage girl named Laiba Kazi quoted the statement in the photo given above. She edited the picture and added images of the slogan “Go Nawaz Go” and used expressions like “Azadi” and “Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf”. This shows that even teenagers and children are supporting him because they see a passion and hope in his eyes. She has decided to support him till her “last breath” or throughout her life. In the column’s third image, she wrote “I am Imran’s supporter” using the colors red and green which are the colors of the PTI flag. She painted her face and showed her love for PTI. Even in the comments section, we can see the slogans of “Go Nawaz Go”. It shows that indeed Imran’s political stance is influencing the readers.

15.2



These words are uttered by one of Imran’s follower Farah Lodhi. Historically, she is referring to the incident, when the then government arrested PTI’s workers from dharna under the allegations that they are creating fuss and anarchy. His followers are passionate and show valor although her manner is sarcastic. Contextually, she is saying that Imran has millions of followers, government cannot imprison them all. She is nominating “Imran” as a “metonymical expression” that here every single person is Imran. Further she showed her boldness by saying “I Am Khan, Arrest Me” which indicates that Imran became successful to convey his political stance in public and people got influenced by him. They cannot bear any injustice and negative associations attached to their leader. They are supporting him and will continue to support their leader even if they have to face prison. Users’ feedback and response in favor of Imran Khan show their energetic followership and heartfelt devotion for change in the country. Users’ posts are taken randomly from the PTI Official webpage.

8. End of protest

16.



On December 16, 2014 the worst incident or terror attack happened in the history of Pakistan when terrorists attacked Peshawar’s Army Public School and killed almost 150 students. This incident shook the entire country. As a result, Khan announced to end the Sit-in in Islamabad. He said that it is time to be united and announced Plan D that was “Death to Terrorism”. This step was highly appreciated by the public since he preferred national interest to personal interest. He ended the “Sit-in” in order to show the external forces that Pakistanis are united and they had much love for the Pakistani nation. He decided to join hands in order to eliminate terrorism and advised his nation to do the same. Therefore, no final outcome of the protest could be seen.

Table 1.

Numbers of Likes, Comments and Shares on some important posts uploaded by official page of Imran Khan during the protest of PTI

LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES
46,542	3,269	4,963
43,574	2,976	5,648
38,221	2,357	2,884
27,294	963	3,905
32,834	1,407	1,472
29,046	1,234	967
26,727	821	2,101
31,236	1,199	2,798
43,768	1,741	2,138
39,514	1,997	2,573

28,744	1,567	1,384
22,680	592	1,523
35,853	1,161	3,219
34,503	1,481	3,625
41,447	3,321	4,109
52,113	1,237	5,690
12,597	507	812
12,808	550	539
19,974	1,259	619
39,807	1,330	2,621
27,989	2,101	1,697
19,408	527	817

Table 2.

Average number of likes, comments and shares

32,122	1,527	2,550
--------	-------	-------

Table 3.

Number of likes, comments and shares on the posts having other issues before the protest on the official page of Imran khan

LIKES	COMMENTS	SHARES
10,274	521	441
6,289	313	995
8,865	509	2,983
6,298	161	445
3,273	172	485
7,932	292	838
5,244	88	14
5,256	551	806
2,739	194	101
4,195	240	888
2,112	266	706
1,024	140	20
617	177	68
4,266	439	521
2,829	451	1,129
612	163	57
1,113	188	160
1,515	223	805
453	58	21
1,267	85	91

Table 4.

Average number of likes, comments and shares

3,809	262	579
-------	-----	-----

There is a clear difference in the average values of likes, comments and shares which shows that the people started taking interest in this issue after the protest started. Before this protest, people, especially the youth were less interested in politics and they rarely commented on the posts by Imran Khan, until the issue attained media attention. It has also been proved that the popularity of Imran Khan also increased after this matter. People started taking interest in his politics and tried to understand his point of view. He drew a lot of public to his processions and gatherings. He seemed to be the only ray of hope and sign of optimism to the public because the masses especially the youth were dissatisfied with the then government and its policies. In this scenario he challenged to lay the foundation of a system which would provide basic rights and necessities to every citizen. This vision of Imran Khan targeted the youth towards his campaign as can be seen in the form of posts, likes, shares and comments. People started to admire his vision and his revolutionary ideas at every step.

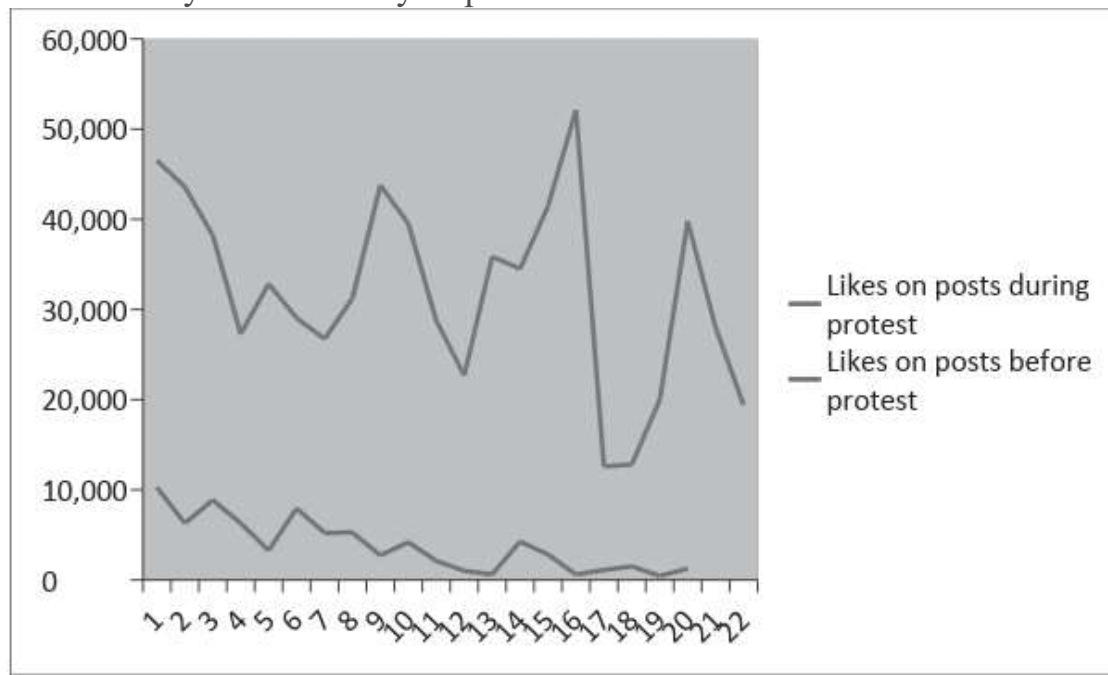


Fig. 1: Number of likes

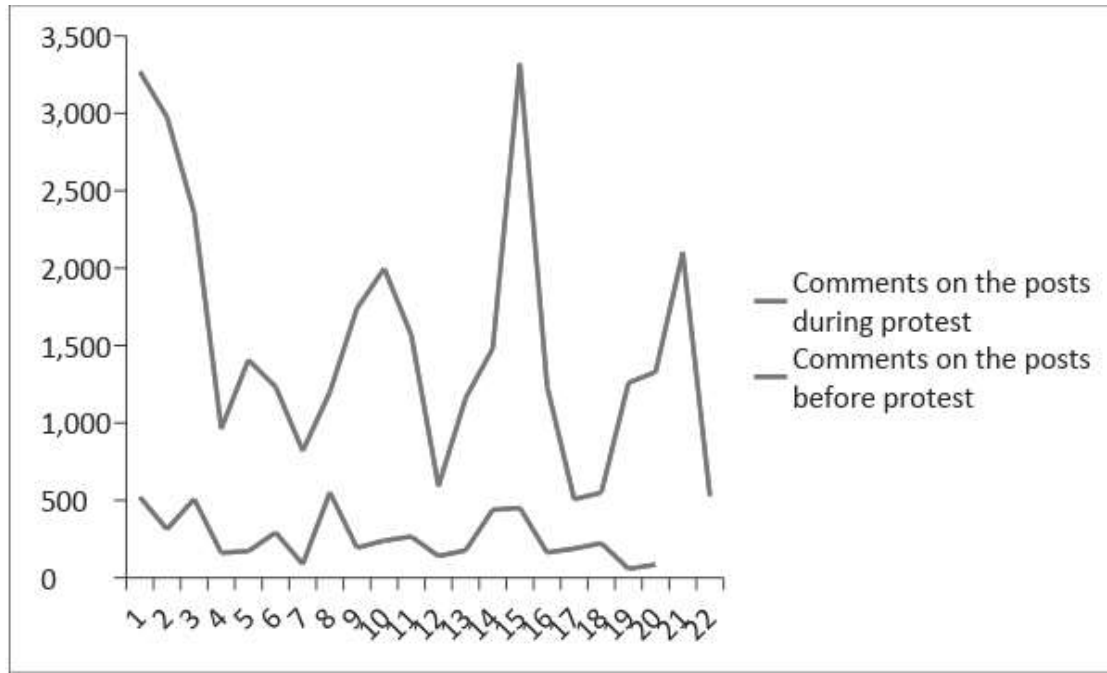


Fig. 2: Number of comments

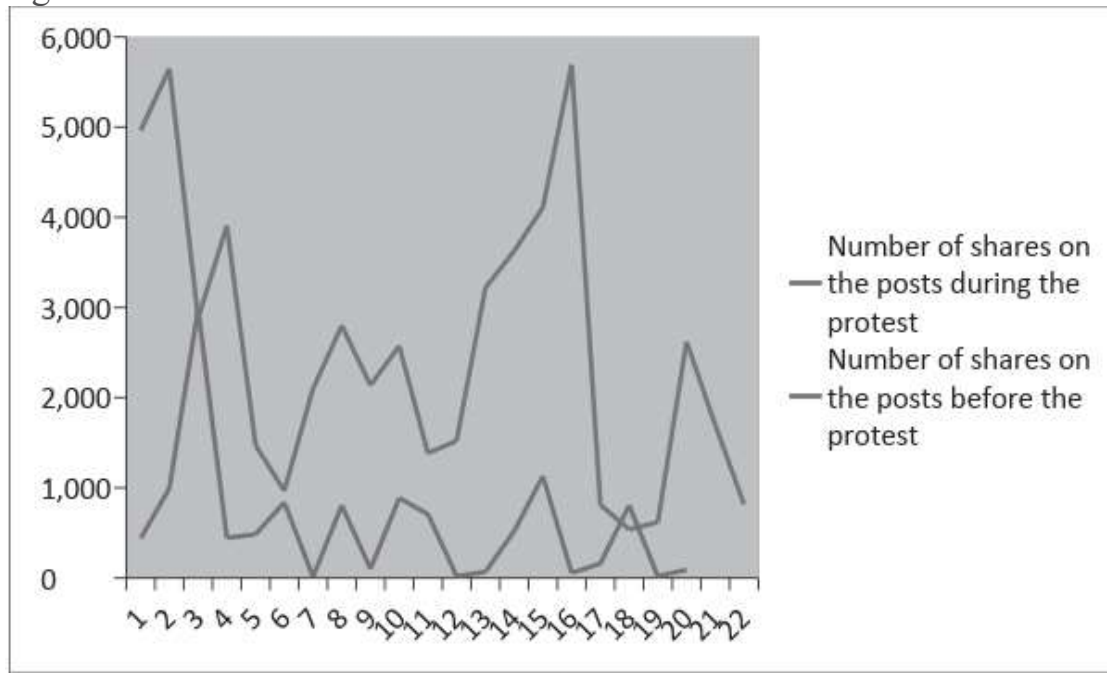


Fig. 3: Number of shares

Graphs showing the stance projection on social media regarding the PTI protest. Before the protest, the youth were less interested in politics and their participation in comments was very low. Since Khan started the protest, people started taking interest in politics and in existing issues as well. This protest put new spirit into the

politics of Pakistan. There is a huge difference in the number of likes on the posts before and after the protest. The same trend has been noted in the average comments and shares as can be deduced from the final annexure, explaining the trend being followed by social media organizations of youth wings. It is pertinent to mention that before this particular force was introduced by PTI as a counter measure to the show of power by other political parties by hand picking youth wings and other subsidiary organizations in educational institutions; there was no other option available for the youth to join a confirmative political process. The youth went through a very rough young leaders forum which led them from institutions to jail and then to the main party. PTI's trend was seen as a cleaner and more viable option by the youth for proper political grooming. They realized that drafting an opinion in the virtual world was easier and safer with no cyber laws and censor policies banning their opinion on the internet and their voices could not be curbed.

Statistics reflect that PTI had mustered forces and seeing its potential tried to mould their youth wings into the modern shape. It indicates also the actual science of social media marketing, proving that Imran Khan got huge success in influencing the nation with his ideologies and urged them to make an effort for "New Pakistan".

CONCLUSION

Social media plays an important role in spreading political campaigns. Its platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube provide new ways to stimulate citizen's engagement in political life where elections and electoral campaigns have a central role. It allows candidates and office workers to not only communicate more efficiently with a larger audience, but it creates a two-way room for constituents to respond and interact with their leaders. Rep. Kriseman says, "This dynamic exchange of information and ideas makes for a healthier and more participative democracy." Our research work was based upon investigating stance projection on social media regarding the PTI protest. After analyzing the official posts of Imran Khan on Facebook and number of likes, comments and shares in order to check the involvement of audience and their feedback regarding the number of people taking the protest critically and how far this protest was successful in shifting the ideologies and perceptions of public, we found answers to the following questions:

1. What (non)linguistic patterns are employed on the social media to convey a particular political stance?

In order to answer this question, we did a critical discourse analysis of Facebook posts where we went through semiotics as well as linguistic analysis. It was

observed that implicit language had been used in many posts in order to target the opposite political parties but a few used explicit expressions as well. The sole purpose for doing this was to unite the nation against corrupt leaders and gather them on one platform using the images of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal, by showing the sign of victory and using the imagery of the sun on the dark canvas in order to show the spark of light or ray of hope. Another image used is the Falcon which points towards the message of Allama Iqbal, so that people can recall forgotten lessons. Pictures of huge crowds of women and children at procession spots were uploaded on daily basis so that the world could see the fervor and enthusiasm in the public and could join the protest.

2. How far does Imran Khan's political stance influence the readers on the social media?

It was observed that the young generation between ages 20-40 followed him in a higher ratio. Most comments were in the favor of Imran Khan. Most people gave respect to his agendas and took him as an honest and straightforward leader. Before the protest, people were interacting on his posts in fewer ratios, but after the protest, people were influenced by his political stance and they started taking interest in his schemas by giving positive feedbacks on his official posts. Each post from the official page qualified as being viral. As the number of likes, shares and comments grew steadily it reflected how strongly the influence of Khan's word grew through social media. It is evident that Khan grew on general public through carefully infusing subliminal patriotic and righteous messages in his campaign. So whenever the reader of his social media content was presented with a tailored choice the reader always chose the narrative of PTI. Some examples are:

- Presentation of case through the narratives of Jinnah and Iqbal allowed the general public to draw parallels between the father of the nation and the chairman PTI.
- Presentation of the demand of basic necessities like education, peace and a corruption free just system of government with equal opportunity was something that no Pakistani could deny and everyone was up for it, allowing the masses to align themselves with the likes of PTI since they were rooting for these facilities from the federal govt. Their protest was in turn a demand for these terms, calling the system to be overhauled by judging the fairness of the general elections.

- Unification through enthusiastic action. PTI campaigned for the shutdown of the state machinery, challenging its writ and touching border line civil disobedience without actually calling it that.

REFERENCES

- Acquisti, A. & Gross, R. (2006). *Imagined communities: Awareness, information sharing, and privacy on the Facebook*. *The Proceedings of the 6th Workshop on Privacy Enhancing Technologies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adamic, L., Buyukkokten, O. & Adar, E. (2003). A social network caught in the web. *First Monday*, 8.
- Bolander, B. & Locher, M. A. (2015). "Peter is a dumb nut": Status updates and reactions to them as 'acts of positioning'. *Facebook Pragmatics*, 25(1), 99-122.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language & Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Carafano, J. (2011). Successful revolution takes more than social media. *The Examiner*, 22.
- Del Campo, J.D. & Segado B. F. (2013). General strike through the social media looking glass: November 14th strike coverage by Spanish mass media profiles in Facebook. Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: MED2013-0551.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C. & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook friends: Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 12(4).
- Hulaimi, W. A. (2011). It's a social media revolution in the mid East. *New Straits Times*, 21.
- Lysak, S., Cremedas, M. & Wolf, J. (2012). Facebook and Twitter in the newsroom : How and why local television news is getting social with viewers? *Electronic News*, 6, 187-207.

- Lee & Carmen K. M. (2011). Micro-blogging and status updates on Facebook: Texts and practices. In C. Thurlow, and K. Mroczek (eds.), *Digital Discourse: Language in the New Media*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. New York: Longman.
- Locher, M. A., Bolander, B. & Höhn, N. (2015). Introducing relational work in Facebook and discussion boards. *Pragmatics*, 25(1), 1-21.
- Rambe, P. (2011). Exploring the impacts of social networking sites on academic relations in the university. *Journal of Information Technology Education*, 10, 271-293.
- Rambe, P. (2012). Critical discourse analysis of collaborative engagement in Facebook postings. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 28(2), 295-314.
- Rash, J. (2011). *Rash Report: Social Media as a tool for social unrest; Facebook helps, but old fashioned courage ends repressive regimes*. Star Tribune, ProQuest, 29.
- Reisigl, M. & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and anti-Semitism*. London: Routledge.
- Safranek, R. (2012). *The Emerging Role of Social Media in Political and Regime Change*. ProQuest, 1-14.
- Theodoropoulou, I. (2015). Politeness on Facebook: The case of Greek birthday wishes. *Pragmatics*, 25(1), 23-45.
- Umar, M. & Rasul, S. (2014). Multifaceted identities of Pakistani youth: Communication through Facebook wall photos. *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 17(1), 51-70.
- Valenzuela, S., Park, N. & Kee, K. F. (2008). Lessons from Facebook: The effect of social network sites on college students' social capital. In *9th International Symposium on Online Journalism*, 4-5.

- Van. Dijck, J. (2012). Facebook as a tool for producing sociality and connectivity. *Television and New Media*, 13 (2), 160-176.
- Van Leuween, T. (2005). *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Watts, R. J. (2003) *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, R. (2014). 'Discourse-Historical Approach' (DHA). In Karen Tracy (ed) *International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 275–287. Oxford: Elsevier.
- Zywica, J. & Danowski, J. (2008). The faces of facebookers: Investigating social enhancement and social compensation hypotheses; predicting Facebook and offline popularity from sociability and self-esteem, and mapping the meanings of popularity with semantic networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14(1), 1-34.
<https://www.facebook.com/ImranKhan.Official?fref=nf>