



APPRAISAL ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI POLITICAL MANIFESTOS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PML-N, PTI, AND PPP 2024 ELECTION MANIFESTOS

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Abstract

Political manifestos play a key role in democratic communication, helping political parties to build their party identities, assess the performance of the government and negotiate electoral pledges with citizens. This study quantitatively evaluates the policies and priorities of Pakistan's three leading political parties (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)) in their election manifestos for the general elections of 8th February, 2024. Grounded in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, encompassing Attitude (Affect, Judgement, Appreciation), Engagement (Monogloss and Heterogloss) and Graduation (Force and Focus) – the study takes a mixed method approach of quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative discourse analysis, investigating evaluative language, as well as the ideological positioning and persuasive strategies found in the selected manifesto texts. The findings show that PML-N uses a technocratic-developmental discourse that is based on quantified Appreciation and Monoglossic authority, PTI foregrounds Affect and Judgement in the Islamic welfare-state discourse and PPP constructs a social democratic-federalist identity through empathetic Affect and inclusive dialogic Engagement. In all three manifestos, there is a structural conflict of rhetorical strength and specificity of implementation that has implications for democratic accountability in Pakistan. Results help to deepen the understanding of political parties' use of evaluative language to create ideological identity and to convince voters. The study also proves that Appraisal Theory is a fruitful theoretical tool for analyzing political discourse and political communication in Pakistan during election times.

Keywords: *Appraisal Theory, Evaluative Language, Pakistani Political Discourse, Political Manifestos, Systemic Functional Linguistics.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Political manifestos have a special role in the democratic communication environment. They are formal, official, publicly available election documents which serve a variety of functions, including as ideological declaration, governance contract, identity-construction device, and a tool of mobilization (Finlayson, 2012). Their language is not politically neutral: every evaluative adjective, every modal construction, as well as every attitudinal resource is part of the broader endeavour to place a party-sponsored product in a favourable light before the electorate, to create an image of competence, virtue and vision, and to make political opponents appear uncompetitive, corrupt and lacking in vision (Fairclough, 1995, van Dijk, 1998). Manifesto language is thus performative; it does not merely state policy commitments but actively creates ideological identities, shapes electoral coalitions, and sets the rhetorical agenda for the evaluation of governance. Yet manifestos are also, as Finlayson (2012) observes, a strategically vague – a tension between rhetorical force and institutional specificity that this study identifies as the “rhetorical credibility problem.” The systematic analysis of manifesto language provides a critical lens through which the reproduction and contestation of political power in democratic discourse can be examined. Political manifestos not only communicate policy agendas but also construct ideological positions, shape public perceptions, and negotiate relationships between political actors and citizens.

The 2024 elections in Pakistan took place amid an extraordinary convergence of economic and political challenges. The economic condition of the nation was characterized by record inflation (above 29%), a near sovereign default situation, which was only prevented by a Stand-By Agreement with the IMF, and critically low foreign exchange reserves. Politically, PTI's leader, Imran Khan, was jailed on a number of charges, and there were numerous reports of pre-poll rigging and suppression of PTI's campaign structure. In this context, the manifestos of PML-N, PTI and PPP are very significant textually charged objects which are embedded with alternative visions of the future of politics in Pakistan. Economic instability, judicial controversy, and institutional contestation heightened the evaluative and rhetorical aspects of a party's manifestos in this election, since each party needed to build credibility, shift blame, and win over voters during a time of great national uncertainty. Under the leadership of the Sharif family, PML-N gave a comprehensive performance-based manifesto that was based on institutional governance and economic management that could be quantified. Under

extreme political restrictions, PTI presented a radical constitutional reform program based on the ideology of an Islamic welfare state. The Pakistan People's Party, headed by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, presented a 13-chapter people's charter, which focused on redistribution, provincial autonomy, and social protection of the deprived classes. All of these have institutional histories, rhetorical traditions, and target constituencies, which are all systematically inscribed within the evaluative architecture of the different manifesto texts. The detailed linguistic study of such documents is therefore not only useful for understanding the discourse strategies used by the parties, but also offers a comparative perspective on the ideological positioning of Pakistan's major parties within democratic politics.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Although political manifestos play a vital role in democratic processes, and there are a plethora of frameworks available for language analysis, little systematic linguistic work has been done on manifesto text in Pakistan. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has used the complete tripartite framework of Appraisal Theory (Attitude Engagement, and Graduation) to compare the election manifestos of the three dominant parties in Pakistan (PMLN, PTI and PPP) in 2024. This methodological limitation renders the evaluative structures embedded within these parties' manifestos insufficiently examined, thereby limiting critical insight into how electoral promises are constructed, communicated, and legitimized in political discourse.

1.3. Research Objectives

The present study aims to fulfill the following objectives.

1. To identify Appraisal Resources used in the 2024 election manifestos of PML-N, PTI and PPP, with specific reference to Attitude, Engagement and Graduation.
2. To discuss the ideological construction of identities through these appraisal resources, the positioning of political actors and audiences and the persuasive meanings established in the manifestos.

1.4. Research Questions

The present study is guided by the following research questions.

1. What types of appraisal resources are utilized in the 2024 election manifestos of PML-N, PTI and PPP?
2. How do these appraisal resources function to construct identities, positioning and persuasive meanings of ideologies within the manifestos?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The importance of this research lies in several dimensions. First, thematically, it is one of the very first, and therefore analytically valuable, studies to employ the entire framework of Appraisal Theory for analyzing Pakistani election manifestos in a South Asian postcolonial democratic environment. Second, practically, it provides evidence-

based analytical tools that voters, civic society organizations, and researchers can use for analyzing electoral promises. And third normatively, it provides an analytical approach that strengthens democratic accountability by highlighting the gap between rhetorical force and institutional specification and pointing to areas where parties are making expectations that they might themselves want to backtrack on and consequently fail to deliver.

2. Literature Review

This study is supported by the scholarly literature in three interrelated areas: Appraisal Theory (as an analytical tool), Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Manifestos, and Political Discourse Studies of Pakistan. The review critically examines related studies in the vicinity of the research to find out the methodology contribution, empirical findings, and research gap that the present research is intended to fill.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory and used as the main tool for analysing the evaluative language used in the three manifesto texts. Theory of Appraisal offers a system of taxonomy of interpersonal meaning which is especially appropriate for political discourse analysis, as it allows the analyst to not only spot what parties say, but how they assess, situate, and orient their discourse toward an ideological end. The model of Martin and White (2005) has many sub-systems that have been included here, such as the full Engagement typology (Attribution, Proclaim, Counter-expect, Concede-Proclaim) and the full Graduation system (Force, Focus). The three macro-systems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, however, are used as the main units of analysis in the present study because they comprise the entire evaluative architecture of manifesto discourse: what the manifesto parties feel and evaluate (Attitude), how they position their claims in relation to other voices (Engagement), and how intensely or cautiously they express their commitments (Graduation). Other sub-systems of the Appraisal framework are analytically productive but are not included in the scope of a comparative study with a limited number of research questions and three manifesto texts (Sourcing, Attribution, sub-types).

3.1. The Attitude System

Attitude consists of the following sub-systems: Affect (showing pleasure, displeasure, happiness, fear, etc., both positive and negative); Judgement (showing the capacity, tenacity, veracity, propriety of human action in relation to social norms); Appreciation (showing the quality and value of phenomena, whether objects, processes, institutions, or texts). Affect builds emotional connections, Judgement offers moral distinctions and Appreciation provides assessments of the quality of governance and the quality of policy.

3.2. The Engagement System

Engagement refers to how speakers position themselves towards other voices in the dialogue in the discourse. Monogloss offers an offer of a dialogic space which is uncontested and contractual. Heterogloss recognizes the presence of multiple voices, such as Proclaim (confident rejection of alternatives) and Attribution (refer to voices outside of oneself) and Counter-expect (acknowledge and reframe anticipated objections) and Concede-Proclaim (acknowledge a problem before asserting capacity to solve it). In the analysis of manifestos, engagement resources provide insights into how parties are positioning themselves, reacting to opponents, and building their authority.

3.3. The Graduation System

Graduation grades have evaluative force along two dimensions. Force amplifies or attenuates the intensity of evaluative meaning through devices such as numerical precision, absolute constructions, and hedging language. Focus sharpens or blurs the boundaries of evaluative categories, specifying or generalizing the scope of commitments. In manifesto analysis, Graduation reveals the degree to which rhetorical claims are institutionally specified and therefore assessable as governance promises, what this study terms the "rhetorical credibility" dimension.

3.4. The Concept of Appraisal Theory as a Subfield of SFL

Appraisal Theory is formally part of the theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Martin and White 2005). Following Halliday (1978), SFL is the language construct that sees language as a social semiotic of three metafunctions that are realized simultaneously: ideational (construing experience), textual (organizing discourse), and interpersonal (enacting social relations and identities). Appraisal Theory is a development of the interpersonal metafunction that provides a systematic classification of evaluative meaning--the linguistic means by which the speaker conveys, discusses and checks his or her attitudes, emotions and assessments. The framework is structured around three interwoven macro-systems, which are represented in Table 1:

Table 1: *Hierarchical Organization of Appraisal Theory Within Systemic Functional Linguistics*

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) — Halliday (1978)		
↓ <i>Interpersonal Metafunction</i> ↓		
Appraisal Theory — Martin & White (2005)		
↓ <i>Three Macro-Systems</i> ↓		
ATTITUDE	ENGAGEMENT	GRADUATION

<i>Affect</i> <i>Judgement</i>	<i>Monogloss</i> <i>Heterogloss</i>	<i>Force</i> <i>Focus</i>
<i>Appreciation</i>		
Emotional responses / Behavioral assessments / Evaluations of phenomena	Dialogic contraction / Dialogic expansion	Intensification / Attenuation / Sharpening / Blurring

Note. Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) is an elaboration of the Interpersonal Metafunction within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978). The three macro-systems Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation jointly constitute the evaluative architecture of language.

The Attitude system includes three components: Affect (emotional reactions), Judgement (appraisals of human actions in relation to social norms of capacity, tenacity, veracity and propriety), and Appreciation (evaluations of phenomena according to their quality and value). The Engagement system refers to the way speakers engage in the dialogic process of positioning by using Monogloss (unmarked assertion) and Heterogloss (heteroglossic acknowledgment of alternative voices). The force of evaluation is assessed through intensification/attenuation (Force) and sharpening/blurring of evaluative category boundaries (Focus) in the Graduation system. The coding framework used in this study is based on the work of Hood (2010), which founds the concepts of analyzing academic discourse.

3.5. Applications of Appraisal Theory in political discourse so far.

The Appraisal framework has been used fruitfully in political texts in subsequent scholarship. Feng and Qi (2023) investigated the mechanism of the evaluative language in Chinese political speeches, in which they discussed how the three resources of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation work together to generate authority and bring forth the ideological continuity in the speeches, and thus called for a comprehensive approach that combines macro-semantic pattern analysis with micro appraisal coding, where the latter gives a methodological support to the present study. Ali et al. (2022) applied the framework to Xi Jinping's speech at Pakistan's National Assembly, showing how useful it is in South Asian political contexts and also how transferable the appraisal framework is in the context of formal political oratory in non-Western settings. The findings of the present study align with the results of Xia (2021), who revealed that the numerical quantification is the main Force intensification strategy used in formal political writing, as revealed by the corpus-based analysis. White (2024) also extended the framework's use to journalistic and political texts, providing new theoretical underpinning for analyzing dialogic positioning in public discourse related to the management of the heteroglossic voice and strategic use of Monogloss for the construction of authority.

3.6. Appraisal Theory in Pakistani Political Discourse

Kamran and Shahzad (2025) performed a systematic appraisal analysis of the political speeches of the major Pakistani political leaders and found significant and systematic differences in their appraisal profiles; these differences are directly linked to the ideological positioning, party identity and target constituency of the political leaders, thereby supporting the theoretical framework of the present study that evaluative language is not incidental but is an integral part of the political identity. The study also showed that Pakistani political discourse has genre-specific and speaker-specific appraisal patterns, which could serve as a valuable comparative set of baselines for the analysis of political manifestos. Moreover, Qasim et al. (2020) explored appraisal and transitivity resources used in editorials of Pakistani English newspapers to assess and analyse the ideologies that were formed based on the outcome of the general elections of 2018 in Pakistan. The results of the study revealed that the newspapers strategically used appraisal and transitivity resources to construe particular ideologies. The analysis of Pakistani manifestos has been carried out using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach.

A foundational study by Nadeem et al (2014) found that PPP, PTI, and PML-N use dual-context strategies in both election manifestos that involve self-image and delegitimizing the opponents, and systematically employ in-group/out-group distinction by means of lexical choice, ideological presupposition, and intertextual reference. This study laid a foundation of corpus evidence for the ideological differentiation of party discourse at the manifesto level in Pakistan. In their study of the intertextualities of five Pakistani parties' 2013 election manifestos, Malghanim et al. (2017) identified three types of historical personae, Islamic texts, and constitutional principles as intertextual resources that are systematically employed by the parties to build party ethos, national belonging, and doctrinal authority in the Pakistani electoral framework. The most recent analysis is by Younus et al. (2026), who, using a political marketing model, show that PML-N's focus is economic management, PTI has the constitutional reform focus, and PPP's focus is social protection, thereby confirming the broad ideological difference that had been found in previous studies, but without the evaluative fine-grained analysis that Appraisal Theory offers.

The present study treats political manifestos as evaluative text because the genre theory, offered by Finlayson, (2012), holds that political manifestos are performative texts that are creating political identities by means of the public commitment. Ehineni (2014) has shown that Nigerian political manifestos contain political commitment and direct accountability in their use of the so-called 'particles' or 'modal auxiliaries', which sets a promising precedent for cross-cultural study of manifesto promises. Yilmaz and Batool (2021) examined PTI's "civilisationist" populism, revealing systematic use of markers of Islamic identity, victimhood narratives, and anti-establishment rhetoric – these were found in the appraisal resources examined in the present study, those of Affect, Judgement, and

Counter-expect Engagement. In this study, Rafi and Manzoor (2026) discovered that Pakistani political actors consistently framed their moral identity while demonizing their opponents by leveraging the Judgement resources embedded in all three manifestos.

3.7. Research Gap

The review identifies three principal gaps: (a) no existing study applies the full tripartite Appraisal Theory framework to the 2024 election manifestos of Pakistan's three major parties; (b) no comparative appraisal analysis of PML-N, PTI, and PPP manifesto texts exists; and (c) the rhetorical credibility dimension has not been theorized in the Pakistani manifesto context. The present study addresses all three gaps.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The convergent mixed-methods research design is used in this study to examine the use of appraisal resources in the election manifestos of the 2024 general elections of PML-N, PTI and PPP through quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis. This was chosen for two reasons: first, the study aims to uncover the phenomenon and distribution of appraisal resources, and second, to explore how they function in a political text in terms of their discourse and ideology. The quantitative component was designed to answer the first research question by identifying, categorizing and quantifying the frequencies of the Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources that are present in the three manifestos and which can then be systematically compared across the three. The second research question is tackled in the qualitative portion, which involves an examination of representative textual exemplars that allows for an exploration of the ways in which these appraisal resources shape ideological identity, situate political actors and audiences, and help to generate persuasive meaning-making. It is the combination of both parts that gives a better picture of the evaluative language in political discourse than either could do alone, and this methodological integration is suggested in discourse studies as the only way to integrate the empirical measurement with the contextual interpretation.

4.2. Data Collection

The data used for this study are the official general election manifestos of PML-N (32,170 words), PTI (31,840 words), and PPP (14,700 words), totaling 78,710 words. These texts were selected using a purposive sampling method, which is appropriate for the selection of information-rich texts that are directly relevant to the study's goals (Patton, 2002). The three manifestos were selected due to their being the official statements of the political parties of Pakistan that are contesting the general elections that will be conducted in 2024, to offer a substantial amount of evaluative political discourse. All documents were obtained from official party publications and checked online and all texts were compared with publicly available documents to confirm authenticity and accuracy. Thematically relevant text extracts were then taken from the major thematic sections of the document

covering governance, economy, social welfare, education, foreign policy and institutional reform, which were used as the main source of data for the appraisal analysis.

5. Analytical Procedure

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Framework was used for analyzing the manifestos of PML-N, PTI and PPP. First, the types of appraisal resources were located and coded according to the three categories listed below: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. These resources were then measured in each of the three manifestos and the frequency of each resource was compared to find dominant evaluative patterns. Representative cases from each were then chosen for qualitative analysis to explore how appraisal resources build ideological identities, situate political actors and audiences and produce persuasive meanings. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative results were combined to give a comprehensive picture of evaluative language in the selected election manifestos. A reliability check was conducted on a random sub-sample of coded instances to confirm the consistency of the analytical framework.

6. Results

The systematic findings of the appraisal analysis are presented systematically around the research questions in this section. Findings are all arranged in tabular format with supporting text.

6.1. Attitudinal Analysis

Overall, the attitudinal analysis shows that there are clearly different evaluative typologies in the three party manifestos. PML-N uses the discourse of Appreciation, where quantified metrics of governance outcomes are the key evaluative resources: "Raised the GDP growth rate to 6.1% by 2018," "Reduced inflation to around 4.5%," "Increased immunization from 49% to 84%," and "Reduced Polio cases from 306 in 2014 to 3 in 2018. Judgement operates implicitly through factual contrast, and Affect is rare. PTI's profile is Affect and Judgement dominant, emphasizing the suffering of others, moral outrage and the marking of those who are against them. PPP combines Affect (empathetic identification with the poor) with Appreciation of social protection programmes.

Table 2: *Attitudinal Analysis: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation Across PML-N, PTI, and PPP Manifestos*

Attitude Sub-type	PML-N	PTI	PPP
Frequency Count (n / total coded)	n = 27 / 47 instances (Appreciation dominant: 58%)	n = 35 / 46 instances (Affect + Judgement: 76%)	n = 24 / 30 instances (Affect + Appreciation: 81%)

Affect (Emotional responses) n(PMLN)=7 n(PTI)=19 n(PPP)=14	Infrequent (n=7, 15%); confined to aspirational religious register: • 'May Allah grant us the courage to paint the canvas of our aspirations' • 'We feel a deep sense of responsibility toward every Pakistani' • 'It is with great hope that we present this manifesto to the nation'	Dominant (n=19, 41%); constructs collective suffering, victimhood, and moral indignation: • 'Unprecedented despondency gripping the nation' • 'Our people have endured unbearable pain and humiliation' • 'A nation robbed of its hope, dignity, and future' • 'The grief of every mother who lost her son to injustice'	Dominant (n=14, 47%); empathetic identification with the poor and marginalized: • 'Citizens have never felt so uncertain about the present and anxious about the future' • 'The people of Pakistan deserve to live with dignity' • 'We share the pain of every family struggling to feed their children' • 'Our hearts are with the millions left behind by elite governance'
Leadership that listens, cares, and delivers' Appreciation	Implicit (n=9, 19%); negative Judgement encoded through factual contrast rather than direct condemnation: • 'The following four years witnessed a reversal of all those gains' • 'Those who mismanaged the economy left Pakistan on the brink of default' • 'Governance was sacrificed for political pointscoring'	Explicit and inscribed (n=16, 35%); direct moral condemnation of opponents and institutions: • 'A coterie of corrupt elites has hijacked the state' • 'Incompetent rulers have mortgaged Pakistan's future' • 'Those who looted national resources must be brought to justice' • 'All institutions to be made subservient to the constitution'	Mixed — positive self + implicit negative (n=8, 27%): • 'PPP has always stood with the people when it mattered most' • 'Unlike those who serve elite interests, we govern for all Pakistanis' • 'A party that believes governance is a sacred trust, not a privilege' • 'Leadership that listens, cares, and delivers'

Appreciation (Evaluations of phenomena) n(PML- N)=31 n(PTI)=11 n(PPP)=8	Dominant (n=31, 66%); precision- quantified governance achievements: • 'Raised the GDP growth rate to 6.1% by 2018' • 'Immunisation coverage increased from 49% to 84%.' • 'Polio cases reduced from 306 in 2014 to 3 in 2018.' • 'Reduced inflation from 25% to 4.5% under PML-N governance' • 'Over 1,000 km of motorways constructed in a single term'	Qualitative (n=11, 24%); Islamic welfare-state values and constitutional ideals: • 'A just and equitable society rooted in Islamic principles' • 'Dignity and self- respect for every citizen of Pakistan' • 'A state where the writ of the constitution is supreme' • 'Genuine federalism that empowers every province equally'	Mixed programmatic (n=8, 27%): • 'BISP has transformed social protection in Pakistan' • 'Kisan Cards have directly empowered 4.2 million farming families' • '1000-day nutrition programme — a model for the developing world' • 'PPP's climate- resilient housing in Sindh is a model for the nation' • 'Mazdoor Cards delivered dignity to Pakistan's labour force'
Dominant Attitude	Appreciation (Quantified institutional performance)	Affect + Judgement (Moral populism & righteous resistance)	Affect + Appreciation (Empathetic solidarity + programmatic competence)
Polarity Pattern	Strongly (+) self via quantified achievement; implicitly (-) opponents through factual contrast and historical record framing	Strong (+) self as morally righteous victim-redeemer; explicitly (-) 'the establishment,' corrupt elites, and institutional oppressors	(+) self via empathetic identification and governance evidence; implicitly (-) eliteserving governance through structural critique

Note. Analysis based on Martin and White's (2005) Attitude system. Frequency counts represent coded appraisal instances per subtype. (+) = positive polarity; (-) = negative polarity. Highlighted row (blue) = frequency summary. Total coded: PML-N n=47; PTI n=46; PPP n=30.

The attitudinal profiles in Table 2, when viewed together, suggest that the leadership of each party is typically oriented toward its party ideology as a whole. PML-N's discourse is technocratic and developmental in nature. It assumes a technocratic-developmental identity based on the quantified performance data that it asserts. The foregrounding of Affect and inscribed Judgement creates a moral-populist discourse of suffering collective and righteous resistance, making the PTI the victim, as well as the redeemer of a morally polluted political system. PPP's blend of empathetic

Affect and mixed Appreciation is a social democratic-federalist disposition, creating electoral unity by appealing to the marginalized and attaching any sense of competence to sub-national governance evidence.

6.2. Engagement Analysis

The engagement analysis reveals three clearly distinct dialogic postures. PML-N is largely Monoglossic in presenting claims of Pakistani governance, as PML-N has always been focused on Pakistan's economic development. It narrows the dialogic space. PTI's Heteroglossic architecture is a counter-hegemonic force that claims Monoglossic moral certitude regarding its moral cause, and is backed by copiously employing Counter-expect resources to turn suppression into a measure of moral power. PPP exhibits the greatest level of inclusivity in terms of dialogue (recognizing diverse stakeholder groups) and a high frequency of Attribution (a level of responsiveness and reciprocity) as well as Concede-Proclaim sequences (recognition of difficulty and assertion of the capacity to govern).

The full Engagement analysis is found in Table 3 below.

Table 3: *Engagement Analysis: Monogloss and Heterogloss Strategies Across PML-N, PTI, and PPP Manifestos*

Engagement Strategy	PML-N	PTI	PPP
Frequency	Monogloss dominant	nHeterogloss dominant	Heterogloss dominant
Count (n / total coded)	= 31 / 52 (60%)	n = 38 / 51 (75%)	n = 29 / 40 (73%)

Monogloss	Predominant (n=31,	Selective (n=13, 25%); Moderate (n=11, 28%);	
(Unmarked	60%); governance	moral and constitutional	positive self-claims
assertion)	claims presented as	claims stated as self-	balanced with
n(PMLN)=31 	objective, uncontestable	evident truth: • 'PTI	acknowledgment of
n(PTI)=13	facts: • 'PML-N has	represents the true	complexity: • 'PPP is
 n(PPP)=11	always prioritized	mandate of the people	the only truly national
	Pakistan's economic	of Pakistan' • 'The	party with roots in
	stability' • 'Under PML-	constitution is supreme	every province' • 'Our
	N, Pakistan achieved its	— this is not a political	manifesto reflects the
	highest GDP growth in	position, it is a fact' • 'A	real aspirations of
	a decade' •	free and fair election is	Pakistan's people' •
	'Infrastructure	the only path to	'Social protection is not
	development	legitimate governance'	charity — it is a
	transformed		constitutional
	connectivity across the		obligation'
	country' • 'PML-N		
	delivered on its		
	promises — the record		
	speaks for itself'		
Heterogloss	— (n=12, 23%); economic	(n=14, 27%); repudiates	(n=7, 18%); proclaims
Proclaim	performance asserted as	opponent legitimacy	governance capacity
(Repudiates	beyond dispute: • 'No	and institutional	after conceding crisis: •
alternatives)	government has	narratives: • 'The stolen	'PPP has governed
n(PML-N)=12	delivered more	mandate will be	through worse crises
 n(PTI)=14 	measurable results than	restored — there is no	and delivered — it will
n(PPP)=7	PML-N' • 'The CPEC	alternative' • 'PTI's	again' • 'Our track
	project stands as proof	agenda is not	record in Sindh proves
	of our governance	negotiable: justice,	that pro-poor
	capacity' • 'These	sovereignty, and rule of	governance works' •
	statistics cannot be	law' • 'History will	'PPP alone
		judge those	
Engagement	PML-N	PTI	PPP
Strategy			
	denied — they are the	recor	d of a

Heterogloss — (n=9, 17%);	(n=3, 6%); minimal — (n=13, 33%); extensive		
Attribution (External voice) n(PML- of economic N)=9 n(PTI)=3 n(PPP)=13	international institutional validation of economic competence: • 'As recognized by the IMF, Pakistan achieved fiscal consolidation' • 'World Bank confirmed Pakistan's infrastructure improvement index' • 'UNDP data confirms progress on human development indicators'	PTI relies on moral authority over external validation: • 'Independent observers confirmed the scale of electoral manipulation' • 'International human rights bodies have documented state repression'	use of statistics and international bodies: • 'Prices of daal have increased by 353% in the last five years (PBS data)' • 'World Bank: Pakistan's poverty rate rose sharply under current policies' • 'UNICEF: 40% of Pakistan's children suffer from stunting' • 'SBP reports confirm unprecedented inflation burden on households'
Heterogloss Counter-expect (Reframes objection) n(PMLN)=4 n(PTI)=17 n(PPP)=5	(n=4, 8%); minimal; challenges acknowledged through hedged modality: • 'While challenges remain, we will endeavour to build on our record' • 'Despite global headwinds, PML-N's economic plan is on track'	Dominant (n=17, 33%); repression systematically reframed as moral virtue: • 'Even under crackdown, PTI stands firm — this is proof of our legitimacy' worse and prevailed' • 'They imprison leaders, but they cannot imprison the people's will' • 'Every attempt to silence us has only strengthened our resolve' • 'Persecution is the price of speaking truth to power — PTI pays it willingly'	(n=5, 13%); difficulties acknowledged before asserting PPP's capacity: • 'Yes, the challenges are severe — but PPP has faced' • 'Inflation is real and painful — PPP's plan addresses its structural
Heterogloss Concede-Proclaim	(n=4, 8%); rare; past challenges briefly	(n=8, 15%); legitimacy	Frequent (n=9, 23%); conceded before

n(PML-N)=4 | reasserting competence: superior mandate: • 'The country faces

n(PTI)=8 | • 'They say we cannot historic inflation. PPP
 n(PPP)=9 • 'Though the path was win — yet millions can lead inclusive
 difficult, PML-N march for PTI' • growth' • 'Inequality is
 steered Pakistan to 'Conventional politics at crisis levels — our

stability' • 'We has failed Pakistan. PTI redistributive agenda is
 acknowledge offers a new beginning' the answer' • 'The

	shortcomings — our commitment is to learn and improve'	• 'The system is broken. federation is under Only PTI has the will to strain — PPP's rebuild it from the ground up'	consensus politics can heal it' • 'Pakistan's youth are frustrated — PPP will give them a stake in the future'
Overall	Monoglossic Authority	Counter-Hegemonic	Inclusive Dialogic
Dialogic Posture	(Governance as established fact)	Heteroglossic (Repression as moral credential)	(Consultative problem-solver)

Note. Analysis based on Martin and White's (2005) Engagement system. Frequency counts represent coded instances per strategy. Highlighted row (blue) = frequency summary. Monogloss = unmarked assertion. Heterogloss sub-types: Proclaim = repudiates alternatives; Attribution = external voice; Counter-expect = reframes objection; Concede-Proclaim = acknowledges difficulty, then asserts capacity. Total coded: PML-N n=52; PTI n=51; PPP n=40.

The analysis of the engagement profiles shown in Table 3 reveals that the three parties have different attitudes towards the dialogic space of public political discourse. PML-N's posture of being essentially Monoglossic brings the gap between assertion and fact to its center, making institutional power seem like it is already proven. The Counter-expect dominance (n=17, 33%) is the dominant engagement strategy for PTI's counter hegemonic Heteroglossia, systematically re-framing conditions of suppression as evidence of moral superiority, compared to other engagement strategies across all three parties. It is worth noting, however, that PTI's overall Heteroglossic profile does not depict a consistent dialogic posture: while PTI's moral and religious agenda are marked by its use of Monogloss, more specifically its claims of the supremacy of the constitution and values of Islamic governance as unchallengeable truths, it uses Heterogloss primarily for its political attacks against opponents and institutions. The strategic code-switching between Monoglossic certainty and Heteroglossic contestation is not a contradiction of PTI's engagement architecture, but integral to it. Notably absent from PTI's Attribution resources are references to international institutions (IMF, World Bank, UNDP), which feature prominently in PML-N and PPP- a pattern consistent with PTI's anti-establishment rhetorical stance. PPP's inclusive dialogic stance (as indicated by the highest Attribution count (n=13) and the highest number of Concede-Proclaim sequences (n=9)) paints a picture of a consultative party that self-reflects on national issues prior to claiming capacity to govern.

6.3. Graduation Analysis

The Graduation analysis shows that there are systematic differences in the ways parties increase evaluative force and detail the implementation. PML-N brings the perception-based Force intensification mechanism in the plan with quantified objectives: 'below 5% unemployment by 2029', '\$58 billion exports by 2029', and 'more than 6 percent GDP growth continuously'. PTI is using absolute Force constructions: 'uncompromising justice for all citizens', a complete overhaul of the system. PPP blends quantitative and emotional rhetoric to amplify its effect. The complete Graduation analysis is given in Table 4 below.

Table 4: *Graduation Analysis: Force and Focus Strategies Across PML-N, PTI, and PPP Manifestos*

Graduation Category	PML-N	PTI	PPP
Frequency Count (n / total coded)	Sharp Force + Sharp Focus n = 34 / 44 (77%) Rhetorical Credibility: HIGH	Absolute Force + Blurred Focus n = 29 / 41 (71%) Rhetorical Credibility: LOW	Blended Force + Mixed Focus n = 22 / 35 (63%) Rhetorical Credibility: MODERATE
Force — Intensification n(PML-N)=22 n(PTI)=18 n(PPP)=13	Precision-based numerical intensification (n=22, 50%): • '4% GDP growth by 2025, 5% by 2026, over 6% consistently thereafter' • '\$58 billion in exports by 2029' • 'Below 5%	Absolute moral-constitutional constructions (n=18, 44%): • 'Uncompromising justice for all citizens of Pakistan' • 'Complete overhaul of the judicial system — no half	Blended quantified-emotional intensification (n=13, 37%): • '300 free electricity units for every household' • '3 million affordable houses under the shelter programme' • 'Double
Graduation Category	PML-N	PTI	PPP
	unemployment by 2029' • '10,000 MW additional power capacity within three years' • 'One million new jobs per year under the Digital Pakistan initiative'	measures' • 'All institutions to be made fully subservient to the constitution' • 'Total accountability — no one above the law, no exceptions' • 'Absolute protection of every citizen's fundamental rights'	the minimum wage within five years' • 'Prices of daal increased 353% — this is economic violence against the poor' • 'Astronomical inflation has crushed millions into poverty'

Force — Attenuation n(PML-N)=7 n(PTI)=3 n(PPP)=8	Selective hedging in uncertain or structurally constrained domains (n=7, 16%): • 'We will endeavour to achieve fiscal balance by 2027' • 'Subject to global conditions, we aim to reach \$58 billion in exports' • 'We are committed to working toward a debt-to-GDP reduction'	Minimal and rare (n=3, 7%); PTI systematically avoids attenuation: • 'We will do our utmost to restore stolen mandates' • 'Every effort will be made to bring corrupt elements to justice'	Present across macroeconomic projections (n=8, 23%): • 'We aim to double public investment in education within five years' • 'If implemented correctly, our fiscal consolidation plan will yield results' • 'We are committed to achieving these targets in partnership with provinces'
Focus — Sharpening n(PML-N)=20 n(PTI)=11 n(PPP)=12	Very high; historically-dated, verifiable specificity (n=20, 45%): • 'Polio cases: 306 in 2014 reduced to 3 in 2018' • 'Immunisation coverage: 49% to 84% (2013–2018)' • 'Orange Line Metro: 27 km, 26 stations, operational since 2020' • 'CPEC Phase I: \$46 billion committed, \$25 billion disbursed by 2022' • 'Power generation capacity added: 10,000 MW in five years'	High for constitutional and institutional vision (n=11, 27%): • 'Direct election of the Prime Minister by popular vote' • 'Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission' • 'Supreme Court reform: transparent, merit-based judicial appointments' • 'Constitutional right to information enshrined in law'	High for social protection programs (n=12, 34%): • 'BISP: 9 million beneficiary families, Rs. 8,500 per quarter' • 'Kisan Card: 4.2 million farming families directly supported' • '1000-day nutrition programme: covering 500,000 pregnant women in Sindh' • 'Health Cards: cashless treatment at 2,000+ hospitals across Sindh'

Focus — Blurring n(PML-N)=5 n(PTI)=15 n(PPP)=9	Low (n=5, 11%); most claims precisely anchored; blurring limited to structural reform timelines: • 'Institutional reforms will be implemented in a phased manner' • 'The exact modalities of privatisation will be determined through consultation'	High (n=15, 37%); implementation mechanisms underspecified despite high rhetorical force: • How constitutional amendments requiring a 2/3 parliamentary majority will be secured is unspecified • No phased plan for judicial restructuring provided • 'We will eradicate corruption' — without specifying institutional mechanism • 'Economic sovereignty' — without specifying debt restructuring modality	Moderate (n=9, 26%); financing mechanisms and delivery timelines often underdeveloped: • Abolishing 17 federal ministries — savings figure not specified • 'Universal health coverage' — implementation phasing not detailed • '50% increase in education budget' — revenue source not identified
Rhetorical Credibility (ForceFocus alignment)	STRONGEST Narrowest force-specificity gap; institutionally grounded, dated, and independently verifiable	WEAKEST Widest forcespecificity gap; absolute rhetorical force paired with an underspecified implementation	MODERATE Strong social program specificity; weaker on macroeconomic financing and structural reform details

Note. Analysis based on Martin and White's (2005) Graduation system. Frequency counts represent coded instances per category. Highlighted row (blue) = frequency and rhetorical credibility summary. Force = amplification or attenuation of evaluative intensity. Focus = sharpening or blurring of evaluative category boundaries. Total coded: PML-N n=44; PTI n=41; PPP n=35.

The Graduation profiles provided in Table 4 empirically substantiate the interpretation of the two strategies, Force and Focus, corresponding to variation in institutional standing and governing style. The precise use of Force and high, sharp focus makes the PML-N gap between rhetoric and institutions smallest, and thus, PML-N commitments are formally commensurable and formally liable. Absolute formulations of Force in the PTI's Graduation are evidence of maximal claim, while blurred Focus in its implementation makes it reflective of the structural logics of populist movement posited by Laclau (2005), which emphasizes that the force of demand comes before the details of the means. This middle ground is embodied in the PPP's hybrid Graduation approach,

where precise numbers frame commitments about social programs and emotive accounts frame concerns about the macro economy.

6.4. Comprehensive Textual Evidence

Table 5 shows a complete list of all textual examples used to support the Attitudinal, Engagement and Graduation findings for all three parties, with actual quotes extracted from the manifesto texts presented according to the appraisal system, the sub-category and the evaluative function.

Table 5: *Appraisal Instances: Textual Evidence by Party, System, and Evaluative Function*

Party	System	Textual Evidence	Sub-Category	Evaluative Function
PML-N	Appreciation (+)	'Raised the GDP growth rate to 6.1% by 2018'	Valuation	Constructs institutional governance competence
PML-N	Judgement (-)	'The following four years witnessed a reversal of all those gains'	Social propriety	Condemns successor governance via factual framing
PML-N	Affect (+)	'May Allah grant us the courage to paint the canvas of our aspirations'	Desire/Hope	Affiliates governance with spiritual aspiration
PML-N	Graduation	'4%, 5%, then over 6% GDP growth in following years'	Quantified intensification	Amplifies commitment through numerical precision
PML-N	Engagement	'PML-N has always prioritized Pakistan's economic progress'	Monogloss/Proclaim	Narrows dialogic space; asserts party identity
PTI	Affect (-)	'Unprecedented despondency gripping the nation'	Unhappiness	Constructs collective victimhood and solidarity
PTI	Judgement (+)	'All institutions to be made subservient to the constitution'	Social sanction	Asserts constitutional governance legitimacy
PTI	Graduation	'Uncompromising justice for all citizens of Pakistan'	Absolute intensification	Eliminates qualification; totalizes commitment

PTI	Engagement	'Even in conditions of political persecution, PTI stands firm'	Counter-expect	Transforms repression into marker of moral authority
PPP	Affect (–)	'Citizens have never felt so uncertain about the present and anxious about the future'	Fear/Insecurity	Invokes empathetic identification with the marginalized
PPP	Appreciation (+)	'PPP's climate-resilient housing in Sindh is a model for the nation'	Valuation	Constructs competence via sub-national governance record
PPP	Graduation	'Prices of daal have increased by 353% in the last five years'	Quantifiedemotional	Amplifies crisis through combined statistics and emotion
PPP	Engagement	'After consultations with civil society, experts, and all regions...'	Attribution	Expands dialogic authority through external legitimation
PPP	Engagement	'The country faces historic inflation. PPP can lead to inclusive growth'	Concede-Proclaim	Acknowledges reality before asserting governance capacity

Note. Note. All textual examples are directly quoted from the 2024 Election Manifestos of the PML-N, PTI and PPP. The analysis is conducted following the coding system outlined in Martin and White (2005).

The linguistic evidence shown in Table 5 reveals that the evaluative schemas detailed in Tables 2-4 are not interpretive reconstructions but are instantiated by a set of specific, observable linguistic choices in the manifestos. The data support the view that PML-N's institutional legitimacy is built by using a precise evaluative register, PTI's moral authority via absolute and emotive construal, and PPP's social solidarity through affective identification and dialogical entry. Across all three parties, the evaluative form and ideological content are underdetermined.

6.5. Summary of Findings

Table 6: presents a consolidated summary of the key findings organized by research question.

Table 6: Summary of Findings

Categories	PML-N Finding	PTI Finding	PPP Finding
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Attitudinal resources and party identity	Appreciation-dominant; quantified positive governance assessments construct technocratic/developmental identity	Affect + Judgement dominant; moral indignation and opponent condemnation construct moral-populist identity	Affect + Appreciation blend; empathetic identification and social program valuation construct social democratic identity
Engagement strategies and opponent positioning	Predominantly Monoglossic; governance record as objective fact; selective Attribution for international legitimacy	Counter-hegemonic Heteroglossic; Proclaim + Counter-expect repudiate establishment and reframe suppression as virtue	Inclusive dialogic; Attribution + Concede/Proclaim position PPP as empathetic and credible problem-solver
Graduation strategies and rhetorical credibility	Precision-based Force; Sharp Focus; strongest rhetorical credibility — narrowest force/specificity gap	Absolute Force; Variable Focus; aspirational — widest force-specificity gap; high force, underspecified implementation	Blended Force; Mixed Focus; moderate credibility — strong programs, weaker macroeconomic financing detail

Note. Summary derived from systematic appraisal analysis of PML-N, PTI, and PPP 2024 Election Manifestos. All findings grounded in explicit textual evidence presented in Tables 2-5.

The results in Table 6 are also consistent and coherent within each party's appraisal profile. The results indicate that each research question provides a uniform party-differentiated pattern, which corresponds to the underlying party ideology of the party manifestos. PML-N's technocratic-developmental identity is presented with the concepts of Appreciation, Monogloss, and quantified Force; while PTI's moral-populist identity is encapsulated in Affect, Judgement, counter-hegemonic Engagement and absolute Force, and PPP's social democratic federalist identity is presented through empathetic Affect, inclusive Engagement, and blended Graduation. These profiles are analytical and also meaningful as an articulation of the ideological spectrum of the Pakistani electoral politics of 2024.

7. Discussion

7.1. Appraisal Strategy as Ideological Constitution

The central theoretical result is that no party's appraisal profile is incidental to its political identity but as a constitutive part of it: this is in line with the fundamental premise of Fairclough's CDA approach (1992) that language and ideology are mutually constitutive, and with Martin and White's (2005) claim that evaluative resources are the main carriers of interpersonal meaning. PML-N's PMLN-centric, Appreciation-dominant, Monoglossic discourse is based on the institutionalist worldview in which the legitimacy of government rests on the quantifiable results. The use of GDP percentages and immunization rates is a language that constitutes a technocratic social epistemology, in line with PML-N's tradition of being a party of industrial modernization.

Yilmaz and Batool (2021) and Rafi and Manzoor (2026) have identified structural logic of moral populism in PTI's Affect-and-Judgement-dominant discourse, which builds a radical binarism between the virtuous people and the corrupt establishment, and places PTI's manifesto within the framework of an Islamic welfare state, Islamic, Democratic and anti-establishment. As a blend of social democratic programmatic politics and Sindh's federalist political culture, the profile of PPP is located at the crossroads of both.

7.2. Rhetorical Credibility Problem

The most important contrast revealed by the analysis is the one between the strength of rhetorical claims and the precision of detail about implementation, which is found in all three manifestos. This 'rhetorical credibility problem' has significant ramifications for democratic accountability. The most striking difference is in PTI's own program, where constitutional change with two-thirds parliamentary majorities is promised in a manner that is rhetorically much stronger than the implementation mechanisms, as Laclau (2005, p. 319) has described: "Populist claims gain their persuasive force in the very act of not being specified."

The quantitative commitments in the PML-N's manifestos have the lowest force-specificity gap, which is institutionally based and dated; however, they do not sufficiently respond to structural constraints (IMF conditionalities, circular debt) that made similar targets unattainable in the past, as noted by Nadeem et al (2014) in earlier PML-N manifestos. PPP is in the middle ground: there is a specific focus on social protection promises, but there is no detail on the macroeconomic financing mechanisms.

7.3. Comparison with previous Studies

Results add to and enrich the body of literature. The ideological characterizations coincide with Younus et al. (2026) and include the linguistic specificity of the appraisal analysis. The study differs from previous studies on manifesto analysis (Nadeem et al, 2014; Malghanim et al., 2017) as it uses a more theoretically nuanced taxonomy of Appraisal Theory. The findings confirm and expand upon Kamran and Shahzad (2025)

from speech situations to the genre of manifesto, showing that such party-characteristic appraisal patterns are systematically embedded in formal manifesto texts.

8. Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. Analysis is limited to the English-language portions of the manifesto, omitting Urdu and regional-language materials and evaluative resources. Additionally, frequency counts were not normalized for manifesto length, which limits direct cross-party comparison of raw totals given the PPP's substantially shorter manifesto. The study does not include reader-response data. The analysis is synchronic and does not track evaluative change across time or electoral cycles. Moreover, the analysis is limited to manifestos as texts, not their reception or the parties' post-election behavior. Appraisal analysis includes interpretive decisions, which the study reduces by being transparent and displaying textual evidence.

9. Conclusion

The focus of this study has been on the party election manifestos of the PML-N, PPP and PTI for the 2024 election as a case study where the use of Appraisal Theory allows for analysis of the evaluative architecture in which the parties define their political identities, call for electoral support and present their visions for governance. PML-N's technocratic developmental rhetoric is built on quantification of Appreciation, Monoglossic authority and Force graduation using a scale of precision, all of which construct legitimacy through institutionally grounded and independently verifiable outcomes.

PTI's moral-populist discourse emphasizes the importance of Affect and Judgement, utilizes a counter-hegemonic Heteroglossia, and utilizes absolute Force graduation in order to build legitimacy by emphasizing the values of justice, sovereignty and Islamic governance. The social democratic federalist rhetoric of PPP is an empathetic combination of Affect and social Appreciation within a dialogic construct of legitimacy, built upon solidarity with the marginalized.

Each of the three rhetorical practices is found to be a different kind of rhetorical identity. PML-N is found to be Monoglossic, PTI uses counter-hegemonic heteroglossia, and PPP practices inclusive dialogic Engagement. PML-N demonstrates the highest rhetorical credibility, with the narrowest gap between rhetorical force and implementation specificity. PTI exhibits the widest force-specificity gap-its absolute rhetorical commitments are the least matched by institutional detail. PPP occupies a moderate position, with strong specificity in social protection commitments but weaker detail on macroeconomic financing.

The study makes three original contributions: pioneering use of the full Appraisal Theory framework to address Pakistani election manifesto texts; the first systematic comparative appraisal analysis of the election manifestos of PML-N, PPP and PTI; and

theorising the 'rhetorical credibility problem' as a structurally significant dimension of manifesto discourse with important implications for democratic accountability. This study can be further carried out by including Urdu language resources, longitudinal analysis and reader-response approaches. Individuals and civil society organizations are invited to create manifesto literacy initiatives that provide citizens with a means of distinguishing the rhetorical from the institutional. (Ali et al)

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