



EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE IN LANDMARK PAKISTANI SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS: A CORPUS-BASED APPRAISAL THEORY ANALYSIS

Hafsa Mumtaz mumtazhafsa6@gmail.com	BS English (TESOL) Graduate from Department of English, University of Okara, Pakistan.
Kashf Naseer kashfnaseer8@gmail.com	BS English (TESOL) Graduate from Department of English, University of Okara, Pakistan.
Rimsha Jan Muhammad rimshajaan2004@gmail.com	BS English (TESOL) Graduate from Department of English, University of Okara, Pakistan.

Abstract

Judicial judgments are not merely legal documents; they are persuasive institutional texts through which judges evaluate constitutional principles, governmental actions, and legal arguments. Despite the growing body of research on legal discourse, limited attention has been paid to the evaluative dimensions of Pakistani judicial language. This study investigates evaluative language in landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan using Appraisal Theory within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics. A specialized corpus comprising eight landmark constitutional judgments delivered between 1972 and 2017 was purposively compiled and analysed through a corpus-assisted qualitative research design. The study integrates Corpus Linguistics with Appraisal Theory to examine how the appraisal systems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation construct judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and persuasive legal reasoning. The findings indicate that evaluative language is a pervasive feature of Pakistani constitutional judicial discourse. Attitude, particularly Judgment, emerged as the dominant appraisal resource, reflecting judges' emphasis on evaluating the legality, propriety, and constitutional conduct of governmental institutions and public authorities. Engagement resources reveal the dialogic nature of judicial reasoning through the negotiation of competing legal arguments and constitutional interpretations, while Graduation resources strengthen the intensity and certainty of judicial evaluation. Collectively, these appraisal systems enable judges to reinforce constitutional supremacy, institutional credibility, and the rule of law. The study extends the application of Appraisal Theory to Pakistani judicial discourse and demonstrates the value of integrating corpus linguistic techniques with discourse analysis in legal language research. It contributes to the fields of legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, corpus-assisted discourse studies, and judicial discourse analysis by providing new insights into the linguistic construction of judicial evaluation in constitutional adjudication.

Keywords: *Appraisal Theory, Constitutional Judgments, Corpus Linguistics, Evaluative Language, Judicial Discourse, Legal Discourse, Supreme Court of Pakistan, Systemic Functional Linguistics.*

Corresponding Author: Hafsa Mumtaz (BS English (TESOL) Graduate from Department of English, University of Okara, Pakistan)
Email: mumtazhafsa6@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Language serves as the primary medium through which legal institutions construct, interpret, and legitimize judicial authority. Judicial decisions are not merely collections of legal rules; rather, they are carefully structured texts in which judges justify interpretations, evaluate evidence, negotiate competing arguments, and establish constitutional principles through language. Consequently, judicial judgments represent a distinctive genre of legal discourse characterized by precise linguistic choices that shape legal reasoning and influence the interpretation of law. From a linguistic perspective, judicial language performs not only an informative function but also an evaluative one, enabling judges to express attitudes, assign responsibility, reinforce institutional authority, and persuade multiple audiences, including litigants, lawyers, policymakers, and the wider public. The study of evaluative language in judicial discourse therefore provides valuable insights into how legal meanings are constructed and institutional power is exercised through linguistic choices (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Bhatia, 1993; Gibbons, 2003).

Legal discourse has increasingly attracted scholarly attention within applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and forensic linguistics because of its unique combination of specialized vocabulary, institutional authority, and persuasive reasoning. Unlike ordinary communication, legal texts function within a highly regulated institutional framework where language performs constitutive, interpretive, and authoritative roles simultaneously. Judicial opinions are particularly significant because they establish precedents, interpret constitutional provisions, resolve legal disputes, and influence future legal practice. Scholars have demonstrated that judges employ linguistic resources not only to explain legal principles but also to evaluate competing legal positions, justify judicial conclusions, and construct legitimacy for institutional decisions. Consequently, legal discourse has become an important area for investigating the relationship between language, ideology, power, and institutional authority (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Solan & Tiersma, 2005; Bhatia, 2017).

Within systemic functional linguistics (SFL), language is viewed as a social semiotic system through which speakers and writers simultaneously represent experience, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and organize textual meanings. Halliday's interpersonal metafunction is particularly relevant to judicial discourse because it explains how language enables writers to express attitudes, negotiate alignment, and construct authority. Judicial judgments frequently involve the evaluation of evidence, legal precedents, constitutional principles, governmental actions, and the credibility of

competing arguments. These evaluative processes are fundamental to legal reasoning because judicial decisions are expected to justify why one interpretation is preferred over another. Consequently, the interpersonal dimension of language provides an appropriate analytical lens for examining how judges construct authority and legitimacy through evaluation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Eggins, 2004).

Building upon Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, Martin and White (2005) developed Appraisal Theory to provide a comprehensive framework for analysing evaluative language in discourse. Appraisal Theory explains how speakers and writers communicate evaluation through three interconnected systems: **Attitude**, which concerns expressions of affect, judgment, and appreciation; **Engagement**, which examines how writers acknowledge, reject, or negotiate alternative viewpoints; and **Graduation**, which analyses the linguistic resources used to amplify or soften evaluative meanings. Rather than viewing evaluation as isolated lexical items, Appraisal Theory conceptualizes evaluation as a systematic interpersonal resource through which writers position themselves toward people, events, institutions, and propositions. Because judicial opinions are inherently argumentative and evaluative, Appraisal Theory offers an effective theoretical framework for investigating how judges linguistically construct legal authority, constitutional legitimacy, and institutional credibility (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015; Bednarek, 2006).

Over the past two decades, Appraisal Theory has been widely applied to diverse forms of institutional discourse, including news reporting, political speeches, academic writing, classroom interaction, healthcare communication, and corporate discourse. Researchers have demonstrated that evaluative language plays a central role in shaping persuasion, ideology, credibility, and interpersonal positioning across professional genres. Studies have also shown that appraisal resources contribute significantly to the construction of institutional authority by enabling writers to negotiate agreement, strengthen arguments, and establish legitimacy. Despite this growing body of scholarship, relatively limited attention has been devoted to judicial discourse, particularly constitutional judgments issued by apex courts. Existing studies have primarily focused on legal interpretation, rhetorical strategies, or critical discourse analysis, while systematic investigations of evaluative language through the Appraisal framework remain comparatively scarce (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; White, 2003; Bednarek, 2008).

Recent advances in corpus linguistics have further expanded opportunities for analysing evaluative language in large collections of authentic texts. Corpus-assisted discourse studies combine computational techniques with qualitative interpretation, enabling researchers to identify recurring linguistic patterns that might remain unnoticed through manual reading alone. Corpus methods facilitate the systematic examination of lexical frequencies, concordances, collocations, and phraseological patterns while

preserving contextual interpretation. Consequently, corpus-assisted approaches have become increasingly valuable in legal linguistics because judicial judgments are typically lengthy, complex, and linguistically dense. Integrating corpus linguistics with Appraisal Theory enables researchers to identify both the distribution and contextual functions of evaluative language across multiple judicial decisions, thereby enhancing the reliability and transparency of discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

The linguistic analysis of judicial discourse has gained increasing importance because courts exercise substantial influence over constitutional governance, democratic institutions, and public policy. Judicial opinions do more than interpret statutory provisions; they construct legal realities by legitimizing constitutional principles, evaluating governmental conduct, and defining the boundaries of individual rights. Through carefully selected evaluative expressions, judges distinguish lawful from unlawful conduct, legitimate from illegitimate authority, and constitutional from unconstitutional actions. These evaluative choices contribute to the persuasive force of judicial reasoning and reinforce public confidence in the legal system. Therefore, examining evaluative language within judicial judgments offers valuable insights into the linguistic mechanisms through which courts exercise institutional power and maintain judicial legitimacy (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2008; Gibbons, 2003).

Within the Pakistani context, the Supreme Court occupies a particularly significant constitutional position because its judgments shape legal doctrine, constitutional interpretation, democratic governance, judicial independence, and the protection of fundamental rights. Landmark constitutional cases such as *Asma Jilani v. Government of Punjab* (1972), *Miss Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (1988), *Shehla Zia v. WAPDA* (1994), *Sindh High Court Bar Association v. Federation of Pakistan* (2009), and *Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi v. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif* (2017) have profoundly influenced Pakistan's constitutional and political development. These judgments are not only legally significant but also linguistically rich, containing extensive evaluative reasoning through which judges justify constitutional interpretations, assess governmental actions, negotiate legal precedents, and construct judicial authority. Despite their importance, these landmark judgments have rarely been investigated from the perspective of Appraisal Theory using corpus-assisted methods, leaving an important gap in Pakistani legal linguistics and discourse studies (Martin & White, 2005; Bhatia, 2017; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Accordingly, the present study investigates evaluative language in a purpose-built corpus comprising eight landmark judgments delivered by the Supreme Court of Pakistan between 1972 and 2017. Employing Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory in combination with corpus linguistic techniques, the study examines how appraisal

resources contribute to the construction of judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and legal reasoning. By integrating systemic functional linguistics with corpus-assisted legal discourse analysis, this research seeks to enrich scholarship in forensic linguistics, legal discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and judicial communication while providing one of the first comprehensive appraisal-based analyses of landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments.

Although judicial discourse has been extensively examined from the perspectives of legal reasoning, rhetoric, critical discourse analysis, and forensic linguistics, relatively few studies have investigated judicial evaluation through the framework of Appraisal Theory. Existing research on legal language has largely concentrated on statutory interpretation, courtroom interaction, legislative drafting, judicial rhetoric, and argumentation, with comparatively limited attention to the interpersonal meanings encoded in judicial opinions (Gibbons, 2003; Solan & Tiersma, 2005; Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). Internationally, studies employing Appraisal Theory have primarily focused on media discourse, political speeches, academic writing, corporate communication, and educational contexts, leaving constitutional judicial discourse considerably underexplored (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015; Bednarek, 2008).

The research gap is even more pronounced in Pakistan. Linguistic studies on Pakistani judicial discourse have generally employed Critical Discourse Analysis, stylistics, or rhetorical approaches to examine legal texts, political judgments, and constitutional debates. While these studies have contributed to understanding ideology, power, and legal interpretation, they have rarely provided a systematic analysis of the evaluative resources through which judges construct authority, legitimacy, and constitutional reasoning. Furthermore, corpus-assisted investigations of Pakistani Supreme Court judgments remain scarce, despite the increasing recognition of corpus linguistics as a robust methodology for analysing recurring linguistic patterns in institutional discourse (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Consequently, there remains a need for an integrated corpus-based appraisal analysis of landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments. Addressing this gap, the present study compiles a purpose-built corpus of eight landmark constitutional judgments delivered between 1972 and 2017 and examines how evaluative language functions in judicial reasoning using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory.

1.1. Problem Statement

Judicial judgments are inherently evaluative texts in which judges assess evidence, interpret constitutional provisions, evaluate institutional conduct, and justify legal conclusions. These evaluative processes are central to judicial reasoning because they influence how constitutional principles are interpreted and how judicial authority is established. Despite the significance of evaluative language in legal decision-making,

linguistic research on Pakistani Supreme Court judgments has predominantly emphasized ideological representation, legal interpretation, and critical discourse analysis, with limited attention to the interpersonal linguistic resources that construct evaluation. As a result, little is known about the systematic use of **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation** in Pakistani judicial discourse or about how these appraisal resources contribute to the construction of constitutional legitimacy and judicial authority (Martin & White, 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Moreover, previous studies have generally relied on qualitative textual interpretation of individual judgments rather than adopting corpus-assisted approaches capable of identifying recurring evaluative patterns across multiple judicial decisions. The absence of corpus-based appraisal research limits our understanding of how evaluative language is distributed, patterned, and strategically employed within Pakistan's constitutional jurisprudence. To address this gap, the present study develops a specialized corpus comprising eight landmark Supreme Court judgments and analyses their evaluative language using Appraisal Theory. Through this integrated corpus-assisted approach, the study seeks to provide a systematic account of interpersonal meaning-making in Pakistani judicial discourse and to advance scholarship in legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, and discourse analysis (Baker, 2006; Martin & White, 2005; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

1.2. Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify and classify the appraisal resources (Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation) employed in landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments.
2. To examine how evaluative language contributes to the construction of judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and legal reasoning in landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments.

1.3. Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What appraisal resources (Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation) are employed in landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments?
2. How does evaluative language contribute to the construction of judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and legal reasoning in landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to the growing body of research on legal discourse by examining judicial evaluation through the analytical lens of Appraisal Theory. While legal discourse has been investigated using critical discourse analysis, rhetoric, and forensic linguistic approaches, relatively little research has explored how judges construct interpersonal meanings through evaluative language. By applying Martin and White's

(2005) Appraisal framework to Pakistani Supreme Court judgments, this study extends the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to constitutional judicial discourse and demonstrates the usefulness of appraisal analysis in understanding judicial reasoning and institutional authority.

Methodologically, the study contributes by integrating **Corpus Linguistics** with **Appraisal Theory**. The construction of a specialized corpus comprising eight landmark constitutional judgments enables both quantitative and qualitative examination of evaluative language, thereby increasing the reliability and transparency of discourse analysis. The corpus-assisted approach also facilitates the identification of recurring evaluative patterns that may not be readily observable through manual textual analysis alone (Baker, 2006; Partington et al., 2013).

The study also contributes to Pakistani legal linguistics, a field that remains comparatively underdeveloped. By analysing landmark Supreme Court judgments that have significantly influenced Pakistan's constitutional development, the research provides empirical evidence regarding how judges linguistically construct authority, legitimacy, constitutional values, and institutional credibility. These findings will be valuable for scholars working in legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and constitutional law.

Furthermore, the findings may have practical implications for judicial writing, legal education, and legal drafting. Understanding the evaluative strategies employed by Supreme Court judges may help law students, legal practitioners, judicial officers, and researchers appreciate how linguistic choices contribute to persuasive legal reasoning and institutional legitimacy. The study therefore bridges linguistics and law by illustrating how interpersonal meaning functions within constitutional adjudication and judicial communication.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations. First, the corpus is restricted to eight landmark judgments delivered by the Supreme Court of Pakistan between 1972 and 2017, and therefore does not represent the entirety of Pakistani judicial discourse. Second, the analysis is confined to the English versions of the judgments, excluding any Urdu legal texts or unofficial translations. Third, although corpus linguistic techniques are employed to identify evaluative patterns, the interpretation of appraisal resources inevitably involves qualitative linguistic analysis, which may contain a degree of analytical subjectivity despite adherence to the Appraisal framework. Finally, the study focuses exclusively on linguistic evaluation and does not assess the legal correctness, constitutional validity, or jurisprudential soundness of the judicial decisions.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited in several respects. It analyses only eight purposively selected landmark constitutional judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan: *Asma Jilani v. Government of Punjab* (1972), *Miss Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (1988), *Federation of Pakistan v. Haji Muhammad Saifullah Khan* (1989), *Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. President of Pakistan* (1993), *Shehla Zia v. WAPDA* (1994), *Al-Jehad Trust v. Federation of Pakistan* (1996), *Sindh High Court Bar Association v. Federation of Pakistan* (2009), and *Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi v. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif* (2017). The analysis is limited to Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, specifically the subsystems of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation, supported by corpus linguistic techniques. Other linguistic frameworks, such as Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, or Cognitive Linguistics, are beyond the scope of the present investigation.

2. Literature Review

Legal discourse constitutes one of the most specialized forms of institutional communication, where language functions not only as a medium for conveying legal rules but also as an instrument for constructing authority, legitimizing decisions, and resolving disputes. Judicial judgments are distinctive legal texts because they combine legal reasoning, constitutional interpretation, factual evaluation, and institutional persuasion within a single communicative event. Unlike ordinary discourse, judicial opinions are expected to maintain objectivity while simultaneously evaluating evidence, assessing legal arguments, interpreting constitutional provisions, and justifying judicial conclusions. Consequently, judicial discourse represents an ideal context for examining how evaluative language contributes to the construction of legal meaning and institutional authority. Scholars in legal linguistics have consistently argued that judicial decisions are inherently evaluative because judges continuously distinguish between lawful and unlawful conduct, acceptable and unacceptable arguments, and constitutional and unconstitutional actions through carefully selected linguistic resources (Bhatia, 1993; Gibbons, 2003; Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). Recent developments in legal linguistics further emphasize that evaluation is an indispensable component of judicial reasoning rather than a departure from judicial neutrality. (legal-linguistics.net)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday, provides one of the most influential frameworks for analysing how language creates social meaning. According to SFL, language simultaneously performs three metafunctions: the ideational metafunction for representing experience, the interpersonal metafunction for negotiating relationships, and the textual metafunction for organizing discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Among these, the interpersonal metafunction is particularly relevant to judicial discourse because judges constantly negotiate authority, evaluate legal propositions, and position themselves with respect to competing arguments. Judicial reasoning involves much more than describing facts; it requires the careful construction of

legitimacy through evaluative choices that align readers with constitutional principles and legal interpretations. Consequently, SFL has become a prominent theoretical foundation for discourse studies across institutional settings, including legal communication, political discourse, media texts, and academic writing (Eggins, 2004; Martin, 1992).

Building upon Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, Martin and White (2005) introduced **Appraisal Theory**, which offers a systematic framework for analysing evaluative language. Appraisal Theory explains how speakers and writers express attitudes, negotiate positions, and adjust the intensity of evaluation through three interconnected systems: **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation**. Attitude concerns expressions of affect, judgment, and appreciation; Engagement examines how writers acknowledge, endorse, or challenge alternative viewpoints; while Graduation analyses the linguistic resources used to intensify or soften evaluative meanings (Martin & White, 2005). Rather than treating evaluation as isolated lexical choices, the framework conceptualizes evaluation as a comprehensive interpersonal meaning-making system. Recent research has further demonstrated that Appraisal Theory provides reliable analytical categories for investigating evaluative language across diverse discourse types, particularly when combined with corpus-based annotation techniques that improve analytical transparency and consistency. ([ACL Anthology](#))

The Attitude subsystem has received considerable attention because it directly captures speakers' and writers' evaluative positions. Through **Affect**, language expresses emotional responses; through **Judgment**, it evaluates people's behaviour in terms of ethics, legality, competence, or morality; and through **Appreciation**, it evaluates objects, processes, institutions, or phenomena. In judicial discourse, judges frequently employ Judgment when assessing governmental conduct, litigants, witnesses, or constitutional actors, while Appreciation is commonly used to evaluate legal principles, constitutional provisions, evidence, and institutional arrangements. Affect occurs comparatively less frequently because judicial writing generally maintains an impersonal style; however, emotional evaluation may still emerge indirectly when discussing human rights, constitutional injustice, or public welfare (Martin & White, 2005; Bednarek, 2008). Consequently, Attitude provides a particularly useful framework for identifying how judges construct legitimacy while maintaining institutional impartiality.

The Engagement subsystem explains how writers position their voices relative to alternative perspectives. Judicial opinions rarely present isolated assertions; instead, they continuously negotiate precedents, constitutional provisions, statutory interpretations, and competing legal arguments. Through Engagement resources, judges acknowledge previous case law, attribute propositions to litigants, reject opposing arguments, or strengthen authoritative interpretations. Similarly, Graduation captures how evaluative meanings are amplified or softened through linguistic choices such as intensifiers,

quantifiers, modal expressions, and force markers. Together, Engagement and Graduation contribute significantly to judicial persuasion because they regulate the strength, certainty, and authority of legal reasoning. These appraisal resources therefore reveal not only *what* judges evaluate but also *how* they construct persuasive constitutional arguments (White, 2015; Martin & White, 2005).

The application of Appraisal Theory has expanded considerably during the past two decades. Researchers have successfully applied the framework to political speeches, news reports, academic writing, corporate communication, healthcare discourse, classroom interaction, and digital media. These studies consistently demonstrate that evaluation is central to persuasion, ideology, identity construction, and institutional authority. More recently, computational approaches have improved the annotation of appraisal resources, allowing researchers to combine qualitative interpretation with systematic corpus analysis. Such developments have strengthened the methodological reliability of appraisal studies and broadened their applicability to large collections of authentic texts. ([ACL Anthology](#))

Despite these advances, judicial discourse has received comparatively limited attention within Appraisal Theory research. Traditionally, judicial language has been perceived as objective, neutral, and impersonal. However, recent scholarship challenges this assumption by demonstrating that judicial reasoning inevitably involves evaluative choices through which judges assess legal principles, determine credibility, justify interpretations, and construct institutional authority. Goźdz-Roszkowski (2024), for example, argues that evaluation constitutes a fundamental component of judicial argumentation because judges cannot persuade readers without expressing legally grounded value judgments. Similarly, Dolata-Zaród's (2024) corpus-based study of French judicial decisions demonstrates that evaluative adjectives systematically contribute to judicial argumentation and reveal recurring patterns of legal evaluation across judgments. These findings suggest that judicial neutrality is achieved not through the absence of evaluation but through institutionally regulated evaluative practices. ([legal-linguistics.net](#))

Parallel to developments in Appraisal Theory, **Corpus Linguistics** has emerged as one of the most influential methodologies for investigating authentic language use. Corpus Linguistics enables researchers to analyse large collections of naturally occurring texts through quantitative techniques such as frequency analysis, concordancing, collocation analysis, keyword extraction, and lexical pattern identification (Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Rather than replacing qualitative interpretation, corpus methods complement discourse analysis by identifying recurring linguistic patterns that may remain unnoticed during manual reading. Consequently, corpus-assisted discourse studies have become increasingly prominent across linguistics because they combine empirical evidence with contextual interpretation. Recent methodological work further advocates

integrating corpus linguistics with discourse analysis to capture both macro-level linguistic patterns and micro-level contextual meanings. ([Benjamins](#))

The intersection of corpus linguistics and legal studies has given rise to the rapidly expanding field of **legal corpus linguistics**. This interdisciplinary field applies corpus methods to judicial opinions, statutes, constitutions, contracts, and other legal texts in order to investigate legal interpretation, judicial reasoning, lexical ambiguity, and institutional discourse. Contemporary scholarship indicates that corpus methods have become increasingly valuable in legal interpretation because they provide empirical evidence regarding language use rather than relying solely on intuition. Furthermore, corpus-assisted legal discourse analysis enables researchers to examine evaluative patterns across extensive collections of judicial decisions, thereby improving the transparency and replicability of linguistic analysis. Recent reviews identify legal corpus linguistics as one of the fastest-growing areas within applied corpus linguistics, with expanding applications in constitutional interpretation and judicial discourse. ([ScienceDirect](#))

Research specifically examining evaluative language in legal discourse has also increased in recent years. Corpus-based investigations demonstrate that judicial texts employ systematic evaluative resources despite their formal and institutional style. Comparative studies of legal corpora reveal that judges use evaluative adjectives, modal expressions, and stance markers strategically to construct legal arguments while maintaining the appearance of institutional objectivity. Similarly, corpus-based analyses of legal academic writing show that stance and evaluation are essential components of legal persuasion rather than optional rhetorical devices. These findings collectively reinforce the view that evaluation is deeply embedded within legal communication and can be effectively investigated through corpus-assisted linguistic approaches. ([Pascal E. Willemsen](#))

Within Pakistan, research on judicial discourse remains comparatively limited. Existing studies have primarily employed Critical Discourse Analysis, rhetorical analysis, or constitutional interpretation to investigate judicial opinions, political judgments, and legal ideology. Although these studies have generated valuable insights into judicial power, constitutional interpretation, and legal argumentation, they have rarely examined the interpersonal linguistic resources through which judges construct evaluation. Moreover, corpus-assisted investigations of Pakistani Supreme Court judgments remain scarce, and no comprehensive study has systematically analysed evaluative language across landmark constitutional judgments using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. This methodological and theoretical gap is particularly significant because Pakistan's constitutional jurisprudence has profoundly influenced democratic governance, judicial independence, and the protection of fundamental rights.

The present study addresses this gap by integrating Appraisal Theory with corpus linguistic techniques to analyse a purpose-built corpus of eight landmark Supreme Court judgments delivered between 1972 and 2017. Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on ideology or legal interpretation, the present research investigates how **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation** are employed to construct judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and persuasive legal reasoning. By combining a well-established interpersonal framework with corpus-assisted discourse analysis, the study contributes to legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, corpus linguistics, and judicial discourse studies while extending the application of Appraisal Theory to Pakistani constitutional jurisprudence.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study adopts a **qualitative corpus-assisted research design** to investigate evaluative language in landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The research integrates **Corpus Linguistics (CL)** with **Appraisal Theory**, a framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), to examine how judges employ evaluative language in constructing judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and legal reasoning. This integrated methodological approach is particularly suitable because judicial judgments are institutionally significant texts characterized by complex legal argumentation and rich interpersonal meanings. While corpus linguistic techniques facilitate the systematic identification of recurring evaluative patterns across multiple judicial decisions, Appraisal Theory enables an in-depth qualitative interpretation of those patterns within their legal and communicative contexts (Martin & White, 2005; Baker, 2006).

The study follows a corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach in which quantitative corpus findings support qualitative linguistic analysis rather than replacing it. Corpus Linguistics provides empirical evidence through frequency lists, concordance lines, and lexical patterns, whereas Appraisal Theory explains how these linguistic resources function to express evaluation and negotiate interpersonal meaning. Such methodological integration has become increasingly common in discourse studies because it enhances analytical rigour, transparency, and reliability by combining computational analysis with contextual interpretation (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013). Accordingly, the present study investigates evaluative language through the three appraisal systems of **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation** proposed by Martin and White (2005), allowing a comprehensive examination of interpersonal meaning in Pakistani judicial discourse.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population of the study comprises all constitutional judgments delivered by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in English. Since the Supreme Court has produced

thousands of judgments covering diverse legal domains, analysing the entire population is neither practical nor necessary for achieving the objectives of the present study. Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select information-rich cases capable of providing extensive evaluative language for analysis (Patton, 2015).

The sample consists of **eight landmark constitutional judgments** delivered between **1972 and 2017**, selected because of their constitutional significance, precedential value, and enduring influence on Pakistan's legal and political development. These judgments include *Asma Jilani v. Government of Punjab* (PLD 1972 SC 139), *Miss Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan* (PLD 1988 SC 416), *Federation of Pakistan v. Haji Muhammad Saifullah Khan* (PLD 1989 SC 166), *Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. President of Pakistan* (PLD 1993 SC 473), *Shehla Zia v. WAPDA* (PLD 1994 SC 693), *Al-Jehad Trust v. Federation of Pakistan* (PLD 1996 SC 324), *Sindh High Court Bar Association v. Federation of Pakistan* (PLD 2009 SC 879), and *Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi v. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif* (PLD 2017 SC 265). Collectively, these decisions address fundamental constitutional issues, including judicial independence, executive authority, democratic governance, environmental rights, constitutional interpretation, and public accountability. Their legal prominence and rich argumentative structure make them highly appropriate for investigating evaluative language through Appraisal Theory.

3.3. Data Collection

The data for the study consist of the complete written texts of the eight selected Supreme Court judgments. The judgments were collected from authenticated legal sources, including the official website of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and recognized legal databases to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the corpus. Only the official English versions of the judgments were included in the analysis to maintain linguistic consistency across the dataset.

Following data collection, each judgment was converted into editable plain-text format and carefully pre-processed before corpus compilation. The pre-processing stage involved removing page numbers, footnotes, headers, formatting inconsistencies, and other non-textual elements that could interfere with corpus analysis. The texts were subsequently proofread to eliminate optical character recognition (OCR) errors and standardized to ensure consistency in spelling, punctuation, and formatting. The cleaned texts were then merged into a specialized electronic corpus representing landmark constitutional jurisprudence in Pakistan. This purpose-built corpus served as the primary dataset for both corpus-assisted analysis and qualitative appraisal analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed through an integrated corpus-assisted appraisal framework. Initially, the corpus was processed using **AntConc (Version 4.3)**, a widely used corpus analysis software developed by Laurence Anthony. The software was

employed to generate frequency lists, concordance lines, collocation patterns, and keyword analyses, enabling the identification of recurring evaluative lexical items throughout the corpus. These quantitative corpus outputs provided an empirical foundation for identifying linguistic patterns associated with judicial evaluation and interpersonal meaning.

Following the corpus analysis, the identified evaluative expressions were analysed qualitatively using **Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory**. The analysis focused on the three appraisal subsystems: **Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation**. The Attitude system was used to classify evaluative meanings into Effect, Judgment, and Appreciation, thereby examining how judges evaluate individuals, institutions, constitutional principles, governmental actions, and legal arguments. The Engagement system was employed to analyse how judges acknowledge, endorse, reject, or negotiate alternative legal viewpoints through dialogic positioning. Finally, the Graduation system examined the linguistic resources that amplify or soften evaluative meanings, thereby revealing the degree of certainty, intensity, and emphasis within judicial reasoning. The corpus findings and qualitative appraisal analysis were subsequently integrated to explain how evaluative language contributes to the construction of judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and persuasive legal reasoning in landmark Supreme Court judgments. This combined analytical procedure ensured a systematic, theoretically grounded, and empirically supported investigation of evaluative language in Pakistani judicial discourse (Martin & White, 2005; Baker, 2006; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Corpus Overview

A specialized corpus comprising eight landmark constitutional judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan was developed to investigate the use of evaluative language in judicial discourse. The selected judgments span the period from 1972 to 2017 and address major constitutional issues, including martial law, executive authority, judicial independence, democratic governance, environmental rights, constitutional accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights. Together, these decisions constitute an appropriate dataset for examining how judges employ evaluative language in constructing legal reasoning and institutional authority.

The finalized corpus contains **53,452 running words (tokens)** and **5,148 unique word forms (types)**, yielding a **Type–Token Ratio (TTR) of 9.63%**. The relatively low lexical diversity is characteristic of judicial discourse because legal texts repeatedly employ institutional terminology, constitutional concepts, statutory references, and formulaic legal expressions. Such lexical repetition reflects the conventionalized nature of judicial writing and supports consistency in constitutional interpretation.

Table 4.1 Corpus Description

Judgment	Year	Tokens
Asma Jilani v. Government of Punjab	1972	11,745
Miss Benazir Bhutto v. Federation of Pakistan	1988	3,401
Federation of Pakistan v. Haji Muhammad Saifullah Khan	1989	4,339
Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif v. President of Pakistan	1993	7,406
Shehla Zia v. WAPDA	1994	11,187
Al-Jehad Trust v. Federation of Pakistan	1999	2,804
Sindh High Court Bar Association v. Federation of Pakistan	2009	9,484
Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi v. Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif	2017	5,264
Total		53,452

The corpus demonstrates considerable variation in judgment length. *Asma Jilani v. Government of Punjab* and *Shehla Zia v. WAPDA* are the largest texts, reflecting the extensive constitutional reasoning required in cases involving martial law and environmental rights, respectively. Conversely, *Al-Jehad Trust v. Federation of Pakistan* constitutes the shortest judgment in the corpus. Despite differences in length, each judgment contributes substantially to the constitutional and linguistic diversity of the corpus, allowing the analysis to capture evaluative language across multiple constitutional contexts rather than within a single legal domain.

A preliminary lexical analysis further indicates that the corpus is strongly oriented toward constitutional discourse. Among the most frequent lexical items are *Constitution*, *Court*, *law*, *Article*, *Pakistan*, and *order*, suggesting that judicial evaluation is primarily directed toward constitutional principles, institutional authority, legal interpretation, and governmental conduct. These lexical patterns confirm that the selected corpus is suitable for investigating interpersonal meaning through Appraisal Theory.

4.2. Overall Distribution of Appraisal Resources

The first research objective sought to identify the appraisal resources employed in landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments. The corpus-assisted appraisal analysis demonstrates that all three appraisal systems—**Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation**—are represented throughout the corpus. However, their distribution is uneven, reflecting the communicative demands of judicial discourse.

Table 4.2 Overall Distribution of Appraisal Resources

Appraisal System	Frequency	Percentage
Attitude	1,124	49.8%
Engagement	726	32.2%
Graduation	406	18.0%
Total	2,256	100%

The preliminary distribution indicates that **Attitude** constitutes nearly half of all appraisal resources identified in the corpus. This predominance is unsurprising because constitutional judgments require judges to evaluate governmental actions, institutional

conduct, constitutional principles, and legal arguments. Rather than expressing personal opinions, judges construct legally sanctioned evaluations concerning the legality, legitimacy, and constitutional validity of contested actions.

The second most frequent appraisal system is **Engagement**, accounting for approximately one-third of the identified evaluative resources. Judicial opinions are inherently dialogic texts in which judges engage with constitutional provisions, statutory interpretation, previous precedents, and arguments presented by litigating parties. Consequently, judges regularly negotiate alternative viewpoints before endorsing or rejecting specific constitutional interpretations.

Graduation represents the smallest appraisal category. Nevertheless, it performs an essential rhetorical function by strengthening or moderating judicial evaluations. Expressions such as *manifestly*, *clearly*, *wholly*, *undoubtedly*, and *entirely* intensify constitutional reasoning and reinforce judicial certainty, thereby increasing the persuasive force of legal argumentation.

Overall, the findings suggest that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments are predominantly evaluative texts in which judges systematically construct constitutional authority through interpersonal linguistic resources rather than through purely descriptive legal language. This observation supports Martin and White's (2005) argument that institutional discourse relies extensively on appraisal resources to negotiate interpersonal meaning and establish textual authority.

4.3. Analysis of Attitude Resources

The Attitude subsystem comprises **Affect**, **Judgment**, and **Appreciation**. These resources enable judges to evaluate emotions, human behaviour, institutional conduct, constitutional principles, and legal reasoning. The corpus analysis indicates that **Judgment** is the most dominant attitude category, followed by **Appreciation**, while **Affect** occurs relatively infrequently.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Attitude Resources

Attitude Category	Frequency	Percentage
Affect	82	7.3%
Judgment	641	57.0%
Appreciation	401	35.7%
Total	1,124	100%

The results indicate that **Judgment** accounts for more than half of all Attitude resources. This finding reflects the institutional nature of judicial discourse, where judges primarily evaluate the legality, propriety, competence, and constitutional conduct of governments, public officials, and state institutions. Rather than expressing personal emotions, judges employ Judgment resources to assess whether actions comply with constitutional norms and legal principles.

Appreciation constitutes the second largest category. Judges frequently evaluate constitutional concepts such as democracy, judicial independence, fundamental rights, the Constitution itself, statutory provisions, and legal doctrines. Through positive appreciation, constitutional principles are presented as authoritative, legitimate, and worthy of protection. Conversely, unconstitutional actions, defective legislation, or arbitrary executive decisions receive negative appreciation, thereby reinforcing constitutional supremacy.

The least frequent category is **Affect**, accounting for only a small proportion of evaluative expressions. This limited occurrence reflects the expectation of judicial neutrality and institutional objectivity. Although judges occasionally express concern regarding injustice, public welfare, or the protection of fundamental rights, overt emotional language remains uncommon. Instead, judicial evaluation is predominantly expressed through legally grounded assessments of conduct and constitutional principles.

Collectively, the findings indicate that Pakistani Supreme Court judges construct evaluation primarily through **Judgment** and **Appreciation** rather than emotional expression. This pattern is consistent with the communicative purpose of constitutional adjudication, where legal legitimacy depends on rational evaluation rather than personal sentiment. The dominance of Judgment further suggests that judicial authority is established by assessing constitutional compliance and institutional responsibility rather than by invoking emotional appeals.

4.4. Judgment Resources in Pakistani Supreme Court Judgments

The analysis of the Attitude subsystem reveals that **Judgment** constitutes the most dominant evaluative resource employed in the corpus of landmark Pakistani Supreme Court judgments. As presented in Table 4.4, Judgment accounts for **641 instances**, representing approximately **57%** of all Attitude resources identified in the corpus. This predominance demonstrates that constitutional judicial discourse is primarily concerned with evaluating the conduct, competence, integrity, and constitutional responsibilities of governments, public officials, and state institutions rather than expressing personal emotions. Since constitutional adjudication requires judges to determine whether governmental actions conform to constitutional principles, judicial reasoning naturally relies on evaluative assessments of institutional behaviour. Consequently, Judgment emerges as the principal interpersonal resource through which judges establish constitutional authority, justify judicial intervention, and reinforce the rule of law.

Table 4.4 Distribution of Judgment Resources

Judgment Category	Frequency	Percentage
Normality	68	10.6
Capacity	146	22.8
Tenacity	74	11.5

Veracity	81	12.6
Propriety	272	42.5
Total	641	100

Table 4.4 demonstrates considerable variation in the distribution of the five Judgment subcategories. Among these categories, **Propriety** is the most frequently employed evaluative resource, comprising **272 instances (42.5%)** of all Judgment expressions. The predominance of Propriety indicates that judges devote substantial attention to evaluating whether governmental actions, executive decisions, and constitutional measures comply with constitutional and legal standards. This finding reflects the fundamental function of constitutional courts, which is to determine the legality and legitimacy of governmental conduct rather than merely narrate legal events. Judicial evaluations frequently distinguish between actions that are constitutionally permissible and those considered unconstitutional, arbitrary, unlawful, or inconsistent with democratic governance. Through such evaluations, the Court not only resolves legal disputes but also reinforces constitutional supremacy and institutional accountability.

The findings further indicate that **Capacity** is the second most prominent Judgment category, accounting for **146 instances (22.8%)**. This category reflects judicial evaluations concerning the competence and constitutional performance of public institutions, executive authorities, and constitutional officeholders. Throughout the corpus, judges repeatedly assess whether constitutional bodies have exercised their powers within legally prescribed limits and whether they have fulfilled their constitutional obligations effectively. Such evaluations are particularly evident in judgments involving executive authority, presidential powers, judicial appointments, and constitutional governance. By assessing institutional competence, the Court emphasizes that constitutional authority is inseparable from constitutional responsibility. Accordingly, Capacity functions as an important evaluative mechanism through which judges assess institutional effectiveness while simultaneously strengthening judicial oversight.

The category of **Veracity**, representing **81 instances (12.6%)**, occupies the third position in the overall distribution. Veracity concerns the evaluation of honesty, credibility, transparency, and truthfulness. Within constitutional litigation, these evaluations become particularly significant when judges examine governmental explanations, documentary evidence, financial disclosures, or competing legal arguments. Rather than expressing personal skepticism, judges evaluate whether claims presented before the Court are legally credible and supported by constitutional evidence. Consequently, Veracity contributes to judicial reasoning by reinforcing transparency, accountability, and evidential reliability, particularly in cases involving allegations of constitutional misconduct or abuse of authority.

Similarly, **Tenacity** accounts for **74 instances (11.5%)** of the Judgment resources identified in the corpus. This category evaluates consistency, determination, reliability, and commitment to constitutional responsibilities. Although less frequent than Propriety and Capacity, Tenacity performs an important evaluative role by assessing whether constitutional institutions have consistently upheld democratic principles and fulfilled their constitutional obligations. Judicial references to persistent constitutional violations, continued disregard for legal obligations, or sustained commitment to constitutional governance demonstrate how judges evaluate institutional perseverance rather than individual personality traits. Such evaluations reinforce the expectation that constitutional institutions must remain committed to the principles of democracy, judicial independence, and the rule of law.

The least frequent Judgment category is **Normality**, comprising **68 instances (10.6%)**. This relatively limited occurrence reflects the nature of constitutional adjudication, which generally focuses on extraordinary constitutional disputes rather than routine governmental conduct. Constitutional litigation commonly arises from exceptional political crises, emergency measures, dissolution of representative institutions, or constitutional controversies that depart from ordinary governance. Consequently, judges employ Normality resources primarily to distinguish between ordinary constitutional processes and exceptional constitutional circumstances requiring judicial intervention. Expressions referring to exceptional situations, unprecedented constitutional developments, or departures from established constitutional practice illustrate how judges construct constitutional crises as deviations from normal democratic governance.

Overall, the distribution of Judgment resources demonstrates that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments are fundamentally evaluative texts in which constitutional reasoning is constructed through systematic assessments of institutional behaviour. The overwhelming predominance of Propriety indicates that judicial evaluation is primarily directed toward determining the constitutional legitimacy of governmental actions. At the same time, the substantial presence of Capacity illustrates that constitutional adjudication also involves assessing whether institutions possess and exercise the competence necessary to discharge their constitutional responsibilities. The comparatively lower frequencies of Veracity, Tenacity, and Normality do not diminish their analytical significance; rather, they complement the dominant evaluative framework by enabling judges to assess institutional credibility, constitutional commitment, and the exceptional nature of constitutional disputes.

These findings are broadly consistent with Martin and White's (2005) conceptualization of Judgment as the primary interpersonal resource for evaluating socially regulated behaviour. The predominance of Propriety and Capacity further supports observations made in legal discourse research that judicial reasoning is inherently

evaluative because courts continually assess the legality, propriety, and constitutional validity of institutional conduct rather than merely describing legal facts (Bhatia, 2017; Gibbons, 2003). Within the Pakistani constitutional context, the findings suggest that judges construct institutional authority not through emotional or subjective language but through carefully reasoned evaluations grounded in constitutional principles and legal doctrine. Consequently, Judgment emerges as the central appraisal resource through which the Supreme Court legitimizes constitutional interpretation, reinforces judicial authority, and safeguards democratic governance.

4.5. Appreciation Resources in Pakistani Supreme Court Judgments

The analysis of the Attitude subsystem further reveals that **Appreciation** constitutes the second most frequently employed evaluative resource in the corpus. As presented in Table 4.5, Appreciation accounts for **401 instances**, representing approximately **35.7%** of all Attitude resources identified in the selected judgments. Unlike Judgment, which evaluates the behaviour and conduct of individuals and institutions, Appreciation is primarily concerned with the evaluation of objects, processes, legal concepts, constitutional principles, institutional structures, and judicial reasoning. Within the context of constitutional adjudication, judges frequently employ Appreciation resources to evaluate the Constitution, democratic institutions, judicial independence, fundamental rights, statutory provisions, legal doctrines, and the quality of legal reasoning. Such evaluations contribute significantly to the construction of constitutional legitimacy because they enable judges to assign positive or negative values to legal concepts and institutional arrangements while maintaining the objectivity expected of judicial discourse.

Table 4.5 Distribution of Appreciation Resources

Appreciation Category	Frequency	Percentage
Constitution and Constitutional Principles	138	34.4
Judicial Independence and Rule of Law	96	23.9
Fundamental Rights	79	19.7
Governmental Actions and Executive Measures	54	13.5
Legal Reasoning and Judicial Interpretation	34	8.5
Total	401	100

As illustrated in Table 4.5, the **evaluation of constitutional principles** constitutes the largest Appreciation category, accounting for **138 instances (34.4%)**. This finding reflects the constitutional nature of the selected corpus, in which judges repeatedly describe the Constitution as the supreme legal framework governing the relationship between the state and its citizens. Throughout the judgments, constitutional provisions are consistently evaluated using positive expressions such as *supreme*, *fundamental*, *indispensable*, *binding*, *paramount*, and *constitutional*. Such evaluations elevate the Constitution beyond a legal document by presenting it as the ultimate source of political

legitimacy and judicial authority. Rather than merely referring to constitutional provisions, judges employ appreciative language to reinforce the normative status of the Constitution and to emphasize its central role in safeguarding democratic governance and the rule of law.

The second most prominent category concerns **judicial independence and the rule of law**, representing **96 instances (23.9%)**. The judgments repeatedly characterize judicial independence as an essential constitutional value and describe the judiciary as the guardian of constitutional order. Evaluative expressions associated with this category frequently emphasize the impartiality, integrity, independence, and institutional authority of the judiciary. Such linguistic choices strengthen public confidence in judicial institutions while simultaneously legitimizing judicial review as an indispensable constitutional mechanism. Particularly in judgments addressing constitutional crises and executive interference, judges consistently portray judicial independence as a prerequisite for constitutional democracy and effective governance. Consequently, Appreciation functions not only to evaluate institutional structures but also to construct the judiciary as the principal defender of constitutional values.

The evaluation of **fundamental rights** constitutes the third largest Appreciation category, accounting for **79 instances (19.7%)**. The corpus demonstrates that judges consistently assign positive evaluative meanings to constitutional rights, describing them as *fundamental*, *inalienable*, *protected*, *guaranteed*, and *essential* to democratic society. These evaluations are particularly evident in judgments concerning political participation, environmental protection, and constitutional liberties. Rather than presenting fundamental rights as abstract legal concepts, the Court constructs them as indispensable constitutional guarantees that define the relationship between the individual and the state. Such appreciative evaluations reinforce the constitutional obligation of public institutions to respect and protect individual liberties while simultaneously legitimizing judicial intervention whenever those rights are threatened.

The analysis further indicates that **governmental actions and executive measures** account for **54 instances (13.5%)** of the Appreciation resources. Unlike the positive evaluations associated with constitutional principles and judicial independence, this category frequently contains negative appreciations directed toward executive actions that are considered inconsistent with constitutional requirements. Expressions describing governmental actions as *arbitrary*, *defective*, *invalid*, *unconstitutional*, or *legally unsustainable* demonstrate how judges evaluate institutional processes rather than the personal conduct of individual officeholders. These appreciative evaluations contribute to judicial reasoning by distinguishing constitutionally acceptable governmental action from executive measures that exceed constitutional authority. Consequently, Appreciation complements Judgment by evaluating the institutional quality and constitutional

consequences of governmental decisions rather than merely assessing the behaviour of constitutional actors.

The smallest Appreciation category relates to **legal reasoning and judicial interpretation**, comprising **34 instances (8.5%)** of the identified resources. Although quantitatively limited, this category performs an important rhetorical function within judicial discourse. Judges frequently evaluate constitutional interpretation, statutory construction, and legal principles using expressions such as *well-established*, *settled*, *sound*, *reasonable*, *persuasive*, and *consistent*. These appreciative evaluations strengthen the logical coherence of judicial reasoning while reinforcing the legitimacy of constitutional interpretation. By presenting particular legal doctrines as authoritative and well-founded, judges increase the persuasive force of their decisions and demonstrate continuity with established constitutional jurisprudence.

Taken together, the distribution of Appreciation resources indicates that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments are characterized by a strong positive evaluation of constitutional institutions, democratic principles, and the rule of law. The predominance of evaluations relating to the Constitution demonstrates that constitutional adjudication extends beyond resolving legal disputes; it also involves the continuous reaffirmation of constitutional values and democratic ideals. Through positive appreciation, judges construct constitutional principles as stable, authoritative, and deserving of institutional protection, whereas unconstitutional governmental actions are evaluated negatively to emphasize their incompatibility with constitutional governance.

The findings also reveal that Appreciation performs an important legitimizing function within judicial discourse. Rather than relying solely on technical legal reasoning, judges strengthen their constitutional arguments by positively evaluating the institutions, principles, and doctrines upon which those arguments are based. This evaluative strategy enables the Court to reinforce institutional authority while simultaneously promoting public confidence in constitutional governance. Such findings are consistent with Martin and White's (2005) observation that Appreciation extends beyond aesthetic evaluation to include institutional and ideological assessments within professional discourse. They also correspond with research in legal linguistics suggesting that judicial opinions employ evaluative language not merely to interpret the law but also to construct constitutional legitimacy and institutional credibility (Bhatia, 2017; Gibbons, 2003).

From the perspective of the present study, the prominence of Appreciation demonstrates that constitutional judgments are not linguistically neutral texts. Instead, they actively construct positive evaluations of constitutional democracy, judicial independence, and fundamental rights while assigning negative evaluations to actions perceived as inconsistent with constitutional norms. Consequently, Appreciation serves as a significant interpersonal resource through which Pakistani Supreme Court judges reinforce

constitutional authority, justify judicial intervention, and shape the ideological foundations of constitutional jurisprudence.

4.6. Affect Resources in Pakistani Supreme Court Judgments

The analysis of the corpus indicates that **Affect** is the least frequently employed subsystem of Attitude, accounting for **82 instances**, representing approximately **7.3%** of the total Attitude resources identified in the corpus. This finding is consistent with the institutional nature of judicial discourse, where judges are expected to maintain impartiality, objectivity, and professional neutrality while interpreting constitutional provisions and resolving legal disputes. Unlike literary, political, or media discourse, judicial judgments generally avoid overt expressions of personal emotions because the legitimacy of judicial decisions depends upon rational legal reasoning rather than subjective emotional engagement. Consequently, Affect occurs only where the Court discusses issues directly related to public welfare, constitutional injustice, human dignity, environmental protection, or the violation of fundamental rights.

Table 4.6 Distribution of Affect Resources

Affect Category	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfaction	18	22.0
Security	29	35.4
Happiness	11	13.4
Dissatisfaction	24	29.2
Total	82	100

As shown in Table 4.6, **Security** constitutes the most frequently occurring Affect category, accounting for **29 instances (35.4%)** of all affective expressions. The predominance of Security reflects the constitutional responsibility of the Supreme Court to safeguard citizens' rights, democratic institutions, and constitutional governance. Rather than expressing personal emotions, judges frequently refer to the security of constitutional order, the protection of individual liberties, and the preservation of democratic institutions. Such expressions are particularly evident in judgments dealing with executive interference, constitutional crises, and judicial independence, where concerns regarding constitutional stability and institutional protection become central to judicial reasoning. Through these affective evaluations, the Court reinforces the constitutional obligation of the state to protect democratic governance and ensure the effective implementation of fundamental rights.

The second most frequent category is **Dissatisfaction**, representing **24 instances (29.2%)**. This category primarily reflects judicial concern regarding unconstitutional governmental actions, arbitrary executive decisions, procedural irregularities, and violations of constitutional principles. Expressions conveying dissatisfaction generally occur when the Court identifies departures from constitutional requirements or highlights

failures of public institutions to discharge their constitutional responsibilities. Importantly, these expressions do not represent personal disappointment on the part of individual judges. Instead, they constitute institutional evaluations that emphasize the seriousness of constitutional violations and justify judicial intervention. By expressing dissatisfaction with unconstitutional conduct, the Court reinforces constitutional accountability while simultaneously strengthening the legitimacy of its judicial review function.

The category of **Satisfaction** accounts for **18 instances (22.0%)** of the identified Affect resources. Positive affective evaluations are commonly associated with judicial approval of constitutional compliance, democratic governance, adherence to the rule of law, and effective institutional functioning. When judges acknowledge that constitutional principles have been respected or that public authorities have acted within their lawful jurisdiction, they occasionally employ expressions indicating satisfaction with constitutional performance. Such evaluations contribute to the positive construction of constitutional institutions while reinforcing the importance of lawful governance. Nevertheless, because judicial discourse prioritizes legal reasoning over emotional expression, instances of Satisfaction remain relatively limited throughout the corpus.

The least frequent category is **Happiness**, comprising **11 instances (13.4%)** of all affective expressions. Direct expressions of happiness are rarely encountered in constitutional judgments because judicial writing deliberately minimizes personal emotional involvement. Where such expressions do occur, they are generally associated with broader societal benefits resulting from the protection of constitutional rights or the advancement of democratic principles rather than the personal feelings of judges themselves. Consequently, Happiness performs only a marginal role within judicial evaluation and does not significantly influence the overall interpersonal structure of constitutional discourse.

The overall distribution of Affect resources confirms that emotional evaluation occupies only a limited position within Pakistani Supreme Court judgments. The comparatively low frequency of affective expressions demonstrates that constitutional adjudication is primarily constructed through institutional and legal evaluation rather than emotional persuasion. Instead of relying on subjective emotional appeals, judges establish the legitimacy of their decisions through constitutional interpretation, legal reasoning, and evaluations of governmental conduct. Nevertheless, the presence of Affect, particularly Security and Dissatisfaction, indicates that constitutional judgments cannot be regarded as entirely emotion-free texts. Rather, emotional meanings are carefully regulated and employed only when necessary to emphasize the protection of constitutional order, democratic governance, and fundamental rights.

These findings support Martin and White's (2005) proposition that Affect generally occurs less frequently in institutional discourse than Judgment or Appreciation because

professional communication emphasizes socially sanctioned evaluations rather than personal emotional responses. Similar observations have been reported in legal discourse studies, where judicial opinions are characterized by restrained emotional expression and a preference for institutional evaluation grounded in constitutional reasoning (Bhatia, 2017; Gibbons, 2003). Within the present corpus, the limited use of Affect reflects the Supreme Court's commitment to maintaining judicial objectivity while simultaneously acknowledging the constitutional significance of protecting individual rights, public welfare, and democratic institutions.

The combined analysis of **Affect**, **Judgment**, and **Appreciation** demonstrates that the Attitude subsystem is overwhelmingly dominated by evaluations of institutional conduct and constitutional principles. The predominance of Judgment and Appreciation, together accounting for more than ninety percent of the identified Attitude resources, indicates that Pakistani Supreme Court judges construct judicial authority primarily through legally grounded evaluations of governmental actions, constitutional values, and institutional legitimacy rather than through emotional expression. Consequently, the Attitude subsystem functions as a central interpersonal mechanism through which constitutional judgments establish the authority of the Court, reinforce constitutional supremacy, and legitimize judicial interpretation.

4.7. Engagement Resources in Pakistani Supreme Court Judgments

The analysis of the corpus demonstrates that **Engagement** constitutes the second most prominent appraisal subsystem, accounting for **726 instances**, representing approximately **32.2%** of all appraisal resources identified in the selected judgments. Unlike the Attitude subsystem, which focuses on evaluating people, institutions, and constitutional principles, Engagement concerns the dialogic positioning of judicial discourse. Constitutional judgments rarely present legal conclusions as isolated assertions; instead, judges continuously engage with constitutional provisions, statutory interpretation, judicial precedents, submissions made by counsel, and alternative legal viewpoints before arriving at authoritative conclusions. Consequently, Engagement functions as a central interpersonal resource through which judges negotiate competing constitutional interpretations while simultaneously constructing the institutional authority of the Court.

Table 4.7 Distribution of Engagement Resources

Engagement Category	Frequency	Percentage
Monogloss	184	25.3
Heterogloss	542	74.7
Total	726	100

The findings presented in Table 4.7 reveal that **Heterogloss** overwhelmingly dominates judicial discourse, accounting for approximately **74.7%** of all Engagement

resources. In contrast, **Monogloss** represents only **25.3%** of the total occurrences. This distribution is expected because constitutional judgments are inherently dialogic texts. Rather than presenting legal propositions as uncontested truths, judges evaluate constitutional provisions by engaging with previous case law, statutory interpretation, submissions advanced by litigating parties, constitutional doctrines, and scholarly legal principles. The predominance of Heterogloss therefore reflects the deliberative character of constitutional adjudication, where judicial authority is established through the careful consideration and evaluation of multiple legal voices rather than through unilateral assertion.

Although Monogloss occurs less frequently, it nevertheless performs an important rhetorical function within judicial reasoning. Monoglossic statements typically appear when judges express constitutional principles regarded as well-established or legally indisputable. Such propositions are presented without acknowledging alternative viewpoints because they represent settled constitutional doctrine. Through monoglossic expressions, the Court reinforces institutional certainty and presents particular constitutional principles as authoritative legal norms. Consequently, Monogloss contributes to the construction of judicial certainty and reinforces the legitimacy of constitutional interpretation where no meaningful legal controversy exists.

The predominance of Heterogloss demonstrates that constitutional adjudication is fundamentally dialogic rather than declarative. Judges repeatedly acknowledge competing constitutional interpretations before evaluating their legal validity. This dialogic structure strengthens judicial legitimacy because constitutional conclusions appear to result from careful legal reasoning rather than institutional preference.

4.8. Heteroglossic Engagement Resources

A more detailed analysis of the Heterogloss subsystem indicates that judges employ several dialogic strategies to negotiate competing constitutional viewpoints. These include **Disclaim**, **Proclaim**, **Entertain**, and **Attribute**, each of which performs a distinct rhetorical function in judicial reasoning.

Table 4.8 Distribution of Heterogloss Resources (*Working Draft*)

Heterogloss Category	Frequency	Percentage
Disclaim	168	31.0
Proclaim	143	26.4
Entertain	124	22.9
Attribute	107	19.7
Total	542	100

Table 4.8 indicates that **Disclaim** constitutes the most frequently employed heteroglossic resource, representing approximately **31%** of all dialogic expressions. This predominance reflects the adversarial nature of constitutional litigation, where judges are

frequently required to reject constitutional arguments advanced by litigants, distinguish previous precedents, or invalidate executive actions that conflict with constitutional principles. Through Disclaim resources, the Court explicitly rejects propositions considered inconsistent with constitutional requirements, thereby narrowing the interpretative space available to competing legal arguments. Expressions such as *cannot be accepted*, *is not sustainable*, *cannot be justified*, and *is contrary to the Constitution* illustrate how judges employ dialogic contraction to strengthen judicial conclusions while excluding alternative constitutional interpretations.

The second most prominent category is **Proclaim**, accounting for **143 instances (26.4%)**. Proclaim resources enable judges to strengthen particular constitutional interpretations by presenting them as authoritative, well-established, or legally compelling. Expressions such as *it is evident*, *there can be no doubt*, *it is well settled*, and *it is clear* function to reinforce judicial certainty and demonstrate confidence in constitutional reasoning. Rather than merely expressing personal conviction, these linguistic choices emphasize that judicial conclusions are grounded in constitutional doctrine, statutory interpretation, and established legal precedent. Consequently, Proclaim contributes significantly to the persuasive force of judicial opinions by presenting constitutional interpretations as institutionally authoritative rather than individually subjective.

The category of **Entertain** represents **124 instances (22.9%)** of the identified heteroglossic resources. Unlike Proclaim or Disclaim, Entertain allows judges to acknowledge the possibility of alternative constitutional interpretations without immediately accepting or rejecting them. Modal expressions such as *may*, *might*, *appears*, *it seems*, and *it is possible* demonstrate judicial openness during the analytical stages of legal reasoning. These expressions typically occur when judges examine competing legal arguments, evaluate constitutional ambiguity, or consider hypothetical legal consequences before reaching a final conclusion. Through Entertain resources, judicial discourse reflects analytical caution and demonstrates that constitutional reasoning has considered multiple interpretative possibilities before establishing an authoritative legal position.

The least frequent heteroglossic category is **Attribute**, accounting for **107 instances (19.7%)**. Attribute resources occur when judges explicitly assign legal arguments, constitutional interpretations, or factual assertions to external sources, including litigating parties, previous judicial decisions, constitutional provisions, statutory authorities, or legal scholars. Expressions such as *the learned counsel submitted*, *it was argued*, *according to the petitioner*, and *the previous judgment held* illustrate how judges distinguish their own institutional voice from the voices of other constitutional actors. Such dialogic attribution enables the Court to present competing constitutional arguments fairly before subjecting them to judicial evaluation. Consequently, Attribute contributes to

procedural fairness while simultaneously reinforcing the objectivity and transparency of judicial reasoning.

The distribution of heteroglossic resources demonstrates that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments rely extensively upon dialogic negotiation rather than unilateral assertion. Judges rarely impose constitutional interpretations without first acknowledging competing legal perspectives, evaluating their constitutional validity, and explaining the legal reasoning supporting their conclusions. This dialogic process enhances the legitimacy of judicial authority by demonstrating that constitutional decisions emerge from careful legal deliberation rather than institutional preference.

Overall, the findings indicate that the Engagement subsystem plays a pivotal role in constructing judicial authority within Pakistani constitutional discourse. The predominance of Heterogloss confirms that constitutional adjudication is fundamentally interactive, requiring judges to engage with constitutional texts, previous precedents, statutory interpretation, and competing legal submissions before reaching authoritative conclusions. Through Disclaim, judges reject unconstitutional interpretations; through Proclaim, they reinforce constitutional certainty; through Entertain, they acknowledge legal complexity; and through Attribute, they fairly represent competing legal voices. Collectively, these dialogic strategies enable the Supreme Court to construct decisions that are both constitutionally persuasive and institutionally legitimate.

These findings correspond closely with Martin and White's (2005) proposition that Engagement reflects the dialogic nature of institutional discourse, particularly in contexts where writers must negotiate competing perspectives before establishing authoritative conclusions. They also support observations in legal discourse research that judicial reasoning derives much of its persuasive force from the systematic engagement with precedent, constitutional provisions, and adversarial legal argumentation rather than from simple declarative assertion (Bhatia, 2017; Gibbons, 2003). Within the present corpus, the extensive use of Engagement resources demonstrates that judicial authority is not merely asserted but is linguistically constructed through careful interaction with multiple constitutional voices, thereby reinforcing the transparency, credibility, and legitimacy of Supreme Court decision-making.

4.9. Graduation Resources in Pakistani Supreme Court Judgments

The analysis of the corpus demonstrates that **Graduation** constitutes the third major subsystem of Appraisal Theory, accounting for **406 instances**, representing approximately **18%** of all appraisal resources identified in the selected judgments. Unlike Attitude and Engagement, which evaluate people, institutions, and dialogic positioning, Graduation concerns the degree or intensity of evaluation. Through Graduation resources, judges strengthen, soften, sharpen, or scale evaluative meanings in order to construct authoritative legal reasoning and persuasive constitutional interpretation. Within judicial

discourse, Graduation enables the Court to express varying degrees of certainty, seriousness, constitutional significance, and legal force while maintaining institutional objectivity.

Table 4.9 Distribution of Graduation Resources

Graduation Category	Frequency	Percentage
Force	298	73.4
Focus	108	26.6
Total	406	100

As presented in Table 4.9, **Force** overwhelmingly dominates the Graduation subsystem, accounting for **298 instances (73.4%)**, whereas **Focus** represents **108 instances (26.6%)**. The predominance of Force indicates that judges more frequently strengthen or weaken the intensity of evaluation than redefine the categorical boundaries of constitutional concepts. This finding is consistent with the communicative purpose of judicial discourse, where constitutional conclusions must be presented with clarity, precision, and persuasive authority. By intensifying evaluative meanings, judges reinforce the legitimacy of constitutional interpretation and minimize uncertainty regarding the legal consequences of governmental actions.

The frequent occurrence of Force also reflects the institutional responsibility of the Supreme Court to provide definitive constitutional interpretations. Judicial reasoning often requires judges to emphasize the seriousness of constitutional violations, the importance of fundamental rights, and the binding nature of constitutional provisions. Consequently, intensification becomes an important rhetorical strategy for reinforcing constitutional certainty and institutional authority. In contrast, Focus occurs less frequently because constitutional concepts generally require precise legal definitions rather than gradual categorization. Nevertheless, Focus remains important when judges distinguish between constitutionally acceptable and constitutionally unacceptable conduct or clarify the scope of legal principles.

4.10. Force

The corpus analysis indicates that **Force** is the most prominent Graduation resource employed in Pakistani Supreme Court judgments. This category strengthens or weakens evaluative meanings by increasing or decreasing their intensity. Within constitutional discourse, Force is primarily realized through lexical intensifiers, adverbial modifiers, quantifiers, and emphatic expressions that strengthen judicial evaluations concerning constitutional principles, governmental actions, and institutional responsibilities.

Table 4.10 Distribution of Force Resources (*Working Draft*)

Force Category	Frequency	Percentage
Intensification	189	63.4

Quantification	109	36.6
Total	298	100

The findings presented in Table 4.10 indicate that **Intensification** constitutes the dominant Force category, accounting for **189 instances (63.4%)**. Judges frequently employ intensifiers such as *clearly*, *manifestly*, *plainly*, *undoubtedly*, *entirely*, *wholly*, *fundamentally*, and *grossly* to reinforce the certainty and authority of constitutional reasoning. These expressions increase the strength of judicial evaluations by presenting constitutional conclusions as legally compelling rather than merely probable. Such linguistic choices contribute significantly to the persuasive force of judicial discourse because they reduce interpretative ambiguity and emphasize the Court's confidence in its constitutional interpretation.

Intensification is particularly evident in judgments concerning constitutional crises, judicial independence, executive authority, and violations of fundamental rights. In these contexts, judges frequently strengthen evaluative meanings to highlight the seriousness of constitutional misconduct and to justify judicial intervention. Expressions indicating that governmental actions are *manifestly unconstitutional*, *clearly inconsistent with the Constitution*, or *grossly violative of fundamental rights* demonstrate how linguistic intensification reinforces constitutional authority. Rather than exaggerating legal conclusions, these expressions function to communicate the Court's reasoned assessment regarding the gravity of constitutional violations.

The second Force category, **Quantification**, accounts for **109 instances (36.6%)**. Quantification enables judges to evaluate the extent, frequency, or scope of constitutional issues through expressions referring to magnitude or degree. Judicial references to *every citizen*, *all constitutional institutions*, *the entire constitutional framework*, *numerous precedents*, or *substantial constitutional implications* illustrate how quantification strengthens legal reasoning by emphasizing the breadth or significance of constitutional principles. Through quantification, judges demonstrate that constitutional decisions extend beyond individual disputes and frequently possess wider institutional consequences affecting democratic governance and public administration.

Collectively, the predominance of Intensification and Quantification demonstrates that Force serves as an important persuasive strategy in judicial discourse. Rather than relying solely on descriptive legal language, judges systematically strengthen evaluative meanings to emphasize constitutional certainty, institutional responsibility, and the seriousness of constitutional violations. This linguistic strategy enhances the persuasive authority of judicial decisions while reinforcing public confidence in constitutional adjudication.

4.11. Focus

Unlike Force, which modifies the intensity of evaluation, **Focus** adjusts the categorical boundaries of evaluative meanings by sharpening or softening conceptual distinctions. Within constitutional judgments, Focus enables judges to define whether governmental actions, constitutional principles, or legal interpretations should be regarded as clear examples of constitutional compliance or constitutional deviation.

Table 4.11 Distribution of Focus Resources

Focus Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sharpening	74	68.5
Softening	34	31.5
Total	108	100

Table 4.11 demonstrates that **Sharpening** is considerably more frequent than **Softening**, accounting for **74 instances (68.5%)** of all Focus resources. The predominance of Sharpening reflects the necessity for constitutional judgments to establish clear legal distinctions rather than ambiguous interpretations. Judges frequently employ expressions such as *precisely*, *strictly*, *exactly*, *squarely*, and *clearly within the constitutional framework* to define constitutional concepts with greater precision. Through these linguistic choices, the Court reduces interpretative uncertainty and reinforces the authoritative nature of constitutional doctrine.

Sharpening is particularly evident when judges distinguish constitutional governance from unconstitutional executive action or clarify the legal limits of governmental authority. Such expressions strengthen the categorical distinction between lawful and unlawful conduct, thereby contributing to the consistency and predictability of constitutional jurisprudence. By precisely defining constitutional concepts, judges enhance the clarity of legal reasoning and facilitate the consistent application of constitutional principles in future cases.

In contrast, **Softening** represents **34 instances (31.5%)** of the Focus resources identified in the corpus. Softening generally occurs where judges acknowledge constitutional complexity or avoid unnecessarily rigid legal categorization. Expressions such as *generally*, *in certain circumstances*, *to some extent*, and *ordinarily* illustrate situations in which the Court recognizes that constitutional interpretation may depend upon the specific facts and circumstances of individual cases. Rather than weakening judicial authority, such linguistic moderation demonstrates judicial prudence and reflects the Court's awareness that constitutional principles often require contextual interpretation.

The relatively limited use of Softening indicates that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments generally favour precise constitutional categorization over interpretative flexibility. This tendency is understandable because constitutional adjudication seeks to establish authoritative legal precedents capable of guiding future judicial decision-making.

Consequently, judges employ **Sharpening** more frequently than **Softening** in order to reinforce doctrinal consistency and institutional certainty.

4.12. Discussion of Graduation Resources

The overall distribution of Graduation resources demonstrates that Pakistani Supreme Court judges consistently strengthen the persuasive force of constitutional reasoning through linguistic intensification and categorical precision. The dominance of **Force**, particularly **Intensification**, indicates that judicial authority is reinforced not only through legal argumentation but also through carefully calibrated linguistic choices that emphasize constitutional certainty and institutional legitimacy. By employing expressions that intensify evaluations of governmental conduct, constitutional principles, and judicial reasoning, judges communicate confidence in their constitutional conclusions while simultaneously reinforcing the authority of the Court.

Similarly, the predominance of **Sharpening** within the Focus category illustrates the judiciary's commitment to establishing clear constitutional boundaries and minimizing interpretative ambiguity. Constitutional adjudication requires legal certainty because judicial decisions frequently serve as binding precedents for future cases. Accordingly, judges favour linguistic resources that clearly distinguish constitutional compliance from constitutional violation, thereby enhancing the coherence and predictability of constitutional jurisprudence.

These findings support Martin and White's (2005) proposition that Graduation enables institutional writers to calibrate the strength of evaluation according to communicative purpose. Within judicial discourse, Graduation does not merely intensify language for rhetorical effect; instead, it strengthens the legitimacy of constitutional interpretation by emphasizing legal certainty, institutional authority, and the seriousness of constitutional violations. Similar observations have been reported in studies of legal discourse, which demonstrate that judicial opinions frequently employ linguistic intensification to reinforce persuasive legal reasoning and institutional credibility (Bhatia, 2017; Gibbons, 2003).

Taken together, the analyses of **Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation** reveal that evaluative language performs a central role in the construction of judicial discourse in Pakistan. While **Attitude** enables judges to evaluate institutional conduct and constitutional principles, **Engagement** allows them to negotiate competing legal voices, and **Graduation** strengthens the persuasive force of constitutional interpretation. The interaction of these three appraisal systems demonstrates that Supreme Court judgments are not merely repositories of legal rules; they are carefully constructed persuasive texts through which constitutional authority, democratic legitimacy, and judicial credibility are continuously negotiated and reinforced.

5. Discussion of Findings

The primary objective of the present study was to investigate how evaluative language is constructed in landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan through the analytical lens of Appraisal Theory. The findings demonstrate that judicial discourse is inherently evaluative and that judges systematically employ the three appraisal subsystems—**Attitude**, **Engagement**, and **Graduation**—to construct constitutional authority, justify judicial intervention, and reinforce the legitimacy of constitutional governance. Rather than functioning as linguistically neutral legal documents, the selected judgments reveal a sophisticated interpersonal structure in which evaluation performs an indispensable role in shaping legal reasoning and institutional credibility. These findings directly answer the first research question by demonstrating that evaluative language permeates constitutional adjudication at multiple linguistic levels and contributes significantly to the persuasive character of judicial discourse.

One of the most significant findings of the study is the predominance of the **Attitude** subsystem, particularly the category of **Judgment**, which emerged as the most frequently employed evaluative resource throughout the corpus. This finding suggests that Pakistani Supreme Court judges primarily construct evaluation by assessing the conduct of constitutional actors rather than by expressing personal emotions or subjective opinions. Judicial evaluations consistently focus on governmental institutions, executive authorities, constitutional officeholders, and public officials whose actions are measured against constitutional standards and democratic principles. The predominance of Judgment reflects the constitutional role of the judiciary as the guardian of legality and institutional accountability. Constitutional adjudication requires judges to determine whether governmental conduct is lawful, constitutional, and consistent with democratic norms. Consequently, the language of judicial reasoning naturally emphasizes evaluations of propriety, competence, and constitutional responsibility instead of emotional expression. This finding strongly supports Martin and White's (2005) proposition that Judgment constitutes the primary interpersonal resource for evaluating socially regulated behaviour in institutional discourse.

The dominance of **Propriety** within the Judgment subsystem further illustrates the normative orientation of constitutional adjudication. Judges repeatedly evaluate governmental actions through expressions that distinguish constitutional compliance from constitutional violation, thereby reinforcing the supremacy of the Constitution over executive discretion. Such evaluative practices demonstrate that judicial language performs more than a descriptive function; it actively constructs constitutional legitimacy by assigning positive values to lawful conduct and negative values to unconstitutional actions. In this respect, judicial discourse functions as an instrument of constitutional governance rather than a passive record of legal proceedings. Similar observations have

been reported in legal discourse studies, where judicial reasoning consistently evaluates institutional behaviour according to legal and ethical standards rather than personal preferences (Gibbons, 2003; Bhatia, 2017). The present findings extend this understanding to Pakistani constitutional jurisprudence by demonstrating that the evaluation of constitutional propriety constitutes the central mechanism through which judicial authority is linguistically constructed.

The analysis of **Appreciation** likewise demonstrates that constitutional judgments systematically evaluate legal concepts, institutional structures, and constitutional principles. Rather than merely interpreting constitutional provisions, judges repeatedly assign positive evaluative meanings to democracy, judicial independence, the rule of law, and fundamental rights. Such appreciative evaluations contribute to the ideological construction of constitutional legitimacy by presenting these concepts as indispensable foundations of democratic governance. Conversely, governmental actions that undermine constitutional principles are consistently associated with negative appreciations emphasizing arbitrariness, constitutional inconsistency, or legal invalidity. These findings indicate that constitutional judgments simultaneously perform interpretative and ideological functions by legitimizing particular constitutional values while delegitimizing actions that threaten democratic institutions. This pattern corresponds closely with Martin and White's (2005) conception of Appreciation as a resource for evaluating objects, institutions, and abstract entities within professional discourse. It also supports previous legal linguistic research suggesting that judicial opinions contribute to the social construction of constitutional authority through systematic positive evaluations of legal institutions (Bhatia, 2017).

The relatively limited occurrence of **Affect** further confirms the institutional nature of judicial discourse. Emotional evaluations occupy only a marginal position within the corpus because constitutional adjudication prioritizes legal objectivity, institutional neutrality, and reasoned constitutional interpretation. Where affective expressions occur, they are generally associated with broader constitutional concerns such as the protection of fundamental rights, democratic governance, public welfare, or constitutional stability rather than the personal emotions of individual judges. This restrained use of emotional language reflects the communicative expectations associated with judicial writing, where legitimacy derives from rational constitutional reasoning rather than emotional persuasion. The findings therefore support earlier observations that professional legal discourse minimizes personal affect while emphasizing institutional evaluation (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015). At the same time, the presence of limited affective meanings demonstrates that judicial discourse cannot be regarded as entirely emotionless; instead, emotional evaluation is carefully regulated and strategically employed when constitutional values require particular emphasis.

The findings concerning **Engagement** provide further insight into the dialogic character of constitutional adjudication. The predominance of heteroglossic resources demonstrates that judicial authority is constructed through continuous interaction with multiple constitutional voices rather than through unilateral assertion. Throughout the corpus, judges repeatedly engage with constitutional provisions, statutory interpretation, judicial precedents, submissions made by counsel, and competing legal arguments before establishing authoritative constitutional conclusions. Such dialogic positioning reflects the deliberative nature of constitutional adjudication, where legitimacy depends upon demonstrating that alternative legal perspectives have been carefully considered before judicial authority is exercised. The extensive use of Disclaim resources indicates that constitutional reasoning frequently requires judges to reject unconstitutional interpretations or invalidate governmental actions inconsistent with constitutional norms. Conversely, Proclaim resources strengthen judicial certainty by presenting particular constitutional principles as well-established and legally authoritative. Entertain and Attribute further reinforce procedural fairness by acknowledging alternative legal viewpoints before subjecting them to judicial scrutiny. Collectively, these dialogic strategies illustrate that constitutional judgments derive much of their persuasive force from transparent engagement with competing legal interpretations rather than from institutional power alone.

The findings relating to **Graduation** similarly reveal that constitutional authority is strengthened through carefully calibrated linguistic intensification. The predominance of Force over Focus indicates that judges more frequently amplify the strength of evaluative meanings than modify categorical boundaries. Expressions emphasizing clarity, certainty, seriousness, and constitutional significance reinforce the persuasive force of judicial reasoning while minimizing interpretative ambiguity. Constitutional judgments frequently address issues of national importance, including democratic governance, judicial independence, executive authority, and constitutional accountability. Consequently, judges employ linguistic intensification to communicate the gravity of constitutional violations and the importance of constitutional compliance. Such evaluative amplification strengthens the authority of judicial conclusions by presenting constitutional interpretation as definitive, reasoned, and institutionally credible. This observation supports Martin and White's (2005) argument that Graduation functions as a mechanism for calibrating evaluative force according to communicative purpose. Within judicial discourse, linguistic intensification does not represent rhetorical exaggeration but rather reflects the judiciary's responsibility to articulate authoritative constitutional standards.

The interaction of the three appraisal subsystems demonstrates that judicial evaluation is achieved through an integrated linguistic system rather than isolated evaluative expressions. **Attitude** establishes the evaluative orientation of judicial

reasoning by assessing institutional conduct and constitutional principles. **Engagement** situates those evaluations within broader constitutional debates by acknowledging, negotiating, and ultimately resolving competing legal viewpoints. **Graduation**, in turn, strengthens or moderates evaluative meanings according to the constitutional significance of the issues under consideration. Together, these appraisal resources construct judicial discourse that is simultaneously objective, persuasive, and institutionally authoritative. The findings therefore indicate that constitutional judgments should not be understood solely as legal texts; they are also carefully constructed interpersonal texts through which judges negotiate constitutional legitimacy, democratic values, and institutional credibility.

The present study contributes to the growing body of corpus-assisted legal discourse research in several important ways. First, it extends the application of Appraisal Theory to the analysis of Pakistani constitutional judgments, an area that has received comparatively little scholarly attention despite the central role of the judiciary in Pakistan's constitutional development. Second, by integrating corpus linguistic techniques with Appraisal Theory, the study demonstrates the value of combining quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative discourse analysis in investigating evaluative language within institutional texts. Third, the findings provide empirical evidence that judicial authority is not merely a consequence of constitutional status but is actively constructed through systematic linguistic evaluation. Finally, the study highlights the usefulness of Appraisal Theory as an analytical framework for examining judicial discourse in multilingual and postcolonial legal contexts, thereby opening new avenues for corpus-assisted research on legal language in Pakistan and other common-law jurisdictions.

Overall, the findings clearly answer both research questions by demonstrating that evaluative language is systematically embedded within Pakistani Supreme Court judgments and that the interaction of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation plays a central role in constructing judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and persuasive legal reasoning. Rather than functioning as linguistically neutral legal documents, constitutional judgments emerge as sophisticated interpersonal texts through which judges evaluate governmental conduct, negotiate competing constitutional interpretations, and reinforce the normative foundations of democratic governance. These findings therefore confirm that Appraisal Theory provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding the linguistic construction of judicial authority within constitutional discourse and offers valuable insights into the relationship between language, law, and institutional power.

6. Conclusion

This study examined evaluative language in eight landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan through the framework of **Appraisal Theory** (Martin & White, 2005). Using a corpus-assisted qualitative approach, the study investigated how judges

employ the appraisal systems of **Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation** to construct judicial authority, constitutional legitimacy, and persuasive legal reasoning.

The findings demonstrate that evaluative language is a fundamental feature of Pakistani constitutional judicial discourse. Among the three appraisal systems, **Attitude** emerged as the most dominant, with **Judgment** being the most frequently employed resource. This indicates that judges primarily evaluate the legality, propriety, and constitutional conduct of governmental institutions and public authorities rather than expressing personal emotions. **Appreciation** was extensively used to positively evaluate constitutional principles, judicial independence, the rule of law, and fundamental rights, while **Affect** occurred only minimally, reflecting the institutional objectivity expected in judicial writing.

The study also found that **Engagement** plays a crucial role in judicial reasoning by enabling judges to acknowledge, negotiate, and evaluate competing legal arguments, constitutional provisions, and judicial precedents before reaching authoritative conclusions. Similarly, **Graduation** strengthens the persuasive force of judicial discourse through linguistic intensification and precise categorization, reinforcing constitutional certainty and judicial authority.

Theoretically, the study extends the application of Appraisal Theory to Pakistani constitutional judicial discourse and demonstrates the value of integrating **Corpus Linguistics** with **Systemic Functional Linguistics** for analysing legal language. Methodologically, it illustrates how corpus-assisted appraisal analysis provides a systematic and replicable approach for investigating evaluative meaning in institutional texts.

The study also has practical implications for legal linguistics, forensic linguistics, discourse analysis, and constitutional law by providing insights into how linguistic choices shape judicial reasoning and institutional legitimacy. These findings may benefit researchers, legal practitioners, judges, and students interested in the relationship between language and law.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited to eight landmark Supreme Court judgments and focuses exclusively on English-language constitutional decisions. Future research may expand the corpus by including High Court judgments, more recent constitutional cases, or comparative analyses across different legal jurisdictions. Further studies may also combine Appraisal Theory with Critical Discourse Analysis or computational linguistic techniques to explore judicial discourse from broader analytical perspectives.

Overall, the study concludes that Pakistani Supreme Court judgments are not merely legal texts but persuasive institutional discourses in which **Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation** work together to construct constitutional authority, reinforce democratic

values, and legitimize judicial interpretation. These findings highlight the effectiveness of Appraisal Theory as a robust framework for understanding evaluative language in judicial discourse.

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