LITERATURE, LINGUISTICS & CRITICISM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Framing COVID-19 in Pakistani mainstream media: An analysis of newspaper editorials

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Abstract: This study set out to compare the framing of the COVID-19 pandemic in the editorials of two most popular, mainstream dailies published in Pakistan viz. Dawn, an English newspaper; and Jang, an Urdu newspaper. It carries out a comparative analysis of how a popular mainstream English daily and Urdu daily frame COVID-19 during the months of March and April 2020 when its incidence was on the rise starting from 28 February when its first case was reported in Pakistan. For a theoretical framework, the study took insights from the Framing theory for content analysis. The most salient frames in the data were collected and the similarities and difference in their content were explored. It was found out that the editorials, especially those in Dawn provided useful insights for policy decisions, public and government’s guidance by defining problems, making moral judgments, diagnosing causes, and suggesting remedies. Flattening the curve demands citizen participation which can be effective if countries adopt public health policies that are aligned with their “culture and underlying societal values and culture”. The present study posits that media framing also helps in understanding local cultures and

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This study was conducted in the context of rising cases of COVID-19, i.e., during March and April 2020. Combating the pandemic and flattening the curve depends on the governments’ understanding the situation in their respective states. Newspaper editorials play a great role in informing and advising the governments. We analyzed the content of COVID-related editorials from two newspapers in Pakistan using Framing theory. We found out what are the COVID-related issues that the government is paying attention to and what are those that it needs to pay more attention to. The most salient frames in the data were compared. We found out that the editorials, especially those in Dawn provided useful insights for policy decisions, public and government’s guidance by defining problems, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. As the number of COVID cases worldwide are increasing again, such researches have valuable contribution for interventions and policy decisions in local contexts.
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Subjects: Asian Studies; Cultural Studies; Sociology & Social Policy; Mass Communication; Persuasion; Risk Communication; Health Communication; Health & Development; MediaCommunication; Language & Linguistics

Keywords: Media; COVID-19; framing theory; Framing; salience

1. Introduction
The world is faced with a pandemic named COVID-19 since November 2019 when its first known case was discovered in Wuhan, China. COVID-19 stands for coronavirus disease 2019. It is caused by a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The World Health Organization declared the disease to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 (World Health Organization), and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO Director-General’s opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19–11 March 2020).

A pandemic is a large-scale epidemic that spreads throughout the globe (Taylor, 2019). An influenza like pandemic was anticipated by virologists (Taylor, 2019), with potential devastating consequences in the absence of vaccination. A cure or vaccination has yet to be discovered. By 24 August 2020, 23,434,221 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 188 countries, causing 808,928 fatalities (Johns Hopkins, 2020). Though 15,141,042 infected people have recovered globally, there may be a possibility of recurring which calls for research in this area to see the patterns in local as well as global contexts.

Pakistan is a South Asian developing country with a population of around 220 million. As of 24.8.2020, the number of confirmed cases in Pakistan were 293,261, with 6,244 casualties and 276,829 recoveries and 686 critical cases according to the Government of Pakistan Official Portal (2020) and John Hopkins CSSE,2020 Dashboard. The first patient of COVID-19 in Pakistan was reported on 28 February 2020 when it had already affected thousands of people in more than 120 countries. Such a situation calls for a very quick response, strategies and intervention by any government to minimize the possible harm caused in terms of the number of casualties and affected patients. Developing countries like Pakistan are already faced with several other issues like poverty; lack of healthcare facilities and opportunities of education; and other issues related to economic instability among others.

In this backdrop, the role of the leadership is very important which calls for timely and informed decision-making. There are many sources of inspiration for such action, e.g., guidance from healthcare professionals, observation, learning from history and other leaders’ success stories, literature including books, history of pandemics, media and journalism, and reviewing one’s routine policies and strategies among others. Newspaper editorials play an important role in advising and warning leadership and providing timely commentary on events for the general public awareness. Frames in Pakistani newspaper editorials have not been analysed in this context to the best of our understanding.

The present study, thus, fills this gap by analysing COVID-19 related editorials published in one most popular English newspaper and one most popular Urdu newspaper during the months of March and April 2020 with a view to finding out the COVID-19 related issues that found salience in these editorials in these crucial times. Dawn, according to Qazi and Shah (2018), is a representative of Pakistan’s liberal readership while Jang is the most popular Urdu newspaper among the common public.

For analyzing the editorials to see which are the predominantly salient frames constructed by both the dailies, the following research questions were formulated
1.1. Research questions
The research questions guiding this analysis are:

RQ1: How did Dawn editorials frame the COVID-19 Pandemic and related issues?

RQ2: How did Jang editorials frame the COVID-19 Pandemic and related issues?

RQ3: What are the similarities or differences in their framing?

2. Theoretical underpinnings
Most of the media discourse is framed. Goffman (1974) was one of the developers of the concept of framing. According to him, frames are the “schemata of interpretation.” Framing theory incorporates the concept of intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1986; Gordon, 2015). Entman’s (1993) definition of framing considers it as the act of picking some features of professed reality and giving them more salience in a communication, and thus promoting a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the phenomena. In short, frames may foreground some aspects of truth and exclude certain others (Druckman, 2001, p. 230).

Media persons often frame the information they receive while reporting. Frames either inform or emphasize or do both with the purpose of impacting opinion on a given subject (Chong & Druckman, 2007; De Vreese, 2005; Leeper & Slothuus, 2019; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele, 2000). As a theoretical framework, framing explores how people construct their social worlds, generate meanings, relations, and identities through linguistic and paralinguistic means (Gordon, 2015) i.e., “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1982) that help recipients in meaning making and sense making.

For Bateson (1972) and other psychologists, frames are psychological, and hence play a role in sense-making. For media personnel like Goffman (1974: 10), frames are “definitions of a situation” recognized by interlocutors. Linguists and discourse analysts like Fairclough (2015, p. 169) define frame as a “representation of whatever can figure as a topic, ‘referent’, or ‘subject matter’ within an activity”. Lakoff’s (2004) definition explains frames as “mental structures that shape the way we see the world”. Frames are ideologically capricious and those having power change and develop their frames for accomplishing their own specific goals.

Gamson (1992) likens news reporting with storytelling in that the teller has the possibility to give salience to certain elements despite the fact that news stories are factual representations of events. This salience giving is called framing. Framing is defined as making certain “facets of a perceived realism more salient in a text, with the objective of promoting a specific problem definition, moral evaluation, causal interpretation, and/or treatment recommendations” (Entman, 1993: 52). Frames are the “organizing principles that are socially shared and work to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001: 11).

Different frames thus cause the same issue to be interpreted differently (Gandy, 2001) and hence, framing analysis helps in understanding how media manufactures people’s opinions and perceptions of reality by giving salience to certain facts more than the others (Miller & Riechert, 2001). Differentiating agenda setting research and framing analysis, Scheufele (1999) states that the former focuses on the selection of issues, and the latter attends to the aspects and attributes of the issues.

Frames are built by an incessant communication between journalists and elites and social movements (Gans, 1979; Snow & Benford, 1992; Tuchman, 1978). Subsequently, they appear in texts. Frames “define problems”, “make moral judgments”, “diagnose causes”, and “suggest remedies” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; Entman, 1993).

Combining intertextuality, framing contends that individuals and social situations are flexible, and that interactions are built moment by moment (Gordon, 2015). Reese (2007) propounds that
frames carry a lot more than just story topics. Though there has been a lot of research in media studies on framing, linguists have started employing this framework lately.

To framing analysts, Gee (2014) suggests pushing their knowledge of the situation to the farthest and to include all relevant aspects of the context. This enables them to do a politically committed discourse analysis. The Frame Problem recommends that after one is done with an analysis, one should look at the context again and include all aspects of the context that can be relevant in the meaning of data. If looking at more context does not change the meaning we have made, we can be contented that our analysis is on the right track.

The present study investigates how two dailies frame the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in their editorials. Besides being a global health emergency, it has had several other indirect impacts like those on economy, politics, travel, trade, tourism, employment and other health issues that were ignored, too. This whole scenario demands a rethinking of individual practices and state policies since the whole life style has changed and this rethinking requires constant nudging and reminders from different sources including media and journalism.

Keeping in view these impacts of the crisis, it is important to explore the role of mainstream media in framing the crisis because it has a great impact on manufacturing public and government’s opinion, policies and response. These goals are achieved by the media through giving salience to certain frames, providing commentaries on the current state of things; and sometimes criticizing or commending certain measures; and still other times offering advice, guidance or suggestions, too.

Studying frames in a pandemic backdrop is especially important because frames influence the health policy process (Koon et al., 2016) and affect preferences for different interventions (Hameleers, 2020). Examining the Chinese media framing of COVID-19, Wang and Mao (2021) found that the use of the frames of treatment responsibility and consequences played the main role in turning the COVID-19 from a risk to a catastrophe. Primarily, the journalists framed the pandem as superable locally, with calculable consequences. After the government stepped in, journalists framed COVID-19 as an uncontrollable local reality, thus transforming it into a national catastrophe, and called for increased controlling measures. The third phase saw journalists transforming the local catastrophe into a global crisis through framing. According to them, delocalisation, incalculability, and non-compensability were crucial in risk virtualisation. They contend that the different usage of the consequences and treatment responsibility frames have the ability to either prevent the transformation of a risk into a catastrophe or facilitate this transformation process.

Framing thus is an important area of study during pandemics because perceptions of risk are largely formed by media communication which may influence the public’s response to a pandemic (Sandell et al., 2013) as serious as COVID-19.

3. Methodology

Researchers (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) have identified two broad approaches to framing analysis, i.e., inductive and deductive. The former begins with loosely defined presuppositions of the frames, and its objective is to identify all the probable frames (Gamson, 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The latter, however, embarks upon the analysis with stronger conjectures, predefining certain frames, and examining their incidence in the data (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This study employs the inductive approach as it has to draw a comparison between two newspapers’ editorial frames with a view to finding out what is important for each newspaper and what are the problems faced by the country in view of the editors of these newspapers. Hence, the authors did not pre-specify certain frames, and left it upon the data to reveal frames constructed as they were analysed minutely during thorough, repeated readings of the editorials by each of the independent expert coders.

The coders read the editorials to extract frames. Each of the coders jotted down frames individually first while reading and rereading the editorials. In the next step, the frames by each
coder were compared. A list of agreements and a list of disagreements was prepared. Inter-coder reliability (ICR) was calculated using the formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) i.e., the total number of agreements divided by the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements.

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\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of agreements}}{\text{Number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}
\]

The ICR value for this study’s data turned out to be 0.86 which is greater than the 0.60 threshold for good reliability.

This study posits that it is especially important at this stage of the COVID-19 to study media frames to understand the situation in Pakistan and to inform policy decisions when most countries are witnessing a new surge in the number of effected cases after it was thought of having been controlled there. And some places are predicting that a new wave is expected in the winters.

3.1. Data
Data were downloaded from Dawn and Jang editorial archives from their websites. For locating editorials on COVID-19 and related issues, the keywords “COVID-19”, “corona”, “pandemic”, “lock-down”, and “SOPs” were used. Moreover, some other words also were used that could be related to the topic remotely, e.g., “PPEs”, “stranded abroad”, “economic issues”, “frontline warriors” etc., because sometimes the editorials referred to the pandemic indirectly.

The study focused on the editorials from 28 February, i.e., the day the first COVID19 case was reported in Pakistan to 30 April 2020 when the outbreak was most severe and cases were on the rise in Pakistan and around the world. It helped to find out the initial concerns of the newspapers. Dawn published a total of 98 editorials on the topic during this period and Jang published 43 COVID-19 related editorials during this period which is almost half as compared to Dawn.

Initially, the headlines were collected and read and categories under the frames that emerged. In the second step, the editorials were read thoroughly to see if the detailed content revealed focus on some other aspect more than was apparent in the headline. The frames and categories were readjusted accordingly to reach at the final frames to be analyzed. The following section provides a detailed discussion of the findings.

4. Findings and discussion
It was observed that Dawn published almost double the number of COVID-19 related editorials (n = 98) as compared to Jang (n = 43). Moreover, if we see the detail month wise, the number of editorials related to the pandemic kept increasing with the increasing number of cases and related problems in both newspapers. From February to April 2020, Dawn published 1 in February, 28 in March, and 69 in April. Similarly, the number of COVID-19 related editorials published in Jang increased from 1 in February, to 15 in March and further to 25 in April.

Table 1 shows the Main COVID-19 related frames in the Dawn editorial titles and Table 2 lists the frames in Jang editorial titles with salience of each frame in percentage. The following paragraphs will present a discussion of the content analysis of the data.

4.1. Government response frame
The most salient frame in Dawn as well as Jang editorials is the government response frame. Editorials under this frame discuss the news related to gradual responses and measures taken from time to time by the government and also provide a commentary on them and offer certain advice to the government.

Dawn editorials discuss the measures taken by the government like closing down all educational institutions and Western borders; cancellation of the Pakistan day parade; change in the PSL Schedule; limiting the Raiwind Tablegi Ijtemah; closing down wedding halls and cinema houses;
Table 1. Main COVID-19-related frames in the Dawn editorial titles

| Frame                   | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Government’s response   | 11 Mar-Call for Leadership 15 Mar- Containing the virus 20Mar- Foot-in-mouth syndrome 24 Mar- Lockdown begins 29 Mar- Opening supply chains 30Mar- Sindh leads the way 1 Apr- Relief force 1 Apr- Education lockdown 6Apr- Ill-conceived policy 7 Apr- Reopening business 10Apr- Quarantine lapses 11Apr- Ehsaas begins 11Apr- Lifting lockdown 15 Apr- A risky choice 17Apr- A Risky Proposition 18Apr- Shelter in place 19 Apr- Construction package 21 Apr- A smart strategy? 21 Apr- Wrong messaging 24Apr- Stark warning | 20.4         |
| Health and well-being   | 24 Mar- World Tuberculosis Day 29Mar- Polio strikes back 29Mar- Front-line warriors 4 Apr- Drop delay 6 Apr- Digital help 7 Apr- PMDC conundrum 8Apr- On the front-line 12 Apr- Dearth of test kits 12 Apr- Quack supplies 14 Apr- Medics under threat 17 Apr- A Stealthy Contagion 20Apr- Mental health and COVID-19 23 Apr- Left to Suffer. 24 Apr- Medicine shortage 30 Apr- A Troubling trend. 30 Apr- Childhood Immunization | 16.3         |
| Frame                   | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Advice                 | 22Mar - Lessons for the world  
23 Mar - Militant attacks  
23 Mar - Save the pangolin  
28Mar - Water, water … 31 Mar - COVID-19 misinformation  
2Apr - Limiting the spread  
2 Apr - Policing the pandemic  
13 Apr - Need to restrict  
24 Apr - The Primary Dilemma  
25Apr - Ramzan Prices      | 10.2          |
| News and views         | 28 Feb - Corona Virus cases  
20Mar - The crisis deepens  
21 March - Iran’s crisis (Advice to world leaders)  
4 Apr - One million mark  
13 Apr - Data protection  
21 Apr - AQIS CELL Busted caught terrorist planning to attack  
23 Apr - Virtual parliament  
26Apr - Local Transmission  
27Apr - Empty Stomachs   | 9.2           |
| Impacts on Economy     | 13 Mar - Budgeting on anxiety  
15 Mar - Hot money  
2Apr - Informal enterprises  
3Apr - Bridging the gap (opening construction)  
3 Apr - Bailing out industry  
9Apr - FATF extension  
14 Apr - Economic projection  
17Apr - Debt Relief  
25Apr - Financing risk   | 9.2           |

(Continued)
| Frame                        | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| International               | 31 Mar - Stranded citizens 3 Apr - HK domicile 8 Apr - Stranded in UAE 10 Apr - Yemen truce 11 Apr - Trump vs WHO 14 Apr - AJK shelling 16 Apr - Trump's Ego 19 Apr - Progress in Yemen 20 Apr - A Divided Region 20 Apr - Blaming Muslims 27 Apr - India's Muslims 30 Apr - Extremism in India. | 12.3         |
| Need for solidarity/unity/peace | 17 Mar - A common enemy 19 Mar - Message of unity 21 Mar - Time for unity 25 Mar - No time for war 26 Mar - A Joint Battle 31 Mar - Missile strikes 1 Apr - Need for ceasefire | 7.1          |
| Religion                    | 18 Mar - Religious precautions 27 Mar - Al Azhar fatwa must be heeded 12 Apr - Mob attack on police 17 Apr - Congregational prayers 19 Apr - A Risky proposition 23 Apr - Reverse the Decision | 6.1          |
| Others                      | 10 Apr - Cruelty to animals 15 Apr - Back to the future? 15 Apr - Domestic violence. 26 Apr - Blaming Women 29 Apr - Sugar Audit 27 Apr - Track and Trace 28 Apr - Weak Virus Strategy | 7.1          |
| Prisoners                   | 18 Mar - COVID-19 & prisoners 9 Apr - Infected prisoners | 2.0          |
Table 2. Main COVID-19-related frames in the Jang editorial titles

| Frame                        | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Government’s response        | 21 Mar-Corona-Hangami Halat (Corona: Emergency situation)                          | 23.3         |
|                              | 15 Mar-Aalmi Waba aur Pakistan (Pandemic and Pakistan)                             |              |
|                              | 24 Mar-Corona aur Hakumi Taqamaat (Corona and the Government’s Measures)           |              |
|                              | 25 Mar-Hangami Halat, Mushkil Faisley (Emergency Situation, Difficult Decisions)    |              |
|                              | 26 Mar-Ber Waqt Muashi Package: Intazami Control Na gueer                          |              |
|                              | (Timely Economic Package: Administrative Control Indispensable)                   |              |
|                              | 28 Mar-Qumi Robto Committee kay Ahsen Faisley (Welcome Decisions of the National Coordination Committee,) |              |
|                              | 1 Apr-Waiz e Azam ki Hikmat e Amali (The Prime Minister’s Wisdom)                  |              |
|                              | 5 Apr-Tameeraat Shaabo,Aham Faisley (Construction Sector, Important Decisions)      |              |
|                              | 10 Apr-Corona Phailoa aur Maali Madad kay Program (Spread of Corona and the Financial Aid Programs) |              |
|                              | 29 Apr-Mustehsan Imdaadi Package (A Welcome Aid Package)                           |              |
| Health and well being        | 25 Apr-Sehat kay Ilaron kay Khadshaat (Reservations of Health Care Organizations)   | 2.3          |

(Continued)
| Frame          | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Advice        | 19 Mar-Maeeshat Chalani hy to Shara e Sud Mazeed Ghataeen (Decrease interest rate if you wish to run the economy) | 23.3         |
|               | 31 Mar- Corona Bohraan: Todabbur ka Inteha Qan (Corona Crisis: a Test of Sobriety) |              |
|               | 2 Apr- Corona Ehtiaat bhi aur J距im Bhi (Corona: Precaution and Work: Side by Side) |              |
|               | 3 Apr- Corona kay Sath Rehma Seekhain (Learn to live with Corona)                  |              |
|               | 7 Apr- Corona Mazeed Ehtiaat Zaruri (Corona: More Precaution Essential)            |              |
|               | 9 Apr- Corona: Her Shehri Kirdaar ada Kre (Corona: Every Citizen to play their role) |              |
|               | 13 Apr- Khataarnao: Corona: La Panwah ki Gunjaish Nahi (Dangerous corona, No Room for Carelessness) |              |
|               | 16 Apr- Lockdown mein Mamulaat e Zindagi Kaisey (How to manage life's routines during lockdown) |              |
|               | 18 Apr- Zaheer aandaz Jurum (Hoarding: a Crime)                                    |              |
|               | 22 Apr- Shadeed khatra: Ehtiaat Jarai Rokhan (Serious Risk: Continue the Precautions) |              |
| News and views| 28 Feb- Corona: Her Satah per Ehtiaat ki Zarurat (Corona: Caution needed at every level) | 5.1          |
|               | 29 Mar- Azaad Media, Jamhuriat aur Wazir e Azam (Free media, Democracy and the Prime Minister) |              |
|               | 4 Apr- Afghan Honokmat, Taliban Muaeheda, Amn Nagueer (Afghan Government-Taliban pact, peace indispensable) |              |
|               | 15 Apr- Waqt Itehaad ka, Paigaham Inteshaar Ka (Time for unity: Message of anarchy) |              |
|               | 17 Apr- Faislon mein Ilbhaarm (Obscurity in Decisions)                              |              |

(Continued)
| Frame                  | Title of editorial                                                                 | Salience (%) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Economic Impact       | 11 Mar-Aalimi Muashi Surat e Haal our Pakistan (Global Economic Situation and Pakistan)   | 18.6         |
|                       | 26 Mar-Ber waqat Muashi Package: Intazami Control na Guzeer (Timely economic package: Administrative control indispensable) |             |
|                       | 11 Apr-Corona, Muashi Asraat (Corona, Economic Impacts)                             |              |
|                       | 12 Apr-Rozgar ka Tahafuz: State Bank ka Ehm Tqdaam (Security of Livelihood: An Important step by the State Bank) |              |
|                       | 14 Apr-Wazir e Azam ki alami Idaron se Jeez Tawaquaat (PM’s Fair Expectations from World Organizations) |              |
|                       | 19 Apr-Maesshat m Behtri, Waqqi ya Mustaqil? (Improvement in economy, temporary or permanent?) |              |
|                       | 26 Apr-Corona aur Muashi Mushkilaat (Corona and Economic Problems)                  |              |
|                       | 27 Apr-Muashi Thinktank ki Sifarishat (Recommendations of the Economic Think tank)   |              |
| International         | 30 Mar-Corona Bohraan, Qaumi aur Aalimi surat e Haal (Corona Crisis: National and Global Situation) | 7.0          |
|                       | 21 Apr-Bharti Musalmonon kay sath Barhti Ziadtaan (Increasing Mistreatment of Indian Muslims) |              |
|                       | 30 Apr-Bharat: Aqliat Dushman Rawaejya (India: Anti minority attitude)               |              |
| Unity/Solidarity/Peace| 22 Apr-Crona se nimatney k leay Qaumi Yok Jehti Na guzeer (National unity indispensable to combat corona) | 9.3          |
|                       | 23 Apr-Corona ka Muqabla Qaumi Azm hi se Mumkin (Fight with Corona only Possible through National Determination) |              |
|                       | 27 Apr-Sub mil ker Corona se Larain (Fight against corona together)                  |              |
|                       | 24 Apr-Corona: Aalimi Tawaun Naguzeer (Corona: Global Cooperation Indispensable)    |              |
| Religion              | 20 Apr-Ba jamaat Namaz (Congregational prayer)                                       | 2.3          |
| Others/Miscellaneous  | 18 Mar-Corona Virus kay Asraat (The Effects of Corona virus)                         | 2.3          |
and cancellation of the Bangladesh cricket team tour. Some of these steps are commended and applauded by the writer; some criticized and for some, better suggestions have been offered as discussed in the lines below. The Jang editorials framing government response also discuss most of these steps and commend or criticize them but do not offer much informed suggestions or recommendations. In this sense, Jang editorials offer just a commentary, and Dawn provides solutions, e.g., “Containing the virus” published on 15 March states:

‘Pakistan is a developing country with poor healthcare infrastructure and low hygiene standards, so authorities ought to have sounded the alarm by enforcing strict screening and cancelling mass public events when the first case was reported … Given that Pakistan is straddled by China and Iran which have among the highest reported cases, the authorities’ response to the fast-spreading virus has been lethargic and more reactive than proactive—a circumstance which has led the virus to thrive in other countries.’

The above extract points out that the vulnerable situation of the country demanded a faster response from the government than it did. It implies that the governments needed to display a proactive response to the pandemic in order to avoid devastating consequences owing to the already existing poor healthcare and hygiene facilities.

It further states:

‘Across cities, the government must kick off mass multilingual awareness drives about hygiene, symptoms and the availability of medical help.’

It was an apt advice keeping in view the multilingual milieu of the country where more than 72 languages are spoken and the literacy rates are not satisfactory and more than 70% population lives in the countryside where they have less access to English or Urdu, which is the national language and mostly speak their regional languages. This was a piece of advice which was later observed to be put to action and till now, there are messages in indigenous languages in circulation through various media.

In the editorial “Call for Leadership” published on 11 March, Dawn editorial commends the proactive response of the Balochistan and Sind governments and adds: “however, the governments of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan have not displayed the same level of urgency.’ Moreover, it points out to the slow reaction by the PM thus:

‘Prime Minister Imran Khan has yet to publicly acknowledge the presence of Covid-19 in the country and thereby demonstrate that he is cognizant of the … danger … Pakistan is in need of a leader who can bring people together to work collectively to forestall a widespread epidemic in the country.’

This advice was needed in keeping with the contentious competitive steps taken by the federal government and the Sind government and both governments leaders criticizing the steps taken by the other in relation to the pandemic, e.g., the Sind Govt announced a complete lockdown much earlier than the federal government.

Prime Minister Khan … must galvanise the political leadership of all parties to work in unison to combat the emerging crisis. It also recommends all parties to ‘rise above partisan politics and petty vendettas ’ and that Mr Khan needs to ‘be visible in the COVID-19 messaging campaign, which he had stayed away from until yesterday.

In the middle of the rising cases situation, the government decided to ease lockdown because of the worse effects of lockdown on the economy of the country generally and the situation of the common man specifically. This resulted in criticism by some sections of the society and the publication of editorials calling for giving the decision a second thought. “A risky choice” published on 15 April
questions the government’s decision of opening businesses for economy despite the rising number of cases. Similarly, “Stark warning” published on 24th April talks about the request made by the medical professionals to reconsider easing lockdown. It is worth mentioning that the health care professionals were not consulted before easing the lockdown regarding the situation in hospitals and limitations faced by them due to the lack of facilities provided. Initially, many medical professionals were working without protective gears and at this stage, hospitals were overfilled with patients and doctors were appealing to the government to keep the complete lockdown intact.

18Apr-Shelter in place demolition of kachi abadi houses by CDA

The editorial titled “Foot in mouth syndrome” published in Dawn on 20 March condemns the statement by the minister for Information and Culture Mr Chohan that people who engage in panic buying and hoarding during the pandemic will be “punished” by God by bearing offspring with disabilities. The editorial declares it “utterly unbecoming of a public office-bearer” and suggest them to talk of things like “solidarity and reason” like the German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The editorial “Qaumi Rabta Committee kay Ahsen Faisley” (Welcome Decisions of the National Coordination Committee) published on 28 March by the Urdu newspaper Jang commends the governments’ measures of restricting the Friday congregational prayer’s gathering to 4 people, and creating a force to deliver ration to the needy people’s homes.

4.2. Health and wellbeing frame

Though an important, solution-oriented frame in the face of a pandemic, its salience is visible only in Dawn editorials that dedicated 16.3% of its editorials to the frame whereas Jang has only one editorial framing health and wellbeing. While Dawn discusses wide-ranging health-care issues including those related to COVID-19 like the government’s decreasing the testing capacity despite the promise to increase it; and those related to patients with other health problems being ignored due to the emergency faced by everybody that has caused the government as well as the public to downplay other issues like tuberculosis; OPD patients (since OPD sections were locked down in the initial panic); the number of polio cases increasing; and immunization of thousands of kids delayed; health-care professionals’ dilemma; shortage of medicines; and hurdles in the way to PMDC registration (which might cause unrest among the practitioners) among others, Jang, the Urdu newspaper, only discusses reservations of health-care organizations.

4.3. Advice frame

This frame was allocated to the editorials that direct advice to either the government or the public on some presumed, potential, or anticipated issue or on the situation at hand without any background news. Otherwise, suggestions are included with many other frames, too, especially in Dawn editorials.

Although the advice frame is much more in salience (23.2%) in Jang editorials than in Dawn, Jang editorials mostly offer advice to public regarding protective measures against the pandemic except for one or two places where it advises government, too, i.e., reducing the interest rate even further to support the nosediving economy.

Dawn editorials, on the other hand, offer very in-depth analytical advice on issues ranging from risks of terrorist attack; to water scarcity; to misinformation; to education being affected among others e.g., the 28 Feb editorial “Corona Cases” suggests “state-of-the-art quarantine and treatment facilities” as this “dilapidated healthcare system” is not sufficient to deal with a “potential outbreak”.

“Corona Bohraan: Tadabbur ka imtehaan” (Corona Crisis: a test of wisdom) published on 31 March in Jang aptly advises the government to make COVID-19 related decisions in consultation with the opposition and health-care professionals to avoid any misjudgment. This is what most other
leaders around the world are doing but Pakistan government is known to act without consulting anybody even in the face of the pandemic. “Policing the Pandemic” published on 2 April advises the government to use its authority to contain the pandemic instead of leaving it to the public to act responsibly which proved to be a serious suggestion when on the occasion of Eid, people’s not following SOPs like social distancing in markets and surroundings caused the number of cases to shoot rapidly. Resultantly, the government started experimenting with smart lockdown by locking down areas where there were many cases at a time. Hence in this case also, Dawn presents a wide-ranging vision in its editorials keeping an eye on multiple problems closely or directly as well as remotely or indirectly associated with the pandemic.

Table 2 lists the frames related to COVID-19 published in the Dawn editorial titles. These frames are Events/news, economic impact, Unity/Solidarity/Peace, advice,

### 4.4. News and views frame
Under this frame, editorials offer a critique of certain national and global news related to the pandemic and its effects. Both newspapers discuss diverse news related to international, local, political, and societal issues and the spread of the disease and offer relevant advice to the concerned. An important editorial by Dawn, i.e., “Empty Stomachs” offers suggestions in the face of the prediction made by the WHO about a potential global food scarcity. Likewise, “Iran’s crisis” published on 21 March offers advice to world leaders about lifting sanctions from Iran.

In this frame, Jang points out more diverse issues ranging from Afghan Government-Talibaa pact; Obscurity in Decisions as late as 17 April; Caution needed at every Level; and the self-contradictory stance of the government in “Waqt Itehaad ka, Paighaam Inteshaar Ka” (Time for unity: Message of anarchy).

### 4.5. Economic impact frame
Under the economic impact frame, Jang discusses the huge drop in the prices of petrol causing a huge downfall in the stock market index by 2300 points and the increase in currency exchange rate even further. This could cause a hurdle in the privatization of businesses going in loss as foreign investors might be discouraged to invest during the pandemic. People might lose jobs as a result. In this scenario, the editorials suggest the government should broaden the scope of consultation and then make decisions that are beneficial for the public as well. Moreover, this frame also discusses the financial aid packages for the daily wage earners during the lockdown which was a good step by the government.

“Hot Money” published by Dawn on 15 Mar makes a very informative judgment about the priorities of the government advising them to “show leadership and focus on action, transparency and communication” keeping in view the potential mortality rate and the resultant economic losses. It further adds: “this is not the time to bicker over the 18th Amendment or the availability of funds.” These are the routine discussions in the national assemblies and points of arguments between the government and the opposition. Similarly, “Bridging the gap” published on 3 April questions the risky decision of opening the construction sector when the number of cases were at their peak. This decision was taken when the cases were at their peak by the government under pressure of the public and opposition about the destabilizing economy which in turn raised opposition from many sections of the society and media, including this editorial.

Jang editorials discuss the Global Economic Situation and Pakistan; the necessity of an Economic package; the State Bank’s relief initiative and offers advice on lowering the interest rates further to support the economy.

### 4.6. Need for unity/solidarity/peace frame
Editorials constructing this frame rightly emphasize the need for local, regional and global peace and unity among people and nations to strengthen them for the common fight against the
medical emergency faced by all termed as “A Common Enemy” and “A Joint Battle” by Dawn editorial headlines. This situation calls for the whole world joining hands to win against it. Here again, the Dawn editorials discuss more wide-ranging and broad-based problems than Jang editorials do. One can say they are more broadly international than the Jang editorials. While Dawn discusses issues from regional and local disagreements about the situation to Indian minorities’ issues to the situation in Syria, and further to Trump and the WHO in “No time for war”, “Missile strikes”, and “Need for ceasefire” and other editorials, Jang focuses more on national or South Asian regional concerns.

In “Crona se nimatney k leay Qaumi Yak Jehti Na guzeer” (National unity indispensable to combat corona); “Corona ka Mugabla Qaumi Azm hi se Mumkin” (Fight with Corona only Possible through National Determination); and “Sub mil ker Corona se Larain” (Fight against corona together) published on 22, 23, and 27 March respectively, Jang editorials focus on the need for national and interprovincial unity between the public and the leaders of different parties to be able to handle the situation which was lacking in the disagreements between the federal government and

| Frame                  | Dawn    | Jang    |
|------------------------|---------|---------|
| Government response    | 20.4%   | 23.3%   |
| Health and wellbeing   | 16.3%   | 2.3%    |
| Advice                 | 10.2%   | 23.3%   |
| News and views         | 9.2%    | 11.6%   |
| Impact on economy      | 9.2%    | 18.6%   |
| International          | 12.3%   | 7.0%    |
| Solidarity/unity/peace | 7.1%    | 9.3%    |
| Religion               | 6.1%    | 2.3%    |
| Others                 | 7.1%    | 2.3%    |
| Prisoners              | 2.0%    | 0%      |
the Sindh government regarding decisions about lockdown and flattening the curve. Moreover, the latter editorial discusses the Prime Minister’s disconnecting after his speech during a video conference specially organized by the speaker National Assembly Mr Asad Qaiser which left the other leaders upset. The editorial says it would have been better had the PM Khan stayed; listened to the other leaders and taken them in confidence for making decisions in these crucial times.

The editorial titled “Message of Unity” published on 19 March in Dawn points to the contradiction in the Prime Minister’s stressing the need for global unity and urging the international community to lift the sanctions against Iran on the one hand and his televised speech to the nation reflecting the “divisions within, both in its content and in the reactions it generated” on the other. Similarly, “A common enemy” published on 17 March points to Mr Zafar Mirza’s underscoring the importance of joint efforts to combat COVID-19 during SAARC. The title itself metaphorically terms the pandemic as the common enemy that needs to be tackled more than any other problem or enemy at the moment.

4.7. International concerns frame
Under this frame, it is noteworthy that Jang includes more regional concerns and Dawn, being an English newspaper, published more broad-based international concerns too along with the locals. Both the papers equally highlight and condemn the Indian extremism and anti-Muslim atrocities during the pandemic while erroneously blaming them for causing the spread of the virus.

The frame also includes problems faced by the Pakistani citizens stranded abroad; the Yemen truce and developments toward a ceasefire which is necessary in view of the collapsed health-care system of Yemen that could be unable to handle the pandemic; to Trump’s ego in matters with the WHO.

4.8. Religion frame
The Dawn editorials constructing this frame discuss all the developments regarding the government trying to convince the religious clerics to discontinue congregational rituals temporarily; to people resisting outside mosques; to the Al Azher Fatwa regarding restricting congregations; to reaching a consensus between the two parties after a meeting regarding permission for four people to join Friday prayers with SOPs.

Jang dedicated only one editorial to this frame while Dawn discussed it step wise in six editorials from 18 March to 30 April starting with the following advice in “Religious precautions” to take decisions “rationally, not emotionally” on 18 March giving examples from Egypt, Iran and Oman, the UAE and Saudia

‘Considering the fact that worshippers are in such close proximity during daily prayers in mosques, it is incumbent on religious leaders and the state to come up with a strategy that protects people’s health and lives until the threat of the virus subsides.’

to “Reverse the Decision” published on 23 April that states: “For the sake of public health, both the state and ulama need to reverse the decision on congregational prayers,” when various provincial administrations had taken differing steps regarding the suspension of congregational prayers in mosques to stop the spread of the contagion” and they were negotiating on reopening mosques for Ramadan.

4.9. Prisoners frame
Dawn very aptly drives the readers’ and government’s’ attention towards the prisoners and COVID-19 situation. Jang, however, did not give space to this frame. “COVID-19 and prisoners” published on 18 March in Dawn portrays a very serious picture of the situation in prisons i.e., “Jails in Pakistan are shockingly overcrowded … . there are 114 prisons across the country with 77,275 inmates against a combined capacity of 57,742 . . . . onsite medical facilities are less than satisfactory. About half the … posts for jail medical staff are lying vacant, and medical equipment and ambulances
are in short supply … close to 2,400 prisoners already suffer from chronic, contagious diseases such as hepatitis, HIV and tuberculosis. It is therefore vital that preventive measures be put in place immediately such as releasing … prisoners … over 65., minors, petty offenders and those with existing serious illnesses.”

“Infected prisoners” published on 9 April discusses the release of nearly 300 prisoners from Adiala Jail, and hundreds involved in minor crimes from Sindh. These were susceptible, especially given the poor hygiene standards, lack of medical care, and the already present ailments. Social distancing amongst prisoners could not be ensured.’ This renders the prison staff also vulnerable.

The latest decision has come when in Punjab alone, nearly 50 prisoners were recently diagnosed with the virus. It also indirectly points to the delay inherent in our judicial system by saying “over 60pc of all prisoners are under trial, waiting to hear their verdicts.”

4.10. Others/miscellaneous frames
In this category, we included editorials that discuss one frame each but are very important in their own right, e.g., the aftermaths of lockdown like the “Cruelty to Animals” (i.e., about the news regarding a pet market being locked down in emergency causing the deaths of many animals); “Domestic violence” (likely to increase during lockdown—a concern of women rights activists and shelter homes) which was a concern of all nations around the world during the early days of the pandemic; attributing responsibility of the outbreak to women by Maulana Tariq Jameel; “Sugar Audit” delayed because of factories being locked down; citizen’s privacy being affected due to the “Track and Trace” technology that the ISI employs in its anti-terrorist operations being employed by the government during COVID-19. Jang has only one editorial in this category that discusses all effects of COVID-19 already jotted down under other frames.

4.11. Comparative salience of the frames in Dawn and Jang editorials
Table 3 and Figure 1 present in percentages the salience of each of the above-mentioned frames in both the newspaper editorials. Dawn gives the greatest salience to the Government response frame (20.4%) and Jang gives the greatest salience equally to the government response and advice frame (23.3%). Health and wellbeing frame gets much more salience in Dawn (16.3%) than in Jang (2.3%) which is negligible. Impact on economy frame gets double the salience in Jang (18.6%) than in Dawn (9.2%).

5. Conclusion
The analysis concludes that the predominantly salient frames of both Dawn and Jang editorials are similar. The most frequently occurring ones are Government response; advice; and news and views frame. Dawn also has health and well-being as a salient frame but Jang, surprisingly, does not give much space to it. Both newspapers’ editorials stress the need for regional and global unity which is understandable as it was the time when the incidence of the pandemic cases was constantly on the rise in terms of the number of affected cases and deaths caused by the disease. Moreover, the whole world was facing a sudden adverse effect on their economy and stock markets due to the huge fall in petrol prices. The editorials regarding news/events frame did not only report the event(s) but also their critique and advice for governments and the world about their responses but to individuals on how to protect themselves against the pandemic. The ones on government response reported the measures taken by the government; and commentary on them including criticism and/or appreciation of the step(s) taken.

It is noteworthy that Dawn editorials included more informed and expert commentary than the Jang ones which mostly sounded a matter-of-fact restatement of facts and a simple critique, that too, mostly in a positive tone. Overall, Dawn editorials have a more insightful approach towards most frames and overall circumstances. An in-depth reading of the editorials is informative for public, government and policymakers alike.
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