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## **Psychosocial Working Conditions and Work Engagement: The Mediating Role of Psychological Well-Being**

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With the evolution of the global landscape towards remote work, the working conditions of such arrangements tend to pique the interest of researchers. This framework seeks to assess the role of psychological well-being as a mediator between job demands, social support, family-work conflict, and work engagement by combining Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and Boundary theory. Quantitative designs utilizing cross-sectional studies have been conducted. A total of 315 Malaysian employees with remote working experience were recruited as respondents via homogeneous sampling. The COPSOQ II was used to assess job demands and social support, the WAFCS to assess work-family conflict, and the WHO-5 to assess psychological well-being. The Hayes Process Macro Version 4 was employed for hypothesis testing. The results indicate that job demands and social support are significant predictors of work engagement, but work-family conflict is not. For mediation analyses, it was found that psychological well-being mediates the relationship between job demands, social support, work-family conflict, and work engagement. This study offers empirical support for the conceptual framework of JD-R model, COR theory, and boundary theory as a means of predicting work engagement in remote work settings. HR professionals and organizations considering the implementation of work-from-home policies can gain valuable insights from this study, which can be used to develop policies and procedures that promote employee engagement, productivity, and well-being .

**Keywords:** psychological well-being; work engagement; JD-R model; job demands; social support; work-family conflict

Numerous researchers have highlighted employees as an organization's most valuable asset. A robust workforce can bolster competitive advantage by generating profits through services and output (Ahmad et al., 2021; Kuean et al., 2010). Employee engagement is crucial because it amplifies productivity and fosters job satisfaction (Mustaffa et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2021; Zainab et al., 2022). Such engagement not only helps in retaining talent but also reduces resource wastage, including recruitment costs. To ensure talent retention, it's vital to engage employees and nurture a robust organizational commitment. Work engagement, described as the

degree of involvement, is directly linked with elevated productivity and organizational loyalty (Anitha, 2016). Research by Mohd et al., (2016) identified 21 key factors that drive work engagement, including employee welfare, organizational justice, career opportunities, work-life balance, and the working environment. Work environment is a key factor in determining work engagement (Teo et al., 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic's surge in remote work poses challenges. While working from home offers flexibility, it can engender feelings of social isolation, potentially intensifying anxiety and depression, especially if workers' families have experienced COVID-19 related tragedies. Alarmingly, mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and stress afflict a significant proportion of employees, with one in three being diagnosed (Chua, 2020). The conditions surrounding remote work remain a critical focus for organizations. Previous studies suggest that work conditions significantly influence psychological well-being (Leka et al., 2015). Wang et al., (2020) also noted that perceived organizational support can impact an employee's psychological well-being.

Despite the attention, a research gap persists regarding work engagement as a distinct construct (Marathe et al., 2019). Limited research has been dedicated to the influence of psychological well-being on job outcomes, particularly work engagement. Most studies have concentrated on psychosocial work conditions and their direct impact on employee psychological well-being (Ervasti et al., 2022; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Schütte et al., 2014). The current pandemic underscores the need to investigate the mediating role of psychological well-being between psychosocial work conditions of remote employees and their work engagement. By delving into the mediation of psychological well-being in this relationship, researchers can glean deeper insights into the interplay among these factors. Such findings can illuminate managerial perspectives on fostering healthy work environments. They can also guide policymakers and HR professionals in promoting better engagement by ensuring a salubrious work environment for remote staff. Governments and related entities can accentuate and champion mental health services. By educating and raising public awareness about the importance of psychological well-being, they can pave the way for more robust external supports to tackle mental health challenges, consequently elevating work engagement and overall productivity.

### **Underpinning Theories**

Three key frameworks that explain how working conditions affect psychological well-being and engagement at work are the Job Demand-Resource Model (JD-R), the Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), and the Boundary Theory.

According to the JD-R model, employees' positive and negative outcomes are influenced both directly and indirectly by their job demands and job resources (Adisa et al., 2021; Bakker et al., 2014; Chen & Fellenz, 2020; Teo et al., 2020; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2020b). Positive outcomes can be accelerated by job resources, but job demands can deplete energy and result in negative outcomes like stress and emotional exhaustion (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Tripathi et al., 2021). Additionally, the JD-R model has been used to forecast how resources and job demands will affect employees' engagement and well-being at work (Radic et al., 2020).

The COR theory suggests that individuals are innately driven to invest effort in safeguarding their resources and averting their loss, which in turn shapes their psychological well-being and motivation at work (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 2011; Meyer et al., 2021; Tagoe & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). A depletion of these resources can culminate in emotional exhaustion, stress, and waned motivation, while the acquisition of new resources can foster

positive outcomes (Wang et al., 2020). This theory has been instrumental in probing the repercussions of psychosocial hazards on well-being and elucidating emotional exhaustion precipitated by resource loss (Meyer et al., 2021; Tagoe & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Social interactions play a quintessential role in resource acquisition and bolstering self-esteem (Gardner et al., 2015; Hobfoll et al., 2016).

The Boundary Theory delves into how individuals delineate distinct role boundaries to harmonize work-life balance and seamlessly transition between work and familial roles (Allen et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2019). It underscores the necessity of setting lucid demarcations between professional and personal realms. The ease with which one transitions between these roles hinges on one's adeptness in self-management (Imhanrenialena et al., 2021). The confluence of home and work in remote settings can obscure these boundaries, potentially exacerbating stress and emotional weariness (Bhumika, 2020; Mellner et al., 2016; Greer & Payne, 2014; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

In summation, these theories illuminate the interrelationships among psychosocial work conditions, psychological well-being, and work engagement. They underscore the paramountcy of job resources, social support, self-efficacy, and work-life equilibrium in engendering positive employee outcomes.

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### ***Job Demands and Work Engagement***

According to Breevaart and Bakker (2018), there is a direct negative relationship between job demands and teacher engagement. The prevailing thought is that heightened job demands could demoralize teachers, leading them to be less involved in their daily responsibilities. Echoing the outcomes of another qualitative research, respondents conceded that their commitment waned owing to frustrations and an unsatisfactory work environment (Adisa et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies have highlighted the adverse repercussions of an escalating workload on productivity (Wang et al., 2021; Wu & Chen, 2020). When an unwavering commitment to excellence is absent, organizational performance can be compromised. Radic et al., (2020) asserted that elevated job demands exert a direct influence on employee engagement. However, when individuals possess substantial autonomy over their tasks, their engagement levels are expected to mirror that control (Bakker et al., 2014; Sonnentag et al., 2020). Additionally, Ahmad et al., (2020) emphasized that extant literature corroborates a substantial association between job demands and work engagement. Investigations into both challenging and hindering job demands have established a marked connection with employee engagement (Rastogi & Chaudhary, 2018). Given these findings, this study hypothesized:

H1. Employee work engagement is negatively influenced by Job demands.

#### ***Social Support and Work Engagement***

Research has shown that strong social support from superiors motivates employees to be more engaged (Amano et al., 2021). Furthermore, several studies have established a positive relationship between social support and employee engagement (Contreras et al., 2020; Sonnentag et al., 2020). Building on this, research suggests that when coworkers are willing to provide encouragement and support, it inspires others to reciprocate, thus enhancing overall engagement (Zeijan et al., 2020). Echoing an earlier study, receiving support from superiors is often interpreted as organizational backing, which in turn positively influences work engagement (Caesens et al., 2016; Kiema-Junes et al., 2020). Tan et al., (2020) utilized the JD-R

model to establish a direct correlation between support and work engagement in a sample of 214 individuals employed full-time. In contrast, a study of 200 microfinance employees found that neither social support from colleagues nor professional support significantly influenced employee engagement (Jean & Mathurin, 2021). However, the bulk of the research does underline a connection between the two constructs. The following hypothesis is proposed, based on the literature reviews and the JD-R model's presumptions from earlier studies:

H2. Employee work engagement is positively influenced by social support.

### ***Work-Family Conflict and Work Engagement***

According to Breevaart and Bakker (2018), motivation and engagement at work are negatively impacted by role conflicts between work and family. As per Shaheen et al., (2019), effectively balancing work and family empowers employees to feel more relaxed and competent, especially when situations are under their control. In line with reviews of the literature based on the JD-R model, Wood et al., (2020a) found that a significant predictor of work engagement was work-family conflict. Park and Lee (2020) observed that work-family conflict negatively influenced work engagement, especially among women. Concurrently, Labrague and Obeidat (2021) found that a lack of boundaries leading to work-life imbalance curtails job engagement. When such conflicts emerge, it is expected that they would consume more time and dilute focus. Yucel et al., (2021) posited that unresolved work-family conflicts have a direct negative impact on work engagement, often culminating in decisions to resign. This sentiment is bolstered by Mache et al., (2014), who noted that organizations can significantly boost work engagement by addressing work-family conflicts. As an example, a survey conducted in 2021 by Žnidaršič and Marič found a weaker correlation between work-family conflict and employee engagement, but it confirmed that conflicts lead to dissatisfaction, which in turn affects engagement. In other studies, researchers discovered that there is a negative correlation between work engagement and the interface between work and family commitments. It is widely accepted that a high level of work engagement reflects an individual's ability to manage family responsibilities, which in turn reduces work-family conflict (Ilies et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2020). These studies emphasized that balancing work and personal obligations depends on the amount of time spent working, which supports concentration and energy in the workplace. The following theories are put forth in this study in light of these findings:

H3. Employee work engagement is negatively influenced by work-family conflict.

### ***Psychological Well-Being and Work Engagement***

Work engagement encompasses the positive attitudes employees hold towards their job responsibilities. Numerous studies have highlighted a relationship between work engagement and psychological well-being (Aiello & Tesi, 2017; Radic et al., 2020). When an individual is in a positive emotional state, they are generally more motivated to complete tasks (Saad et al., 2018). Given that psychological well-being mirrors an individual's optimistic perspective, it embodies their positivity. It is often posited that content and happy individuals tend to be more dedicated to their professional performance (Mubeen et al., 2022). This link between psychological well-being and work engagement among teachers has been explored and affirmed (Greenier et al., 2021). Additionally, Mlangeni and Van Dyk (2017) underscored the role of well-being in enhancing the commitment of 178 soldiers and 57 police officers to their roles. A study involving 200 employees from an oil and gas company probed the influence of both psychological and subjective well-being on work engagement, unveiling a positive correlation between well-being and heightened work engagement (Jayasekera, 2017). Employees with a

clearer life vision tend to exhibit greater commitment. This notion finds backing in recent research suggesting that those with robust well-being generally foster a more positive work attitude (Oktavia et al., 2020). Paramitta et al. (2020) mirrored these findings, elucidating the uplifting effect of psychological well-being on work engagement. In a contrasting dimension, research has shown that mental health complications can undercut motivation, thereby affecting work engagement adversely (Kotera et al., 2020). This study operates on the premise that employees who are content with their remote working conditions are more likely to excel in their roles. As such, the following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

H4. Employee work engagement is negatively influenced by psychological well-being.

#### ***Job Demands, Psychological Well-Being, and Work Engagement***

Contrary to prior studies, the research by Ganguly et al., (2020) suggests that when employees were mandated to work from home, both their workloads and productivity increased. Bakker et al., (2021), Imhanrenialena et al., (2021), and Ten Have et al., (2015), extensive research has demonstrated the influence of job demands on an individual's psychological well-being, often leading to employee fatigue and distress. A study by Lee et al., (2016) using a representative sample of 33,569 workers found a relationship between job demands and psychological well-being at work. In line with the COR theory, it posits that grappling with a demanding workload necessitates augmented efforts to achieve desired goals, primarily because such burdens drain employees' vitality (Adil & Baig, 2018). This perspective aligns with Mudrak et al., (2018), who demonstrated a connection between job demands and deteriorating psychological health. Further, there's evidence suggesting that remote work escalates work intensity (Grant et al., 2019). While the allure of remote work offers flexibility and accommodative hours, job demands indisputably influence well-being. A decline in motivation or losing sight of life objectives can deter one's zeal for success, leading to subpar work outcomes. Tesi et al., (2019) highlighted the instrumental role of psychological well-being as a personal resource in harmonizing job demands and work engagement. Even though direct impacts of job demands on work engagement have been identified, studies indicate that the psychological well-being of employees can temper the effects of this relationship (Radic et al., 2020). Most research points to an indirect relationship between elevated job demands and employee engagement. Drawing from this extensive body of literature, the subsequent hypothesis is formulated:

H5. There is a mediating effect of psychological well-being on the relationship between job demands and employees' work engagement.

#### ***Social Support, Psychological Well-Being, and Work Engagement***

Social support encompasses assistance from both superiors and peers. This kind of support is thought to mitigate feelings of isolation, especially during remote work. According to He et al., (2018), earlier research has demonstrated the beneficial relationships between psychological well-being and social support. Employees who have limited social support frequently report lower levels of psychological well-being, which may be attributed to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (Schütte et al., 2014; Ten Have et al., 2015). Given the stress and job uncertainties instigated by the pandemic, extending such support is imperative to counteract these negative emotions, thereby reinforcing a sense of worthiness. Cho (2019) posits that the detrimental effects of emotional dissonance on psychological well-being can be attenuated with appropriate support from peers and managers. When employees feel adequately equipped with support or resources to tackle tasks, it can act as a catalyst, boosting their motivation and aiding them in reconciling internal conflicts (Carrasco et al., 2014). An



employee's perception of internal resources can thus spur their commitment to task completion. Furthermore, Bakker et al., (2021) discovered that social support can act as a cushion, diminishing the impact of psychological distress among nurses. Based on these insights, the subsequent hypothesis is posited:

H6. The relationship between social support and employees' work engagement is mediated by psychological well-being.

**Work-Family Conflict, Psychological Well-Being, and Work Engagement**

Remote work can amplify the risk of role conflict when boundaries between work and personal matters become blurred. Imhanrenialena et al., (2021) found that work-family conflict emerged as a primary stressor in navigating the challenges of remote work. The flexibility inherent in remote work hours can lead to boundaryless working, potentially harmful to one's well-being (Mellner et al., 2016). Specifically, escalating job demands might compel employees to stay engaged for prolonged durations, potentially weakening their familial connections. As suggested by the boundary theory, individuals can undergo latent stress when striving to balance their professional and personal spheres. Research indicates that work-life conflict adversely impacts employee health and well-being (Sirgy & Lee, 2018). Such conflicts can hinder one's ability to savor life, thereby dampening happiness. As noted by Obrenovic et al., (2020), the repercussions of work-family conflict on psychological well-being directly influence job performance (Novitasari et al., 2020). This research posits that understanding this relationship can provide organizations with a strategy to address work-family conflict effectively. When considering the three dimensions of work engagement, dissatisfaction can erode feelings of accomplishment, which may, in turn, undermine the motivation to immerse oneself in work. But within the framework of the JD-R model, having enough resources could lessen the negative impact that conflict has on worker engagement. In light of these discoveries, the research puts forth the following hypothesis:

H7. The relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement is mediated by psychological well-being.

The conceptual framework of this study is depicted in Figure 1.

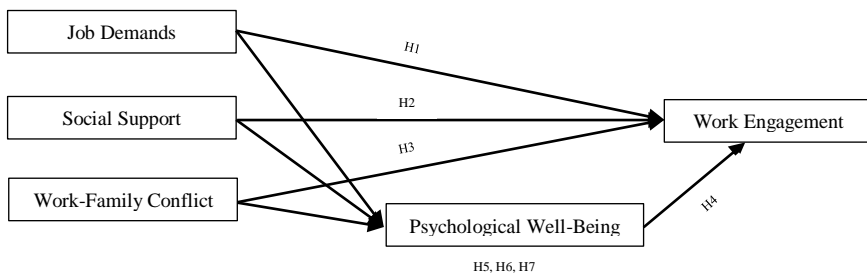


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

**Method**

**Participants**

A cross-sectional study was conducted using a quantitative method (Chiv et al., 2022). Due to the pandemic and the research objective focusing on employees working from home, data was collected via online questionnaires. This study encompassed 315 respondents aged 18

years and above. All participants are employed full-time in Malaysia and have experienced working from home for a minimum of three months. DeVellis and Thorpe (2021) proposed that a sample size of at least 300 is suitable for a study containing more than 20 construct items. The sample size of this study meets the requirements for further data analysis. Tietze and Musson (2010) defined working from home as the study of experiences associated with identity work when it is a new practice for a portion of their weekly working hours (equivalent to 2.5 days a week) over the past year, which equates to 3 months. This study refined the definition to exclude employees with less than three months of remote work experience. Those not based in Malaysia or with less than three months of remote work experience were excluded.

As per Table 1, fewer than half of the participants, 45.4% to be exact, have over six months of remote work experience. This means that 172 participants, which is 54.6% of the sample, have worked from home between three to five months. The sample comprises 199 females (63.2%), 116 males (36.8%), with 56.8% aged between 25 and 30. The next age groups are those 41 and older (15.2%), 31 to 35 years old (12.4%), and 36 to 40 years old (8.4%). Notably, only a minor segment, 7.4%, of participants between 36 and 40 years participated. The analysis reveals that 67.9% of the participants are unmarried, 30.2% are married, and around six individuals or 1.9% are divorced. Regarding education, 60.6% hold a bachelor's degree, 15.2% have a master's or doctorate, 14.6% possess a diploma or its SPM/STPM equivalent, and 1.9% have a certificate. In terms of job roles, 55.2% are at the Executive level, 22.9% at the non-Executive level, and 18.8% at the Manager level. Only 3.8% of participants from the executive level took part in this study.

Table 1

*Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=315)*

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Experiences of remotely working	3-5 months	172	54.6
	6 months and above	143	45.4
Gender	Male	116	36.8
	Female	199	63.2
Age	Below 24	26	8.3
	25 to 30	179	56.8
	31 to 35	39	12.4
	36 to 40	23	7.3
	41 and above	48	15.2
Marital Status	Single	214	67.9
	Married	95	30.2
	Divorced	6	1.9
Education	Certificate	30	9.5
	Diploma	46	14.6
	Bachelor Degree	191	60.6
	Master Degree and above	48	15.2
Position	Non-Executive	72	22.9
	Executive	174	55.2
	Manager	57	18.1

### **Data Collection**

We employed a homogeneous sampling strategy in the current study because the traditional convenience sampling method is known to be less accurate and generalizable than a homogeneous convenience sampling method, which can cause estimation bias (Jager et al., 2017). The study's homogeneous group of respondents was limited to respondents who were at least eighteen years old and had worked for themselves in Malaysia for at least three months. A Google link was generated and shared with the target list. Simultaneously, the researcher identified and approached several respondents at the managerial level to assist in distributing the questionnaires to their subordinates within the organization. This strategy has been recognized as effective in reducing the risk of bias, especially when applied to homogeneous populations (Naderifar et al., 2017). As a result, both sampling methods are suitable for this study. Each participant provided informed consent before participating in the survey.

### **Measurement**

#### ***Job Demands***

To assess job demands, the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II) was adapted from Pejtersen et al., (2010). As recommended in Kristensen and Borg (2003)'s version of brief questionnaires, this study has chosen only six items to assess the quantitative and emotional demands of job demands. As a result, only six items for job demands scales were included in this study using a 6-point scale, ranging from (1) Never to (6) Always. Alpha Cronbach was 0.82.

#### ***Social Support***

For the social support construct, this study used a 4-item scale with a 6-point scale ranging from (1) Never to (6) Always derived from Kristensen and Borg (2003)'s Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ II). These scales are used to determine the frequency with which employees receive support from neither coworkers nor superiors. Pejtersen et al., (2010) state that if a scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or higher, it is considered reliable. Cronbach alpha is 0.87 for this study.

#### ***Work Family Conflict***

In this study, the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996) was utilised to measure the work-family conflict construct. A total of ten items with 7-point scales, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (7) Strongly Agree, were used. Cronbach alpha is 0.95 for this study.

#### ***Psychological Well-Being***

Regarding the psychological well-being construct, the World Health Organization-5 Well-Being Index (WHO-5) was chosen to measure the construct using 5 item scales adapted from Lee et al., (2016). This research employed a 6-point scale ranging from (0) Never to (5) Daily. Cronbach alpha is 0.92 for this study.

#### ***Work Engagement***

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli et al., (2006) was modified to assess work engagement. This scale is based on the frequency of occurrence and ranges from (0) Never to (6) Daily. Employees were asked to rate their level of involvement in the workplace. Originally, the scale contained 17 items to measure three dimensions of vigour, dedication, and absorption. Based on the analysis collected from ten countries, the results showed that UWES can be reduced to only nine items that best fit to explain the engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The later version of UWES-9 has been tested and found to be reliable, with a minimum Cronbach's alpha value of more than 0.85. (Anasori, et al., 2021). The Cronbach alpha for this study is 0.93.

### Data Analysis

The Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to analyse all the collected data. Descriptive analysis techniques were applied to examine the demographic profile of the respondents and the variables. The data in this study were subsequently tested for validity, normality, and reliability. Through normality analyses, outliers were identified and removed. To address the hypothesis, the Hayes Process Macro Version 4 was used to examine the indirect effect between job demands, social support, work-family conflict, and work engagement via psychological well-being.

### Results

The data were checked for normality before running the correlation analysis. In terms of skewness, all five variables ranged from -0.57 to 0.01, with a value less than or equal to one indicating that the data in this study are normally distributed. Kurtosis analysis, on the other hand, showed that the data were normally distributed with a value of less than or equal to 3. However, compared to other variables, the negative kurtosis for job demands, work-family conflict, and psychological well-being suggests that the distribution is platykurtic. Nonetheless, if the values for Skewness and Kurtosis fall within the -2 to +2 range, normality can be assumed (Sharma & Ojha, 2020). Moreover, skewness and kurtosis are recommended to justify normality for sample sizes greater than 300 (Mishra et al., 2019). Consequently, we can conclude that all the variables are normally distributed.

The Pearson correlation analysis was employed in this study to determine the strength of the relationships between the variables. Based on Table 2, there are significant negative correlations found between job demands ( $r = -.308$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and work-family conflict ( $r = -.131$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with work engagement. This implies that higher job demands and work-family conflict are associated with lower work engagement among Malaysian employees working remotely. In contrast, social support is positively correlated with work engagement ( $r = .385$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that higher social support is associated with increased work engagement. Moreover, psychological well-being was found to be positively and significantly correlated with work engagement ( $r = .769$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a robust relationship between good well-being and enhanced employee engagement.

Table 2

*Inter-correlation, means, and standard deviation for variables (n=315)*

No.	Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1	Job Demands	3.65 (1.013)	1				
2	Social Support	4.24 (1.139)	-.258**	1			

3	Work-Family Conflict	3.75 (1.435)	.668**	-.155**	1
4	Psychological Well-Being	3.17 (0.978)	-.392**	.360**	-.255**
5	Work Engagement	3.60 (1.107)	-.308**	.385**	-.131* .769**

Note: \*\*p < 0.05

The study investigated the impact of job demands, social support, and work-family conflict on work engagement. The analysis utilized Hayes' (2017) SPSS macro process, incorporating a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) derived from 5,000 bootstrap samples. The mediation model involved positioning psychological well-being as a mediator, with job demands, social support, and work-family conflict as exogenous variables, and work engagement as the endogenous outcome variable. Job demand was found to significantly predict work engagement (B = -.307, t = -4.420, p < .01), thus supporting H1. Similarly, social support significantly predicted work engagement (B = .325, t = 6.206, p < .01), supporting H2. Conversely, work-family conflict was not a significant predictor of work engagement (B = .125, t = 1.833, p > .05), indicating that H3 is not supported. Psychological well-being, however, significantly predicted work engagement (B = .769, t = 21.283, p < .01), supporting H4. Additionally, it was discovered that psychological well-being significantly mediated the relationship between work engagement and job demands (B = .328, SE = .054) with a 95% CI [-.44, -.22]; social support and work engagement (B = .253, SE = .049) with a 95% CI [.16,.35]; and work-family conflict and work engagement (B =.154, SE = .036) with a 95% CI [-.23, -.09]. Consequently, H5, H6, and H7 are all supported. The results of the relevant direct and mediation analyses, as well as their summary, are depicted in Figures 2 to 4.

Figure 2. Mediation model showing the effect of job demand and psychological well-being on work engagement

Note: \*\*p < 0.05

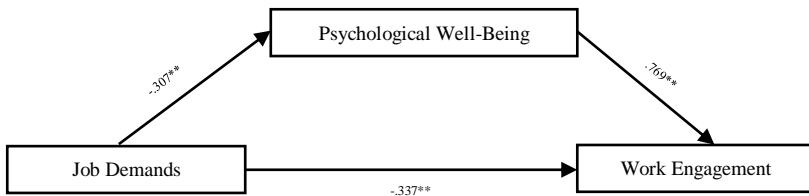


Figure 3. Mediation model showing the effect of social support and psychological well-being on work engagement

Note: \*\*p < 0.05

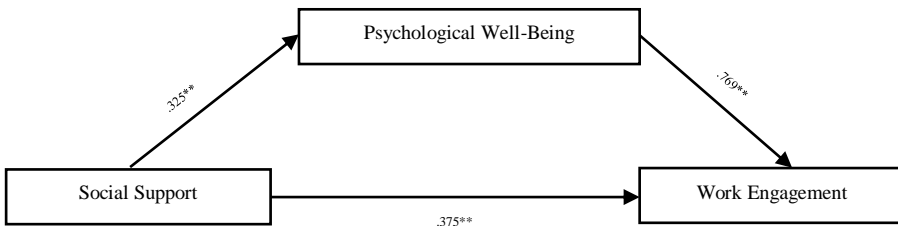
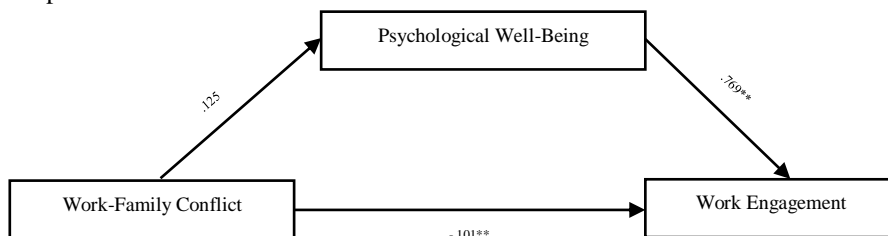


Figure 4. Mediation model showing the effect of work-family conflict and psychological well-being on work engagement

Note: \*\* $p < 0.05$



## Discussion

The current study found that psychological well-being, social support, and job demand were significant predictors of work engagement. There was a positive, though insignificant, effect of work-family conflict on engagement in the workplace. The study also revealed that psychological well-being significantly mediates the relationships between job demand, social support, work-family conflict, and work engagement. Consequently, H1, H2, H4, H5, H6, and H7 were accepted, while H3 was rejected.

The findings indicate that job demand negatively and significantly affected employee work engagement when working from home. This is consistent with previous research (Adisa et al., 2020; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Radic et al., 2020; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, job demands are personal demands that require increased effort and energy to preserve existing resources and prevent resource loss, potentially leading to emotional exhaustion over time. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model posits that job demands like workload and pressure sap energy and can ultimately demotivate individuals (Tripathi et al., 2021; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Individuals working from home under intense job demands might adjust to their environment, enhancing their stress management abilities. Ojo et al., (2021) found that employees are more engaged when they meet job demands. Ismael and Yesiltas (2020) also found that job satisfaction is positively influenced by work engagement. Satisfaction, which can offer a sense of achievement, can motivate individuals. According to the JD-R model, job resources like flexibility and support can boost job satisfaction by amplifying positive work sentiments (Rai & Chawla, 2021). Employees working from home can adjust their hours while completing their tasks, possibly influencing their engagement, especially if results-oriented.

The current study also identified a significant and positive relationship between the amount of social support received by employees working from home and their work engagement level. This suggests that support from colleagues and supervisors can enhance employee engagement, with higher support correlating to greater engagement. These findings are consistent with earlier research (Caesens et al., 2016; Contreras et al., 2020; Sonnentag et al., 2020; Zeijen et al., 2020) that highlighted the significance of perceived social support in

work engagement. Other research also supports the idea that support from superiors can boost employee engagement (Amano et al., 2021). The JD-R model postulates that aid in skill or development is seen as a social resource (Meyer et al., 2021). Supporting one another can indirectly help achieve team goals. Even though remote employees might experience reduced social interaction, support can still be conveyed through chats or video calls. Regular social interactions can foster positive self-esteem (Gardner et al., 2015; Hobfoll et al., 2016), potentially enhancing engagement. Additionally, support or encouragement can amplify employees' job crafting behavior, indirectly fostering an innovative culture and bolstering well-being and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Radic et al., 2020; Waizenegger et al., 2020).

However, unlike some prior studies (Labrague & Obeidat, 2022; Yucel et al., 2021; Žnidaršič & Marič, 2021), this research did not find work-family conflict as a significant predictor of work engagement. According to Boundary theory (Allen et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2019), individuals craft diverse role boundaries based on their work functions and family, necessitating role transitions. This requires both physical and mental agility. With 45% of the respondents working from home for over 6 months and 67.9% being single, they might have adjusted to the role transitions, making work-family conflict less impactful. Hongbo et al., (2020) indicate that boundary negotiation is preference-based. If one can manage role interference, they likely stay engaged (Hislop et al., 2015; Liao et al., 2016). Additionally, adept conflict resolution can rejuvenate a sense of achievement, possibly enhancing engagement.

Empirical data showed that job demands, social support, and work-family conflict all indirectly influence work engagement through psychological well-being. This study revealed that psychological well-being acts as a mediator between job demands and work engagement. As job demands rise, psychological well-being can decrease, leading to diminished work engagement. Prior studies indicate that heightened job demands can detriment employees' psychological health, leading to distress (Ten Have et al., 2015; Bakker et al., 2021). Excessive workloads might sap an individual's energy, diminishing their drive to engage (Adil & Baig, 2018). This study concurs with the COR theory's view of psychological well-being as a personal resource balancing job demands and engagement (Tesi et al., 2019). Radic et al., (2020) echoed this perspective. In another mediation model, psychological well-being mediates the relationship between social support and work engagement. Increased social support is shown to improve psychological well-being, subsequently boosting work engagement. Earlier research corroborates this link between social support and psychological well-being (He et al., 2018). However, this study suggests that perceived low support can degrade psychological well-being (Schütte et al., 2014; Ten Have et al., 2015). The COR theory argues that encouragement is pivotal for bolstering motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018). Hence, a lack of social support might be seen as resource depletion. Bakker et al. (2021) found that social support can mitigate psychological distress, suggesting that poor health might indirectly diminish engagement. Last but not least, work-family conflict and work engagement are mediated by psychological well-being. Experiencing a significant level of work-family conflict while working remotely can negatively impact one's overall well-being, resulting in reduced levels of engagement. Prior studies have showcased the negative impact of work-life conflict on well-being (Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Obrenovic et al., 2020; Imhanrenialena et al., 2021). This could potentially dampen an individual's dedication, potentially impacting organizational performance. This is corroborated by research by Novitasari et al., (2020), which discovered a favorable correlation between work-family interference and job performance. Lizano (2022) discovered that engagement and work-family conflict are mediated by satisfaction, a measure of well-being.

### **Implications**

The JD-R Model was extended in this study to incorporate work-family conflict as a distinct construct within the framework. This study contributes to the literature on work engagement by linking the JD-R Model with COR theory and integrating Boundary Theory to elucidate the effects of work-family conflicts. Several studies have explored the direct effects of psychosocial working conditions on employees' psychological well-being (Ervasti et al., 2022; Felstead & Henseke, 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Schutte et al., 2014) and on work engagement (Adisa et al., 2021; Bakker et al., 2014; Chen & Fellenz, 2020; Teo et al., 2020; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2020b). While the JD-R Model addresses both variables, the impacts on psychological well-being and work engagement have traditionally been studied in isolation. In order to investigate the relationship between psychosocial working conditions, psychological well-being, and work engagement as suggested by the JD-R Model, more research was done on these topics. This study distinguished the social support construct from the relationship domains in COPSOQ, highlighting the benefits of support from direct supervisors and colleagues, using the JD-R Model as a guide. The current findings showcased the mediating role of psychological well-being, grounding the explanations in both COR theory and Boundary Theory. The principles of boundary theory are highlighted by the change in the direction of the relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement after taking psychological well-being into account as a mediating factor.

Furthermore, this study stands out as one of the few to delve into the impacts of psychosocial working conditions on remote work in Malaysia during the pandemic. With a direct bearing on work engagement, this research offers invaluable insights for HR practitioners and organizations considering the implementation of a work-from-home policy. It equips policymakers, in both public and private sectors, with recommendations for rules and guidelines to integrate into their policy manuals. Such guidelines could serve as benchmarks for employees, outlining best practices for remote work. Such guidance could foster better boundaries, indirectly empowering employees to handle potential interferences and thereby enhancing engagement. The importance of social support is underscored for employers, emphasizing the significance of encouragement, moral support, and productive interpersonal interaction. Overburdening employees, expecting them to tackle tasks without concern for their well-being, can erode their motivation and commitment. Moreover, given that mental health challenges are prevalent in Malaysia—6.6% of 983 surveyed Malaysians reported severe anxiety, with 2.8% indicating extreme anxiety (Bahar Moni et al., 2021)—this study highlights the ripple effects of psychological well-being on job engagement. The findings also beckon the government and relevant stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Health, to champion public and employee mental health awareness and support.

### **Conclusions, Limitations and Future Recommendations**

Our research successfully illustrated the connections between psychosocial working conditions and job engagement and underscored the mediating role of psychological well-being. This study elucidates how the JD-R model, COR theory, and Boundary Theory can serve as a conceptual framework for predicting work engagement during remote work. Although the JD-R model is commonly utilized to clarify the impact of psychosocial working conditions on work engagement and psychological well-being, there are still few studies that include all three variables. Our results accentuate the pivotal role psychological well-being plays in amplifying or diminishing the association between psychosocial working conditions and job engagement. The connections between psychosocial working conditions—like job demands, social support, and work-family conflict—and their effects on work engagement, as well as how psychological well-being influences these relationships, are better understood as a result of our findings.



Ultimately, our insights will prove invaluable to policymakers, HR professionals, and governmental bodies aiming to devise strategies that optimize remote working conditions, bolster psychological well-being, and amplify work engagement.

Notwithstanding, this study possesses some limitations. Given the limited controls to curtail bias and the reliance on non-probability sampling, our findings could be prone to researcher bias, especially as the sample predominantly hails from a specific interest group. To mitigate this limitation, we recommend that subsequent studies employ probability sampling techniques to guarantee an equitable selection chance. Broadening the research scope to encompass the entire Malaysian demographic might yield more generalizable outcomes. The utilization of self-assessment to quantify research variables might also introduce self-reporting bias. It would be prudent for future researchers to procure email addresses during responses to discern and nullify multiple submissions from identical participants. The present findings can serve as a springboard for scholars exploring the ramifications and importance of remote work. A cohort analysis might offer a more nuanced comparison of this influence, while a longitudinal study could furnish more robust causative insights, particularly as remote work continues its ascent in popularity. Moreover, while our study did not discern a marked influence of work-family conflict on work engagement, subsequent research could probe if this linkage fluctuates based on socio-demographic determinants. For instance, managers might experience diminished social support, rendering them more susceptible to the detrimental impacts of work-family conflict. Conclusively, this study intimates that extraneous variables might influence the nexus between work-family conflict and work engagement. Future endeavors could delve into this intricate relationship, contemplating the influence of elements like personality traits on the dynamic between work-family conflict and work engagement.

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## **An Empirical Investigation of the Determinants of Protectionism: A Case of Pakistan**

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Pakistan is among the most protectionist economies of the world and highly protective trade regimes thus calls for an investigation of the determinants of this protectionism. The current study intends to examine the macroeconomic determinants of protectionism in the case of Pakistan employing the Granger Causality test and Impulse Response Function covering a time period from 1988-2018. The results of the Granger Causality test reveal that unemployment & GDP Granger cause the tariff rate and there exists a unidirectional relationship between these two variables with the tariff rate. Contrary to this, the tariff rate is granger caused by the trade balance. Terms of the trade is found to have a bidirectional association with the tariff rate, while there is no evidence of a causal relationship between the tariff rate and inflation. The results of Impulse Response functions reveal that an increase in unemployment and a higher TOT, both are found to be positively associated with an increased level of protectionism. However, a higher level of GDP or economic growth leads to reduce the protectionism thereby reducing the tariff rate. The results of the study are quite pertinent in identifying the core factors inducing a high level of protectionism in Pakistan .

**Keywords:** protectionism, tariff, Pakistan, granger causality, impulse response function

The history of protectionism dates back to Mercantilism, which is considered the first economic theory of the bourgeoisie. Mercantilism prevailed in Western Europe from the 15th century till the middle of the 17th century. Afterward, foreign trade and economic policies at the global level have undergone tremendous changes. The early period of US history is marked with protectionist measures to safeguard domestic businesses from foreign competition. However, the dismal contribution of the protectionist policies to national welfare and colossal loss on account of protectionist measures during the period of the Great Depression led to the formation of GATT in 1948. GATT was a provisional multilateral agreement that provided guidelines for the negotiations of trade barrier reductions between nations (Aaronson, 2001). GATT formally became WTO in 1995 as a multilateral body to monitor the trade issues of its member countries (Wilkinson, 2017). The successive trade liberalization and dismantling of tariffs after the formation of GATT and WTO has resulted in the reduction of protection across the globe.

The increase in globalization on account of trade liberalization and resulting integration among the countries has contributed significantly to the growth of trade across the globe. Trade liberalization has contributed much to global economic welfare in terms of faster economic



growth, improved efficiency of resource use, more employment generation, lower consumer prices, and comparatively fewer conflicts between and within nations (Anderson, 2016). Therefore, literature widely discusses the nexus between trade liberalization and economic growth (Gul et al., 2015; Malik et al., 2020; Bibi et al., 2017; Ramzan et al., 2019; Jalil & Rauf 2021; Luqman & Soytaş 2023). However, this momentum of liberalization has slowed down (Pugachevska, et al., 2023) during the last couple of years and countries are in fact moving back to protectionism and import substitution. This is not only evident from the recently observed trade war between the world's two trading giants i.e., China and the USA (Fajgelbaum & Khandelwal 2022) but is also well documented in the case of G20 countries (Albertoni 2021; Evenett & Fritz 2018, 2017; WTO 2016, 2017). The 2008-09 post-financial crisis period has observed a steady increase in protectionist measures (Albertoni 2021; Evenett, 2019) and a stalled trade liberalization has been weighing on the world's trade growth. Among these protectionist measures, import tariff contributes significantly accounting for almost one-fifth of all barriers imposed after 2009 and this highlights the importance of tariffs being the most active trade policy instrument still employed to erect the trade barriers (Dimitrova & Lakatos, 2017).

The reversal in trade policy regimes is not only observed globally but individual countries have also been reverting to protectionist policies after following decades of liberalization. Pakistan, a South Asian country in the list of developing countries, is a classic example in that regard, which after observing open-oriented regimes during the last couple of decades has now reverted to protectionism and inward-looking policies. Pakistan has been observing a liberalized trade regime since the late 1980s after realizing that a protectionist regime has negative consequences for the economy in terms of creating inefficiencies and anti-export bias (Karim, 2014). The liberalized tariff regime and dismantling of barriers for imports is well evident from observed tariff rates where the maximum tariff rate of 223% in 1991 has been reduced to 16.98% in 2003 (WITS, 2023). Furthermore, there has also been a decline in the applied average tariff rate from 23 percent to 8.9 percent from 2000-2014. This reduction in tariff has been accompanied by an increase in exports from \$ 9.2 billion to \$ 25.1 billion during the same time-period. However, a gradual increase in tariff has been observed afterward and the applied tariff rate is observed to be 11 % in 2019, which has resulted in a decline in exports to the \$23 billion mark (National Tariff Policy 2019). Although the average tariff rate over the years has declined in a regional context as well as in global comparison, nonetheless Pakistan is still considered a highly protectionist economy (Karim, 2014). There are certain industries whose tariff rates are quite high despite a decline in overall tariff rates in the country (Karim 2014; Haque & Siddiqui 2017). The decades of protection to high lobbying power groups and politically influential industries have not only resulted in generating inefficiencies but have also contributed to the erosion of competition, an anti-export bias, and consumer welfare loss (Salman & Arshad, 2019).

Against the backdrop of this policy switching from liberalization to protectionism, it is very pertinent to evaluate the factors that are responsible for protectionism in the case of Pakistan. To examine those factors, we need to appraise both the theoretical and empirical literature available on this particular topic. The theoretical literature on protectionism is based on the political economy argument of trade policy and endogenous tariff models where a change in tariff or protectionism is associated with macroeconomic disturbances in a country. Such models conceive the tariff setting as an outcome of special interest lobbying in response to macroeconomic changes like economic recession, unemployment, increase in trade deficit, change in terms of trade, etc. (Baldwin, 1985). The endogenous tariff model is empirically supported for the US by Magee and Young (1987), Bohara and Kaempfer (1990, 1991), and Das and Das (1994). It is also empirically validated for Japan by Krol (1996) and for Italy by Ibile and Thornton (2000). These are the studies that test the endogeneity of tariffs or determine the driving factors for

protectionism, however, the literature regarding protectionism in the case of Pakistan is only limited to a few studies (Kemal 1987; Karim 2014; Haque & Siddiqui 2017). The analysis in these studies is limited either to the determination of ERP, or identification of industries receiving heavy protection and resulting inefficiencies generated from that protection. Nevertheless, not even a single study examines the core driving factors that are the determinants of protectionism in the case of Pakistan. Hence, this study attempts to explore the core fundamental determinants of protectionism in Pakistan. In order to determine the driving factor for protectionism, we follow the theory of tariff endogeneity which suggests that tariffs are created and changed in the political system in response to certain economic factors (Baldwin, 1985). However, it is also well documented that a preestablished causality regarding the tariff rate determined by these macroeconomic factors can be misspecified, as the standard theory of tariffs also proposes that there are feedback effects that run from tariffs to these macroeconomic determinants (Bohara & Kaempfer (1991). Hence, following the correct specification by first estimating the causality between the variables under investigation, the study examines whether a unidirectional or bidirectional relationship exists between the level of tariff and important macroeconomic variables. Next, using the impulse response function, the study examines the impact of those macroeconomic variables on the tariff rate which are found to have a unidirectional relationship with the tariff rate. For achieving the objective of this particular study Granger Causality test, and impulse response function have been employed utilizing the dataset from 1988 to 2018.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section two discusses the evolution of protectionism in the case of Pakistan. Section three examines the methodology and analytical framework of the study. This section also provides a discussion on variables, data sources, model specification, and estimation methodology. The results and relevant discussion is covered in section four. Finally, section five presents the conclusion of the study.

### **Overview of Pakistan's Trade Policies**

Pakistan in its primitive years adopted an import substitution policy to strengthen its fragile industrial base. Import restrictions, industrial licensing, and administered prices were used as controls to protect the local industries. Higher Tariff rates were imposed on manufactured goods as compared to intermediate and capital goods favoring domestic consumer goods industries (Din et al., 2003). As a result, Pakistan's industrial growth accelerated in the 1960s at an average rate of 13.4 percent per annum (Khan & Ali, 1998). Though the trade policies in this era were mainly protectionist (over-valued exchange rate, low administered prices of agricultural inputs, etc.), efforts were made to promote industrial exports as well. These include export bonuses, automatic renewal of import licenses, credit, and foreign exchange access to export-oriented industries on preferential grounds, issuance of a free list of imported items consisting of major raw materials required for the industries, tax holidays along numerous other fiscal incentives. Industries like automobiles and textiles were the highest protected industries in that time period (Khan & Ali, 1998).

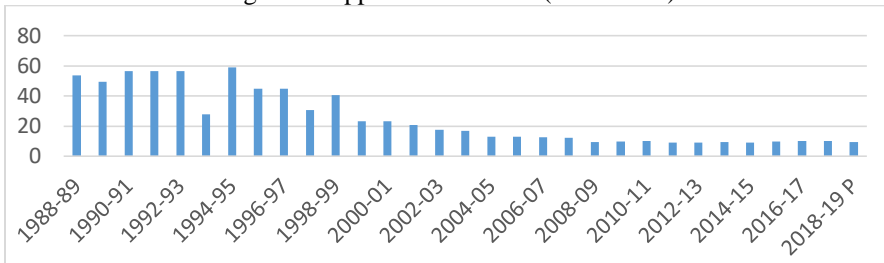
In the 1970s the government introduced several policies towards trade liberalization and reducing anti-export bias; the economy faced a decline in industrial output at the same time owing to the state's nationalization policy. These policies included the devaluation of Pakistan's currency by 57 percent in 1972, revoking the export bonus scheme, termination of restrictive licensing, introduction of two import lists instead of six (free plus tied lists of items), gradual reduction in export duties and Export Refinance Scheme 1978 allowing commercial banks to provide loans to exporters at a lower interest rate (Khan & Ali, 1998; Yasmin et al., 2006).

Pakistan adopted more liberalized trade policies in the 1980s through the reduction of non-tariff trade barriers, switching from positive to negative import lists, and tax cuts on the

imports of raw materials and capital goods. The trade policy, however, continued to be protectionist; import competing manufacturers were given compensatory rebates and higher tariff rates were imposed for imported substitute products. Pakistan also shifted from a fixed to a flexible exchange rate system in this time period. The tariff reforms of 1987 were a major breakthrough in the adoption of a more liberalized trade regime whereby the tariff slabs were reduced from 17 to 10 and applied tariff rates were reduced to a new maximum from 225 percent to 125 percent (Khan & Ali, 1998). The government's focus changed from import substitution policies towards increasing the competitiveness of Pakistan's industrial sector along with enhanced private investment and export promotion.

The trade liberalization policy was further supported by the tariff reforms of 1993; aimed at “*rationalization of tariff structure, reduction of non-tariff barriers and simplification of import mechanisms*” (Din et al., 2003). The maximum tariff rates were reduced to 70 percent in 1994-95 and further to 45 percent in 1997-98 (Khan & Mahmood, 1996; World Bank, 1997). Custom duty slabs declined from 13 to 6 in this time period. The average tariff rate was also reduced to 12 percent with a substantial decline in tariffs on capital goods (from 16 percent to 8 percent) and a trivial decrease in those on consumer goods and raw materials for both capital and consumer goods. Meanwhile, Pakistan also became a member of the World Trade Organization in 1995. In keeping with its commitments under the WTO, Pakistan shifted entirely from reliance on quantitative restrictions (such as import licensing schemes and import quotas) to adoption of tariffs as the leading policy instrument. From this time period, Pakistan embarked on a journey of trade liberalization through the reduction in tariff rates, customs duty slabs, and non-tariff barriers.

Figure 1: Applied Tariff Rate (1988-2018)



Source: Annual applied tariff rate data from the Ministry of Finance

Figure 1 shows that there has been a decline in the weighted mean applied tariff rate from approximately 53 percent in 1988 to 9.45 percent in 2018. From 2001 to 2014, the applied weighted mean tariff decreased from 20.62% to 8.92%. However, since 2014, trade liberalization appears to have overturned with the steady increase in applied tariff rate to 10.09 percent in 2018.

**Table 1***Effective rate of protection (%) on different sectors in 2009 and 2018*

Sectors	Effective Rate of Protection (%)	
	2009	2018
Textile	58	48
Motor Vehicles and Parts	114	114
Beverages and Tobacco Products	160	145
Petroleum and Coal Products	41	36
Sugar	76	67
Metal Products	54	48

Source: *Document of World Bank*

f rate to 10.09 percent in 2018

**Table 1** shows the effective rate of protection in the years 2009 and 2018 in some of the highly protected sectors of Pakistan. Beverages, tobacco products, and motor vehicles entail the highest percentage of effective rates of protection. Others like Textile, Petroleum, Sugar, and metal products enjoy high levels of protection as well though the effective protection rates have fallen over time.

Recent World trends reveal that all the fastest export growth economies during the last decade have decreased their import tariffs but in the case of Pakistan, the trend has been the opposite; an increased level of 11 percent import tariffs along with the imposition of regulatory duties from 2010 to 2019 (National Tariff Policy 2019).

In the present scenario, Pakistan is seen to endure the third highest weighted tariff among all those 68 countries whose annual exports are greater than twenty billion USD. In Pakistan, the total tax revenue from import tariffs is 13 percent, which is substantially higher compared to other export-oriented economies such as Malaysia has 1.6 percent tax revenue generated from import

tariffs, China (4.6 percent), Turkey (2.0 percent), Indonesia (2.5 percent), South Korea (3.9 percent) and Thailand (4.3 percent). At the import stage, the total revenue collection in Pakistan is around 44 percent of the total tax revenue (Ministry of Commerce). Thus, in the regional as well as global context, Pakistan's average tariff rate is still significantly high.

An evaluation of the historic evolution of protectionism in Pakistan leads to a general conclusion that although over time country has reduced protectionism and has observed liberalization, however, tariff liberalization has reversed in recent years. Besides, in a regional context as well as in global comparison, Pakistan still lags behind in terms of the openness of its economy. Another important fact relating to protectionism is that some industries are still heavily protected as compared to others, although they are inefficient even after being protected for decades. The inefficiencies generated on account of the provision of tariffs to these industries, the erosion of the competition, and the repercussions for the entire country for this protectionism thus call for an insightful study that should investigate the determinants of protectionism. Besides, there should be a rationalization of the tariff structure that would be least distortionary and that would serve the broader interests of the country rather than serving a few influential industries or lobbying groups.

## Method

### *Endogenous Tariff Models and Theoretical Causal Relationship*

Both theoretical and empirical explorations, into the political economy of trade policy focused on the endogeneity of level and form of protection (Baldwin, 1985). Endogenous tariff models predict that macroeconomic disturbances in the country lead to tariff changes. These models interpret the tariff changes as a result of special interest lobbying in response to macroeconomic changes such as adverse shifts in terms of trade, economic recession, trade deficits, unemployment, and inflation (Magee *et al.*, 1989). The interaction between various interest groups in the political arena gives rise to tariffs and protectionism. On the other hand, the existence of an import-competing sector would be interesting to have protectionism whereas sectors that use imports as an intermediate input would demand free trade. Thus, tariffs are imposed due to economic reasons as well as due to the existence of pressure groups. Nonetheless, tariffs affect these pressure groups in reverse which shows there exists a causal relationship between protectionism and its determinants.

The aforementioned arguments make it abundantly evident that empirical tests of tariffs that undertake a prior causality between macroeconomic events and level of protection may be misspecified. Protection levels may lead to certain economic consequences that have repercussions for aggregate macroeconomic variables. On the contrary, the state of the macroeconomy may lead to the rearrangement of the political forces that cause the endogenous level of protection to be established. Thus, a priori test causality (determining unidirectional and bidirectional) is a prerequisite before conducting any regression analysis that determines the long-run relationship between protectionism and its macroeconomic determinants.

### *Empirical Model Specification*

Following the studies by Baldwin 1985, Magee *et al.* 1989, Thornton and Molyneux 1995 and Bohara and Kaempfer 1991, the following empirical model is constructed.

$$TR_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 TB_t + \alpha_2 CPI_t + \alpha_3 RGDP_t + \alpha_4 TOT_t + \alpha_5 UNR_t + \mu_t$$

Where, TR, TB, CPI, RGDP, UNR, TOT, and  $\mu_t$  represent the applied tariff rate, trade balance as a ratio to GDP, consumer price index, real GDP growth rate, unemployment rate, terms of trade, and error term which is identically and independently distributed as normal i.e.,  $IIDN \sim (0, \delta^2)$  respectively.

### ***Variable Description***

The weighted applied tariff rate has been used as a dependent variable to calculate the rate of protectionism. Weighted mean applied tariff is the average of effectively applied rates weighted by the product import shares corresponding to each partner country. Whereas the independent variables employed in the study are annual real GDP growth rate (as a proxy for economic growth), unemployment rate, terms of trade (the price of exports/price of imports), consumer price index CPI (as a proxy for inflation) and annual trade balance as a percentage of nominal GDP. The time series data for all the above-stated variables has been taken from 1988 to 2018.

### ***Data sources***

Data has been collected from various sources as the time-series data for all the variables was not available from a single source. The full list of variables and their sources are presented in

**Table 2.**

**Table 2**

*Data sources*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Sources of Data</b>
Applied Tariff Rate	Ministry of Commerce
Real GDP Growth Rate	World Bank national accounts data and OECD National Accounts
Unemployment Rate	Pakistan Economic Survey
Terms of Trade	Pakistan Economic Survey
Trade Balance	World Bank national accounts
CPI	World Bank national accounts

### ***Estimation Methodology***

To analyze the causal relationship between tariff rate and macroeconomic determinants for the case of Pakistan, the study employs a two-variable Vector Autoregressive (VAR) Model. The VAR model does not require any stringent assumption related to exogeneity or endogeneity. It is also shown by Zellner and Palm (1974), that causality tests run on these VAR models are more powerful (Nelson & Schwert, 1982).

The estimation technique proposed by Hsiao (1981) and extended by Caines et al., (1981) has been used. To estimate a VAR model the first step is to make the data stationary. To ensure the stationarity in time series data, Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test statistics have been used. Thereafter we estimate VAR for all the variables separately keeping tariff to be the dependent

variable. The Final Prediction Error (FPE) criterion suggested by Akaike (1969) has been used to select the lag length as Granger Causality test results are sensitive to the lag length structure. As Hsiao (1981) and Thornton and Batten (1985) experimented with the FPE criterion it appeared to perform well so we are also going to follow the same criterion for selecting lag length. Once we get an appropriate lag length the next step is to perform the Granger causality tests for all the variables. To gain sight of the signs of the Granger causality tests, we estimate the final version of the VAR model which is Impulse Response Functions.

### Results and Discussion

The study initially examines the stationarity of the variables by employing the Augmented Dicky-Fuller (ADF) test. The results of the ADF test presented in

Table 3 reveal the mixed order of integration for the variables under consideration. Variables such as tariff rate, terms of trade, and GDP turn out to be I(0), implying they are stationary at level. Whereas trade balance, CPI, and unemployment are I(1) integrated of order 1 that is they are stationary at first difference.

**Table 3**  
*ADF Test Results*

Variables	ADF Test Results				Order of integration
	Level		1 <sup>st</sup> difference		
	Without trend	With trend	Without trend	With trend	
Tariff	-6.92***	-0.83	-0.76	-5.02***	I (0)
Gdp	-3.81***	-3.67***	-6.78***	-6.71***	I (0)
Tot	-0.81	-3.36*	-4.86***	-4.78***	I (0)
Unemp	-2.57	-2.28	-5.47***	-5.62***	I (1)
trade balance	-1.46	-2.25	-5.34***	-5.49***	I (1)
cpi	-2.48	-2.46	-6.16***	-6.02***	I (1)

\*\*\* and \* imply that the coefficients are significant at 1% and 10% significance level respectively.

The two-variable VAR model has been applied to all the dependent variables separately, keeping an independent variable tariff rate for all. The optimal lag length is determined using the Final-Prediction-Error (FPE) criterion. To explore the patterns of causality between variables, the final VAR model employs Granger causality testing.

Granger Causality tests separately on all of the five independent variables have been tested keeping tariff rate to be the dependent variable. The Hypotheses H1-H10 presented in

Table 4 have been tested by applying pairwise Granger causality tests. Hypothesis H1-H5 tests the causal effect of tariffs on the other macroeconomic variables, whereas the remaining hypothesis from H6-H10 is designed to study the feedback from the macroeconomic variables to the applied tariff rate. A detailed list of hypotheses has been provided in

**Table 4.**

**Table 4**  
*Hypothesis Testing using Pairwise Granger Causality Test*

Hypothesis	P-value	F-statistics	Remarks
H1: Tariff rate does not cause changes in the level of real GDP growth rate	0.92	0.08	Not Rejected
H2: Tariff rate does not cause changes in the level of trade balance	0.02**	3.75	Rejected
H3: Tariff rate does not cause changes in the level of unemployment	0.93	0.13	Not Rejected

H4: Tariff rate does not cause changes in the level of terms of trade	0.00004***	12.80	Rejected
H5: Tariff rate does not cause changes in the level of CPI	0.97	0.02	Not Rejected
H6: Real GDP growth does not cause changes in the level of tariff rate	0.0036**	7.18	Rejected
H7: Trade balance does not cause changes in the level of tariff rate	0.26	1.42	Not Rejected
H8: Unemployment rate does not cause changes in the level of the tariff rate	0.01**	4.49	Rejected
H9: Terms of trade does not cause changes in the level of tariff rate	0.0019**	6.57	Rejected
H10: CPI does not cause changes in the level of tariff rate	0.72	0.32	Not Rejected

\*\*\* Implies significant at the 0.05 level

Granger causality tests on the hypotheses (H1-H10) have been applied separately in five pairs. The test has been performed on hypotheses H1 and H6 together, where the p-value of H1 is (0.92) which is insignificant, showing that the null hypothesis (H1) is accepted indicating that tariff rate changes do not granger cause real GDP growth rate. On the other hand, the p-value for H6 is (0.0036) which is significant at 5% so the null hypothesis H6 is rejected. This shows that the real GDP growth rate granger causes the tariff rate, but the tariff rate does not granger cause the real GDP growth rate. It indicates that there exists a unidirectional causal relationship (see

#### Table 4).

In the second pair, the Granger causality test is performed on hypotheses H2 and H7 where the p-value for H2 is (0.02) and for H7 the p-value is (0.26). As the p-value for null hypothesis H2 is significant at 5% thus we reject the null hypothesis H2. Whereas the p-value for null hypothesis H7 is (0.26) which means that it is not significant so the null hypothesis H7 is accepted. Thus, the result indicates that the trade balance does not granger cause a tariff rate, but a tariff rate causes a change in the trade balance. This indicates that there exists a uni-directional causal relationship where trade balance is affected by the change in tariff rate.

Hypotheses H3 and H8 together were tested to check the causal relationship between tariff rate and unemployment rate. The result shows that the p-value for hypothesis H3 is (0.93) which is insignificant and shows non-rejection of the null hypothesis H3. But the p-value for null hypothesis H8 is (0.01) which shows that the p-value for null hypothesis H8 is significant at 5%, therefore, this reveals that the null hypothesis H8 is rejected. Therefore, the results show that the unemployment rate does Granger cause a tariff rate; whereas the tariff rate does not Granger cause a rate of unemployment. Hence these results indicate that there is a uni-directional relationship between the tariff rate and unemployment rate.

Similarly, the Granger causality test is performed on hypotheses H4 and H9 together to uncover the causal relationship between tariff rate and terms of trade. The outcome of the test reveals the p-value of hypothesis H4 to be (0.00004), this shows that the p-value for null hypothesis H4 is significant at a 1% level so we will reject the null hypothesis H4. Similarly, the p-value of null hypothesis H9 is (0.0019) at lag 4 showing that it is significant at 1%. This postulates that terms of trade granger cause tariff rate but tariff rate granger cause terms of trade. There exists a bi-directional relationship.

The final Granger causality test has been applied to hypotheses H5 and H10 which has been applied to find the causality between the inflation rate and tariff rate. The results reveal that the p-value for the null hypothesis H5 is (0.97) which is insignificant. This means that the null hypothesis H5 is accepted, and it says that the tariff rate does not Granger cause inflation. The p-value for the null hypothesis H10 is (0.72) which is also insignificant, therefore, it also shows the non-rejection of null hypothesis H10. This depicts that the inflation rate also does not show a



causal relationship with the tariff rate. The causality result for null hypotheses H5 and H10 reveals that there exists no causal relationship between tariff rate and inflation rate (see

Table 4).

From the aforementioned results and discussion, it can be deduced that the tariff rate is influenced by unemployment, GDP growth, and the TOT effect, but not through the trade balance and inflation. Hence the variables that Granger cause the tariff rate can now be employed for further investigation of the impact on the tariff rate. To determine the direction and magnitude of the effect of these variables we estimate Impulse Response Functions. The results of Impulse Response Functions measure the cumulative impact of one standard deviation (SD) shock in the unemployment rate, GDP growth rate, and terms of trade (TOT) on the applied tariff rate.

Table 5 shows the results of Impulse Response Functions.

**Table 5**  
*Estimates of Impulse Response Function*

Period	Unemployment	GDP growth rate	Terms of trade
1	0.00	0.00	0.00
2	0.43	-2.33	1.22
3	-1.68	-1.61	1.31
4	-2.27	-1.59	2.17
5	-3.45	-0.80	1.96
6	-4.38	-0.12	1.59
7	-5.39	0.53	1.02
8	-6.43	1.26	0.40
9	-7.37	1.95	-0.20
10	-8.24	2.63	-0.85

The relationship between the tariff rate and the unemployment rate shows that whenever there is a shock in the unemployment rate it is going to induce a change in the tariff rate. For the initial two time periods, there is a positive relationship between the unemployment rate and tariff rate. It implies that whenever there is an increase in unemployment, it will be accompanied by an increase in the protection rate. The reason for this direct association between these two variables is that when the unemployment rate is high in Pakistan, the lobbying and influential groups put pressure to increase tariff rates which will make imported items expensive, and it would lead the consumers to switch towards domestically produced goods. The increase in the demand for these domestically produced goods will increase production, which will increase the demand for labor thus absorbing the surplus labor and reducing unemployment. In the long run, we observe an inverse relationship between these two variables as if the unemployment rate continues to increase, tariff rates will not be raised as indicated in Figure 2. This justification is in line with the studies of Thornton and Molyneux, 1995; Bohara and Kaempfer, 1991; Dutt et al., 2009; Adekunle, 2016.

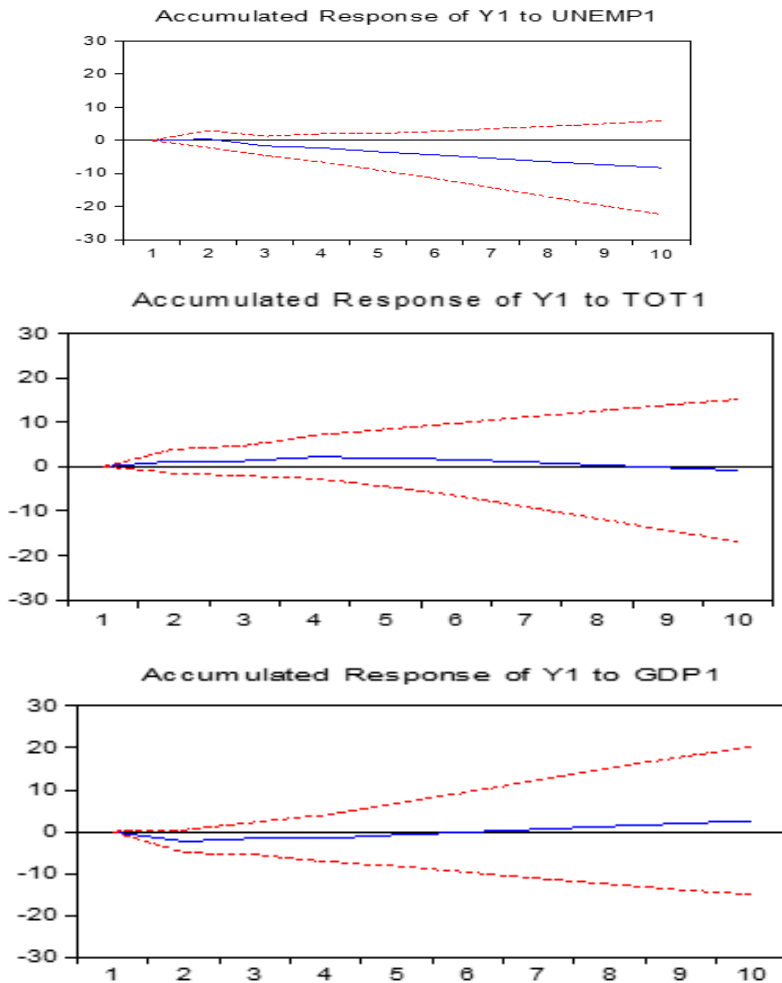
For the short to medium term, a decline in economic activity which shows recession in the economy of Pakistan, will lead to an increase in protectionism as revealed in Figure 2. When there is an economic recession in the country, the tariff will be raised so that imports are reduced and the demand shifts towards home-produced goods. This would increase production in the import-competing sectors, which will generate employment. This outcome aligns with the discoveries of Dejong and Ripoll, 2006 and Nguyen, 2009. In the long run, we observe a positive relationship between economic recession and protectionism. This may be due to the switching of resources from other productive sectors of the economy or the export sector to import-competing

sectors. The exporting sector will be demanding a liberalized tariff regime. In the long run, there will be an inclination towards a more liberalized trade regime because export sectors have been impacted on account of protectionism. These findings are in line with the results of Bohara and Kaempfer, 1991; Thornton and Molyneux, 1995; Muketha et al., 2019; Parikh and Stirbu, 2004.

An improvement in terms of trade has been accompanied by an increase in tariff rates (see Figure 2). Whenever there is an increase in terms in terms trade then the relative price of imports will decline and there will be an inflow of imports in countries. So, import-competing industries will suffer. There will now be pressure to increase the tariff rate. The results of this variable are in line with the study of Ibile and Thornton, 2000; Thornton and Molyneux, 1995; Muketha et al., 2019.

Figure 2: Impulse Response Functions

Accumulated Response to Cholesky One S.D. Innovations  $\pm 2$  S.E.



From the results of the Granger causality test, trade balance was also found to have a unidirectional relation with tariff rate, however, the causality was running from tariff rate to trade balance. So, it is quite pertinent to examine the relations between these 2 variables through the Impulse response function.

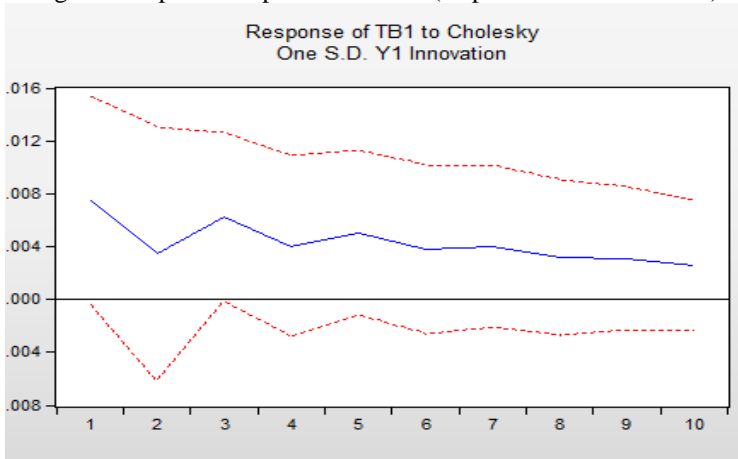
Table 6 presents the result of the Impulse response function which is graphically depicted in

Figure 3. The link from the tariff rate to the trade balance would seem to support the protectionist argument that tariffs lead to an improvement in the trade balance because of the expenditure-switching effect. When there is an increase in the tariff rate, it will lead to an increase in the prices of importable items. Therefore, imports will reduce and the reduction in the imports will bring improvement in the trade balance. These results are in line with the study by Thornton and Molyneux, 1995; Muketha et al., 2019; Allaro, 2012. Theoretically, trade balance determines the change in tariff rate but in the case of Pakistan, the effect is the other way round. So, we see that the tariff rate causes a change in the trade balance.

**Table 6**  
*Estimates of Impulse Response Function*

Periods	Response of trade balance
1	0.007
2	0.003
3	0.006
4	0.004
5	0.005
6	0.003
7	0.003
8	0.003
9	0.003
10	0.002

Figure 3: Impulse Response Function (response of trade balance)



### Conclusion and Policy Implication

An evaluation of the determinants of the tariff rates is pertinent to identify the macroeconomic variables that determine protectionism in any economy. The current study intends to examine the macroeconomic determinants of protectionism in the case of Pakistan. To find the causal relationship between tariff rates and macroeconomic variables (trade balance, inflation, unemployment, gross domestic product, and terms of trade), Granger causality tests have been employed. The results of the test reveal that there exists a unidirectional relationship between tariff

rates Vs unemployment and GDP where both the unemployment and GDP granger cause the tariff rate. A unidirectional relationship is also found to exist between tariff rate and trade balance but the direction of causality in this case runs from tariff rate to trade balance. The result further points to a bidirectional causality between tariffs and terms of trade. Whereas no causal relationship is found to exist between the inflation rate and tariff rate.

After ascertaining the causality among the variables, the study employed the impulse response function to determine the magnitude and direction of the causal relationships. The findings from Impulse Response Functions are quite insightful in explaining the impact of core macroeconomic drivers in inducing a higher level of protectionism in Pakistan. The results of Impulse Response functions reveal that an increase in unemployment is positively associated with an increased level of protectionism. This implies that an increase in unemployment is detrimental in terms of raising the level of protectionism in the country, thereby switching the country towards a more protectionist regime. However, a higher level of GDP or economic growth leads to reduce the protectionism thereby reducing the tariff rate. This finding infers that a lower GDP or slow economic growth would be accompanied by a high level of protectionism, again reiterating the first conclusion that a recessionary trend or an increase in unemployment would be distortionary in terms of moving the country to inward-looking policies. The impact of TOT is also found to be tariff increasing; however, this result needs to be dealt with cautiously because an increase in TOT can also be on account for the higher price of exports, thus leading to more foreign exchange earnings in terms of export proceeds. Finally, in the case of trade balance, the results of the impulse response function reveal that an increase in protectionism through higher tariffs helps improve the trade balance. This result rests on the notion that a higher level of tariff would make imports more expensive thus reducing the demand for importable items and moving the trade balance towards a more favorable side.

The findings of this study point to some important policy implications. In the presence of strong bearing of the macroeconomic effects on protectionist measures, policymakers need to be quite vigilant in directing macroeconomic policies. Any change in the macroeconomic determinant can have a growling effect on the country's tariff regime, which is already regarded as one of the most protectionist ones in comparison to the other countries. The policy objective designed to rationalize the tariff structure can be influenced by the changes in these macroeconomic variables and can influence the effective implementation of designed policy goals. It is thus very pertinent to have a close monitoring of economic fundamentals and external sector variables while designing a rational tariff policy, which should not be subservient to other macroeconomic policies. In this context, it is also very important to correct macroeconomic problems with an appropriate policy tool rather than using trade policy as an instrument to deal with them. Moreover, keeping in view the related cost of protectionism in terms of efficiency losses, erosion of competition, wastage of resources, and other repercussions and retaliatory actions the country can face serious implications of further restrictive tariff regimes.

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## **Iraqi Graduate Students' Analysis of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Verbal Reasoning Content: A Think-Aloud Study**

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This study describes difficulties Iraqi graduate students encounter while answering Verbal Reasoning Measure (VRM) questions of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Participants thought aloud while answering questions from three VRM subsections: Reading Comprehension (RC), Text Completion (TC), and Sentence Equivalence (SE). Data were collected via audio recordings, from seven Iraqi graduate students, and transcribed orthographically, coded, and analyzed. The analysis yielded several themes: Difficulties related to the structure of the question and/or the meaning of its answers, the content is pertinent to USA culture and history, SE is the most difficult part followed by TC, and RC is time consuming. These findings are consistent with previous research results that the structure of the GRE VRM questions and/or the answers are difficult to understand, SE items were much harder than TC and RC items due to their unfamiliar content and vague meanings, and RC is time consuming for international graduate students. Pedagogical implications were identified and recommendations for ETS and students were suggested.

**Keywords:** think aloud, GRE, verbal reasoning section, difficulties, graduate students.

Assessing students' performance has long been the core aim of teaching and learning domains. For English language, this assessment process is conducted via quantitative or qualitative methods based on the procedure used to collect data and the type of the research design. Quantitatively, various versions of survey, online voting, and longitudinal research were and are the used methods. Qualitatively, interviews, observations, personal journals, and audio and video recordings are the prominent methods for assessing language knowledge. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is one of the quantitative methods used by Educational Testing Services (ETS) to assess a wide range cognitive abilities of graduate students to choose the best students to continue their next graduate education. Most US universities depend on the (GRE) score, interviews, undergraduate grades, and recommendation letters as vital factors to nominate master or doctoral students (Stack & Kelley, 2002). A particular GRE total score, with sometimes specified score for each section, is required from both domestic and international students to start their graduate academic courses. However, international graduate students seem to face more difficulties in this test than their domestic counterparts due to various reasons. Although ETS attempts to ensure the impartiality and fairness of the GRE test items via assessment specialists and statistical procedures like Differential Item Functioning (DIF) (Raquel, 2019), international graduate students are still complaining about the problematic parts of this test. Therefore, it is necessary to use methods that are based on students' experience and



perception to obtain a clearer picture about the cognitive process that occurs while taking the test under time pressure. Hence, this study aimed at: first identifying the difficulties international Iraqi graduate students face during taking the VRM using an innovative qualitative method known as think-aloud approach, and second to see if the test's time-limitation impact students' performance. This method was used in this study because it is an efficient educational strategy and a vital tool in cognitive assessment as it relies on immediate articulated thoughts of graduate international students (Charters, 2003).

### **Literature Review**

In this section, the think-aloud approach, the reasons behind choosing it to analyze data, and the structure of the GRE Verbal Reasoning measure are presented.

### **What is Think- aloud Approach?**

A Think-aloud method is a research approach that involves vocalizing participants' internal thinking as they are engaged in completing a given educational task or a problem. A review of prior research has indicated that this method has solid theoretical grounds when it started in the 1960s originating in the cognitive psychology field (Boren, & Ramey, 2000). However, it developed through years and stabilized in 1984 when Ericsson and Simon published their book *Protocol Analysis: Verbal Reports as Data* in which they set a model that values heedful consecutive verbal data produced by participants while solving a task. Today, think-aloud approach is considered as an effective instructional strategy and a critical tool in cognitive assessment as it is based on articulated thoughts (Charters, 2003). Also, it has sundry advantages, such as: providing an unmodified performance response, real situational assessment about the given task, and flexibility of cognitions according to the situation (Davison, Vogel, & Coffman, 1997). In addition, some scholars argue that the efficient use of this approach can positively leverage students' achievement (Ness, 2016).

Think aloud approach has two types of interviews or analyses: protocol and verbal (Leighton, 2009). *Protocol analysis* (interview) is used to measure and identify a problem-solving process where participants are required to provide a verbal record of their instant thoughts as they solve a task. The focus on simultaneous solving and thinking loudly is vital in protocol analysis to recognize immediately the working memory contents or short-term memory of the student (Ericsson, 2006). *Verbal analysis*, on the other hand, is used to measure and identify student's knowledge including attitudes and beliefs. Verbalizing thoughts simultaneously while solving a task is not needed in verbal interviews as students can articulate what they are thinking after or during solving the problem. This is due to the reliance of this kind of interview on the information obtained from long-term memory instead of short-term memory (Chi, 1997). As explained above, the difference between both types is based on the memory location used during the think- aloud interview. Protocol interviews utilize short-term memory, while verbal interviews exploit long-term memory (Leighton, 2009).

Since the main purpose of this paper is to identify various difficulties graduate students encounter in the VRM section of the GRE test, protocol analysis was used. In the data collection and analysis, we assumed that answering every question was a problem-solving task and the goal of the analysis is to understand the cognitive processes participants used while answering the question, correctly or incorrectly. By collecting the immediate verbal record of their thoughts simultaneously as they solve each VRM questions, we rely only on their short-term memory and avoid the problems associated with replying on their long-term memory.

### **Verbal Reasoning Measure**

GRE is an aptitude test that is required from both native and non-native students to begin their graduate degrees. It is mainly used in the United States to measure students' cognitive skills to select the best students who are expected to excel in a graduate program

(Bridgeman, Cline, & Hessinger, 2004). It has three sections, each designed to assess certain cognitive traits: Analytical Writing, Verbal Reasoning, and Quantitative Reasoning. For the purposes of this study, only the VRM is considered.

VRM items are designed to measure graduate students' ability to evaluate and analyze written texts and deduce information from them. This section also aims to analyze connections among sentence constituents and identify relationships among concepts and words (ETS, 2022). VRM has three parts: Reading Comprehension, Text Completion, and Sentence Equivalence.

Reading Comprehension (RC) items measure various cognitive abilities that are critical to read, analyze and understand the types of texts they may encounter in their graduate programs. Such abilities include recognizing between major and minor points, comprehending the meaning of words and sentences, deducing conclusions from the given text, specifying the assumptions and options of the author. This section contains about ten passages, and each question relies on the passage that may include one paragraph or several paragraphs. Passages are selected by assessment specialists from materials that are taught and studied in United States' schools in various academic fields. Items may include any of the above listed topics, from identifying an individual word's meaning to evaluating sentences to provide evidence that may weaken or strengthen points mentioned in the text. Most of the items are multiple-choice in form, and students are supposed to choose one correct option; other item types require selecting two correct answers; while others require choosing a whole sentence from the text (ETS, 2022).

Text Completion (TC) items take the form of short passages that have omitted key words. Graduate students are required to use the available text to infer and select short phrases or words to complete the given sentence(s). The most common TC item structure consists of one to five sentences, with space(s) to be filled and three choices for answering each blank. TC items will sometimes include one blank where five choices of words or phrases are provided (ETS, 2022).

Sentence Equivalence (SE) items focus on the synonymous meaning of two answer choices. The structure of these questions is a single sentence with one blank space. Test-takers are required to select two answers, from six choices, to form two coherent and complete sentences that have almost the same meaning when using the two selected choices. Both TC and SE rely mostly on the accumulative knowledge of English language vocabulary.

### **Think-aloud Approach and VRM**

The use of the think-aloud approach in educational environments was impelled by cognitive psychological researchers to find new instruments and methods to collect qualitative data that are as close as possible to the real-world. Thus, scholars like Simon and Ericsson (1984) originated the innovative method of the think-aloud approach that relies entirely on students' articulated thoughts to attain data that are as real, constant, undisturbed, and undirected as possible. Although their model was developed in the field of cognitive psychology to study certain kinds of problem-solving behaviors, its use has expanded widely to collect cognitive process data in many other fields, including educational measurement (Snow & Lohman, 1989), reading comprehension (Pressley & Afflerbach, 2012), and different engineering fields (Sanderson, 1990). Some of the aforementioned fields have similar research purposes to those of cognitive psychology in that they want to deduce how cognitive processes are happening in specific domains (Boren, & Ramey, 2000). It is also used to ensure the validity of psychological and educational tests and ensure that the test or its items are not inadvertently assessing something other than what it claims to be assessing (AERA/APA/NCME, 2014). The use of

protocol analysis in the field of educational measurement helps to ensure that participants' thinking processes are aligned with what the test claims to be assessing (Snow & Lohman, 1989). This integration has since become the core topic for research in the last four decades not only by scholars (e.g. (Li, Kannry, Kushniruk, Chrimes, McGinn, Edonyabo, & Mann, 2012) but also by governmental organizations and assessments boards in the United States like the National Research Council (Grubbs, Strimel, & Kim, 2018)

We selected think-aloud approach as a data collection method for this study for two reasons: previous evidence of this approach's effectiveness in assessing students' cognitive process in educational and assessing environments (Leighton, 2009), and it helps in highlighting individual variances in response among the sample. From the two interview methods the think-aloud approach has, protocol analysis was chosen for this study not the verbal analysis as the researchers needed to know through the data produced by the participants the difficulties they face while solving the VRM items, which requires students to depend on the immediate cognitive analysis they do after reading a question and while solving the question. This immediate cognitive analysis is based on the information available in the short-term memory that the protocol analysis relies on. In addition, the data collected by protocol analysis is more reliable and valid as they are unaltered or modified (Kuusela, & Paul, 2000).

Protocol analysis has been used to study the four communication skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Ness, 2016). However, no research has been conducted to investigate graduate students' thinking processes while they are answering items like those used in the GRE VRM section. Most published research focuses on the predictivity of the GRE test scores on graduate students' performance in their graduate programs, using quantitative methods (Petersen, Erenrich, Levine, Vigoreaux, & Gile, 2018). None of these studies has addressed Iraqi doctorate students' thinking processes while taking the GRE test which is the main goal of this study.

The main aim of this investigation is to understand the difficulties that Iraqi graduate students encounter while answering GRE VRM items. The results of this study may be interesting to test designers who wish to ensure that test items are as relevant as possible to the academic fields of the students. The results will also interest those who help international students prepare for the GRE VRM. To accomplish this goal, the following questions guided the design of the study:

1. What are the difficulties that Iraqi graduate students face while solving GRE VRM questions?
2. How does the time-limitation of the VRM impact students' performance in the test?

## Method

Before starting data collection for this study, in person informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study voluntarily and to audio record their voice during the interviews. The purpose and importance of the study were explained in the consent and the researchers assured that participants that their personal information will be kept completely anonymous.

### Sample

The sample consisted of seven Iraqi graduate students at two large research-focused universities in the Southeastern United States, four males and three females. Both universities require all applicants to submit recent GRE scores to be considered for admissions. Those students were selected due to their nationality (Iraqi), Ph.D. candidates, and have taken the GRE test at least once before or during their PhD study. Participants were in various stages of their

Ph.D. programs, including Computer Engineering, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Analytical Chemistry, and Biology.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of the Participants*

<u>Participant #</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>University</u>	<u># of times</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Required Score</u>
1	Comp. Eng.	male	Fourth	UCF	2	Iraq and USA	309
2	Comp. Eng.	male	Third	UCF	2	USA	309
3	Comp. Eng.	male	Third	UCF	3	USA	309
4	Comp. Eng.	male	Second	UCF	2	USA	309
5	<u>Analyt. Chem.</u>	female	Fifth	UCF	2	USA	310
6	TESOL	female	Second	UCF	3	USA	300
7	Biology	female	Fifth	UF	2	Iraq and USA	312

Table 1 above illustrates the demographics of the participants, the number of times they have taken the test, and the total GRE score required by each program according to both universities' websites.

Methodologically, recent research has questioned the validity of protocol analysis data when participants are not fluent in the language of data collection (Ericsson & Simon, 1984). This is simply because the added cognitive effort of translating one's thought reduces the cognitive resources available for task completion. To avoid these problems, the interviewer made two adjustments to standard think aloud methods. First, because all participants shared the same dialect of Arabic as their first language, participants were told they could code switch during the tasks, thinking aloud in the language in which they were thinking. It also allowed ease of communication with the first author if the researcher or the participants needed clarification. Second, some participants were silent when they first read the questions, especially the longer reading comprehension passages. When they did this, the interviewer allowed them an initial period of silently reading so that they could focus on comprehension before reminding them to "keep talking." This change led to the loss of some data but made the study design viable.

### **Data Collection**

Methodological research on protocol analysis has shown that think aloud is not an appropriate method of data collection for certain tasks and populations, including very young children, problem tasks that are either too easy or too difficult for the participants, people with difficulties processing verbal information, and people who are not adequately fluent in the language of data collection (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). However, we used it as we assumed that VRM items were neither too easy nor too difficult. Anyone who had too much difficulty processing verbal information would not have been able to complete our training tasks.

In this study, the authors used VRM questions from the paper-based GRE test taken from *The Official Guide to the GRE Revised General Test*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) that was published by Educational Testing Services (ETS) in (2012). A full version of the VRM, from pages 309-318, with its assigned allocated time was applied to the sample of this study to simulate the situation of a real GRE test to obtain as close results from the participants as possible to those of the real test. The VRM used in this study included 25 questions that varied in length and difficulty and 35 minutes to answer those questions. The number of questions for each section in the VRM is almost fixed in each try with a largest portion for the RC (12-13 questions) followed by TC (7-8 questions), and SE (4-5 questions). In our study, RC questions were 12, TC were 8, and SE were 5.

The data collected for this study included seven audio-recorded protocol interviews answering GRE VRM questions. Each interview was conducted individually. Data were collected through a period of three months in 2021-2022 year. The test was administered in English, but participants could code switch to reflect their thinking. At the beginning of each interview, participants were required to complete a series of “training” tasks to ensure that they understood what it meant to think aloud during the test, especially the need to continually verbalize their thinking and to avoid efforts to explain or justify their thinking to the interviewer. When the participants demonstrated that they could think aloud effectively, they began answering the GRE test items. The researchers did not explain the test items or how they should be answered, presuming that they had recent familiarity with the test and question types.

Although efforts to remind participants to not explain or justify their thinking, several participants did so spontaneously and persisted in doing so. This behavior was most evident when participants struggled to comprehend the questions and/or answer choices. The interviewer allowed participants to explain their strategies for answering the question or their frustrations with the questions, assuming that these explanations were at least in part an authentic reflection of their thinking even if they were not a verbatim record of their cognitive processes.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews are divided into four sub-sections according to the fields of the participants: Computer Engineering (4 participants), Analytical Chemistry (1 participant), TESOL (1 participant), and Biology (1 participant). However, the same VRM version was used, and the same procedures were followed with all participants.

### **Computer Engineering Participants**

Four Iraqi graduate males participated in the study who were pursuing their Ph.D. in various years of the program. The first participant was in his second academic year in the Ph.D. program. The interview took 47 minutes and 55 seconds. When he started with RC, the participant did not want to understand the meaning of the question but wanted to understand the overall meaning of the passage and tried then to know the correct answer. Since this strategy failed, he went back again to the meaning of the sentence to get clues from the context. The participant said that “RC was time consuming as it took me about 15 minutes to understand the first paragraph of one of the passages because it talked about America’s history, which was unfamiliar to me”. Although he used deletion and replacing strategies in the TC and SE sections, he commented that “they have difficult options with similar meaning, or the question was sometimes difficult to understand.”

The second participant was in his third year of the academic program. The interview went for 45 minutes and 45 seconds. When the participant started with the RC questions, he read the passages silently for himself for 2-5 minutes and then started solving the questions. However, he kept going back and forth between the text and questions saying: “I am not very familiar with most of the words or vocabularies mentioned in the text”. Another issue according to this participant is the unfamiliar culturally subject of some passages that addressed for example US history, space, biology, etc.

As for the TC questions, the participant used the substitution strategy where he used each of the given options in the blank to see if it makes sense for him. The participant mentioned that he faced more difficulties in answering the questions that have two-blanks than those with one blank. SE part was according to the participant “a nightmare” as he stated that “I understand the meaning of the question but the problem when I read the given choices, I become

shocked since I do not have any idea about most of them, therefore; I selected the answer relying on my sense. This part is definitely the hardest one among all three.”

The third participant is in the same academic year of the previous participant, third year. The interview went for 30 minutes and 34 seconds. When he started working on the RC questions, he analyzed the question and its options simultaneously to see which answer fits more. He used elimination strategy to get closer to the correct answer. However, he stated that “this part (RC) of VRM is time consuming as I re-read some of the texts multiple times to understand them.” As for the TC and SE questions, the participant chose the answers randomly as he thought “it is a waste of time to try to answer something I do not understand.”

The fourth interviewee was in his last year in the program. The interview took 38 minutes and 57 seconds. He used the elimination strategy with RC questions. Then, the participant used logic in interpreting the given text to reach to the correct answer. Although it is a very good strategy, it is time consuming. He added saying that “this section was somehow difficult due to its limited time and type of passages that were non-academic in nature”. As for SE and TC items, the participant mentioned that their “questions were much more difficult than those of the RC,” which explains his random choices of the answers.

### **The Analytical Chemistry Participant**

The fifth participant was from Analytical Chemistry department, College of Sciences at UCF. The participant is a female in the final year of the Ph.D. program. The interview took 38 minutes and 53 seconds. She read every item of the VRM loudly while solving them one by one. The researcher code switched a little bit to explain the procedures but did not help the participant with anything else about the test. Due to her specialization in Chemistry and sciences in general, she mentioned that “the passages of RC were understandable, but some of their questions were difficult, especially the inferring items.” The most difficult part of the VRM for her was SE since according to her “it requires a massive vocabulary knowledge about every topic, which unfortunately I do not have.” As for TC questions, the participant mentioned that “the structure of the sentences was difficult and also the choices were really hard to understand”. Therefore, she said that she had two choices: either to understand the sentence and be able to answer it which requires more time, or not getting the meaning of the sentence and thus depend on luck when picking the answer.

### **The TESOL Participant**

The sixth interviewee showed higher linguistic skills and more sophisticated thinking than previous participants in terms of English vocabularies due to her background knowledge in English language. The participant was a female graduate student in the Ph.D. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) track, in the second year. The think aloud procedure went for 40 minutes and 6 seconds. The interesting thing is that she worked on the choices first before the question itself, a technique she reported that she learned from GRE preparation books. Yet, the participant admitted that “it was not helpful with the given questions of the RC.”

In addition, she had similar opinion to that of other participants about the difficulty of either the question or the options and sometimes both saying that “sometimes I know the meaning of all choices, but the question is difficult to understand, and sometimes it is vice versa.” In these situations, the participant used the structure of complex sentences to reach the correct option(s). For example, although she said that the questions of SE “were the most difficult ones,” she was able to identify the key words in the sentence depending on the structure of the sentence.

The participant added that the one-blank items in the TC section were easier than the two blank ones. Agreeing with the other participants, she stated that “some SE items were very difficult as they require previous knowledge about the US history. Also, both the structure and options were not understandable.” According to her, SE questions was harder than those of TC because she“ (has) to figure out the two choices that are similar in meaning.” Therefore, she looked at the choices first and after locating every pair, she tried to see if they would fit the meaning of the sentence.

**The Biology Participant**

The last participant was a female graduate student in a Ph.D. Biology program, in the fifth year. The think aloud procedure went for 44 minutes and 6 seconds. When the participant started with RC questions, she stated that “she needs more time for this section due to the unclear content of some passages. However, I was able to answer the questions related to sciences as it is part of my specialization.” According to her, “TC questions were difficult though I relied on the structure and context to analyze and answer them.” The participant shared the same viewpoint expressed by other participants about SE questions when she stated: “the questions of the SE were the most difficult among all as they require rich background knowledge in vocabularies and their use in various contexts.” After the interview, the participant said that she felt pressured due to the time limitation required to complete solving VRM section, which impacted her answers and her total grade in the test.

Table 2 shows the main strategies used by each participant to solve VRM questions. Most of the participants used elimination, context clues, deletion, sentence structure, and matching the options with the question strategies to solve the RC items, while they used substitution, key words, logic to solve SE and TC items.

**Table 2**  
*Participants’ Strategies for Solving VRM’s Questions*

Participant #	Program	Gender	Strategies
1	Comp. Eng.	Male	-Elimination of direct information/ logic (sense) (RC).
2	Comp. Eng.	Male	- Random answer selection for (TC) and (SE) -Analyzing the question and answers simultaneously (RC) - NO STRATEGIES WERE USED FOR (TC and SE).
3	Comp. Eng.	Male	-Reading silently (RC). -Context Clues (RC) -Substitution (TC) -Reading the Q more than once (TC) - Logic (sense) (SE)
4	Comp. Eng.	Male	-Structure Analysis (RC). - Substitution (TC and SE) - Deletion (TC and SE)
5	Analyt. Chem.	Female	-Reading loudly (RC/TC/SE) -Code switching (RC) -Context clues (RC) -Trying to get the meaning of the sentence (TC) -Answer randomly (TC)
6	TESOL	Female	-working on the answers first (RC/TC/SE) -code switching (RC) -Sentence structure analysis (TC) -Key words (TC) -Identifying the synonymous pair first and fit them in the question. (SE)
7	Biology	Female	-Background knowledge (RC) -Sentence structure analysis (TC) -Context clues (TC) -Random answers (SE)

## Results and Discussion

The think aloud audio recordings were transcribed carefully, then differences and similarities among the main statements of the participants were distinguished. After that, those sentences were unified and coded to have the following four themes:

### 1. *Difficulty of either the structure of the question or the meaning of its options.*

All the participants agreed that most of VRM questions are difficult either in terms of the structure of the question or the meaning of its options and sometimes both. Because analyzing the structure and/ or selections is time consuming, participants preferred to select the answers randomly and move to the next question. These difficulties were reported in the SE and TC sections by Computer Engineering and Analytical Chemistry participants. Although participants used various strategies to solve questions, they faced problems in the two blank questions of SE more than those including one blank. The difficulties faced in SE and TC sections might be attributed either to complexity of the structure of the question or their unfamiliarity with the meaning of the options in addition to the limited time needed to analyze and solve such questions. Therefore, they had two choices: either to understand the question and maybe answering it which requires more time or could not understand the meaning of the question and depend on their sense in selecting choice(s).

### 2. *Culture or history related topics.*

Some VRM questions need previous knowledge about US history and/or culture. Since most Iraqi students are non-native speakers who do not have such knowledge, they struggle in answering those questions and therefore become obliged to select any answer(s) they think related. This difficulty was reported by most interviewees in this study which means that it is not related to the knowledge level a participant has, it is rather an essential one also for many international students who take this test. Inserting cultural and historical items in the GRE test are obvious examples of content bias against international students who should be tested for their analytical skills not cultural and historical knowledge of USA. Therefore, the validation of the items could be improved by ETS through taking into consideration international students' direct opinions about the difficulty level of some items before considering them in a real test or having a panel of non-native experts who can point out issues in the test items.

### 3. *Sentence Equivalence is the most difficult section followed by Sentence Completion.*

All participants agreed on the fact that SE questions were the hardest ones in the VRM followed by TC and RC questions. Even though the participants used different techniques they learned from GRE preparation books, they reported that SE questions were so frustratingly difficult as they require knowing the precise meaning of two synonymous words that are new. Also, this might be attributed to the double- task issue they must do on SE questions of understanding the meaning of the question and locating the synonymous pair that would fit the meaning of the sentence. In addition, having more than one synonymous pair per item adds more difficulty for the students who needed more time to cluster the synonymous pairs and see which pair fits more to the given question. This issue needs a deeper investigation in a collaboration with ETS itself by getting a GRE test blueprint and evaluating its items by English language experts to understand better if those difficulties result from the students' lack of knowledge or the unfairness of the questions to non- native students.

### 4. *Reading Comprehension is time consuming.*



Most of the participants agreed that although RC is the least hard section, its questions require more time to answer due to either the content of the RC questions that is drawn from (non) academic books and journals from various domains or the cultural and historical topic of the question that is unfamiliar for international students. The students used various strategies to help them complete this section successfully, but this did not work all the time. In other words, analyzing structure and trying to understand the meaning of the sentence and choices are time consuming. This difficulty was doubled for the sample of this study since they are international students and need longer time to understand the questions than their domestic counterparts. For these reasons, Iraqi graduate students who took the test reported that they wasted almost half of the allotted time to only read and understand the questions instead of answering them.

### **Implications and Suggestions**

The most important implication of this study's findings is related to GRE test designers who should consider using either analysis of the think-aloud approach; protocol or verbal to develop test items since this approach allows them to identify the kind of psychological variables needed to be measured, especially those related to knowledge structure or problem-solving process. The results of this study are also important for test takers as they can also utilize the think aloud approach, to first monitor their performance and comprehension, and second to prepare for the test in a better way. Thus, when students think aloud, they can assist themselves and others since connections between cognition, oral language, reading, and writing, are made while acting as a paradigm for their student audience (Khudhair, 2020). Finally, psychometricians should consider using protocol analysis to develop or validate a cognitive model of performance tasks, especially in large-scale standardized tests like the GRE.

The findings of this study are also important for teachers who can use the think-aloud protocol and explicit meta-cognitive instruction to train the attention and working memory of students (test-takers) since preparing to answer large-scale tests, like the GRE, relies mainly on the working or short memory and the attention to fine details in the questions (Makmee, 2022; Nasim et al., 2022)

### **Limit and Scope of the Study**

This study has some limitations. First, since the study was implemented only to explore difficulties that Iraqi doctoral students face while solving VRM questions, it mainly focused on this section of the GRE. However, another study can be conducted to the other sections of the GRE test with a different sample. Moreover, the present study is limited to two research questions, more questions can be added. The sample size was also limited to seven students only which makes the results ungeneralizable.

### **Conclusion**

Difficulties in GRE's VRM were investigated in this study via recording and analyzing Iraqi Graduate students' direct opinions using think aloud approach. It has been found that questions which require merely vocabulary knowledge, like those of SE and TC, were much more difficult than the questions that depend on the context, like RC's questions. Also, it has been concluded that international students face more difficulties in solving VRM's questions than native students due to their unfamiliarity with the meaning of many vocabularies and the nature of the content of many questions that are related to the culture or history of USA. As far as RC questions are concerned, the results indicated that although this section was the easiest in the VRM, it was very time consuming because of the topics of the given texts that were sometimes non-academic and /or heritage based. Future research can tap into other important issues related to the large-scale test, such as comparing difficulties faced by graduate students from various cultural backgrounds in TEOFL or IELTS test, examining the effect of linguistic proficiency on performance, or exploring the efficiency of certain test preparation strategies.

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## **Impacts of the International Monetary Fund on the Economy of Pakistan**

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This research article addresses the question “What are the impacts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the economy of Pakistan?”. Here a matter of concern is whether the IMF program has an overall positive impact on the growth of the economy of Pakistan or has just increased the debt burden. Positive impacts include solving the issue of balance of payment, stabilizing the foreign exchange reservoirs, bringing improvement in its exports, and providing money for imports. The negative impacts included the devaluation of Pakistani currency, increased burden of foreign debt, increased excise duties, discouraged investment, and dictate Pakistan in controlling the stock exchange. A qualitative research approach is utilized to examine the impacts of the IMF on the economy of Pakistan. It has been observed from the study that IMF has both positive and negative impacts on the economy of Pakistan. This study explores and analyses in detail the impacts of IMF loans on economic stabilization processes in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** IMF, policy, Pakistan, economy, foreign exchange reservoirs.

Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the destiny of the country depends on the economy of the country. Those countries are at the mercy of their enemy who depend on other countries or some other international monetary institutions for taking loans. These institutions provide funds to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is primarily focusing on the economic growth and stability of member countries. IMF provides loans to all those member countries having a serious balance of payment problems or any other type of economic crisis. IMF funding is one of the most debated issues from the last few decades in terms of its policies, restrictions, and impacts on the economy of the countries who are borrowing loans from it. Along with loans, it also provides policy advice and conditionalities that are considered to have negative and positive impacts on the indigenous economy of the borrowing country. To get a loan, the core issue for the borrowing country remains to fulfill the conditionalities imposed by the IMF.

Similarly, Pakistan is also dependent on the IMF loan. Pakistan is facing economic problems, therefore, Islamabad looks again and again towards the IMF for loans. The economy of Pakistan is weak while its expenditure is huge, therefore the government has no option but to turn over to the IMF (Lodhi, 2008). Due to its weak economic position, poverty, and balance of payment issues Pakistan has attempted many times to borrow from the IMF. Since 1958 Pakistan

has borrowed 22 times from the IMF among which 4 times from 2001 to 2019. This study is based on the last four time frames, i.e., 2001, 2008, 2013, and 2019 respectively. The IMF imposed strict conditions and policy measures on Pakistan to take any kind of loan. These conditionalities have negative impacts on the economy of Pakistan. The IMF conditionalities that are imposed on Pakistan were macro-economic plans (monetary and fiscal), inflation targeting measures, economic deregulation, more openness of Pakistan's economy to global capital flows, liberalization of trade (including a decrease of tariff and non-tariff barriers), and denationalization of public sector companies and enterprises.

Although some countries that borrowed from the IMF achieved better economic growth, minimized financial deficit, and got a reduction in inflation in the short-term. In Pakistan, such development has not happened (Majid, 2019). Though IMF funding has played a vital role in trade liberalization, capital flows and privatization of state-governed enterprises could affect the long-run impacts (Qayyum, 2018). Since 1988, 12 IMF programs proved to be unsuccessful (Ahmad & Mohammed, 2012). The IMF program aimed to encourage growth in terms of the balance of payments, current account balance, and lower inflation but the policies of the IMF were not obvious, and difficult to assess the effects. IMF loans would have been positive if the conditions with loans had not become a burden on the economy of Pakistan. Pakistan was always compelled to implement many poorly planned programs, plunging the economy of the country into a gap dying the state in the constraints and restrictions executed by the IMF.

This paper addresses the main question "What are the impacts of IMF on the economy of Pakistan from 2001-2019"? Due to its weak economic position, poverty, and balance of payments issues, Pakistan has been going to the IMF for a long time to borrow. IMF has both positive and negative impacts on the economy of Pakistan from 2001-2019. As for positive impact, it includes solving the issue of Balance of payment, stabilization of foreign exchange reserve, bringing improvement in their exports, and providing money for imports. The negative impact, includes devolution of Pakistani currency, increase in excise duties, reductions in employment opportunities, reduction in subsidies of different items, and dictating Pakistan in controlling the stock exchange.

This paper examines the impacts of the IMF on the economy of Pakistan. The study is significant because still today Pakistan is dependent on the IMF for loans. The novelty of this study is that it highlights the impacts of the IMF on the economy of Pakistan from 2001 to 2019. This paper has highlighted the pros and cons of IMF loans on the economy of Pakistan. The study analyzes in detail the impacts of IMF loans on the economy of Pakistan and explores the causes of how IMF has negative implications on the economy of Pakistan. This paper provides a guiding principle for policymakers and presents recommendations for the government of Pakistan in the light of results (Hussain et al., 2021).

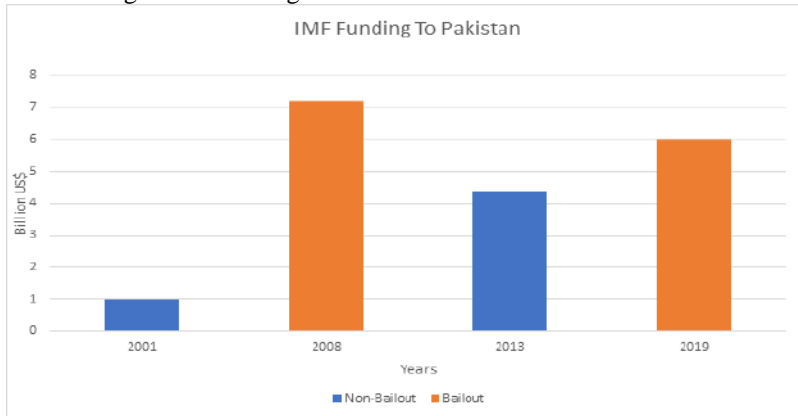
### **Research Methodology**

This study is conducted through a wide review of existing literature through the content analysis technique (CAT). The content analysis technique is widely accepted and broadly deployed in qualitative social research studies. It is important in qualitative data analysis and results in generalization. The data has been collected from research papers, books, reports, IMF and State Bank of Pakistan websites, newspapers, economic surveys of Pakistan, and government of Pakistan white papers released from time to time about the economy of Pakistan.

**An Overview of the IMF Policies**

International Financial Institutions including the IMF are working for economic regulation and can play a vital role in the economic development of the countries. The core objective of the IMF is to raise the revenue generation and economic development of the borrowing countries. While getting loans countries have to sign some arrangements with IMF.

Figure 1: Showing IMF Loans to Pakistan from 2001-2019.



**Source:** Impact of IMF Loan on Pakistan’s Economy in Long Run and Short Run.

<https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:24481/>

The study period contains four IMF programs extended credit facility, standby agreement, and extended fund facilities, and each fund has different numbers of conditionalities. The conditionalities of the IMF for Pakistan were to control the spending of non-developmental expenses. Besides these devaluations of currency, the decline in GDP, markup rate, excise duties on agriculture and services, inter-bank transactions, and many more were the outlays of the loans to Pakistan. During the non-democratic era of General Musharraf, Pakistan signed a three-year agreement of Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) in December 2001, which was completed successfully. Pakistan delivered well and performed a good track record due to its commitment to IMF although the conditionalities were a little hard to achieve. With the varied procedure of 19 conditions, the performance measures were nearly three times the fund’s arrangement.

Again in 2008, the democratic government of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) got the biggest IMF package of 4.94 billion dollars. The package was composed of 11 conditionalities. They were focused on some reforms for Pakistan to modify its policy of tax such as the removal of tax exemptions and change in the interest rate (Abbasi, 2019). Another package from IMF was approved for Pakistan in September 2013, under Extended Fund Facility with some harsh conditions. In this package, the conditions were severe and very hard to implement. Different actions especially changes in taxation policy, privatization of PSE, and power energy subsidies. The initial US\$1 billion was approved by the board of the IMF, while the remaining amount was given in a specified period with the eight reviews consisting of four quarterly and four annual assessments (IMF Press Release No. 19/264, 2019). IMF staff and board regularly apply the conditionalities such an improvement but in most cases, Pakistan did not implement the reforms. So, it leads to the abandoning position of IMF assistance before ending the loan package. Although each case is different from one another, the consequences remain the same.

Yasemin (2016) stresses that the loans of IMF are advantageous for the less developing countries confronting macro-economic inequalities. It was also found that States with IMF plans get economic growth in the short term and have better reserve handling, lower fiscal deficit, and reduce inflation for growth. IMF packages are guiding principles for States on the policy requirements for their economic growth. Bird and Rowlands (2016) opinion the IMF program has negative outcomes in the short run while balancing for the long run which is an encouraging factor. Breen & Egan observed that the IMF program led to a reduction in foreign direct investment.

Saleem (2019) discusses a case study about the IMF shows the impacts on Argentina. The economy of Argentina was very high in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's first quarter and had one of the leading top ten GDP States of the world was greater than that of France and Italy. What kind of problems led Argentina to such a harsh economic calamity? When Argentina became into member of the IMF on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956. An author analyses of negative impacts of the loan of Argentina by Argentina's observatory of social debt, had "32 % of families while 41 % of people were under the poverty level. Argentina is using digital price tabs in supermarkets because of the price's unstable situation which is changing very frequently. The author's study evaluated that Argentina was one of the stable states in terms per capita of Gross Domestic Products, but changed to the defaulter, where poverty and inflation became regular things. The poverty of Argentina reached 35.4% in the first quarter of 2019 which was the highest recorded figure since 2011. A high level of poverty and inflation rate led to many diseases related to poverty in Argentina".

### **Positive Impacts of IMF on the Economy of Pakistan Privatization of State Enterprises**

Privatization is one of the key policy options of the IMF when providing a loan to a country. Concerning privatization, Pakistan experimented with many ways to privatize the state-owned entrepreneurs and some banks but was not as successful as was required by the IMF. Privatization has impacted the economic development of the states in different ways. The idea of privatization flourished Neo-classical for advancement in the export system by entering the free market arrangement. With the introduction of free trade, foreign investors feel free to bring their investments to the free markets (Mehmood & Faridi, 2013).

The process of privatization is giving different results in different countries, especially in under-developed nations and only a few showed positive. The possibility of privatized properties is lent to the middle-class elites instead of the high class (Todaro, 2000). While taking some steps for privatizations of different states' enterprises the IMF gave dictation for it in its conditionality of loan. The privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Pakistan was held at different times which had given some fruitful results for the country's economy. The positive impacts of privatization measures of SOEs could be observed in Pakistan with an increase in FDI and intensification of the domestic demands which was a positive sign for any economic growth.

### **Increased FDI**

It is observed that the capital inflow has gained momentum in Pakistan since 2003. The capital inflow recorded a blooming growth between the fiscal years 2003 and 2007 in Pakistan. The share of external capital was very low which was about 4 percent of the total investment of the state in the year 2000-2001 which dramatically changed to 38 percent in the fiscal year 2007-08. The figure of FDI showed 2.3 percent of the total investment and 55.7 percent of the total external capital in 2000-2001. FDI shares increased to 10.6 percent of the whole investment

while 27.5 percent of the foreign resources of the country in 2007-08 (Nasir, 2012). Privatization of SOEs also created helpful earnings in foreign exchange by attracting foreign investors to the constructive macro-economic setting of the state. The percentage of FDI to Pakistan in the year 2005 recorded the highest ratio to the world's FDI inflows which was about 0.222%. One of the basic reasons for that increase in inflow was the privatization measures after getting loans from the IMF and managing its conditions.

**Table 1**

*FDI Inflows to Pakistan from 2001 to 2018 with the rate of change and percentage to GDP in Pakistan (in million US Dollars).*

Year	FDI (Million US\$)	Rate of Change (%)	Percentage of GDP
2001	322.5	-31.37	0.45
2002	484.7	50.29	0.67
2003	798	64.64	0.96
2004	949.4	18.97	0.97
2005	1524	60.52	1.39
2006	3521	131.04	2.57
2007	5139.6	45.97	3.37
2008	5152.8	0.26	3.03
2009	3,719.90	-27.81	2.22
2010	2,150.80	-42.18	1.21
2011	1,634.80	-23.99	0.77
2012	820.7	-49.80	0.36
2013	1447.3	76.35	0.61
2014	1 868	29.06	0.69
2015	1 621	-13.22	0.36
2016	2 479	52.93	0.82
2017	2 806	13.19	0.90
2018	2352	-16.18	1.10

*Source:* Trading Economics. Pakistan Foreign Direct Investment.  
<https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/foreign-direct-investment>

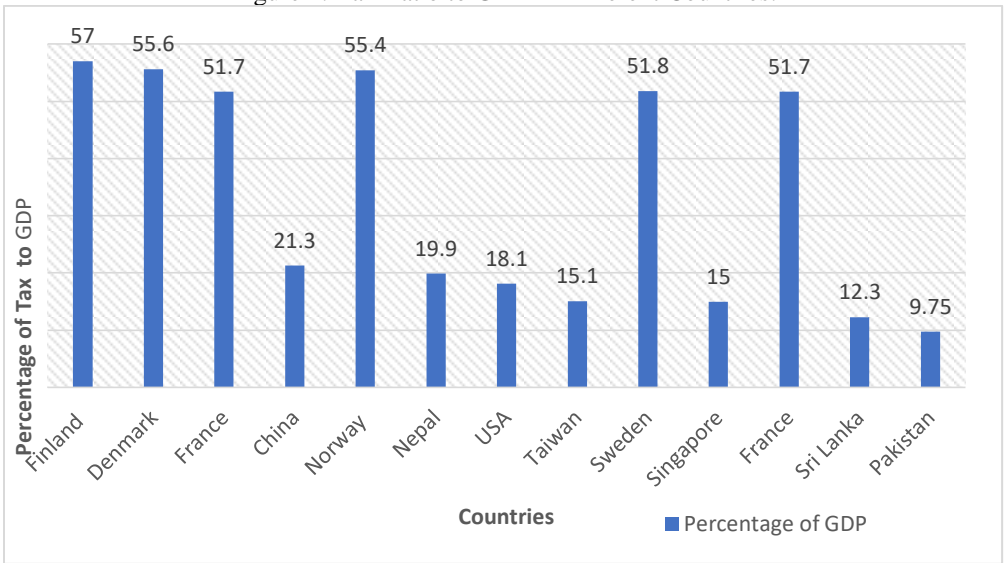
Table 1 shows a solid increase in the volume of the FDI from 2002 to 2008. Besides the politically stable environment, the economic stability that had been brought about by the IMF package is on track. FDI inflows declined consistently from 2009 to 2013 despite taking another bailout from IMF Pakistan. It was due to some worse political instability, a severe flood in 2010, and the absence of any notable privatization policy of SOEs to attract FDI. From 2013 to 2018 there was no continuity in FDI inflows to Pakistan to improve its economic growth. The percentage of FDI was only good in the year 2007 which was 3.37 percent of GDP. The role of privatization in bringing FDI to Pakistan could be observed by the transaction of the country's single bank "United Bank Limited" (UBL) which was privatized for 387 million dollars. In the period from 2004 to 2007, Pakistan experienced an increase in FDI inflows and got a well economic growth, and political stability along with engaging in a privatization strategy, which showed positive effects on the growth (Nanji, 2014).



**Increased Tax Ratio**

The IMF Stabilization Program has some typical Policy measures like an increase in taxes. The state of Pakistan is coming in the list of the under-developed economy having a very low tax ratio to Gross Domestic Products. The Tax arrangement in Pakistan is not fully developed and is considered complex, rigid, non-neutral, and unproductive for the state economy. For the improvement of the tax system in Pakistan, many efforts have been made with the help of IMF policy recommendations. The ratio of tax to GDP of Pakistan is 9.75 % which is very low compared to other Asian countries.

Figure 2. Tax Ratio to GDP in Different Countries.



Source: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/pakistan/#economy>

During the period from 1999 to 2001, there was a decline in the currency of Pakistan by about 12.1% while the exports improved by 25 %. With the rapid rise of payments and inflow of capital into the country, the value of the rupee increased. For microeconomics, the first thing that influences a state economy is to maximize the demands. Secondly, it has an outcome on the other goods with relation to labor which can affect the volume of the worker employed for each unit of production. IMF wanted to mobilize the revenue and tax treks but there was some strain on the government because the protection of the poor was a matter of helplessness from the adjustment and its effect which was proposed by IMF. It can benefit to lessen the impacts of global prices and instability in the exchange rate (Ijaz et al., 2019).

Tax reforms had a great impact on the economic growth of Pakistan, especially in the balancing of the budget problems. The budget deficit of Pakistan improved to the proportion of GDP with the tax reforms policy. Pakistan was continuously struggling with tax revenue generation during the study period. With the new bailout package, the current government is also trying to bring improvement in public finance through tax reforming policy (Masood, 2019).

**Table 2***Year Wise Tax Revenue and Expenditure of Pakistan, 2001-2018 (in million \$).*

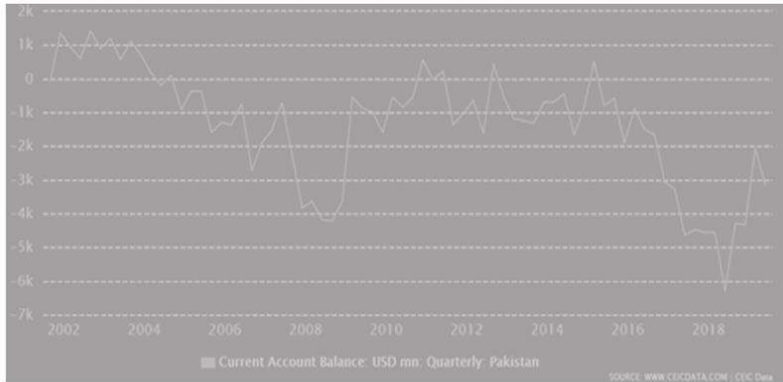
Year	Tax revenue	Expenditure
2001-02	478.1	826.2
2002-03	555.8	898.2
2003-04	617.9	940.3
2004-05	659.4	1,116.9
2005-06	803.7	1,401.9
2006-07	891.2	1,663.8
2007-08	1,095.5	1,874.6
2008-09	1,331	2,531
2009-10	1,500	3,008
2010-11	1,738	3,566
2011-12	2,076	4,326
2012-13	2,231	4,816
2013-14	2,635	5,027
2014-15	3100.1	5808.2
2015-16	3534.6	6304.4
2016-17	3,969.2	6,800.5
2017-18	4,467.2	7,647.0

*Sources:* Authors' Simulation from Finance Division, Pakistan and Economic Survey of Pakistan.

In the study period, it was noted that the tax revenue generation was very low compared to the expenditure of Pakistan. One main cause of the budget deficit was the low tax ratio in the country. The period from 2001 to 2007 was comparatively good due to the implementation of some taxation policies. If taxes were increased as compared to expenditures it could improve the fiscal budget to a great extent. The deficit was reduced to 4% of GDP in the year 2003-04. It further declined to 3.4% and 3.2% in the years 2004-05 and 2005-06 respectively. The budget deficit rose again in the fiscal year of 2006-07 to 4.2 percent and reached a high level of 7.3 % of GDP in 2007-08. Pakistan is one of those borrower countries that have the maximum growth rate of adjustment loans from IMF but reliably had a massive budget deficit which still brought the country to the public severe debt crisis (Easterly, 2012).

### **Positive Impacts of Adjustment of Exchange Rate**

Adjustment of the exchange rate had also some positive measures in contrast to currency fluctuation for the economic growth in Pakistan. In the year 2007 a year of the Standby Arrangement, it was recorded that the economy of Pakistan was in good form. At that time the exchange rate was stable, and the exchange rate of the Pakistani Rupee to the US dollar was round about Rs. 60. In an adjusted rate the foreign reserves were at the peak point of that time which was about 16.5 billion US dollars. The current account deficit was almost 5.3% of the gross domestic product. The export growth rate exceeded imports, which was about 14.2% and 4.5%. The private sector credits were 15.2 percent, and the financial growth was a little above the nominal GDP which was 18.2% (Husain, n.d.).



### Balance of Payment

The exchange rate has a direct link with the balance of payment. When the balance of payment is for selling local products abroad or purchasing foreign assets there should be a change in the supply and demand of the foreign currency. Any international transaction cannot be completed without an exchange rate. Changing any one constituent of the balance of payment will affect the supply and demand of the country for foreign currency.

Figure 3: Current Account Balance of Pakistan in million US dollars.

**Source:** <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/pakistan/forecast-current-account-balance>

The adjustment rate of the first bailout loan of the study era, the balance of payment showed a positive result, and the exports exceeded over imports. After 2004-05 the balance of payment declined till 2008-09. Another adjustment was set up in 2009-10 which gave a sound result for BoP. During the second and third loans of IMF in the study period, the BoP was a little controlled due to the adjustment of the exchange rate policy of Pakistan. The BoP declined to a record level of - 6.3 billion US dollars in the year 2018 due to no adjustment of the exchange rate.

### Standard of Living

Over 80% of the population of Pakistan consistently reported that their financial security had either worsened or continued the same in the study period. Only 20%, excessively focused on the very topmost of the circulation, feel that they were improved and likewise, small figures have faith that financial situations have improved in their area (Rahman et al., 2021). The state's statistic about the issue concerned shows a diverse story. According to the "National Poverty Line" set in the year 2001, the country had seen extraordinary poverty, dropping from 35% in 2001 to less than 10% by 2014. These improvements were not focused on among those close to the poverty level. Even 5% of the inhabitants saw an upgradation in living standards. The possession of resources like motorbikes had increased from only 2 percent to 18 percent and many more of the poorest families now have fridges, TVs, cookers, and stoves.

### Value Determination of Pakistani Currency

IMF called to avoid operational exchange rates for a limited competitive advantage. Under a fixed exchange rate system, only a choice by a state's administration or financial

authority can change the official worth of the currency. Governments rarely, take such actions, often in reply to uncommon market burdens. When a government devaluates its currency, it is often due to the interface of market forces and policy choices that has made the currency fixed rate indefensible. To bear a fixed exchange value, a state essentially has adequate foreign exchange assets, often dollars, and is ready to spend it, to buy all offers of its money at the recognized exchange value. First, devaluing makes the state's exports comparatively less expensive for outsiders. Second, devaluing makes external goods comparatively more expensive for local customers. This may help to raise the state's exports and decline in imports and may then support to decrease of the current account deficit. A state might try to practice deflation to increase collective demand in the economy in a struggle to contest joblessness (Federal Reserve Bank, 2011).

The currency of Pakistan had determinedly weakened against the value of the US dollar. The primary purpose of devaluing the currency was to strengthen the growth of export items. When a country devalues its currency its exports are becoming low-priced, and its demand increases. Regarding Pakistan, the long-term struggle to export items is associated with imports which are around 37 percent. However, the result seems with an interval. The shares of capital goods and raw materials were 16 and 24 percent respectively (Bader, 2006). Also, depreciation affects the balance sheet.

The economic survey of 2008-2009, reported an increase of 18 percent in public debt and 30 percent in foreign exchange because of the devaluation of the Pakistani rupee compared to the dollar. IMF welcomed the devaluation of Pakistan's currency and called it significant for financial development. For the external adjustment of the exchange rate suppleness is vital. The leader of the staff mission of the IMF, Finger said after the SBP provision for devaluing measures "allowing the currency to decline was a good measure to achieve progress for the current year". The IMF expected growth to gross domestic products was 5.6% (Shahzad, 2017). Economic policy alone is questionable to encourage large and determined depreciations required for achieving that permanent development. The spending substituting effect of a currency weakening is generally insignificant. As mentioned, 10 percent of devaluation usually progresses a trade of a state about 0.3 percent of GDP in one year mainly due to the reduction of import items since the trade was charged in dollars. If the period is extended for such a process of the trade balance, the gross domestic product rises to 1.2% so the complete outlay result comparatively remains uncertain (Smith, 2019).

Currency devaluation may worsen inflation and lead to an additional loss to the economy of the country. The government tried by interfering in the foreign exchange market and increasing rates of interest, and reserve ratios, and tightening monetarily (Azis & Yarcia, 2014).

### **Support for the Finance Sector**

Likely, the impacts of the deflation on the economy could be the inspiration of exports, depressing imports and thus refining the terms of trade, rise in income collection and investments in the repatriation of incomes and royalties by current foreign stockholders, transporting prohibited foreign exchange leaks into official networks and put an end to the smuggling of gold. The arrival of foreign wealth can be better by devaluation only if values do not increase (Shah et al., 2015). It managed to take down the current account deficit by choking the economy. Imports have dropped from 19 billion dollars to 14.65 billion dollars. In spirit, the current account deficit shriveled because of a disturbing slow-down of the economy, and not because of any noteworthy

progress in exports. A 36% drop in the current account deficit of the country was surely good news for the IMF (Rahman et al., 2022).

### **Negative Impacts of IMF's Policies on the Economy of Pakistan**

IMF conditionalities alongside positive outcomes on Pakistan's economy have also proved some negative consequences as well.

### **Negative Impacts of Privatization of State Enterprises**

IMF focused on privatization and liberalization policies of state-owned enterprises which were running in deficit to improve the economy. By adopting the process of privatization of state-owned enterprises, due to privatization, Pakistan faced many costs of negative impacts. Privatization is not the only remedy to boost the economy of a country, but rather it is necessary to improve the performance of those enterprises that are running in deficit. Privatization was accelerated in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 but declined dramatically in 2002. Consequently, the economic growth of Pakistan was consistent during that period. There were some diverse forms of growth during different years of the study period. The growth of privatization declined from 2006 to 2008 (Mehmood & Faridi, 2013). Along with the varied forms of growth, privatization had some negative implications on the economy as well. It resulted in socio-economic problems in Pakistan. Evidence shows that the revolutionization and privatizing policy of the IMF did not control the financial space of the Pakistani economy but deteriorated. IMF also did not control the space by reforming commodity processes. Still, the debt rose, and unemployment increased in Pakistan (Saleem, 2019).

Privatization harmed the employment ratio in Pakistan. When the privatization of State-Owned Enterprises increased, a decrease occurred in the employment rate. The World Bank's senior vice president said about the policies of international economic institutions "Their policies protect the foreign creditors". But he did not mention anything about those who lost their jobs. A lot of Pakistanis lost their jobs, but the IMF had no provision for them. Unemployment of laborers in Pakistan was on the fast track and moved towards starvation. The private sector adopted many methods of improving their investment in the host countries and depressed their unemployment (Megginson, 2005). In the case of Pakistan, the employees were selected for the golden handshake and then rehired on a contract basis for the privatized firm (Kemal, 2003). Private sectors were also selected for different characteristics of the labor force which had no capabilities of achieving the targeted jobs.

**Table 3**  
*Unemployment Rate in Percentage (%)*.

Years	Unemployment ratio	Male unemployment	Female unemployment	Male youth unemployment	Female youth unemployment
2001	7.4	5.8	16.7	11.4	27.2
2002	7.8	6.2	16.5	12.1	20.7
2003	7.7	6.2	15.7	11.8	19.3
2004	7.4	6.2	13.1	11.1	15.1
2005	7.1	6.0	12.3	10.5	13.7
2006	6.1	5.2	9.8	8.5	9.8
2007	5.1	4.2	8.7	7.2	9.0
2008	5.0	4.0	8.8	7.1	10.7
2009	5.0	4.0	8.8	7.1	10.7

2010	5.1	4.0	8.8	7.1	10.7
2011	5.1	4.0	8.8	7.1	10.7
2012	5.1	4.0	8.9	7.3	11.2
2013	6.3	5.4	10.0	8.5	11.5
2014	7.3	5.1	8.7	7.7	11.9
2015	8.3	5.0	9.0	7.6	13.3
2016	6.0	5.1	8.6	7.7	14.2
2017	5.9	5.1	8.8	7.7	14.7
2018	5.8	5.1	8.3	6.5	15.2
2019	6.9	5.9	10	9.5	16.3

**Source:** Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Surveys. <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/>

Table 3 illustrates that the rate of unemployment varied in different years. It is observed that after the privatization of the state-owned enterprises during the years of getting loans from the IMF, there was an increase in the unemployment rate in the subsequent years. In 2002, it was 7.8% as compared to 7.4% in the previous year of 2001 due to adopting of privatization policy of some state-owned enterprises. It is to be noted that female youth unemployment decreased to a high level from 27.2 to 20.7 percent in the same year and a reduction noted in male employment increased from 11.2 to 12.1%. The unemployment of males was more affected and rose to 6.2% in 2001 where it was 5.8% while female unemployment decreased to 16.5 % in 2002 from 16.7 % in 2001. These figures show that there was a slight decrease every year starting from 2003 up to 2008. It is observed that an increase in unemployment started again in 2009 and continued till the year 2012 due to privatization measures. This time an increase in the unemployment ratio occurred in all the above types of male/female youth and female youth. After another, package from IMF in 2013 Pakistan implemented a privatization policy but at that time the wave of privatization was different from previous phases and sold out 26 pc shares in which PIA was also included (Shaikh, 2013). The rate of unemployment in 2013 was not much increased as compared to 2002 and 2008. However, there was an enormous increase in 2014 and 2015 when the government did some privatization after taking a bailout from the IMF.

### **Negative Impacts of the Increase of Taxes**

The share of direct and indirect tax was variant in Pakistan during the study period. The Indirect taxes harmed economic growth in the long term while its factor for the short term is immaterial. Generally, with a one percent increase in indirect taxes, there is a decrease of 1.68 in economic development. It is necessary to increase the direct taxes and decrease the indirect taxes for real economic development. The share of direct taxes was only 33 percent of total tax revenue while the contribution of indirect taxes was 63 % in the country (Ahmad et al., 2018). Besides these, with an increase of taxes, there were negative impacts on the real gross domestic products, an adverse effect on investment due to income tax while the daily use consumption expenditure is negatively affected by the sales tax. Along with the negative effect of taxes on GDP, investment and consumption also were negatively affected by taxes in Pakistan (Saqib, et al., 2014). However, the IMF wanted the program of 2007-08 to reduce the financial gaps from the figure 7.4% of GDP to 3.3 % in the next year by taking some measures including taxation measures (Irfan, 2011). Due to IMF conditionality, the whole economic activities were affected by the introduction of a new taxation policy in Pakistan.

Besides the controversial view of economists about the tax's measures regarding economic growth indirect taxes big a negative impact on the GDP of Pakistan. It is justified as it directly affects the individuals of a common society. The main source of tax revenue in Pakistan is indirect taxes. A huge change occurred in the fiscal year of 2007-08 and direct tax increased

from 18 percent to 40 percent of the tax revenue. Indirect taxes had a high share in the tax revenue it declined only twenty percent from 80 to 60% in the year 2009. It was 60% in 2010. The total share of taxes was recorded at 38.315 billion US dollars in 2018.

The increase in taxes in Pakistan decreased the business profit. When the number of the tax payer rises it ultimately reduces reusable income and slows down the economy of the state. The slowdown ultimately also affected the collection of the amount of taxes. As Pakistan has an Agrarian-based economy the share of taxes was very low as compared to other economies where the share of indirect taxes is high, which affects the GDP of Pakistan.

### **Negative Impacts of Adjustment of Exchange Rate**

While fulfilling the conditionalities of the IMF for the new bailout package Pakistan had decided to initiate a high-powered monetary policy committee (MPC) to regulate the dollar-rupee exchange rate in the country. The IMF had asked for an adjustment of the market-based flexible exchange rate from the existing managed exchange rate of Pakistan (Haider, 2019). Pakistan has faced many economic issues including contained inflation, external debt, fiscal deficit, and imbalance of import and export expenditure which were improved by adjustment of the exchange rates. Generally, the high exchange rate has a positive link with the growth rate of a country. Nonetheless, in the case of Pakistan, the export balance was sligher than the import balance, so the balance of payment and trade balance hurt the growth rate (Ahmad et al., 2013). The adjustment of the existing managed exchange rate to a market-oriented exchange rate greatly affected the currency and made it unstable. As the market-based flexible exchange rate needs the depreciation of the currency and the prices of imports increase, the pressure comes on Pakistani currency.

From 2007 the foreign exchange reserves were reducing very rapidly and the rupee fluctuated to 25% (Husain, n.d.). With the adjustment of the declining value of the Pakistani rupee, the cost of imported things like chemicals, paints, etc. also increased and created problems for the local non-exporting industries of the country. However, as remained the case in working investment credits, the depreciation of the Pakistani currency also intensified the cost of the imported machinery, showing a fixed investment loan by sugar, textiles, power generation, and some other distributor sectors. For example, the whole commodity price index remained 16.6 % higher between July and October in the year 2018 and posted a devaluation of 6.4 % between November 2018 and June 2019.

The average Commodity Price Index (CPI) is observed with the average depreciation between the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 and FY 2019. The CPI average increased from 3.9 to 7.3% by the depreciation of -4.8 in 2018 to -19% in FY 2019. For adjustment of the exchange rate due to the current measure of IMF, there should be further fluctuation in the currency which could be very negative for the Commodity Price Index (O'Neill, 2014).

### **Value Devaluation of Pakistani Currency**

Devaluation of the currency was another policy measure taken by Pakistani governments under the IMF conditionalities. Value determination was also one of the most important factors that had an impact on the economic development of a country. The value of the currency was always determined by the central bank of Pakistan i.e., the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The currency of Pakistan was directly or indirectly guided by the IMF. According to H. Finger, the IMF staff mission's leader in 2017, "the current currency devaluing measure is an important starting idea to achieve economic growth in this fiscal year" (Shahzad, 2017).

In June 2008, the Pakistani rupee's value fell from almost 66 to 70 equal to a dollar and inflation reached 20%. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) raised its discount rate by 150 points while intervening in the foreign exchange market to recover. The State Bank of Pakistan used the reserves and contribution to the depletion to defend the rupee, therefore, the State Bank issued a temporary suspension of all imports of forwarding booking of the time (Felipe & Lim, 2008). The same happened in 2019, the value of the rupee decreased by 17 percent. It resulted in the loss of the value of the rupee up to 21% against the US dollar and crossed Rs.150 from Rs.123 in only nine months (Majid, 2019). The economic identifications were observed in Pakistan while agreeing with the IMF's 22<sup>nd</sup> agreement. Economic uncertainty started again in the country when the rupee was devalued.

### **Discourage Investment**

The effect of devaluation has also led to various measures like higher demands for domestic goods and an increase in inflation. Considering devaluation as a sign of economic weakness, the confidence of investors was reduced in the country's economy, and were found upset about further investments to secure their investments. The consecutive devaluation led to a negative effect on the concerned export industries. The trading partners were also affected by the devaluation of the currency. The export prices of goods of the country were decreased by devaluation. At the same time increased the prices of domestic goods which reduced the purchasing power of the people, ultimately leading to inflation. Over the past practices of devaluation of the currency, there was no positive remedial measure for the proper long-term economic development of the country. It is important to note that the devaluation of the currency in Pakistan resulted in negative impacts on the economy of the country.

### **Increase the Volume of Pakistan's Foreign Debt**

Pakistan is among those countries in the world that has a floating exchange rate and has a core issue of currency depreciation. The devaluing issue of the rupee in Pakistan has created many problems for its economy. The depreciation of the rupee means buying 1 US dollar required more rupees to pay for it. It has serious issues with debt repayment. The foreign debt in 1994-95 was to be paid in 2013 increased almost six times due to the dollar rate of 2013. About 1,035 billion Pakistani rupees were equal to 30.22 billion US dollars at a rate of Rs. 34.25 dollars in 1994 while Rs. 6,499 billion rupees were equivalent to 60.43 billion dollars at the dollar rate of Rs 108.04 in 2013. If the currency of Pakistan were stable at Rs. 34.25/US\$, it would have to acquire to pay about 2, 069 billion in rupees. Rupee depreciation started more rapidly since 2008 which was one of the main causes of the prevention of the economic development of Pakistan (Malik, 2014).

The debt of Pakistan continuously increased year by year. The total debt ratio to GDP was 67.20 percent in the fiscal year of 2017 and reached 2018 to 72.5 percent (Mourdoukoutas, 2019). The total foreign debt of the country raised in 2019 to 105841 million US dollars which was 99086 million US dollars in the last quarter of the preceding year. The position of Pakistan, as compared with the rest of the world, had worsened in 2018 in terms of GDP percentage. Currently, the country is ranked 144 on the list of debt ratio to GDP and 60 in debt per capita, out of the 186 countries list.

**Table 4**

*Showing the Annual Debt in Million US Dollars.*

Year	Debt in millions of US\$	Debt in Percentage of GDP	Debt per capita in US\$
2001	63,299	81.23%	451
2002	59,353	76.10%	415



2003	63,269	70.49%	431
2004	66,810	63.23%	446
2005	69,764	58.91%	457
2006	73,719	53.72%	474
2007	79,894	52.44%	505
2008	97,678	57.16%	593
2009	98,270	58.47%	584
2010	107,242	60.58%	624
2011	125,835	58.90%	718
2012	141,819	63.24%	793
2013	147,659	63.86%	809
2014	155,061	63.47%	833
2015	171,306	63.32%	902
2016	188,515	67.63%	974
2017	204,277	67.05%	1,036
2018	225,435	71.69%	1,122
2019	248,845	77.51%	1,163
2020	239,003	79.56%	1,095
2021	256,161	73.56%	1,151

Source: Pakistan national debt goes up. (2021). <https://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/pakistan>

### Conclusion

Pakistan is among the frequent borrowing member countries of the IMF. Every new political setup in Pakistan claims for the last loan but it never stopped. From 2001 to 2019, Pakistan got four loans from the IMF. The total amount of those four loans was 18.6 billion dollars which were 1 bn, 7.2 bn, 4.4 bn, and 6 bn in the years 2001, 2008, 2013, and 2019 respectively. IMF provided loans to Pakistan along with some conditions and policy advice that were mandatory to be implemented. Each time the number of conditions was stricter. Some of the conditions and policy advice proved to have negative impacts on the economy of Pakistan. Besides the strict and harsh conditions of the IMF, it also had some positive impacts on the economy of Pakistan.

Most of the IMF conditions were macro-economic plans to control the fiscal deficit, denationalization of public sector companies, liberalization of trade and openness of the country's economy to the global market, increase in direct and indirect taxes, adjustment of exchange rate for global market flow, and measure of determining of Pakistani currency. These policies had negative impacts on the economy of Pakistan. The conditionalities of higher taxes and the privatization of state-owned enterprises directly affected the low-income class. With the introduction of indirect taxes, a decrease in the growth of GDP was also recorded. With the depreciation of the currency of Pakistan on the IMF demand, the external debt of the country reached 103.4 billion dollars during the study period. The debt raised per capita from 451 to 1,122 dollars, an almost 250 % increase in just eighteen years.

### 1. Recommendations

1. Pakistan should strive to get rid of the IMF as soon as possible by developing indigenous resources, increasing exports, decreasing imports, strengthening relations with "Friends of Pakistan" and converting its economy to producing one.

2. The government of Pakistan needs to reinforce the financial restructuring and policies to accelerate economic growth to make the country independent from receiving loans.
3. It is required to control government expenditure and reduction in the military budget.
4. The government of Pakistan needs to focus on the improvement of its exports and indigenous revenue generation to tackle the issue of balance of payment as most of the time Pakistan went to IMF for loans to solve the issue of balance of payment.
5. A firm kind of motivation is required to develop the tax culture in the country along with its structural reforms.

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## **Examining Israeli Media Targeting Arab and Muslim Audiences: A Content Analysis of the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Facebook Page**

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The study examined Israeli digital diplomacy’s strategic use of social media platforms, particularly Facebook, to engage with the Arab public in neighboring countries. The study focused on the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ Facebook page, a project by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Facebook. The study aims to analyze the content themes presented to Arab Face bookers, the different media formats employed, and the Arab countries targeted. The methodology involved qualitative data analysis from three pivotal periods in 2019 and 2020. This process was executed by collecting and examining posts published on the ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ page to understand their content and significance. The study’s results highlighted the page’s use of a human-interest framework to emphasise peace and coexistence themes. The portrayal of Arab Palestinians in the 1948 territories served as an illustration of a peaceful society. Additionally, the page underscored its positive ties with Egypt, a neighboring country, demonstrating the potential for harmonious relationships with the rest of the Arab world. This strategic approach emphasizes the significance of digital diplomacy in fostering better international relationships .

**Keywords:** social media, facebook, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, news framing.

Media plays a significant role in shaping public discourse and awareness, significantly establishing and developing international relationships among countries. By providing extensive coverage and disseminating critical information, media platforms can influence public perception and promote understanding among nations. Thus, media is a powerful tool in facilitating diplomatic relations and fostering collaborations, such as the educational partnership between Pakistan and China (Rehman et al., 2022). As such, the role of media cannot be underestimated in building and enhancing connections among nations.

The rise of social media platforms and their influence on younger generations have altered our communication methods and created a new trend that individuals and governments are beginning to adopt (Soukup, 2018). Facebook is one of these social media platforms that contributed to the Arab Spring revolutions in the Arab world (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Thus, Israel paid attention to the social media phenomenon and created official pages to represent the state’s official narrative and ideologies in the most straightforward manner that social media permits.

One of these pages is titled ‘Israel Speaks Arabic’ and was created on Facebook to provide Arabic-language content to the Arab-speaking population in Palestine and the

surrounding Arab countries. Israel, the occupation state that occupied Arab Palestine, is aware that it stands alone in the Middle East, surrounded by Arab countries. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been the central factor that has made Israel the antagonist of Arab nations. Social media can achieve Israel's goal of softly penetrating the Arab public to establish channels for acceptance due to the Arab public's attitude. By analysing the content of the Facebook page 'Israel Speaks Arabic,' this study examines how Israel achieves its goal of reaching out to the Arab people. It is important to note that this paper is part of a larger project entitled: 'The Israeli Media and Social Media Diplomacy' whereby four official Israeli Facebook pages were analysed: 'Israel Speaks Arabic', 'The Coordinator', 'Avichay Adrae', and 'Ofer Gendelman' Pages. This study presents the results for one page; i. e, 'Israel Speaks Arabic' FB Page. The study seeks to address the following issues:

1. What are the most prominent themes highlighted in the FB posts of 'Israel Speaks Arabic'?
2. What media frames are used by the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' FB Page concerning the Arab-Palestinian issues?
3. Which Arab countries does Israel's content aim to target?

The perception of the Israeli State of Occupation, established in 1948 on Palestinian territory, as the enemy remains prevalent among Arabs, including Palestinians. Since its inception, Israel has maintained this stance, which has hindered the prospects of normalization with the Arab world. To address this challenge and promote a shift in perspective, leveraging the media as a form of soft power becomes crucial. This article examines the transformative journey of Israeli media targeting Arabic-speaking countries, transitioning from traditional media to contemporary social media platforms. By embracing these innovative communication channels, the Israeli media has revolutionized, enabling new avenues for engagement and interaction. This discussion highlights the significance of utilizing these cutting-edge platforms in reshaping media narratives and fostering dialogue towards building understanding and potential normalization between Israel and the Arab world.

### **The Emergence of Arabic-language Media in Israel, its Objectives, and its Functions**

As a result of the Zionist mission, Israeli media existed before the formation of the state. The first two Israeli newspapers, *Halifanon* and *Haftsil*, were established in 1863. However, during the British mandate period, several newspapers expressed partisan tendencies within the Zionist entity after its revival appeared. The most prominent were 'Haaretz,' 'Yediot Aharonot,' 'Maariv,' and 'Defar Shi'; the latter was published in 1922 and adopted a purely partisan direction following the declaration of the occupation state (Qasim, 2010).

After the establishment of the occupation state, media interest generally increased. It relates to the Hebrew-speaking Israeli media and the Arabic-speaking Israeli media. At the time, Israeli radio allocated daily time slots for Arabic broadcasts. In the process of nation-building, the Israeli media adhered to specific objectives rooted in the concept of the Jewish State and promoted social cohesion within Israeli society. According to Awad (2016) (Ahmed, 2016), these tracks were: first, promoting the idea of Jewish nationalism by emphasizing Hebrew as a language and creating a unified Jewish heritage; and second, consolidating the concept of the Jewish entity as a distinct and independent entity unique to all Jews of the globe. Thirdly, it sought assimilation with Western societies and confirmation that Israel is a part of the Christian West. Fourth, it attempted to unite Jewish forces' diverse forms and locations.

Moreover, Zaboun (2017) emphasises the significance of media to the architects of the occupation state. Before the establishment of Israel, they dealt with it as one of the fundamental tools for state formation. Before 1948, the Zionist movement established a Jewish radio station and published 14 periodicals, including four Arabic-language publications. Today, at least two of these periodicals, namely Haaretz and Yedioth Ahronoth, serve as global resources for news about Israel. Haaretz was first published in 1919, followed by Yedioth Aharonoth in 1939 and Maariv in 1948.

Regarding the Arab public, Kabaha (2001) argued that the Israeli media was keen on reinforcing two trends in its discourse: first, weakening the Palestinian Arab's connection to his homeland by challenging and questioning the Palestinian narrative about the history in favour of emphasising the Jewish narrative and relying on the fact that 'the land is for those who cultivate it, not those who leave it. Second, it attempted to persuade the Arab public of the benevolence of the State of Israel, the necessity of a national homeland for the Jews, and the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the Jews within a developed Israeli Jewish entity comparable to the West. Thirdly, it attempted to isolate Palestinian Arabs from their Arab and Islamic surroundings by making them ashamed of the decline in values and modernity, the weakness of services, and the low living standards in Arab and Islamic nations compared to the development in the occupation state.

Abu Tabak (2007) proposes that Israeli media operates along two trajectories: one internal and the other external, with the latter directed towards Western, Arab, and Palestinian societies. Therefore, the media discourse strategies for these demographics are distinctly different. Abu Tabak (2007) further delineated the principal subdivisions within the external media:

- The Media Department is preparing research on Israeli concerns. In addition, it distributes the annual, publishes a colour magazine in multiple languages (Israel), participates in exhibitions and symposia, and maintains close ties with international television networks.
- The Department of Cultural Relations is dedicated to ensuring that Israeli cultural treaties with foreign nations include provisions for teaching Hebrew, radio exchange, creative teams, and establishing Israeli cultural treaties with foreign countries.
- The Department of International Cooperation is responsible for sending Israeli specialists abroad, admitting students to study in Israel, and organising seminars and conferences within Israel.
- The mission of the Ministry of Exterior's press office is to provide daily news to the local press and foreign correspondents, to arrange interviews for journalists with officials of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and to send a daily summary of the Israeli press to Israeli diplomatic missions abroad.

According to Jamal, Israel's excessive interest in foreign media is a result of the ideology of the Zionist movement, which founded the nation Jamal (2005). In addition to being a national movement, this is also an educational one. It uses media as a means and a goal to transform the ongoing conflict on the ground into a discourse battle and establishes criteria for evaluating reality. Since 1925, according to Jamal (2005), the Zionist establishment and then Israel has contributed to developing newspapers and the media. The most prominent example is

the 'Davar' newspaper, which established Arabic-language newspapers to reach Arabs and Palestinians and infiltrate Arab media to convey the Zionist perspective to Arab readers.

Concern for Palestinian and Arab viewers prompted the occupation state to establish several Arabic television station channels, particularly to lessen the impact of Syrian, Egyptian, and Iraqi televisions on Arab and Palestinian audiences. It adopted the same editorial policy for Arabic-language radio stations and newspaper broadcasts. It emphasised, for instance, portraying the State of Israel as solid and unconquerable and that Arab resistance would result in disaster. It also symbolises Israel as a developed Middle Eastern nation whose citizens experience a high standard of living (The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2014).

Through its targeted programming, Arabic-speaking Israeli radio also held a prominent position in the collective memory of the Arab and Palestinian public. It competed with Arab radio stations primarily because the occupation state intended to disrupt Arab radio waves and enhance its broadcasts to control what the Arab and Palestinian public heard. This radio station was managed by the Prime Minister's office with a security intelligence policy until the mid-1960s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It used targeted programs and counter-propaganda to respond to Arab propaganda (Jamal, 2005). In general, Israeli policy based its media management on the content of Herzl's speech in the editorial of the first issue of the Zionist movement weekly 'Die Welt' on March 6, 1897, in which he stated that this newspaper should be a shield for the Jewish people and a weapon against its enemies.

There is an Arabic-language radio station on the current Arabic-language media level. In addition, an official Israeli satellite channel devoted hours to Arabic programming and a second satellite channel called 'I 24' was founded years ago (Jamal, 2005). In addition, there is the Al-Masdar website, which specialises in promoting Israeli issues not discussed by other media channels, and the 'Arab Times of Israel website, which broadcasts in-depth reports and has a solid pro-Israel bias (Al-Budairi, 2005). In addition to the social media profiles of Israeli officials, all Arabic-speaking Israeli media outlets exist.

Article 3 of the Radio and Television Law, which the Israeli Knesset approved in March 1965, identifies the Israeli media's most essential functions and responsibilities as follows: highlighting the Jewish entity, its struggle, creativity, and achievements; and strengthening the connection to Jewish traditions and thirdly, highlighting the way of life and culture of Jewish communities around the globe. According to the state's primary goals, Arabic-language broadcasts serve the Arabic-speaking audience in preparation for future cooperation with neighbouring nations.

According to (Al-Naami, 2017), Israeli Arabic-language media existed before the establishment of the occupation state. The Zionist movement utilised Arabic-speaking media to urge Palestinians to abandon their towns and villages, as the 'Haganah' and 'Lehi' Zionist gangs allotted a portion of their radio broadcasts to the Arabic language. The Israeli government employed psychological warfare techniques in these messages. The announcers were referring to the crimes their organisations committed against Arabs to instil fear in the hearts of Palestinians and compel them to abandon their lands and homes.

Al-Naami (2017) added that the first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, established an Arabic-language private radio station called "Voice of Israel" based in Jerusalem and broadcast daily for brief periods. Then, in 1949, it was relocated to Tel Aviv; in 1954, it was returned to Jerusalem. After the tripartite invasion of Egypt in 1956, Arab radio broadcasting



became popular and began to air seven hours daily. After the war of 1967, daily broadcast time was prolonged to 14 hours. From 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m., radio stations now broadcast in Arabic for over 18 hours daily.

### **The Concealed Ideology of Israeli Media**

Since the country's founding, absolute security and military control from the interior to the periphery have dominated Israeli thought. Consequently, everything that results from this belief serves and reinforces this concept. According to Rofou'o (2004), the Zionist ideology governed the Israeli state through its various political parties and the associated media discourse. Therefore, it was natural for party leaders and members to switch parties without affecting the public discourse that nurtured the concept of Zionism. This concept holds that Israel is the national home of Jews around the globe. This concept prioritises Israeli security and preservation, the dissemination and deepening of the Jewish heritage, and the fortification of the Hebrew language relative to the other languages spoken by Jewish immigrants.

Regarding the ideology of the Israeli media regarding the Palestinians, Abu-Amer (2018) made several observations regarding the performance of this media, particularly concerning its orientation toward Palestinian issues and events. First, it is a security guard regarding its objectives and principles, directed, controlled, and monitored by the military security circles. Second, it complements foreign policy by supporting its efforts to promote Israeli propaganda and opposing any counter-propaganda or global campaign against it.

Abu-Amer (2018) added that Israeli media could penetrate societies and accomplish diversity by luring foreign media celebrities, signing contracts with advertising firms, and attempting to sway public opinion. Abu Amer specifies the Zionist ideological trends serviced by Israeli media, arguing that these trends or media specifications have not changed regardless of events or developments concerning the Palestinian issue. First, it believes that all Jews are part of a single Jewish nation, so bringing them together in Palestine is necessary to establish a Jewish state. Second, it maintains Israel's security and survival as a priority, albeit through varying mechanisms. Thirdly, it recalls the Holocaust and its continued use as an excuse for the oppression and displacement of the Palestinians and the suppression of the Western world's voice demanding justice. The fourth trend emphasizes the historicity and legitimacy of Jewish existence in Palestine while ignoring Palestinian history, marginalization, and denial. Fifth, it undermines the Palestinian national identity and its relationship to the Arab identity. Sixth, it disregards the Palestinians' right to form a nation or exercise self-determination, regarding them as an indeterminate human group. Seventh, it considers Israel an oasis of Western democracy in a primitive and autocratic Arab world.

In this regard, Al-Gharabli (2018) asserted that the Israeli-Arabic speaking media employs two media theories: the first is the 'Agenda-Setting Theory,' which categorises published topics based on their significance to the target audience, Palestinians. This theory posits that this strategy directly influences Palestinian public opinion and compels it to consider within the framework of published media materials. The second media theory is the 'Gatekeeping' of the media portal, which holds that all data disseminated in the media is filtered and monitored by multiple outlets before publication.

The target audience of the Arabic-language media in Israel, according to Alassas (2019) is divided into five categories: the first is Palestinian Arabs residing within the 1948 borders of the occupied territories. The second group consists of Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza. The third category consists of citizens of the Arab nations that have explicitly signed peace

accords with the occupying power, namely Egypt and Jordan. The fourth group comprises citizens of Arab countries that are not at peace with Israel or have not yet executed a public peace accord. Everyone who speaks Arabic is intrigued to learn more about the occupation state and follows its various media outlets, constituting the fifth category.

Based on the following, researchers classified the most notable media techniques used by the Israeli Arabic-speaking media to influence the Palestinian and Arab public as follows (Abu-Amer, 2018; Abu Arqoub, 2019) :

- First, the Jews' distinct human touch, emphasis on their emotional and psychological aspects, and consideration of innocent victims within a peaceful society and cohesive families set them apart.
- Second is the use of sophisticated open rhetorical inquiries that the Arab guest cannot answer or evade.
- Third accentuates Israel's scientific, social, and cultural superiority over its Arab and Islamic neighbours and its proximity to the West and presence in a single trench.
- Fourth is using the passive voice, such as referring to the killing of Palestinians with the verb "killed" to avoid blame for the occupation forces.
- Fifth, it questions the official and popular Palestinian narratives and views them as contradictory to undermine the recipient's trust in the Palestinian information source.
- Sixth violates the fundamentals of Palestinian life by accusing Palestinian ambulances of transporting resistance fighters, by accusing Palestinian educational institutions, schools, and universities of inciting terrorism and using them as platforms for protecting resistance fighters, and by depicting Palestinian children as human shields and terrorist seeds in the hands of Palestinian resistance fighters. This propaganda justifies the occupying force's targeting of schools, ambulances, children, and unarmed civilians.

Israeli journalists do not conceal their biased coverage of Palestinian issues or their attempts to portray Palestinians in a ruthless, inhuman, and barbaric manner. The Israeli journalist and general manager of Israel News, Shlonsky, stated that he does not seek objectivity in his coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In contrast, he adopts the stance of his cause. He adds that the excessive attachment of the Israeli media to information sources, namely the military spokesman, is the primary reason for the media's failure to investigate the facts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Sen, 2015).

### **The Digital Diplomacy of Israel**

Digital diplomacy, also referred to as e-diplomacy, is a contemporary iteration of public diplomacy that utilises the internet, novel information and communication technologies (ICTs), and social media platforms as mechanisms to bolster diplomatic relations (Adesina, 2017; Bjola & Holmes, 2015). It is distinguished from traditional public diplomacy by its broader access to information, increased interaction among individuals and organisations, and enhanced transparency. The changing technological landscape has driven this evolution in diplomacy practices, encompassing various activities such as foreign public engagement, international situation monitoring, crisis management, and promoting a country's image and foreign policy objectives.

The standardisation of websites by foreign ministries, embassies, and international organisation delegations is a testament to this evolution, with these platforms serving to elucidate national foreign policies and counter unwelcome actions or claims by other states (Barston, 2013). Social media platforms have emerged as influential tools in this new diplomacy landscape, fostering a level of openness and transparency previously unexperienced. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Periscope, and Snapchat provide a space for unhindered communication and have become powerful tools for communicators. Through these digital means, diplomatic practices aim to shape public opinion favourably towards the policies being pursued.

Digital diplomacy can serve many purposes. Abdelal (2018) enumerated seven of the most prominent ones. First, digital diplomacy achieves the state interest and grows the country's soft power. Second, digital diplomacy interacts with civil society, specifically opinion leaders in other countries. Third, digital diplomacy influences the countries' external dimensions and periphery and conveys messages to them. Within this context, Abdelal (2018) reported that Israeli digital diplomacy moved from eighth in the world in 2016 to fourth in 2018 in the use of social media. It recognised that military tools had proven ineffective in resolving the conflict with the Arabs and that hope lay in utilising soft power.

According to Aouragh (2016), Israel's digital media strategy is comprehensive and multidimensional, leveraging various technological tools and media platforms. Its primary objective is to amplify pro-Israeli narratives and sentiments worldwide. This strategy encompasses establishing connections with Arab societies through non-traditional frameworks, facilitating uninterrupted relationship growth, and potentially paving the way for a new normalisation framework. In 2011, Israel institutionalised these efforts by setting up a dedicated department for digital diplomacy. This department focuses on crafting and disseminating messages via social media to broaden its audience reach and enhance communication. Within this division, an Arabic section exists, directly reporting to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by Yonatan Gonen, with Hasan Kaaba as a prominent spokesperson.

### **Hasbara and Digital diplomacy**

Hasbara is a Hebrew term that means "explanation" or "public relations" in English. It refers to Israel's official efforts to communicate and promote its position, policies, and actions to the international community, particularly concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other regional issues (Aouragh, 2016). Hasbara is a strategic communication approach to shaping public opinion and countering negative narratives about Israel.

Hasbara is frequently associated with Israel's efforts to present its point of view in the media, online platforms, and diplomatic circles. It includes press releases, social media campaigns, educational programs, and cultural exchanges to portray Israel positively and defend its policies (Jędrzejewska, 2020). Hasbara aims to highlight Israel's accomplishments, democratic values, and contributions to various fields, such as technology, innovation, and humanitarian aid.

Hasbara critics argue that it can sometimes oversimplify complex issues and minimize the Palestinian perspective. They argue that it may involve the manipulation of information to create a favorable image, which can stifle genuine dialogue and understanding between the various parties involved in the conflict.

On the other hand, proponents of hasbara assert that it is a necessary tool for Israel to counter misinformation and bias in the media and to provide a more accurate portrayal of its actions and intentions (Gilboa, 2008). Thus, while it aims to present Israel's perspective and counter negative narratives, it is a concept that sparks debates about transparency, propaganda, and the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Israeli Facebook Users**

With the decline of radio and television in favour of social media, Facebook has become one of the preferred channels for Israeli digital diplomacy to expand the horizon of communication with its audience beyond geographical and physical borders.

In agreement with Israel, according to Al-Safadi (2018), the Facebook administration has been combating Palestinian pages that publish Palestinian narratives about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, according to the Israeli Ministry of Justice, Facebook complied with 85% of Israeli requests to remove and prohibit Palestinian content (Abu-Amer, 2018; Aljazeera, 2018).

### **Israel's Official Facebook Page 'Israel Speaks Arabic'**

'Israel Speaks Arabic' is the official Facebook page of Israel, with 3.2 million followers up to this date. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched it to disseminate information on social media about Israel (Khalifa, 2017). The page focuses on building a relationship between Israel and the Arab world; thus, it attempts to enhance Israel's image among the Arab-speaking public (Matoug, 2015).

Most of the one million likes came from Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. However, such preferences and interactions do not reflect genuine positive interaction. Still, rather the comments of Arab surfers indicate that they do not take these publications seriously. One of the most interesting observations is that Cairo is one of the most popular cities on the page, with interaction from youth aged 18 to 24 (Al-Hussini, 2019).

## **Method**

This descriptive-analytical study analyses all subject matters on the Arabic-language Facebook page 'Israel Speaks Arabic', targeting Palestinians. The study employs content analysis as its primary method, considered the most suitable for descriptive studies. This practical and systematic approach aims to gather comprehensive data and insights about the subject matter by studying the subject and the form of topics disseminated on these Facebook pages.

Through content analysis, the study aims to assess the quantity and quality of the posts on these pages to answer the research questions. For data collection, a purposive sampling approach is employed, with the study timeframe spanning eleven months, from May 2019 to March 2020. 643 Facebook Posts were collected from the page, with different variations of media used, including; short videos, live broadcasts, interviews, caricatures and cartoons, quotes for famous people, infographics, pictures for cities and sites, etc. The goal is to collect all materials related to the most significant events and occasions during this period.

The study focused on certain weeks that coincided with significant events in the region. Two weeks in May 2019 were devoted to discussions around the Nakba, coinciding with Israel's Independence Day and the transfer of the American embassy to Jerusalem and a week in January

2020 aligned with the Deal of the Century declaration. Additionally, a week in March 2020 focused on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the occupied territories.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Goffman (1974), the father of Framing Theory, defines media frames as a specific structure of perspectives that media uses to make people more aware of social situations at some point. Therefore, it is a targeted practice by communicators when reorganising the message to fall into people's awareness and persuasive influences.

The frame may be achieved by selecting precise settings and terminology to label the event, whether by intimidation or underestimation. Furthermore, it may (Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005) be added, deleted, distorted, or allowed to comment on specific details but not others; this denotes a point of view that what information is received is what the journalist desires, not necessarily what occurred in reality. As a result, it may influence the public's understanding and judgment of this incident may (Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005; Mark, 1997).

### **News Frames Types**

Even though journalists vary in their news writing styles, news frames are still prevalent. Furthermore, a large amount of research has identified these formats of news frames. Based on these frames, Semetko, and Valkenburg (2000) examined five national newspapers and television news stories during the 1997 meeting of European heads of State in Amsterdam. They identified five dominant news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economics, human interest, and morality.

The 'human interest frame' bears a human face or sensitive side to demonstrate an event, issue, or problem. In a crisis, the frame arouses the psychological pulsation of people, causing them to develop a negative attitude toward it.

According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), the 'conflict frame' signifies conflict and divergence among individuals, groups, or organisations. It is newspapers' second most frequently employed frame to establish their credibility.

The 'morality frame' positions the event, problem, or issue within the context of morals, social norms, and religious doctrines.

The 'economic consequences frame' describes an event, problem, or issue that financially affects individuals, groups, organisations, or countries. The economic influence is regarded as essential news and is frequently accounted for in reporting (Graber, 1993).

The 'attribution of responsibility frame' is "a method of assigning responsibility for a problem or solution to the government or to an individual or group." (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000 ).

## Results

The data were analysed and answered following the proposed framework. It is important to note that the numbers in the tables below were calculated based on the total number of posts used for each question category rather than the number of contents, as multiple contents are sometimes included in a single post.

### First Question:

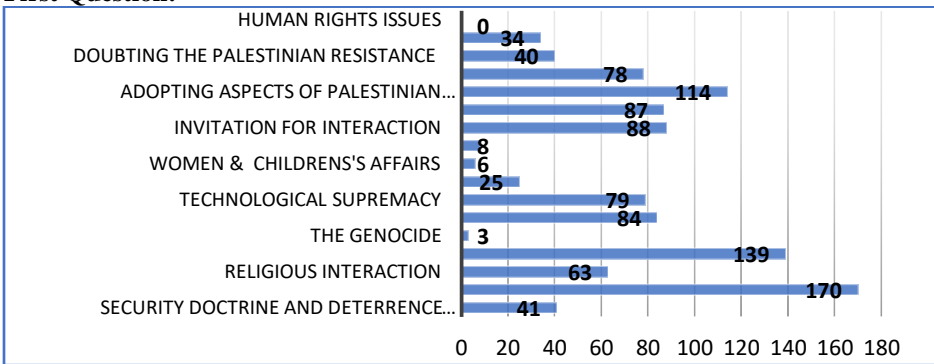


Figure 1: Media themes of the 'Israel Speak Arabic' Facebook page.

The media content of the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' FB page contains various themes and issues, as depicted in Figure (1). The trend of posting topics indicates that there is content with more high postings with more than (100) posts, medium postings within (70-90) posts, and low postings with (40) posts or less. Such a trend reveals the topics that Israel emphasises while attempting to avoid others.

The highest numbers of posts were about 'Peace and coexistence,' which ranked first with (170) posts; 'Cultural interaction' ranked second with (193) posts, and 'Adopting Palestinian heritage as Israeli' ranked third with (114) posts. Israeli diplomacy attempted to create a positive image of Israel as a peace-seeking state in the region. Such results highlighting cultural events agree with Rotem (2018), who indicated how Israeli diplomacy focuses on culturally engaging with the Arab audience. Although Israel is considered a military country that focuses on building its military institution, it attempts to call for peace on its official pages. In addition, it attempts to exhibit that it is a civilised state by highlighting the positive cultural aspects to serve the peaceful image. Nevertheless, since Israel was established by Jewish migrants from all over the world, there is no unifying culture unique to Israel similar to the Arab culture. Thus, Israel employs Palestinian themes and adopts them as Israeli to be closer to the Arab world to show similarity and closeness rather than differences and distance.

The second trend of medium posting content varied between (70-90) posts, successively focusing on 'invitation to interaction' (88), 'documenting daily life in Israel' (87), 'political

diplomacy’ (84), ‘technological supremacy’ (79), and ‘critiquing the politics of specific countries in the region’ (79). These themes attempt to demonstrate the various aspects of Israel as a State to be viewed as a normal country similar to the neighbour

During the phase marked by a reduced frequency of content posting, several themes like ‘security doctrine and deterrence force’ (41), ‘questioning the credibility of the Palestinian Resistance’ (40), ‘the history of Israeli Presence in Palestine’ (34), and ‘military supremacy’ (25) were recurrent. However, the page strategically minimised the usage of these themes to maintain balance and effectiveness.

### Second Question

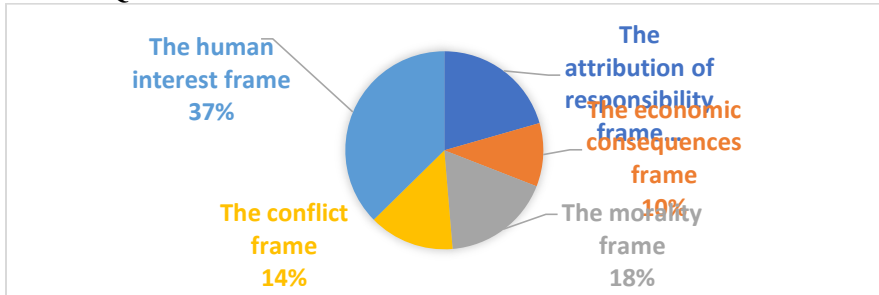


Figure 2. Media Frames Used by the Facebook Page 'Israel Speaks Arabic'

The Data in the first question indicate the types of frames that the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook page attempts to use when communicating with Facebook Arab users. As shown in Figure (2), Israeli diplomacy focused heavily on the 'human interest news frame' with (37%), which would contribute to shaping a sharp, pleasant image of Israel that would lead to a positive attitude among Arabs towards Israel.

With the 'attribution of responsibility frame' (21%), the page attempts to demonstrate that Israel is responsible for its citizens, including Muslims and Christian Arab Palestinians residing within its borders. Such responsibility is also intended to persuade Arabs to make peace with Israel, as it is the only means of coexistence in the region. The 'morality frame' (18%) of the posts contributes to the image that Israeli wishes to maintain as an ideal state in the Middle East region. The least prevalent frames are the 'conflict frame' (14%) and the 'economic consequence frame' (10%).

### Third Question

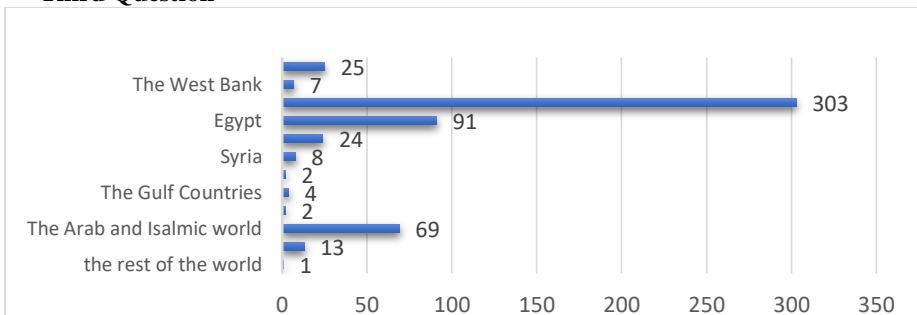


Figure 3: The location of media content on the Facebook page for "Israel Speaks Arabic"

As shown in Figure 4, the Israeli Facebook content was heavily directed with content to the Arab countries with either direct borders or relationships like Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. The highest result was shown to be directed to the Palestinian Arabs residing in the Palestine 1948 territories, with 303 published posts. Other Palestinians residing in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank received less attention in the page's posts. The second highest number of posts was directed to the with 91 posts, and the Arab and Muslim world with 69 posts. These findings are consistent with Alassas's (2019) conclusion that the Israeli Arabic-speaking media targets 1948 Palestinians. The second-highest percentage of posts on the page are from and about Egypt. The page creates content with the stories of Jewish Egyptians. The third-highest posts in the study target the Arab and Muslim world, while Lebanon was in the fourth rank after Egypt.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Israeli digital diplomacy strategically used Facebook as a primary medium to engage with Arab users, including Palestinians within the 1948 territories and Arab nationals surrounding Israel. It harnessed this soft power to shift its image from an adversarial occupier to a civilised and developed regional state with cultural and linguistic ties to the Arab world.

This article is part of a larger project entitled: 'The Israeli Media and Social Media Diplomacy', which examines Israeli Arabic-language social media. This paper focused exclusively on the 'Israel Speaks Arabic' Facebook Page as one project goal. Using Framing Theory as a conceptual framework, it analysed the page's content across critical periods in 2019 and 2020. The findings suggest that Israel's digital diplomacy seeks to portray a peaceful, coexistent, culturally rich, and technologically advanced image to foster normalised relations and economic growth.

Despite this, the page subtly addresses Israel's military dominance and critiques Arab political entities still perceiving Israel as a threat. This understated approach suggests an intention to downplay adversarial elements for a larger objective - promoting peace. This digital diplomacy approach seeks to recast Israel's regional narrative towards a more harmonious and beneficial relationship with Arab neighbours.

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## **Adaptation of Thematic Apperception Test in Pakistan**

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Thematic Apperception Test is a widely used projective measure of personality assessment. The present research adapted 20 of the most useful TAT cards according to Pakistani culture. The cards were modified by changing the dressing and facial features of the characters showed in the pictures. The cards were given to clinical psychologists for qualitative item analysis. After the final approval both the original and adapted TAT version were applied on 54 respondents (n=34 normal and n=20 psychological patients). Nine judges interpreted TAT protocols according to Bellack's scoring system on original as well as adapted version. Validity of the adapted version was calculated through convergence between original and adapted versions of TAT cards. Reliability was estimated through percentage of agreement among judges by inter-rater method. The validity ranged from 29.83 for card 7GF to 42.40 for card 9 BM. The average reliability ranged from 9.73 for card 18 BM to 22.79 for card 1. Although the reliability and validity indices of the newly adapted cards were generally low due to the projective nature of TAT, still the adapted version of TAT can be used in clinical settings for diagnostic purposes as well for the assessment of normal population .

**Keywords:** thematic apperception test, inter-rater reliability, convergent validity

An individual's personality is the core of a person with which s/he interacts with others. It's a combination of traits that affects the actions, thinking, desires, feelings and behaviour of a person. Interest in the study of personality originated with Hippocrates in 370 BCE. Psychology encompasses personality with the help of many perspectives including psychoanalysis (unconscious), behaviourism (overt actions), humanism (growth potential) and cognitive (thinking). Among them, psychoanalysis (Schultz & Schultz, 2016) focuses on the latent aspects of personality. The main assumptions of psychodynamic theory are: i) the basic determiner of our behaviour is the unconscious; ii) which originate from our painful childhood experiences; iii) and determines our behaviour; vi) and that personality is mainly developed during childhood.

Freud used free association to reach to the hidden aspects of a person's life, that led to the development of "projective hypothesis" that is our unconscious is revealed with the help of unstructured stimuli. Projective techniques are gaining support among clinicians due to improved standardization. Although there are many interpretations of projective techniques, most clinicians strongly believe in its effectiveness of revealing the hidden aspects of personality (Cordón, 2005). Murray was also impressed by Freud's notion of unconscious; his theory of personality has borrowed many concepts from psychoanalysis (Hall, Lindzey, Loehlin, & Manosevitz, 1985) that is why he decided to work on development of projective measure.

Projective tests can be in the form of drawing, sentence completion, inkblots and semi structured sketches; Murray in 1930 (as cited in Anderson, 1999) worked on Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). This technique ask subjects to write a story on semi structured pictures, which in turn reveals their hidden motives, desires, conflicts and the like. In the making of TAT, Murray and Morgan spent 1930s in selecting pictures for TAT from different magazines (Morgan, 2002). After three times revision (series A, B and C), a final set of images (series D; which are now in use) that contain 31 cards was finalized. Initially Morgan was given the authorship credit of TAT, however, she refused to receive it on the final published instrument as she was not able to answer many letters having queries about TAT. TAT cards depict people in different actions or human interactions. Different TAT cards can be used for the assessment of male, female, children, adolescents and adults. Generally 10 TAT cards are administered in a single session to a subject which can elicit meaningful hidden aspects of personality. Individual's spontaneously written stories are scored and interpreted according to the content of these stories. Murstein (1963) has provided different content and quantitative scoring and interpretive analyses for thematic techniques. Other quantitative analyses also have been developed by researchers. Although been useful for research purposes these techniques bear little clinical application. That is why most clinicians prefer qualitative approaches for interpretation.

For administering TAT cards the person's ability to relate easily to the selected cards is also important. Murstein, (1968) suggest that the practitioner should decide most suitable 10-12 TAT cards, according to the subject. For example, age and gender visible in the TAT card is important to establish a connection with it. Generally cards 1, 3BM, 7GF, 8BM, 12M, 13B, 14 and 17BM are considered for children between 7 and 11 years of age. Productive TAT cards for adolescents are card number 1,2,5, 7GF, 12F, 12M, 15, 17BM, 18BM and 18GF. The practitioners can add one or two more cards which are considered essential for a better understanding of the subject. Like, for a depressed person, TAT pictures associated with depression and suicide can be added. Similarly, Symonds (1939) suggests ambiguous pictures with minimal detail as the most useful, specifically to overcome the effect of sad and dark tones noted in many TAT cards. Similarly, Goldfried and Zax (1965) found that ambiguous cards have usually been rated as less sad.

There are many scoring approaches of TAT, regardless of the scoring system; TAT helps reveal the individual's dominant drives, emotions, traits and conflicts. Murray's (1971), scoring is based on identifying significant interpersonal "needs" (determiners of behavior within the person) and "presses" (environmental determinants of behavior). In his scoring system the need is ranked on five point scale from 1 to 5 depending on the strength, duration, frequency and importance of needs as manifested in the story. Presses are also scored for intensity and frequency on a 5 point scale. As compared to Murray's classification, Bellack scoring focuses more on projection of defence mechanisms, ego functioning, interpersonal relations and the like.

Keeping in view the effectiveness of TAT, it's adapted versions are available for different populations. For example, for Negro subjects TAT was adapted on the assumption that blacks will identify easily with similar looking figures than of white subjects. Consequently, 23 of the TAT pictures were modified by substituting black with white figures (Thompson, 1949). Similarly, in Indian museum of Calcutta an adaptation of the TAT also took place. The pictures were adapted according to Indian culture (Chaudhary, 1960).

### **Rationale and Importance of the study**

Cross cultural psychology suggests that the tests may not yield the same measure when used for assessment in a different culture. Every culture has specific traditions, customs, norms, beliefs etc which may affect responses on the measurement instruments. Matsumoto (as cited in Durrani, Mahmood & Saleem, 2017) stated that social and cultural aspects are an inseparable part of human development. Similarly, Maqsood, Hanif, Rehman, and Glen (2012) endorsed the need of assessing the measurement models developed in the West to see their generalizability across cultures.

Poortinga and Van der Flies (1988) suggested three things for cross-cultural application of scales, 1) the ability or characteristic assessed should have similar meaning in each culture; 2) it should organize behaviours in the same manner in each culture and, 3) test scores should have same meaning in each culture.

To achieve test equivalence in a different culture of Pakistan, TAT cards should be adapted by implementing appropriate changes. Usually people report difficulty in appropriately relating to TAT pictures due to dissimilar dressing, features and social setup. It is referred as “distancing” by clinical psychologists. Keeping in view this aspect, the present study aims to make TAT more useful and productive measure in general and specifically as an assessment tool in clinical settings.

As the present research focused more on helping clinicians reach accurate diagnosis, Bellak system of interpretation was used for scoring instead of Murray’s. The present study aims to make TAT more relevant for Pakistani population, helping in selecting the most useful cards for assessment.

### **Objectives**

1. Adaptation of TAT cards according to Pakistani culture
2. To establish psychometric properties of adapted TAT cards

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The present study consisted of 54 respondents, including diagnosed psychiatrist patients (n=20), and psychologically healthy (n=34). The sample varied in age between 16 to 50 years, with 50 % males (n=27) and 50 % females (n=27). As the sample was selected from government hospitals, most of the sample was less educated and belonged to lower to middle socioeconomic status. Convenience sampling technique was used to extract the sample from Peshawar, Abbotabad, and Dera Ismail Khan (cities comprising different division of Khyber Pakhtun Khawa).

Inclusion / exclusion criteria for the selection of clinical sample consisted of selecting individuals suffering from minor psychological disorders (like depression, anxiety). Whereas, severely disturbed individuals were excluded as they could not narrate stories on TAT cards. Individuals who already had responded to TAT were also excluded from the sample. The clinical sample was taken from different outpatient and inpatient departments of the hospitals situated in Peshawar, Abbotabad and Dera Ismail Khan

### **Instruments**

**Thematic Apperception Cards.** . Original Thematic Apperception Test (Morgan, 1935) consists of 31 cards showing different situations including one blank card. Individual

narrates a story on the pictures shown in the card and the hidden motives, conflicts, defenses etc. are measured with the help of the stories. In the present study to establish the psychometrics of the adapted TAT, 20 of the original TAT cards were used i.e., card 1, 2, 3BM, 4, 5, 6BM, 6GF, 7BM, 7GF, 8BM, 8GF, 9 BM, 9 GF, 10, 12M, 12F, 13MF, 15, 18BM and 18GF. For scoring, Bellak system was utilized for interpretation.

**Adapted Thematic Apperception Cards.** In the present study the adapted 20 TAT cards were used (card number 1, 2, 3BM, 4, 5, 6BM, 6GF, 7BM, 7GF, 8BM, 8GF, 9 BM, 9 GF, 10, 12M, 12F, 13MF, 15, 18BM and 18GF) which were suggested as the most productive ones by the clinical psychologists for personality assessment. TAT stories were interpreted on Bellak scoring system.

### Procedure

The process of adapting TAT cards initially started with consulting clinical psychologists who suggested frequently preferred cards for adaptation. Based on their suggestion; card 1, 2, 3BM, 4, 5, 6GF, 6BM, 4, 5, 6BM, 6GF, 7BM, 7GF, 8BM, 8GF, 10, 12M, 12F, 13MF, 15, 18BM and 18GF were selected for adaptation. After two unsuccessful trials the third artist remade the TAT cards effectively according to Pakistani culture. These cards were then presented to the panel of experts who assessed them for accurateness. They suggested minor changes which were incorporated in the sketches and the cards were shown to them again. They considered it appropriate for Pakistani population so the data collection was started. After getting informed consent one card at a time was shown to the subject and the subject narrated a story about it. With the time gap of one day, both versions of TAT cards were administered on the same subjects, the original and the adapted respectively. To break the ordering effect, original and adapted TAT cards were randomly administered. The cards left were shown to the person on the next day, but if the patient felt tired or not willing to respond further the process continued for three or more days to evaluate them on all cards. For the assessment of the TAT stories initially six clinicians were consulted to evaluate responses on both the versions of TAT. Each clinician had to interpret the protocols of 20 subjects. Assessment of projective measure is a difficult and time consuming task, due to which instead of six judges evaluating all 60 protocols, a set of two judges was made for the assessment of inter-rater reliability, i.e., 20 same protocols were assessed by judge one and two; 20 another by judge three and four and similarly the last 20 by judge five and six. The number of judges was increased afterwards due to problems faced in interpretation.

Details of how these cards were made and applied are as follows. Initially an artist was searched who can redraw the sketches in a culturally relevant manner. The researcher found one local artist from D.I.Khan and had a meeting with him to explain the concept behind this remaking of cards. He was explained to keep the original drawing a standard in which only features and dressing of the subjects need to be changed according to Pakistani population. After four months when the adapted version of cards was presented, it was the exact copy of the original without any cultural changes implemented in them. Although the first set of pictures did not fulfil the purpose of the research, but as the artist had good drawing skills, he was again explained the whole procedure. After another four months the second set presented consisted of the artist's own artistry in the cards, which made it very different from the original ones. As the artist was not getting what is standardization of a psychological test, another artist was searched. This time the department of Arts and Design of University of Peshawar was contacted where the chairman suggested the names of the two female artists. One of them refused, while the second one agreed. During another four months duration, researcher frequently asked the artist to send the soft copy of the cards, to make sure this time instructions are followed appropriately. It

helped in correcting the minor mistakes timely. The complete set of 20 adapted cards was then presented to the judges for evaluation. Three judges evaluated the drawings and few corrections suggested by them were incorporated in the sketches, after which the cards were considered ready for application.

Data collection phase had its own difficulties. People who initially agreed to take part in the study refused to participate in the middle of the process of data collection due to 40 cards to respond (20 original, 20 adapted). Due to an ethical guideline one cannot be forced to continue participation in the study, all that incomplete data became useless. Data collection from individuals with psychological problems was even tougher. Different hospitals and psychiatric clinics of Peshawar, Abbottabad and D.I.Khan were consulted for this purpose. The authorities allowed the researcher but individuals with psychological problems hardly agreed on making 20 stories on each version. As all the cards could not have been applied on a single day, it required taking one day gap between the administrations of both versions. Many of the patients did not cooperate on the second day.

Interpretation of the TAT cards was the most hideous task to carry. Initially 6 judges were supposed to serve the purpose, but when each judge received 20 protocols, four of them refused, although they had committed earlier. One judge interpreted the complete 20 protocols, another judge interpreted only 6 forms out of 20 protocols. Due to this problem more clinical experts were searched for interpretation of TAT cards. New judges sought also did not agree because of the time frame left for the study (this paper is extracted from an MPhil work and less time was left for the submission of thesis) and plenty of forms. Finally the data was now distributed among seven judges who agreed to interpret TAT cards. Due to the unwillingness of judges for interpreting 20 protocols, it was reduced to 10 protocols i.e., each judge was given a set of ten protocols. Judges were given 15 days for interpretation due to leaving some time for the compilation of results, but the judges interpreted the set of protocols according to their convenience. Each judge took two and half months to interpret the protocols. At the end every judge returned 2 or 3 forms without interpretation. They excused that they cannot manage to interpret the whole set of ten protocols because of their personal responsibilities and time constraint.

## Results

***Estimation of Validity.*** Convergent validity of TAT was estimated through calculating similar indicators on both versions of TAT and then converting it to percentage of agreement among judges. Two separate judges independently filled the Bellack's form on both original and adapted cards. Total indicators found on both the versions, helped in constituting similarity index between the original and adapted version, i.e., counting similar indicators found by a single judge on both the versions. The estimated validity by a single judge for a particular card was found by dividing similar indicators on total indicators found. The same procedure was adopted for the second judge. For each of the card then an average validity was estimated by summing the indicators of the two judges and dividing it by 2.

**Table 1**

*Average validity of different TAT cards computed through convergent validity between original and adapted TAT cards by the judges*

Cards	Validity index
1	31.29
2	27.86
3BM	28.60
4	27.78
5	28.68
6BM	25.93
6GF	23.95
7BM	28.56
7GF	29.83
8BM	30.64
8GF	26.39
9BM	42.40
9GF	29.59
10	33.08
12M	29.15
12F	29.43
13MF	26.81
15	26.27
18BM	27.75
18GF	28.28

Table1 shows the average validity of each TAT card with lowest validity 23.95 for card 5 and highest 42.40 for card 9BM.

***Estimation of reliability.*** Reliability indices were calculated through inter-rater method, i.e., two separate judges interpreted the same adapted card. Consensus between the judges on indicators found for a given card gave higher reliability.

**Table 2**

*Average inter-rater reliability of different TAT cards computed through percentage of agreement between judges*

Cards	% of agreement
1	22.79
2	21.42
3BM	16.97
4	17.63
5	12.25
6GF	14.12
6BM	18.74
7GF	17.96
7BM	15.54
8GF	12.15
8BM	12.61
9GF	14.12
9BM	18.55
10	18.11
12F	15.49



12M	14.06
13MF	19.05
15	12.55
18GF	11.68
18BM	9.73

Table 2 shows the inter-rater reliability of adapted cards by calculating all the similar indicators filled by two judges on adapted version. The highest reliability index is 22.79 (card 1) and lowest 9.73 (card 18BM).

### Discussion

As Thematic Apperception Test is a widely used projective measure of personality. One problem it poses when applied in other cultures is “distancing”, that is due to differences in features and dresses of TAT pictures, individuals find it difficult to relate with them appropriately (Habib, 2016, Personal communication). Keeping in view this limitation it was decided in the present study to adapt TAT for Pakistani population. As has mentioned in the procedure section, out of the 30 TAT cards, 20 cards that were suggested by clinicians were selected for adaptation.

Table 1 shows that both cards 6GF and 6BM had the lowest validity index 23.95 and 25.93 respectively. As these pictures are less structured the respondents did not narrate detailed meaningful stories on both original and adapted version of these cards. Looking for the highest validity indices, card 9BM scored the highest (42.40) followed by card 1 (31.29). It suggests that these two cards are more meaningful for the respondents in our culture and should be incorporated in the set of cards to be administered on the respondents.

Table 1 shows the validity indices which are not high for most of the cards. In a projective test, we can come across such problems as in the present study quantification was applied on the qualitative data. Low validity and reliability is the common problem of projective measures (Riaz, 2008) as it is not necessary that on both the original and adapted versions similar stories, with similar, needs or defence mechanisms will be achieved. It is likely that a similar but not identical defence is seen in the adapted than original card, which lowers down the validity. As in the present research long form of Bellack’s system was used for interpretation, finding similarity between numerous indicators was difficult to achieve.

Another reason for the low validity is that the respondents had to answer 40 cards in total, knowing that they narrated shorter stories, which the judges did not find useful, hence left many indicators blank which resulted in loss of the data. Lack of interest on the part of judges was another reason, as they did not assess all cards with same vigour which resulted in lower validity indices.

Table 2 shows reliability index of the 20 adapted TAT cards. As like validity, card number 1 also showed higher reliability. Similarly, card 2 also had higher reliability than the other cards. Inspecting the average reliability of Card 1 (22.79) showed subject no 24’s responses yielded a zero consensus among the two raters, whereas, the highest agreement was found for subject 8’s responses i.e., 38.90. Average reliability was 21.42 for card 2 in which for subject 3 the judges showed lower consensus, whereas, for subject 7 there was highest consensus among the judges, i.e., 36.84.

Lilienfeld, Wood, and Garb (2000) also stated in their meta-analysis of projective measures that generally these measures are low on psychometric properties. As in the present

study results indicated lower reliability estimates than the validity due to the dependence on finding consensus in the responses of two separate judges. Various reasons are responsible for variation among the interpretations of judges in projective measures, e.g., differences in the experience and training. Similarly, in the present research when the researcher was calculating reliability, similar but non-identical defences were scored different from each other which resulted in lower reliability of all the cards. It is evident to face such problems in calculation of reliability of projective measures as the data is narrative that is converted in quantification. Similarly, due to the existence of different scoring systems with their own limitations it is difficult to reach to higher reliability indices. In practice, mostly experts trust their instincts in interpretation to make their judgments instead of strongly adhering to a scoring system. As different scoring systems yield different instructions, requiring diversity of numbers, categories in arrangement and presentation of cards from one individual to the other (Geiser & Stein, 1999; Karon, 2000), which generally results in low reliabilities. Similarly the problems can also occur due to the difference between administrations. When under the same administration the scoring of stories can be different, variations are more likely to occur under different administrations, hence reliability is expected to be low (Entwisle, 1972).

Lundy (1985) estimated test retest reliability of .56 and .48 respectively for the need for association and accomplishment when assessed subjects on story telling with a time gap. As the consistency of test-retest was low, it is stated that these consistencies only revealed the stability of memory instead of the stability of personality traits on TAT.

### Limitations

- As the judges needed more time for interpretation, they skipped some cards which in turn lowered the validity and reliability indices.
- Similarly, some of the judges interpreted only gender specific cards when interpreting male and female respondents.
- Some judges interpreted only adapted cards while leaving the original TAT cards. Similarly, the length of interpretations differed among the judges.
- Lack of finances was a hindrance in interpretation phase.
- Due to responding to 40 cards, subjects wrote shorter stories which made the interpretation difficult for the judge.

### Suggestions

- Keeping in view the above limitations the following suggestions are put forward:
- Finances must be provided to motivate the judges for assessing TAT responses.
- More productive responses could be gathered by applying only gender specific cards on the respondents instead of all the adapted ones.
- Murray scoring is easy in quantification, so future researchers can use it for establishing the reliability of TAT.
- More than two judges should be used while calculating inter- rater reliability.

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Appendix

Adapted TAT Cards



## **Prophetic Leadership: Lessons from the Greatest Leader of Prophet Muhammad**

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There is limited academic research specifically focused on prophetic leadership and its implication for the success of modern business organizations. At the same time, prophetic leadership can play a crucial role in providing vision, guidance, and inspiration to employees and stakeholders to focus on long-term sustainable success. Therefore, this study aims to map the concept of prophetic leadership and its related outcomes within organizations. Also, by considering the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) model, this study offers the comprehensive principles and practices associated with prophetic leadership to achieve long-term success. This study includes the term "prophetic leadership" as a reference in "Article title, Abstract and Keywords" based on the Scopus database (from 1979–July 2023). One hundred forty-eight documents are found in the collected data. A comprehensive bibliometric analysis is applied using VOSviewer to analyze the data. In addition, VOSviewer software is utilized in this study to explore the most prolific authors and potential research avenues. The gist of the findings shows that prophetic leadership brings a unique set of qualities and values that can greatly benefit modern business organizations. Prophetic leadership, for instance, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) indeed provides a clear vision, promotes ethical decision-making, fosters transparency, empowers followers, and develops a mission that encompasses various aspects of life, including spirituality, morality, governance, and social justice, to create the long-term success in this world and the hereafter .

**Keywords:** prophetic leadership, islamic values, Prophet Muhammad, bibliometric analysis

The interconnectedness of economies, cultures, and societies, as well as rapid advancements in technology, have created a highly complex global landscape. Also, ethical dilemmas within organizations emerged (Melé, 2019; Rickards, 2015; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2015) in various forms, such as balancing the pursuit of profit with social responsibility (Cramer, 2017; Filatotchev & Stahl, 2015; Resnik & Elliott, 2016), maintaining privacy and data security in the digital age (Denecke et al., 2015; Martin, 2015; Royackers et al., 2018), and addressing issues of diversity (Hartwell et al., 2017), and inclusion. Therefore, leaders have to navigate diverse perspectives and complex systems to adapt to rapid changes. Leaders within organizations have to grapple with the implications of emerging technologies (Chen & Decary, 2020; Peifer et al., 2022), such as artificial intelligence, automation and cybersecurity, to stay abreast of these developments to anticipate the impacts on their organizations.

Effective leaders require adaptability, strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, and a commitment to continuous learning for developing an organization. Leaders have to consider the long-term consequences of their actions (Bibi et al., 2018; Gohar et al., 2023; Leithwood, 2018; Merriman, 2017) and navigate complex trade-offs. In addition, leaders have to be able to inspire and mobilize employees, foster a culture of innovation, and ensure the organization remains agile and adaptable. Therefore, nurturing leadership skills, for example, prophetic leadership, is crucial for the long-term success of organizations (Muhammad, 2015). Prophetic leaders go beyond traditional management approaches and seek to inspire and guide individuals as well as organizations towards a compelling vision of the future (Empson, 2021; Halton, 2018; Yukl & Gardner, 2019) to anticipate emerging trends and envision possibilities to achieve shared goals.

There is limited academic research specifically focused on prophetic leadership and its implication for the success of organizations. While the extensive literature on prophetic leadership is not as commonly recognized within the academic community. However, some scholars have explored leadership approaches that are similar to prophetic leadership. For example, transformational leadership, developed by Burns (1978) and expanded upon by Bass (1997), refers to the leader's capability to inspire and motivate their followers by articulating a compelling vision, demonstrating strong values and ethics, and empowering others to reach their full potential. Additionally, visionary leadership (Ali, 2009; Stam et al., 2010; Westley & Mintzberg, 1989) is another concept that overlaps with prophetic leadership. Visionary leaders have the ability to envision a desired future state, communicate that vision effectively, provide a sense of direction and mobilize others to work towards its realization. Furthermore, spiritual leadership (Egel & Fry, 2017; Tobroni, 2015) and ethical leadership (Gabriele, 2011; Kretzschmar, 2023; Udin, 2023) are also interconnected concepts within the realm of prophetic leadership. Ethical leaders apply ethical principles to navigate complex dilemmas and consider the well-being of the broader societal impact of their decisions. Therefore, this study aims to map the concept of prophetic leadership and its related outcomes within organizations. Also, by considering the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) model, this study offers the comprehensive principles and practices associated with prophetic leadership to achieve the long-term success of organizations.

## **Literature Review**

### **Prophetic leadership**

Prophetic leadership is a style of leadership that focuses on envisioning a better future and inspiring others to achieve that vision (Randolph, 2011). Prophetic leaders have the ability to anticipate and address challenges before they arise, as well as motivate others to create a better organization. Prophetic leaders have a clear vision aligned with the organization's values of what the organization can become (Dantley, 2005; Setiyaningtiyas, 2016; Tiemeyer, 2008). Based on the set vision, prophetic leaders inspire others to strive for excellence (AlSarhi et al., 2014). Prophetic leaders also have the ability to anticipate future trends and opportunities (Adz-Dzakiey, 2009; Sidiq & Uyun, 2019). They stay informed about industry developments, emerging technologies, and social as well as cultural shifts. By proactively interpreting the information, prophetic leaders can make informed decisions and take timely action (Beerel, 1997).

Prophetic leaders uphold high ethical standards. They lead by example and encourage a culture of integrity, trust, and respect (Yusuf, 2022) within the organization. They create an inclusive environment where all individuals feel respected, leading to a more creative organization. Additionally, prophetic leaders possess emotional intelligence, allowing them to empathize with the needs of others (Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019). This helps them build strong relationships and create a compassionate work environment (Hadiyani et al., 2021). Also, prophetic leaders are skilled at articulating their ideas, actively listening to feedback, and fostering honest communication within the organization to enhance cooperation and collaboration.

### **The greatest leader of prophet Muhammad**

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the founder of Islam and final messenger of Allah, is widely regarded as one of the greatest leaders in history. His leadership qualities, achievements, impacts and accomplishments continue to inspire millions of people around the world. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has a clear vision and mission (Noor, 2003) to convey the message of Islam, monotheism (worshipping Allah alone), and social justice to all of humanity. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exhibits impeccable character and ethical conduct, such as honesty, trustworthy, integrity, humility, patience, generosity, and kindness to gain the trust and respect of his followers (Ahmed & Amiri, 2019; Bangash, 2001). Furthermore, throughout the Qur'an, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is praised for his character, wisdom, and devotion to spreading the message of Islam to guide humanity (Ather & Sobhani, 2007). He is described as a mercy to all the world (Qur'an, 21:107) and an excellent example for believers to follow (Qur'an, 33:21).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplifies servant leadership, prioritizing the well-being of his community over his own interests. He cares deeply for the welfare of his followers and leads by serving them in times of need (Mir, 2010). Also, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remains humble and approachable. He highly values the contributions of others and does not seek personal aggrandizement (Beekun & Badawi, 1999).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further displays exceptional strategic thinking in managing the affairs of the community (Beekun, 2012). He made well-informed decisions, considering the long-term implications of his actions. He promotes inclusivity and equality among his followers, regardless of their background, race, or social status (Adair, 2010; Dogan, 2015). He emphasizes that all individuals are equal in the sight of Allah. In addition, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a master communicator. He effectively conveyed his message to a diverse audience through his eloquence, wisdom, and persuasive abilities. His communication skills help in gaining the support and loyalty of millions of people to this day, making him one of the most respected leaders in the world.

### **Islamic values**

Islamic values are the principles and beliefs that form the foundation of Islam (i.e., a monotheistic religion) followed by over a billion people worldwide. These values are derived from the teachings of the Quran (the holy book) and the Hadith (the sayings, actions, and approvals of Prophet Muhammad 'peace be upon him') (Halstead, 2007; Rafiki & Wahab, 2014) to provide Muslims with a moral framework to live a meaningful life, both in their relationship with Allah (God) and their interactions with fellow human beings (Zaelani, 2015).

The core Islamic values include *tawhid* (i.e., the belief in the oneness of Allah), *ihsan* (i.e., striving for excellence in all aspects of life), *akhlaq* (i.e., displaying honesty, humility, patience, forgiveness, and sincerity in interactions with others), *justice* (i.e., fair in dealings with others, regardless of their race, gender, religion, or social status), *responsibility* (i.e., being responsible and accountable to fulfil the rights towards Allah, themselves, families, and all society), and *compassion* (i.e., show kindness, empathy, and mercy towards others, especially those in need or less fortunate). Additionally, Islamic values emphasize the importance of hard work and excellence (Rosyada et al., 2018). Islamic values, in turn, promote a strong work ethic among employees, leading to increased productivity and a commitment to delivering quality work (Zaim et al., 2021).

## Method

This study explores all documents relevant and related to prophetic leadership published in the database of Scopus over the last 45 years (from 1979–July 2023). This study includes the term "prophetic leadership" as a reference in "Article title, Abstract and Keywords" based on the entire Scopus database. One hundred forty-eight documents are found in the collected data. Of 148 documents, based on the category "document type", there are 93 (62.8%) research articles, 32 (21.6%) book chapters, 15 (10.1%) review papers, 6 (4.1%) books, and 2 (1.4%) conference papers. Furthermore, based on the category "subject area", 110 (74.3%) cover arts and humanities, followed by social sciences (41.9%), business, management and accounting (7.4%), economics, econometrics and finance (4.1%), and other areas such as psychology (2%). The majority of documents are written in English (143, 96.6%) and open access sources (36, 24.3%). In addition, based on the category "country/territory", there are 67 (45.3%) documents are from the United States, South Africa (19, 12.8%), United Kingdom (14, 9.5%), and other countries such as Malaysia (5, 3.4%). A comprehensive bibliometric analysis is further applied using VOSviewer to analyze the data. In addition, VOSviewer software is utilized in this study to explore the most prolific authors and potential research avenues.

## Results and Discussion

The network visualization maps and data analysis in this study are created using VOSviewer software.

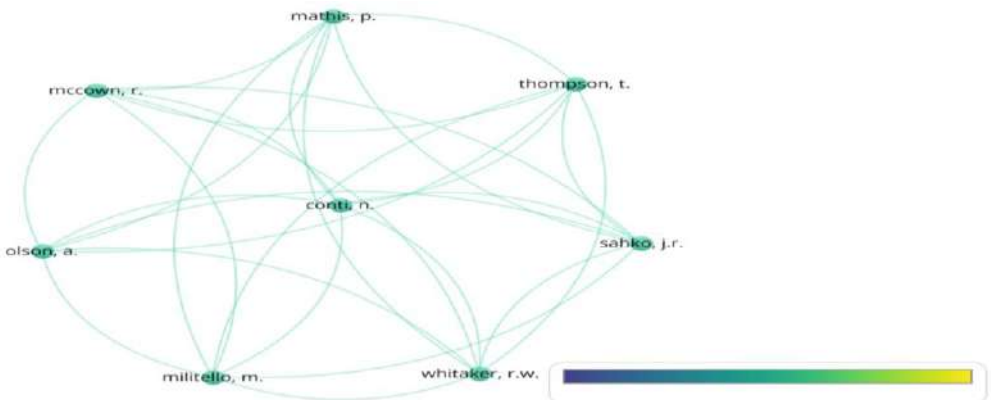




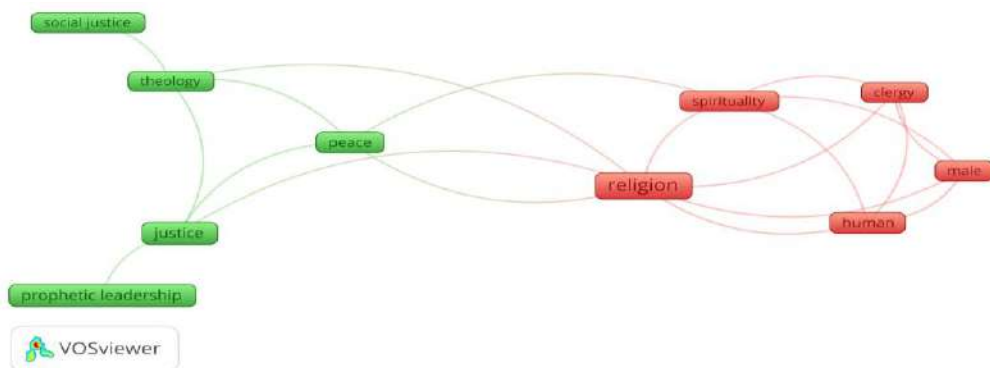
Figure 1. Overlay visualization of authors

Figure 1 indicates the collaboration among authors. N. Conti from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh – United States, has the highest frequency of collaboration than other authors. He has collaborated with other experts from different fields of study such as A. Oslon, R. McCorn, P.Mathis, T. Thompson, J. R. Sahko, R. W. Whitakel, and M. Militello.

**Table 1**  
*Top five prolific authors*

No.	Document title	Authors	Year	Source	Citations
1	African American spirituality and Cornel West's notions of prophetic pragmatism: Restructuring educational leadership in American urban schools	M. E. Dantley	2005	Educational Administration Quarterly, 41(4), pp. 651–674	95
2	On heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic in history	T. Carlyle, D. R. Sorensen, and B. E. Kinser	2013	On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, pp. 1–350	40
3	Islamic perspectives on leadership: a model	A. J. Ali	2009	International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management, 2(2), pp. 160–180	36
4	Maasai age-sets and prophetic leadership: 1850–1910	J. L. Berntsen	1979	Africa, 49(2), pp. 134–146	17
5	The prophet and the engineer meet under the mango tree: Leadership, education, and conflict in the Southern Philippines	J. A. Milligan	2010	Educational Policy, 24(1), pp. 28–51	7

Table 1 shows that M. E. Dantley becomes the most productive author (with 95 citations) in investigating related to the issue of prophetic leadership. Following his records, T. Carlyle, D. R. Sorensen, and B. E. Kinser performed 40 citations, A. J. Ali with 36 citations, J. L. Berntsen with 17 citations, and J. A. Milligan with 7 citations. In addition, J. L. Berntsen, as the first prolific author, has introduced the concept of prophetic leadership in the Scopus database since 1979.



### Figure 2. Network visualization of prophetic leadership

Figure 2 shows that prophetic leadership in this study is divided into two clusters: green and red cluster. The green cluster includes peace, theology, justice, social justice, and prophetic leadership. In comparison, the red cluster includes religion, spirituality, human, clergy and male. Prophetic leadership inspires individuals and communities to work towards peace and create a more just society. Prophetic leader, for example, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Abd Rahman et al., 2022; Izudin, 2021; Mirela et al., 2021; Retnaningdiah et al., 2023), provides a vision of a more peaceful world by inviting all humans to worship the one God (only Allah). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) inspires others by articulating a compelling vision of compassion and dignity for all individuals (Ahmed & Amiri, 2019), challenging people to aspire to higher moral standards. By casting a clear vision for the future, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) motivates and mobilizes individuals to work towards achieving peace and justice (Prier, 2019). Furthermore, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) often works towards social transformation. For example, after prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) migrated to Yathrib (later known as Medina), everything shortly changed and this city transformed into a state with the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as head of state (El Syam, 2017). In Medina, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established a Muslim community, and the city served as the center of Islamic governance during the time of the Prophet, covering almost all of the Arabian Peninsula. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encourages critical thinking and dialogue to bridge divides and foster understanding among different people (Armstrong, 2023). By promoting empathy, inclusivity, and respect, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) contributes to the creation of a more equitable and harmonious society.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) often promotes the importance of service to others as a manifestation of spirituality. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encourages individuals to reflect on their spiritual beliefs, values, and principles as a source of inspiration to seek meaning and purpose in their lives (Armstrong, 2023; Tabroni et al., 2022). By promoting spiritual practices such as prayer and self-reflection, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) inspires individuals to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship with others, leading to personal growth and spiritual awakening in the workplace. Additionally, in the context of humanity, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) fosters a sense of unity and collaboration, empowering people to overcome challenges and realize their potential for the well-being of humanity as a whole.

### Conclusion

The gist of the findings concludes that prophetic leadership brings a unique set of qualities and values that can greatly benefit modern business organizations. Prophetic leadership, for instance, prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) indeed provides a clear vision, promotes ethical decision-making, fosters transparency, empowers followers, and develops a mission that encompasses various aspects of life, including spirituality, morality, governance, and social justice, to create the long-term success in this world and the hereafter.

The practical implication of prophetic leadership by prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is very complex. As a prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him) received divine guidance through the revelation of the Quran. His role as a leader is intertwined with his mission of delivering Allah's message and guiding people on matters of faith, spirituality, and

moral conduct around the world. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) advocates for social justice and equality regardless of social status, race, or gender in all aspects of life. Also, the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasizes the importance of personal integrity, honesty, compassion, justice, and humility to establish a foundation of ethical conduct in both personal and societal affairs.

This study uses the Scopus database as a secondary data source, so it becomes a limitation that needs to be noted. By limiting further to the specific keywords related to prophetic leadership, there are only five articles that clearly mention the term in their research titles, such as Berntsen (1979), Doohan (1983), Smollett (2013), Indra, Tanjung, Setiawati, Primarni, and Norman (2022), Kretzschmar (2023). Therefore, it is beneficial for future studies to explore prophetic leadership in multiple data sources: Web of Science (WOS), ScienceDirect, PubMed, IEEE Xplore, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). In addition, focusing solely on the prophetic leadership of Muhammad (peace be upon him) could lead to bias, as it may not provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices across different religious or cultural contexts (Ghani, Rahim, & Mat, 2021). Prophets in various religious traditions might have different teachings, beliefs, and leadership styles. Thus, to gain a more holistic perspective on prophetic leadership, it is essential to consider a broader range of religious and historical figures, as well as cultural contexts.

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## **Foreign Capital Inflows and Macroeconomic indicators: Are Developing Economies in the Trap of the Dutch Disease Hypothesis?**

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The Dutch disease phenomenon has been related to foreign inflows into emerging economies in particular, including foreign aid, migrant's remittances, and foreign direct investment. A surge in these inflows is expected to yield a rise in the real exchange rate. Recipient countries have seen a decline in industry as a result of the rise in the non-marketable sector and the slump in the marketable sector. This study empirically investigates the mechanisms of real exchange rate adjustments to migrant remittances, ODA, and FDI toward emerging economies. For the analysis covering the years 2001–2020, dynamic panel data approaches, difference GMM and system GMM, are used to investigate the incidence of Dutch Disease in 84 emerging economies. Numerous econometric studies have shown that Dutch Disease does exist in emerging economies. The Dutch Disease theory is supported by an expanded study that has included the empirical analysis of both industrial (marketable) and service (non-marketable) sectors .

**Keywords:** official development assistance; foreign direct investment; remittance; real exchange rate; dutch disease; panel data models  
JEL Classification: C33, F21, F24, F35

Currently, remittances, official development assistance, and foreign direct investment are the three main sources of funding for the development of many developing nations. To support global sustainable development goals, financial inflows to developing nations have substantially expanded in recent years. Because of this, it is not unexpected that many academics and economists have started to become more interested in foreign inflows. The majority of their studies concentrate on how these inflows help the economy thrive, reduce poverty, maintain a healthy balance of payments, improve education, and provide health services for its people. In comparison to foreign direct investment and official development assistance, migrant remittances are significantly more common in poor countries. Migrant remittances are the major cause of earnings for people in developing and low-income economies, helping to sustain prosperous lifestyle there.

The notion of "Dutch disease," commonly referred to as the Gregory Thesis, was expounded upon by *The Economist* in the year 1977 with the aim of elucidating the phenomenon of the economic decline experienced by the Netherlands subsequent to the unearthing of natural gas deposits in the North Sea during the 1960s. This phenomenon was subsequently noted in the United Kingdom and Australia and subsequently in a plethora of other nations. The Balassa-Samuelson impact theory lends credence to the idea Dutch disease prevalence in a nation (Balassa, 1964). This theory supports the idea that the real exchange rate

appreciation of an economy results from productivity gap between its traded sector and non-traded sectors. The spending effect mechanism, which is also endorsed by Corden and Neary (1982), predicts that relative improved productivity will result in a rise in labour wages in the context of the traded goods sector, which would in turn cause a price increase in non-traded items. This would lead to an increase in the actual exchange rate, which is determined by the price of marketable to the price of non-marketable.

The basic conceptual framework for examining the link between foreign capital flow and the Dutch disease issue in the recipient country is proposed by Van Wijnbergen (1984) and Corden and Neary (1982). They demonstrate that a rise in foreign currency inflow is responsible for a rise in the income of the recipient country, which would result in a surge in demand for both marketable and non-marketable items, known as the aid-induced spending effect. The price of the non-marketable, which is set locally through the domestic demand-supply market forces, would rise as a result of this spike in demand. The cost of marketable, however, would not alter because it is exogenously set on the global market. Real exchange rates will rise as a result, which will exacerbate the Dutch disease issue in developing nations. A resource movement effect also occurs in conjunction with the aid-induced spending impact, where resources are switched from the production of marketable products to the comparably more expensive production of non-marketable items. A rise in consumer demand and spending capacity for non-marketable goods leads to an increase in the corresponding price and worker's earnings. As a result, resources are diverted away from the sector of marketable goods to the sector of non-marketable commodities. This further contributes to the Dutch disease issue by impeding the growth of exports.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the prevalence of Dutch Disease as ramifications of more foreign capital inflows in developing nations by using dynamic panel data techniques. This study particularly answers the following concerns:

1. Is there a long-term relationship between real exchange rate changes in the selected developing economies and foreign exchange inflows (remittances, ODA, and FDI)?
2. Is there any variation in the impact of foreign exchange inflows on the marketable (industrial) sector?
3. Does the sort of foreign exchange inflows have a diverse influence on the non-marketable sector (service)?

### **Literature Review**

The effect of capital inflows on exchange rate movements causing the DD problem is well demonstrated in the available literature. The findings indicate uncertainty with regard to empirical studies conducted specifically for different countries and regions. The empirical literature with regards to the impact of various foreign exchange influx sources on the real exchange rate of the recipient economies is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Adenauer and Vagassky (1998) examined the link between assistance inflows and the real exchange rate for Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Togo, using data between 1980 and 1992. A study that evaluated the real exchange rate within the context of the Salter-Swan two-sector model confirmed the possible detrimental impacts of aid on a country's competitiveness. The problem of Dutch Disease is discussed by McKinley (2009) who also evaluated the detrimental consequences of Dutch disease on economic development as a outcome of increased aid influses to developing nations. Similarly, the study by Ouattara and Strobl (2008) examined the relationship between foreign aid inflows and real exchange rates by



selecting twelve Countries of the CFA France zone. The outcome showed that foreign assistance influx had not generated Dutch Disease in chosen countries and not affected their competitiveness.

According to Kang et al., (2010) there is evidence for Dutch Disease when exports and GDP respond favorably to shocks to the foreign aid system and adversely to real exchange rates in terms of their magnitude. Hasanov (2013) came to the conclusion that Azerbaijan does not suffer from an extreme de-industrialization, but rather from a partial de-industrialization in the non-oil marketable sector, whereas the non-marketable sector significantly strengthened between 2000 and 2007. Study also showed that the "spending effect," which is more significant than the "resource movement effect," has been produced by government spending. Moreover, it was determined that Azerbaijan's real exchange rate has increased as a result of the swift rises in wages and non-marketable goods.

Jongwanich and Kohpaiboon (2013) investigated the relationship between RER and FDI inflows and outflows in Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, The People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, and the Republic of Korea. The study used biannual data from 2000 to 2009 using a dynamic panel data regression methodology. According to the pertinent findings of the GMM panel data regression analysis, FDI inflows, and outflows, both caused appreciation of the RER, which is evidence of the presence of the Dutch Disease issue in above mentioned emergent Asian nations.

For the four nations (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), Roy and Dixon (2016) used a fixed effects panel data model to analyze the Dutch disease argument and found evidence for its existence. They also highlighted that trade liberalization may undermine the REER appreciation spurred on by the significant remittance flows.

In a recent study, Ito (2017) used a vector autoregressive model to analyze quarterly data from 2006 to 2014 to determine whether the Dutch disease existed in Moldova. They came to the conclusion that remittance inflows caused the RER to appreciate, but that this appreciation had no impact on remittance flows. According to Javaid and Panhwar (2019), who examined the effect of Dutch disease on Pakistan's economic development, the disease is detrimental to the industrial sector and hinders the creation of output and jobs, which in turn hinders economic growth.

Using a linear dynamic panel data model from 32 countries for the period of 2006 to 2016, Hien et al. (2020) looked at whether Dutch disease existed as a result of increased remittances in Asian developing economies. They investigated the link between remittances and real effective exchange rate and found that a 1% rise in remittances per capita causes an appreciation of the real effective exchange rate (REER) of these countries by 0.103%, which in turn lowers their competitiveness and confirms the prevalence of Dutch disease.

Murshed and Rashid (2020) examined how the actual exchange rate changed in reaction to FDI, ODA, and migrant remittances coming into the four developing South Asian economies of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The findings demonstrated that the overall amount of received remittances and ODA increase the real exchange rate, whereas FDI inflows were found to decrease the actual exchange rate. Few studies also highlighted the behavior of aid and remittances particularly in Pakistan (Bashir & Aman, 2021; Yousaf et al., 2022).

This study is attempting to fill the gap in the available literature after reviewing a considerable amount of literature. This study examines the Dutch Disease phenomenon through a detailed investigation of emerging countries' marketable and non-marketable sectors. It focuses on all developing economies rather than a specific region or country.

### Method

#### Data

It is crucial to ascertain whether foreign resources are favorable because they are required for rising economies to achieve their future objectives. However, Dutch Disease is among the major aspect that is identified to slow down the productivity of such foreign assets. Consequently, the main goal of the research is to determine how much international assistance, foreign direct investment, and migrant remittances are accountable for the incidence of Dutch Disease in emerging nations. A 20-year panel dataset (2001-2020) for 84 developing countries from all regions classified as developing by the World Bank makes up the sample for this empirical study. The world development indicator serves as the main data source (World Bank).

#### Model

To evaluate the Dutch disease phenomenon as a upshot of foreign investment in evolving economies, three models are developed for empirical investigation. The first model looks at how resources from other countries affect the real exchange rate. Other two models are made to evaluate how foreign assets affect the marketable and non-marketable sectors, correspondingly. The service sector is considered as non-marketable sector, in contrast to the industrial sector, which is marketable sector (Piton & others, 2017). The central equations in each model are:

$$ER_{i,t} = \beta_0 ER_{i,t-1} + \beta_1 FA_{i,t} + \beta_2 FDI_{i,t} + \beta_3 PMR_{i,t} + \beta_4 TO_{i,t} + \beta_5 M2_{i,t} + \beta_6 CE_{i,t} + \mu_t + v_{i,t} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$SVA_{i,t} = \beta_0 SVA_{i,t-1} + \beta_1 FA_{i,t} + \beta_2 FDI_{i,t} + \beta_3 PMR_{i,t} + \beta_4 TO_{i,t} + \beta_5 M2_{i,t} + \beta_6 CE_{i,t} + \mu_t + v_{i,t} \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

$$IVA_{i,t} = \beta_0 IVA_{i,t-1} + \beta_1 FA_{i,t} + \beta_2 FDI_{i,t} + \beta_3 PMR_{i,t} + \beta_4 TO_{i,t} + \beta_5 M2_{i,t} + \beta_6 CE_{i,t} + \mu_t + v_{i,t} \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

Where the subscripts i stands for cross-sections while t for time series.

- ER = Real Exchange Rate
- FA = ODA as a proportion of GNI (Foreign Aid)
- FDI = Foreign Direct Investment inflows
- PMR = Personal Migrant Remittances
- TO = Trade Openness
- M2 = Broad Money Supply
- CE = Consumption Expenditures by State
- $\mu_t$  = Time-fixed effects to capture the impact of business cycles
- $v_{i,t}$  = The error term.
- SVA = Non-marketable sector (Service Value Added)
- IVA = Marketable sector (Industrial Value Added)

#### Variable Description:

This section describes the explained and explanatory variables used in this paper. Real Exchange Rate (ER) is dependent variable for model 1. It is quantified by Price level ratio of PPP alteration factor (GDP) to market exchange rate. Price level ratio is also known as the ratio of purchasing power parity (PPP). It is transformed to an exchange rate.

Foreign Aid (FA) is measured by Net ODA as a percentage of GNI. Money from bilateral, multilateral, and non-DAC countries under lenient conditions is included in net official development assistance. Personal transfers and employee compensation are included in personal migrant remittances received (PMR), which is expressed as a proportion of GDP. Private transfers are any monetary payments made or received by households that reside from nonresident families. The components of net inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), expressed as a percentage of GDP, are capital invested in equity, earnings reinvested, and other long-term as well as short-term capital.

Currency, coins, demand deposits, time deposits, including bank accounts and other deposits, make up broad money (M2) that is measured as a percentage of GDP. It indicates the amount of money in circulation within the economy. All contemporary government spending on general government final consumption is included in general government final consumption expenditure (CE), which is expressed as a percentage of GDP. The total of all imports and exports of goods and services represented as a percentage of gross domestic product is known as trade openness (TO), also expressed as a percentage of GDP.

Value added in mineral extraction, building, manufacturing, gas, and electricity generation is included in industry (including construction) value added (IVA) as a proportion of GDP. Value-added in broad areas such as selling trade, transportation, and administration, as well as in economic, professional, and personal services like property ownership, medical care, and schooling are all included in services, value-added (SVA) as a proportion of GDP. These two variables are dependent variables for models 2 and 3 respectively. Industry value added (IVA) represents marketable sector and service value added (SVA) measures non-marketable sector. World Bank has published this data annually by utilizing all raw data for all developing economies, hence the main source for this data is world development indicator (WDI) developed by World Bank.

### **Econometric Methodology**

This section presents the econometric methodology which is used to empirically investigate the existence of Dutch disease and its macroeconomic effects in developing economies.

#### **Cross-section dependence test:**

First, with the suitable cross-sectional dependence tests recommended by Pesaran, Friedman, and Frees test for cross-sectional correlation, the dataset is examined for any potential cross-sectional dependencies (Baltagi et al., 2012). Cross-section dependence may result from spillover effects or known or unobserved spatial effects that are widespread among cross-sections or panels (Baltagi & Hashem Pesaran, 2007). Testing dependencies across cross-sections is crucial because, in the case of such dependencies across panels, first generation panel data unit root tests do not function as intended because the majority of these methodologies for unit root testing presume cross-sectional independence. The efficient understanding of the convergence process of the panel data variables is made possible by such dependency analysis.

#### **Panel causality test:**

Test for panel causality, proposed by Dumitrescu and Hurlin is utilized in this research (Dumitrescu & Hurlin, 2012). To more accurately assess the association among regressors and regressand, panel causality tests will be performed in the study.

**Estimation Techniques:**

The occurrence of Dutch Disease caused by foreign resources in developing economies is investigated using a dynamic panel data (DPD) estimate methodology. The structural design of dynamic panel data is:

$$Y_{i,t} = \alpha_i + \beta Y_{i,t-1} + \gamma X_{i,t} + v_{i,t}$$

(4)

Where  $t = 1, \dots, T$  and  $i = 1, \dots, N$

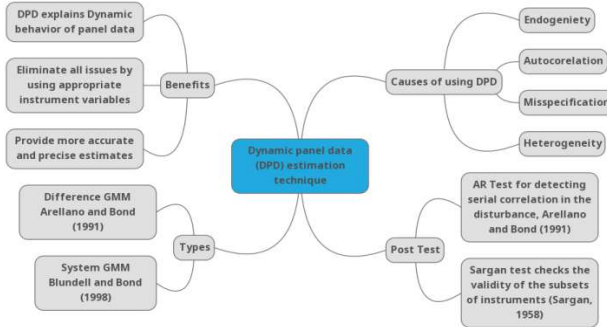


Figure 1 Dynamic panel data estimation methodology

The DPD (Dynamic Panel Data) techniques to estimate  $\beta$  coefficients of all equations include difference GMM by Arellano and Bond (1991) and System GMM by Arellano and Bover (1995) and Blundell and Bond (1998). Arellano and Bond (1991) recommended a process to ascertain serially correlated residuals. The Sargan test recognize the strength of all instruments used in estimation process (Sargan, 1958). Panel data with a wide cross section and a short time period ( $N > T$ ) are ideally suited to the GMM estimation technique.

**Results and Discussions**

The actual data presented in this section helps readers fully comprehend the Dutch Disease phenomenon and the mechanism through which it counteracts the beneficial impacts of foreign capital inflows on macroeconomic performance in emerging countries. Three models are estimated using empirical study. An empirical finding to determine whether Dutch Disease exists in developing economies is ER appreciation or depreciation as an outcome of increased foreign capital inflows. A second empirical analysis is then conducted for other two models to determine how foreign capital inflows impact the expansion of both industrial (marketable) and Service (non-marketable) sectors. Due to the larger number of cross sections in panel data, the cross-sectional dependency test is applied to the data. The cross-sectional independence in the dataset used in this study is statistically supported by the cross-sectional dependency analyses results, which are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Cross-sectional dependence Test*

Test	Model 1 Statistic	Model 2 Statistic	Model 3 Statistic
Pesaran’s Test of Cross-sectional independence	31.780 (0.000)	2.920 (0.004)	7.139 (0.000)
Frees' Test of Cross-sectional independence	15.103 (0.169)*	12.78 (0.1695)*	10.99 (0.1695)*

Friedman's Test of Cross-sectional independence	194.81 (0.000)	35.629 (1.000)*	50.99 (0.998)*
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Note: p-values are in parenthesis. \* indicates the acceptance of null hypothesis of cross-sectional independency.

Table 2 presents the outcomes of the causality test. The estimated results support the hypothesis that increases in FA and FDI in developing economies are what first cause ER movements.

**Table 2.**

*The Dumitrescu and Hurlin (2012) granger non causality test results*

Dependent variable	Independent variables								
	ER	PMR	FA	TO	M2	FDI	CE	SVA	IVA
ER	-	3.18775 (0.0014) ***	2.61100 (0.009)** *	4.72674 (0.000)** *	6.33009 (0.000)** *	2.13069 (0.0331) **	2.91739 (0.0035) ***	3.66386 (0.000)** *	5.79113 (0.0000) ***
PMR	9.5491 1 (0.000) ***	-	6.13999 (0.000)** *	6.77512 (0.000)** *	9.18406 (0.000)** *	1.58408 (0.1132)	6.31632 (0.000)** *	5.94450 (0.000)** *	5.54639 (0.000)** *
FA	9.3961 2 (0.000) ***	7.45288 (0.000)** *	-	5.88927 (0.000)** *	5.75881 (0.000)** *	3.25221 (0.0011) ***	8.59032 (0.000)** *	1.30646 (0.1914)	5.49245 (0.000)** *
TO	6.2133 9 (0.000) ***	3.65516 (0.0003) ***	2.45694 (0.0140) **	-	6.50261 (0.000)** *	2.77477 (0.0055) **	5.71205 (0.000)** *	7.88773 (0.000)** *	3.30272 (0.0010) ***
M2	4.5932 2 (0.000) ***	2.38791 (0.0169) **	0.53128 0.5952	7.09236 (0.000)** *	-	0.48363 0.6287	5.81528 (0.000)** *	3.94888 (0.000)** *	4.01129 (0.000)** *
FDI	1.7055 6 (0.0881) )	2.63021 (0.0003) ***	4.94560 (0.000)** *	4.52588 (0.000)** *	3.25723 (0.0011) ***	-	4.73028 (0.000)** *	5.55042 (0.000)** *	3.68061 (0.0002) ***
CE	6.7471 1 (0.000) ***	2.05005 (0.0404) **	2.69629 (0.0070) ***	3.28767 (0.0010) ***	8.86279 (0.000)** *	4.45567 (0.000)** *	-	5.99896 (0.000)** *	5.40104 (0.000)** *
SVA	8.4773 0 (0.000) ***	2.70271 (0.0069) ***	3.51055 (0.0004) ***	5.36494 (0.000)** *	4.68728 (0.000)** *	5.58268 (0.000)** *	6.62047 (0.000)** *	-	3.65017 (0.0003) ***
IVA	9.1327 1 (0.000) ***	5.28647 (0.000)** *	2.16129 (0.0307) **	6.34881 (0.000)** *	5.00550 (0.000)** *	4.09437 (0.000)** *	6.68248 (0.000)** *	3.64150 (0.0003) ***	-

Notes: \*\*\* and \*\* indicate that the coefficients are significant at the 1% and 5% levels of significance, respectively. P-values are presented in parentheses.

Dynamic panel data analysis is utilized to produce the estimated coefficients for all Models. For this purpose, the GMM estimator, a panel data estimation technique, is employed in this study. Both difference GMM (Arellano & Bond, 1991) and system GMM (Blundell & Bond, 1998) are used to test the robustness of estimates. Tables 3 show the results of the difference GMM, whereas Tables 4 show the results of the system GMM.

**Table 3***Estimated results based on Difference GMM*

Variables	One-Step Difference GMM		
	Dependent variable		
	ER (DUTCH DISEASE)	SVA (NON-MARKETABLE)	IVA (MARKETABLE)
PMR	-0.036 (-0.53)	0.57*** (2.38)	0.438** (1.92)
FA	-0.08*** (-2.42)	0.094** (1.95)	-0.154*** (-3.26)
TO	0.01 (1.15)	-0.063*** (-4.70)	0.052*** (3.77)
FDI	-0.043** (-1.76)	-0.037 (-0.43)	-0.261*** (-3.30)
M2	-0.027** (-2.27)	0.09*** (4.77)	-0.136*** (7.62)
CE	-0.05* (-1.53)	0.232*** (4.58)	-0.215*** (-4.32)
No. of observations	1280	1275	1274
No. of instruments	70	37	37
AR(1) test (p-value)	0.000	0.002	0.000
AR(2) test (p-value)	0.432	0.330	0.410
Sargan test ( $\chi^2$ )	0.052	0.066	0.021

Note: \*\*\*, \*\* and \* indicate 1%, 5% and 10% level of significance and t-statistics are in the parenthesis.

**Table 4***Estimated results for RER based on System GMM*

Variables	One-Step System GMM		
	Dependent variable		
	ER (DUTCH DISEASE)	SVA (NON-MARKETABLE)	IVA (MARKETABLE)
PMR	-0.011 (-0.44)	0.13*** (2.23)	-0.15*** (-2.95)
FA	-0.01 (-0.47)	0.028 (1.05)	-0.11*** (-4.15)
TO	0.011** (1.72)	-0.014*** (-2.95)	0.014*** (3.27)
FDI	-0.053* (-1.50)	0.06 (0.97)	0.004 (0.07)

M2	-0.002* (-1.37)	0.014*** (3.90)	-0.007*** (-3.50)
CE	-0.01 (-1.02)	0.065*** (3.48)	-0.027*** (-2.28)
No. of observations	1367	1362	1361
No. of instruments	71	72	72
AR(1) test (p-value)	0.000	0.000	0.000
AR(2) test (p-value)	0.519	0.416	0.348
Sargan test ( $\chi^2$ )	0.425	0.037	0.046

*Note: \*\*\*, \*\* and \* indicate level of significance at 1%, 5% and 10% while t-statistics are presented in the parenthesis.*

The impact of foreign inflows (PMR, FA, and FDI) on resource reallocation among the marketable and non-marketable sectors is examined in this section. The estimated coefficient for PMR shows that one unit change in PMR leads to appreciating ER by 0.011%, improvement in non-marketable sector (SVA) growth, and reduction in marketable sector growth (IVA). It separates the resource mobility effect of remittances from the spending effect. The Dutch Disease is seen as an increase in the spending power of remittance-receiving households that leads to amplified demand for services, causing high prices in the non-marketable sector. This causes a shift in labor and capital to the non-marketable sector at the expense of the marketable goods sector, lowering export competitiveness. By allocating funds to the progress of non-marketable goods and services in emerging economies, remittances have been linked negatively to the claim that they have led to the decline in competitiveness in essential exports (Lartey, 2008; Meyer & Shera, 2017).

The results of diff-GMM and sys-GMM are identical in this regard (Adu & Denkyirah, 2018). The presence of Dutch Disease is perceived in that remittances and foreign aid have decreased the marketable sector, as evidenced by PMR and FA estimates. Similarly, studies demonstrate that a one-unit increase in FDI corresponds to a 0.043 percent increase in ER, indicating the symptoms of Dutch Disease in emerging economies (Cambazoglu & Günes, 2016).

The association among trade openness and the ER can be clarified by the fact that as the real exchange rate increases, native goods become more luxurious to consumers abroad, which reduces demand. As a result, imports rise unless the government raises the cost of such products through tariffs or finds other ways to prevent their entry.

Conversely, an overvalued exchange rate makes imported marketable goods cheaper than domestic ones (e.g., quotas). According to Edwards (1988), due to two opposing impacts, a substitution effect and an income effect, trade openness does not appear to have a distinct impact. When marketable and non-marketable goods are considered alternatives, the substitution effect outweighs the income effect. Furthermore, a comprehensive study provided an inter-temporal model of the real exchange rate that supports to the same findings. The notion that the income effect is not dominating Khan and Ostry's (1992) model leads to a common agreement.

### Conclusion and policy implications

This study investigates how foreign inflows affect the actual exchange rate. With data for 84 emerging economies from 2001 to 2020, Difference GMM and System GMM panel data estimate techniques are used for this objective. Several diagnostic tests are employed to evaluate the data. Finally, it is stated that while marketable sector expenses drop and resources migrate to non-marketable sectors, foreign investment in emerging economies increases non-trading sector expenses. As a result, emerging economies' real exchange rates rise. The consequences of resource allocation and spending effect support the manifestation of Dutch Disease in emerging economies. ODA and migrant remittances are observed to be the core drivers of Dutch Disease. In the end, it must be acknowledged that a country's competitiveness is determined by a variety of factors, including its real exchange rate. To lessen the consequences of foreign inflows on competitiveness loss, policymakers must focus on both external and internal competitiveness improvements. By using fiscal policy carefully, the impact of foreign inflows on competitiveness can be further reduced. Steps toward achieving this goal include making the tax system leaner and more transparent and enhancing labour productivity through skill-upgrading initiatives. To reach their ultimate goals, developing economies should thoroughly examine their macroeconomic challenges and make use of foreign inflows. Instead of being consumption-driven, economies should be production-driven. Import taxes can be raised significantly to slow the growth of the non-marketable sector. More amenities for traders and marchers are needed to improve the marketable sector and limit the risk of Dutch disease.

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## **The Multinational Approach to Peace and Stability in Afghanistan: Divergence and Convergence between Pakistan, United States and China**

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Afghanistan provides a significant geographical linkage for the regions of the Middle East, South Asia, and Western Asia; therefore, its stability is utmost important for regional as well as broader global accord. The two and half decades of the US military engagement inside Afghanistan had a qualified success as far as peace and stability goals were concerned. The Doha talks focused on the complete withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and the internal dialogues among the Afghan stakeholders. Here, the United States, China and Pakistan's stakes inside Afghanistan became very significant in the context of counter- terrorism and peace. However, the policies of these three significant powers diverge over major elements of security and peace in the region. This paper attempts to explore such divergence and convergence in the multinational peace building approach in Afghanistan. A mixed methodology approach is used to investigate such divergence and convergence in the multinational approach to Afghanistan in the region. The findings of the paper suggest that the two major powers, the US and China are strategically involved in countering each other's influence and retaining their dominance in Central Asian region, including Afghanistan. For Pakistan on the other hand, the major adversary to contain and confine in the region is India. The paper argues that the three nations can benefit on a common ground if a multilateral approach to peace building is carried out prudently for the sake of a long-term peace and stability in the region .

**Keywords:** Peace and Stability, Diplomacy, National Interests, Natural Resources

Afghanistan's strategic location provides ready access to the Middle East, and South Asia, but that access depends on the prospects of peace and stability in the region. The United States invaded Afghanistan more than two decades ago to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. However, after more than 20 years of US invasion, Afghanistan still reels in instability with the situation exacerbated even after the coming of the Taliban in power and withdrawal of the US. Militancy and militant backed movements are actively engaged in disruption peace and security of the country. According to the Doha Accord, a time frame for the foreign forces exit was given, and the US was to withdraw from military bases in Afghanistan and cease control of Afghanistan to an interim government. This also included ceasefire to be operational immediately after the withdrawal. The United States was to size down its forces of

12,000 to 8,600 in four months' time and within fourteen months, the remaining forces were to exit Afghanistan.

When Joe Biden became the US president, an unconditional and complete withdrawal from Afghanistan was announced and the date given was September 11, 2021. To President Joe Biden, the US main policy contour was to dismantle Al-Qaeda and other militants from Afghanistan being existential threat to the US. Since Al-Qaeda supposedly had lost its strength with the death of Osama Bin Laden, so continuing the war was no longer needed in the eyes of US policy makers (Hussain, 2021). It was also stipulated that the presence of the US in Afghanistan was to add nothing to the national interests. Because the US was to focus on a "modern landscape of threats" which was quite different from the one that existed inside Afghanistan when the US invaded in 2001 (Shah, 2021). Besides the military engagement couldn't solve the Afghan war or deter the Taliban. Consequently, the complete withdrawal from Afghanistan was decided due to internal political factors and for a strategic shift to the Indo-Pacific from South Asia (Congress, 2018; State Department, 2020). The US withdrawal saw Afghanistan taken over by the Taliban and a transition government was set up by Taliban 2.0 as iteration of the previous Taliban regime. This current Afghanistan is said to be governed by an exclusive male and Pashtun dominated composition (Gannon, 2021). It is financially constrained and isolated from the global economy which has resulted in malnutrition and food crisis (Shah, 2022). The Taliban government has major security threats from militants as Islamic State of Khurasan (Mir, 2021). The ISKP poses security threats to both Taliban government and to the general public of Afghanistan. This is evident from the fact that after the Taliban take-over, deadly attacks were carried out by ISKP on health workers, Hazara and Shia communities; the resultant Sunni-Shia rift is an implication (Ricardo, 2022). The further targeting of infrastructure and deadly attacks on schools are being carried out in order to spread terror and miseries.

Though the Taliban are administering Afghanistan since August 2021, but the country is suffering from a humanitarian and a socio-economic crisis. One of the most important challenges to the Taliban rule is de-jure recognition by the world's major powers, such as the United States, Russia and China (Cafiero, 2022). Recent research has examined Afghanistan from a wide variety of peace and security dimensions; hence, a great deal of knowledge about this country is available. However, in literature, less attention has been devoted to objective identification of the stakes that major powers hold in Afghanistan, and which are mutually inclusive and draw on wider ownership and which will accrue long-term dividends, compared to those stakes that are exclusive and more competitive. This paper addresses this gap by exploring the stakeholder (three important countries— China, US and Pakistan) paradigm - either geographically contiguous or globally influential.

To Cambridge dictionary, a 'stake' in any mutual conflict is the set of rewards for those who succeed in such conflict situations. In the case of Afghanistan's endgame, stakes, or common and conflicting interests of the major powers, including the United States, China and Pakistan, and these three countries are working out strategies for how best to safeguard and promote their stakes/interests. The United States has invested around more than one trillion dollars for more than two decades with loss of more than four thousand lives. This is what makes the stakes of the US most significant in Afghanistan. China on the other hand has an abiding interest in Afghanistan's peace and stability because it has invested huge amounts of money in the country's reconstruction and rehabilitation; furthermore, its flagship Belt and Road Initiative would bear fruit if there was peace in Afghanistan.

For Pakistan, the stakes are much higher than the above two countries. It is because being a geographically contiguous neighbour, it would benefit hugely from Afghanistan's reconstruction by way of providing skilled manpower, technology, and capital; and access to central Asia, which in turn would open doors to boundless trade. It is expected that such a scenario would help Pakistan benefit from the hydrocarbon resources of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. In addition, peace in Afghanistan would ensure Pakistan's western border is safe, ending the strong perception about a long history of instability in the borderland region.

This research investigates the stakes which major powers, such as the United States, China and Pakistan have in relation to Afghanistan with particular emphasis on identifying the basis of the three countries' interests in Afghanistan's peace and stability. This research paper analyses the problem under investigation in three main sections: Section one outlines the methodology of the study; Section two underscores the descriptive statistics about Afghanistan's significance for China, the US and Pakistan with the help of graphs and tables; and the third section provides a hypothetical framework which gives a theoretical base to the findings of this research.

### **Method**

For the purpose of this research, a mixed method design consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods has been designed. This mixed method is valid in exploring the problem under investigation within the paradigm of the research objectives. Research findings are validated to great extent through triangulation. The quantitative data underscores the importance of Afghanistan for three countries Pakistan, China, and the United States, whereas qualitative data provides the required explanations. This method had three phases of data collection and analysis: the initial data collection process, followed by a survey questionnaire and finally qualitative data collection and analysis.

### **Study population and Sampling**

This research is conducted through primary as well secondary data analysis which comprised interviews with key Informant Interviews on the research area, especially personnel from defence, foreign affairs ministry and retired military officers having expertise on war, conflict and strategic issues and with retired civil bureaucrats for their input on foreign policy affairs. For secondary data analysis, various libraries were visited and books, research articles were collected. Online data is collected through digital libraries, searching websites as Brookings institute, Institution of Strategic Studies Islamabad, Jinnah Institute Islamabad, Islamabad Policy Research Institute, websites of NATO, the US State Department.

The sample area comprised Pakistan Foreign office, Defence Ministry, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), public sector universities (Behria University Islamabad, COMSATS Islamabad, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, National Defence University Islamabad, University of Peshawar, Indian Think Tank, Thailand Senior Journalist, Director of UK Statecraft (Table 1, Table 2). The criteria for selecting the sample were taking the opinion of the experts on foreign policy, defence and security as well as academicians. This was done to cover perspectives about Pakistan, China, and the US stakes inside Afghanistan. The sample comprised 23 key informants' interviews from respondents having expertise on the research area. The questionnaire used for the study was semi-structured.

**Table 1**  
*Showing the results of different organizations.*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4.3	4.3	4.3
BU	1	4.3	4.3	8.7
COMSATS	1	4.3	4.3	13.0
FJWU	7	30.4	30.4	43.5
India	1	4.3	4.3	47.8
ISI	1	4.3	4.3	52.2
NDU	1	4.3	4.3	56.5
PSU	1	4.3	4.3	60.9
SPU	1	4.3	4.3	65.2
TISF	1	4.3	4.3	69.6
UoP	7	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	23	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2.**  
*Showing the number of specialized numbers Area Specialized*

Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
6	26.1	26.1	26.1
14	60.9	60.9	87.0
1	4.3	4.3	91.3
1	4.3	4.3	95.7
1	4.3	4.3	100.0
23	100.0	100.0	

### Results

All data was analysed using a variety of statistical packages, including SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences); relationships between other studied variables are given by bar charts and tables included in the text of Pakistan, the US and China stakes and elaborated.

**Table 3**

*Hypotheses of the Study and Analysis Techniques*

Serial No	Hypotheses of the Study	Variable type	Data Analysis	Remarks
1	Pakistan, the United States and China have stakes in Afghanistan peace and stability	Yes or No	Descriptive Statistics	Frequency distributions and Bar charts showing Pakistan, the United States and China have stakes in Afghanistan peace and stability

Statistics for US, China and Pakistan stakes

Valid	23
Missing	0

### The Multination Peace and Stability Stakes in Afghanistan

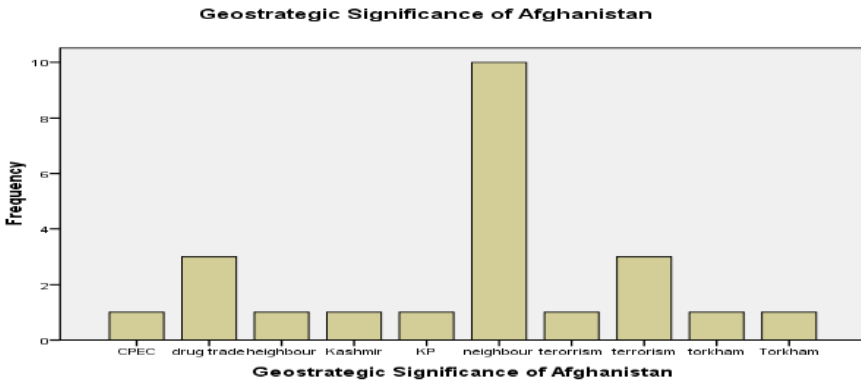
#### Pakistan Stakes in Afghanistan Peace and Stability

Peaceful and stable Afghanistan is significant for Pakistan for its economic and strategic relations with China and access to natural resources of Central Asian Republics. Pakistan relations with Afghanistan have been strewn with multiple complicated factors as institutional disconnect, ethnicity, border issue, mistrust and people to people dissonance. (Nasreen, 2016) Whereas the systemic influence along with domestic and state factors have made it more intricate.

The research statistics shows that militancy and terrorism from Afghanistan have fall out for Pakistan in general and for tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. The Torkham border remains closed most of the time because of the troubled security situation.

Pakistan has adopted cautious diplomatic stance in the Taliban 2.0 government and has conferred only de facto recognition to Taliban rule. Afghanistan has resumed ambassadorial tasks in the capital of Pakistan (Khan, 2021).

Graph 1: Pakistan’s Stakes in Afghanistan



**Table 4**  
*Pakistan Stakes in Afghanistan*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CPEC	1	4.3	4.3	4.3
	drug trade	3	13.0	13.0	17.4
	neighbour	1	4.3	4.3	21.7
	Kashmir	1	4.3	4.3	26.1
	KP	1	4.3	4.3	30.4
	neighbour	10	43.5	43.5	73.9
	Terrorism	1	4.3	4.3	78.3
	Terrorism	3	13.0	13.0	91.3
	Torkham	1	4.3	4.3	95.7
	Torkham	1	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

Pakistan wants an inclusive Afghan government, having no any favorite inside Afghanistan and not to enmesh herself in internal friction like that of Haqqani and Mullah Baradar— whereas the Haqqani is deemed close to the Pakistan’s establishment. (Latifi, 2021). While on question of recognition, Pakistan has been in a dire confusing position because a de jure recognition to Taliban will break all hell loose on Pakistan in the form of US becoming more adamant in diplomatic and economic stances as in Financial Action Task Force (FATF), hence Pakistan is cautious following regional and global stakeholders in this matter. In the region she

has efforts for China–Russia–Pakistan bloc which has a promising chance for regional recognition of the Taliban 2.0.

While taking Pakistan stakes in Afghanistan peace and stability the security perspective is significant because terrorism has been caused and escalated in Pakistan as a fallout of Afghan war. The Tehreek-i-Taliban [TTP] and Afghan Taliban have ethnic and ideological connections which have been strengthened with establishment of Taliban government in August 2021. Afghan Taliban have had arbitration role for Pakistan and TTP in order to reach for a peaceful settlement because the latter has been involved in deadly attacks on Pakistani state institutions (Gilani, 2022). However the process did not succeed. The Taliban 2.0 regime is using the TTP as an instrument against Pakistan military.

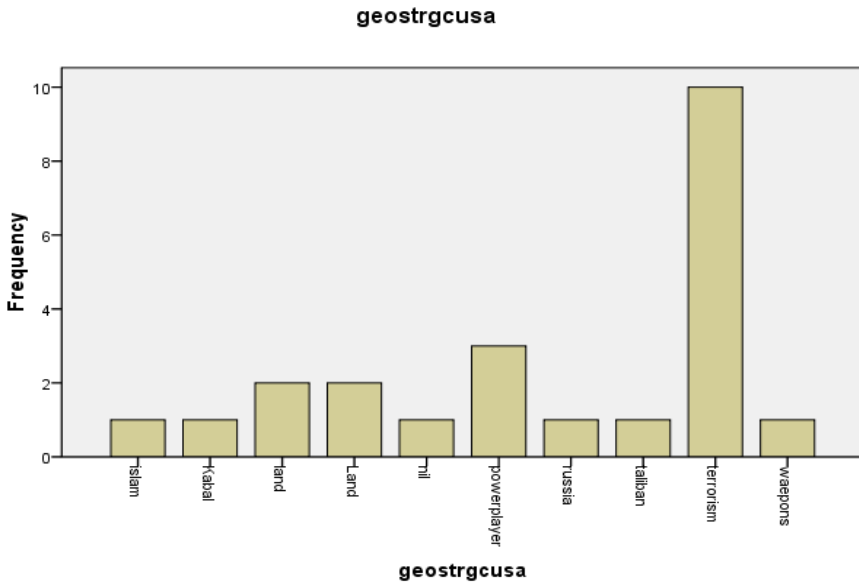
### **The United States Stakes in Afghanistan Peace and Stability**

Afghanistan is important for the United States in the context of emerging strategic world order being shaped in the Asian regions. The US as sole hegemon since the collapse of USSR wants maintaining same hegemonic position in the Asian region in order to have control of Central Asian resources and to lessen China and Russian leverages in the region. The US has withdrawn from Afghanistan mainly to shift its resources for the containment of China as China's assertive economy and military is threatening for the US (Parveen, 2023). Moreover the US wanted to leave Afghanistan in a respectable way with no impression of defeat from Taliban.

The President Joe Biden has rigid Afghan policy after the Taliban take over as manifested from non-recognition of Taliban government and has refrained key partners from any diplomatic ties with Taliban government. Western world has criticized Taliban 2.0 regime for being violating women rights to education and work and for failure of stable economy and good governance. Further to the punitive measures the Biden Administration has given half of Afghanistan frozen assets to the 9/11 victims which in itself has arisen questions. (TRT World, 2022).

Graph 2: Stakes of the United States in Afghanistan





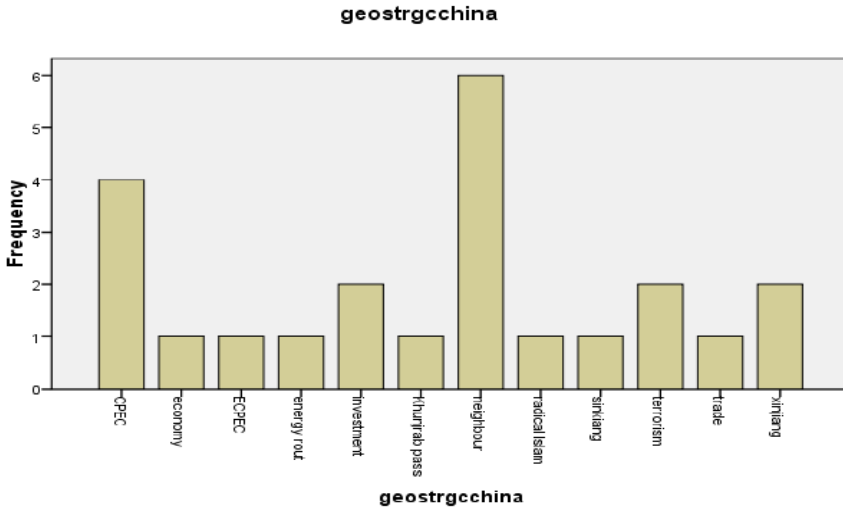
**Table 5**  
*Stakes of the United States in Afghanistan*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	islam	1	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Kabal	1	4.3	4.3	8.7
	land	2	8.7	8.7	17.4
	Land	2	8.7	8.7	26.1
	nil	1	4.3	4.3	30.4
	powerplayer	3	13.0	13.0	43.5
	russia	1	4.3	4.3	47.8
	taliban	1	4.3	4.3	52.2
	terrorism	10	43.5	43.5	95.7
	waepons	1	4.3	4.3	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

### China Stakes in Afghanistan Peace and Stability

Afghanistan is important for China for natural resources exploitation and development of infrastructure. China is in a much better position due to assertive economy and domestic stability to claim that it can play a stabilising role in the region and, geo-strategically, to take a decisive part in regional affairs. China's policy aims in Afghanistan are, first, to safeguard Xinjiang; as China is alert that Afghanistan doesn't breeds insurgents and militants which can destabilises Xinjing. Specifically China wants no space inside Afghanistan for both the ETIM, which is causing the Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang, and the ISKP, which has plans for an Islamic caliphate under its jurisdiction in western China. As already mentioned China is apprehensive about the Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang and remained alert because Uyghur groups from Wakhan bases located in Afghanistan had attacked on administration of Xinjiang. China desires strong economic terms ensuring huge investment in mines and deposits of Afghanistan and the broader Central Asian region. Afghanistan is significant for Chinese economic interests and for the expansion of its Belt and Road Initiative although previously the economic interests have not been fully succeeded due to decades long insurgency and civil war.

Graph 3: Stakes of China in Afghanistan



**Table 6**  
*Stakes of China in Afghanistan*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CPEC	4	17.4	17.4	17.4
	economy	1	4.3	4.3	21.7
	ECPEC	1	4.3	4.3	26.1
	energy rout	1	4.3	4.3	30.4
	investment	2	8.7	8.7	39.1
	Khunjrab pass	1	4.3	4.3	43.5
	neighbour	6	26.1	26.1	69.6
	radical Islam	1	4.3	4.3	73.9
	sinkiang	1	4.3	4.3	78.3
	terrorism	2	8.7	8.7	87.0
	Trade	1	4.3	4.3	91.3
	Xinjiang	2	8.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	23	100.0	100.0	

The Chinese are apprehensive about the same possible fallout from the Afghan border into its western province of Xinjiang.

The Wakhan Corridor is also significant which is a land narrow strip in Afghanistan north and is going through Afghanistan to China, situated in north towards Pamir mountains, south towards Hindu Kush and segregates Kashmir region in Pakistan from Pakistan. This strip is used by Uighur for infiltration in Xinjiang and has enhanced security issues.

The Taliban shelter and train the ETIM in Afghanistan and ex-FATA of Pakistan where these elements are fighting for separation from China. Xinjiang is significant for gas and oil production but these separatist elements have throughout impeded the security as happened in incidents in 1992 and 1997, (Chung, 2002) renewed in 2009, giving Xinjiang an international profile. China wants security and counter-terrorism cooperation with Afghanistan in order to

overcome Uighur and has had foreign ministries exchanged. China has played role in Afghanistan security agreement with the US, (China supports the security agreement between Afghanistan and the United States, 2013) and later on Taliban Doha agreement with the US.

China like Pakistan has remained cautious and did not officially recognize the Taliban government. However, Beijing has maintained embassy in Afghanistan and kept some low-level diplomatic initiatives and trade. Some quarters in Beijing hailed the US unyielding and hurried withdrawal from Afghanistan as token of declining US prestige and weak position of west (Zhou, 2021), but this has not shifted the contours of China's Afghanistan policy. China's stakes in Afghanistan are mainly to invest in Afghanistan economic resources as the latter has promising gas and oil resources in north, copper fields in Jawkhar Darband and Aynak, gold reserves in the northern provinces of Badakhshan, Ghazni and Takhar, huge deposits of iron ore between Herat and the Panjshir Valley (Muzalqeky, 2010). China is in dire need of iron and copper ore, as well as giving access to the natural gas supplies of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

China owing to the viability of Belt and Road Initiative will try to modify the politico-economic landscape of Asia. It is the key to China's strategic plan for expanding its influence. China has stand for Afghan frozen assets in international financial institutions to be released (Calabrese, 2021). Moreover, China is to promote the 'Pine Nuts Air Corridor' as a token of Chinese promotion of Afghan pine nuts boosting agriculture sector of Afghanistan (MFA, 2022a).

## Discussion

### **The Multination Common and Conflicting Interests in Afghanistan**

Since the Taliban assuming power on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2021, the bilateral relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan are at a crossroads. Pakistan has de facto recognition of Taliban, and it has approached regional countries in order to assist them in having a working governance system. At the other spectrum, China is being watched closely by the US because any initiative on part of the China regarding Taliban 2.0 recognition will cause serious commercial and geopolitical implication for both the countries and the United States' European allies.

Pakistan role is significant for China in countering fissiparous trends, militancy, and religious extremism in order to secure Xinjiang (Haider, 2005). Post 9/11, Pakistan took it on priority to curb Uighur activity as manifested in the Pakistan-China anti-terror agreement 2005 being ratified in 2006 by China as token of cooperation. While the West led by US see Pakistan as hub of terrorism but also key to solution of Afghanistan problem. The results of this research show that terrorism is the main threat and there is a strong recognition by the US, Pakistan and China of the need to work together to combat it.

The rising Asian region is compelling countries for regional economic and security cooperation and to go in tandem for energy policies. The results of this research show the significance of Afghanistan for China and Pakistan in form of investment, energy routes, trade and above all for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Belt and Road Initiative (Tables 4 & 6, Graphs 1 & 3).

Regional countries are interdependent especially in economics needs as in energy requirements competition is enhanced among these countries in order to control infrastructure and transportation of resources.

Geo-strategically, Pakistan and China have mutual strategic and economic interests as Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea in Pakistan's Baluchistan province is promoting these interests. Pakistan is connecting Gwadar port with Central Asia for gas and energy transit and will lead bilateral trade with Central Asia with open market of Europe.

China with an assertive economy is spreading its control and influence in the region by infrastructure development as in form of China Pakistan Economic Corridor which is facilitating China trade with shortest distance, time and low expenses. Because China face hurdles through Straits of Malacca, the journey takes 45 days and impeded by the US. CPEC is vital component of BRI which links South Asia with Central Asia.

China will have frictions for sea routes linking South Asia, the Northern Mediterranean, North Africa and Southeast Asia (Ahmad, 2015). CPEC will yield in economic cooperation and ultimately will converge interests of regional countries.

Pakistan and China cooperate for peace and stability inside Afghanistan because only that will guarantee regional connectivity and economic integration through CPEC, alongside other economic plans. Pakistan's location at the crossroads of Gulf countries, China and Central Asian Republics makes its role of prime significance. In the coming forty years, the oil reserves of Gulf countries are expected to expire, so the exploration of those in the Central Asian Republics is essential and that will give new import to the economic corridors through Pakistan, providing a backdrop to the US containment of China's and India's designs for regional supremacy. It is envisaged that trade through CARs and Pakistan could increase CARs and China GDP by 2.3%, whereas nearly 2% GDP can be by Xinjiang alone. Afghanistan is contemplated by Pakistan as a soil of rail, energy supply line and roads from Eurasia and Indian Ocean.

All the three countries, Pakistan, the US and China are playing their part for stability and peace in Afghanistan. But, the policies of Pakistan, the US and China diverge over regional geo-political dynamics. As shown in Table 5, Graph 2, US interest in Afghanistan is power play, as a result of which, the US intends to stay in Afghanistan to contain Chinese influence both in Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. Conversely, China's interest is to counter the US leverage, and Pakistan is obsessed with countering India's position.

Pakistan would certainly like to help end the conflict; it has stakes in peace in Afghanistan. But for Islamabad the focus is on reducing India role inside Afghanistan which has been resented by Afghanistan and has taken it as interference in Afghan internal affairs by Pakistan. Similarly, the US does not want China to be beneficiary of political and economic stability as she has not invested in peace and stability of Afghanistan.

China wanted complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan and see herself as regional dominant economic and military power. But she wants her dominant position to be looked through cultural and economic cooperation than neo-imperialist nation asserting its hegemony on smaller nations. How these sometimes contradictory positions play out remains to be seen but it depends largely on how the political map takes shape in the near future. Now as the Taliban government has been established so there are various challenges in the form of non-inclusive political dispensation, divide among Taliban own ranks and files, and most importantly non-recognition.

In the context the US is rigid on non-recognition of Afghanistan and at the same time uneasy about China moves. Although China is cautious and with wait and see policy. It will pin

its hopes on peace taking hold in the country and not taking a partisan role because it believes time is on its side, but China CPEC and BRI endeavour are apprehensive for US.

Indian factor is causing strategic cooperation of Pakistan with China. However, the acceptance of reality is needed that an independent and free Afghanistan may initiate policies of enduring friendship with its regional countries, comprised India and Pakistan must emphasize that Afghanistan land be not allowed by any country whether openly or secretly against Pakistan's interests.

Pakistan can contribute hugely in the stability and peace of Afghanistan in form of trade facilitation, infrastructure build up and technical assistance for establishing public and private departments and giving favourable terms for bilateral trade. For Pakistan the utmost important is to have friendly or at least neutral Afghanistan with no favourite faction, group or individual which will ultimately ease their bilateral relations.

It will give Pakistan a margin for improving relations with India and in turn diplomatic working relations, calling on the US, EU and others to support these endeavours. Pakistan would reap dividends when having reality based policies and then setting priorities in that realm. Influence can be sustained or built through soft power, mutual cooperation and an outlook that would strengthen areas of convergence. Diplomacy through media hype should be minimised.

Border management issues have great significance. Once Pakistan has physically and politically established its writ over international borders, the situation could incrementally tilt in Pakistan's favour, though this is, presently, a tricky issue. The Western interests are to counter China leverage in the region hence including Afghanistan into CPEC project is implausible. China will remain within the evolving scenario while using Iran for goods transit to western markets. In this challenging situation Pakistan must emphasize transit, trade and economic potential for economic integration and connectivity in the region so that economic interests can be equally served along with security interests.

Afghanistan stability and peace is utmost requirement for access to Central Asian countries and for viability of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. It would get dividends from exploitation of 1.5 \$ trillion mineral reserves. The US would keep stability and peace of Afghanistan on priority so that it could not be used as soil for militant activities against US. China would also like to integrate Afghanistan into its orbit of influence by becoming a partner in the country's reconstruction – and it would benefit from exploitation of Afghanistan's huge untapped mineral reserves.

As the policy contours of both US and China are to access natural resources of CARs and Afghanistan and to counter each other influence hence there is a continuous struggle and competition between the superpower and the emerging regional great power. In this evolving scenario the strategic importance of Pakistan is making it an important linkage. Accordingly Afghanistan is becoming a significant determinant of three countries foreign policies and national interests.

By contrast, the continuation of the conflict would jeopardize all hopes of reconstruction and there would be increased destabilisation in the region. Daesh, Fidayi Mahaz and Turkistan Islamic movements would garner additional support and would launch further attacks, and China's western border would become more insecure. Attacks across the Oxus would increase

and Iran would not be immune to the threat of Daesh striking targets deep in the country. Pakistan would also have to confront the menace of border incursions.

### **Recommendations**

- The Taliban 2.0 are needed to formulate an inclusive broad based government and to ensure women empowerment by allowing women for education and work in order to get legitimacy and international recognition.
- To eradicate all form of militancy and non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda and refrain from hurting the USA's interests in the region.
- Pakistan, in the changing dynamics is to reset its ties with Washington in order to overcome all mistrusts.
- Although Pakistan and China desire formal recognition to the Afghanistan but the international rigid stance is resistive to both as already mentioned in the article that Pakistan at the moment couldn't withstand the economic tough stances of the US and similarly China is to avoid confrontation with Washington in South Asia and safeguard its interest in the Taiwan straits.
- However, in the wake of Afghanistan deteriorated economy and humanitarian crisis USA, China and Russia need to take the regional players as Pakistan, India, CARs and Iran along in order to make consensus through UN forum on future Afghan inclusive political dispensation.
- The US will need to consider the geopolitical implications of non-engagement or recognition. So if the Taliban review their rigid stances then some settlements can be considered.
- Assuming the Taliban stays in power and the economy slowly rebounds, it is very likely that China will emerge as a key player in Afghanistan's economic future.
- While China becoming major economic player in the region and Pakistan will also accrue the dividends in form of CPEC then the entire situation will make the US least significant economic player and that Washington would be uncomfortable with completely ceding this space to Russia or China.

### **Conclusion**

It would be in the interests of the three countries to counter terrorism and to ensure peace and stability in the region. If the US wants to stabilise Afghanistan, then a resolution to the conflict is possible. Ideally, it should seek to achieve the following objectives: no foreign militants in Afghanistan, no more use of Afghan soil against any country, progress towards pluralism, protection of minorities and ensuring human rights. The resistance movement in Afghanistan would be prepared to go along with all these conditions.

But a continuation of the miserable plight of Afghanistan would have deadly repercussions for the whole region. The utmost requirement is the immediate humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan specifically with release of its frozen assets and waving sanctions on Afghanistan by international financial institutions. The political dispensation inside Afghanistan be all-inclusive while giving representation to all stakeholders with no discrimination of minorities and gender. An institution building mechanism abreast of updated trends and transformation should be focused on.

Moreover, neutral foreign policy should be adopted towards neighbouring countries; an effective administration, proper media projection and above all, strong diplomatic relations with economically strong countries are viable policy options for Afghanistan. Ethnic strife has

undermined any political and military headway made, so an intra-Afghan dialogue should be arranged that brings together groups like the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras and anti-Taliban, or at least moderate Pakhtuns, to agree on power-sharing arrangements and changes in the constitutional structure.

Pakistan role of a facilitator of peace and stability and to provide assistance in rehabilitation and infrastructure build up with no obsession on countering India influence there. The need of time is that Afghanistan as a sovereign state is to have own independent foreign relations and achieve avenue for its economic stability and growth. The rational choices for these countries are to work together for counterterrorism, and extremism and more significantly to ensure regional economic integration. All the economic projects like Belt and Road initiative, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, TAPI and CASA-1000 are in need of stable and peaceful Afghanistan in order to fully benefit from these economic endeavours. In the emerging world order, the US and China seem on more competitive pace on issues of South China Sea, East China Sea whereas the alliances of QUAD and AUKUS are on scene against China. Due to economic interdependence these two powers are adopting diplomatic stances for strategic balance and re-assurance.

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## **Ideological Framing and Polarization in Imran Khan's Speech at UNGA on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019: A Political Discourse Analysis**

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The aim of this study is to critically analyze the components of the speech given by Imran Khan, the 22nd Prime Minister of Pakistan, during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 27, 2019. Van Dijk's (1997) Political Discourse Analysis framework was employed to examine how politicians persuade their audience, propagate their ideologies, and construct in-group and out-group divisions in their speeches. The study sought to achieve its objectives by analyzing both macro and micro structures in the speech and exploring the underlying agenda behind the utilization of these discourse structures. The qualitative data consisted of the English transcript of the speech, totaling approximately 2,577 words. NVIVO software and Dijk's Political Discourse Analysis framework were employed for the analysis of the speech. The findings of the study revealed that the macro elements in the speech provided an overview of national, regional, and global issues such as climate change, money laundering, Islamophobia, and the Kashmir conflict. Through the use of microstructural elements, the speaker effectively expressed his ideological and political beliefs regarding these aforementioned issues. In summary, this research examined Imran Khan's UNGA speech through the lens of discourse structures, shedding light on the macro and micro elements utilized by the speaker to convey his perspective on various socio-political topics.

**Keywords:** political discourse, ideology, macro & micro elements, Islamophobia

Examining political speeches and language used by politicians is a complex task due to the hidden ideologies, manifestos, objectives, and motives inherent in political discourse. While politicians may strive for clarity when addressing the public, their language is often intricate, featuring double meanings, implicit structures, and elusive connotations. According to Van Dijk (2005), "political ideologies are primarily acquired, expressed, learned, propagated, and contested through discourse. In this verbal battlefield of political discourse, conflicting groups, power dynamics, struggles, and interests collide." Politicians and parties

commonly present themselves in a positive light while portraying opponents negatively through various mediums like speeches, conferences, campaigns, and social media, leading to polarization and the division between "Us" and "Them."

The term "Us" refers to members of an in-group, representing their own group, while "Them" designates the out-group, seen as potentially threatening to the in-group. This division between in-group and out-group is prominently observed in political discourse. It is essential to highlight the strategies or tactics employed by politicians to construct or maintain these in-group and out-group identities and boundaries.

While there are numerous studies utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is worth noting that several of these studies have specifically examined Imran Khan's speeches. For instance, Nusrat et al., (2020) conducted research on Imran Khan's protest speeches during the Dharna in 2014, exploring the correlation between the usage of pronouns "I" and "We" and power dynamics within his speeches. Additionally, Rehman et al., (2021) conducted a Fairclough-based study that focused on Imran Khan's 74<sup>th</sup> speech. When examining political discourses, such as a speech delivered by a global leader, researchers have found van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to be insightful (Javaid et al., 2022; Pratiwi & Refnaldi, 2018; Komaruddin, 2014).

Previous researches on Khan's 2019 speech (Javaid et al., 2022; Mushtaq et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020; Imtiaz, 2020) have either employed different models of Critical Discourse Analysis or focused on some specific aspects of his speech. However, no one has conducted a comprehensive analysis of entire speech using Van Dijk's Political discourse analysis model in conjunction with NVivo software. Previous researches have also suggested that CDS can benefit from a more comprehensive approach, involving both micro-level and a macro-level critical perspective (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Stamou, 2018). This distinctive approach in the analysis is noteworthy as it combines the theoretical framework suggested by Van Dijk (2005) in the form of Political Discourse Analysis with the utilization of NVivo software to reveal underlying ideologies within the speech.

This research addressed the following research questions:

1. How do politicians employ language to disseminate their ideologies?
2. How do politicians utilize diverse linguistic strategies to categorize and position various individuals or groups within the social realm?
3. How is the concept of positive self-representation and negative portrayal of others deliberately constructed in political speeches?

### **Literature Review**

Discourse refers to any form of spoken or written communication that goes beyond individual sentences to convey meaning. It encompasses both simple and complex segments of speech and can be applied to various contexts (Johnstone, 2018; Mumby & Clair, 1997). For example, discussions between a teacher and students would be considered discourse.

Different studies have been done by focusing different discourse like Folklores (Khan & Nusrat, 2020), and poems (Sardaraz & Nusrat, 2019). Discourse Analysis (DA) involves critically examining written, spoken, or gestural language. It is a method used to study language in its social context, aiming to understand how discourse is employed in real situations. Researchers can analyze different types of data to uncover the meaning beyond individual sentences. DA encompasses both written and spoken language, with the written form often being more complex (Van Dijk, 1985; Potter & Edwards, 1996).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Van Dijk (1998), is a tool used to analyze written and spoken materials, with a focus on uncovering biases, power dynamics, and underlying agendas. Fairclough (1992) further emphasized that CDA critically examines various types of discourse, including political speeches and dialogues. Political leaders and influential figures have been the subject of numerous studies applying the Fairclough model to identify power dynamics, hidden agendas, and the use of language for persuasion (Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R., 1997).

The concept of Critical Linguistics (CL), proposed by literary theorists and linguists such as Kress and Fowler (1979), emerged in the late 1970s. CL, building on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, aimed to isolate ideology in discourse and understand how it shapes societal practices. Fairclough (1995) and Fowler (1991) emphasized the three functions of language in CL: ideational, relational, and textual. Language serves to comprehend the world, establish connections between speakers and audiences, and convey information. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aligns with CL, focusing on the social act of language and its connection to practice.

In summary, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates the ideologies and visions conveyed through language, with a focus on power dynamics, biases, and hidden agendas. Language is viewed as a social practice that shapes and is shaped by society. CDA is employed to scrutinize social and political discourses and analyze the language used to legitimize specific events, beliefs, individuals, and more. It also enables the study of prevailing ideological divisions and conflicts. CDA highlights how certain events reinforce ideological beliefs, potentially widening societal gaps.

Various approaches within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) encompass disciplines such as Social Semiotics, and Halliday's salient work on Systemic-functional linguistics (e.g., Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Halliday, 1978; Rashidi & Souzandehfar, 2010; Shabani et al., 2019). However, among the prevailing CDS theories used today, the three most influential ones are Fairclough's framework based on socio-cultural (2016), Ruth Wodak's prominent work as discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2009), and van Dijk's theory based on socio-cognitive perspectives (2005, 2016).

The next section provides an overview of these three frameworks with a specific focus on Van Dijk's theory of CDA which is taken as the basis to provide certain information and serve as the main theoretical framework to be used in this study. According to Fairclough (2018), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) involves a dialectical reasoning approach that combines discourse critique and discourse explanation. Discourse critique addresses how to change reality while explaining the relationship between discourse and various aspects of reality. This dual focus on critique and explanation constitutes the core of critical discourse analysis.

Fairclough (2018) views discourse as a social practice that both reproduces and is shaped by knowledge, identities, and power relations. His three-stage model of critical discourse analysis includes description, focusing on formal features like vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures; interpretation, which examines text production and comprehension in relation to context and intertextuality; and the explanatory stage, analyzing how discourse and social practices interact and influence each other, shaping power relations.

Ruth Wodak introduced the "discourse historical approach" in critical discourse analysis, emphasizing the importance of historical and socio-political context in discourse analysis. The approach views discourse as a macro-topic generating sub-topics through intra-discursivity and intratextuality, analyzing interconnected "fields of actions" that shape discourses. It is interdisciplinary, problem-oriented, and eclectic, incorporating various theories and methods, including elements of ethnography or fieldwork. The approach explores intra-textual and intra-discursive relationships, considering historical contexts alongside discourses. Discursive strategies, such as nomination, prediction, argumentation, perspectivization, and mitigation or intensification, are outlined in Wodak and Reisigl's work "Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis." Wodak's model integrates socio-political and historical circumstances to understand changes in discourse genres over time.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) encompasses various approaches, with the "self-other schema" being a significant focus. In the analysis of political discourse, politicians utilize linguistic strategies to persuade and shape ideologies. They highlight their positive attributes while downplaying negative ones and use language to accentuate negative portrayals of opponents while diminishing their positive qualities. Van Dijk's ideological square model is a vital framework for analyzing these linguistic strategies, exploring the dynamics of "us versus them" within socio-political groups. This approach examines how politicians construct favorable self-portrayals while dehumanizing the "other," serving as a potent narrative for legitimizing ideological beliefs, practices, and sentiments. The Socio-cognitive model of ideology analysis combines discourse, social, and cognitive analyses (Rashidi & Souzandehfar, 2010; Alhumaidi, 2013).

At the micro-level, discourse analysis focuses on textual and conversational structures, including elements like vocabulary, study of meaning, and systematic structures. At the macro-level, social analysis delves into societal structures, institutional/organizational structures, group relations, and group structures, highlighting power dynamics and inequality between social groups.

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as the foundation for his 2005 framework to analyze political discourse, which is rich in ideology and presents various ideological perspectives. This comprehensive framework blends argumentative, meaning and techniques of politics at the lower-level and employs an ideological dichotomy at the macro-level to reveal how language is used to favor in-group members and disadvantage out-group members.

Political discourse involves a polarization structure due to differing ideologies adopted by various political groups. The discourse represents competing or conflicting group memberships, and the mental models of "*us versus them*" influence the content of political discourse, leading to polarization in terms of in-group or out-group affiliation. Van Dijk's (2005) framework of discourse related to politics, including the "*ideological square*," is a valuable tool to analyze ideological polarization in political discourses, making it a comprehensive analytical approach widely acknowledged by researchers in the field.

- Emphasize positive aspects of 'US'
- Emphasize negative aspects of 'THEM'
- Deemphasize negative things about 'US'
- Deemphasize Positive things about 'THEM'

These four above mentioned characteristics make this model a square.

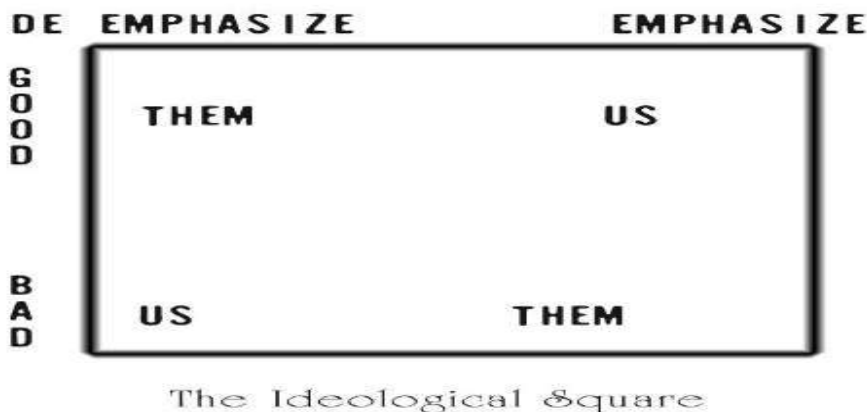


Figure 1. Ideological Square (Van Dijk, 1993)

Figure 1 describes ideological square which is a "fundamental dichotomy" that focuses on 'Positive Self-representation' and 'Negative Other-representation.' It polarizes actors into in-groups and out-groups, with in-groups projecting positive attributes while downplaying negatives, and vice versa for out-groups. Political discourse often emphasizes topics favorable to 'our' group while associating opponents with negative themes. These macro-strategies serve face-keeping, impression management, and the exclusion of opponents from the in-group. At the micro-level, linguistic elements like lexical items, syntax, and discursive devices are used to instill favorable ideologies in the public's mind. In addition to the dichotomy, Van Dijk introduced the following 25 discursive devices as general strategies for ideological discourse production and useful tools for analyzing political discourse.

*actor description (meaning), authority (argumentation), burden (topos), categorization (meaning), comparison (meaning, argumentation), consensus (political strategy), counterfactuals (meaning, argumentation), disclaimers (meaning), euphemism (rhetoric, meaning), evidentiality (meaning, argumentation), example/illustration (argumentation), generalization (meaning, argumentation), hyperbole (rhetoric), implication (meaning), irony (meaning), lexicalization (style), metaphor (meaning, rhetoric), national self-glorification (meaning), norm expression (normalization), number game (rhetoric, argumentation), polarization; US-Them categorization (meaning) populism (political strategy), presupposition (meaning), vagueness (meaning), and victimization (meaning).* (p. 735-36)

Numerous research studies have been conducted to examine the opaque meanings, ideologies, and agendas of politicians. For instance, Javaid et al., (2022) employed Van Dijk's Ideological Square Model to analyze Imran Khan's speech at the UNGA, focusing specifically on Islamophobia. The study explored micro and macro-level strategies within the model, revealing that Khan, instead of challenging the Us versus Them schema prevalent in Islamophobia, employed the same schema to highlight ideological differences between the West and Muslims.

Mehboob and Alvi (2021) conducted an analysis of hate speech tweets targeting women in the Pakistani context using van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach. Their study aimed to investigate how discourse, social cognition, and social conditions collectively contribute to the creation of a social system that discriminates against women. The tweets under scrutiny were directed at influential women in Pakistan, including journalists, politicians, and actresses. The researchers conducted a two-fold analysis, starting with a discursive level examination of the tweets, followed by an assessment at the cognitive level, focusing on social cognition and mental models. The research by Mehboob and Alvi (2021) utilized a qualitative approach, involving non-numerical data analysis. The current study also employs a qualitative approach. In another research study, Rehman et al., (2021) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis of Imran Khan's UNGA speech, utilizing Fairclough's model. The study examined how different linguistic tools and rhetorical devices were employed to achieve political goals and objectives.

Nasih and Abboud (2020) conducted another study, employing a socio-cognitive analysis of Iraqi politicians' speeches. The primary goal was to uncover the underlying ideologies and attitudes conveyed through the speeches and how politicians utilized their discourse to influence the community. The analysis was conducted at the micro-level, with a focus on examining lexical choices, semantics, syntax, and context within the speeches. The researchers interpreted the speeches from the perspective of positive self-representation and negative other representation.

The study utilized a mixed-method approach, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Alongside the qualitative examination of the discourse's underlying ideologies, the researchers performed a quantitative analysis to study the frequency of 25 discursive devices present in the speeches. The current study also employs a micro-level analysis of Khan's discourse with ideological polarization as the main focus.

Shah (2018) conducted a mixed-method research study analyzing Imran Khan's first public address. The study employed Fairclough's tri-phased model, as well as narrative analysis models, to shed light on the structure and content of the speech, revealing Imran Khan's hidden ideologies and beliefs. Khalil et al., (2017) conducted a research study focusing on Imran Khan's election speech, aiming to highlight how political leaders convey their ideologies through intentional language use and employ different linguistic strategies to achieve political interests. The study emphasized that politicians utilize language as a weapon to portray opponents negatively while presenting themselves in a positive light. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, along with other CDA strategies, was employed to analyze the speech and uncover hidden ideologies.

In the context of Pakistan, few studies have explored Imran Khan's 2019 UNGA speech. For instance, Javaid et al., (2022) employed Van Dijk's Ideological Square Model to analyze Imran Khan's speech at the UNGA, focusing specifically on Islamophobia. The study explored micro and macro-level strategies within the model, revealing that Khan, instead of challenging the Us versus Them schema prevalent in Islamophobia, employed the same schema to highlight ideological differences between the West and Muslims. Ahmed et al., (2020) analyzed speech acts related to Islamophobia using Austin and Searle's framework of Speech Act Theory. Mushtaq et al., (2021) investigated the transitivity process in the speech using the ideational meta-function of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Imtiaz (2020) utilized Referential Strategies to examine how language was employed to create in-group and out-group distinctions.

Previous studies on Khan's speech have not thoroughly examined it. Some have utilized different frameworks, while others have focused on macrostructural elements of Dijk's (1980) model or explored specific aspects of his speech. However, there appears to be a lack of extensive research based on Political discourse framework.

This study aims to address this gap by employing van Dijk's (1980) ideological square model, with a specific emphasis on microstructural elements. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the speech and uncover its political and ideological agenda, the researchers have also utilized NVivo software.

By applying a socio-cognitive analysis to Imran Khan's 2019 speech, the current study offers a more comprehensive insight into the underlying dynamics and implications present in the speech, filling the gap in previous research on this topic.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study utilizes Van Dijk's (2005) socio-cognitive approach to political discourse analysis, a component of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This framework considers cognition, society, and discourse as key elements. Originally designed for media and political discourses, it examines both written and spoken communication, viewing discourse as a complex communicative event embedded in a social context involving participants and their characteristics. The analysis involves three levels: discourse level (micro-level), social level (macro-level), and cognitive level (interface between the two). At the macro-level, the social analysis focuses on power inequalities represented among group members in society. A significant aspect of this model is the "us versus them" dimension, wherein one's own group is positively portrayed (positive self-representation), while other groups are depicted negatively (negative other-representation). Van Dijk (2005) has guided in terms of providing 25 various discursive devices to make an examination at the lower-level (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 735-736), which this article employs. These indicators are defined below.

### **Definition of devices**

#### **Actor Description**

Named after its function, actor description serves as a discursive tool used to elucidate the attributes of individuals, objects, or locations, as well as their roles within the social and political framework. Employed in discourse, this device showcases the involvement of these entities in either a favorable or unfavorable manner. According to van Dijk (2006), the ideologies held by the discourse producer influence how actors are described in the discourse, leading to the downplaying of negative traits in between different group members since depending on the negative features of out-group.

#### **Authority**

In order to support own argument, claim or statement people make use of authorities. Such authorities include the institutions, organizations and people who are experts and scholars etc. For instance, scholars, courts, church or international organizations such as United Nations can be referred as authority in the discourse.

#### **Burden (Topos)**

It is related with the human or financial loss of a group (the group can be small or large), in order to portray them as victims or to stimulate the feelings/emotions of the audience.



**Categorization**

People are categorized or classified on the basis of their perspectives and actions. Also they are attributed positively or negatively.

**Comparison**

Comparison involves analyzing and contrasting the likenesses or distinctions between two entities, be it individuals, objects, or locations. In the context of discourse, as van Dijk (2006) points out, comparisons are often made between in-group and out-group members, with in-group members being favorably compared while out-group members are subjected to negative comparisons.

**Consensus**

Generally some sort of unity and agreement is called consensus but according to Van Dijk, consensus is “cross-party or national” which means it is related with the solidarity of all the in-groups against the threats and issues caused by out-groups.

**Counterfactuals**

As per van Dijk (2006: 736), counterfactuals serve as a persuasive and argumentative device that seeks empathy from the audience. In essence, counterfactuals illustrate how something or someone would be different if specific circumstances had not occurred, aiming to sway the audience in favor of the discourse producer's argument.

**Disclaimer**

Disclaimer is a discursive device in which firstly some entity's positive point or attribute is mentioned and then its denial is presented by using the words but, yet, and however etc. According to Dijk (2006), disclaimers are a face-saving device that initially emphasizes the positive attributes of "Us" and then proceeds to solely concentrate on the negative characteristics of the "Other."

**Euphemism**

Euphemism is the practice of using more gentle or mild words to describe a particular entity instead of using harsh or direct language. Dijk (2006) categorizes euphemism as both a rhetorical device and a semantic maneuver, which serves to soften negative portrayals of out-group members and negative actions by in-group members. This discursive approach is frequently utilized to describe immigrants within the discourse. Thus, euphemisms are not only employed for ideological reasons but also fulfill contextual requirements, such as maintaining politeness strategies and adhering to interactional norms (2006: 736).

**Evidentiality**

Solid facts and figures are provided to support the claims, opinions, ideas and beliefs of speaker. Facts and figures can make something reliable and credible. They are also used to present the members of in-group positively and out-group negatively.

**Illustration/Example**

By providing illustrations and appropriate examples people make their statements more understandable and reliable for their audience.

**Generalizations**

People make generalizations by attaching or associating negative or positive characteristics of a person or a small group with the larger group or entire population.

**Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a linguistic tactic or strategy which is related with the exaggeration of language. People make use of 'hyperbole' in order to enhance the meaning or to put stress on something.

**Implication**

Implication is basically the awareness or understanding of something which is not explicitly addressed by the speaker. Sometimes implication is used as a tactic to avoid the truth and to deduct some information.

**Irony**

Irony is basically the use of language, a contrast or a dissimilarity between what the speaker said and what is his/her intention, and it is humorous.

**Lexicalization**

Lexicalization is a discursive device which is related with the choice or selection of words. People make use of different lexical items for the people of in-group and out-group to portray them positive or negative respectively.

**Metaphor**

Metaphor is basically the comparison of two things, which do not have same identity to relate the characteristics among themselves.

**National self-glorification**

This device is used for glorification and positive representation of own country or nation through certain positive references.

**Norm-expression**

In 'norm expression' certain norms or guidelines are provided on how something should and should not be followed and what somebody should or should not do.

**Number game**

Number game is usually used for gaining the authenticity and credibility by providing statistics and numbers.

**Polarization**

Polarization is a discursive device which is used to separate or divide people in two distinct groups; in-group and out-group. People of in-group are characterized/ attributed positively and out-group negatively.

**Populism**

It is a political strategy, in which political leadership or members show that they represent the common people.

### **Presupposition**

It is a political tactic or strategy, by which people use language to get their political benefits and fulfill their agendas without evidence or proof. Dijk stated that “Presuppositions are used to assume the truth of some proposition when such truth is not established at all”.

### **Vagueness**

Vagueness occurs when people do not clearly express or state something or there is some uncertainty or ambiguity. Dijk added that vague expressions are used in delicate issues; they are also used to maintain ‘face’ in certain situations, vague expressions are those which lack definite referents.

### **Victimization**

By employing victimization strategy, the out-group is portrayed negatively. And the members of in-group are showed as the victims of unjust and unfair treatment of the members of out-group. The analysis is done at the lower level of meaning by focusing the use of 25 discursive devices suggested by Dijk (2005) to disclose if the speech can be considered to be related to “*Fundamental Dichotomy*” (Rashidi & Souzandehfar, 2010, p. 69) of ‘**Positive Self-representation**’ and ‘**Negative Other-representation**’ postulated by Dijk, V. (2005). Based on the theoretical foundations mentioned above, this study investigated Khan’s speech using Van Dijk’s model.

## **Method**

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze a specific speech by Prime Minister Imran Khan at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 27, 2019. The speech focuses environmental change, transferring money by using unlawful methods, Islamophobia, and the issue related to Kashmir. Using Dijk’s (2005) model, the researchers aim to identify ideological conflicts and the creation of an “*Us vs. Them*” dichotomy in the discourse. They utilize NVivo software for analysis, providing visualization of data. The speech was sourced from the official UNGA website, cleaned, and filtered. Word frequency and word cloud functions in NVivo were employed to identify commonly used words.

Various discourse elements, such as hyperbole, lexicalization, number game strategies, presuppositions, victimization, and consensus, were studied and marked in the speech. The analysis of the data provides insights into the key aspects of Prime Minister Imran Khan’s speech, which are presented in the research’s data analysis section.

### **Data Analysis**

The data for the analysis, which was Imran Khan’s speech at UNGA in 2019, was collected from the official website of the UNGA speeches. The quality and accuracy of the scripts was confirmed and then the text was analyzed by the researchers. Initially, NVivo was used to analyze the speech and this computer assisted analysis yielded some significant results.



Kashmir

9

0.67

To conduct a micro-level analysis, the researchers thoroughly examined the script of Imran Khan's speech, carefully identifying the usage of Dijk's discursive devices and documenting their frequency within the speech.

The analysis of the discursive devices revealed that Prime Minister Imran Khan utilized a wide range of these devices in his UNGA speech. One of the discursive devices employed by Khan was "consensus." He used this device for multiple purposes throughout his speech. Firstly, when discussing Islamophobia, he stated, "*We have faced Islamophobia ..... address this*" (Khan, 2019). In this sentence, the first "we" represents Muslims, while the second "we" refers to the people at the United Nations.

Secondly, Khan employed the device of "consensus" when addressing the plight of Kashmiri Muslims and the potential nuclear conflict between Pakistan and India. He emphasized the responsibility of the United Nations in resolving the issue, stating, "*This is ..... being in 1945!*" (Khan, 2019). He urged the United Nations to lift the curfew in the areas of Kashmir, release the kidnapped Kashmiris, and emphasize on Kashmiris right to gain independence.

Thirdly, the discursive device of "consensus" was employed to seek assistance from international bodies such as the IMF, the Asian Bank, and the World Bank in combating money laundering. Khan highlighted the potential crisis arising from increasing poverty and inequality, stating, "*The world is changing..... to stop this plunder*" (Khan, 2019).

Lastly, the device of "consensus" was used to invoke the United Nations to play a leading role in addressing climate change. Khan mentioned the successful tree plantation efforts in the province of KP in Pakistan and emphasized the need for a collective global effort, stating, "*In KP, ..... effort of the world*" (Khan, 2019). He expressed his optimism and urged the United Nations to lead in harnessing the collective will of humanity.

The aforementioned examples clearly demonstrate how Imran Khan utilized the device of "consensus" to garner international support in addressing crucial matters such as climate change, money laundering, Islamophobia, and Kashmir. Through the strategic use of this device, Khan effectively conveyed his ideas in a neutral and balanced manner, devoid of personalization or extreme language. Overall, the analysis of discursive devices highlighted the strategic use of "consensus" by Prime Minister Imran Khan in his UNGA speech to address various issues and advocate for his positions.

The discursive device of "illustration/example" is extensively employed by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, with a frequency of approximately 67 instances in his speech. According to Dijk (2005), "illustration/example" serves as a compelling technique in argumentation, as it provides concrete examples or anecdotes to support and enhance the speaker's general point. These illustrations/examples possess persuasive power, evoke strong emotional responses, and are more memorable than abstract arguments alone.

Utilizing illustrations/examples enables individuals to substantiate their statements and enhance their credibility. By incorporating illustrations, individuals can bolster their positive self-image and present negative portrayals of out-group members. Imran Khan adopts a rational and persuasive approach by employing examples/illustrations instead of relying on unrealistic and far-fetched explanations.

For instance, Khan states, "*We had actual proofs ..... caught their spy Kulbhushan Yadav who admitted to crimes*" (Khan, 2019). By providing the concrete example/illustration of Kulbhushan Yadav, Khan aims to demonstrate that India, not Pakistan, bears responsibility for the region's unrest and terrorism. Similarly, he cites specific examples to convince the audience about the importance of respecting all religions and avoiding offense towards their followers. He asserts, "*In western society, ..... maligning our Holy Prophet (PBUH). That is all we ask*" (Khan, 2019).

In his speech, Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed Islamophobia and dispelled misconceptions about Islam. He cited historical examples, particularly from the state of Medina, to demonstrate the religion's promotion of women's rights and equality among all individuals.

Khan emphasized Islam's value of minority rights, using an example of Hazrat Ali (RA) to illustrate equality within the religion. He stressed that mistreating minorities goes against the fundamental teachings of Islam. Recognizing the significant global Muslim population, Khan attributed the rise of Islamophobia to the events of 9/11. He criticized the misuse of terms like "radical Islam," clarifying that there is no such concept within the religion.

Khan highlighted that no religion should be judged based on the actions of a few individuals with evil mindsets, citing the unrelated heinous acts of the Tamil Tigers. He underscored the negative role played by the Western world in perpetuating Islamophobia, emphasizing that Islam signifies peace by definition.

The discursive device of 'hyperbole' is employed to downplay negative attributes of within-group members or it can be the positive attributes of out-group and vice versa (Dijk, 2005). Hyperbolic terms often consist of complex structures and words, which align with the overall language used by Khan.

The topics discussed in Imran Khan's UNGA speech warranted the use of hyperbolic terms. For instance, when addressing money laundering, he used the hyperbolic term '*billions of dollars*,' stating, "*Every year billions of dollars leave poor countries and go to rich countries*" (Khan, 2019). Another example is the use of the hyperbolic term '*worst periods*' in "*Joining the war on terror, Pakistan went through one of its worst periods*" (Khan, 2019) when describing the hardships faced by Pakistan during the war on terror (Khan, 2019).

While discussing the environmental issues, he used '*hyperbole*' to warn the world about rapid climate change. There are two examples of hyperbolic term '*a huge catastrophe*' in "*If nothing is done, we fear humans are facing a huge catastrophe.*" and '*an alarming pace*' in "*80 percent of our water comes from the glaciers and these are melting at an alarming pace.*" (Khan, 2019).

Dijk (2005) stated that, '*polarization*' is a semantic strategy created a division of people between us and them. Usually, in-group people are attributed positively and out-group people in a negative way. According to Dijk (2005, p. 738) "Polarization may also apply to 'good' and 'bad' subcategories of out-groups, as is the case for friends and allies on the one hand and enemies on the other. Note that polarization may be rhetorically enhanced when expressed as a clear contrast, that is, by attributing properties of 'us' and 'them' that are semantically each other's opposites."

Imran Khan has used 'polarization' to present Pakistan and its people positively and the enemies of Pakistan negatively. Personal pronouns 'we', 'our' and 'us' have been used frequently in his UNGA speech. This frequent use of these personal pronouns has helped him to present his politically charged viewpoint not as his personal but as an accepted point of view of Pakistan, its people and the entire Muslim world. The following examples taken from his speech clearly show that how Imran Khan has used this technique of polarization to create a positive image of in-group members and a negative image of others. "*We .....Muslim communities.*" "*I told India ..... we did not want the situation to escalate.*" (Khan, 2019)

'Lexicalization' as a discursive device can be used to represent others negatively or delegitimize the action of others" (Dijk, 2005). This is done through "the selection of (strongly) negative words to describe the actions of the Others" (Dijk, 1995, p. 154). Imran Khan has used Lexicalization for a significant self-representation and to show negative side for others. As for example "*Why would ..... bomb us again*" (Khan, 2019). Use of lexical items like "*their own cruelty, blame, no other narrative left for India*" (Khan, 2019) present a negative image of India.

Lexicalization along with victimization strategy has been used in phrases and sentences like "*try to bomb us again*" and "*Pakistan went through one of its worst periods*". "*We lost 70,000 people to the war, 150 billion dollars to our economy*" to present Pakistan as a victim of Indian's violence and what Pakistan has suffered after joining the war on terror. Another lexicalization usage is '*further increase cruelty on the people of Kashmir*' which actually presupposes that India is treating the people of Kashmir with cruelty leading to a negative Indian presentation.

During his speech, Prime Minister Imran Khan frequently employed the strategy of 'victimization,' portraying the in-group as victims of unjust treatment caused by the out-group. He addressed the issue of money laundering, highlighting how powerful individuals from developing countries buy expensive properties abroad with funds taken from their own poor citizens. Khan emphasized that developing countries are victims of money laundering and corruption due to their inability to afford such practices. He proposed that western countries should implement laws to allow developing nations to repatriate their money for national development, calling for action from international organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank. Additionally, Khan depicted Kashmiri Muslims as victims of inhumane treatment by the Indian armed forces and the Modi government, providing evidence of the cruelties and raising rhetorical questions to draw attention to their plight in the conflict. "*How would ..... children of a lesser God?*" (Khan, 2019).

He said the whole world should play its role in forcing India to lift the curfew and making Kashmir a suitable place for the Muslims. And Kashmiris should be given the right of self-determination. In his speech Imran Khan has used a number of phrases and sentences which are manifestations of 'evidentiality' strategy. He has provided the evidences of what India has done through lexicalization of the phrases like "*to butcher 2000 Muslims*", "*locks up 8 million people*", "*100,000 Kashmiris killed, thousands of women raped*", "*This ideology of hate murdered Mahatma Gandhi*", "*70,000 Pakistanis lost their lives*". (Khan, 2019).

In the concept of 'Evidentiality,' facts and figures are used to support the speaker's claims and opinions, often presenting the in-group positively and the out-group negatively.

In his speech, Imran Khan provided evidence to explain the reasons behind atrocities, citing Modi's affiliation with RSS, which promotes Hindu superiority in India, leading to the

suppression of others' freedom. He questioned the silence of world leaders, including the UNGA, suggesting economic interests may overshadow concerns for human lives. Khan used hypothetical examples, like the treatment of animals, to highlight the lack of action in addressing the suffering of Kashmiri people.

Additionally, Khan presented evidence of an Indian spy, Kulbhushan Yadav, confessing to India's involvement in terror attacks in Pakistan. By presenting such evidence, Khan aimed to enhance the credibility and reliability of his statements.

In his speech, Imran Khan employed the 'comparison' strategy around 17 times, comparing in-groups and out-groups to present the in-group (Pakistan) in a positive light and the out-group (India) in a negative manner. He used this strategy to demonstrate Pakistan's innocence in the Pulwama incident and highlight India's aggressive actions.

Khan pointed out that India failed to provide evidence of Pakistan's alleged involvement in Pulwama and instead attempted to carry out bombings in Pakistani airspace. Despite capturing an Indian pilot, Pakistan chose to return him as a gesture of peace, showing their commitment to de-escalation.

Through comparisons, Khan emphasized how Pakistan's treatment of the Indian pilot was contrasting with India's actions towards Pakistan, aiming to glorify Pakistan's efforts while criticizing India. He also cited evidence of an Indian spy, Kulbhushan Yadav, who confessed to his involvement in terror attacks in Baluchistan, further supporting Pakistan's innocence in the Pulwama incident.

In his speech, Imran Khan employed the 'actor description' strategy to portray Indian PM Narendra Modi and his party negatively, associating them with RSS and critiquing their ethnocentric mindset and treatment of minorities. Khan highlighted evidence of Modi's actions and decisions that negatively affected Muslims and Kashmiris.

He also emphasized Pakistan's role in peacebuilding and combating terrorism, presenting a positive image of his government's commitment to promoting peace in the region. Throughout the speech, Khan created a dichotomy between 'us' (in-group, Muslims, and people of Kashmir) and 'them' (out-group, Modi, and his party), using contrasting vocabulary to reinforce this division. The 'actor description' strategy contributed to the polarization and division evident in the discourse.

'Populism' is a political strategy, in which political leaders or members show that they represent the common people. While talking about the plight of Kashmiri Muslims he has employed 'populism' strategy, for instance "*Don't you think that 180 Million ..... Kashmiri Muslims*". (Khan, 2019).

'National self-glorification' device is used many times in the speech. In this strategy, own country or nation is glorified or is admired through the discourse. While addressing the issue of climate change, Imran Khan has used this strategy. Former PM highlighted and glorified the efforts of his country in order to minimize the aftermaths of climate change by saying that "*we planted a billion trees in 5 years*".



Imran Khan has used the device 'Number game' frequently. Number game is usually used for gaining the authenticity and credibility by providing statistics and numbers etc. His speech was loaded with facts and figures, he used such numerical figures to support his point of view, to make audience believe in what he was saying and to make his stance more reliable and authentic.

Some examples from the speech where Imran Khan has used this strategy are "*to free the 13,000 Kashmiris*", "*a country 7 times smaller*", "*article 370*", "*100,000 Kashmiris killed*", "*70,000 Pakistanis lost their lives*" and "*post 9/11*" etc. (Khan, 2019).

Former Prime minister also used 'Counterfactuals' device in his speech. For example, "*If we retrieve ..... worth millions of dollars.*" (Khan, 2019).

In his speech, Imran Khan addressed the issue of money laundering and its impact on developing countries. He aimed to evoke empathy and sympathy from the world, emphasizing that developing nations lack the resources to effectively combat money laundering and retrieve their assets. Khan called on powerful countries to take action for the better economic future of developing nations.

Additionally, Khan used the 'disclaimer' strategy in his speech, presenting positive points followed by denials using words like "but," "yet," and "however." While talking about the climate change and the response of the world leaders he said that "*First let me talk about climate change.....mere hallucination.*" (Khan, 2019).

Firstly, he mentioned that many leaders are talking about the issue of climate change, and then he uttered that 'but' they do not have a realization of this thing that this matter is very urgent and it should be prioritized. This is how he made use of the strategy of 'disclaimer'.

In his speech, the former PM Imran Khan frequently employed the strategy of 'Presupposition' regarding Pak-India conflicts, highlighting India's habit of blaming Pakistan without providing evidence. He stated, "*We fear another Pulwama incident. And for that, India will again blame Pakistan.*" Here, he presupposed that there would be another attack, and India would thoughtlessly blame Pakistan. Khan expressed concern about the situation in Kashmir, anticipating severe consequences and a potential bloodbath once the curfew is lifted. He said, "*What will ..... 900,000 troops? I fear there will be a bloodbath.*" He aimed to draw attention to the revocation of Kashmir's special status by India, which he ideologically opposed.

Furthermore, Khan negatively assumed that India would hold Pakistan accountable for any future wrongs in Kashmir, showing a lack of trust in India. He said, "*There will be ..... us again.*"

Generally, metaphor is a figurative device, in which comparison is made without using 'like' or 'as'. Here metaphors are used to portray something or someone positively or negatively. While pointing out the issue of 'Islamophobia' Imran Khan highlighted the main cause of this issue by drawing a difference between what actually religion mean to Muslims and the western countries. He said that, "*The west could not ..... a watershed.*" (Khan, 2019).

In his speech, Imran Khan highlighted the different perspectives of Muslims and the Western world towards Islam. He pointed out that the Western world views Islam as intolerant, leading to a division between the two. He stated, "*But the world did..... triumphed humanity.*"

Here, he criticized the world for prioritizing economic interests over the plight of Kashmiri people suffering under Indian rule.

Imran Khan used the device of 'Norm expression' to suggest guidelines for overcoming crucial issues. He urged the United Nations to fulfill its duty of giving Kashmiris the right to self-determination, stating, "*This is the time ..... self-determination!*"

Additionally, he employed the discursive device of 'Categorization' to urge the world to intervene in the Kashmir issue. He emphasized the dire situation of 8 million Kashmiri Muslims, comparing it to how the world would respond if 8 million animals were treated similarly. He urged the world to see the people of Kashmir as humans and take action to stop India's cruelty in the region.

Generalizations are basically wide/vast statements which are derived from specific/particular instances. He said that "*There are radical fringes in every society, but the basis of ALL religion is compassion and justice.*" Through generalization he is clearing the concept that no religion preaches terrorism, and black sheep exist in every society. And on the basis of such black sheep whole religion cannot be blamed. All religions teach peace and love. In portraying the negative character of people of out-group, generalization was also incorporated. Imran Khan said that "*I picture myself in Kashmir..... towards radicalization.*" (Khan, 2019). He is portraying that how people in Indian Occupied Kashmir are living in such circumstances, how a human can be treated like this. He cannot imagine himself being in such situation.

Vagueness occurs when something is not clearly expressed or stated or there is some uncertainty or ambiguity. It is normally done unintentionally or unconsciously. For instance, he said that "*Rich countries ..... held accountable.*" (Khan, 2019). In this utterance, he has not mentioned the names of rich countries that are responsible for causing harm to climate so this statement is a bit vague.

Vagueness can be seen when Imran Khan has mentioned the issue of money laundering, he explained that corrupt politicians of poor/developing countries sent billions of dollars to rich/developed countries, developing world face consequences due to this issue. Here Imran Khan has not mentioned the names of politicians who are involved in the corruption and money laundering; He has also not mentioned the name of rich countries and the poor countries too who are supporting this process. So, this statement is somehow vague and ambiguous.

### Discussion

The analysis of Imran Khan's UNGA address showed that he employed positive self-representation and negative other-representation at the macro-level, a common characteristic in political discourse found in various studies. (Alemi et al., 2017; Darweesh & Muzhir, 2016; Rashidi & Souzandehfar, 2010; Sardabi et al., 2014; Wahyudi, 2012). This suggests that positive self-representation and negative other-representation are universal characteristics of political discourse. The use of positive self-representation allows politicians to legitimize their policies, ideologies, actions, and decisions, while the negative representation of others serves to delegitimize these same aspects in political opponents. The analysis at the micro-level revealed Imran Khan has extensively utilized Van Dijk's (2005) twenty-five discursive devices. These findings affirm the effectiveness of Van Dijk's paradigm in analyzing political discourses across various contexts and backgrounds.

The most frequently employed devices in the speech of Imran Khan were lexicalization, The dominance of lexicalization as a micro-device was not only evident in our study but also in numerous earlier research, indicating its universal presence in political discourse. From Osama Bin Laden (Al Saaidi, et al., 2016) to Hilary Clinton (Abdel-Moety, 2015), lexicalization seems to govern political speech across different times, geographical locations, and ideological perspectives. As an ideologically-driven way of referring to events, lexicalization serves as a "signifier" of ideologies; any ideology necessitates specific lexical items in its surface representation (Van Dijk, 1995).

Lexicalization stood out as one of the most frequently employed devices in his speech. The significant use of negative lexicalizations enabled Imran Khan to create multiple negative other-representations at the macro level.

Presupposition represents a concealed and unspoken aspect of meaning, presumed to be known, understood, and accepted. It forms a part of the shared "general sociocultural knowledge" (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 739), crucial for constructing the representation of "us." Additionally, it has been recognized as a means of establishing socio-political dominance making it widely employed in politics regardless of the specific political platform, as demonstrated by the examples from Khan's speech, who used a high number of presuppositions.

In the realm of political discourses, the utilization of numerical data as a strategy aims to enhance the credibility and factual basis of arguments (Nasih & Abboud, 2020; Unvar & Rahimi, 2013). Khan has employed specific numbers and statistics (e.g., 70,000 people, 150 billion dollars) to express his discontent and unhappiness regarding the human and economic losses endured by Pakistan as a consequence of its involvement in the war on terror, which he perceived as unnecessary.

Actor Descriptions are verbal expressions influenced by ideological and political perspectives, wherein members of the in-group are portrayed positively, while those outside the group are depicted negatively (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 735). These descriptions directly contribute to the macro-level representation of positive self and negative other and were present in Imran Khan's speech. This study aligns with prior critical research (Makarova & Shakoury, 2021; Masroor et al., 2019), affirming that diverse discursive strategies are utilized in political discourses to create positive self-representations and negative portrayals of others.

Imran Khan employed the "consensus" approach to secure global backing in tackling vital issues like climate change, money laundering, Islamophobia, and Kashmir. By skillfully utilizing this method, Khan adeptly conveyed his ideas impartially and equitably, avoiding personal biases or overly emphatic language.

In the realm of politics, vagueness is often employed by speakers to shield themselves from criticism when addressing controversial issues or to avoid explicitly referring to out-group characteristics or in-group positive traits that are taken for granted (Gruber, 1993). Vagueness in political discourse is motivated by factors like political necessity, self-interest, power dynamics, and the preservation of personal reputation (Obeng, 1997). This approach allowed him to outline his position without directly antagonizing any specific state leaders, using vagueness at the micro-level to mitigate negative other-representations at the macro-level.

Consensus is a widely employed political strategy, particularly in situations where the country faces external threats, such as outside attacks (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 736). Imran Khan has used this strategy to promote his ideological stance of moderation, negotiation, and compromise.

Hyperbole serves as a tool to intensify or exaggerate meaning, commonly employed in political discourse to achieve specific goals and gain or maintain support. Both left and right politicians utilize hyperbole to either praise their own actions (positive self-representation) or criticize the actions of others (negative other-representation), making it unrelated to any specific political stance (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 737). Imran Khan has used hyperboles several times in his speech while talking about different issues. Consistent with earlier critical research (Makarova & Shakoury, 2021; Masroor et al., 2019), this study corroborates the use of varied discursive strategies in political discourses to construct positive self-representations and negative depictions of others.

Illustration (example) is recognized as a potent tool in argumentation, as concrete examples are better remembered and have a more emotional impact (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 737). He has illustrated many of his points with concrete examples.

Polarization, as described by Van Dijk (2005, p. 738), serves as a tool to emphasize the contrast between in-group and out-group representations, thereby contributing to macro strategies of positive self and negative other-representations. Imran Khan utilized this polarization technique to present Pakistan and its people in a favorable light while portraying its adversaries in a negative manner. These findings align with previous studies conducted on political discourse in diverse contexts and languages, which have shown that politicians widely employ polarization to achieve "political domination and legitimization of political actions by controlling public opinion" (Masroor et al., 2019).

### **Conclusion**

The study analyzes former Prime Minister Imran Khan's political discourse at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2019 using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The aim was to understand how Khan utilized discursive strategies to convey his ideology. The analysis focused on micro-level (25 discursive devices) and macro-level (positive self-representation and negative other-representation) aspects of the speech. Khan promoted his ideologies, associating positive attributes with the in-group and negative attributes with the out-group. The analysis ensured impartiality to avoid personal biases. However, it focused solely on semantic aspects, excluding grammatical and syntactic features. Future studies can use similar frameworks to assess ideological inclinations, incorporating diverse data sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of Khan's political perspectives.

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## **A Predictive Relationship between Academic Resilience and Stress of University Students**

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Universities play a critical role in educating students for their successful career. However, in higher educational institutes major focus is given on their academic achievement and psychological factors like academic stress are ignored. The aim of this quantitative study was to investigate predictive relationship between academic resilience and stress of the university students. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from 738 northern area university students in Pakistan. Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) having 6 items developed by Smith et al., (2008) was used to measure perceived resilience of university students, freely available on internet for academic research. During data collection respondents were asked to assess themselves on a 6-point Likert scale on both scales. Tools were validated by experts and reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha (0.813). For data analysis, the gathered information was organized and summarized in Excel. Following that, it was analysed using SPSS version 22. To find the effect of perceived resilience stress of the university students regression model was used. Before analysis assumptions of regression model as given by Field (2013) and Laerd (2018) were considered. Findings of this research revealed that perceived resilience scores had a great significant negative effect on stress of university students. The present study highlighted the influence of psychological constructs resilience on reducing stress of university students which ultimately affect their academic performance. In the light of results of current study, it can be recommended that through workshops, seminars, and orientation sessions how university teachers can be motivated to enhance their capacity for teaching and learning using resilience abilities.

**Keywords:** higher education, academic resilience, academic stress. regression, predictive correlation.

Higher education is now regarded as having a dominant standing and as a necessary investment in the social and economic growth of a nation. Students run into a lot of academic



challenges in higher education, which leads to their failure. Riaz et al., (2017) consider that higher education is essential for the development of every nation and is regarded as one of the fundamental human rights. Resilience is the key to helping students overcome their academic challenges. Resilience is defined as the ability of a student to cope well with failures, stress, and study pressure. It is often seen as a process of capacity for successful adaptation despite adverse conditions. The ability to overcome challenges to accomplish professional, personal, and academic goals is referred to as resilience (Ahmed, 2006). If an individual can weaken threatening circumstances in life, others are not. Resilient People tackle successfully with difficulties. It can be concluded that capability a person to handle challenges even in future (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).

Academic resilience is the ability of a student to succeed academically despite challenges (Martin, 2013). Academic resilience, described by Fry and Keyes (2010), is the capacity to successfully manage pressure, stress, or setbacks during studies. Tremayne and Curtis (2007) added that variables that affect academic resilience, including self-belief, optimism, purposefulness, direction, adaptability, creativity, challenge, and orientations. The type of resilience related to academics has two components that contribute to the students' adjustment and achievement under threat: the defensive features of the student associated to inner and outside defensive variables (McInerney et al., 2012). Individual qualities and traits (values, beliefs, abilities, and attitudes) that are linked to favourable developmental outcomes are known as internal protective factors. These factors also support positive social, health, and academic outcomes (Bauer et al., 2012).

The study of academic resilience has developed because it is possible to create resilience in at-risk pupils (Luthar et al., 2000). Multidimensional resilience research has been studied in the previous few decades in the domains of psycho-social, and anthropological aspects. Academic resilience is the subject of comparatively rare studies. However, research on academic resilience has grown in significance as a paradigm for examining why some adolescents from similar origins perform better in school than others (Feder et al., 2019).

According to empirical studies, students from low-income or at-risk backgrounds may exhibit resilient traits if they have supportive teachers and a curriculum that encourages active engagement and high expectations (Waxman et al., 2008). According to Resnick et al. (1993), students who have strong bonds with their peers, adults, and society are more likely to lead successful lives. Both environmental conditions and personal traits play a significant protective role (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). If their school provides a source of external protective factors, such as low academic pressure, attentive and loving teachers, and good student-teacher relationships, students from underprivileged families may have more resilient personalities. According to the mixed methodological study by Waxman et al., (2008), adolescents who formed strong friendships with their mates and elders were with a reduction of probable school. They found that while some students from such homes did not exhibit behavioural issues, most pupils from low-income families tended to be less intelligent and disruptive in class. Veselska et al., (2009) evaluated factors influencing academic resilience in California using academic grades as a criterion for resiliency. It was discovered that opportunities and supportive relationships contribute to increased accomplishment in the resilience construct.

Chronic stress in students increases due to their psychiatric illness. Stress is a crucial factor which is a cause of poor performance of students. Any situation that puts one's capacity for coping at risk qualifies as stressful. There are difficult circumstances involved, which could lead to strain, pressure, anxiety, irritation, and even danger for acquiring an education. Both the

body and the intellect of kids are negatively impacted by stress. Students' minds and bodies are negatively affected psychologically and physiologically by it. Everyone encounters stress on a regular basis, which is a common component. Students from all backgrounds and locations enrol in universities to pursue higher education. They each have unique goals and visions for the future (Caruso et al., 2019). Throughout their school year, students deal with a variety of pressures that affect the entire system. They are anxious about the review procedure and disappointed with the projects. They are unable to handle complicated tasks for a short time.

Cheng and Catling (2015) found negative correlation between resilience and perceived stress as described in resilience. Petrie (2010) and Frigborg et al., (2006) conducted research and observed that stress and resilience are negatively correlated; if the higher the resilience scores were high, the stress was low. This implied that resilience play role to low stress. A good method to improve overall resilience is to develop healthy stress management behaviours (Klatt et al., 2022). These routines could include actions to take in times of stress such as cognitive reconstructing, diaphragmatic breathing exercises, expressive writing, biofeedback techniques, effective communication, problem-solving strategies, and progressive muscle relaxation (Zisopoulou & Varvogli, 2022). They could also include actions that promote overall health, such as getting enough sleep and exercising. Both adults and kids can acquire and perfect these talents with a little practise. They eventually develop the confidence to handle challenging circumstances and the resilience to recover rapidly (Durstun, 2022). Consider seeking the assistance of a cognitive therapist if you are having trouble managing your stress levels (Hyland et al., 2022).

In the modern day, investing in higher education is seen as a capital expenditure for our nation. It is of utmost significance for the nation's socioeconomic development. Higher education-accredited institutions are accountable for providing students with a quality education and professional credentials. Highly educated people handle cutting-edge technologies. Higher education is crucial for development because competent labour participation accelerates the economic growth process. Stainton et al., (2019) explained that higher education acts as a launching pad for the nation's socioeconomic and political progress. If we achieve our national goals, we may need to raise the standard of the learning environment.

The idea of resilience as a brand-new area of study in positive psychology is covered in this chapter, along with individual resilience, strategies for enhancing individual resilience, the seven c's of resilience, its types, prior research on academic resilience, the impact of resiliency on students' academic achievement, the role of teachers in honing students' resiliency, and the resiliency model.

### **Research Questions**

The research question of the study was:

What are the effects of perceived academic resilience on stress of the university students?

### Method

The goal of the study was to analyse the predictive relation of academic resilience with stress of undergraduate university students in northern areas of Pakistan. In this study, quantitative nonexperimental predictive correlational research design was used. Data were collected from students of three Northern areas universities of Pakistan studying in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> semesters using convenience sampling technique. The researcher personally distributed 800 questionnaires to the undergraduate students in final year of public sector universities located at Northern areas of Pakistan while 738 (male 510, female 228) filled questionnaires were received from students of all three universities. The range of majority (84.4%) of students was 21-23 years.

**Table 1**

*Gender wise Sample*

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	510	69.1	69.1
Female	228	30.9	100.0
Total	738	100.0	

**Table 2**

*Age wise Sample*

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-21 years	361	48.9	48.9
22-23 years	265	35.9	84.8
24-25 years	89	12.1	96.9
26-27 years	13	1.8	98.6
28-29 years	10	1.4	100.0
Total	738	100.0	

**Results**

Data were analyzed to answer the research questions after data collecting through valid and reliable research instrument.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive statistics for Resilience and stress of university students*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	n (items)
R	717	12.00	35.00	22.85	4.784	7
S	717	3.00	21.00	9.75	3.262	7

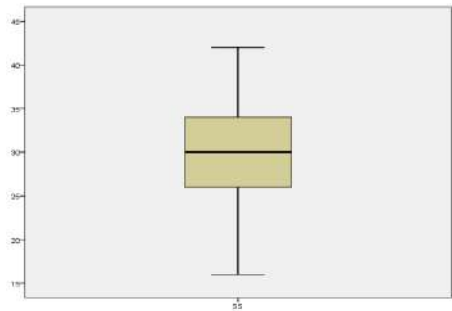
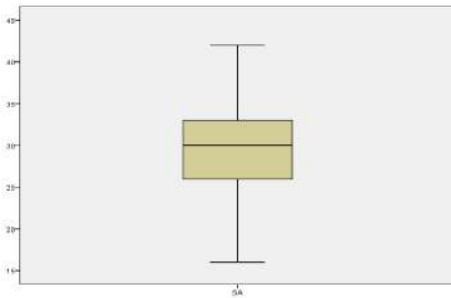
Table 1 shows the Resilience scores 12.00 to 35.00, with M = 22.85 and SD = 4.784. Stress scores 3.00 to 21.00, with M = 9.75 and SD = 3.262.

**Figure 1**

*Screening of the data to exclude outliers from students' academic resilience and stress*

*Academic Resilience*

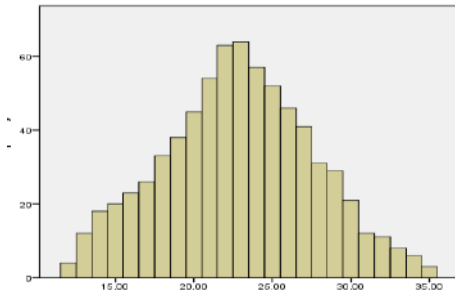
*Stress*



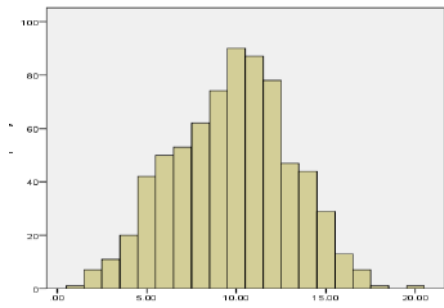
**Figure 2**

*Histograms for Resilience and Stress scores*

*Academic Resilience*



*Stress*



**Assumptions of LRM**

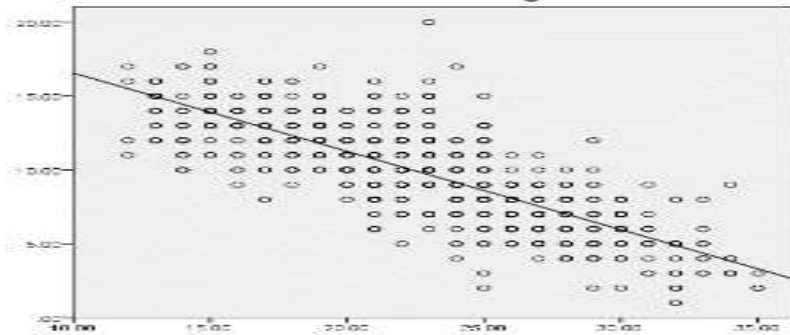
Field (2013) and Laerd (2018) has given assumption for using LRM analysis:

**Dependent Variable and Independent Variables.** The dependent variable should be continuous. The assumption has been followed by adding scores of each item of stress scale so sum of scores for each item of stress scale of university students taken at continuous level. The independent variable academic resilience should also be at continuous level or at nominal level. This assumption was achieved by taking variable academic resilience as continuous level.

**Autocorrelation.** The value of Durbin-Watson test was 1.768 (greater than 1.5 and less than 2) which ensured independence of observations, hence no autocorrelation.

**Linear Relationship.** To find a linear relationship is between independent variable (academic resilience) and stress, scatterplot had been made to verify the linear relationship. This graph established a negative trend between academic resilience and stress of the university students, anxiety, and depression scores appeared (Figures 3).

**Figure 3**  
*Relationship between academic resilience and stress*



**Table 4**  
*Homoscedasticity (resilience and stress)*

Model	UC		SC	t	p
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	21.868	0.374		58.458	0.000
Resilience	-0.530	0.016	-0.778	-33.095	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Stress

**Homoscedasticity Test:** Glejser Test shows the predictive relationships academic resilience as the independent variable and stress of university students as dependent variable. If the significance value is greater than 0.05 then it makes the data Homoscedastic (Berry & Feldman, 1985; Adams & McGuire, 2018). As value of significance for academic resilience p (0.000), is less than 0.05 so Heteroscedastic.

**Table 5**  
*VIF values of academic resilience and stress*

	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
Resilience	-0.778	-0.778	0.778	1.000	1.000

**Multicollinearity.** Table 5 shows about absence of multicollinearity which is required for LRM using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. Stevens (2009) described that if the value VIFs is between 1 and 10, means there is a low linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. VIF value is less than 10 for academic resilience so there is absence of multicollinearity.

**Table 6**  
*Academic resilience and stress(Model Summary)*

R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	SE of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson test
0.778 <sup>a</sup>	0.605	0.604	2.072	1.768

a. Predictors: (Constant),

In table 6, the model summary, the predictors academic resilience changed the stress of the university students as  $R^2$  scores were 0.605 (60.5%) determine the change in dependent variable due to independent variables. The model summary explains approximately 60.4% variance with adjusted  $R^2 = 0.604$  of predictive variable resilience of university students.

**Table 7**  
*ANOVA for academic resilience and stress of students*

	SS	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	p
Regression	4697.93	1	331.702	38.157	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	7071.11	715	8.693		
Total	7769.05	716			

a. Dependent Variable: S

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resilience

In ANOVA table 7, the independent variable of academic resilience was regressed (4697.93) using LRM on the dependent variable stress for the adequacy of the model. The value of F (38.157),  $p(0.000)$  p is less than 0.05 so entire model is significant.

**Table 8**  
*Linear relationship (Resilience and Stress)*

Model	B	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	20.157		24.560	0.000
Resilience	-0.535	-0.778	-33.072	0.000

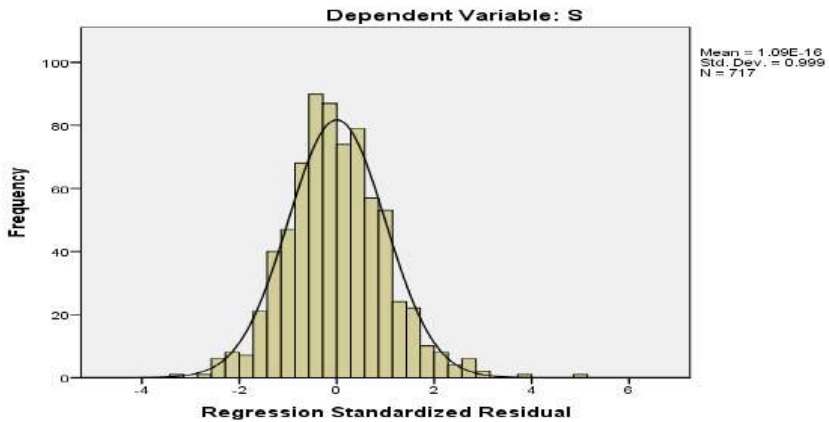
a. Dependent Variable: Stress

The linear regressions reported in table 8, the predictor the academic resilience (R) scores, unstandardized coefficients B (-0.535), Beta(-0.778),  $t(-33.0723)$  with  $p(0.000)$  and

$p < 0.05$  show significant effect of academic resilience (independent variable) as it increases one unit, decrease stress of university students 0.778 units.

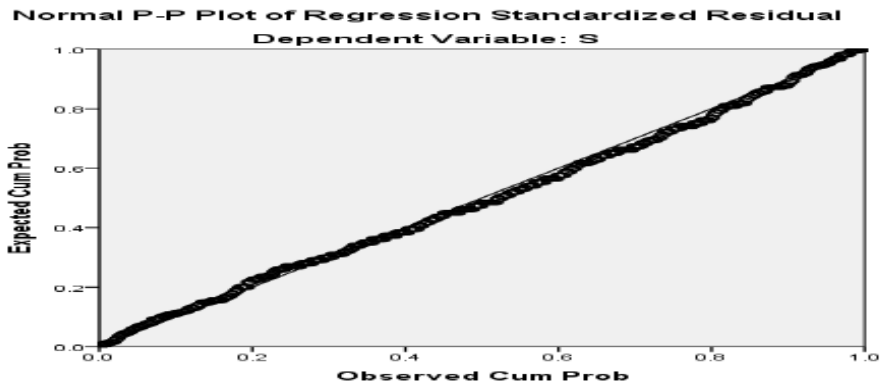
**Figure 4**

*Regression standardized residual (Resilience and Stress)*



**Figure 5**

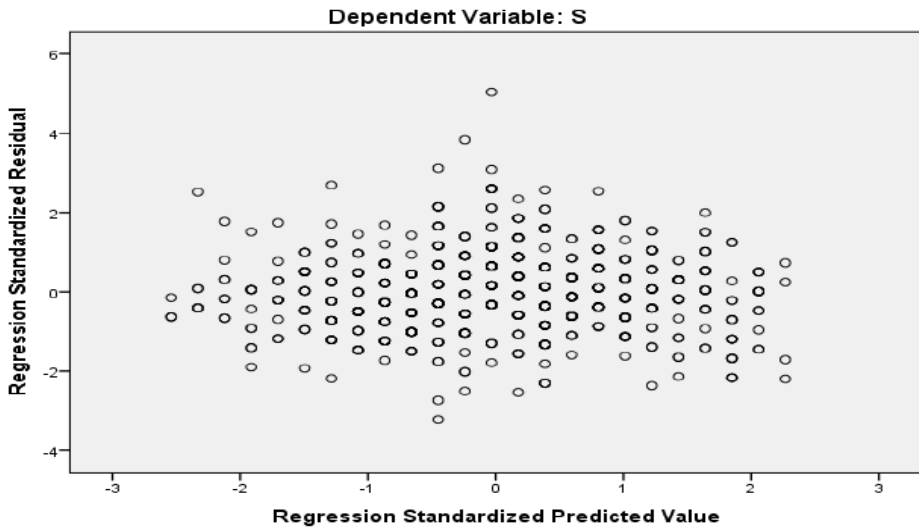
*Normal P-P of Regression standardized residual (Resilience and Stress)*





**Figure 6**

*Scatterplot of Regression standardized residual (Resilience and Stress)*



## Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to explore predictive relationship between independent and dependent variables. First, perceptions of students studying in Northern area universities of Pakistan about their resilience and stress were taken. The researcher also examined the effects of independent variable (resilience) on independent variable (stress). The findings of this research revealed that resilience scores had great significant effects on stress. It is concluded from the findings of this research that perceived resilience scores had a great significant negative effect on stress of university students (Table 2-6). The results of this study show that the scores of resilience have a linear relationship between the outcome of stress and abilities of the university students. The findings of this research revealed that resilience scores had great significant negative effects on stress of university students (psychological problems). Earlier available literature has been aligned with this finding (McGillivray & Pidgeon, 2015; Liu & Boyatzis 2021; Abolghasemi & Taklavi-Varaniyab, 2010; Chen et al., 2009; Cassady et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2020). Researchers like Friborg et al. (2006), Petrie (2010), Solomon (2013) and Pourafzal et al. (2013) also pointed out that there is a negative correlation between perceived stress and had a negative correlation among university students. These results are supported by Tung et al. (2014), where increased resilience was correlated with reduced perceived stress in university students. A study by Ebenezer et al. (2020) and Shilpa and Srimathi (2015) also showed a significant negative relationship between perceived stress and resilience level among university students suggesting that stress and resilience influence one another. When a student's level of perceived stress decreased, hence the level of resilience would increase. The  $H_1$ : there were negative effects of perceived resilience on the stress of university students is accepted. The hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) positing negative effects of perceived resilience on the stress of university students is accepted based on the findings. This means that the research data supports the idea that higher levels of perceived resilience are associated with lower levels of stress among university students.

### Conclusion

The present study analysed perceived resilience and its effect on psychological problem (Stress) of university students. It is concluded from the findings of this research revealed that perceived resilience scores had a great significant negative effect on stress of university students (4 - 8). As university students studying in fourth year of their study so they are active members of their respective institutions to describe actual situation of their psychological problems such as increasing level of stress which is the main cause of burnout all students. The findings of this research underscore a significant and negative correlation between perceived resilience scores and the stress levels experienced by university students. This substantial effect highlights the crucial role of psychological constructs, particularly resilience, in influencing and mitigating stress among the student population. The established linear relationship between resilience scores and stress further emphasizes the impact of these psychological factors on the overall well-being and abilities of university students.

### Recommendations

Although educationists and other responsible stake holders are continuously struggling for improvement of all students in general and university students are particularly. The present study highlighted the influence of psychological construct academic resilience on reducing stress of university students which ultimately affect their academic performance. In the light of literature review and finding of current study it can be recommended that through workshops, seminars, and orientation sessions how university teachers can be motivated to enhance their capacity for teaching and learning using resilience abilities. The finding of current study suggested that learning module should be developed on resilience psychological constructs which have negative significant effect on stress which is most common psychological problem of the university students. Similar research may be conducted to replicate to prove the results of the present study in other universities of Pakistan. The data for future research can be calculated using time series as data collected throughout multiple time of any educational program can give better results in terms of predictive relationship between resilience and stress of students.

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