



RESEARCH PAPER

Persuasive Strategies in Pakistani Public Health Broadcasts: A Systemic Functional Multimodal Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the diverse persuasive strategies in Pakistani COVID-19 public service announcements (PSAs). Adopting a Systemic Functional Multi-modal Analysis framework, it deconstructs three distinct broadcasts from the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), and SAMAA TV. The analysis reveals three "persuasive profiles": The NCOC uses authoritative instruction with high-modality language to establish logical necessity. ISPR uses moral and nationalistic unity, presenting the pandemic as a war to appeal to common values. SAMAA TV uses persuasion by juxtaposition, employing a neutral, fact-based tone to lead audiences to infer a cause-and-effect account. The results show how ideational, interpersonal, and textual decisions construct customized messages that capture distinct institutional objectives. This research offers a detailed, linguistically grounded model for analyzing persuasive discourse in public health crises.

KEYWORDS Systemic Functional Linguistics, Multi-Modal Analysis, Persuasion, Public Health Communication, Discourse Analysis, Covid-19, Pakistan

Introduction

In periods of national emergency, like the COVID-19 pandemic, public service announcements (PSAs) are essential resources for influencing the minds of the public, spreading information, and promoting compliant action (Maibach & Parrott, 1995). The success of these broadcasts is dependent on the persuasive tactics built into their linguistic and multimodal realization. In Pakistan, a diverse range of institutions, from governmental health bodies to military public relations and media outlets, produced PSAs with markedly different approaches to this communicative challenge. This study investigates the nuanced persuasive strategies employed in these broadcasts by asking: How do different Pakistani institutions use language and multimodal resources to persuade the public during a health crisis?

To answer this question, this study conducts a comparative analysis of three different COVID-19 PSAs of 2020, created by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), and SAMAA TV (National Command and Operation Center [NCOC], 2020; Inter-Services Public Relations [ISPR], 2020; SAMAA TV, 2020). Drawing on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework of M.A.K. Halliday, this paper disassembles the semiotic structure of each broadcast (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

SFL provides a robust methodology for this task, as it posits that every linguistic choice is a meaningful act that simultaneously constructs a version of reality (the ideational metafunction), enacts social relationships (the interpersonal metafunction), and organizes the message into a coherent text (the textual metafunction) (Eggins, 2004).

This study will demonstrate that the persuasive power of these PSAs is not accidental but is systematically constructed through deliberate linguistic choices (Fairclough, 1995). The NCOC broadcast, for instance, persuades through an appeal to logic and authority, employing high-modality directives and relational processes to establish objective necessity. By contrast, the ISPR PSA takes a narrative approach, employing metaphorical discourse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and religious and patriotic values (ethos and pathos) to promote cohesiveness and moral determination. The SAMAA TV broadcast, lastly, persuades through an appeal to reason (logos), structuring objective facts and aligning events to lead the viewer to a determined conclusion without overt commentary.

By conducting a detailed, clause-level analysis of these broadcasts, this paper will reveal the distinct "persuasive profiles" of each institution. It will shed light on how decisions regarding process types, modality, thematic structure, and inferred multimodal features operate together to guide, motivate, or educate the Pakistani public. Overall, this analysis further engenders an understanding of the salience of strategic communication in overcoming public health emergencies and underscores the myriad ways in which persuasion is realized linguistically in various settings (Parrott, 2004).

Literature Review

This study is situated at the intersection of three key scholarly domains: public health communication, discourse analysis of media, and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as an analytical tool. The literature in these areas provides a foundation for understanding how language functions persuasively in the specific context of Pakistani public health broadcasts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Persuasion in Public Health Communication

The public health communication discipline has, from the very beginning, understood that providing information is not just a matter of conveying facts but of convincing audiences to acquire certain habits and attitudes (Maibach & Parrott, 1995; Freimuth & Quinn, 2004). When health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic occur, the functions played by public service announcements (PSAs) assume singular importance. Scholars have investigated the effectiveness of various persuasive appeals at length, frequently organized according to Aristotle's traditional rhetorical paradigm of logos (appeal to reason), pathos (appeal to emotion), and ethos (appeal to authority or credibility) (Roberts, 1924). This research builds on that tradition by examining how these classic appeals are realized through concrete linguistic choices. For example, the SAMAA TV broadcasts' reliance on data and chronology is a clear appeal to logos. The NCOC's use of high-modality directives ("is crucial," "is urged") constructs a powerful ethos of institutional authority. Meanwhile, the ISPR's message, with its references to faith and family, is a potent appeal to pathos. This study contributes to the literature by moving beyond simply identifying these appeals to deconstructing the grammatical mechanisms that bring them to life.

Discourse Analysis and Media

Discourse analysis provides the tools to understand how media texts, such as PSAs, do more than just report events; they actively construct social reality (Gee, 2014). Media discourse does not simply reflect the world but frames it, influencing public perception and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1988). A key concept here is framing, where certain aspects of reality are made more salient in a text to promote a particular interpretation or evaluation (Entman, 1993). This study demonstrates how different institutions frame the same crisis in vastly different ways. The ISPR, for example, depicts the pandemic as a national struggle using a war metaphor ("unseen enemy that attacks") (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This ideational option has far-reaching implications, from diverting attention from personal health to defending communities and national solidarity.

The NCOC frames the crisis as a matter of civic responsibility and protocol, while SAMAA TV frames it as a statistical phenomenon. By analyzing these framing strategies at the clause level, this research provides a micro-linguistic account of a macro-level discursive phenomenon.

Systemic Functional Linguistics as an Analytical Framework

To conduct this micro-linguistic analysis, this study employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL is especially appropriate for the analysis of persuasive discourse because it is a "theory of language in use," to describe how linguistic options produce meaning in particular social situations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Much SFL work has been used to study media, political, and institutional language, showing how transitivity, mood, modality, and theming decisions expose underlying power relations and ideologies (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2007). This study draws specifically on the SFL analysis of modality to understand how speakers enact authority and position their audience (Martin & White, 2005). The NCOC's graduated use of modality from the high obligation of "is crucial" to the low modality of "suggests" reveals a sophisticated strategy of command and guidance. The analysis of transitivity shows how the ISPR's use of material and verbal processes personifies the virus and positions religious figures as authoritative Sayers. Finally, the analysis of the Theme demonstrates how textual organization itself is a persuasive tool, as seen in SAMAA TV's chronological thematization, which builds a compelling, data-driven narrative of cause and effect (Martin & Rose, 2007). By integrating these SFL concepts, this research provides a detailed, evidence-based account of how persuasion is systematically achieved, thereby filling a gap in the literature by applying a rigorous linguistic framework to the specific context of Pakistani public health broadcasts.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to deconstruct persuasive strategies in Pakistani public health broadcasts. SFL is uniquely suited for this analysis as it views language not as a set of abstract rules, but as a resource for making meaning in specific social contexts. It assumes that each linguistic option has a function, interpreted via three concurrent "metafunctions": ideational, interpersonal, and textual. By examining how these metafunctions are enacted in the chosen PSAs, we can methodically uncover the underlying structure of their appeals to persuasion.

Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction represents worldly experience, analyzed through the system of Transitivity, which deconstructs the clause into its core components: processes

(verbs), participants (the entities involved), and circumstances (adverbial details). This reveals how PSAs construct reality: the NCOC's use of Relational Processes ("*is crucial*") frames advice as an objective, undeniable fact, while the ISPR's Material Processes ("*attacks*") personify the virus as a physical conflict. Analyzing these choices uncovers how each PSA builds a specific worldview to make its message persuasive.

Interpersonal Metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction enacts social relationships and attitudes, primarily through Mood (which establishes the fundamental speech role, such as a statement or command) and Modality (which reveals the speaker's stance, judgment, or degree of commitment). This framework maps persuasive stances: the NCOC's high-obligation modality ("*is crucial*") establishes an authoritative, expert-to-public relationship. Conversely, the ISPR's use of high certainty ("*will unite*") builds a relationship of shared conviction and hope, revealing the distinct power dynamics each institution constructs.

Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction organizes the message into a coherent and cohesive whole via the system of Theme (the clause's point of departure) and Rheme (the part that develops the Theme). Thematic options are instrumental to persuasion insofar as they intentionally direct the audience's attention and organize the development of an argument. For instance, the NCOC thematizes actions ("*Maintaining social distance...*") to create a clear, instructional list, while SAMAA TV thematizes time ("*March 2020...*") to build a persuasive chronological narrative from events and data.

Finally, recognizing these broadcasts are audiovisual texts, this study adopts a Systemic Functional Multimodal approach. This framework acknowledges that language is only one component of the message. The full persuasive effect arises from the interplay of different semiotic modes, where the deliberate orchestration of linguistic choices with visual elements (images, graphics) and auditory resources (music, tone of voice) works to reinforce and amplify the intended meaning.

Material and Methods

This qualitative study employs a Systemic Functional Multimodal Analysis to deconstruct persuasive strategies in Pakistani public health broadcasts. This approach was chosen for its capacity to perform a detailed, evidence-based analysis of language as a tool for meaning-making in a specific social context.

Data Selection and Description

The information consists of descriptive text for three unique 2020 COVID-19 Public Service Announcements (PSAs) from the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), and SAMAA TV. These passages were selected since they illustrate three various forms of persuasive strategies: instructional, inspirational, and informational. The analysis is founded on the given English summaries and key messages of such broadcasts.

Analytical Procedure

The core methodology was a detailed, clause-by-clause analysis guided by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), conducted in a systematic, three-tiered process.

First, an Ideational Analysis examined Transitivity structures (Process, Participants, Circumstances) to uncover how each PSA constructed a particular version of reality. Second, an Interpersonal Analysis focused on Mood and Modality to reveal how social relationships and persuasive stances were enacted. Finally, a Textual Analysis investigated Theme/Rheme structures to understand how the argument in each PSA was organized to guide the viewer's attention.

Synthesis and Interpretation

After analysis at the clause level, the results of the three metafunctions were combined to determine the overall persuasive strategy for each PSA. This step of interpretation linked particular linguistic features to wider rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) and discourse techniques such as framing and juxtaposition. The comparative table was chosen to display this rich data in a way that would make it easy to build each institution's "persuasive profile." This methodical process guarantees that all conclusions are properly based on the linguistic evidence of the texts.

Results and Discussion

1st Broadcast: This section provides a detailed clause-level analysis of the NCOC's public service announcement (PSA 1). Every clause is analyzed based on the three metafunctions of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual to show how certain linguistic choices cumulatively construct an authoritative, logical, and responsible message of persuasion. Clause Ideational Analysis (Representation of Experience) Interpersonal Analysis (Enactment of Relationships) Textual Analysis (Organization of Message) Persuasive Strategy & Elaborati.

Table 1: Analysis of 1st Broadcast

Clause	Ideational Analysis (Representation of Experience)	Interpersonal Analysis (Enactment of Relationships)	Textual Analysis (Organization of Message)	Persuasive Strategy & Elaboration
1. It is important to consistently wear masks	Process: Relational (Attributive) Carrier: [to consistently wear masks] Attribute: important	Mood: Declarative Modality: High (Obligation) Function: Establishes an objective, non-negotiable fact. The impersonal "It" removes a human Sayer, making the statement feel like a universal truth.	Theme: "It" (Unmarked) Rheme: "...is important to consistently wear masks." "Structure: The key action is placed in the Rheme, presented as new and focal information.	Strategy: Establishing Objective Necessity. By using a relational process and high modality ("important"), the PSA avoids a direct command ("Wear masks!"). Instead, it frames the action as an inherent, logical necessity, persuading the audience through an appeal to reason rather than overt force.
2. Maintaining social distance is crucial	Process: Relational (Attributive) Carrier: Maintaining social distance Attribute: crucial	Mood: Declarative Modality: Very High (Obligation) Function: Intensifies the command. "Crucial" carries a higher modal value than "important," signaling increased gravity.	Theme: "Maintaining social distance" (Marked) Rheme: "...is crucial." "Structure: The action itself is now the Theme, giving it prominence and making the message more	Strategy: Escalating Urgency. The shift in thematic structure (from "It" to the action itself) and the escalation in modality ("crucial") work together to increase the perceived stakes. The persuasion here is built on heightening the sense of urgency and the critical nature of the action.

3. Regularly sanitizing hands is advised	Process: Verbal (Passive Voice) Sayer (implied): NCO C / The authorities Verbiage: [Regularly sanitizing hands]	Mood: Declarative Modality: Median (Recommendation) Function: Projects an official, institutional voice. The passive voice obscures the agent, making the advice sound like established protocol.	direct.	Strategy: Projecting Institutional Authority. The use of the passive verbal process ("is advised") is a key feature of institutional discourse. It persuades by positioning the message as an official, carefully considered recommendation from an authoritative body, rather than a personal opinion.
			Theme: "Regularly sanitizing hands" "Rheme: "...is advised" "Structure: Continues the pattern of thematizing the action, reinforcing the list-like structure of the PSA.	
4. The video suggests holding discussions and gatherings in open spaces...	Process: Verbal Sayer: The video Verbiage: [holding discussions...]	Mood: Declarative Modality: Low (Suggestion) Function: Shifts from command to guidance. This offers a solution rather than just a prohibition, engaging the audience collaboratively.	Theme: "The video" "Rheme: "...suggests holding discussions..." "Structure: Thematizing "The video" reminds the audience of the source of the message.	Strategy: Guided Choice and Empowerment. Through the application of a low-modality verb ("suggests"), the PSA tempers its method. It cajoles, not through prohibition of an action, but through subtle encouragement of a safer option. This gives power to the viewer to decide responsibly, maximizing compliance.
			Theme: "The public" "Rheme: "...is urged to follow the guidelines..." "Structure: Thematizing the audience ("The public") is a powerful move that directly addresses and involves them in the message.	
5. The public is encouraged to adhere to the guidelines released by the NCOC Process: Verbal (Passive Voice)	Process: Verbal (Passive Voice) Sayer (implied): NCOC Target: The public Verbiage: [to follow the guidelines...]	Mood: Declarative Modality: High (Obligation) Function: A direct and summative call to action. Explicitly naming "The public" as the Target makes the command personal and unavoidable.	Theme: "The public" "Rheme: "...is urged to follow the guidelines..." "Structure: Thematizing the audience ("The public") is a powerful move that directly addresses and involves them in the message.	Strategy: Direct and Summative Appeal. This clause functions as the thesis statement for the entire PSA. It consolidates all previous points into a single, overarching command. By thematizing "The public" and using a high-modality verb ("urged"), it creates a powerful, direct appeal that is difficult to ignore.
			Theme: "to protect" "Structure: This dependent clause provides the purpose for the action in the main clause, creating strong logical cohesion.	
6. ...to protect themselves and their families	Process: Material Actor: themselves (the public) Goal/Beneficiary: themselves and their families	Mood: Non-finite (Clause of Purpose) Function: Provides the ultimate rationale and emotional warrant for compliance.	Theme: "to protect" "Structure: This dependent clause provides the purpose for the action in the main clause, creating strong logical cohesion.	Strategy: Appealing to Core Motivations (Pathos). This final clause shifts from institutional command to personal benefit. It provides the powerful emotional and logical reason <i>why</i> the public should comply: to protect themselves and their loved ones. This is a classic persuasive strategy that connects abstract rules to the audience's most fundamental values.

2nd Broadcast: This section provides a detailed clause-level analysis of the ISPR's public service announcement (PSA 2). This PSA persuades not through direct instruction, but by constructing an emotive, nationalistic narrative. The analysis deconstructs how each clause contributes to this narrative by appealing to shared values, cultural identity, and faith.

Table 2
Analysis of 2nd Broadcast

Clause	Ideational Analysis (Representation of Experience)	Interpersonal Analysis (Enactment of Relationships)	Textual Analysis (Organization of Message)	Persuasive Strategy & Elaboration
1. It discusses an unseen enemy	Process: Verbal Sayer: It (the video) Verbiage: an unseen enemy	Mood: Declarative Function: Establishes the premise. The verb "discusses" is neutral, but the content of the Verbiage is highly charged.	Theme: "It" (Unmarked) Rheme: "...discusses an unseen enemy." "Structure: Introduces the central antagonist of the narrative.	Strategy: Framing through Metaphor. The PSA immediately frames the virus not as a medical issue but as a sentient "enemy." This is a powerful metaphorical choice that shifts the context from public health to a national conflict, a framework that allows for appeals to unity and patriotism.
2. ...that attacks unexpectedly	Process: Material Actor: that (the enemy) Circumstance (Manner): unexpectedly	Mood: Declarative (as a defining relative clause) Function: Characterizes the enemy as treacherous and aggressive, justifying a defensive, unified stance.	Theme: "that" Rheme: "...attacks unexpectedly." "Structure: This is embedded clause modifies "enemy," adding a layer of menace.	Strategy: Personification and Threat Construction. By attributing a material action ("attacks") to the metaphorical enemy, the PSA personifies the threat. This makes the danger feel more immediate and intentional, unifying the audience against a common, malevolent foe.
3. It emphasizes saving lives and helping each other	Process: Verbal Sayer: It (the video) Verbiage: [saving lives and helping each other]	Mood: Declarative Function: Presents the moral imperative. "Emphasizes" has a stronger modal force than "discusses," signaling this as a core message.	Theme: "It" Rheme: "...emphasizes saving lives..." "Structure: Presents the collective, moral response to the threat.	Strategy: Appeal to Shared Morality (Pathos). The response is framed not as a set of rules, but as a noble, collective duty ("saving lives," "helping each other"). This persuades by appealing to the audience's sense of virtue and shared humanity.
4. ...referencing a saying by Hazrat Muhammad	Process: Verbal Sayer: It (the video) Verbiage: a saying...	Mood: Non-finite (as a circumstantial clause) Function: Grounds the moral call in the highest possible cultural and religious authority.	Theme: "referencing" Structure: This dependent clause provides the source and legitimacy for the moral call in the previous clause.	Strategy: Appeal to Supreme Authority (Ethos). This is a very effective persuasive tactic. By referencing an honored religious leader, the PSA grounds its moral argument in a structure of deeply held belief, pre-empting controversy and giving the message huge credibility and emotional resonance
5. ...asserting that the nation's people will unite in any conflict	Process: Verbal ("stating") projecting a Material clause ("will unite") Actor: the nation's people	Mood: Declarative Modality: High (Certainty/Prediction) Function: A confident declaration of	Theme: "that" Rheme: "...the people of the nation will unite..." Structure: This projected	Strategy: Declaration of Inevitable Unity. This strategy persuades by creating a vision of inevitable collective strength. By stating unity as a future fact, it inspires

			national resolve. The high-modality "will" present unity not as a hope, but as a certainty.	clause presents the core patriotic message.	confidence and encourages the audience to align themselves with this powerful, foretold national identity.
6. The video also expresses a wish to bring happiness to those who are sad	Process: Verbal Sayer: The Verbiage: a wish...	video	Mood: Declarative Function: Shifts the tone from strength to empathy, positioning the message producer (ISPR) as benevolent and caring.	Theme: "The video" Rheme: "...also expresses a wish..." Structure: The matizing "The video" makes the source explicit while introducing a new, softer emotional dimension.	Strategy: Building Empathic Connection. After the powerful calls to morality and patriotism, this clause softens the tone. It persuades by showing compassion for the vulnerable, building an emotional bond with the audience and portraying the national struggle as one rooted in care.
7. ...noting that the Almighty helps the helpless	Process: Verbal ("noting") projecting a Material clause ("helps") Actor: The Almighty Goal: the helpless		Mood: Declarative Function: Offers divine reassurance and a final, hopeful conclusion. It is presented as a timeless, universal truth.	Theme: "that" Rheme: "...the Almighty helps the helpless." Structure: This projected clause provides the ultimate, spiritual warrant for the entire narrative.	Strategy: Appeal to Divine Providence and Hope. This final clause provides the ultimate comfort. It frames the national struggle within a divine plan, assuring the audience that they are not alone. It persuades by reducing anxiety and instilling a sense of faith and ultimate hope.

3rd Broadcast: This section provides a detailed clause-level analysis of the SAMAA TV public service announcement (PSA 3). This broadcast uses a strategy of persuasion by logos (appeal to reason and logic), building its case through the chronological arrangement of facts. The discussion shows how the arrangement of the clauses and their contrast lead the viewer in a certain way to interpret the timeline of the pandemic.

Note: The data points (e.g., "Cases: 1,796") are handled as elliptical clauses, where the complete clause (e.g., "[The number of] Cases was 1,796") is assumed. This is a typical property of data-driven and news texts.

Table 3
Analysis of 3rd Broadcast

Clause	Ideational Analysis (Representation of Experience)	Interpersonal Analysis (Enactment of Relationships)	Textual Analysis (Organization of Message)	Persuasive Strategy & Elaboration
1. This video presents data on Coronavirus in Pakistan...	Process: Verbal Sayer: This video Verbiage: data on Coronavirus..	Mood: Declarative Function: A factual statement about the video's content. It establishes a formal, informational relationship with	Theme: "This video" Rheme: "...presents data..." Structure: Sets the topic for the entire PSA, framing it as an act of information delivery.	Strategy: Framing through Objectivity. This initial sentence puts the PSA squarely forward as a factual, evidence-based report immediately. It persuades by establishing an expectation of objectivity and invoking the viewer's need to know accurate, evidence-based

		the viewer.		information.
2. Cases: 1,796 (Elliptical version of "[The number of] Cases was 1,796")	Process: Relational (Attributive) Carrier: [The number of] Cases Attribute: 1,796	Mood: Declarative Modality: Zero. It is a bare fact. Function: Presents a statistic without comment, creating an air of neutrality and social distance.	Theme: "Cases" Rheme: "1,796" Structure: A typical data-label structure, highly efficient for information transfer.	Strategy: Persuasion through Quantification. The power of this clause lies in its facticity. The number is presented as an undeniable, objective piece of reality. The lack of emotive or modal language enhances its credibility, persuading the audience by presenting raw, uninterpreted data.
3. A lockdown was imposed in March	Process: Material (Passive Voice) Goal: A lockdown Actor (implied): The government Circumstance (Time): in March	Mood: Declarative (Passive) Function: Reports a major event. The passive voice obscures the agent (the government), presenting the action as an official, almost inevitable event.	Theme: "A lockdown" Rheme: "...was imposed in March." Structure: Thematising the event gives it prominence.	Strategy: Contextualizing Data through Juxtaposition. This clause is not a statistic but an action. By placing it directly alongside the March data, the PSA implicitly creates a cause-and-effect narrative for the viewer to infer: <i>this action was taken in response to these numbers</i> . It guides interpretation without explicitly stating it.
4. The lockdown was eased...	Process: Material (Passive Voice) Goal: The lockdown Actor (implied): The government	Mood: Declarative (Passive) Function: Reports a significant policy reversal, again using the objective tone of the passive voice.	Theme: "The lockdown" Rheme: "...was eased." Structure: Parallels the structure of clause 3, creating a clear contrast between the two policy actions.	Strategy: Building a Narrative of Consequence. This clause, when viewed alongside the subsequent data for June (Cases: 212,000), is the most powerful persuasive element. The PSA does not state, "Easing the lockdown caused a massive spike in cases."
5. ...and markets were fully reopened in May	Process: Material (Passive Voice) Goal: markets Actor (implied): The government	Mood: Declarative (Passive) Function: Provides a specific, concrete example of the lockdown being eased, making the policy change more tangible for the viewer.	Theme: "markets" Rheme: "...were fully reopened in May." Structure: This clause elaborates on the previous one, adding detail to the policy shift.	Strategy: (Continued from above) Instead, it simply juxtaposes the <i>action</i> (easing lockdown) with the <i>data</i> (a massive increase in cases). This arrangement persuades the audience to draw the conclusion themselves, which is often more powerful than being told directly. The persuasion lies in the silent, logical gap between the clauses.
6. ...and smart lockdowns began in June	Process: Material Actor: smart lockdowns Circumstance (Time): in June	Mood: Declarative Function: Reports the next policy evolution, showing a reaction to the changing situation.	Theme: "smart lockdowns" Rheme: "...began in June." Structure: Continues the chronological narrative of policy responses.	Strategy: Completing the Narrative Arc. This clause shows a governmental response to the spike in cases, completing a mini-narrative cycle within the data report: <i>Problem -> Action 1 -> Consequence -> Action 2</i> . This structured presentation makes the timeline feel logical

				and understandable, reinforcing the PSA's authority as a credible narrator of events.
7. Overall data up to October 2020(<i>Followed by final statistics</i>)	Process: N/A (Nominal Group) Function: Functions as a heading or title for the final summary data.	Mood: N/A Function: Signals a shift from a month-by-month view to a cumulative summary.	Theme: "Overall data..." Structure: Acts as a textual signpost, preparing the viewer for the concluding figures.	Strategy: Summarizing for Final Impact. By presenting the cumulative totals at the end, the PSA delivers its final, most impactful numbers. After walking the viewer through the monthly fluctuations and their implied causes, these large, aggregate figures ("Cases: 325,000," "Deaths: 6,700") land with greater weight, summarizing the entire scale of the pandemic in a stark, quantitative conclusion.

The systemic functional analysis of the three public service announcements reveals distinct and deliberately constructed persuasive strategies, each aligned with the institutional identity of its producer. The results, organized by the research question, demonstrate how choices in the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions work in concert to persuade the public.

Constructing the Crisis: Ideational Strategies

The first research question asked how different institutions use ideational resources to construct distinct realities of the pandemic. The analysis shows a clear divergence.

- The NCOC primarily uses Relational Processes ("is important," "is crucial") to represent the crisis as a set of objective, manageable facts and responsibilities. This ideational choice frames the pandemic as a problem solvable through logical adherence to protocol. The reality constructed is one of civic duty and procedural compliance.
- In stark contrast, the ISPR employs a powerful metaphorical framework, representing the virus as an "unseen enemy that attacks." This use of Material Processes personifies the threat and reframes the health crisis as a national conflict. This ideational construction shifts the required public response from one of personal hygiene to one of collective defense and nationalistic duty.
- Finally, SAMAA TV constructs reality through quantification. Its discourse is dominated by elliptical Relational (Attributive) Processes that assign numerical values to abstract categories (Cases: 1,796). This ideational choice strips the pandemic of emotion and presents it as an empirical, statistical phenomenon, reinforcing the channel's role as an objective reporter of facts.

These findings demonstrate that the "reality" of the pandemic was not a monolithic concept but was strategically framed by each institution. The NCOC's logical framing calls for a rational, compliant citizen. The ISPR's conflict framing calls for a unified, patriotic citizen. The SAMAA TV's data-driven framing calls for an informed, analytical citizen. This confirms that ideational choices are not neutral; they are persuasive acts that define the problem and, by extension, the appropriate solution.

Enacting Relationships: Interpersonal Strategies

The second research question addressed the interpersonal strategies used to enact relationships and build persuasive appeals. The analysis of Mood and Modality reveals three different persuasive stances.

- The NCOC establishes an authority-to-subject relationship through its sophisticated use of obligation modality. It begins with high-value modals ("important," "crucial") to assert non-negotiable authority, then strategically lowers the modality ("suggests") to appear collaborative, before reasserting its power by directly targeting "The public" with a high-modality command ("is urged"). This creates a persuasive appeal based on ethos (institutional authority) and logos (the logic of the rules).
- The ISPR fosters a leader-to-compatriot relationship. It avoids obligation modality entirely, instead using high-value certainty modality ("will unite") to inspire confidence. Its primary persuasive tool is the appeal to shared values (pathos and ethos), achieved by referencing supreme religious authority ("a saying by Hazrat Muhammad") and divine providence ("the Almighty helps the helpless"). This builds an emotional and spiritual connection with the audience.
- SAMAA TV enacts an information provider-to-audience relationship by maintaining a strict zero-modality stance. The declarative mood is used to present facts without comment, creating a social distance that enhances its perceived objectivity. The persuasive appeal is purely to logos, trusting the audience to interpret the data logically.

The interpersonal analysis confirms that persuasion is fundamentally relational. The NCOC persuades by leveraging its institutional power, the ISPR by leveraging its cultural and moral influence, and SAMAA TV by leveraging its credibility as a neutral observer. Each strategy is tailored to the institution's perceived role in society and its communicative goals.

Organizing the Message: Textual Strategies

The third research question explored how textual organization contributes to the persuasive effect. The thematic structure of each PSA was found to be a key component of its overall strategy.

- The NCOC employs a clear instructional list structure. By consistently thematizing the recommended actions ("Maintaining social distance..."), it creates a text that is easy to navigate and remember, reinforcing its practical, instructional purpose.
- The ISPR organizes its message as a narrative arc. The thematic progression moves from establishing a threat ("unseen enemy") to a moral call to action ("saving lives") and a declaration of unity, creating an emotionally resonant story that is designed to inspire.
- The SAMAA TV PSA's most subtle and powerful persuasive tool is its chronological thematic structure. By thematizing time and juxtaposing policy decisions ("A lockdown was imposed") with subsequent data, it builds a silent but compelling argument for cause and effect. The viewer is textually guided to

conclude that easing the lockdown led to a spike in cases, a conclusion made more powerful because it is inferred rather than stated.

This analysis demonstrates that textual organization is not a neutral container for content but an active part of the persuasive strategy. The structure of the message whether a list, a story, or a timeline prepares the audience for a specific kind of engagement and guides them toward the intended interpretation. This confirms that the textual metafunction is integral to realizing the ideational and interpersonal goals of a persuasive text.

Comparative Analysis of Persuasive Strategies

Table 4
Comparative Analysis of Persuasive Strategies

Analytical Dimension	PSA 1: NCOC (The Directive)	PSA 2: ISPR (The Narrative)	PSA 3: SAMAA TV (The Report)
Overall Persuasive Strategy	Authoritative Instruction: Persuades through logic, graduated authority, and appeals to civic and familial responsibility.	Moral & Nationalistic Unification: Persuades through an emotive narrative, appealing to shared faith, patriotism, and collective identity.	Persuasion by Juxtaposition: Persuades by arranging objective data to guide the audience to infer a cause-and-effect conclusion.
Ideational Strategy (<i>How reality is constructed</i>)	A Manageable Problem: The pandemic is framed as a set of tasks and responsibilities solvable through adherence to protocol.	A National Conflict: The pandemic is framed as a war against a personified "unseen enemy," requiring national unity.	A Statistical Phenomenon: The pandemic is framed as a series of objective data points and events unfolding over time.
Key Process Types	Relational Processes ("is crucial") to state facts; Verbal Processes ("is advised") to issue commands.	Material Processes ("attacks," "will unite") to create action; Verbal Processes ("referencing") to cite authority.	Relational (Attributive) Processes ("Cases: 1,796") to quantify; Material Processes ("lockdown was imposed") to report events.
Interpersonal Strategy (<i>How relationships are enacted</i>)	Authority-to-Subject: The NCOC is the expert; the public is the compliant recipient of rules.	Leader-to-Compatriot: The ISPR is the unifier; the public is a collective of national and spiritual brethren.	Information Provider-to-Audience: SAMAA TV is the neutral observer; the public is the informed citizenry.
Key Persuasive Appeals	Ethos & Logos: Appeals to institutional authority and the logic of the rules, with a final appeal to pathos (family protection).	Pathos & Ethos: Appeals to emotion (hope, unity, empathy) and the authority of religious and nationalistic values.	Logos & Ethos: Appeals to logic through data and to its own credibility as an objective news source.
Use of Modality	Graduated Obligation: Uses a strategic mix of high ("crucial"), median ("advised"), and low ("suggests") modality to command and guide.	High Certainty & Zero Obligation: Uses high-certainty modals ("will unite") to inspire confidence, while avoiding obligation.	Zero Modality: Deliberately avoids modal verbs to maintain an objective, factual tone.
Textual Strategy (<i>How the message is organized</i>)	Instructional List: Thematic structure focuses on the recommended actions, creating a clear, easy-to-follow set of directives.	Narrative Arc: Thematic progression follows a story structure: threat -> moral call -> resolution -> hope.	Chronological Report: Thematic structure is organized by time, juxtaposing policy actions with subsequent data to imply causality.

Conclusion

This study investigated persuasive strategies in Pakistani COVID-19 PSAs using a Systemic Functional Multimodal Analysis. Deconstructing broadcasts from the NCOC, ISPR, and SAMAA TV, the research confirms that persuasion is a strategic process tailored to institutional identity and communicative goals.

The findings revealed three "persuasive profiles." The NCOC used authoritative instruction, framing the pandemic as a manageable problem, enacting an expert-to-public relationship via graduated modality, and using an instructional list (logos/ethos). The ISPR pursued moral and nationalistic unification, framing the crisis as a national conflict, and fostering a leader-to-compatriot relationship through appeals to faith and patriotism (pathos/ethos) within an emotive narrative. Finally, SAMAA TV employed persuasion by juxtaposition, representing the pandemic as objective data, maintaining a neutral relationship by avoiding modality, and using a chronological structure to guide viewers to an inferred conclusion (logos).

This study demonstrated that choices in process types, modality, and thematic structure are the core mechanisms for framing reality, building relationships, and winning arguments. This divergence highlights that public discourse during a crisis is a contested space where institutions compete to define the problem. The research contributes a detailed, evidence-based model for analyzing persuasive language, moving beyond identifying rhetorical appeals to explaining their grammatical construction.

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