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**RESEARCH PAPER**

## Unveiling Impoliteness Strategies in Political Discourse: A Case Study of Online Press Conferences and Media Platforms during the Political Crisis in Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT**

This research endeavors to scrutinize the impoliteness strategies employed by Pakistani political figures amidst political censorship and the prevailing political turmoil, with a particular emphasis on their utilization of social media and press conferences. The investigation seeks to dissect the communicative patterns exhibited by the designated political elite, delving into the ubiquity and characteristics of impoliteness strategies, encompassing behaviors such as talking over interlocutors, manifestations of aggressive body language, employment of derogatory appellations, initiation of insults and personal invectives, as well as the application of sarcasm and irony. Given the heightened prevalence of social media usage, the study predominantly concentrates on virtual press conferences and assorted online media platforms exploited by politicians to attribute blame and participate in contentious dialogues with their adversaries. Through an examination of these impoliteness strategies, the primary objective of this inquiry is to elucidate the intricacies of political communication amid political censorship and the enduring political crisis, delineating its repercussions on democratic processes and the state of public discourse within the context of Pakistan.

**KEYWORDS** Impoliteness Strategies, Online Press Conferences, Political Censorship, Political Crisis, Social Media

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**Introduction**

In the intricate realm of political discourse, communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and reflecting the socio-political landscape of a nation. The digital age has not only transformed the channels through which political messages are disseminated but has also introduced new dimensions to studying language use in political contexts. This research endeavors to unravel the impoliteness strategies employed in political discourse, focusing on the context of online press conferences and media talks during the political crisis and political censorship in Pakistan. Grounded in Brown and Levinson's influential work on politeness (1987), this study seeks to extend their framework to explore the less-explored facet of impoliteness within the context of Pakistani politics, shedding light on how political actors strategically utilize impoliteness as a communicative tool. This study is an academic contribution by providing valuable insights into the communication strategies used by Pakistani politicians in times of political and judicial crisis by identifying and analyzing impoliteness strategies and helping the public by making them informed citizens, by critically evaluating the political

discourse, and the use of impoliteness strategies by the so-called political elite for their gains.

### **Literature Review**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the significant elements of impoliteness theory are name-calling, insults and personal attacks, sarcasm and irony, interruptions and talking over others, and aggressive body language. According to a study conducted by Shafiq (2021) on e-political discourse using Twitter data of three major political parties during and after general elections (2018) held in Pakistan to uncover patterns like prejudice and dehumanization, the study reveals how strong language is strategically used to disrupt opponents, exposing implied negative connotations in seemingly straightforward political discourse (Muzaffar, et al. 2019) Ultimately, this study provides readers insights into online hate speech, allowing them to decode underlying hatred in general and online political discourse.

Dynel (2015) argues impoliteness in the context of theoretical and methodological issues and discovers topics such as insults and sarcasm. Dynel (2013) takes impoliteness as disaffiliation humor in film talk. Bousfield (2010) addresses the definitions and variations of impoliteness and rudeness while also considering the role of face threat, attack, and damage. Kienpointner (2018) studies impoliteness in online discourse, specifically hate speech and explores strategies and techniques employed in online communications. Overall, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of impoliteness and its various indicators, shedding light on the different aspects of name-calling, insults, sarcasm, interruptions, and aggressive body language in different contexts.

### **Material and Methods**

Following are the impoliteness strategies used in the interactional communication of politicians; researchers have selected the theory for the analysis of the data "Impoliteness theory," presented by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987) in their book "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use."

Kasper (2005) states, "the action-theoretical view of politeness shared by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983) firmly places linguistic etiquette in the arena of language use. their occurrence determines Fraser (1990) comments, "the politeness of linguistics acts in communicative contexts rather than by inherent properties, pushes the issue that being "polite" is attributable only to speakers, not to language." Different studies show that social judgments are made based on speakers' conduct, which can be in the form of language use or other behaviors as more or less polite concerning community values and social norms.

Researchers employed a qualitative approach for the data analysis by analyzing the available online material using criteria sampling. The inclusion criteria are the social media video clips of Pakistani politicians from 2018 to August 2023, and the exclusion criteria for the data is given in Table 1 of the study. Online press conferences of politicians will be analyzed by doing content analysis to identify impoliteness strategies. Data was collected systematically with inclusion and exclusion criteria over a specific period, ensuring a representative sample.

**Table 1**  
**Criteria for Selection of Textbooks**

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media videos and clips from 2018 to August 2023</li> <li>• Pakistani Political parties and their followers</li> <li>• Mainstream political parties</li> <li>• Politicians who performed any kind of impoliteness as an instigator</li> <li>• Politicians who are targeted and whose positive face is threatened</li> <li>• Parliamentarians from Pakistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and electronic media videos and clips before 2018 and after August 2023</li> <li>• Political Parties other than Pakistan</li> <li>• Political parties that are not labeled</li> <li>• Politicians whose positive or negative face has never been damaged</li> <li>• Parliamentarians other than Pakistan</li> </ul>

### Results and Discussion

In political discourse, impoliteness strategies are employed by politicians to discredit/ dishonor opponents and assert dominance. These schemes involve different forms of verbal aggression, personal attacks, sarcasm, or disrespectful language. The following are the most commonly used impoliteness strategies:

**Name-calling:** In the light of previous studies, politicians worldwide use derogatory terms and labels to demean their opponents or delegitimize their arguments.

**Insults and personal attacks:** To humiliate and let down the opponent, politicians engage in ad hominem attacks, targeting the character, appearance, personal and private life of their opponents.

**Sarcasm and irony:** Politicians use sarcastic or ironic remarks to mock or demean their opponents' statements and positions.

**Interruptions and talking over others:** Politicians may engage in aggressive conversational tactics, such as interrupting or talking over their opponents, to undermine their arguments or assert dominance.

**Aggressive body language:** Non-verbal cues, such as aggressive gestures, facial expressions, or tone of voice, can also contribute to impoliteness in political communication.

Following are the instances of observed impoliteness strategies used in the interactional communication of Pakistani politicians during their online press conferences and talk shows selected in the light of Brown and Levinson's theory of impoliteness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) through content analysis.

**Table 2**  
**Name Calling**

Impoliteness Strategies Used by Pakistani Politicians					
Type of Impoliteness	Name Calling	Target	Instigator	Social media	Source

Diesel	Fazal U Rehman	Imran Khan	✓	(24 News HD, 2020) (News Desk, 2022)
Cherry Blossom	Shehbaz Sharif	Imran Khan	✓	(24 News HD, 2020), (News Desk, 2022)
Kukri	Hamza Shehbaz	Imran Khan	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2022)
Nani	Maryam Nawaz Sharif	Imran Khan	✓	(24 News HD, 2020), (News Desk, 2022)
Pinki Peerni	Bushra Bibi	Maryam Nawaz	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2022)
Mr. 10 %	Asif Ali Zardar	Ali Ameen Ganda Pur	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2020)
Dentonic	Ata Tarar	Kamil Ali Agha	✓	(News One, 2022)
Ventilator	Khawaja Asif	PTI followers	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2022)
Daddo Charger	Maryam Orangzeib	PTI followers	✓	(Video, 2023)
Billo Rani	Bilawal Bhutto	Sheikh Rasheed	✓	(News, 2022)
Tanzeem Sazi	Talal Ch.	Imran Khan	✓	(24 News HD, 2020)
Pindi Boy/ Sheeda Talli	Sheikh Rasheed	Hafiz Hamdullah	✓	(Bol News, 2021)
Patwari	Muslim League N followers	PTI followers	✓	(Video, 2018)
Yuthia	PTI followers	N League followers	✓	(Video, 2018)
Bakri	Hina Pervez But	PTI followers	✓	(Right TV, 2023)
Geedar	Nawaz Shareef	Imran Khan	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2022)
Baby Bilawal/ Bilawal Sahiba	Bilawal Bhutto	Imran Khan	✓	(News Desk, 2022)

Name-calling means using derogatory terms and labeling political opponents to demean their opponents or delegitimize their arguments. In Pakistani political discourse, using impoliteness strategies has been expected for years Yasmeen (2014). However, it was constrained between two mainstream political parties, the Muslim League N and the Pakistan People's Party, before the arrival of the third political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The use of impoliteness strategies increased after the mass of interest and participation of Pakistani youth and the excessive use of social media. It was due to youth interest in politics who spent ample time on social media whom opponents labeled keyboard warriors. Baqir (2011) mentioned the role of ICT growth in new political discourse in Pakistan, describing how ICT has shaped the political landscape and political scenario in Pakistan. During this era, Social and electronic media have emerged as powerful tools for youth as political players, influencing Pakistani politics and policy-making greatly. It was the time when narratives were built through state-run media and

private TV Channels. However, youth took a huge shift from traditional media to ICT as technologies that include but were not limited to social media: YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, the Internet, cell phone, modern electronic broadcast media including TV over cable networks, TV over cell phone, and IP TV are the common tools of use for the youth who spent most of their time on these social media platforms destroying the traditional narrative building techniques used through conventional methods.

PTI followers, Insafians gave a trend to name calling; for instance, during IK speech to the youth, published in (News Desk, 2022), IK has been calling the names of different politicians as "nani", "diesel", "cherry blossom", "geedar", "baby Bilawal/ Bilawal Sahiba" (24 News HD, 2020), (SAMAA TV, 2022).

Imran Khan has started addressing ex-Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Shairf as "cherry blossom" and often calls him "boot polishiya". In some of his political processions, Imran Khan called PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz "nani"; in some of Maryam Nawaz named IK's wife, Bushra Bibi, as Pinki Peerni during a public procession is an example of name calling and personal attack on a lady who has nothing to do with politics (SAMAA TV, 2022). Instigator Ali Ameen Gandapur targeted ex-president Asif Ali Zardari by telling his name during a public procession that books had been written on him naming him as Mr. 10 % (SAMAA TV, 2020). Instigator Kamil Ali Aga targeted Atta Tarar, naming him Dentonic wala..... during a political talk show (News One, 2022). During a public procession, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad named Bilawal Bhutto Billo Rani (News, 2022). Hafiz Hamdullah targeted Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad in a talk show by calling him Sheeda Talli and Pindi Boy (Bol News, 2021).

During a party's public procession in 2015, Imran Khan named Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari "*beta* and baby." The former premier said, "Bilawal *beta*, this is not how politics is done. Politics cannot be done by putting pictures of your grandfather and mother in the background. He further claimed that their party would make a Naya Pakistan baby Bilawal. " In addition to this, the PTI chairman has often named Chief Minister Punjab Hamza Shehbaz "kukri" due to the rising process of chicken during his CM ship and due to Hamza Shabazz's chicken business.

Furthermore, Khan called Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Shehbaz Sharif, and PPP co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari the "three stooges," referring to a classic American program. This address was before Khan was ousted from power. He told his party members that the no-confidence motion was a "blessing" because it helped to provide a kick to Khan's party. In a public procession, Imran Khan named Hamza Shehbaz' Kukri", saying Hamza Kukri has doubled the price of chicken (SAMAA TV, 2022).

**Table 3**  
**Insults and Personal Attacks**

<b>Impoliteness Strategies Used by Pakistani Politicians</b>				
Type of Impoliteness	Target	Instigator	Social Media	Source
<b>Insults and personal attacks</b>				
Pinki Peerni	Bushra Bibi	Maryam Nawaz	During Public Procession	(SAMAA TV, 2022)
Dabbu	Fawad Chaudhry	Mushahid Ullah	During Senate Session (2020)	(24 News HD, 2020)

Na Ahl Mamaar	Maryam Aurangzeb	Shahbaz Gill	In response of Maryam Aurangzeb	(ARY News, 2020)
Kaneez	Maryam Aurangzeb	Shahbaz Gill	In response to Maryam Aurangzeb's press conference	(GNN, 2022)
Jaal Saz Aurat	Maryam Nawaz Shareef	Shahbaz Gill	In response to Maryam Aurangzeb press conference	(GNN, 2022)

During the Senate Session (2020), Instigator Mushahid Ullah Syed targeted Fawad Chaudhry by telling him Dabbu due to passing wrong information about his role in PIA. In response to Maryam Aurangzeb's tweet where she claimed that local refineries have been closed due to a shortage of furnace oil, blaming the sitting government as the cause of load shedding, Shehbaz Gill that it is due the incompetent politicians and wrong decisions of the past governments. In response to Maryam Aurangzeb's press conference where she asked about the "auqat" of Imran Khan, Shehbaz Gill responded to the press conference using insulting words like Kaneez for Maryam Aurangzeb and Jaal Saz Aurat for Maryam Nawaz Shareef (GNN, 2022).

**Table 4**  
Aggressive Body Language

<b>Impoliteness Strategies Used by Pakistani Politicians</b>				
<b>Aggressive body language/Physical Assault</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Instigator</b>	<b>Social Media</b>	<b>Source</b>
Firdous Ashiq Awan	Qadir Mandokhel	Host of the program and Target	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2021)
Dehshat Gard	Khadija Shah	Ata Tarar	✓	(SAMAA TV, 2023)

Firdous Ashiq Awan used aggressive body language and lost control over her in Javed Chaudhry's live show and targeted PPP MNA Qadir Mandokhel by slapping his face. Attaullah Tarar, during a press conference, used aggressive body language against political opponents, targeting and labeling female activists of a political party as Dehshat Gard (terrorists), explaining that terrorists have no gender, race, or religion.

## Findngs

The study shows that politicians in Pakistan use extremely impolite language for their political opponents, and due to a lack of tolerance and patience, they do not want to listen to the opinions of their opponents. Another common finding of the study is that private and personal attacks on their opponents' families are taken as point-scoring, and media houses are not trained enough to follow journalistic ethics. This study is equally beneficial for media houses by understanding how impoliteness is manifested and propagated through online press conferences and media outlets to inform media professionals about the ethical dimensions of political reporting during crises.

The study shows that politicians are public figures; nothing remains private once they become public figures. It is highly recommended that politicians should never go to

the point of no return; they should be constantly flexible and always keep elasticity in their political discourse. This study is beneficial for media giants and Policymakers who can use the research findings to utilize communication strategies during crises effectively. In light of the above findings, training programs for political figures and journalists can be devised to ensure more effective and ethical communication in high-stakes situations.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research on impoliteness in political discourse is not just an academic activity. However, it has real-world implications for fostering a more informed and resilient society, enhancing the ethical standards of political discourse, and contributing to effective crisis management practices in the country. This study offers an academic contribution by providing valuable insights into the communication strategies used by Pakistani politicians in times of political and judicial crisis by identifying and analyzing impoliteness strategies and helping the public by making them informed citizens, by critically evaluating the political discourse, and the use of impoliteness strategies by the so-called political elite for their personal gains.

### **Recommendations**

This study has academic contributions as the research contributes to the existing body of literature on politeness and communication studies by extending the application of Brown and Levinson's (1987) Impoliteness theory to political discourse. By identifying and analyzing impoliteness, scholars and policymakers understand how language should be used to navigate and influence political landscapes.

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