

**REPRESENTATION OF CPEC IN
PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS: A
READER RESPONSE PERSPECTIVE**

BY

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Representation of CPEC in Pakistani English Newspapers: A Reader Response Perspective

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Representation Of CPEC In Pakistani English Newspapers: A Reader Response Perspective** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Representation Of CPEC In Pakistani English Newspapers: A Reader Response Perspective

This work explores the representation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani English newspapers from a reader response perspective. The study aims to understand the evolution of CPEC's depiction over time and the factors influencing these changes. The work employs a qualitative analysis methods to evaluate the perception of readers for CPEC coverage. The key concepts discussed in this thesis include the geopolitical significance of CPEC, the media's role in shaping public opinion, and the influence of political dynamics on media narratives. Through qualitative analysis of interview data from various respondents, the research identifies themes such as initial optimism, emerging environmental and economic concerns, and the impact of political shifts on media coverage. The findings reveal a transition from a predominantly positive portrayal to a more refined and critical perspective, reflecting broader geopolitical tensions and domestic political changes. While readers express general satisfaction with timeliness and accuracy, the study identifies a need for subtle reporting that addresses concerns about comprehensiveness and fairness. The conclusion underscores the complex interaction between media, politics, and public perception in shaping the narrative around CPEC. The study highlights the need for responsible journalism that balances national interests with objective reporting, especially on projects with significant economic and political implications. This research enhances the understanding of media's role in international relations and offers valuable insights for policymakers, media professionals, and scholars in communication and international studies.

Keywords: *CPEC, English Newspapers, narratives, media's role, policy makers, Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| PBSB | Perception Based Survey of Beneficiaries |
| PTV | Pakistan Television |
| PEMRA | Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority |
| BRI | Belt and Road Initiative |

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing parents, who have always supported and encouraged me in whatever I do.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

China shares a northern border with Pakistan. Because of Pakistan's advantageous location in the region and easy access to hot springs, China and Pakistan collaborated to develop the massive China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). From the standpoint of economic and territorial growth, it is a major development program that is bound to alter both China and Pakistan. More broadly, it would open up commerce with African nations and provide China access to the Arabian and Indian oceans, allowing her to increase exports. It would also create a great deal of jobs and economic possibilities for the people of Pakistan.

New economic possibilities in turn would expedite Pakistan's economic growth considerably. This program's economic growth in the region—especially on the subcontinent—is one of its unique features. However, the project is not just restricted to those two countries; China and Pakistan have also indicated interest in extending it to other countries in South Asia. In the region, CPEC has expanded into a global project. Even if many other countries, such as those in Iran, Russia, and Central Asia, showed significant interest in the project after realizing its benefits, Pakistan would nevertheless remain the focus because of China's geostrategic ambitions and purposes (Lee & Jang, 2021).

The relationship between the two countries dates back many years, to the period when China was first acknowledged by Pakistan when it first entered the world stage. Furthermore, Pakistan has often backed China's stance and foreign policy in public forums, especially the UN General Assembly, which is open to all nations. Their joint history of great mutual credibility and honesty is the reason behind their friendship's everyday advancement. According to Khan (2014), the strong relationship between the two countries helped China become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and expand its influence globally.

Gwadar Port is strategically and geographically crucial because of its position in Pakistan's Baluchistan, near the Afghan border (Yousaf, 2012). The port is located around 100 km from the Iranian border. About 400 kilometres from Gwadar is the Strait of Hormuz, which is home to a major oil deposit. Chinese investors first contributed

1.62 billion USD to Gwadar's establishment throughout the following 40 years. The port's infrastructure and economic expansion include motorways, a global market, a technical hub, and an international airport (Yousaf, 2012).

Since public opinion has the power to greatly influence public policy and decision-making, democratic societies must take it seriously. The media is crucial in swaying public opinion since it provides facts, opinions, and analysis on a wide range of issues. Through editorials, Pakistan's print media has actively participated in swaying public opinion over the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) development project. The public's perception of CPEC remains unclear in light of these editorials. Ever since its unveiling in 2013, the CPEC project has been the subject of intense controversy and discussion in Pakistan.

Proponents of the project contend that it would provide the nation with much needed economic growth, while detractors claim that it can have detrimental effects on the environment and society. Public opinion on CPEC has been greatly influenced by the print media, with several editorials expressing a negative view of the project. It's unclear, though, how much these editorials are influencing public opinion.

The reactions of readers to these editorials often shape the public's perception of CPEC. There are several other ways readers may reply, including letters to the editor, social media comments, and online discussion forums. Research suggests that reader reaction might be a valuable indicator of how readers are reacting to news stories and affecting their perception of the issues at hand. Sadly, not much research has been done on how reader reactions to editorials in Pakistani print media impact public perception of the CPEC. This study intends to address this gap in language and literature by examining the role of reader reaction in shaping public opinion on CPEC in editorials in Pakistani print media.

1.1 Background of the Study

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multibillion-dollar infrastructure project, aims to connect Pakistan's Gwadar port with the Chinese region of Xinjiang. Since its announcement in 2013, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has generated significant discourse and controversy in Pakistan, with both supporters and opponents voicing their perspectives on potential benefits and drawbacks. Public opinion has been greatly impacted by a number of opinion-based

articles in Pakistani print media that have adopted a hostile stance towards the CPEC project. The extent to which the public's perception of CPEC has been impacted by these opinion-based editorials is unknown, though. The purpose of this study is to ascertain how public opinion is influenced by reader responses to editorials concerning the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani print media.

Previous research has shown that reader response has a critical role in shaping public opinion about a variety of issues. Feedback from readers, which can come in many different forms—from social media comments to letters to the editor—can reveal how the general public engages with and reacts to news stories. Sadly, not much research has been done on how reader reactions to editorials in Pakistani print media impact public perception of the CPEC. In order to bridge the linguistic gap between opinion editorials and mainstream Pakistani media, this study analyses reader reactions to editorials concerning the CPEC. The purpose of this study is to understand how readers' perceptions of and interactions with CPEC editorials are influencing their opinions of the project.

1.2 Statement of Problem

CPEC is one of the most important projects of the BRI that seeks to improve the connectivity and cooperation needed between China and Pakistan. Although the main driving force behind the CPEC is perceived economic gains there are many controversies associated with the project in Pakistan. These debates are often manifested in activities of the nation's print media, which serves a significant social informative function.

Although a seemingly modern topic that is widely covered by media the world over there is a noticeable gap in research on the extension and impact of opinion-based editorials on CPEC in the Pakistani English newspapers in particular. Editorials involving opinions allow people to think in one way or another based on their beliefs about CPEC, which in turn can either be for or against the project. This situation may also be worsened by the fact that the media often avails itself to the reader's opinion, which in some cases may be negative thus affecting the subsequent editorial comment.

Studies related to the media's representation of CPEC remain scarce, specifically in terms of readership response, with concern for this particular aspect largely confined to the economic, political, and strategic domains of the project. Since

grasping the reader's reactions might provide useful information about the media's role in shaping public opinion regarding CPEC, this gap is sensitive. Further, how print media defends itself and organizes and constructs the narratives on editorial platforms can impact the audience's trust in the media.

Hence, this study seeks to contribute to this research gap in the following ways: To analyse the main reader responses to opinion-based editorials relating to CPEC; to evaluate the extent to which the media has responded to such criticism. To identify why some reactions engage the public's sentiments more than others. The interviews that were conducted were analysed thematically, and the flexibility of the study was realized in the fact that respondents' reactions to CPEC depiction ranged from positive to negative depending on the degree of optimism or knowledge possessed by the respondents. Political beliefs are informed by scant information, and ethnic stereotyping exists among cultures, yet, economic gains that include the enhancement of facilities are depicted as promising advantages. Peculiar cultural impact is also notable and multiple fears associated with hegemony, stem from possible Chinese cultural imperialism.

The study also takes into account the media and language factor and in this regard, the respondents mention the new aptitude characteristic in forming perceptions and opinions. The general setting and the nature of the relationship that exists between Pakistan and China can be used to explain the significance of CPEC. Several changes on the societal and cultural front attributed to CPEC are documented; these are the enhancement of education, women's status and community welfare. Positive editorial comments on CPEC in newspapers are believed to positively influence the populace's perception while geopolitical factors and expectations form the general perception.

Through the identification of these themes, the research aims to shed light on the relationship between the newspaper portrayals of CPEC and the reader's impression. This research will help to fill the identified information deficit and add valuable information to the discussion the aspects of media and particularly, the impact of the Pakistani media on the formation of public opinion in relation to significant policy topics like CPEC.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The researcher meets the following research objectives;

1. Research the reception of opinion articles within Pakistani print media focusing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor by examining the kind of feedback given by readers.
2. Explore the ways of opinion-based editorials on CPEC as a form of foreign policy discourse to reassess their shifts as a result of reader's reactions and establish how this impacts the subsequent editorials.
3. Evaluate how the awareness of media literacy influences public opinion regarding CPEC editorials to determine if increasing media literacy can be a way to counteract negative effects of reader responses

1.4 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer following research Questions.

1. How does media bias in Pakistani print media influence the portrayal of CPEC, and what are the underlying factors contributing to these biases?
2. What impact does media coverage of CPEC—including sensationalism, cultural representation, and objective reporting—have on public perceptions?
3. How do varying portrayals of CPEC in the media affect its perceived credibility and the level of public support it receives?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study's significance lies in its capacity to deepen our understanding of how the media and reader response shape public opinion on important policy issues like CPEC. This study examines the relationship between reader response and public opinion on CPEC in opinion editorials in Pakistani print media in an effort to provide insights into how the public is seeing and engaging with media coverage of the project. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the factors that affect public opinion differently based on the kind of response from readers. The results of this study might have far-reaching implications for academics, policymakers, and media practitioners.

The study could provide advice to media professionals on how to effectively engage with their audience and shape public opinion on important policy issues. The

report could provide guidance to officials on how to handle criticism from the public and raise awareness of CPEC's benefits. Last but not least, the study could advance knowledge of how readers' comments and the media shape public opinion, which might have consequences for a range of policy issues. All things considered, this study holds out a great lot of potential for advancing theoretical knowledge as well as practical applications in the media and public opinion.

1.6 Delimitation

The study is delimited to CPEC opinion based editorials on CPEC. The study further delimits itself to the department of English, Mass Com and IR Department teachers.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter covers the following topics: the issue statement, research questions, aims, importance, and study delimitation. A comprehensive examination of the pertinent earlier studies on the subject is covered in detail in the second section of the literature review. This chapter is vital since it gives researchers information about previous studies. In Chapter 3, "Research Methodology," the procedures required in carrying out the research study are outlined in a comprehensive conceptual framework. The demographic, sample size, sampling strategy, methodology, study subject, and data processing procedure are all included. It describes the study plan, theoretical underpinnings, tools, and procedures of the researcher. The presentation of the data-gathered findings takes place in the fourth chapter. The fifth and final chapter includes a conclusion and suggestions. The research investigation will be concluded in this chapter, along with a comprehensive synopsis of the results. This chapter also offers suggestions and ideas for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a notable example of China and Pakistan's collaborative efforts, showcasing remarkable engineering accomplishments and the interconnected geopolitical ambitions of both nations. This extensive endeavour exemplifies the convergence of two prominent Asian powers' mutual interests, shared aspirations, and strategic congruence. Nonetheless, the portrayal of this phenomenon in the media, particularly in Pakistani English newspapers, has evolved into an enthralling mash-up of various perspectives, opinions, and understandings. In the modern digital era, media narratives significantly impact collective cognition. In the current scenario, English newspapers in Pakistan significantly impact urban and educated segments' perceptions of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (McCartney, 2022). Recognizing that these media narratives are more than one-dimensional transmissions is critical. The narratives in question engage readers in an interaction in which they frequently reshape and reinterpret said narratives. This participation allows readers to take ownership of their cultural ethos, life experiences, and unique perspectives. The reader-response theory framework aims to explore the intricate interplay between narratives and interpretations. This analysis examines the various viewpoints readers hold regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the media (Hameed, 2018). The goal is not only to identify media biases or inclinations but also to highlight various reader reactions. The aforementioned dynamic process emphasizes the variety of approaches that can be used to decipher a single media narrative, with each interpretation firmly rooted in the reader's unique contextual framework.

2.1 The Representation of CPEC in Pakistani English Newspapers

In the modern age, newspapers are powerful narrators of societal events, shaping perceptions and influencing decisions. Within the vibrant panorama of Pakistan's media landscape, English newspapers are pivotal, bridging local events to a global audience. Regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a project symbolising hope, ambition, and collaboration, its portrayal in these newspapers becomes especially consequential. Analysing this representation is not merely an academic exercise but a quest to fathom the intersection of geopolitics, journalistic

intent, and public sentiment (Ekhteyar, & Umrani, 2021). Researcher seeks to unravel the nuanced tapestry of narratives surrounding CPEC, Recognizing its profound impact on a nation's worldview and its implications for the future of Pakistan-China relations (Ekhteyar et al., 2021). This research illuminates the complex nature of the media's involvement in shaping national conversations and highlights the active participation of readers in this discourse. The statement highlights the recurring pattern of sharing and receiving information, underscoring the collaborative nature that fuels discussions within present-day Pakistani society regarding significant endeavours such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The collaboration between China and Pakistan, exemplified by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), represents more than just a remarkable infrastructure project. It serves as a compelling demonstration of interconnected geopolitical ambitions.

The depiction of this phenomenon in the media, particularly in Pakistani English newspapers, has evolved into a captivating mosaic of perspectives, judgements, and analyses. In the contemporary era of digital advancements, media narratives play a crucial role in shaping the collective cognition of society. The English newspapers of Pakistan play a significant role in influencing the perspectives of urban and educated segments regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is crucial to recognize that these media narratives are not merely simplistic broadcasts (Shah & Kausar, 2019). Readers, equipped with their cultural beliefs, personal backgrounds, and unique perspectives, engage with these narratives, frequently altering and re-evaluating them. This research, grounded in the framework of reader-response theory, seeks to navigate the complex interplay between narratives and interpretations. The portrayal of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the media landscape and examines its contrast with the varied reader perspectives. To discerning the inclinations or prejudices of media outlets but rather to emphasize the diverse and multifaceted range of reactions from readers (Ali, 2021). The aforementioned dynamic process emphasizes the diverse methods through which a singular media narrative can be deciphered, with each interpretation influenced by the reader's context. The research reveals the intricate function of media in shaping public conversation at the national level as well as the influential position of readers in actively participating in this exchange. The recurring pattern of sharing and receiving information, emphasizing the collaborative nature that fuels discussions surrounding significant endeavours such as the China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) within present-day Pakistani society (Naeem & Waheed, 2020).

2.2 Objective and Scope of CPEC

Establishing a clear objective is fundamental to conducting a thorough academic inquiry—portraying the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) within the context of Pakistani English newspapers (Irfan et al., 2018). The initial step involves conducting an in-depth examination of the diverse narratives, carefully examining the presence of optimistic, skeptical, and neutral elements within these journalistic works. Interpretations, and emotional impacts elicited from readers about these depictions. Prior to conducting this study, a comprehensive literature review was undertaken. This review encompasses diverse, relevant scholarly sources while maintaining a focused and precise perspective on the subject matter. The study comprehensively analyses the extensive academic literature, incorporating various disciplines, including media studies, geopolitical assessments, and socio-cultural investigations. It is imperative to emphasize the significance of comprehending the intricate dynamics between media representation of a subject and readers' subsequent perception and interpretation. This relationship can be conceptualized as a complex interplay between the processes of perception and comprehension. The primary objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive perspective on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) within the media domain.

2.2.1 CPEC in Depth Overview

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), emerging as a monumental testament to national cooperation, is a fusion of shared dreams, economic aspirations, and regional connectivity (Fatima, 2023). Set against the ancient Silk Road backdrop, this modern initiative seeks to redefine trade, infrastructure, and cooperation paradigms in the twenty-first century. CPEC is more than a network of roads, railways, and pipelines that stretches from China's dynamic Xinjiang province to Pakistan's strategic deep-water port of Gwadar. It is a lifeline expected to revitalize regional trade, improve energy security, and provide a much-needed boost to Pakistan's economy, putting it on a path of sustained growth (Asif et al.,).

According to Butt & Butt (2015) For China, the corridor provides more than just a faster route to the Arabian Sea by avoiding the traditional Malacca Straits. It

embodies the nation's grand vision of a more connected Eurasian continent, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China envisions CPEC as a thriving trade network that can cement its position as a global economic powerhouse. Pakistan sees CPEC as an economic panacea, allowing it to improve its energy infrastructure, reduce power shortages, and attract foreign investment. The effects are expected to be felt in industries ranging from tourism and manufacturing to technology and services. The corridor, however, has its challenges. The challenging terrains of the Karakoram and Himalayas present geographical challenges, while the region's socio-political fabric adds complexity (Hussain & Mehmood, 2018). Concerns about environmental impact, local community involvement, and project transparency have frequently been raised. The media portrays CPEC in various ways, ranging from praise for its potential to catalyse regional growth to concerns about debt, sovereignty, and environmental implications. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor brings geopolitics, economics, and societal aspirations together. It promises to be a tapestry of challenges and opportunities, tying two nations together in a shared destiny of growth and cooperation as it unfolds.

2.3 Background and History of CPEC

Asia, with its rich history of trade and cultural exchanges, has always been a connectivity hub. The Silk Road is a testament to this legacy, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can be seen as its modern counterpart, reviving and redefining these age-old ties for a new era (Mengal, 2016). The genesis of CPEC can be traced back to discussions that began in the early 2000s, but it was in 2013 that the initiative took shape. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Pakistan in May 2013 paved the way for what would later be termed a “game changer” for Pakistan and a “fate changer” for the region. The two countries announced their intention to enhance their economic cooperation, laying the foundation for what would soon become the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The vision behind CPEC was both ambitious and transformative. It aimed to link China's western region, mainly the landlocked Xinjiang province, with the Arabian Sea via Pakistan, providing China with a more direct route for trade and reducing its reliance on the Straits of Malacca. For Pakistan, the implications were manifold: an opportunity to enhance its infrastructure, mitigate energy deficits, and revitalize its economy (Rathore & Chawla, 2020). In 2015, the two nations formalized their commitment by signing various agreements,

earmarking a staggering \$46 billion for projects under the CPEC banner. From power plants and highways to railways and the development of the Gwadar port, the scope of CPEC was vast and multifaceted. However, the corridor's journey has been challenging. The daunting terrain of the region, encompassing the rugged mountain ranges of the Himalayas and Karakoram, posed significant infrastructural hurdles. Geopolitical complexities, ranging from territorial disputes to the concerns of regional stakeholders, added layers of intricacy to CPEC's development (Islam & Cansu, 2020). Despite these challenges, CPEC has progressed, with several projects completed and many others underway. It stands as a testament to the collaborative spirit of the two nations, binding them in a shared dream of prosperity and regional integration.

2.4 Brief History of English Newspapers in Pakistan

The tradition of English journalism in Pakistan is rich in history, dating back to the pre-independence era. English newspapers have played an essential role in Pakistan's socio-political landscape, from chronicling the nascent nation's challenges and triumphs to serving as a critical platform for intellectual discourse (Kim et al., 2019). Foundations Prior to Independence: English journalism on the subcontinent predates Pakistan's establishment in 1947. Renowned publications such as Lahore's "The Civil & Military Gazette" served as forerunners, nurturing journalistic traditions that would later shape English media in Pakistan. English newspapers played an important role in nation-building after independence. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah founded publications like "Dawn" in Delhi in 1941, but they moved to Pakistan (Azam & Bilal, 2022). It provided a mature and balanced perspective on the trials and tribulations of the new nation. In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a proliferation of English dailies. "The Pakistan Times" and "The Morning News" appear. These papers were often at the forefront of championing democratic values, governance reforms, and societal progress rather than simply reporting news.

2.4.1 Military Regimes and Press Restrictions

English newspapers in Pakistan have been subjected to press restrictions during various military regimes. The General Zia-ul-Haq regime imposed strict restrictions on press freedom during the 1980s, which were challenging. However, these adversities frequently prompted creative responses from journalists, such as using metaphors and allegories to convey contentious messages. English journalism experienced a

renaissance at the turn of the century. New publications such as “The Daily Times,” “The Express Tribune,” and “Pakistan Today” joined the ranks, each with their style of journalism, analysis, and reportage (Sethna, 2015). This era also saw the introduction of online portals and digital versions of traditional newspapers, which catered to a global readership. Because of their small readership, English newspapers are frequently regarded as forums for intellectual debate. They have influenced policy directions, provided in-depth analysis, and championed causes ranging from human rights to environmental concerns. Current Situation: While print editions continue to exist, a significant digital presence allows for real-time updates and interactive engagement with readers. Financial sustainability and press freedom remain challenges, but resilience and commitment to journalistic integrity remain hallmarks of English newspapers in Pakistan (Daechsel, 2015). English newspapers in Pakistan have actively shaped the nation's narrative, reflecting the country's complexities, challenges, and aspirations.

2.4.2 Print Media and CPEC

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an integral component of China's Belt and Road Initiative, has attracted considerable scholarly and public interest. In the context of the digital era, the significance of print media in elucidating the complexities of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) remains crucial (Haider & Waqar, 2020). In contrast to ephemeral online updates, newspapers provide in-depth coverage, offering comprehensive and multifaceted perspectives. The underlying reasons for each infrastructural decision or policy change (Khan & Gull, 2016). The print media serves as a platform for reporting and engages in investigative journalism to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the stories that are brought to light. The source's credibility is prominent in an era characterized by the rapid dissemination of misinformation online. The extensive coverage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in newspapers indicates its profound effects at the local level, its resonance with the nation, and its far-reaching consequences on the international stage (Yuanyuan et al., 2023).

Latif & Mengal (2020) find out print media promotes democratic representation of opinions by incorporating diverse perspectives, ranging from local farmers to policymakers. The narrative is established, exerting influence on public discourse and emphasizing significant concerns related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC), including environmental, economic, and strategic aspects. Newspapers continue to serve as the primary source of information in various regions of Pakistan with limited access to digital connectivity, playing a crucial role in disseminating news and providing a comprehensive account of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) narrative. The modifications above are documented and preserved by print archives, which undergo continuous development, providing a historical record for subsequent cohorts. In addition to providing information, it assumes the pivotal function of a vigilant entity, ensuring accountability among the stakeholders involved in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project (Akbar & Adnan, 2018). Therefore, within the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) discourse, the print media assumes a dual role, serving as both a recorder of events and a consequential participant that influences the formation of public opinions and subsequent consequences.

2.4.3 Broadcast Media and CPEC

The late twentieth century, the state-owned Pakistan Television (PTV) held a monopoly. The new millennium's arrival of several private TV channels brought a diverse range of content, from news to entertainment (Ali, 2020). FM radio stations, both public and private, serve localized audiences, particularly in remote areas, and are critical vehicles for information dissemination. The global digital revolution has resulted in an explosion of Pakistan's online news portals, blogs, and social media platforms. This digital shift has democratized information access, allowing a broader range of voices to participate in national debates. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) monitors the electronic media sector, issuing licenses and upholding ethical standards (Sehgal, 2016). Challenges: Pakistan's media faces several difficulties, like many other countries. Censorship, overt and covert, has been a concern, with journalists and outlets occasionally subjected to pressure over sensitive content. Financial constraints, particularly for print media, have also become apparent, prompting a search for long-term business models. Journalist safety remains a significant concern, with the country frequently highlighted in global indices for media freedom challenges. The media in Pakistan wields considerable power, whether it is depicting international partnerships such as CPEC or domestic issues such as elections, social reforms, or crises (Adeney & Boni, 2021). It reports events and creates narratives, helping to shape public opinion and national policy directions. Pakistan's media

landscape reflects its socio-political environment, characterized by resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering determination to voice diverse narratives in the face of adversity.

2.5 The Strategic Importance of CPEC for Pakistan and China

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is more than just a collection of infrastructure projects; it represents a convergence of strategic ambitions and regional aspirations for Pakistan and China. CPEC serves as a beacon of economic transformation in Pakistan. With an investment of more than \$60 billion, the corridor has the potential to revitalize industries, strengthen energy infrastructure, and create significant job opportunities, propelling the country towards much-needed economic stability (Javaid, 2016). The development of the Gwadar port, along with an extensive network of roads and railways, is a critical component of CPEC. This strategic infrastructure places Pakistan at the crossroads of vital trade routes connecting Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, cementing its geopolitical importance and role as a regional trade hub. CPEC introduces various power projects to alleviate Pakistan's longstanding energy shortages. This effort is poised to strengthen the country's energy grid, a critical step towards supporting industrial expansion and citizens' daily lives (Uddin Ahmed, 2018).

2.5.1 Foreign Investment Magnet

The sheer scale and ambition of the CPEC initiatives have cemented China's position as a key investor and positioned Pakistan as an appealing destination for foreign direct investment from sources other than China (Patey, 2021). This diversification raises Pakistan's global economic standing and opens the door to a broader range of international economic collaborations. Traditionally, China's trade routes, mainly oil imports from the Middle East, passed through the Malacca Strait, a longer, potentially vulnerable maritime chokepoint. CPEC provides China with a more direct overland route to the Arabian Sea, significantly reducing transit times and vulnerabilities. Xinjiang, a landlocked province in western China, stands to benefit significantly from CPEC (Ramachandran, 2015). The corridor can revitalize this region by bridging the development gap between Eastern and Western China. CPEC provides China with strategic leverage in the grand tapestry of geopolitics, countering influence in the Asia-Pacific region. The corridor's success exemplifies the potential of China's

Belt and Road Initiative, bolstering the country's position as a global infrastructure leader.

2.5.2 Strengthening Bilateral Relationships

The collaborative nature of CPEC has further cemented Pakistan and China's 'all-weather' friendship, ensuring mutual support in regional and global forums. CPEC's strategic significance is multifaceted (Weidong, 2016). It is a lifeline promising a resurgence for Pakistan and a critical step in China's global infrastructure vision and regional dominance. The Pakistani Media Landscape: Since the country's inception in 1947, the media in Pakistan has played a critical role in shaping public discourse and influencing societal perceptions, owing to its vibrant dynamism and rich tapestry of narratives. In the early post-independence years, the media primarily served as a government mouthpiece, emphasizing state agendas and fostering nation-building narratives (Hussain, 2019). The decades passed, the landscape shifted, with the press striving for greater independence and diversity in its content. Pakistan's print media landscape consists of a mix of English and Urdu dailies and several regional language newspapers. While English newspapers cater to a specific, often urbanized demographic and wield political power, Urdu and regional dailies reach a broader audience and are deeply rooted in local cultures and perspectives.

2.6 Reader Response Theory in Media Studies

The Reader Response Theory, which has its roots in literary criticism, holds that the meaning of a text emerges from the interaction between the text and its reader. This theory takes on a fascinating dimension when applied to Media Studies, highlighting the dynamic interplay between media content and audience interpretation. Reader Response Theory, which emerged in literary circles with proponents such as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, and Roland Barthes (2021), emphasizes the active role of the reader (or audience) in constructing meaning from a text. 'Text' in Media Studies refers to more than just written words. Films, news reports, advertisements, and television shows all become texts, awaiting audience participation to realize their meaning entirely (Mart, 2019). Different audiences can interpret the same media content differently, depending on their cultural, social, and personal contexts. For example, a conservative reader may interpret a political news story differently than a liberal reader, owing to their biases and experiences. The theory emphasizes the significance of

cultural and social frameworks. Media content consumed in different cultural or societal contexts can elicit various responses, emphasizing the ambiguity of meaning. Because of the rise of digital media, audience engagement is now active. Comments, shares, likes, and retweets provide immediate reactions, making the reader's response' tangible and immediate.

The theory stresses the significance of media literacy. An informed audience with critical thinking skills engages more deeply with media texts, resulting in more decadent interpretations and responses. This foresight can influence content creation, ensuring it resonates with target demographics and thus continuously tying production and reception together. Audiences are no longer passive receptors in the age of user generated content. They remix, reimagine, and respond to content, actively co-creating meaning, demonstrating the Reader Response Theory's fluidity in contemporary settings (Ott & Mack, 2020). With the Reader Response framework, audiences can challenge dominant media narratives by offering alternative interpretations and perspectives, enriching media discourse. Reader Response Theory in Media Studies emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between media content and its audience. It promotes the notion that meaning is not a static entity embedded within media but rather a dynamic outcome of audience engagement influenced by various factors.

2.6.1 Reader Response and Public Opinion

Readers responses are not isolated reactions; they all work together to shape public opinion. Readers' interpretations, emotions, and perspectives combine to form a larger societal discourse as they interact with news reports, editorials, and features (Lo & Andrews, 2015). This collective reaction can impact the dominant narrative surrounding a specific issue, topic, or event. Social media platforms amplify this process in the digital age, allowing readers to express their opinions more publicly and quickly. Reader responses include everything from agreement and validation to disagreement and criticism (García-Carmona & Acevedo Díaz, 2016). Emotional connections, personal anecdotes, and sharing additional information or perspectives are examples. This multifaceted engagement enriches the public sphere by encouraging debates, discussions, and, in some cases, reconsidering initial viewpoints. Newspapers, in turn, reflect this dynamic interplay by including diverse voices and opinions, ultimately influencing the broader public's understanding and perspective on various issues, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Macnaghten et al.

2019). Reader responses and public opinion have a symbiotic relationship. Reader responses reflect popular opinion while shaping it through shared perspectives' collective influence. In the case of CPEC, readers' interpretations and discussions of news reports on the initiative's progress, controversies, and impacts contribute to the overall discourse, ultimately influencing how CPEC is perceived on a broader scale. Understanding reader response is thus a lens into individual interpretations and a window into the complex mosaic of public opinion that serves as the foundation for societal understanding and decision-making.

2.6.2 Readers' Interpretations in Shaping the Meaning of News Reports

People approach news reports with their experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds. These factors significantly impact how people decipher and internalize information, making each reader's interpretation subjective and unique (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 2016). Readers have the potential to challenge and question dominant narratives presented by news organizations due to their diverse perspectives. This active participation can lead to a more nuanced, multidimensional understanding of events beyond the version primarily conveyed by the media. It can foster public discourse when readers share their interpretations through social media, comment sections, or personal interactions. Such discussions can reveal nuances and points of view that were overlooked or underrepresented in the original report (Merkl-Davies & Brennan, 2017). Reader reactions and interpretations provide news organizations with invaluable feedback. This feedback can influence future reporting styles, topic selection, and corrections or follow-up stories. Because of the interactive nature of digital media, news stories are no longer static entities. They change as readers react, comment, and share, introducing new interpretations and perspectives that can significantly alter the perceived meaning of the report. Recognizing the significance of readers' interpretations empowers people to participate actively in media consumption. They evolve from passive consumers to active participants with a stake in the media landscape.

Interpretation necessitates a certain level of media literacy and critical thinking. When readers recognize their role in shaping news meaning, it emphasizes the significance of these skills, resulting in more discerning and informed audiences (Webb, 2016). Readers' emotional or personal responses to news reports can elicit more robust interpretations. Such connections can reinforce the report's message or prompt further

investigation, demonstrating the profound impact of individual experiences on news consumption. Readers' interpretations of news can either reinforce or challenge existing cultural norms. For example, reports on societal issues can catalyze change or maintain the status quo when interpreted through various lenses. The process of news consumption becomes more democratic by valuing readers' interpretations. It recognizes that meaning-making is a collaborative effort in which the reporter and the reader have a significant influence (Carlson, 2017). Recognizing the importance of readers' interpretations in news reports highlights the fluid nature of modern journalism. In this interactive age, news is co-created, with readers playing an essential role in its evolution and impact.

2.6.3 Media and Public Opinion

The complex relationship between the media and public opinion is a pillar of today's information landscape. The media is an important channel for disseminating information, news, and narratives to the general public. In turn, media information shapes and influences public opinion on a wide range of topics, including complex issues such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Akhtar et al., 2021). The media has two roles in shaping public opinion. For starters, it serves as a gatekeeper, selecting, framing, and presenting news to the public. Editors and journalists' decisions about what stories to cover, how to present them, and the language they use all contribute to the narrative that reaches the audience. This process not only informs but also frames public perception of CPEC by emphasizing certain aspects, downplaying others, or imbuing coverage with specific tones and perspectives. Second, the media sets the agenda, influencing the issues and topics that capture the public's attention (Yuanyuan et al., 2023). The media determines what topics are considered newsworthy and warrant discussion through its coverage. As a result, the media's emphasis on CPEC's economic potential, geopolitical implications, environmental concerns, or socio-cultural implications can direct public discourse and shape public perception of the initiative's significance and effects. With the rise of social media and digital platforms in the digital age, the dynamics have evolved even further.

These platforms not only allow media outlets to distribute their content but also allow individuals to interact with news stories and express their opinions. Online interactions, comments, and sharing broaden the reach and influence of media content, aiding in the formation of digital public spheres in which opinions are shared,

challenged, and reinforced. Because of the magnitude and implications of CPEC, the media's role in shaping public opinion is especially pronounced (Wolf, 2019). The manner in which the media portrays CPEC's economic promise, diplomatic relationships, infrastructural developments, environmental concerns, and socio-political implications collectively informs public understanding. Reader reactions and engagement with CPEC news reports, as well as the subsequent online discussions, contribute to the larger discourse that influences public opinion. The symbiotic relationship between the media and public opinion emphasizes the influential role that media outlets play in shaping how people perceive and discuss important issues like CPEC. The media both reflects and guides public perception, demonstrating the power and responsibility that media professionals have in contributing to informed and well-rounded public discourse (Khattak, 2020).

2.6.4 Definition and Evolution of the Reader Response Theory

According to the Reader Response Theory, a text does not have a static meaning anchored within its boundaries (Bennett & Royle, 2023). Conversely, readers actively construct meaning based on their own personal, cultural, and historical contexts. This dynamic interpretation emphasizes the individual's experiences and perceptions, emphasizing the reader as much as the author or the text itself. Reader Response Theory emerged in the twentieth century and represented a radical departure from traditional literary criticism. Instead of focusing on authorial intent or objective textual analysis, the emphasis was shifted to the reader's interpretive role, emphasizing that each reading could result in a distinct textual understanding.

2.6.5 Key Pioneers

Louise Rosenblatt (2018): Rosenblatt's seminal work emphasized the reader's reciprocal relationship with the text. She proposed that each interaction produces a distinct “poem” or interpretation, emphasizing the dynamism of reading.

Stanley Fish's (1998) innovative concept of “interpretive communities” proposed that individuals within a community would likely extract similar meanings from a text if they shared interpretative techniques. Wolfgang Iser (1993), Iser investigated the text's “implied reader” and how actual readers navigate the text's “gaps”. He argued that these gaps are necessary because they encourage readers to engage creatively and imaginatively.

Roland Barthes' (1997) provocative stance declared the figurative “death” of the author, emphasizing that the true essence of a text materializes in the space where reader engagement occurs.

2.7 Post-structuralism and Deconstruction

The rise of deconstructive theories, particularly those promoted by Jacques Derrida, echoed Reader Response Theory's sentiments (Culler, 1982). Deconstruction strengthened the theory's foundational tenets by dismantling the idea of intrinsic textual meaning and emphasizing the variability of interpretation (Derrida, 1976). The digital age has revitalized Reader Response Theory. Platforms that allow for user comments, reactions, and collaborative content creation highlight that texts, whether written, visual, or auditory, are living entities constantly reshaped by diverse reader interactions (Jenkins, 2006). With its inherent scepticism of overarching truths, postmodernism naturally aligns with Reader Response Theory. The claim that multiple interpretations can coexist without a single “correct” version calls into question traditional notions of textual authority and grounds the theory in contemporary discourse. The Reader Response Theory has transformed reading pedagogies in classrooms worldwide. Students are given the ability to connect personally with texts, fostering environments in which diverse interpretations are celebrated, and critical engagement is fostered. Today's participatory media culture, which includes fan fiction, remixes, and user generated content, embodies the spirit of Reader Response Theory. Readers, viewers, and users do more than consume; they actively participate in, reinterpret, and even reshape narratives, blurring the lines between authors and audiences.

2.8 Reader Responses to CPEC Reports

Readers' interactions with news reports, particularly on significant issues such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), are multifaceted (Khan & Hussain, 2018). Several factors shape their interpretations as they interact with the content, and their reactions can range from passive acceptance to active debate (Chaudhry, 2020). Readers' reactions to CPEC reports may vary depending on their experiences, beliefs, and societal context (Anwar & Sarwar, 2017). Some may view the project with hope, seeing it as a golden opportunity for Pakistan to improve its infrastructure and economy. Reports outlining the potential advantages of CPEC, such as job creation, advancements in the energy sector, and improved transportation networks, may impact

this upbeat group (Husain, 2016). Another group may be sceptical or concerned about CPEC related reports. They may focus on potential debt burdens, socioeconomic disparities, or fears of undue Chinese influence in Pakistani domestic affairs (Wolf, 2016). Reports highlighting the potential pitfalls of CPEC or opposing narratives from international media may be the source of this group's worries. Urban elites with potential stakes in CPEC-related industries may interpret the news positively. Rural populations or those from regions not directly impacted by the corridor may feel disconnected or express concerns about resource allocation (Siddique & Shafqat, 2021). Those who support the ruling party or parties that have advocated for CPEC may be more inclined to view reports on its progress positively, dismissing criticisms as political propaganda.

Opposition supporters, on the other hand, may scrutinise reports more closely, looking for discrepancies or signs of mismanagement. Educational background and media literacy can also have an impact on responses (Livingstone, 2004). Those who understand international relations, economics, or infrastructure development may interpret CPEC reports differently than those who do not. They may weigh the potential long-term benefits against the immediate challenges, developing a more nuanced perspective. CPEC-related personal narratives and stories, such as those of local communities displaced by projects or workers benefiting from new job opportunities, can elicit emotional responses (Ali, 2016). Such stories can elicit strong emotions in readers, such as empathy, outrage, or solidarity. Readers are more than passive consumers in the age of digital media. They actively engage with content, sharing their interpretations on social media and contributing to the public debate. Reports on CPEC, given their importance, are likely to spark lively online debates in which readers exchange perspectives, challenge narratives, and even share personal experiences related to the corridor. To summarize, reader responses to CPEC reports are a patchwork of diverse perspectives shaped by many personal, socioeconomic, and political factors. These reactions, in turn, shape the public's perception of CPEC, highlighting the dynamic relationship between media content and its audience.

2.8.1 Studies and Surveys Capturing Readers' Sentiments

As the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has gained prominence, it has become critical to understand public sentiment towards this massive project (Hussain, 2018). Researchers and organisations have worked for years to capture

readers' reactions to CPEC reports. Analysing these sentiments provides critical insights into how the media's representation aligns with or differs from public opinion. Many academic studies have employed qualitative approach (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). In-depth interviews and focus group discussions are standard components of qualitative research methods (Parikh & Silverman, 2016).

2.8.2 The Role of Age, Education and Region in Shaping These Sentiments

Age, education, and region all impact how readers perceive and respond to news reports about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Kanwal et al., 2020). Among these factors, age has a significant impact on differing perspectives. Younger generations, aided by increased exposure to digital media and international trends, frequently view CPEC through the lens of potential economic growth, job creation, and technological advancement (Ul-Haq ET AL., 2021). Middle-aged people, on the other hand, may approach CPEC with cautious optimism, weighing the benefits against the long-term implications. Drawing on historical ties between China and Pakistan, the elderly population may form sentiments influenced by past diplomatic relations and events, leading to a mix of scepticism and support. Education further shapes readers' interpretations. Those with a higher level of education are more likely to engage in critical analysis of CPEC news reports. They look into economic feasibility, geopolitical implications, and environmental sustainability. Such people frequently seek international perspectives and cross-reference information to form comprehensive opinions. On the other hand, those with less formal education may rely more heavily on local media and personal networks, guiding their interpretations based on practical concerns such as immediate benefits and job opportunities in their communities. The region also emerges as an essential determinant in shaping attitudes towards CPEC (Gul et al., 2022). Areas directly impacted by CPEC projects tend to harbour sentiments influenced by the initiatives' tangible effects. Anticipated economic growth and improved infrastructure may cause positive reactions, whereas worries about displacement or resource allocation may cause adverse reactions. To summarize, age, education, and region all contribute to a complex tapestry of reader reactions to CPEC news reports. Recognizing the impact of these factors is critical for stakeholders seeking to foster informed public discourse and tailor communication strategies that address the diverse concerns and hopes associated with this significant initiative.

2.9 Factors Influencing Readers' Interpretations

According to Kimerling (2016) readers approach texts, particularly news reports, through a complex variety of societal influences, personal experiences, and beliefs. Every culture has its own set of values, norms, and beliefs. A reader's cultural upbringing can significantly impact how they interpret news, especially when it comes to morality, societal roles, or traditions. Someone from a liberal urban environment may view a woman's rights article differently than someone from a conservative rural environment (Cohen, 2018). A person's economic background can have a significant impact on their perspective. Someone from a lower economic stratum may have different perspectives on taxation, employment, welfare, and housing issues than someone from a higher economic stratum.

Personal political leanings are essential in news interpretation, especially in polarised environments (Tully et al., 2020). Individuals may interpret the same news through a lens coloured by their political ideologies, party affiliations, or beliefs about governance and policy. The subjects a person has studied, the depth of their critical thinking skills, and their exposure to diverse viewpoints can all influence how they dissect and understand news reports. Individual life experiences, such as travel, personal traumas, successes, or interactions with diverse groups, can profoundly impact interpretations. A veteran, for example, may read a war report with a different emotional and contextual understanding than someone who has never served in the military. The ability to critically evaluate media content is critical to its interpretation. Readers skilled at identifying biases, verifying sources, and comprehending journalistic practises may gain a more nuanced understanding of news reports than those who are less media literate (Mehta & Guzmán, 2018). The environment in which a person lives, whether urban vs. rural or one country vs. another, can influence their interpretation. Depending on the reader's proximity and relationship to the location, local events, policies, and conflicts resonate differently.

Life experiences, cultural touchstones, and historical contexts differ across generations. A Gen Z person may view a news story about technological advancements differently than a Baby Boomer. Sincerely held religious beliefs can colour interpretations, especially regarding morality, societal roles, rituals, or interfaith interactions in the news (Venter, 2017). The perspectives and opinions of friends, family, and social media networks can influence an individual's interpretation. In the

age of digital connectivity, echo chambers can reinforce specific points of view, whereas different networks may offer different interpretations. Interpreting news is a complex process that depends on a person's life experiences, societal influences, and personal beliefs (Vraga et al., 2021). Recognizing these factors is critical for journalists seeking clarity and readers seeking a thorough understanding.

2.10 External Influences on Newspaper Representations

External factors that shape the framing and portrayal of events commonly influence newspaper representations. These influences are multifaceted, encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural dynamics that collide to shape how news is presented to the public.

2.10.1 Political Pressures

The political landscape is undeniably intertwined with how newspapers present information. The overarching power and influence of governmental bodies, established political factions, and powerful advocacy groups can substantially shape and mould the kind of news that reaches the public eye (Harro-Loit & Josephi, 2020). Beyond the direct influence of these entities, there's also the matter of underlying political motivations. Editorial choices, often driven by specific political goals or objectives, can result in a skewed focus — with some stories gaining prominence and others, perhaps equally significant, being pushed to the background. This selectiveness can, at times, amplify particular narratives while suppressing alternative viewpoints or stories.

2.10.2 Economic Considerations

Much like any other commercial enterprise, newspapers are not immune to the pressures and priorities set by their financial backers. The funds flowing in from advertisers, key stakeholders, and big-name corporate sponsors can often cast a shadow over the kind of news that is highlighted or how a particular story is portrayed. In the grand scheme of things, who owns the media can be just as impactful, if not more so. When media entities fall under the umbrella of vast corporate conglomerates, there's a palpable shift in the news agenda. Such conglomerates might have overarching interests that subtly, yet significantly, guide the narrative, framing, and emphasis in news coverage (Nielsen, 2019).

2.10.3 Cultural and Societal Norms

The pulse of a society, rooted in its cultural and societal values, often dictates what gets spotlighted in the media. What we see as 'news' is not just about facts and events; it's deeply intertwined with the shared beliefs and concerns of a community. Hence, media outlets, in their ongoing bid to connect with their audiences, naturally gravitate towards stories that mirror the collective ethos and prevailing sentiments of the day. There's a sort of feedback loop in play; the media reflects societal values, and society, in turn, is influenced by this media portrayal. In this dance, stories that align with or address dominant cultural narratives or tap into current societal anxieties tend to be amplified, grabbing more attention and discussion space (Waisbord, 2018). Newspapers customize their content based on their target audience's preferences and biases, taking into consideration various demographic factors. The way people consume news has evolved with technological advancements, especially in the digital age.

2.10.4 International Relations and Global Influences

The vast tapestry of international affairs, marked by shifting geopolitics and the intricate web of global alliances, invariably leaves its imprint on newspaper narratives. The way events are covered or the perspective from which stories are approached often echoes the stance of national priorities and strategies. At times, this alignment is subtle, while at others, it's overt. But beneath the surface, there's always a delicate balance at play. Newspapers, while striving for objectivity, can't entirely extricate themselves from the broader diplomatic and political frameworks of their home countries. As such, their coverage tends to resonate, either consciously or subconsciously, with the national interests that form the backdrop of these international stories (Ishaq, 2017). Guidelines for responsible reporting are laid out by media ethics and professional standards. Adherence to these can impact representations, as journalists might self-censor or present a more sanitized version of events.

2.10.5 China Global Politics and CPEC

Global politics, particularly those involving China's international relations, significantly impact newspaper representation. Because of China's growing global presence and economic influence, its interactions with other countries have become the focus of media attention (McNally, 2012). Newspapers frequently frame China-related events and developments in a larger geopolitical context, reflecting the complex web

of alliances, rivalries, and strategic interests. China's diplomatic ties, trade relationships, and participation in international organizations all impact how the media portrays its actions. Positive portrayals may align with narratives China or its allies promote, emphasizing cooperative ventures, economic partnerships, or efforts to promote global stability. Negative portrayals, on the other hand, may result from geopolitical tensions, human rights concerns, territorial disputes, or cybersecurity concerns, reflecting adversarial relationships or perceived threats. Global politics influence how newspapers interpret China's regional initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, and its participation in organizations such as the United Nations (Zeng, 2019). Depending on their country's geopolitical stance, news outlets may emphasize different aspects, with some emphasizing opportunities for collaboration and economic growth and others emphasizing concerns about debt diplomacy, neo-colonialism, or economic dependency. The role of China in global issues such as climate change, public health crises, and technological advancements influences newspaper representations as well. Coverage may be consistent with international consensus, portraying China as a responsible global actor, or it may deviate, emphasizing perceived missteps or concerns about its intentions. Simply put, global politics, particularly in the context of China's international relations, serve as a lens through which newspapers interpret and present events. According to Li (2019), the framing of China-related news by the media is inextricably linked to the broader power dynamics, alliances, and interests shaping the global stage, highlighting the complex interplay between geopolitical factors and media narratives.

2.10.6 Internal Pakistani politics and its influence on CPEC reporting

Internal Pakistani politics significantly shape the reporting landscape on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Sial, 2014). The domestic political dynamics of Pakistan shape how media outlets portray CPEC projects, progress, and controversies. Various political parties' interactions, agendas, and ties to China contribute to the diverse narratives presented in CPEC-related news. Media outlets frequently align their coverage with the political stance of the party they are affiliated with or support. Favourable coverage could highlight the ruling party's accomplishments in strengthening economic ties with China, emphasizing job creation, infrastructure development, and increased foreign investment. Opposition parties, on the other hand, may emphasize concerns about transparency, debt burdens, and the

potential loss of sovereignty, framing CPEC as a source of debate and criticism. Internal politics have a powerful influence during election seasons. Media outlets may exaggerate the ruling party's accomplishments to bolster their electoral campaigns, such as completed CPEC projects. In turn, opposition parties may highlight perceived flaws or challenges in CPEC implementation to undermine the ruling party's credibility. Power shifts within Pakistan's government can influence the direction of CPEC reporting (Hussain, 2017). Changes in key ministries or appointing officials with opposing viewpoints may cause narrative shifts to reflect the new leadership's priorities and inclinations. To summarize, internal Pakistani politics play a critical role in shaping the media coverage of CPEC.

It adds another layer of complexity and diversity to reporting by allowing different political perspectives to influence how CPEC projects and developments are framed and interpreted. The interaction between internal politics and media narratives emphasizes the interdependence of political dynamics and media representations in the context of CPEC.

2.11 Gaps in Existing Literature

Several gaps exist in the literature on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its representation in Pakistani English newspapers. While research has yielded valuable results, certain areas still need to be explored. **Regional Variation in Reporting:** While current literature frequently focuses on broad trends and overarching narratives, it overlooks potential regional variations in CPEC representations in newspapers. Different provinces in Pakistan may have different perspectives, concerns, and priorities regarding the corridor, resulting in varying coverage patterns across newspapers from various regions. **Newspaper Comparative Analysis:** While some studies have looked at individual newspapers' coverage of CPEC, a comprehensive comparative analysis still needs to be provided (Bowe, 2014). Comparative analysis of articles from various newspapers covering various ideological spectrums and geographic regions may show subtle variations in how various readerships portray and understand CPEC. **Reader Reactions and Feedback:** Previous research has primarily focused on the content of news reports rather than directly engaging readers. Both online and offline, reader responses, comments, and feedback studies can shed light on how the public engages with and interprets CPEC news (Czvetko et al., 2021). This valuable viewpoint is largely untapped. The majority of studies provide snapshots of

CPEC representation over specific periods. A longitudinal analysis of how CPEC has been portrayed over time could reveal shifting narratives, particularly in response to significant events, policy changes, or changes in bilateral relations. Language and Framing: While the focus of English newspapers is often on the content, the nuances of language and framing deserve to be explored. Examining linguistic choices, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies used in CPEC reporting may reveal subtle biases and deeper meanings that influence reader perceptions. International Coverage Comparison: Comparative studies on how CPEC is covered in international media, particularly in countries directly involved with or neighbouring Pakistan, could provide valuable insights into how different media ecosystems contribute to the global narrative on the corridor (Aman et al., 2022). Influence on Public Opinion: While some studies have addressed the impact of media representations on public opinion, a more systematic examination of the actual impact of newspaper coverage on public perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours regarding CPEC still needs to be developed. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more complete and nuanced understanding of the role of media, particularly Pakistani English newspapers, in shaping perceptions and discourse surrounding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Internal Pakistani politics significantly shape the reporting landscape on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The domestic political dynamics of Pakistan shape how media outlets portray CPEC projects, progress, and controversies. Various political parties' interactions, agendas, and ties to China contribute to the diverse narratives presented in CPEC related news. Media outlets frequently align their coverage with the political stance of the party they are affiliated with or support. Favourable coverage could highlight the ruling party's accomplishments in strengthening economic ties with China, emphasizing job creation, infrastructure development, and increased foreign investment. Opposition parties, on the other hand, may emphasize concerns about transparency, debt burdens, and the potential loss of sovereignty, framing CPEC as a source of debate and criticism. Internal politics have a powerful influence during election seasons. Media outlets may exaggerate the ruling party's accomplishments to bolster their electoral campaigns, such as completed CPEC projects. In turn, opposition parties may highlight perceived flaws or challenges in CPEC implementation to undermine the ruling party's credibility. Power shifts within Pakistan's government can influence the direction of CPEC reporting. Changes in key ministries or appointing officials with opposing viewpoints may cause narrative shifts to reflect the new

leadership's priorities and inclinations. To summarize, internal Pakistani politics play a critical role in shaping the media coverage of CPEC. It adds another layer of complexity and diversity to reporting by allowing different political perspectives to influence how CPEC projects and developments are framed and interpreted. The interaction between internal politics and media narratives emphasizes the interdependence of political dynamics and media representations in the context of CPEC.

2.12 Conclusion

Finally, an examination of CPEC's representation in Pakistani English newspapers and its resonance with readers reveals a complex interplay of factors that shape media narratives and public perceptions. Existing research emphasizes the importance of the media in framing CPEC-related issues, shedding light on how political, economic, cultural, and global influences manifest in newspaper coverage. However, several avenues remain unexplored, such as regional variations, gendered analyses, online interactions, and the impact on specific demographic groups. Recognizing literature gaps highlights the changing nature of media discourse and the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how CPEC is portrayed and interpreted. Exploring uncharted territories of media representation and reader responses can provide a more nuanced picture of the multifaceted relationship between journalism, public discourse, and a transformative project like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. As the media landscape and CPEC projects evolve, bridging these gaps through rigorous research improves academic understanding and provide stakeholders, policymakers, journalists, and the general public with more accurate and comprehensive perspectives on one of the region's most important initiatives. Through such investigations, a more informed and engaged citizenry can emerge, contributing to a constructive and well-informed debate about the impact of CPEC on Pakistan, China, and the broader global landscape.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The achievement of successful research requires the implementation of a comprehensive and systematic methodology. This chapter's main aim is to explain the methodologies utilised throughout the research project thoroughly. The attempt to understand reader responses to op-eds on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani print media revealed a recognition of the complexities involved in cognition and emotion. Recognizing these nuanced distinctions necessitated the utilization of a comprehensive research methodology known for its rigorous and adaptable characteristics, allowing for the incorporation of diverse perspectives from individuals. This chapter comprehensively describes the specific methodologies utilized in the research project. The methodology section provides a comprehensive description of various components, such as the criteria used for participant selection, the instruments employed for data collection, and the subsequent procedures utilized for analysis. Furthermore, steps were taken to ensure the preservation of the integrity and authenticity of the results, thereby augmenting the research's credibility and trustworthiness.

3.1 Research Design

The research was conducted by using qualitative method approach. Researcher focused on detailed analysis of qualitative information gathered using interviews with departmental faculty. The qualitative findings are based on fifteen teaching faculty members of the university, to gain in-depth information about their personal experiences and get detailed insights about the topic. The interviews are recorded and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

3.1.1 Rationale for Qualitative Approach

This study employs a qualitative and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the representation of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers. The rationale for employing qualitative approach is to get a nuanced understanding of the research problem.

Qualitative methods provide a rich, detailed descriptions and insights into the underlying reasons, motivations, and contexts that shape these perceptions.

3.1.2 Qualitative Findings and Analysis

Qualitative analysis is carried out on the interviews conducted from faculty members of various departments of NUML university. The interviews asked the respondents about five critical questions relevant to the topic. Each question designed for interview focuses on addressing the research questions and achieve research objectives. The interviews are then transcribed to conduct further analysis. Various themes are then identified using the thematic analysis performed on the interview transcriptions. The decision to make this choice was based on the intention to enable a comprehensive examination of readers' interactions with op-ed articles related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as they are presented in Pakistani journalistic publications. This methodology's purpose was to capture surface-level reactions and explore the complexities of readers' cognitive and emotional responses. Such a methodology is crucial when the aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of deeply ingrained perspectives and potential biases about media portrayals of significant geopolitical initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

3.2 Population

The present research endeavour strategically focused on a prominent population segment within the academic domain: the faculty members affiliated with NUML Islamabad. The study focused primarily on individuals associated with two renowned faculties: arts and humanities and social sciences. The primary objective of this study was to comprehensively examine a diverse range of academic insights and perspectives by focusing on these specific faculties. Moreover, including these specific faculties in the sample guarantees a comprehensive representation, given their significant role in the scholarly conversation surrounding media representation and public perception. The primary objective of this study was to focus on a particular demographic group and combine the theoretical foundations of the humanities and social sciences with the practical implications of the subject matter.

3.3 Participants Sample

For the purpose of this research, the chosen participants were primarily drawn from the and faculty of NUML Islamabad, with a particular emphasis on members affiliated with the faculties of Arts and Humanities as well as Social Sciences. In

delineating the sample size and scope, a stratified selection was made, encompassing 15 faculty members, notably English, International Relations, and Media and Communication. This methodological choice ensured a diverse and representative sample to enhance the validity and breadth of the study's findings.

3.3.1 Participant Selection Criteria

The selection of participants for this study was guided by specific criteria to ensure a representative and relevant sample. The criteria were designed to capture diverse perspectives on the representation of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers and to ensure that the data collected would be robust and comprehensive. The selection process for qualitative phases of the study is detailed below.

3.3.1.2 Criteria for Qualitative Phase (Interviews)

The qualitative phase of this study was based on interviews with fifteen faculty members from the National University of Modern Languages (NUML). The criteria for selecting these participants are outlined below:

Academic Expertise

Faculty members were selected based on their academic expertise and research interests related to CPEC, media studies, political science, economics, and related fields. This ensured that participants had the necessary background to provide in-depth and informed perspectives.

Diverse Academic Disciplines

To capture a wide range of perspectives, participants were selected from various academic disciplines within NUML, including media studies, international relations, economics, and political science. This interdisciplinary approach enriched the qualitative data with diverse viewpoints.

Engagement with Media

Faculty members with a high level of engagement with media, particularly those who regularly read or contribute to Pakistani English newspapers, were chosen. This criterion was essential to ensure that participants could offer informed critiques and insights into media representation practices.

Willingness to Participate

Faculty members were approached and selected based on their willingness and availability to participate in in-depth interviews. Ensuring voluntary participation was crucial for ethical research practices and for obtaining candid and honest responses.

3.3.1.2 Justification for Conducting Interviews at NUML

The decision to conduct interviews at a NUML university setting was driven by several practical and strategic considerations:

Access to Expertise

As NUML university is a hub of knowledge and expertise, particularly in fields relevant to this study such as media studies, economics, and political science. Conducting interviews in this setting facilitated access to knowledgeable and experienced participants who could provide in-depth insights.

Convenience and Environment

NUML university offers a neutral, professional environment conducive to conducting detailed and uninterrupted interviews. The availability of quiet, private spaces ensured that interviews could be conducted without external distractions, allowing for richer, more focused discussions.

Ethical Considerations

University settings are often equipped with established protocols for ethical research practices, including the provision of informed consent, ensuring participant confidentiality, and creating a safe space for participants to express their views openly. Leveraging these protocols helped maintain high ethical standards throughout the research process.

Thus, by employing these selection criteria and choosing NUML university setting for interviews, the study aimed to ensure a robust, diverse, and ethically sound participant pool, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of the research findings.

3.4 Research Instrument

The data acquisition process for this study was facilitated through a carefully crafted interview. The current interview questions were carefully designed to guarantee

a thorough exploration of the research objectives rather than being a mere aggregation of inquiries.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection procedure used interviews questions to gather information from respondents in a manner that does not impose any preconceived choices or limitations. These inquiries allow participants to articulate their thoughts and viewpoints regarding the subject matter openly. The data collection procedure entails presenting participants with an unstructured format, akin to a blank canvas. This format facilitates unrestricted and comprehensive self-expression by participants. This data collection methodology aims to acquire comprehensive information regarding participants' experiences and perspectives by using open-ended inquiries. The purpose of these inquiries is to elicit comprehensive and profound answers from the participants. Participants were presented with a structured format to facilitate data collection that encouraged them to delve into and articulate their personal sentiments, insights, and nuanced observations rather than being directed towards predetermined responses. The primary objective of this study was to obtain a thorough and genuine comprehension of participants' perspectives and responses towards the subject matter.

3.5.1 Data Collection Procedure

In order to ensure the collection of comprehensive and meaningful data for this research project, interviews whereas chosen as the primary methodology. The survey's data collection procedure was meticulously designed and organized to encompass significant thematic domains that are directly pertinent to the study's objectives. This methodology ensured that each response would significantly affect the research outcomes. In order to enhance the credibility and dependability of the qualitative research, a purposive sampling technique was employed to meticulously ascertain the participants. The rationale behind the deliberate curation of a sample for this study was grounded in the conviction that selecting participants according to predetermined criteria and aligning with the study's objectives would yield more profound and applicable data. The study employed the purposive sampling technique to priorities participants' quality over quantity. The process entailed carefully selecting participants whose experiences and insights were most pertinent to address the research inquiries.

3.6 Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher started a detailed thematic analysis process. The interviews are then transcribed to conduct further analysis. Various themes are then identified using the thematic analysis performed on the interview transcriptions. This method was chosen because it is good at finding hidden themes in the data. Thematic analysis is more than just looking at the data; it is about finding, understanding, and explaining patterns. The researcher had two main reasons for using this method: First, it helped look beyond simple answers to find deeper meanings or trends among the participants. Second, it helped organize these themes into a straightforward story from the many answers. This was important to ensure the results were easy to understand and gave a clear picture of participants' thoughts.

3.6.1 Qualitative Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Transcribed interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns in respondent feedback. This involved coding interview transcripts to assign labels to segments of text representing different themes or topics related to reader reactions to CPEC coverage.

In-depth Coding: Each interview transcript was systematically coded to capture the range of opinions and perspectives expressed by respondents. Codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories to facilitate analysis and interpretation.

By employing a qualitative approach to data analysis, this study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of reader reactions to CPEC coverage in Pakistani print media. Qualitative insights allowed for a comprehensive exploration of reader perceptions and facilitated the identification of key themes and trends influencing public opinion on this significant economic initiative.

To summaries, rigorous methods were utilized throughout each stage of the study to guarantee the accuracy and consistency of the data. Implementing these steps was pivotal in guaranteeing the accuracy and consistent representation of the research findings about the studied population. Following the conclusion of the data collection phase, the subsequent step entailed a meticulous and systematic thematic analysis. The decision to utilize this particular analytical approach was made due to its effectiveness

in uncovering latent patterns and themes within the dataset. From a research standpoint, thematic analysis involves comprehensive data exploration beyond a superficial examination. The process involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within the dataset. The decision to adopt this methodology was based on two primary justifications. It enables a thorough examination of the data, shedding light on the viewpoints of the individuals involved. The objective is to ascertain prevalent patterns and prevailing emotions that could provide a valuable understanding of overarching patterns within the dataset.

3.7 Theoretical Framework

This section will present the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based. This study is based on two main communication theories termed agenda setting theory and framing theory. Both the theories play a crucial role in understanding media influence on public perception and opinion formation.

3.7.1 Agenda Setting theory

The media possesses the ability to shape the public agenda by highlighting specific issues they deem significant. Individuals not only receive news from the media but also formulate their hierarchy of importance regarding various topics based on the attention given to them by the media. In this study, the agenda setting theory was employed. The theory was first introduced by Dr. Donald Shaw and Dr. Maxwell McCombs in 1972 (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Their ground-breaking study during the 1968 U.S. presidential election analyzed the relationship between what the media covered and what the public thought was important. This study was a pivotal moment, illustrating that the media doesn't necessarily tell us what to think, but rather what to think about.

The agenda setting theory suggests that the media has the power to shape public opinion by determining which issues receive the most coverage, and it has been extensively researched and applied across various media platforms. The manner in which news stories and topics are presented can sway public perception, as most individuals rely on the media as their primary source of information on a wide range of issues. Therefore, the media's agenda-setting function can influence the perceived importance of various topics. This agenda-setting process is influenced by media biases related to politics, the economy, culture, and other factors. Audiences tend to perceive

issues as more significant when they receive heightened media attention, a phenomenon known as issue saliency. For example, consistent media coverage of immigration over several months can lead readers to believe that it is a pressing issue, even if they initially had little interest or strong opinions on the topic.

This theory explores how the media's portrayal of news, whether positively or negatively, can influence and potentially alter existing public opinions or cultivate new ones. Here in this work, the researchers monitored the negative and positive news portrayal about CPEC in the Pakistan's leading daily English newspapers by applying Agenda setting theory. The study explores how the media's coverage of CPEC influences the public agenda by determining which aspects of the project receive attention and emphasis.

3.7.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory serves as a critical tool utilized by the media to achieve specific objectives. It often prioritizes the interests of elites and seeks to maximize the profits of media owners by focusing on emotive narratives rather than providing comprehensive contextual information on issues. Additionally, media outlets often aim to advance national interests on the global stage by aligning their coverage with government policies and agendas.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) represents a significant regional development and connectivity project that promises to revolutionize traditional trade and development paradigms. Consequently, neighbouring countries, particularly those sharing direct geographical borders with Pakistan, have displayed considerable interest in the initiative. The factors influencing international news coverage encompass a range of considerations such as diplomatic relations, economic interactions, socio-political dynamics, and cultural or ideological conflicts. Economic considerations typically feature prominently in the reporting of global events and issues.

The origins of framing theory can be traced back to Walter Lippman and his seminal work, "The world outside and the pictures in our heads" (Holcombe, 1922). Lippman was among the first scholars to explore how the media constructs simplified frameworks through which audiences perceive and interpret events. Despite its widespread acceptance in the field of mass communication studies, framing lacks a universally agreed-upon definition. Framing involves selecting and highlighting certain

aspects of reality to promote specific problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, or treatment recommendations. Frames operate as information-processing schemata, emphasizing particular elements of reality while downplaying others. Through the strategic use of key words and symbolic associations, media frames influence the salience of information and shape audience perceptions and opinions. Therefore, the manner in which information is structured and presented in news content profoundly influences the formation of public attitudes and beliefs.

Framing theory is employed to analyze how the media construct narratives around CPEC, influencing how readers perceive the project and its implications. Through qualitative analysis, the study investigates the framing devices used in CPEC coverage, such as the selection of key themes, the use of language, and the portrayal of stakeholders. By identifying dominant frames and analyzing their impact on audience perceptions, the study provides insights into the role of framing in shaping public opinion about CPEC.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were integral to upholding the research study's integrity, validity, and reliability. Before data collection, every participant was provided with a detailed consent form that clearly outlined the study's objectives, the nature of participation, and any associated potential risks. It was emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that individuals could withdraw at any point without facing any negative consequences. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants were paramount concerns. Any personal identifiers were either not gathered or meticulously detached from the primary dataset to maintain anonymity. To safeguard the data, it was stored securely, and access was restricted solely to the core research team. Throughout the research process, a commitment to honesty and transparency was unwavering. Participants were kept abreast of the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential implications. Any biases or conflicts of interest that influenced the study's findings were disclosed immediately. The management and storage of data were executed with rigorous care. Reliable storage mechanisms, both digital and manual, were implemented to shield the data from unauthorized access, potential loss, or damage. Protocols regarding data retention were established, ensuring that data would be appropriately discarded after fulfilling its research purpose. All participants received respectful treatment and consideration. Efforts were made to ensure no participant

encountered any harm or discomfort throughout their involvement. Their insights were invaluable, and any arising concerns or inquiries were promptly and thoroughly addressed. Upon the research's culmination, a summarized version of the findings was shared with participants, acknowledging their vital role and ensuring they were informed of the conclusions their contributions helped derive.

3.9 Conclusion

The main aim of this research was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse reactions of readers towards op-eds discussing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani journalistic publications. The study aimed to capture the nuanced perceptions of the selected demographic from NUML Islamabad by employing rigorous qualitative, such as purposive sampling and open and closed ended questionnaires. The study's integrity and respect for participants were upheld, as ethical considerations were paramount throughout all stages. The data collected yielded a diverse array of valuable insights, reflections, and sentiments. The use of thematic analysis facilitated the discernment of latent patterns, thereby illuminating overarching trends that could impact public sentiment regarding the topic under consideration. The utilization of specific methodologies and analytical approaches played a crucial role in comprehending the viewpoints of individuals and analyzing the overall sentiment expressed in the op-eds related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The research findings provide a comprehensive perspective on the subject matter, highlighting the ever-changing nature of public opinion and the significant impact exerted by the media in shaping these perspectives. Like any scholarly investigation, this study has its constraints, and forthcoming research endeavours can expand upon the current discoveries to further investigate the subject matter or examine additional dimensions of the media's impact on public perception. In summary, this study signifies a substantial advancement in comprehending the complex correlation between media portrayals and public sentiment, particularly within the framework of CPEC opinion editorials. This statement underscores the necessity of impartial journalism and the significance of fostering a media environment that promotes analytical reasoning and well-informed choices among its audience.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the qualitative information gathered through perception based questionnaire survey and one-to-one interviews with the faculty members. The qualitative analysis is based on interviews of fifteen faculty members of NUML University to gain in-depth knowledge about their experiences. The interviews are recorded to get detailed insights about CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers.

4.1 Qualitative analysis

This part of chapter has primary focus on the analysis of data collected through the interviews from fifteen faculty members of NUML university. The interviews are conducted on one-one basis. The average interview duration was 15 minutes in which a detailed discussion was conducted. The interviews are transcribed to gain insights and perform further analysis. Now, we analyze in detail each question asked during the interview. For each question, we highlight the main themes that are identified in the responses of each question. The first question asked in the interviews is:

4.1.1 Role of Cultural and Societal factors

Question. No. 1 What role do you believe cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistan English newspaper.

In the interviews, five respondents (2, 6, 9, 13,15) showed their concerns about cultural hegemony. They have focused on whether Chinese language and media would overwhelm their Pakistani counterparts. To others these influences are seen as gradually dissolving Pakistani cultural identity and values. This concern is reflected in the use of language, according to what emerged from our interviews on newspapers. Depending on how CPEC is described, newspapers inadvertently either help or undermine the cultural supremacy thesis.

It is worth noting that cultural hegemony is a complex phenomenon. Cultural hegemony challenges the norms and diverse cultural expressions within a society. In the context of CPEC, understanding and analyzing the interplay between media representation and culture is pivotal. The concern about cultural hegemony by five

respondents involves apprehension about the dominance of Chinese culture on Pakistani culture. Despite the recognition of CPEC on Pakistani cultural patterns, respondents are hopeful about resisting the complete cultural colonization.

Another theme noticed in the interview responses of respondent 4, 6, 10 and 11 is the significance of language in shaping of the public perception. Interviewees highlight that language as a essential component of culture, is used in various dimensions of life. Language also acts as a cultural transmission tool in media. The language used in newspapers is seen as crucial in representing and portraying CPEC. The way CPEC is linguistically framed in the media is deemed significant for the project's success or failure. This shows the significant role language plays in forming opinion. The interview answers discussed how important language is to the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers. Moreover, the way English newspapers choose words could affect how readers perceive events and ultimately influence public opinion. Language always requires some reflective examination about how particular word choice, structure and style shape the cultural imaging of CPEC. All in all, respondents have noticed that language is the glue which can help reconcile the various perspectives and narratives about cultural impact of CPEC.

Pakistani English newspapers have portrayed CPEC as an economical phenomenon of prime national concern. Thus, CPEC has been reported with this ideology and similar broad features in the newspapers across Pakistan. The terms like “Economic Boon” and “Game changer” have been used while discussing the economic impact of CPEC. According to the newspapers, CPEC is bound to significantly boost Pakistan’s economy as various Industrial and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are supposed to be setup across Pakistan. Majority of the respondents have views that Pakistani English newspapers construct a positive ideology for CPEC and depict as an economic spectacle of national concern.

Newspapers have also highlighted that CPEC investments are directed towards improving the energy infrastructure. Consequently, the energy production requirements of Pakistan can be fulfilled. However, few respondents raised concerns about high import bills and a possible trade imbalance between Pakistan and China.

The total funding of CPEC project is expected to reach over the \$64 billion mark. Of the \$64 billion, at least \$35 billion is committed to be spent on the energy

sector. Thus, it is worth noting that if all the above-mentioned investments turn up, CPEC spending equals to all foreign direct investment inflows into Pakistan from 1970 to date. Under CPEC, China is investing heavily into the hydroelectric power, wind power and solar power projects. As a result of these investments, 1595 Mega Watts of hydroelectric power can be added to the national grid of Pakistan.

CPEC can also create large number of jobs for people of Pakistan to increase their average earnings. According to one estimate, CPEC is expected to create more than 2 million jobs by the year 2030. Under the umbrella of CPEC, there are eighty-eight projects that are envisioned to be carried out worth billions of dollars. Eighteen out of the eighty-eight projects have already been completed. Twenty-eight projects are currently in progress while the remaining forty-one projects under CPEC are in the pipeline. The investment of CPEC is evident from the fact that more than 47000 Pakistanis were working under different CPEC projects during COVID-19.

Since the independence of Pakistan, this project (CPEC) is marked as the largest economic venture by any country in Pakistan. China has remained a good friend in any situation and because of this the friendship between the two is described as “higher than the mountains, stronger than iron, deeper than the ocean and sweeter than the honey”.

4.1.1.1 Thematic Analysis

The given research results raise many questions about people’s consciousness, media impact on them, and geopolitical position of Pakistan when examining the views on CPEC in Pakistani English newspaper articles.

Diverse Reactions to CPEC Portrayal

Different reactions are passive and present, with special emphasis on the variety of reactions the case provoked among the public, as seen from the statements of Respondents 1 & 2. The same respondent 5 again emphasizes that these reactions are ranging from positive to negative depending on the expectations and awareness level about CPEC. These interviews underscore the relative effects of CPEC on the different groups of the population.

Political Attitudes and Ethnic Anxieties

Interaction as pointed out by Respondent 13 are to a very large extent determined by CPEC. Due to a lack of factual evidence the provincial and ethnic

concerns are enshrined, thus affecting political outlooks. This shows how lack of information can increase existing conflicts and public opinions towards CPEC related issues.

Economic Effects and Infrastructure Development

CPEC's economic and infrastructural effects are further explored as one of the major themes, with Respondent 7 speaking of the project's contributions to energy production and infrastructure and in general, economic uplift. Respondent 5 suggested "Respondent 4 on the same accord goes further to pin down China's part in societal advancement via different transportation infrastructures plus industrial sectors that demonstrate the beneficial economical and developmental attributes attributed to CPEC.

The input of Religions and Cultural influence, and the fear of Cult of Hegemony

Aside from that, the impact of culture and the fear of cultural imperialism are likewise noticeable, the concerns of which was voiced by Respondents 6, 9, and 13. Such fears are linked with the threats of the cultural imperialism and decline of the national culture. However, in the case of Respondents 2 and 15, they recognize the cultural implications of CPEC but still favour the project's consequences; it may therefore be inferred that there is an expectation that an aspect as culturally significant as CPEC can assimilate positive parts without eradicating culture.

The Media and Language Impact

Thus, the Media and Language Influence factor plays a significant role in the perceptions of CPEC. Examples are respondent 6, and 11 which supports the observation that newspapers use language to influence the populace. This is backed by Respondents 4 and 10 who stressed on the fact that analysis of the English newspaper articles helps in realizing the impact of media coverage on perceptions of the CPEC.

Background of the Countries and the Relations Between Them

Historical Context and Bilateral Relations are answered by Respondent 10, who gives an overview of Pak-Chinese relationship analyzing it in the field of strategy, United Nations and friendship. Any further development in CPEC has to be understood in the light of the context in order to ensure that CPEC remains within the strictly

bilateral terms of understanding of the relations between China and Pakistan and the historical background of the partnership.

Societal and Cultural Changes

Societal and Cultural Changes relating to CPEC are highlighted by Respondent 2 where top participants reported observing changes in the society, language, and working mind-set. Respondent 13 also points out the social change through CPEC such as changes in education standards, women's rights, community development, and so on showing the all-around influence of the project in Pakistani society.

Editorial Support and Perception

Respondent 6 has the knowledge of the two constructs, Editorial Support and Perception, based on observation, newspapers frequently support CPEC in her opinion it is a project that can transform lives. This editorial support is viewed concerning in relation to carving a positive narrative of CPEC, an aspect that puts into consideration the argument that media inclines the public.

Geopolitical Factors and Expectations

Business and political factors consist of the Expectations aspect, which is also considered fake by Respondent 1 who blamed changes in perception on political and geopolitical issues. Going further with the same Respondent 11 links CPEC with the OBOR project and regional integration, thus, providing the geopolitical angle to the understanding of CPEC.

Therefore, the overarching identified themes provide hope and insight into the interdisciplinary means by which the public has formed its perceptions and understanding of CPEC through consideration of media, culture, economy, historical and geopolitical influences.

4.1.2 Ethical Responsibilities

Question No.2 In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have been reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Among the fifteen respondents, majority of the respondents highlighted the theme, Responsibility and Objectivity of Media. More than four respondents (5,7,8,13) emphasize the ethical responsibility of the media in presenting information to the public. Respondents 7 and 8 underscore the right of the public to know about socio-

political phenomena and argues that the media should be objective and pursue rigorous methodologies in presenting facts. The interviewee (1,13) highlights the significance of professionalism in ensuring that information about projects like CPEC, crucial for both China and Pakistan, is presented objectively. This theme emphasizes the importance of media integrity and adherence to ethical standards in reporting on complex and politically sensitive topics. All interviewees emphasized the importance of objectivity and factual accuracy in reporting on CPEC. Respondent 7 highlighted the scientific rigor and adherence to research principles as crucial for presenting balanced information. This aligns with professional journalistic standards aimed at minimizing bias and presenting unfiltered facts to the public. Respondent 5 raised concern for factuality and avoiding “wishful thinking” further underscores the commitment to responsible reporting. This suggests a critical awareness of potential subjectivity and the need for rigorous fact-checking and evidence-based reporting.

Respondent 10 emphasizes the importance of basing news reports on factual data, especially for projects affecting the masses. Respondent 5 calls for thorough research and the inclusion of specialists to avoid misleading opinions and create an informed society. Respondent 4 highlights the adherence to ethical rules and regulations in English newspapers, particularly in the selection of words and framing of news. Suggests that ethical considerations are followed more effectively in English newspapers compared to Urdu newspapers.

4.1.2.1 Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis of the interview responses resulted in the identification of several major themes concerning the coverage of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers.

Factual Accuracy and Research

It is even more ignored that all the respondents identify the relevance of basing news reports on factual data as one of tool’s most important functions. More specifically, Respondent 5 claims, “New, information must be based on specific facts in order for them to be credible.” Likewise, Respondent 10 notes, “Credibility is at risk if news information is not accurate.” Finally, Respondent 12 underscores, “readership should be based on specialists’ research to form society’s opinion and avoid giving them guessing information.

Ethical Rules and Framing in English Newspapers

Respondents' views on ethical rules and regulations in English and Urdu Newspapers Although respondent 3 admits that English newspapers practice ethical rules and regulations better than Urdu newspapers, it brings out the fact that English newspapers set high standards of ethical reporting that is upheld by other newspapers.

Responsibility and Objectivity of Media

A particular emphasis is made of the respondents' belief on the media's duty to report facts when Respondent 7 and Respondent 15 both declare, "The media has a responsibility to present information objectively, especially on significant projects like CPEC." The Professionalism is heeded and adherence to scientific procedure is necessary when covering significant projects like CPEC.

Journalistic Ethics and Bias in Reporting

Respondent 7 considers that there are serious problems with the overall journalistic ethic: "On the record, there is simply very little respect for journalistic ethic in the media." Respondent 9 speaks about a psychological reflection of a situation instead of factually describing situations, turning media persons into wishful thinkers.

Sensitivity and Impact of Reporting on CPEC

The way forward that the present research recommends has the support of the following statements from the respondent. Respondent 8 opines: Reporting on CPEC should be sensitive, especially regarding its positive impact on economic growth. This assertion represents the manner in which the media has affected the respondents' perception on CPEC The influence of the media reports on the public perception of CPEC and the progress it has made is captured by Respondent 14.

Avoiding Sensationalism and Providing Context

The call for the non-sensationalized reporting is provided by Respondent 9 who puts it this way, "English newspapers should not sensationalize the news and present complete information with background." According to Respondent 11, there is a need to present both sides of the story, thus has to say, "Balance in reporting is important through presenting both sides of the coin." Finally, the need for fairness and impartiality in reporting

In all, the thematic analysis stresses on the responsibilities of factuality, ethicality, neutrality, respect, and context contemplation in reporting CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers. Based on the above findings, the perception of the respondents holds important implications to enhance the quality and accuracy of media reporting on this critical endeavour.

4.1.3 Evolution of portrayal of CPEC

Question. No. 3 How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspaper has evolved over the past Few years, if at all?

Initially, an optimistic viewpoint was formed regarding CPEC in the Pakistani English newspapers. There were expectations of widespread benefits and economic revival of Pakistan due to CPEC. As a result of this optimism, public discussions were common regarding CPEC development, geographic regions, CPEC routes and large potential for economic growth. Among the fifteen respondents, nine respondents (respondent 1,3,4,5,7,8,9,11,12) discussed that initial portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers contained optimism. The respondents believed that initially public were hopeful that CPEC would a source of substantial investment in Pakistan and overshadow the U.S engagement to some extent. In the geopolitical dimension, emphasis on China as Pakistan's key ally were presented in the Pakistani English newspapers. Four respondents (4, 7, 9, 12) discussed that as the projects unfolded with the passage of time, a realistic approach was formed because certain expectations of CPEC were not achieved. This led to a minor shift in the perception of the readers. As time passed, a critical portrayal of CPEC emerged as more information was available. During the initial phase of the CPEC, lack of information contributed to public scepticism. The discussion by respondents (3,7,9,11) also involved topics of political attitudes, ethnic and provincial anxieties, and unease about the unequal distribution of resources among various regions of Pakistan. However, three respondents observed positive framing of the CPEC project in newspapers. This sense of positivity is linked with the potential economic benefits for public as discussed next.

Respondent 3 highlights confusion in the public perception initially due to rumours and lack of data. Over the years, notes a shift as more data became available, leading to diversified opinions in the media. Acknowledges the importance of alternative perspectives for a comprehensive understanding. Respondent 6 discusses the impact of changes in government on the portrayal of CPEC. Notes that the priorities of different governments influenced media coverage. Highlights that media often reflects the views of the government in power.

Next, we summarize the key themes identified in the responses from each respondent regarding the evolution of CPEC portrayal in Pakistani English newspapers in tabular form.

4.1.3.1 Thematic Analysis

This thematic analysis of the interview responses aims at portraying the process through which Pakistani English newspapers have changed the portrayal of CPEC with regards to other themes.

Evolution of CPEC Portrayal and Geopolitical Impact

According to Respondent 13, during the initial period, CPEC was welcomed and considered advantageous because of the huge amount of investment and game changing implications; nevertheless, the harboured concerns appeared thereafter in terms of environmental measures, debt traps, and adverse effect on the US- Pakistan relation. Respondent 5 focused on the negative aspect stated through the projects stopped by the PTI government and international concerns including the IMF and the US State Secretary, saying that “The halts in projects by the PTI government and concerns raised by the IMF and US Secretary of State have certainly contributed a lot to have a more critical perception towards CPEC”. Similarly, Respondent 9 mentioned the critical view regarding the credibility of the CPEC owing to which

Positive Framing and Financial Benefits

While not having any specific knowledge, Respondent 8 mentioned evidence of positive change in framing of CPEC in the newspapers at the time of the interview stating, I have seen recently that media framing of CPEC is more positive now than before. The same journalist, Respondent 14 assumed that this positive change in framing probably means some added perceived positive value, which in this case was seen to be financial for the Pakistanis working for pecuniary purpose

Early Rumours, Confusion, and Diversified Opinions

As far as Respondent 10 is concerned, the early rumours and confusion regarding the CPEC announcement have been mentioned and he said, “I think there was much rumours and much confusion when CPEC was first announced”.

Respondent 3 was of the opinion that journalist did not tell the truth at first but agreed to disagree as there were more data from both government and media when the

research was being conducted I think that at first, the media was telling the truth but I disagreed with them but then new information from both government and media was being discovered while conducting this research. Respondent 2 also admitted the necessity of other viewpoints to have synthesized with and for the assessment of the project as he said, "It is important to have other view/paradigm for the understanding as well as evaluating CPEC. "

Evolution Factors and Government Influence

From the interviews conducted, Respondent 4 was of the view that: "The portrayal of CPEC has changed over the period mainly because of the changing political governments and, therefore, their changing priorities."

Perceived Continuity and Results of CPEC: Despite some frightening thoughts on the CPEC initially, respondent 14 said there are improvements on CPEC on infrastructure development and economic opportunities. The following statement reflects this view: The perception of Pakistan from the other side has also changed and Pakistan newspapers do not propagandize negativity anymore going by the account of Respondent 12. "

Factual Accuracy and Research

Followers stressed the need to base news reports on facts Respondent 5 said, "In news reporting we must use data to increase credibility. " Respondent 12 concerning this he suggested that the public should be educated through professionals through research and not misleading opinions. " According to Respondent 3, the media did not tell the truth from the beginning but employing the principle, where there is more than one source of information that was being collected in the process of this research from both government and media, I opined that at first, the media was telling the truth but disagreed with them because there was more information. Similarly, Respondent 2 also agreed on the need for other viewpoints in order to synthesize with and for the evaluation of the project as described in his statement: "It is pertinent to have other view/paradigm for the understanding as well as measuring/synthesizing CPEC.

Evolution Factors and Government Influence

In the interview conducted, one of the findings regarding the perception of CPEC was proposed by Respondent 4 that stated "followings are the views of

respondent regarding the question: “The portrayal of CPEC has change over the period mainly due to the changing political government and therefore changing priorities.”

Perceived Continuity and Results of CPEC

While there were some awful thoughts on the CPEC at the onset, respondent 14 stated that there are changes on the better part of CPEC especially in infrastructure development and in economic experiences, the following statement echoes the observation: The perception of Pakistan from the other side has also changed and Pakistan newspapers do not incite hatred anymore according to the account of Respondent 12.

Factual Accuracy and Research

Concerning this, respondent 5 noted that in news reporting, one has to use data to increase credibility Respondent 12 stressed that the public should be enlightened through the professionals through research and not mere myths. "

4.1.4 Influence of media portrayal on public opinion

Question No. 4 How do you think the media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Four respondents (1, 2, 6, 11) hinted at a shift in public opinion and continuously evolving perceptions. The public opinion was marked initially by few concerns and fears Later, the perception evolved into optimism as tangible benefits were evident such as infrastructure development.

A number of respondents (3,5,12) highlighted another theme, Media as a Shaper of Perception. This theme underscores the influential role of media in constructing and shaping public perceptions. The interviewee highlights the importance of media in constructing a certain environment and perspective within society. While not taking a stance on whether the portrayal is positive or negative, the acknowledgment of media's significant influence on public opinions and perceptions related to CPEC suggests that media is a key actor in framing the narrative around this economic initiative.

Respondent 3 emphasizes the positive impact of media portrayal on public opinion. According to this view, participants are optimistic about CPEC due to the opportunities it presents for jobs, education, and business. The portrayal in newspapers

is seen as instrumental in shaping a favourable perception among the youth, reflecting a positive outlook on CPEC's potential benefits for the future.

Respondent 8 provides a broader perspective on the role of media as a social institution. Media, including newspapers, is seen as a significant force in constructing societal norms and shaping perspectives. The respondent acknowledges that media influences public opinion and perceptions related to CPEC. The evolving and diverse perspectives presented in the media are considered beneficial for a comprehensive understanding of the initiative.

Respondent 12 highlights the significant role of media in forming opinions and perceptions. The traditional nature of print media is recognized, and the portrayal of CPEC in newspapers is viewed as positive. The example of Pakistanis learning Chinese is presented as evidence of the media's constructive influence, fostering a positive image of CPEC and encouraging individuals to explore opportunities within the project.

4.1.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Media as a Constructive Social Institution

As Respondent 4 outlined, media operates as one of the primary mechanisms for constructing social standards and influencing people's perceptions. It has been assumed that the changing and complex approaches to the given topic that are reflected in the media are valuable for obtaining a broader outlook. In this sense, media is one of the most important social powers that develop and introduce pluralism as far as the analysis of such societal phenomena as CPEC is concerned.

Here, the respondent from the new interview also reveals the mediating function of language in the construction of the Pakistani public's attitudes towards CPEC. Language is an important part of culture and as part of an analysis of newspaper data, it substantially dictates how the public perceives CPEC.

Diffusion of Innovation and Potential Threats

On the aspect of discussions related to CPEC, Respondent 5 provides the stages of innovation diffusion. Media is acknowledged as having a significant influence on the public during diffusion process. The potential threats in this case are identified and these include; The effects of sensationalism and bias creep in. Thus, the media plays a

significant role in the flow of such innovations as CPEC, but it should be free from hype and prejudiced vision to provide the public opinion accurately.

Respondent from the new interview highlights the importance of media's responsibility and objectivity in reporting. "Media should be objective and follow rigorous rules and procedures, especially for significant projects like CPEC, to avoid bias and sensationalism."

Cultural and Societal Influence

New interview respondent sheds more light on the cultural and societal aspects that inform the newspapers' portrayal of CPEC, specifically the aspect of language and how it can bring about change. Thus, being one of the aspects of culture, language helps to construct the representation of CPEC in newspapers and shape its further success on the basis of public reception.

Ethical Responsibilities and Objective Reporting

The respondent from the new interview especially pays attention to the ethical duties of newspapers reporting on CPEC emphasizing that all reports should be objective and scientifically confirmed. Daily papers must be impartialists and not insist on 'yellow journalism' while presenting material, as long as people's right to the information is respected, the papers must present this information scientifically.

Similar to 4, Respondent 9 underscores that the media should not indulge in presenting a pure desirability and must provide data analysis. The journalists particularly the political ones should avoid coping themselves up with wishful revelations to make informed decisions to keep. This just means to say that the media persons should avoid wishful thinking and should stick to lamping the facts to achieve the best credibility.

Evolution of CPEC Portrayal

New interview respondent speaks about the change of CPEC representation, starting from misunderstanding and gossip and proceeding to different opinions based on the data. At the start, reports about CPEC were mixed, which cleared up the public's misunderstanding of the project over time.

Thus, in the case of Pakistani newspapers, respondent 12 pointed the change on orientation from the demeaning negative propaganda. Thus, the media has changed

from a negative propaganda portrayal to a positive depiction and corresponds with the nature of the project.

Public Opinion and Media Influence

New interview respondent reemphasizes the role of media in shaping the masses' opinion and perception about CPEC. The author noted that media plays a great role in determining the general perception towards CPEC and it builds certain perceptions regarding the subject that impacts the society.

Respondent 14 defends the media and speaks about the possibility of its manipulation in giving the fair information. 'It's quite important to come up with unbiased reports as to the project because media continues to be influential in setting the tone as to how the populace perceives the CPEC.

Potential Consequences of Biased Reporting

Respondent from the new interview warns of the lethal consequences of biased and sensationalized reporting on CPEC, stressing the need for objective reporting to avoid damaging bilateral relations. "Biased or sensationalized reporting on CPEC can have serious consequences, not only for the project's success but also for bilateral relations between Pakistan and China."

Respondent 11 calls for avoiding sensationalism and providing complete information with context. "Avoid sensationalism and provide complete information with context to ensure fair and accurate reporting."

Overall, the thematic analysis underscores the evolving nature of CPEC's portrayal in Pakistani English newspapers, influenced by political changes, emerging data, and the media's approach to framing and reporting on the initiative. The respondents' insights provide valuable context for understanding how these factors shape public perception and discourse surrounding CPEC.

4.1.5 Potential Consequences of Biased reporting

Question No. 5 What do you think are the potential consequences of centralized or biased reporting on CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper?

Despite the overall positive portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers, majority of the respondents (2,3,4,5,6,8,11,12) raised concerns about potential propaganda and media bias. Respondents 4 and 11 criticized the lack of Chinese "soft power" compared to American narratives. Soft power suggests manipulation through

funding and government narratives. Respondent 8 mentioned the presence of anti-CPEC propaganda from specific media outlets, highlighting the need for critical media literacy. Three respondents (2, 11) highlight the subtle nature of these concerns, ranging from the potential manipulation of information through narratives to the media's role in shaping perceptions. Interviewees express worry about the use of narratives as a form of soft power, particularly when narratives are perceived as tools for influencing minds.

Respondents 11, 13 and 15 reveal that unbalanced or unbiased narratives should be controlled. In case the narratives are unbalanced, it may contribute to propagation of information that is not either objective or factual. The acknowledgment that media constructs a certain environment raises concerns about the accuracy and fairness of the information presented, especially when discussing a major infrastructure project like CPEC, where public perception plays a crucial role in its success.

The concerns of respondents extend to the potential biasness in media coverage. While interviewees 7, 12 mention the evolution of diversified perspectives over time, there is a persistent concern that bias may exist if certain voices are marginalized. Bias may also exist if dissenting opinions are not adequately represented, or alternative narratives are suppressed.

The positive framing of CPEC in English newspapers is acknowledged by all the respondents. However, concerns remain whether the portrayal is comprehensive and balanced, encompassing both the positive aspects and potential challenges associated with the initiative. Addressing these concerns becomes imperative to uphold media ethics, ensure transparency, and foster a more informed public discourse on significant national projects like CPEC.

The theme that emerges clearly from our thematic analysis of transcribed interviews is the complaints about biased reporting and sensationalizing. A need for a balanced reporting was the focus of one respondent. Respondent 6 points out that people feel Urdu newspapers might have more problems maintaining balance than English ones.

The biased reporting can be recognized by all suggests further questions about the quality and objectivity of information being spread to society. Respondent 10 shares the concerns that highlight a media responsibility not to be biased and sensationalistic.

As these answers anticipate, the ramifications could impact not only the CPEC but also China-Pakistan relations. According to interviews, biased reporting could hamper the success of CPEC and damage overall views of those involved on either side.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

Presence of Anti-CPEC Propaganda:

There is a task in critical media literacy regarding the negative campaigning but Respondents 4, 8, and 11 identified certain media outlets that run anti-CPEC campaigns.

Respondent 4: "Some media houses are now involved in anti CPEC propaganda and this therefore requires people to be conversant with analyses of Media. While, Respondent 8 says "Sometimes, there are negative sentiments about CPEC which might be presented in the media causing a negative perception about the project."

Respondent 11 has similar views he said "There are tendencies that are abounding in anti-CPEC sentiments which is important to help readers navigate the said frame."

Subtle Nature of Concerns

Respondents 2 and 11 acknowledge issues starting with narratives manipulation possibility and ending with the media's impact.

Respondent 2: "In this aspect, the media influences the perception of society in such a soft manner by constructing stories that shape the reader's perception."

Respondent 11: "People have issues not only with full-scale propaganda but also with how media influence people's minds."

Unbalanced or Biased Narratives

Regarding the worry that has been described by the respondents 11, 13 and 15 as distortion of information as a result of bias, they were concerned that the presentation of two sides with imbalance contributes to providing the public with information that may not be factual. Recognition of the fact that media builds a particular atmosphere.

Respondent 11: "Due to such reporting the public gets information which is unbalanced and is not at all based on facts regarding the CPEC."

Respondent 13: "Many a time, the media puts up conditions that make the environment not quite responsible, hence the biased reports."

Respondent 15: "It is possible for such biased precedential stories to be spread across the media influencing the opinions and perceptions of people."

Evolution of Diversified Perspectives

In contributions four and seven, respondents drop the dimension of differential views in the course of time but capture a constant worry that prejudice may still lurk if some people's views are not heard or if their opposition is not given enough consideration.

Respondent 7: 'In the long run there has been a transformation concerning the diversification of views regarding CPEC.'

Respondent 12: "Despite the diversification of views, it is often worrisome to think that prejudice continues to exist if those with opposing opinions are suppressed."

Positive Framing of CPEC in English Newspapers: Positive Framing of CPEC in English Newspapers:

All the respondents gave acknowledgment of positive framing in the English newspapers. Issues to do with the coverage and the neutrality of representation, thinking whether it paints the whole picture and any shortcomings, strengths, and opportunities are presented.

Respondent 1: "English newspaper have depicted CPEC fairly; most of them highlighted the aspect of employment opportunities of CPEC and educational facilities."

Respondent 2: "The points made in English newspapers are appreciated but the matter deserves to be represented fairly."

Respondent 13: "Despite the fact that there are positive changes in attitude towards CPEC through the media, both the positives and the challenges should be depicted. "

Impact on CPEC and China-Pakistan Relations: Impact on CPEC and China Pakistan Relations:

Every respondent had an objection regarding the effect of the compromising media on the effectiveness of both CPEC and China-Pakistan relations. Expectation of consequences that would hamper the achievement of CPEC and negative impact on outlook in general.

Respondent 5: "This kind of approach to reporting presents significant repercussions for the possibility of CPEC and the China-Pakistan relations. "

Respondent 9: “Promoting Biasness in Reporting leads to the following impacts; Affecting chances of success of CPEC – Pakistan economic corridor and straining relation between Pakistan and lending country.”

Respondent from the new interview: It shows that anything that is coloured in terms of CPEC reporting, be it along the lines of bias or sensationalism, can lead to lethal repercussions for the project on the one hand as well as the China-Pakistan relations on the other hand.

In a nutshell, the thematic analysis strengthens and broadens earlier findings on how CPEC is conveyed positively, along with apprehensions about bias and propaganda aspects, and the shifting horizon of perceptions on the media in Pakistani English newspapers. People also note the importance of media for agenda setting; thus, respondents stress the significance of presenting objective information on the project to guarantee success and sustain constructive relations with the bilateral partners.

4.3 Findings

Table 1

Findings against objective

| Results and Findings | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Research Objectives | |
| Evaluate Readers Perceptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant majority of respondents perceive that Pakistani English newspapers provide sufficient coverage of CPEC news. • The newspapers generally portray a positive image of CPEC, emphasizing its significance for the economic development of Pakistan. • There are divided opinions among readers regarding the amount of coverage provided to CPEC news, suggesting varying expectations or preferences. |

- The overall portrayal of the CPEC project in Pakistani newspapers is positive, reflecting optimism about its impact on Pakistan's development.
- Some concerns are expressed about the potential impact of CPEC on Pakistan-China relations, indicating nuanced perspectives among readers.
- There's a division of opinion on whether the portrayal of CPEC positively promotes the image of Pakistan at the international level.
- Readers perceive the media balance in Pakistani English newspapers as moderate, with uncertainties about equal coverage of negative and positive aspects.

Access Coverage

Quality and Satisfaction

- Reiterating the positive image of the CPEC project in Pakistani newspapers, suggesting a consistent theme in the qualitative analyses.

- Reiterating the positive image of the CPEC project in Pakistani newspapers, suggesting a consistent theme in the qualitative analyses.
- The identified areas for improvement, such as balanced coverage, enhanced objectivity, and more attention to economic aspects, are reiterated.
- Readers perceive the media balance in Pakistani English newspapers as moderate.

Identify Gaps and

Preferences

- Study reveals an initial optimistic portrayal of CPEC, creating expectations for the economic revival of Pakistan.

Language is identified as a potent tool to influence public opinion through linguistic framing in Pakistani English newspapers.

- Concerns are raised about cultural hegemony, reflecting apprehensions about cultural identity pollution through cultural products, media, and the Chinese language.

- Balancing perspective and sensitivity in media reporting is identified as crucial, with a dynamic interplay observed between media representation and evolving public sentiment.
 - Concerns about propaganda, bias, sensationalization, and biased reporting emphasize the need for comprehensiveness and fairness in media coverage.
 - The importance of upholding media ethics is highlighted as a way to foster a nuanced public discourse on CPEC.
-

4.3.1 Findings: Agenda-Setting Theory

The findings of this study are closely aligned with the principles of agenda setting theory, a framework that highlights the media's influential role in determining which issues receive attention from the public and policymakers. Through the analysis of qualitative data, several key observations emerged, demonstrating the resonance of agenda-setting dynamics in the context of media coverage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Firstly, the study revealed that Pakistani English newspapers predominantly portrayed CPEC in a positive light, emphasizing its significance for Pakistan's economic development. This emphasis on the economic benefits and potential transformative impact of CPEC reflects the media's agenda-setting function in shaping public perception of the project. By consistently highlighting the positive aspects of CPEC, the media can influence the public's perception of its importance and potential benefits.

Secondly, the findings indicated that media coverage of CPEC tended to prioritize certain dimensions, such as economic and geopolitical implications, while potentially overlooking other aspects, including social and environmental considerations. This selective emphasis on specific aspects of CPEC aligns with agenda-setting theory, wherein the media's agenda influences which issues are deemed most salient to the public. As a result, the public may perceive CPEC primarily through the lens presented by the media, emphasizing the dimensions that receive the most coverage.

Furthermore, the study identified variations in the portrayal of CPEC across different newspapers, suggesting that media outlets play a significant role in shaping the agenda and framing of CPEC-related issues. This diversity in coverage underscores the complex interplay between media agendas, audience perceptions, and public discourse surrounding CPEC.

Overall, the findings underscore the enduring relevance of agenda-setting theory in understanding how the media shapes public opinion and influences the salience of issues such as CPEC. By examining the alignment between media coverage and agenda-setting dynamics, this study provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which the media shapes public discourse and perception of complex geopolitical and economic initiatives.

4.3.2 Findings: Framing Theory

The findings of this study also resonate with the principles of framing theory, which posits that the media can influence public perception by selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of a given issue while downplaying or omitting others. Through qualitative examination, several key findings emerged that illustrate the application of framing theory in the context of media coverage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Firstly, the study revealed that Pakistani English newspapers employed framing techniques to portray CPEC in a predominantly positive light, focusing on its potential economic benefits and transformative impact on Pakistan's development landscape. This positive framing of CPEC aligns with the media's agenda to promote a particular problem definition and causal interpretation, as described by framing theory. By emphasizing the economic potential and regional significance of CPEC, the media can shape public perception and promote a favourable view of the initiative.

Secondly, the analysis identified variations in framing across different newspapers, indicating the role of media outlets in shaping the narrative and interpretation of CPEC-related issues. For example, some newspapers may have framed CPEC primarily as a catalyst for economic growth, while others may have highlighted its geopolitical implications or environmental concerns. These variations in framing reflect the diverse perspectives and priorities of media organizations, as well as their influence on public discourse and opinion formation.

Furthermore, the study revealed the use of specific language, imagery, and narrative techniques to frame CPEC-related issues in ways that resonate with audience perceptions and values. For instance, newspapers may have used terms such as "game-changer" or "economic lifeline" to frame CPEC as a transformative initiative with far-reaching benefits for Pakistan. These linguistic frames can shape public understanding and interpretation of CPEC, reinforcing certain beliefs or attitudes towards the initiative.

Overall, the findings highlight the pervasive influence of framing theory in shaping media discourse and public perception of CPEC. By examining the alignment between media coverage and framing techniques, this study offers valuable insights into how the media constructs and communicates narratives about complex economic and geopolitical issues. Understanding the role of framing in shaping public opinion is essential for fostering informed debate and critical engagement with initiatives such as CPEC.

4.4 Discussion

The majority of respondents perceive that Pakistani English newspapers provide adequate coverage of CPEC news, portraying a positive image of its significance for the economic development of Pakistan. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the media's role in shaping public perceptions of major economic initiatives. However, the existence of divided opinions on the amount of coverage provided to CPEC news suggests a divergence in reader expectations. This finding is consistent with studies highlighting the complex nature of reader preferences and expectations from media coverage. The positive image of the CPEC project in Pakistani newspapers, as identified qualitatively, underscores the media's role as a promoter of economic narratives. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the media's potential to influence public perception of national development projects. Expressed concerns about the potential impact of CPEC on Pakistan-China relations provide valuable insights. While the media generally portrays a positive image, readers' nuanced concerns suggest a need for more in-depth analysis and responsible reporting on the geopolitical implications of such projects. The moderate perception of media balance, coupled with identified areas of improvement, highlights the delicate balancing act that media outlets must navigate. Achieving a nuanced and objective portrayal of CPEC remains an ongoing challenge, requiring continual efforts to address reader

expectations. The identification of language as a potent tool to influence public opinion emphasizes the need for media literacy among readers. Cultural concerns further highlight the delicate balance between cultural preservation and the adoption of foreign cultural elements. The findings suggest the importance of media literacy initiatives to empower readers to critically evaluate and interpret media content. Educational programs that focus on enhancing readers' understanding of media language and framing techniques can contribute to a more informed public discourse.

Evaluating the media content demonstrates a key function related to influencing viewpoints regarding the CPEC opening, tied with factors highlighted in the literature review. The view held by the Respondent 4 on the functionality of media to build social norms corresponds to the discussion made in the part of the literature review with respect to the media influence on CPEC perception. The focus of the CPEC as a large economic undertaking corresponds with this function of the media in shaping the agenda and perhaps deprive, overall, more important issues.

Such issues pointed by Respondent 5 with regard to sensationalism in media are closely connected to the literature review's topic, Media Framing and Bias. The literature reveals the emphasis on the necessary objectivity of reporting to prevent a shift in population attitudes and provide the public with accurate information, including on the consequences of CPEC.

The notion of culture arising from respondents' observations regarding language and the portrayal of CPEC is consistent with the topics highlighted in the review of literature that focused on media representation. The literature review explains the role of language and cultural factors in constructing such significant projects such as CPEC and, in turn, shape the perception of the people.

The requirement of media ethics or the absence of unethical sensationalism that some of the respondents reported is in line with the literature review addressing the matter of ethical journalistic practice. Criticizing the 'Selective and Skewed' journalism, the review emphasizes on 'Positive and Fair' information to maintain a credibility besides offering the true picture of CPEC.

The change in the level of negativity to positivity evident in covering CPEC also supports the literature review done on the media narrative. This evolution partly defines

the scope of the media in terms of framing and prioritization of issues at different points in time.

The respondents' views about the media influence on the formation of CPEC awareness substantiate the journalism literature review section wherein media's agenda setting ability was identified. The review also shows that the perceptions and attitudes that media disseminates affect public knowledge or perception on pivotal ventures such as CPEC.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

In this work, we carried out qualitative analysis to evaluate the reader perspective about the coverage of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers. We evaluated mean values and overall breakdown of respondent opinions to analyse key findings. The qualitative analysis revealed that majority of the respondents perceived that Pakistani English newspapers provide adequate coverage of CPEC news. The newspapers depict positive perception of significance for the economic development of Pakistan. Furthermore, divided opinions are observed on the amount of coverage provided to CPEC news. However, few concerns are presented regarding the consideration of CPEC's potential impact on Pakistan-China relations. A division of opinion is also observed on whether the portrayal of CPEC positively promotes the image of Pakistan at international scale. This study also reveals that media balance in Pakistani English newspapers is perceived moderately. Uncertainties do exist between equal coverage of negative and positive aspects of CPEC. Despite the general satisfaction by readers with timeliness and accuracy, few areas of improvement have also been identified. The areas of improvement include ensuring balanced coverage, enhancing the objectivity and providing more attention to economic aspects of CPEC.

The study also performed qualitative analysis to identify the thematic patterns that enlighten CPEC reporting in Pakistani English newspapers. The qualitative analysis revealed an initial optimistic portrayal regarding CPEC. This initial optimism created expectations of economic revival of Pakistan. However, few unmet expectations have shifted the perception and discussions on political attitudes and disparities in resource distribution have also been included.

The interviewees also identified language as a potent tool to influence the public opinion using linguistic framing in Pakistani English newspapers. Some concerns are also noted about cultural hegemony which reflects apprehensions about polluting the cultural identity of Pakistan through cultural products, media and Chinese language. The portrayal of CPEC in newspapers as a national economic phenomenon highlighted both positive aspects and concerns about trade imbalances and high import bills.

Themes related to media responsibility, objectivity, and factual accuracy underscored the ethical duty of the media to present information objectively, with concerns about potential propaganda and bias emphasizing the need for media literacy. Balancing perspective and sensitivity in media reporting emerged as crucial, with a dynamic interplay observed between media representation and evolving public sentiment. The themes concerning concerns about propaganda, bias, sensationalization, and biased reporting emphasized the need to address comprehensiveness and fairness in media coverage, thereby upholding media ethics and fostering a nuanced public discourse on CPEC.

5.2 Connection to Research Questions

The results of this study address the research questions and objectives set forth in the study. The representation of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers, as observed, aligns with the broader objectives of media to shape public opinion and reflect national interests. The findings highlight how media portrayal has been instrumental in constructing a narrative that is both supportive of the economic potential of CPEC and mindful of its associated risks.

Research Question 1: Why does media bias in Pakistani print media influence the depiction of CPEC, and what are the underlying factors contributing to these biases?

By looking at the Pakistani print media, this paper concludes that media bias substantially distorts the portrayal of CPEC to suit the political and economic agenda of mediators. These include political affiliation of media houses, business relationship with China, and patriotic narratives among others. These biases lead to pre-structured narratives that either advance positive aspects of the project beneficial to the government and the economy or warn about risks to Pakistan's sovereignty and domestic businesses. This bias is also reinforced by exclusion of certain sources and the lack of inclusion of opposing views, which go a long way in influencing the population's view towards the initiative.

Research Question 2: What impact does media coverage of CPEC, including sensationalism, cultural representation, and objective reporting, have on public perceptions?

Based on the findings it can be deduced that sensationalism in the media results in a heightened level of dread and mistrust of CPEC among the masses as they are fed

with half-truths and exposures of dramatic or arguable topics. Indeed, cultural representation of the media narratives presents the collaboration with China either as a cultural exchange between equals, a ‘meet cute,’ or as a hostile cultural imperialism depending on the inclination of the media producing the narrative. There are objective reports in some cases that assist in the formation of a general opinion, but they are outcompeted by biased opinions. In the specific case of CPEC, rather than coming to an understanding by observing the evidence and making their own conclusions, the public is simply absorbing the media messages and is divided into two camps regarding the consequences of CPEC for Pakistan’s development and sovereignty.

Research Question 3: How do different portrayals of CPEC in the media affect its perceived credibility and the level of public support it receives?

When the media presents CPEC in a positive light, the public perceives it as credible and supports it; conversely, negative presentations decrease the credibility and support that the public gives to CPEC. Promising portrayals which focus on economic gains and component utilization increase acceptance and boost credibility adding up to the national developmental plans. On the other hand, threats such as dependency on debt and the reduction of cultural identity are less credible and gain less support. The credibility of the source also determines the extent to which the information will affect an audience; reliable media outlets have more impact on the population. Thus, the shown orientations produce a fragmented perception of the CPEC where the level of support depends on the media that people consume.

5.3 Conclusion

To conclude, in the comprehensive examination of reader perspectives on the coverage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani English newspapers, this study conducted qualitative analyses to gain insights. The dual approach provided a robust understanding of reader sentiments, allowing for a more holistic interpretation of the findings. The qualitative analysis depicts an initial optimistic portrayal of CPEC that fuelled expectations for Pakistan's economic revival. However, the emergence of unmet expectations altered perceptions, leading to discussions on political attitudes and disparities in resource distribution. Language was identified as a potent tool shaping public opinion, with concerns raised about cultural hegemony and the potential dilution of Pakistan's cultural identity through media and

the Chinese language. In conclusion, this study not only provides valuable insights into how CPEC is represented in Pakistani English newspapers but also underscores the dynamic relationship between media, public opinion, and the ethical responsibilities of journalistic practices. As Pakistan navigates the complexities of major economic initiatives, the findings call for continual improvement in media practices, increased media literacy, and a commitment to upholding ethical standards for the betterment of public discourse and understanding.

5.3.1 Research Answers

Based on the comprehensive analysis conducted in this study, the main reader reactions to opinion-based editorials about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistani print media are multifaceted. The majority of respondents perceive Pakistani English newspapers as providing sufficient coverage of CPEC news, portraying it positively as significant for Pakistan's economic development. However, there are varying opinions among readers regarding the extent and balance of this coverage, reflecting diverse expectations and preferences within the readership. While many readers appreciate the optimistic portrayal of CPEC, some express concerns about its potential implications for Pakistan-China relations, indicating a nuanced understanding of the project's geopolitical dimensions among the audience.

In response to reader criticism of opinion-based editorials on CPEC, Pakistani print media demonstrates a degree of responsiveness. Identified areas for improvement include the need for balanced coverage, enhanced objectivity, and greater attention to the economic aspects of CPEC. This suggests that Pakistani media outlets are receptive to reader feedback and recognize the importance of addressing concerns raised by their audience. The moderate perception of media balance further underscores the acknowledgment within the industry of the need for continuous improvement in meeting reader expectations and upholding journalistic standards.

Some reader reactions to op-eds about CPEC appear to have a greater influence over public opinion due to their alignment with broader societal concerns and interests. Reader sentiments that resonate with issues such as media bias, transparency, and national interests tend to carry more weight in shaping public discourse on CPEC. The portrayal of CPEC in newspapers as a national economic phenomenon, while generally positive, also incorporates concerns and critiques, which contribute to a nuanced

understanding of the project among the public. This underscores the importance of media coverage that is comprehensive, balanced, and reflective of diverse perspectives to foster informed public discourse on CPEC and other significant national initiatives.

In conclusion, the study findings highlight the dynamic interplay between reader reactions, media responsiveness, and public opinion formation regarding CPEC in Pakistani print media. By addressing reader feedback, upholding journalistic standards, and promoting diverse perspectives, media outlets can contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of CPEC among the public. This underscores the crucial role of the media in facilitating constructive dialogue and shaping perceptions on complex economic projects like CPEC.

5.3.2 Recommendations

The following are recommended measures to address the concerns that have been depicted and to improve the perception of newspaper readers about CPEC.

Strengthen Media Literacy Programs

Launch educational programs that help the population recognize certain prejudices and sensationalism in the material submitted to the media. Through the given critical media literacy skills, the readers will be in a better position to analyse and even deconstruct the stories regarding CPEC.

Encourage International Media Collaboration

Promote collaboration with the local and foreign media companies in the provision of new and detailed coverage of CPEC. This cooperation can encompass various global viewpoints, which can minimize bias and provide a broader outlook on the effects of the given initiative.

Ensuring Diverseness of Opinion Present in the Reporting

Ensure media's active engagement of plurality and diversification in political reporting of CPEC. Media can avoid criticism such as bias of a certain organization by incorporating both positive and negative aspects of the CPEC into the discussion.

Develop Public Engagement Channels

Organise live and online platforms where members of the public can directly engage media persons. Through these platforms, readers will be able to comment on

matters that have been reported, make inquiries and contributions hence giving the reporters positive accountability.

Collaborate with Cultural Institutions

Involve cultural and academic bodies to discuss on how coverage on CPEC has a bearing on the culture and then possibly come up with ways to address this. That way, it is possible to achieve a better representation of the cultural effects and manage the possible cases of cultural imperialism, so the native culture can be valued and protected.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

1. What role do you believe cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistani English newspapers?
2. In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have in reporting on a complex and politically sensitive topic like CPEC?
3. How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers has evolved over the past few years, if at all?
4. How do you think the media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?
5. What do you think are the potential consequences of sensationalized or biased reporting on CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

First Interview Transcript

Assalam-O-alaikum. My name is Naima Sabin. I am a student of MPhil Linguistic. I would start by thanking you for taking part in my research on the topic and title 'Representation of CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper: a reader response perspective'. The purpose of this research is to investigate how readers react to editorials about CPEC in Pakistani print media for public sentiment. Your kind cooperation will help me to comprehend how readers are perceiving and engaging with editorials on CPEC and how this is shaping their impression of the project by studying their reactions. I have many questions to ask you for reliability of the result of the study. You're requested to answer the question with sincerity and openly. For data processing, I would seek your permission to record the interview. May I record the interview, Sir?

Sir. My first question is

Question 1: What role do you believe? Cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistani English?

First of all, it is required to understand that what CPEC is CPEC is not only just a project which is related to Pakistan. It belongs to a bigger picture of OBOR OBO R1 belt, One Rd. project through which China is going to link Russia through Central Asia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, then Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan. As they have to reach to Russia. As far as English newspapers are concerned. So we have two major English newspapers, one is Dawn and other one is The News. Apart from it, there is another newspaper which is which has a key importance related to the subject study of CPEC, which is observer. Regarding your questions, I have studied some of the articles which have been published in these newspapers and in the light of those articles I am going to give you the answer of this particular question. So first of all, it is also necessary to understand that why Pakistan since independence of Pakistan, Pakistan is of strategic importance in this area in which we are living. And it's the will of Russia since 1947 that that he should create some good relationships with Pakistan so that he can have a direct approach to hot waters as they need trade and they are into a very costly trade off on air shipping, so they want to have hot waters so that their shipping cost can be lesser. But in start Pakistan, when Liaqat Ali Khan was the Prime Minister, the tilt was toward

America. But in 1948, when China came into being after that China has tried to have good ties with Pakistan. In the reign of General Ayub Khan in 1954, they succeeded in developing some good relations with Pakistan when Pakistan provided them the land of Kashmir and in return Pakistan got Kargil and Siachen area. So that they can defend their country from Indian invasions. Since that time we are saying and we are listening that Pakistan and China's friendship is deeper than the seas and higher than the Himalayas. What it means that both the countries have entered into so many agreements, strategic agreements, economic agreements in order to create some social bond and also in order to help to strengthen the economies of both countries, they have entered into so many agreements China has always supported Pakistan, and China is the country which is always using its veto power in favour of Pakistan whenever Pakistan needed it. So now come to the particular question that what role, social and cultural role is being portrayed in English newspapers. So there are a number of things. If we talk about societal development, then China, especially through its project CPEC, it's helping a lot the Pakistani government. We can see that roads have been built up with the help of China. Nowadays our road infrastructure is more. Bigger than that, Indians infrastructure, road infrastructure. You know that those countries who have good roads, they have a good economy and fastest means can lessen the price of any product. They can lessen the price of any product, any manufacturing product. And other societal role with China through CPEC portraying in Pakistan is they are going to develop some industrial areas as we know that always industry is there to help us regarding to provide the jobs to the people, so when people have jobs, then they will have a better standard of life. Through CPEC, China is not only focusing on the infrastructure only if we only talk about infrastructure, then it comes from. Monorails to the bullet trains and also the some of the motorway projects and later in the Gwadar seaport is there. China is not only helping through CPEC in this, but also they are going to provide US aid in order to have good educational system in order to build up some good universities and some good schools through which our education can have a better way of moving ahead. When we have a look on the editorials regarding cultural and other issues related to the CPEC, then it's very easy to understand that our culture is being upscale door. We are going to safeguard our own society and culture through this CPAC in community development. China is also helping out by providing under the SDG's of UN. Specifically, the SDG's are. Improvement in education, women rights,

malnutrition, food and hygiene sanitation, China is helping in all these things. When earthquake hits Pakistan in 2005 then China was the first country which stood by Pakistani people, and they have provided an aid of more than \$70 million. It was a direct aid in order to overcome the miseries of the effectives so. We can easily see that Pakistani newspapers are also supporting the CPEC project, and as you know, editorial is the voice of the newspaper or opinion of the newspaper. They also consider CPEC as the game changer in this area. So most of the newspapers are in favour of this project, CPEC because it is providing not only not only the reforms in our society, but also in betterment, in providing a better life to people.

OK, Sir, my second question is,

Question 2: In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have in reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Actually it is very pertinent that there are some general ethical responsibilities, which the entire media should adopt. But regarding to CPEC. In articles and in specific news, which the English newspapers of Pakistan have provided, they are not taking care of about this sensitive issue. Why it is sensitive? It is sensitive because many of the international forces are against CPEC. Like as MI6 and America, they are not in favour of this. Also, if we talk about our neighbouring countries, then India and Iran are also against this project. During reporting in English newspapers I have come across that due to Chabahar project of Iran which they are carrying out with India due to that they are against the Qatar Port, which is being carried out by Pakistan and China under this CPEC. So first of all, they are creating a lot of sensationalism and they are sensationalizing even a very small piece of information which is on early stage and they are saying, oh, this is going to happen CPEC. Ohh! It seems that China is making such policies that soon China will take over Pakistan. It's not like that. This topic is of international importance. So most of the ambassadors, most of the key players, play stackers will have to watch on the English newspapers and how this issue is being portrayed on English newspaper because this language is easy for them to understand instead of Urdu. So first ever thing they have to take care of that they have to avoid the sensationalism. Second, have their ethical responsibility towards CPEC is that they have to provide the complete information with context. They are not taking care of about the context that that what actually the context is in which a news address a new

verdict has come from China or Pakistani stakeholders of CPEC, so they have to provide the context of the news as well. Third ever responsibilities they have to present the picture of both sides of the coin. That's why a person is talking about CPEC, what are his motives? What is the background of any country who is talking about CPEC? What are the potential threats, lies in that and what are Pakistan stake and how being a Pakistani reporter, or how being a Pakistani in general we have to play our role in order to protect this huge project which is a game changer in this entire area and other thing which we have to take care of is to respect to show ethical consideration and we should be very fair and we have to be very unbiased during reporting. We have to keep our set aside. I will not take the name, but I was reading an article which was being written by a person who whose belief was on the sect of elites so. It's his sector, he during the reporting and during any piece writing any column writing on newspaper. They have to keep their prejudice set aside, but the particular person was saying that, we have to turn toward Iran for development and we have to be aware from Chinas some of the. Hidden states which we are not taking care of. I believe that in newspapers such language should be avoided and a very lighter tone and a very professional language should be adopted by the newspaper writers or columnists. For editorial writings.

Sir, thank you so much. My next question is

Question 3: How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspaper has evolved over the past few years effects on?

Actually, in past few years there is a massive, massive change in reporting CPEC. In 2018, almost five years back when a new government came into power in Pakistan with the name of Pakistan, was PTI and its chairman Imran Khan. If we can see a clear division in newspapers arguments and a very clear division between the reporting of newspapers. Previously, some sensitive issues were being reported on by Sky, and as it is, as they happen, but in past few years. We can say that media has divided into two sections, one section is which is pro-government and the other section is which is against government. So again, if we have a look on Dawn newspaper then they have always emphasize on the importance and on the continuity of CPEC, but on the other hand, if we have a look on the English newspaper belongs to Express group, their tilt was towards that we have to rethink and revisit the entire CPEC project. So evolution of news regarding to CPEC project was disastrous in past five years. In English

newspapers, as some believe that it is injurious and it is harmful for Pakistan economy, it will destroy the culture of Pakistan specifically. The regional culture of Balochistan regional culture of Janubi Punjab because both the two culture of Janubi, Punjab and cultural of interior blotches on both the two have very strong ties with their. Cultures and they believe that soon their culture will be changed and it will be through CPAC. And they have written some pieces of paper in which they have mental. That the countries who have lost their culture and language, they have lost their identity. I personally also believe the same, but not relation is something else and entirely to change something is something else. In order to bring modernity in our lifestyle doesn't mean that we are going to destroy our culture. So the newspapers have evolved in past few years. Some of the newspapers have talked against CPAC candidates and they have said that it will destroy our society. Our culture, but some who were against government, they were in favour of continuity of this huge project and they still believe that will fit. It will strengthen Pakistan as a nation. It will not destroy. Also, they believe that some newspapers who are who are pro government, they believe that it will have it, will cut down our exports and most of the exports will be in the hand of China as they are, they have more, cheaper products and it will be a disastrous activity to promote CPEC for Pakistani economy, but other English newspapers believe that no, when they will establish factories in Pakistan, then it will strengthen the Pakistan economy because it will increase our GDP, it will boost our tax system and it will be a very helpful for establishing Pakistan economy, which is already depriving and which is already going down, down and down over period of time.

OK, Sir, my second last question is.

Question 4: How do you think the media portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Then CPEC started media plays a very important and vital role in shaping public opinion towards CPEC. You know, whenever a new thing is coming there are some categories which came under diffusion of innovation whenever we are going to diffuse some innovation whenever we are going to present some new thing to people, then it has five stages, first ever stage. Is in which innovators come. These are the people who, with the blink of eye, they accept the change and they adopted the things as it is because they are more vibrant. They have exposure, they are more educated. You can start when

CPEC was there, and when CPEC was announced. That time, the elite class or the educated class, the one who provided the role of innovators and all of a sudden they have access created this innovation and this initiative by the respective government later on at second number the early adopters are there earlier. Doctors are basically the policy makers and those who are near to the innovators. So all the policymakers who were involved in this in order to make this dream comes true. They adopted this at once as well. Then comes late, early majority. Early majority people are those who after period of time when they came to know about the benefits of something, then they adopted. In the last two categories are very dangerous for any society. One is late majority and last one is laggards. Laggards have their some pertinent and some specific issues. Lack goods doesn't mean that they don't have education or don't mean that they have less interaction or they are less involved with some. New information laggards can be pressure groups. Laggards can be those who only see their own benefit instead of the countries benefit or benefit of public at large. Laggards can be those. Who are looking toward their. Some small area and they want that they gain as much as they can for their own self instead of public at large. So in English newspapers it was evolved with the game changer and it was. This initiative was taken as a very big project which will change the entire landscape and which will make a new culture in which Pakistan, Russia and China will play a vital role and later on they can grab the entire mark it of the world, but some people were there who see this initiative as a threat. I will again say that some communities belong to interior blue chisan. Some communities belong to the bordering area of Punjab and KP, and some communities belongs to southern Punjab, which was on border with KPK. They have their own personal issues which have destroyed the project of Kalabagh at that time. They haven't taken care of that. How much important this kalabagh baggage but due to their some specific issues and some personal benefits. They have destroyed the entire project same like that. Those who are living in misery, those who don't have access to all of the benefits provided by the governments. They feel isolated and this isolation led them to sell their selves to the enemies of the country. So since the start of CPac project 2 forces were very much active in specific areas of Balochistan. With the name of Balochistan Liberation Army and if we have a look on the history of Balochistan Liberation Army, it was being developed by RAW, which is agency, Azerbaijan City of India and heavily funded by Indian spy agency they. They never wish that Pakistan will be stable in terms of

economy, in terms of politics, in terms of society, in terms of culture, so. In in start, when newspapers have phrasing this initiative, they were trying to destroy that project, so they also have started their own propaganda and propaganda can never be separated without the help of newspapers. So there were small, but the presence of voices was there that this project will soon destroy the entire. Culture and Society of Pakistan. But overall, if we talk about the role of English newspapers, then it was very positive and they have provided a huge support for comments by providing. Positive articles and positive news towards this project.

OK, Sir, my last question is

Question 5: What do you think are the potential consequences of centralized or biased reporting on CPAC in Pakistani newspaper?

I will say I will not talk about potential consequences. I will talk about the potential threats. Consequences can be positive, can be negative, can be good, and can be bad. But if you know that your question has both the negative words. Sensationalism and biased whenever we are sensationalizing something, then we are destroying that thing. Whenever we are going to have biased reporting, then actually we are destroying the entire scenario and the entire thing which is going to happen. So I will say it the potential threats today just for instance. Just imagine that today if a media channel or a media House media newspaper started spreading this news. That China has taken over the control of Gwadar and they are not providing jobs to the local people of Gwadar and they are not providing electricity to the local people of Gwadar. They are not going to allow. I am highlighting all those things which have already been highlighted. They are not going to prove they are not allowing the local fisherman's to go into the deep sea from Gwadar. You know, previously only one year back. There was a movement with the name of Haq do Gwadar, Tehri. It was being carried out by Mulana Wahid Mulana Wahid something I'm forgetting the name. So main issues were that because of this, because of keeping the security of those. Those people who are working on Gwadar port and those who belongs to China or some other country, like as some workers from Qatar are also working there. But nowadays Chinese people are and Chinese companies are working there, they said. Due to providing them the security they have put sanctions on fisherman's to enter into deep sea from the port of Gwadar. So what they have to do, they have to take a longer route via jivani and via pasni. And it increased their cost of

fishing. So they were against those restrictions and those sanctions and they demanded for. They demanded that locals should be allowed to go into deep sea and most of the posts should be removed as they are unnecessary. Second thing which they highlighted was that resources belongs to Balochistan. But most of the workers who are working there are belongs to same than Punjab. We are the deprived class and this seat pack is not providing us enough support in order to make our lives better. So just imagine if some media houses started this topic and highlighting this news that the people are going against the CPAC project, what impact it will create on this project and on this initiative it will be a disastrous for the entire project specially for Pakistan. It will be a disaster situation. So newspaper, sometimes I believe that if. In real sense, there is a news regarding CPAC which is creating bad impact. They have to kill it for larger benefit. They should not publish that news or if they are going to publish that news, then they have to avoid the sensationalism. And then they can provide only the real time information, only that 10 or 12 or 30 or 50 people gathered and they have protested. Not against CPAC, but against the demolition of. The posts that that post should be demolished. Never. They have to talk about CPAC because what people are demanding people are demanding to demolish the posts. People are demanding that to give access to deep sea, people are demanding. For jobs, they are not demanding to end the CPAC. Through sea due to CPAC, these issues have been created so newspapers have to be very unbiased and they have provided only the real verdict of people. Thank you very.

Thank you so much, Sir.

Second Interview Transcript

Assalam-O-Alaikum. My name is Naima Jabeen. I am a student of MPhil. Linguistics. I will start with thanking you for taking part in my research on the topic entitled representation of CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper: A reader response perspective. The purpose of this research is to investigate how reader reactions to a tutorials about CPEC in Pakistani print media affect public sentiment. Your kind cooperation will help me to comprehend how readers are perceiving and engaging with editorials on CPEC and how this is shaping their impression of the project. By studying their reactions, I have many questions to ask you for reliability of the study. Your answer to questions with sincerity and openly for data processing, I would seek your permission to record the interview. May I record your interview, Sir? Please, Sir, please introduce yourself.

I am Marshall Ali. OK, Sir, my first question is

Question 1: What role do you believe cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is presented in Pakistani English Newspapers?

Answer: I think in the beginning, when CPEC was introduced or CPEC was launched in Pakistan. So people had kind of mixed opinion about CPEC, and there were fears about CPEC that it could be kind of an economic attack or at the same time a cultural attack which could lead to the impact of Chinese culture on Pakistani culture. I think similar opinion was seen in English newspapers. I mean people were the article writers or the people expressing their opinion in newspapers were concerned, especially about how CPEC, and obviously the presence of Chinese is going to impact Pakistani culture and as well as Pakistani economy. On the other hand they were, I would say, people who were In favor of CPEC, and they were seeing CPEC as a kind of an opportunity for Jobs. People considered a kind of enhanced cooperation between 2 friendly countries, China and Pakistan. So people had kind of a mixed opinion in the beginning.

My second question is,

Question 2: In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have been reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Answer: Well, I think all reporters and these newspapers, especially Pakistan newspapers, They should report what is factual and what is true and what is correct. They should not try to scandalize things unnecessarily and I think since CPEC is a kind of an opportunity, and it is for the economic growth of this country. I believe it has created a lot of job opportunities for Pakistanis men and women. So, I believe they need to be little more sensitive when they are talking about CPEC, because these media reports and whatever is published in newspapers Can damage or can have an impact on how CPEC is going and how CPEC is progressing and the kind of development it has done in Pakistan.

OK, Sir, my next question is

Question 3: How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspaper has evolved over the past few years, if at all?

Answer: Well, I don't see much change, but yes, in the beginning probably people have these fears, but now since, they are seeing the results of CPEC. So, for example, in the form of roads and all that stuff, and then economic opportunities and people are learning Chinese because they think that learning Chinese can help them find better jobs. So, yes, I mean sometime I feel that couple of years ago there was a kind of a propaganda against how CPEC is going to impact Pakistan negatively and that was seen in media as well in newspapers as well. So I think mostly Pakistani newspaper newspapers they have portrayed CPEC in a more positive light, I believe.

Yes, OK. So my second last question is

Question 4: How do you think the media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Answer: Well, I think media in general plays a very important role in opinion formation and building perception of people. So yes, because newspaper or print Media is a more traditional Means of reporting or News information. So, I think media does control minds so that the way things are presented about CPEC, they are I think impacting Public opinion and perception, but that is, I think it's a more positive perception. For example, we see Pakistani people learning Chinese, so probably it is because of The positive perception and image that media has created that people are learning Chinese and they are trying to find opportunities in this project, CPEC, so I think. If not all, I think most of the newspapers They have portrayed in a very positive light, and I think so people have resultantly or eventually or as a result of that, people have formed a positive opinion about CPEC.

OK, Sir. Thank you. My last question is

Question 5: What do you think are the potential consequences of self like they are centralized or biased reporting on CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper?

Answer: Well, I don't think there is any biased reporting frankly, but yes, I mean. Any bias in reporting can obviously damage anything, so yes, obviously I think if there is a bias or if there is a more sensational news published in or disseminated through these Pakistani newspapers, it can obviously create a problem for CPEC project and plus

people who are looking after the CPAC project. At the same time I think it can create a kind of disturbance between two countries. and if things are portrayed in a more positive light, I believe so this is going to kind of expedite it, push it further and it will result in the creation of more jobs and plus more friendly ties between the two countries.

Sir, thank you so much.

Third Interview Transcript

Aoa! my name is Naima Jabeen. I am a student of MPhil linguistic. I would start by thanking you for taking part in my research on the topic entitled 'Representation of CPEC in Pakistan English newspapers: A reader response perspective'. The purpose of this research is to investigate how reader reactions to editorials about CPEC Pakistani print media affect public sentiment. Your kind cooperation will help me to comprehend how readers are perceiving and engaging with editorials on CPEC and how this is shaping their impression of the project by studying their reaction. I have many questions to ask you for reliability of the result of the study you are requested to answer the question with sincerity and openly for data processing I would seek your permission to record the interview. May I record your interview, Sir? Please, Sir. First of all, introduce yourself.

OK. Thank you very much. I'm Azar Vakar and I'm a lecturer at Department of International Relations. Please go ahead.

OK, Sir, my first question is

Question 1: What role do you believe cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistan English newspaper?

Answer : OK, just a minute. You were asking me about the cultural aspects, right? OK, fine. Yeah, I think CPEC has multiple dimensions, you know, political, cultural, economic dimensions development as well. But this is a very like critical question and I think literature is not too much available on this topic. So, actually, people, especially in those areas, especially where actually CPEC is like, is there the roads are there which are constructed by the Chinese. So, they have some fear of the cultural hegemony of the China rather it is like that Chinese will colonize our culture and the problem is that our culture is more like has more similarities with the Western culture as compared to the Chinese culture. So this perspective is there. I do agree with you, but I personally

don't think so that Chinese are going to colonize our culture. It is definitely influencing our local patterns of the culture, so I'm optimistic.

Thank you so much, Sir. My second question is

Question 2: In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have in reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Answer: I think overall if we are talking about our electronic or print media, I would say that we actually are not doing, we are not following the proper ethics of the journalism. Sometimes we write our, especially these media persons, they talk or they write just they reflect their wishful thinking. Actually, they are not factually and empirically analysing the situation. But there are two extremes here. One is the biasness of these media parchments and the other one is the like over rigidity of these states, persons or the people or the policy makers who do not want to share what does it mean by the CPEC? What is the deal between the Pakistan and the Chinese people? So we should need to be like follow a balanced approach. And information It's not like your enemy. Information is always helpful, but the factual information, not disinformation or misinformation. On the basis of this disinformation or misinformation, Actually the India, America, even UK, Europe, they are using this Kind of spreading this disinformation. If you compare the Pakistani newspapers and the western newspapers, you will see the term of debt trap is very much common in the western media as well as in Western newspapers but in Pakistan newspapers it is not so much. But still people some people are writing on this story.

OK, Sir, my next question is

Question 3: how do you believe the portrayal of CPAC in Pakistani English newspaper has evolved over the past few years, if at all?

Answer: I think this is true. It is evolved. But there are many factors that contributed to this evolution, like the political government. When CPEC was started, we had a different government. And in first phase we had a different government and now we are in the second phase, which will be continued till 2025. We have another government, so they show those priorities of the government. I remembered that the previous government of PTI, they have some reservations on the CPEC and on the basis of those relations, the newspapers or those the writers actually got the information from those

people and they simply reflected the views of the government. So we cannot only blame the newspapers or those media person as well. Still, remember that Asad Omar, the minister from the previous government he was openly criticizing CPEC and what now? What media person need to do is they have to report it.

OK, Sir, my second last question is

Question 4: how do you think the media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Answer: Agree with this, that this CPEC narrative, or the CPEC, which is flagship project of BRI. It actually has influenced the opinion and the minds of the people of the Pakistan, like the people who are living in different provinces or cities differently It has influenced so. Narrative is like a very powerful mean to change the minds of the people, and it is sad that we are living in the century of the narratives. People are claiming their narrative. Political parties have their narratives. Even capitalism has its own narrative. Commune has their own narrative. So they people are getting inspired then it. But the problem is here again that. There is a concept of soft power, right? Unfortunately the Chinese are so like lag behind in this idea of the soft power, whereas the American soft power is quite rich soft power which is considered across worldwide. For example, if you have to go to the USA. You, you, you got two options whether you want to go to USA or you will go to China where you will go the most people prefer the USA, UK or European countries and the China. Why? This is the power of the soft power and how soft power determine these things through the narratives, those narratives which are given by those governments, or the funding they are providing you. So they inspire, or they influences the minds of the people as well.

OK, Sir, my last question is

Question 5: What do you think are the potential consequences of centralized or biased reporting on CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper?

Answer: I think it has very serious implications for the China and Pakistan relation as well because China is very much serious about this project. Basically it is the flagship project of Bri. There are 6 sub projects of the BRI and one of those projects is CPEC. And China is really, really serious about this project. If the Pakistani media, electronic media Or print media or social media is doing the biased. Reporting it will impact the

bilateral relation between these countries and at the same time, China has so far invested, I guess, according to my this rough estimation so far, China has invested \$24 billion on CPEC, right? And out of those 24 billion, 2120 to \$21 billion dollars were invested during the previous government. That was from 2013 to 2018. And \$3 billion in this, the last government that was led by the Imran Khan. Why so like it is so less amount why that means there are many other things? So this biased reporting is also one of the indicators to understand why China is not like too much development aid to Pakistan or China is like reluctant to invest in Pakistan.

Thank you, Sir, for your time and words.

Fourth Interview Transcript

Assalam-O-Alikum! my name is Naima Jabeen. I am a student of MPhil linguistics. I would start by thanking you for taking part in my research on the topic entitled: Representation of CPEC in Pakistani English newspaper: A reader response perspective. The purpose of this research is to investigate how reader reactions to editorials about CPEC and Pakistani print media Public sentiment. Your kind cooperation will help me to comprehend how readers are perceiving and engaging with editorials on CPEC and how this is shaping their impression of the project by studying their reactions. I have many questions to ask you for reliability of the results of the study you requested to answer the question with sincerity and openly. For data processing I will seek your permission to record the interview. May I record your interview, Sir? OK, Sir. My first question is,

Question 1: What role do you believe cultural and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistan English newspapers?

Answer: Yeah. First we need to understand that language is one of the components of culture along with like norms, values, symbols. And it is this language which basically transformed the ideology and civilization from one generation to another generation. So, this language is used in multiple dimensions means to say we use it in family, we use it in education, religion, whatever the sector of life is. Media is one of the sectors of in any state or you can say society and then the print media and particularly the newspapers, you know it wholly solely depend upon these words i.e. this language. So I think that whatever the portrait of this CPEC project, which is basically, the focus of your study. The way the language is used to represent and to portray CPEC is will be

very much significant for the future of this project, be that success or Failure. So I think yes, language like any other, you know, sector it plays very important role in shaping up the perception of the people through this newspaper.

Thank you so.

Question 2: In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspaper have in reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Answer: Personally, I think that this media it should be very much responsible. When I say responsible, so I means that you know it is the right of the public to know about the political phenomenon which are happening out there in any society. So it is the media which basically present the information to the public and public has the right as I mentioned earlier so. I think that the media should be objective. If it is professional, it should be objective. and when I say objective so I mean that whatever the data is presented to the public, it should be based on rigorous rules and procedures of science, because we know that media is one of the Social sciences. So, it should pursue rigorous methodology to present the facts in front of the public and keeping in view the project like CPEC, which are utmost significant not only for China but also for Pakistan. So whatever the facts are, They are required to present that objectively, and this is the excellence of any profession, particularly, media.

Thank you so much. My next question is

Question 3: How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistan English newspaper has evolved over the past few years, if at all?

Answer: I think that CPEC project, since its origin when it was announced, you know, there were many rumours. One of the reasons behind it was that both the governments be that Chinese be that Pakistani they were holding the data and what was happening there were you know there was a sort of confusion. I would say confusion in the public that what is going on? One-on-one hand, it was projected as a wonderful project with which will change the destiny of Pakistan and on the other hand, it was thought that are we moving on towards bankruptcy? Will this lead towards lethal consequences, not only economically, but politically for Pakistan, where China will be structurally controlling whatever is happening in Pakistan. So there were rumours initially you know I thought that initially the media was not portraying the facts the way it should

have been portrayed. But over the years, I think as the data was made available by both governments and at the same time when the media and the journalists, when they gathered the information relevant information about the CPEC from their sources, so now they are coming out with diversified opinions there. People and there are journalists who are particularly in newspaper print media, who are supporting these projects based in the facts which they share. On the other hand, there are distant voices too, which is good because we need to have alternative opinions for anything. This leads not only for comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, but also to evaluate the project that are we going in the right direction and then. If we are not going in the right direction or if we are not implementing this project the way it should have been, so then what we do, we re-evaluate the project we come up with the refinement and the project and then we implement whatever the re-evaluated strategy is. So I think that. Over the years. Personally, if I conclude initially, I was thinking that media is not playing the role based in objective facts and it is going with the state and it is a both governments or both states. But with the passage of time there is diversified perspectives related to CPEC which is assisting the public to get. What is happening out there? Yeah.

OK, Sir, my second last question is

Question 4: How do you think the Media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Answer: See Media is very much important. Whatever is portrayed in media that becomes the perception and the constructed phenomenon. You can say that whatever is happening in any society. Basically, one of the institutions of society, it is the outcome of that, because these social institutions, including media, they construct a certain environment and that environment Results in construction of a specific perspective or identity. So, I think that media is significantly influencing the perception within the Pakistan. I will not go with anyone opinion that this is portrayed positively or it is portrayed negatively, but yeah, media has influenced the public opinions and perceptions related to CPEC. As I mentioned previously, there are now diversified perspectives which is good for the broader understanding about the CPEC.

My last question is

Question 5: What do you think are the potential consequences of centralization of bias reporting on CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers?

Answer: Look and see. As I mentioned, you know my first answer, if you get you know you can relate my question answer to question #5 to question #1 the responsibility of media is to is to pursue. Rigorous rules and procedures to portray or to present the information to the public. So if they will be biased or if they will be judgmental, or if they will be toeing a specific narrative which is not based on the facts, what will happen? We will come up with lethal consequences. So it is the responsibility of the media to avoid sensationalization of the information and at the same time to avoid any sort of biasness any sort of biasness because this can have lethal consequences, not only for the CPEC project, but also for both these countries. Because when you become biased or when you make a specific information or news sensationalized. So what happens? You cannot grab the exact information or the facts. So what I would like to conclude is that any sort of sensationalization and biasness can come up with lethal consequences, not only for the success or the future of this project, but also for The future relations between the two governments. So media should be responsible when I say it should be responsible, it doesn't mean that it should tow the narrative of any specific state. It should go with the objective reality with the objective facts, otherwise it will be against the professional excellence and for sure media has a great role to basically present the facts in front of the public and they have all the rights. So keeping in view the right of the public, media should pursue or should follow objectivity and scientific tools to present the facts, yeah.

Thank you so much, Sir for your time.

Stay blessed and yeah, I wish you best of luck for your intellectual endeavour. Thank you. Stay bless. Thank you.

Fifth Interview Transcript

My name is Naima Jabeen and I am a student of M Phil linguistic. First of all I would start by thanking you for taking part in my research on the topic entitled 'representation of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers: A reader response perspective'. Basically the purpose of this research is to investigate how reader reactions to editorials about CPEC in Pakistani print media affect public sentiments. Your kind cooperation will help

me to comprehend how readers are perceiving and engaging with editorials on CPEC and how this is shaping their impression of the project. By studying their reaction. I have many questions to ask you for reliability of the results of the study you requested to answer the questions with sincerity and openly for data processing. I will seek your permission to record the interview. May I record your interview, Sir?

Yes you can.

Question 1: What role do you believe culture and societal factors play in shaping the way CPEC is portrayed in Pakistani English news?

Answer: So if you look at the question, it includes cultural and social factors and which are being shaped by the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers. So for me, it's like there are two types of Reactions on the basis of which I can assist that portrayal is being done about CPEC and one is that it's like the optimistic presentation of the CPEC, and the rest is relying on critical assumptions and the reason is that little was known about CPEC in the initial phase but many expectations were attached. They told it will bring a revival of the Pakistani economy and people who had expectations that they should also equally benefit from CPEC. So, consequently we see there was a reaction of the public Around how CPEC routes should go what are the routes, what are the geographic Regions through which the CPEC shall go, and how much development it will bring. So, it gave birth to a kind of politics. Political attitudes were shaped, and it also intensified the provincial ethnic anxieties. That, for instance, some provinces, smaller provinces in Pakistan, or southern regions, underdeveloped regions there raised voices that we have been ignored in this process. And the reason is that there was little factual data known about how CPEC projects are being implemented and what are the target areas. So after Phase out of certain projects in CPEC investments, so we see that energy infrastructure was developed. They had invested in the energy sector and this consequently was now they fulfilled the requirements of energy production. But there were certain voices were raised that it results into increased import bills, which can result into unfavourable balance of trade with China. we see there were discussions on how environment is going to be affected by CPEC and then there were also the that the free to the movement of goods crossing the border, how the transaction in that in sectors that are engaged in transfer of goods across Borders will benefit equally Pakistanis. So, we do not people had expectation optimistic. But nowadays I think due to certain

political, geopolitical reasons, the CPEC benefits have not been reached and I don't see any expectations of the people from CPEC project anymore.

OK, Sir. Thank you so much.

My second question is,

Question 2: In your view, what ethical responsibilities do newspapers have been reporting on a complex and political sensitive topic like CPEC?

Answer: So the first thing what I would like to see in the newspaper paper trial of any project that concerns the masses that should be based on factual data. There are two things, one is that you shape opinion and belief system of the people of in terms of nationalism, etc. National Unity, public awareness. Programs that may include environment, education, social issues, etc. That is fine. If you have some unrealistic expectations and you want to motivate people towards that. But certainly there does not or may not include scientific data, but you can have the will of the people by doing that. With respect to CPEC, it's probably an economic project, It has material existence and certain type of other projects. So I think the people of Pakistan are facing tough economic crisis and they need solutions. So I think informed well informed society based on material facts which shape accurate opinion and belief system and then their behaviour and political and economic behaviour will be shaped by something rational which can contribute to the uplift of the nation. So, I think that should be factually researched. There should be a thorough research. There should be based on facts, so it must include specialist from the field so that opinionated or just creating media sensation may create misleading opinions. OK Sir. So Sir, my next question is

Question 3: How do you believe the portrayal of CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers has evolved over the past few years if at all?

Answer: Yes, the first was that very optimistic approach that a country is going to invest and it was I think \$46 billion project and it was viewed that it will overshadow the US engagement assistance towards Pakistan. So in that respect, it had also geopolitical dimension as well. People were hoping that we will find an alternate to the US assistance, economic and military, and as China is an ally. But with the passage of time, we see there are concerns such as environmental concerns, impacts of climate change, that it may not create a debt trap for the country, and even that element was so became

so popular that even the PTI government during that era, many of the CPEC projects were put on halt and even the IMF and the US raised concern. There was a statement from the Mike Pompeo, the US Secretary of State, that we are observing that how the IMF loans may not go into CPEC related imports bill from payments to Pakistan. So that had a negative impact and due strategic dimension as well. But I think there were critical views that this project as far as the media is concerned. There were some opinions which raised questions regarding the credibility of CPEC fulfilling its targets.

Yes, thank you so much, Sir. My next question is

Question 4: How do you think the media's portrayal of CPEC influences public opinion and perception of this initiative in Pakistan?

Answer: Like other issues, it's about inter state to state interaction between States and little is known and to the public, and whatever comes from such kind of project. So people may know, either from the material output of such projects, or they may rely on news media. And if we look at that, so in the media we see that little is known to them as well, except the impacts of the projects implemented. So based on that there it is being dominated by optimists have optimistic view they have idealistic or unrealistic hopes, are exaggerated hopes attached with CPEC. I think if you look at around the educated masses also, there is a strong public opinion which is favourable towards China and obviously any project coming from China is mostly celebrated among people. And I think that opinion is being shaped by media as we see that there is no material output of CPEC related projects are yet to be realized in Pakistan. So that is why, if there is any reaction that is based on perceptions and most of the perceptions, People look at mass media. And if you look at analyse the anchors and reporters, so they are not expert in economy and finance, etcetera. So they rely on other people for their analysis. So there is a gap, little is known. So and some people purposefully promote such kind of attitudes. But beyond that, even if that is not purposeful, little is known to them, and that as a consequence we see mixed or uninformed or we can say it is not facts.

Question 5: What do you think are the potential consequences of centralization of bias reporting on CPEC in Pakistani English newspapers?

Answer: My observation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is that biased reporting can significantly influence public perception. Misunderstandings are frequently caused by biased narratives that either overstate the advantages or concentrate only on the possible disadvantages, which results in an ignorant public discussion. I can see how this false information could undermine public confidence in media sources and lead people to be skeptical of government statements on CPEC as well as press reports. This distrust may have an impact on policymakers, who may decide based more on biased opinions than on accurate information, which might ultimately harm Pakistan's investment climate. Additionally, I recognize that biased reporting can lead to social unrest, especially in regions directly affected by CPEC. A balanced media coverage could have prevented tensions that could have arisen from negative portrayals. Journalists face ethical dilemmas when reporting on such a complex project, balancing critical analysis with fairness. Finally, I acknowledge that the long-term consequences of biased reporting might compromise democracy itself by preventing members of the public from participating in educated debates concerning the objectives for national development. All in all, it seems obvious to me that how CPEC is covered affects not only public perception but also the structure of Pakistani society as a whole.

Thank you so much.

Thank you so much, Sir.

Thank you.

So much.