

Media and Communication Review (MCR)

Volume 2 Issue 1, Spring 2022


ISSN(P): 2790-8356, ISSN(E): 2790-8364

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/mcr>



Article QR



- Title:** Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by Pakistani English Newspaper “The Nation”
- Author (s):** Parvaiz Akhter Niazi
- Affiliation (s):** University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
- DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.21.02>
- History:** Received: January 31, 2022, Revised: March 2, 2022, Accepted: April 14, 2022, Published: June 26, 2022
- Citation:** Niazi, P. A. (2022). Editorial coverage of judicial inquiry on panama leaks by Pakistani English newspaper “The Nation”. *Media and Communication Review*, 2(1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.32350/mcr.21.02>
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- Conflict of Interest:** Author(s) declared no conflict of interest



A publication of
The School of Media and Communication Studies
University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Analysing the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by Pakistan’s Leading English Newspaper “The Nation”

Parvaiz Akhter Niazi*

University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

This study aims to analyse the editorial coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama leaks by Pakistan’s leading newspaper ‘The Nation’. The main objectives of the current research include to know that how much space ‘The Nation’ newspaper devoted to judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials. It is also aimed to know about the major themes and sub-themes of the coverage by the said newspaper regarding Panama issue. The current study is more focused to know the stance of ‘The Nation’ in coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials. This study comprises the editorials of ‘The Nation’ published from 1st November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016. Framing and agenda setting theory provided the ‘theoretical foundation’ to the analysis of data collected through content analysis. Thus, collected data was measured through Microsoft Excel to get the results in the form of frequencies and percentages provided by SPSS software to evaluate the means difference and significance. Later, intense reviews of the editorials found out that only 07 articles, out of 135 articles, were relevant to the current study. The present analysis revealed three themes, each with its own prominent sub-themes. These themes include Prime Minister Trial, Corruption Evidence, and Institutional Credibility with their further sub-themes. It was found that The Nation has devoted more space to institutional credibility (57.7604%), corruption evidences (24.881%), and prime-minister trial (17.3587%), in the end. The Nation has remained mostly unfavourable towards Panama issue.

Keywords: editorials, judicial inquiry, Panama leaks, “The Nation”

Introduction

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) released offshore companies’ documents on the website (*offshoreleaks.icij.org*) on 9th May, 2016 in the evening which is claimed to be one of the biggest data leaks of the world, ever. Initially, ICIJ released records regarding world

* Corresponding Author: L1F16PHDJ0010@ucp.edu.pk

leaders were having offshore accounts. The list of those leaders included Russia's President 'Vladimir Putin', Iceland's former Prime Minister 'Sigmundur Davio', British Prime Minister 'David Cameron', Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif as well as his children Maryam Nawaz, and Hussain Nawaz. Moreover, the names of 259 Pakistanis with links to offshore companies were exposed by ICIJ. Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's children were blamed to raise a £7 million loan from Deutsche Bank against four flats in London's Park Lane which they owned by offshore companies founded in the British.

Since that time, the government has been locked in a bitter battle of words with the opposition parties, who are calling for the prime minister to step down. Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and his allies have spent many former months engaged in a damage control exercise to plead the innocence of the Sharif family (Dawn.Com, [2016](#)). An application was lodged in a Supreme Court of Pakistan on 29th of October, 2016. Besides, a larger bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice 'Anwar Zaheer Jamali' resumed the hearing of Panama paper leak case on 07 December 2016, based on the petitions filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and other parties (Geo News, [2016a](#)).

Resultantly, the bench agreed that there were a lot of discrepancies in the Prime Minister's speech which he conducted in the National Assembly and also, the documents submitted by PM's Lawyers were tampered (Geo News, [2016b](#)). During the legal proceedings, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's counsel lawyer argued that Prime Minister had not been named directly in the Panama papers. According to his lawyer, the Prime Minister is not responsible for his family's offshore connections and Maryam Nawaz is not the Prime Minister's dependent (Geo News, [2016a](#)). Hence, the Supreme Court demonstrated its positive role in tackling corruption against government officials such as the actions of some high-impact corruption cases including the prime minister case.

This study aims to examine the editorials about Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by Pakistan's leading newspaper 'The Nation' published during (1st November to 15th December, 2016) to:

- To find out the space devoted to Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks in editorials published by 'The Nation' English Newspapers during the selected time period.

- To explore the prominent issues/themes regarding Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks in editorials published by 'The Nation' English Newspapers.
- To uncover the standpoints taken by 'The Nation' in their editorials regarding Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks.

Agenda setting reflects the Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks presented by the media in a way that specific agenda or ideology of media and government officials is settled in the mind of Pakistan's nation. Editorials of this newspaper highlights official policy of that newspaper on any issue. 'The Nation' is an English Language Daily Newspaper which is widely circulated in Pakistan. 'The Nation' is headed from Lahore since, 1986. Rameeza Nizami is the executive editor of 'The Nation' newspaper. She is the daughter of a well-known Pakistani journalist, the late Majid Nizami (Hanif, 2014). 'The Nation' was published in Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Multan with the commendable efforts of Nawa-e-waqat group. Their papers are popular in the whole country and officials as well. Moreover, editorials of 'The Nation' are particularly chosen to analyse its content extensively. Furthermore, the current study aims to examine editorials about Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by "The Nation" published during (1st November to 15th December, 2016).

Research Questions

1. How much space did Pakistani English Newspapers devote to Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in Editorials?
2. What are the major themes and sub-themes of 'The Nation' English Newspapers in the coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in their Editorials?
3. What stance Pakistani English Newspapers took in the coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in their Editorials?
4. What was the specific agenda of 'The Nation' Pakistani English Newspapers in their Editorial Treatment of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks?

Literature Review

According to the current study, the idea of press watchdog is 200 years old. Whereas, attentive media which is always monitoring government activity

and exposing its excesses has gained a new grip in many parts of the world. During Late 17th Century, classical liberal theorists argued that publicity provides the best protection by using their excesses of power. the idea of press can be taken as Fourth Estate which is an institution that exists primarily and keeps a check on those people who are in public offices. The above idea was totally based on the premises of the powerful states. It had resonance among the citizens who were facing pervasive corruption, weak rule of law, and predatory or incompetent governments unable to deliver basic services.

Today, the power of press watchdogs is embedded in the self-definition of journalism. Even in those countries, where democracy is a fairly new experiment including ‘China’ where democracy and a free press have yet to take root in varying degrees, and also in public expectations of the media (Coronel, [2010](#)). The conflict between the judiciary and politics was so direct that it persuaded the prosecuting judges to investigate a significant number among the political and economic elites of the country (Della Porta & Vannucci, [2007](#)). there is a gap between the media portrayal of corruption and the public perceptions about the reality of corrupt acts. Media reporting shapes the public perceptions and also has an amplifying effects upon the political and corruption issues with relevance to their perceived significance (Masters & Graycar, [2015](#)).

In addition to it, stories about the corruption are often prove to be a source of good entertainment for people and also the press carry multiple reports of corrupt practices in many countries, frequently (Rnning, [2009](#)). Besides, there are such cases in which newspapers have carried out many reports regarding the financial issues related to the leading politicians. These leading parties keep full control over the government coupled with the demands that all public officials are made to declare their assets, and nothing has come out of this. Furthermore, only public exposure is not enough, if it is not being followed up by the legislation and the official practices (Mosse, [2004](#)). Thus, the strong and free media serves as a barrier in the way of corrupt politics by making it difficult for elites to get away from the corrupt behaviours (Lambsdorff, [2007](#)). There is a general perception that the media is an important institution which is highly needed to uncover the abuse of power and economic misconduct (Rnning, [2009](#)).

The involvement of societal acts generates a new age of media scandals, as corrupt acts that were previously concealed are now made public. If that

is the case, corruption scandals actually signal a healthier democracy, where misdeeds are exposed and eventually punished. Hence, other more pessimistic views contend that more scandals arise simply from more corruption (Lambsdorff, [2007](#)).

Methodology

Methodology means the methods of collection and analysis of data and information to make inferences and decisions. In this case, content analysis counts different aspects of contents for summarizing, analysing, and making inferences from the data. Moreover, it often analyses the written words by quantifying and presenting the data in the form numbers and percentages. Furthermore, this is a qualitative study where content analysis is used for the editorial treatment of “The Nation” newspaper about the Panama issue. The current study explores the editorials coverage given to the Panama issue. Also, it stands the newspapers by focusing on the current issue during the selected time period. Besides, ‘content analysis technique’ was used to analyse the editorials to explore the results of this study and to find out major themes and sub-themes of the currently discussed matter. Since, first object was checked by the peer group of researchers in comparison to original articles. Hence, distinguished categorization, coding of themes, and sub-themes are present in this paper.

Universe of Study

The population or universe represents the entire group of units which is the focus of the study Universe of the present study is all editorials as a unit of the English Language Newspaper of Pakistan “The Nation” published from 1th November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016.

Time Frame

The selected time to examine the judicial inquiry on Panama case based editorials in “The Nation” was from 1st November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016.

Sample

Sample of the current study consists of all editorials published about judicial inquiry on Panama case based articles in the selected English Newspapers of Pakistan from 1st November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016.

Unit of Analysis

Units of analysis of the present study is words, sentences, paragraphs of editorials, and whole editorials which are published about judicial inquiry on Panama by English Newspapers of Pakistan “The Nation” during the selected time period.

Importance of Study

In total, 259 Pakistani’s names were exposed by ICIJ with links to offshore companies as well as Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif’s children (Maryam Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz) on 9th May, 2016. A brutal battle of words was fought between Government and opposition parties regarding Panama issue, who pressurised the prime minister to step down. During this controversy, on 29 October 2016, SC of Pakistan resumed, hearing of Panama case. This study advocates a time frame that indicates the media coverage on the judicial proceeding on Panama case. Furthermore, this case will direct or decide the future of Pakistani’s nation. Panama case was preceded in SC and media all over the world during the selected time period by focusing on this case. Therefore, time period starting from 1st November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016 is appropriate in case of the current study.

Categories of Contents

Editorials published during 45 days of the selected time period by ‘The Nation’ in which 7 out of 135 editorials are selected to analyse and categorize the contents of the editorials.

Following categories are found among the contents:

1. Prime-minister Trial: It includes the matters like SC Proceeding, PM’s Family Statement, and Opposition parties demanding PM trail and PM Statement.
2. Corruption Evidences: It includes the matters like Money Trail, Flats Purchasing Date, Dependent of Maryam Nawaz, and Letter of Qatari Prince.
3. Institutional Credibility: It includes the matters like Political Parties Conflicts, Roll of SC, Lawyer Tussles, and TOR (Term of Reference).

Directions of Contents (Favourable, Unfavourable, and Neutral)

Direction of the contents further categorises data as favourable, unfavourable, and neutral towards Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks Issues.

1. Favourable: It means that the selected editorials of ‘The Nation’ reflect favourable attitude towards the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in the subject matter of Prime-minister’s Trial, Corruption Evidences, and Institutional Credibility.
2. Unfavourable: It means that the selected editorials of ‘The Nation’ reflect unfavourable attitude towards the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in the subject matter of Prime-minister’s Trial, Corruption Evidences, and Institutional Credibility.
3. Neutral: It means that the selected editorials of ‘The Nation’ reflect additional information towards the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in the subject matter of Prime-minister’s Trial, Corruption Evidences, and Institutional Credibility.
4. ‘The Nation’ an English Language Newspaper published 45 papers starting from 1st November, 2016 to 15th December, 2016. Besides, overall 135 editorials are found on the basis of editorials pages of newspaper written by editorial board of said newspaper. Only 07 editorials are suitable for the current study and these are coded by the themes and sub-themes in terms of favourable, unfavourable, and neutral. Hence, statistical analysis was conducted on the basis of obtained raw data by Microsoft Excel version 365 to achieve frequencies and percentages to make inferences.

Results and Findings

First Research Question of this study was that: How much space “The Nation” devoted to judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials?

‘The Nation’ published 135 editorials in selected 45 days starting from 1st October, 2016 to 15th December, 2016. While ‘The Nation’ published 03 editorials on different issues every day in daily edition. However, an intense examination of editorials reveals that ‘The Nation’ published only 7 editorials about Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks. ‘The Nation’ devoted 5.185% space to Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue in editorials as compared to the other issues within the selected time period.

Table 1*The Nation Published 07 Editorials about Judicial Inquiry on Panama Case*

Sr. No.	Publishing Date	Editorial Heading
1	7 November,2016	Impossible Consensus
2	9 November,2016	Following The Trail
3	13 November,2016	Imran Khan's Golden Ticket
4	17 November,2016	A Royal Gift
5	20 November,2016	Weak Case, Weaker Advocacy
6	02 December,2016	New Inquiry Commission Law
7	11 December,2016	The Panama Hesitation

Second Research Question of the study was that: What are the major and sub-themes of 'The Nation' in coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials?

There are three primary themes, identified each with their secondary sub-themes, from the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Issue by 'The Nation' during the selected time period. There are some descriptions about the primary themes and their respective sub-themes in the following:

1. Prime-minister Trial
 - SC (Supreme Court) Proceeding
 - PM's Family Statement
 - Opposition Parties Demand PM trail
 - PM (Prime minister) Statement
2. Corruption Evidences
 - Money Trail
 - Flats Purchasing Dates
 - Dependent of Maryam Nawaz
 - Letter of Qatari Prince
3. Institutional Credibility
 - Political parties conflicts
 - Roll of SC(Supreme Court)
 - Lawyer Tussles
 - TOR (Term of Reference)

Third research question of this study was that: What stance ‘The Nation’ taken in the coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials?

Table 1 shows that ‘The Nation’ devoted the maximum space to Institutional Credibility which has 1697 words and overall 57.7604% space has taken in Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama issue. Second largest theme is ‘Corruption Evidences’ with 731 words and which occupy 24.881% space in selected editorials of ‘The Nation’. From rest of the space Prime-minister Trial secured 510 words which become 17.3587% of the Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama issue by ‘The Nation’ during the selected time period.

Table 2

Words Devoted by “The Nation” to Different Themes Under Discussion

Themes	Words Devoted	Percentages
Prime-minister Trial	510	17.3587
Corruption Evidences	731	24.881
Institutional Credibility	1697	57.7604
Total	2938	100

Fourth research question of the study was that: What is specific agenda of Nation fulfill in their editorial treatment of judicial inquiry on Panama leaks?

Table 3

Percentage of Favourable, Unfavourable and Neutral Words Used in “The Nation”

Themes	F	UF	N	Total
Prime-minister Trial	440	70	0	510
Corruption Evidences	490	241	0	731
Institutional Credibility	305	1337	55	1697
Total	1235	1648	55	2938

Table 3 shows that ‘Institutional Credibility’ is a prominent theme which has collective 1697 words in it. Furthermore, in which 1337 words are there for unfavorable, 305 words for unfavorable, 55 words for neutral

towards the Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by ‘The Nation’. While in the case of ‘Corruption Evidences’ theme, it has mostly 490 words for favorable, 241 words for unfavorable, and zero word of neutral treatment. In the Issue of Prime-minister Trial, ‘The Nation’ used 510 words in this theme in which 440 words were used for favorable, 70 words for unfavorable, and zero word for neutral treatment was used.

Discussion

According to Rnning, stories about corruption are often woven for good purpose of entertainment and for the press in many countries, frequently. As it carries the reports of those people who are involved in the corrupt practices. Masters, A., & Graycar, A., say that there is a gap between the media portrayal of corruption and public perceptions about the reality of corrupt acts. Whereas, media reporting shapes the public perceptions and has an amplifying effect upon Panama leaks issues and their perceived significances. The Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks Coverage of the Political Party’s Conflict in Institutional Credibility Issue shows the ‘strongest war journalism framing’ and ‘agenda setting’.

‘The Nation’ devoted little coverage only where seven editorials out of 135 within 45 daily editions come under the coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks in its editorial and converse statements. Furthermore, PM, Lawyer, Opposition leader (PTI’s Chairman Imran khan), Politician, and Judges with evidence and references put frames and themes articulated by ‘The Nation’. The important derived themes from articles present the agenda of ‘The Nation’ towards the Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks. In the present study, one can say that the most prominent theme in the Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by ‘The Nation’ is specific agenda of the newspaper.

Themes that ‘The Nation’ highlighted the most are: Prime-minister Trial, which it discusses neutrally while its rival sub-themes of (a) SC Proceeding (b) PM’s Family Statement (c) Opposition parties demand PM trail (d) PM Statement. Next prominent theme in the Nation is the Corruption Evidences, its sub-theme (a) Money Trail (b) Flats Purchasing Date (c) Dependents of Maryam Nawaz (d) letter of Qatari Prince. “The Nation” ranked three Institutional Credibility in theme in the editorial coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama leaks Four sub-themes are noticeable in the editorials for Institutional Credibility, (i) political parties

conflicts (ii) roll of SC (iii) Lawyer Tussles (iv) TOR (term of reference). In all these contexts one can portray that 'The Nation' frames of The judicial inquiry on Panama leaks shows political economic journalism.

Briefly concluding "The Nation" (English Press in Pakistan) gives a lot of prominent space to Institutional Credibility themes and secured 57.7604% in which political parties conflicts sub-theme earned space 45.50% in judicial inquiry on Panama leak's editorials and only 17.36% space given to core issues, Prime minister trail, judicial inquiry on Panama leaks. Overall results show that "The Nation" gave space in which 2938 words for editorial judicial inquiry on panama leaks in which 1235 words are used toward favour, 1635 words are used against and only 55 neutral words are used in Pakistan's editorial.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the editorial coverage of judicial inquiry on Panama leaks by Pakistan's leading newspaper 'The Nation'. The main objectives of the current research included to know how much space 'The Nation' newspaper devoted to judicial inquiry on Panama issue in editorials. It was also aimed to know about the major themes and sub-themes of the coverage by the said newspaper regarding Panama issue. This study presents the pro-government agenda towards the Editorial Coverage towards the Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks. Ultimately, 'The Nation' devoted a short space for Panama Inquiry as compared to other different issues in their editorial. 'The Nation' frames the 'political party's conflict' and the 'credibility of the institution issue' to create more controversy in the minds of reader. Since, the paper ignores to address or expose the real issue about judicial inquiry on Panama leaks. "The Nation" has adopted the political economic agenda rather than the development journalism.

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Appendix

Coding Sheet for Editorial Coverage of Judicial Inquiry on Panama Leaks by “The Nation”

	F	UF	N	Total
1. Prime-minister Trial				
SC (Suprem Court) Proceeding	237	70	0	307
PM’s Family Statement	65	0	0	65
Opposition parties demand PM trail	18	0	0	18
PM Statement	120	0	0	120
2. Corruption Evidences				
Money Trail	90	6	0	96
Flats Purchasing Dates	285	140	0	425
Dependent of Maryam Nawaz	25	0	0	25
letter of Qatari Prince	90	95	0	185
3. Institutional Credibility				
Political parties conflicts	6	757	0	763
Roll of SC(Suprem Court)	279	318	0	597
Lawyer Tussles	0	230	55	285
TOR (Term of Reference)	20	32	0	52
	1235	1648	55	2938