



Identity Construction through Naming and Describing: A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Major Political Party Manifestos in Pakistan's 2018 General Elections

Research Article

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Abstract

The relationship between political language and meaning-making has been a central concern in linguistics and discourse studies. Building on this tradition, Jeffries' Critical Stylistics offers a systematic framework that connects theoretical insights with close textual analysis at the lexical and grammatical levels. This study investigates how political identities are constructed in the 2018 general election manifestos of three major Pakistani political parties: Pakistan Muslim League (N), Pakistan People's Party, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, through the textual-conceptual function of Naming and Describing. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the study combines qualitative stylistic analysis with descriptive frequency-based measures to examine patterns of noun choice, nominal modification, and nominalisation. The findings indicate that ideologically salient nominal references are strategically employed to foreground positive self-representation while comparatively limiting representations of political rivals. Although all three parties privilege self-oriented naming practices, variation is observed in the extent and distribution of these strategies across manifestos. The study demonstrates the analytical value of Critical Stylistics for examining political texts in the



Pakistani context and provides a replicable framework for future research on identity construction across electoral periods.

Keywords: critical stylistics, political discourse, textual-conceptual, election manifesto, identity

1. Introduction

Naming has been widely examined as a central linguistic strategy in discourse studies, particularly for its role in representing social actors and reproducing ideology (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 2023; Wodak, 2015). As a referential choice, naming enables text producers to foreground particular social realities while simultaneously marginalising others. Despite its analytical importance, the examination of naming practices has often remained theory-driven and interpretive, relying heavily on a priori assumptions. This has left scope for a more systematic, linguistically grounded, and replicable analysis of naming as a distinct textual strategy, especially within specific political genres.

Election manifestos constitute a core political genre through which parties articulate policy agendas, legitimise ideological positions, and seek electoral support. These texts are carefully constructed and authoritative, serving not only as policy documents but also as persuasive instruments that shape collective identities and political alignments. Through strategic lexical choices, manifestos present particular constructions of the political Self and the political Other, thereby embedding ideological meanings within ostensibly neutral policy discourse.

Within this context, Jeffries (2007) identifies naming as one of the most influential choices available to text producers for signalling and construing referents. Similarly, McIntyre (2010) argues that referents acquire ideological significance through the meanings and social values projected onto them by language users. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has long emphasised the evaluative potential of naming in revealing ideological intent; however, such analyses have frequently been criticised for their limited methodological transparency and replicability. Addressing this concern, Jeffries' Critical Stylistics framework (2010) conceptualises naming within a clearly defined set of textual-conceptual functions, highlighting how linguistic choices carry pejorative or ameliorative connotations that index the producer's stance towards a referent. By offering explicit analytical categories, Critical Stylistics enables the systematic tracing of ideological meaning as it emerges from linguistic form, rather than presupposing ideological positions in advance.

The relevance of such an approach is particularly pronounced in the Pakistani political context, characterised by political polarisation, civil–military tensions, and contested national narratives. While election manifestos in Pakistan have largely been examined from political science and policy-oriented perspectives, micro-level linguistic analyses of these texts remain comparatively underexplored. This gap is significant, given the ideologically dense nature of manifesto discourse and its role in shaping political consciousness. Applying Jeffries' Critical Stylistic Analysis, specifically the textual-conceptual function of Naming and Describing, extends this framework to an under-researched political context and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Pakistani political communication.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, such an analysis also holds practical relevance by enhancing critical political literacy. By revealing how linguistic choices construct representations of Self and Other, the study enables readers, voters, and students to engage more critically with political texts, recognise ideological positioning, and interpret political messaging with greater awareness. Accordingly, the present study examines the naming and describing strategies employed in selected Pakistani political parties' 2018 general election manifestos, with the aim of empirically demonstrating how linguistic choices contribute to identity construction and ideological positioning within political discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

RQ1: What naming and describing strategies are employed in the 2018 general election manifestos of selected Pakistani political parties to represent themselves and their political rivals?

RQ2: How do these naming and describing strategies contribute to the construction of ideological identities and political positioning within the manifestos?

2. Literature Review

This section reviews prior empirical research on political discourse, with a particular focus on election manifestos, in order to identify the conceptual and methodological gaps addressed by the present study.

Election manifestos are foundational political documents through which parties communicate their policy agendas, priorities, and ideological commitments. Beyond their informational function, manifestos operate as discursive sites where political identities are constructed and ideological positions are legitimised. Owing to this dual function, manifesto discourse has attracted scholarly attention across disciplines such as political science, linguistics, and rhetoric. Within applied linguistics, manifesto texts have predominantly been examined through critical perspectives, most notably CDA (Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Michira, 2014). These studies have focused on identifying how linguistic choices are mobilised to communicate ideological intent, enact power relations, and construct political identities.

A consistent feature of this body of research is its largely qualitative orientation. Scholars working within the CDA tradition have explored discursive strategies such as lexical selection, metaphor, pronoun usage, and evaluative language to reveal ideological positioning and identity construction. In the Pakistani context, similar trends can be observed. Studies analysing the election manifestos of Pakistani political parties (Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015) have primarily adopted CDA-informed qualitative approaches. Their findings confirm that election manifestos in Pakistan are ideologically loaded texts that function as instruments of persuasion, propaganda, and identity construction rather than neutral policy statements.

Despite their analytical contributions, CDA-based studies have been subject to sustained criticism, particularly concerning methodological rigour, transparency, and replicability (Stubbs, 2001; Widdowson, 2008). Critics argue that CDA often relies on analyst-driven interpretations and

theory-led assumptions, with limited systematic grounding in linguistic evidence. These concerns have prompted the development of alternative frameworks that retain a critical orientation while offering greater methodological explicitness.

One such framework is Critical Stylistics (CSA), developed by Jeffries (2010, 2014). CSA addresses many of the methodological limitations associated with traditional CDA by providing a clearly articulated set of textual-conceptual functions through which ideological meaning can be traced directly to linguistic form. Among these functions, Naming and Describing plays a central role in revealing how referents are categorised, evaluated, and ideologically framed. A key strength of CSA lies in its analytical transparency: interpretations are grounded in observable lexical and grammatical choices, allowing for more systematic and replicable analysis of discourse.

CSA has been successfully applied to a range of institutional and political texts to explore the subtle operation of power and ideology. For instance, Ulrike (2015) and Coffey (2018) employed the framework to examine identity construction and evaluative positioning in institutional discourse, demonstrating its effectiveness in uncovering implicit ideological meanings. More recently, Price and Hermenston (2023) applied Critical Stylistics to political texts to investigate patterns of identity construction, further establishing CSA as a rigorous and linguistically grounded alternative to traditional CDA approaches.

However, despite its theoretical and methodological strengths, the application of Critical Stylistics, particularly to election manifesto discourse—remains limited, especially in Asian and Pakistani political contexts. Existing studies have rarely employed CSA to examine how naming and describing strategies function in manifesto texts, nor have they systematically combined stylistic analysis with corpus-based quantitative support.

The present study seeks to address this gap by applying Jeffries' Critical Stylistics framework, with specific emphasis on the textual-conceptual function of Naming and Describing, to the analysis of general election manifestos of selected Pakistani political parties. By integrating qualitative stylistic analysis with frequency-based corpus tools, the study enhances the objectivity, transparency, and replicability of the analysis. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of research that seeks to bridge critical discourse analysis and corpus-assisted stylistics, while extending the application of CSA to an under-researched political genre and context.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a mixed-methods research design to examine the stylistic strategies of *Naming and Describing* in the 2018 general election manifestos of three major political parties in Pakistan. This approach integrates quantitative frequency-based analysis with qualitative stylistic interpretation, allowing for a systematic and replicable examination of ideological meaning grounded in explicit linguistic evidence.

3.1 Analytical Framework

The analysis is guided by Jeffries' Critical Stylistics framework (2010, 2014), with particular emphasis on the textual-conceptual function of *Naming and Describing*. Within this framework, ideological positioning is traced through nominal choices that categorise, evaluate, and reframe social actors and processes. Table 1 summarises the principal linguistic realisations associated with this function.

Table 1: Naming and Describing as a Textual-Conceptual Function in Critical Stylistics (Jeffries, 2010)

Function	Formal Linguistic Realisations
Naming and Describing	(a) Noun choice : selection between alternative labels (e.g. <i>boss</i> vs. <i>manager</i>). (b) Attribute identification : modification of a noun through evaluative or descriptive elements (e.g. <i>the true representative</i>). (c) Nominalisation : transformation of processes or evaluations into abstract entities (e.g. <i>suppression</i> from <i>suppress</i> , <i>oppression</i> from <i>oppress</i> , <i>killing</i> from <i>kill</i>).

This framework enables the analyst to connect linguistic form directly to ideological function, thereby enhancing analytical transparency and methodological rigour.

3.2 Data Sources and Sample

The dataset comprises the 2018 general election manifestos of three purposively selected political parties in Pakistan: Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). These parties were selected due to their national political significance and electoral performance in the 2018 general elections.

Table 2: Corpus Composition of the 2018 General Election Manifestos

S. No.	Political Party	Word Count
1	Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N)	18,248
2	Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	28,711
3	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	13,626
	Total	62,507

The manifestos collectively constitute a specialised political corpus suitable for comparative stylistic analysis.

3.3 Data Compilation and Analytical Procedure

The manifestos were retrieved from the official websites of the respective political parties. The documents were converted into plain text format and systematically cleaned to remove non-

linguistic material. The corpus was then prepared for analysis by identifying ideologically salient sentences referring to *self* and *others* within each manifesto.

Grammatical tagging was performed using TagAnt (Version 2.0) (Anthony, 2023), which automatically identifies nouns, noun phrases, and nominalisations. Following automated tagging, each instance was manually verified and annotated according to the *Naming and Describing* category outlined in Jeffries' (2014) framework. This two-stage process ensured both computational efficiency and analytical accuracy.

Quantitative analysis involved the manual counting of naming-related nominal instances across the three sub-corpora. As the manifestos differed in length, all frequency counts were normalised per 10,000 words to enable meaningful comparison across corpora of unequal size, following standard corpus linguistic practice (Meyer, 2023). The qualitative component of the analysis focused on examining how specific naming and describing strategies functioned to construct positive self-representation and negative other-representation within the manifestos.

The integration of corpus-assisted quantitative measures with close qualitative stylistic analysis strengthens the objectivity, reliability, and replicability of the study, while remaining consistent with the critical orientation of the research.

This section presents a detailed analysis of the construction of *self* and *other* identities in the 2018 general election manifestos of the selected Pakistani political parties. The analysis is conducted within the framework of Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics, focusing specifically on the textual-conceptual function of *Naming and Describing*. The methodology involved systematic identification, manual coding, frequency counting, and normalization of nominal instances. Quantitative patterns were then interpreted qualitatively using the *Naming and Describing* category, allowing for an exploration of the ideological intent behind these linguistic choices in constructing *self* and *other* political identities. All identified instances are provided in Appendices A–C, while the most representative and recurrent examples are discussed in detail below.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N): Naming and Describing

The *Naming and Describing* strategy is prominently employed in the 2018 general election manifesto of PML-N to construct a positive self-image for the party and its leaders while simultaneously portraying rival political parties negatively. The manifesto uses nominal references and nominalisations to highlight party achievements and leadership qualities, while downplaying the successes or emphasizing the shortcomings of opponents. This strategy reflects the ideological intent of the text producers to influence in-group members and consolidate electoral support, consistent with previous research on manifesto discourse (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015).

Table 3: Normalized Frequencies of Naming and Describing in the PML-N Manifesto (per 10,000 words)

Self (n)	Others (n)	Total (n)
116	49	165

The data indicate a total of 165 nominal instances, with 116 referring to self and 49 to others, highlighting a stronger emphasis on positive self-representation. Selected examples are analyzed below to illustrate these strategies.

4.2 Positive Self-Identity Construction in PML-N

Positive nominal references in the PML-N manifesto are strategically deployed to construct the party and its leadership as principled, competent, and committed to national development. For example, S.No. 9 (Appendix A) describes the party leader as “*a man driven at breakneck speed, in the service of his people*”, where the head noun “*a man*” is modified with evaluative adjectives to depict dedication and selflessness. Similarly, S.Nos. 19 and 20 describe the leader as a “*fighter*”, emphasizing his struggle for “*peace and prosperity*”, portraying the party as proactive and results-oriented.

Nominalisation is a key strategy for ideological representation. Terms such as “*commitment*” (S.Nos. 7, 29, 85, 96) abstract actions into nouns, presenting them as accomplished and institutionalized. Other nominalisations, including “*growth*” and “*development*”, convert dynamic processes into tangible achievements, reinforcing PML-N’s image as competent and reformist. These strategies align with prior studies indicating that manifestos use nominalisation to foreground positive self-representation and project political legitimacy (Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Jeffries, 2010, 2014; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015).

4.3 Negative Other-Identity Construction in the PML-N 2018 Manifesto

The PML-N manifesto also employs nominal lexis and nominalisations, with a normalized frequency of 49, to construct a negative image of rival parties and their leaders. Terms such as “*small coterie*”, “*a conspiratorial clique*”, “*as puppeteers*”, and “*presidential diktat*” (S.Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 24 in Appendix A) imply dishonest political maneuvering and malign intentions, delegitimizing opponents as representative political actors. Evaluative adjectives such as “*small*” and “*secretive*” reduce the identity of rivals to a clandestine minority acting against the general populace. Naming rivals as “*conspirators*” or “*dictators*” functions as a rhetorical strategy to undermine authority, portraying them as disloyal, manipulative, and anti-democratic. Collocates such as “*cruel*”, “*corrupt*”, and “*hated*” further reinforce these negative constructions. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that election manifestos strategically employ lexical and nominal strategies to foreground self-identity while delegitimizing opponents (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018).

4.4 Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP): Naming and Describing in the 2018 Manifesto

Analysis of the PPP 2018 manifesto indicates a similar discursive strategy, combining positive self-representation with the construction of a negative other-identity.

Table 4. Normalized Frequencies of Naming and Describing in the PPP Manifesto (per 10,000 words)

Self (n)	Others (n)	Total (n)
61	31	92

The data show that self-references (61) exceed references to others (31), indicating a stronger emphasis on positive self-construction. This aligns with previous studies highlighting that manifesto texts typically foreground self-identity while using nominal and evaluative lexis to delegitimize political rivals (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015; Jeffries, 2010, 2014).

4.5 Positive Self-Identity Construction of PPP

The PPP manifesto employs nominal references and nominalisations to construct a positive self-identity, portraying the party as a harbinger of prosperity, social justice, and inclusive governance. The noun *“party”* is recurrently pre- and post-modified to reinforce this image. For example, S.No. 27 states: *“We are the only party in Pakistan which has a credible record in dealing with the coming problems”*, emphasizing historical credibility while indirectly positioning rival parties as unreliable. Similarly, S.No. 36—*“Our party has a proven record of extending the rights of workers”*—constructs PPP as socially just, people-centric, and committed to marginalized communities.

The description of party leaders frequently employs the honorific nominal *“Shaheed”* (martyr) in S.Nos. 15, 52, 66, 69, and 71, conveying moral authority, a sacrificial legacy, and visionary leadership. This strategy creates a heroic image of leaders such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, framing them as stalwarts of democracy and social justice. Evaluative adjectives, such as *“the best and bravest”* (S.No. 69), further reinforce admiration, guiding voter perception toward respect and allegiance. These findings align with prior research on manifesto discourse, which highlights the use of nominalisation and evaluative language to foreground positive self-representation and construct political legitimacy (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015; Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Jeffries, 2010, 2014).

4.6 Negative Other-Identity Construction of PPP

The PPP manifesto also employs nominal lexis and nominalisations to construct a negative image of rival political parties. Nominalisations such as *“compromised justice/sovereignty”* and *“quick fixes”* (S.No. 3) transform dynamic processes into seemingly completed failures, emphasizing the lasting damage caused by opponents' governance. Terms such as *“tiny elite”* highlight moral and administrative shortcomings, framing rival parties as self-serving and corrupt.

Economic and institutional failures are further emphasized through ideologically loaded nominal phrases. For instance, S.No. 29 employs “*dismal picture*” to describe trade relations, while repeated references to “*load shedding*” underscore negligence and inefficiency. Similarly, S.No. 30 characterizes economic mismanagement using phrases like “*an unprecedented circular debt*” and “*a time bomb*”, simplifying complex issues into tangible narratives of failure. Notably, the critique in PPP’s manifesto remains largely institutional rather than personalized, targeting systemic flaws rather than individual actors. These strategies resonate with prior studies demonstrating that election manifestos often employ nominalisation and lexical choices to delegitimize opponents while emphasizing self-competence (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015; Jeffries, 2010, 2014).

4.7 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI): Naming and Describing in the 2018 Manifesto

The *Naming and Describing* strategy is prominently employed in the 2018 general election manifesto of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), functioning to construct a positive self-identity for the party while simultaneously highlighting the weaknesses of rival political parties. This strategy aligns with prior studies on manifesto discourse, which demonstrate that lexical and nominal choices are crucial for foregrounding party achievements, legitimizing ideological positions, and strategically contrasting political opponents (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015).

Table 5. Normalized Frequencies of Naming and Describing in the PTI Manifesto (per 10,000 words)

Self (n)	Others (n)	Total (n)
147	113	260

As indicated in Table 5, the *Naming and Describing* strategy occurs 260 times in total, with 147 instances constructing PTI in a positive light and 113 instances framing rival parties negatively. These findings reflect a common pattern observed in both Pakistani and international contexts, where manifestos frequently employ naming and nominalisation strategies to establish political legitimacy, persuade the electorate, and simultaneously delegitimize opponents (Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Jeffries, 2010, 2014).

4.8 Positive Self-Identity Construction of PTI

The PTI manifesto strategically employs the *Naming and Describing* function to construct a positive self-identity that emphasizes moral superiority, historical rootedness, and a reformist orientation. Ideologically loaded nominals such as “*commitment*”, “*welfare state*”, “*rule of law*”, “*meritocracy*”, and “*transparency*” position the party as principled, efficient, and dedicated to public welfare. PTI also aligns itself with the Islamic State of Medina, established by the Holy Prophet, thereby underscoring both moral and religious legitimacy.

For example, S.No. 1 illustrates PTI’s determination to develop Pakistan’s administrative structure according to the principles of the Prophet’s Medina, signaling a reformist vision with ethical and

historical grounding. The manifesto further constructs a people-centric identity, as reflected in S.No. 7: “*it is a commitment to building a welfare state...*”, positioning PTI as attentive to the needs of citizens. By contrasting itself with elitist parties, PTI frames itself as a populist alternative, appealing to ordinary citizens through repeated references to “*ordinary Pakistanis*” (S.No. 4). The recurrent use of the term “*Naya Pakistan*” (S.Nos. 7–13) reinforces a narrative of renewal, signaling a decisive departure from past political practices and establishing a transformative and aspirational identity for the party.

These findings are consistent with prior research on manifesto discourse, which highlights the use of lexical and nominal strategies to foreground positive self-representation, construct political legitimacy, and appeal to voters’ ethical and emotional sensibilities (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015). Within the Critical Stylistics framework, the PTI manifesto demonstrates how naming and describing strategies operate as deliberate rhetorical devices to convey ideological intent, align with historical and moral precedents, and cultivate a distinct and positive political identity (Jeffries, 2010, 2014; Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010).

4.9 Negative Other-Identity Construction of PTI

The PTI manifesto strategically employs ideologically loaded nominal references to delegitimize rival political parties and previous governments, thereby positioning itself as a competent and reform-oriented alternative. These nominal references, identified in items S.Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 16, 32, and 39, serve to negatively evaluate opponents and construct their identities as morally and administratively deficient. For instance, terms such as “*corrupt*” and “*decaying*” (S.No. 1) depict opposition parties as ethically hollow and operationally ineffective, while phrases like “*legacy of misrule and misery by a corrupt, inept elite*” (S.No. 2) further reinforce a narrative of incompetence and systemic failure.

Nominal phrases are frequently paired with negatively evaluative adjectives such as “*poor*” (S.Nos. 10, 13, 16, 18) to highlight structural weaknesses and institutional shortcomings. For example, S.No. 10 foregrounds societal injustice and deprivation, S.No. 13 critiques “*poor local governance systems*”, and S.Nos. 16 and 18 underscore failures in service delivery. The recurrent use of such phrases functions as a deliberate rhetorical strategy, emphasizing rival parties’ deficiencies while framing PTI as a viable, reformist alternative.

These findings align with prior research in both Pakistani and international contexts, which demonstrates that election manifestos often employ lexical and nominal strategies to foreground self-identity while undermining political opponents (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015). The PTI manifesto’s consistent use of negatively loaded nominals exemplifies how such discursive choices can shape perceptions of governance, influence voter attitudes, and construct ideological legitimacy (Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Jeffries, 2010, 2014). Collectively, these nominal constructions not only highlight administrative and systemic failures of rival parties but also emotionally appeal to marginalized communities, reinforcing PTI’s image as a capable and reformist political actor.

5. Findings and Conclusion

The analysis of the 2018 general election manifesto of PTI demonstrates that the party systematically constructs a positive self-identity alongside a negative other-identity through the use of ideologically loaded nouns and nominalisations. Frequency analysis indicates substantial use of such lexis, with 496 instances of self-identity and 336 instances of other-identity across the manifestos under study. These findings are consistent with previous research in both international and Pakistani contexts, which highlights the role of manifestos in foregrounding self-representation while legitimizing ideological positions (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015).

Quantitative analysis shows that PTI employs the highest number of nominals for self-references (n = 147), followed by PML-N (n = 116), while PPP demonstrates a lower focus on self-representation with 61 instances. Qualitative analysis further reveals a reliance on ideologically charged nominal lexis to construct a positive self-image. Recurrent nouns and noun phrases, such as “*Naya Pakistan*”, “*self-reliant Pakistan*”, and “*transformation of institutions*”, signal PTI’s proactive and reform-oriented positioning. Similarly, PML-N and PPP utilize ideologically loaded lexis to emphasize leadership and achievements, employing terms such as “*remarkable track record*”, “*inclusive governance*”, and “*martyrdom*”. These results corroborate prior studies in the Pakistani context, which note that political parties often highlight their accomplishments to persuade voters and assert legitimacy (Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015).

The study also uncovers patterns in the representation of rival political parties and previous governments. Quantitatively, other-identity construction appears more restrained, with PTI registering 113 instances—the highest among the parties—followed by PML-N (49) and PPP (31). Across all manifestos, self-referential nominals consistently outnumber those referring to others, echoing the findings of Ahmad et al. (2019) and Mushtaq & Baig (2021) regarding self-foregrounding strategies in manifesto discourse.

Qualitative findings further indicate variation in the nature of criticism. PTI employs personalized critiques using terms such as “*maladministration*” and “*governance crisis*”, while PML-N and PPP adopt more institutionalized critiques, focusing on systemic failures with phrases like “*institutional failure*” and “*structurally inefficient*”. This pattern aligns with international scholarship on manifesto discourse, which suggests a general tendency to depersonalize criticism, while allowing strategic variations to signal ideological positioning (van Dijk, 2023; Ulrike, 2015; Coffey, 2018; Price & Hermenston, 2023).

Party-specific differences reflect strategic and ideological choices. PTI exhibits high normalized frequency counts and direct self-naming strategies, constructing a reformist, anti-status-quo identity. Conversely, PML-N and PPP manifestos present restrained, legitimacy-focused narratives with less confrontational tones.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the selected political parties employ ideologically loaded nominal lexis as a central strategy to construct positive self-identities and negative other-identities, aimed at persuading the electorate and consolidating political power. By combining quantitative

corpus analysis with qualitative Critical Stylistics, the study captures both the distributional patterns of naming and their ideological implications. This mixed-method approach provides a replicable and transparent framework for analyzing political discourse, addressing methodological gaps identified in previous CDA-based studies (Stubbs, 2001; Widdowson, 2008) while extending the application of Critical Stylistics to Pakistani election manifestos.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses confirm a prevailing trend of self-identity construction over the representation of others' identity in election manifestos. Across the manifestos under study, parties consistently foreground competence, good governance, and efficiency in leadership and policy commitments. In contrast, other-identity constructions are less frequent and generally less confrontational. Notably, the PTI manifesto demonstrates a higher intensity of both self- and other-identity construction, employing a more aggressive and confrontational tone, whereas the PML-N and PPP manifestos exhibit a moderate, legitimacy-focused approach. These patterns align with prior research on manifesto discourse, which indicates that self-representation is typically prioritized while criticism of rivals is often strategic and institutionally framed (Ahmad et al., 2019; Mushtaq & Baig, 2021; Doležal et al., 2016; Nai, 2018; Mahmood, 2014; Sarvat, 2015; van Dijk, 2023).

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, it focuses on a single election year, which restricts the temporal generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the analysis is confined to one textual-conceptual function—*Naming and Describing*—within Jeffries' Critical Stylistics framework. Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach, examining multiple election periods to identify shifts in identity construction strategies over time. Moreover, extending the analysis to other political genres, such as speeches, press releases, and social media texts, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how political parties construct self- and other-identities across different communicative contexts. Such studies would further enhance methodological rigor and contribute to the growing corpus-assisted stylistic research on political discourse (Soule, 2006; Breeze, 2010; Jeffries, 2010, 2014).

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