

Vaccine Inequality and Hesitancy in Pakistan: a Multi-modal Analysis of Covid-19 Cartoons in Pakistani Newspapers

Arooj Rana

Lecturer, Department of English
Quaid-i-Azam University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Tahir Ayoub

Visiting Lecturer, Department of
English, Quaid-i-Azam University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Shazia Akbar Ghilzai

Quaid-i-Azam University,
Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: sghilzai@qau.edu.pk
(Corresponding Author)

▪ p-ISSN: 2663-3299

▪ e-ISSN: 2663-3841

▪ L-ISSN: 2663-3299

Abstract: Political cartoons are humorous and graphical representations of specific situations, events, and thoughts that have the power to change individuals' minds (Morris, 1992). The present study investigates the humorous and satirical depiction of vaccine inequality and hesitancy in the Covid-19 political cartoons published in Pakistan. The cartoons have been qualitatively analyzed as a powerful medium for visual communication on the contemporary challenge of vaccination in Pakistan. In total, 8 political cartoons have been purposively selected from four Pakistani English Newspapers. The theoretical notions of Machin (2007) have been adopted to analyze the semiotic and linguistic resources present in the cartoons. The findings show that various semiotic and linguistic resources have been utilized to expose economic discrepancies, the dominant elite, and prejudiced policies of the government as reasons for vaccine inequality in the country. Moreover, owing to various conspiracy theories and anti-preventive agendas against COVID-19, individuals in Pakistan are vaccine-hesitant.

Key Words: COVID-19, Political Cartoons, Vaccine Inequality, Visual Communication, Vaccine Hesitancy

Introduction

“Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2” (SARS-CoV-2) which is the causative virus for the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has significantly changed the world dynamics. Ranging from personal relationships to international relations and from economic growth to institutional development- the globe has seen an unprecedented change. The novel disease broke out in Wuhan, an emergent business center, in China in December 2019. In

Pakistan, on February 26, 2020, the first case of the virus was reported in a patient who traveled from Iran to Pakistan (Saqlain et al., 2020; Yousaf et al., 2020). On January 30, 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) (Saqlain et al., 2020). However, due to its prompt growth and severe infection rate, it was declared a global pandemic by WHO on March 11, 2020 (Abid et al., 2020). The virus has affected more than 180 countries in the world and

wreaked havoc on the social, political, and economic fabric of the countries (Umair et al., 2021). To mitigate the devastating impacts of COVID-19, various strategies have been devised to date and vaccines are one of the most promising strategies for confining the pandemic and reducing the mortality and morbidity rate of the virus as declared by WHO.

Vaccines are among the most unswerving and effective public health measures which are saving masses every year (Ehreth, 2003; Hajj et al., 2015). After decoding the genomic order of SARS-CoV-2, scientists, and pharmaceuticals have been tirelessly working against time to develop COVID-19 vaccines. As of 02 August 2021, 326 candidates of vaccines have been developed, out of which 103 have been in clinical testing (LSHTM, 2021). In the world, 23.7% of people are fully vaccinated, globally 4.76 billion doses have been administered and only 1.3% of people belonging to less-developed countries have been vaccinated (Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations Statistics and Research, 2021). According to the same report, in Pakistan, only 5.6% population is fully vaccinated. This minute percentage speaks volumes about the lower-vaccination rate in Pakistan owing to the vaccine hesitancy and inequality faced by the country. This particular issue has been highlighted on social media and digital media time and again.

The uncertainty and social disorder built up through COVID-19 and the pressing need for the vaccine have been a major concern of politicians, intellectuals, social workers, and journalists throughout the world. Newspapers have been emphasizing the challenges created by COVID-19. Journalists have been reporting on everyday life, politics, health, business, sports, the entertainment world, etc. from the perspective of COVID-19 (Rafi, 2020). Both digital media as well as social media emerged as significant modes of reporting the COVID-19 challenges as well as

persuading the audience to get vaccinated.

One of the significant modes of communication with the masses is the cartoons published on the editorial pages of newspapers (El Rafae, 2009). These comical representations are a vital medium for displaying socio-political developments, focusing on issues, and representing the needs of individuals in a country. Cartoonists employ humor, satire, analogy, labeling, and exaggeration for communicating their opinion and ideologies to readers. During the pandemic, political cartoons have been striving hard to represent the inconsistencies of the present times (Alkhreshah, 2020). Vaccination of all people in the world is the utmost challenge being addressed by political cartoons. The current study is an effort to highlight the issues of vaccine hesitancy and vaccine inequality in Pakistan as depicted by the famous English Newspapers in Pakistan. The study argues that newspaper discourse is ideologically loaded, uses language replete with multiple meanings, and plays an essential role in shaping the opinion of the masses.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

- Which linguistic and semiotic tools are utilized to produce humor and satire in the COVID-19 political cartoons in Pakistani English Newspapers?
- In what manner, do the COVID-19 political cartoons depict inequality as a challenge that hinders the effective distribution of COVID-19 vaccination in Pakistan?
- How do the COVID-19 political cartoons portray the prevailing vaccine hesitancy among the populace of Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This study is timely and important as it

presents the challenges of COVID-19 vaccination in a humorous and satirical way for making people conscious of the issue. The research analyzes the factors which hinder peoples' access and response to COVID-19 vaccines in a developing country like Pakistan. The study will also depict how linguistics and semiotic resources function in cartoons to depict contemporary challenges; criticize political leaders; highlight social hierarchies and imbalances. These cartoons also serve to call the attention of the masses for sorting out these challenges and providing relief to the masses.

Review of Related Literature

Political cartoons are humorous and graphical representations of specific situations, events, thoughts, and ideologies that have the power to change the minds of individuals (Morris, 1992). Cartoonists are of high value as they possess a captious voice with convincing ability, power, and influence in society (Msudimak, 2010). Cartoons are not haphazardly designed; rather, they are the products of synoptic planning, structuring, segmenting, positioning, and happenings of events in a society (Huhn, 2009). The creative and critical production of cartoons is much similar to writing literary texts. Cartoonists employ characters and tropes in for representing complex political and social ideas. According to Meister and Schonert (2009), cartoons “reduce the complexity of its reference domain to the carrying capacity of its medium and the processing capacity of its senders and receivers” (p.11).

Another valuable feature of political cartoons is their power to approach the class which is not normally involved in political and decision-making situations (Imperial, 2020). Humorous cartoons about politics and social events seem to appeal to all ages. Whether the members of the audience plan to analyze or think deeply to convey messages or not, these ideologically

embedded visual arguments have a subconscious outcome (Edwards, 1997). These cartoons enable the community to categorize, organize, and purposefully make interpretations of what they are seeing or experiencing about the world at a given period (Margulies, 2010).

In the past, multiple studies have been undertaken to analyze the wider nature and purposes of political cartoons. For instance, Morrison (1969) examined the role of cartoons as effective tools in the image-making of Abraham Lincoln, Robert F. Kennedy, and James G. Blaine. Medhurst and DeSousa (1981) conducted a taxonomic study of political cartooning and its rhetorical influence on the masses. Cahn (1984) investigated cartoons as communicative tools for the social and political needs of the masses. Bivins (1984) called cartoons potentially potent political forces as they possess the ability to make complex issues available to the mass audience in a simple format. While dealing with infectious diseases, Wigston (2002) examined the crucial role of cartoons in educating the masses on the Aids struggle in the South-African context. Various studies have been conducted to observe the visual power of cartoons in highlighting the political and social inconsistencies in society. Baldry & Thibault (2006) studied political cartoons as public representatives; while, Handl (1990) surveyed Australian political cartoons as representatives of issues of Australian citizens and the political tussle of major political parties functioning in the country. Morris (1992) highlighted the importance of political caricatures for strengthening democratic notions; Morris (1993) utilized structuralism to explore the visual rhetoric used in political cartoons. Delporte (1995) examined satirical caricatures of the era 1894-1906 that ridiculed the Dreyfus Affair; Feldman (1995) also examined linguistic and semiotic resources in editorial cartoons as the representative themes for six Prime

Ministers of Japan. Willems (2011) examined the political environment of Zimbabwe through satirical depictions of the Zimbabwean president. Also, El-Falaky (2019) employed Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) model to explore Egyptian political cartoons. The satirical cartoons represent the plights of the Egyptian public, national values, gender issues, socioeconomic hurdles, and political conflicts in the country.

Political cartoons have also been utilized for disseminating ideological viewpoints and constructing identities in various conflicting situations. Mazid (2008) analyzed the ideological depictions in Bush and Bin Laden's published cartoons. In addition to it, Najjar (2007) explored the vital role of cartoons in representing Palestinian Refugee identity. Kulikova & Detinko (2014) utilized the lens of multi-modal analysis to study bias and political 'othering' of various political parties as achieved by political cartoons of the British press. These visual caricatures are also utilized to set social agendas in newspapers for reorienting and shaping public opinion by depicting socio-political developments in a community (Sani et al., 2012). Moreover, Tehseem & Bokhari (2015) examined the political affiliations of two media groups as depicted by political cartoons in the Pakistani context. The study concluded that political cartoons serve as face saviors for one political group and face spoilers for another group in the political environment of the country. Shaikh, Tariq, & Saqlain (2019) investigated the use of cartoons in the election campaign of 2013 as communicative tools for producing dominant political themes in that era. The study also examined the impacts of cartoons on the public in the given social, political, and religious milieu of the country.

Furthermore, Ghilzai (2020) contributed to Pakistani political cartoons by examining the power politics of Pakistan from the year 1947 to 2020 as depicted by cartoons

published in various newspapers. The study revealed cartoons as the representatives of the specific period in which they were produced. Ashfaq, Shami, & Khan (2019) probed the use of metaphors, signs, and captions as key contributors in image making of political actors in the Panama leaks. In another study, Ashfaq, Ijaz & Shami (2019) compared Pakistani and Indian Newspaper cartoons depicting their national interests and pertinent rivalry between both South Asian twins. The study investigated the use of cartoons as an important tool in the rivalry between both countries. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, Alkhresheh, (2020) conducted a semiological discourse analysis aimed to unearth the hidden ideologies of cartoons published in Dawn of Pakistan and The Economist of Britain. The cartoons being published in Pakistan have a consistent tradition of criticizing prevailing inequalities, political tussles, and societal challenges. Aazam et al., (2020) explored the discourse of fear and economic crisis among the people as disseminated by the COVID-19 political cartoons in Pakistan. Significantly, the literature review establishes that considerable research has been carried out on the political cartoons of Pakistan, but there is a need to shed light on the role of cartoons in times of natural disasters and global pandemics as touched upon by this study.

Research Design

The research is exploratory as such type of research helps in observing reality by applying new ideas, concepts, hypotheses, and theories to reality (Reiter, 2017). Therefore, the political cartoons were deeply explored in order to find out about vaccine hesitancy and inequality faced by the Pakistani nation. Moreover, the research follows a qualitative research paradigm. To gain a comprehensive insight, linguistic and semiotics resources in political cartoons of Pakistani English Newspapers were

qualitatively examined.

Data Collection

For the study, the data was collected from four famous Pakistani English Newspapers i.e. Dawn, The Nation, Express Tribune, and Pakistan Observer (List of Top Pakistani newspapers, 2020). The newspapers were chosen based on their leading role, widespread audience, and mass circulation in Pakistan. The political cartoons selected for the study ranged from the period of 1st March to 1st August as this was the crucial time of vaccine circulation in Pakistan. Moreover, a purposive sampling method was utilized to select the cartoons on the subject of the vaccine only. In total, 8 political cartoons were selected for the study.

Theoretical Framework

Machin (2007) suggested that all images have denotative as well as connotative meanings. Denotative meanings are the dictionary or literal meanings and are only limited to the surface level. However, connotative meanings provide deeper meanings while considering the historical, social, and cultural context. Any image/cartoon is analyzed in a multi-modal way by considering various aspects depicted in the visual representation. A toolbox is provided by Machin's (2007) multimodal to study the semiotic resources such as person setting, objects, and poses as mentioned below:

Participants

The people present in political cartoons in a situation to their perspective characters are participants. According to Machin (2007), participants are observed by their style, character, and actions in the image. The participants present denotative and connotative meanings through the gestures shown toward the audience. Most of the time, participants convey implicit meanings in the given context. Moreover, more refined

information about dominant and submissive participants can be extracted by examining the exact details of actions in the image.

Settings

Settings are a vital carrier of meaning and act as an active tool to communicate overall ideas. Settings are used to indicate information, values, and actions (Machin, 2007). The whole order of activity can be indicated by the settings and environment of the image.

Poses

In cartoons, broader values, ideas, and identities are reflected by the poses of participants. According to Machin (2007), for the possible meaning of the images, poses as a semiotic resource can be observed. The character of an individual and his/her belief system could be observed by considering different pose styles like rigid and controlled, less controlled, exaggerated, or soft.

Sizes

According to Machin (2007), the size of cartoons is of immense value. In multimodal analysis, the large, middle, and small sizes of the participants are significant to observe as they represent the contextual importance or less importance of the participants. In images, bold, less bold, big, and small letters are also examined as communicative agents of the cartoons. The varying font sizes in images provide various implied meanings about the situation in cartoons.

Gazes

According to Machin (2007), there are two types of gazes in an image: offering gazes and demanding gazes. In the offering gaze, the participants do not offer a direct look to spectators and do not enter into a harmonious relationship. Contrary to it, in the demanding gaze, participants connect

with spectators through the direct look and establish a safe and harmonious relationship.

Discussions and Findings

The discussion section is divided into two parts: the first part analyzes the depiction of vaccine inequality in the political cartoons of Pakistan and the second part analyzes the portrayal of vaccine hesitancy in the political cartoons of Pakistan.

Vaccine Inequality

Being a developing country, Pakistan has an absence of strong medical culture, purchasing power, pharmaceutical infrastructure, and the ability to produce reliable vaccines at home (Parveen et al., 2021). Therefore, the country depends on other developed countries and humanitarian programs to deliver vaccines to Pakistan. In a country with a myriad of socio-economic hurdles, various vulnerable and marginalized groups are facing vaccine inequality (Shoukat & Jafar, 2020) as depicted by the given cartoons:

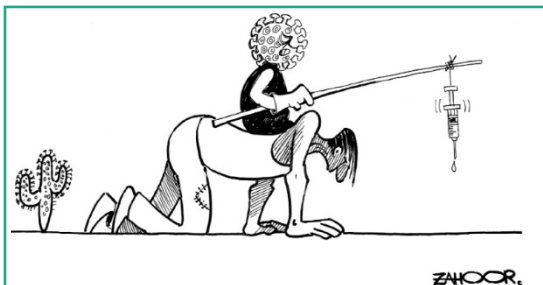


Figure 1: Taken from 'Dawn' Dated: 03-03-2021

In figure 1, the middle-aged man, who is being ridden by the COVID-19 virus, is seen in the center of the image. The image is an important depiction of the vaccine scenario in poor countries. The middle-aged man is wearing tattered clothes and his angle of interaction is downwards with a lower gaze. As suggested by Machin (2007), the above image does not directly interrelate with the

audience and displays hopelessness, despair, and non-harmonious behavior. The bare-footed, man is trying to reach out for the vaccine which is being held by the COVID-19 personified person. However, all his efforts seem to be in vain, as the injection of the virus seems to be out of range. No matter how many steps the poor man takes to get the vaccine, it will remain far with the same distance. Through this striking image, the cartoonist desires to attract the viewers' consideration toward the plight of the lower class in the race for vaccination. The placement of the cactus behind the man is important as it represents the hardships of stressed class during the times of pandemic.

The ragged clothes, barefooted condition, and unkempt hair, of the poor man, speak volumes about the situation of the impoverished class of Pakistan. Moreover, as Machin (2007) suggested, the posture of participants communicates their personality and ideals, and the unfortunate man positioned in the posture of animals implicitly conveys the trauma, stress, and deplorable condition of poor class due to the non-availability of vaccines.

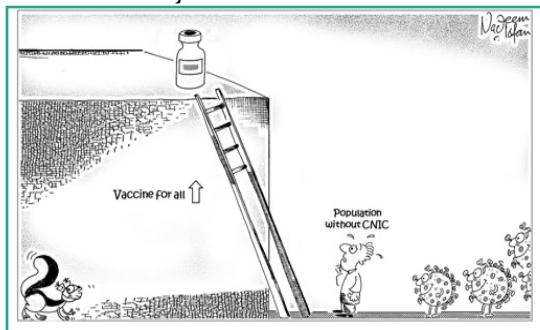


Figure 2: Taken from 'Pakistan Observer' Dated: 25-03-2021

The given cartoon contains significant linguistic and semiotic resources to depict the vaccine disparity in Pakistan. The selected cartoon signifies the alarming situation in the country where only people having verified Pakistani nationality or immigrants with CNIC and official refugee

status can have the access to the vaccine. In the cartoon, a middle-aged man represents the confused and chaotic 'Population without CNIC'. The man is standing in front of a large block having a set ladder with it and a vaccine bottle placed upon it. On the block, the words 'Vaccine for all' is written with an upward arrow. The writing is a satirical remark on the government and policymakers' recurrent proclamation of vaccine availability without any disparity. However, on real grounds, the vaccine is not equally available to the population of Pakistan. In addition to it, man size is reduced when compared to block having vaccine on it. The extraordinary dimension of the block and vaccine convey that the vaccine is beyond the reach of man. Another striking aspect shown in the image is the broken ladder which shows that there is no way for the 'population without CNIC' to overcome the distance and reach out to the vaccine.

As suggested by Machin (2007), a participant's facial expressions, posture, and gestures connote his state of mind in an image. The person depicted in the cartoon is nervous and has terror on his face. His posture is also not straight which shows his dilemma of not getting safety measures against COVID-19. The participant's gaze is non-interactive with the audience and only limited to the vaccine bottle. Furthermore, the participant is further terrorized by four coronaviruses on his back. By adding hands and feet to the viruses, the cartoonist wants to emphasize the rapidly growing power of COVID-19. The smiling faces of viruses depict that the neglected attitude of the government towards refugees and people without CNIC has led them to become easy prey for those viruses.

The unequal distribution of vaccines is ironically described in the image. By presenting such cartoons, the mass media wants to educate the populace on the prejudiced policies of the government. The cartoon spreads the awareness of dealing

with all people equally and supports the distribution of vaccines evenly among all human beings.

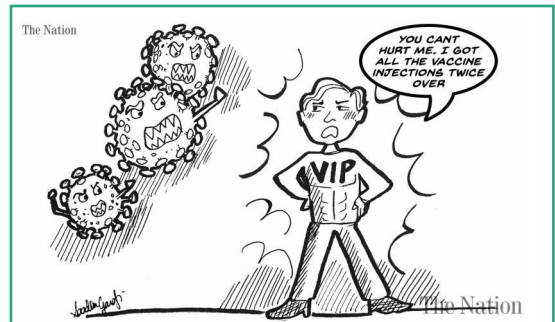


Figure 3: Taken from 'The Nation' Dated: 29-04-2021

The given cartoon ironically sheds light on the VIP culture of Pakistan. It depicts that even in times of crisis, the elite class of the country continues to enjoy health benefits. In the Figure 3 cartoon, the middle-aged participant is standing in the center with authoritative body language. The rigidity in the posture of the participant displays his dominant social status in Pakistani society. Also, his strong, muscular body depicts his affluence personality. To emphasize the prevalent elite culture, the cartoonist has used capital and bold words to write 'VIP' in the middle of the participant's chest. The nice dress and extravagant shoes of VIP participants give the idea that wealthy people are not worried due to the pandemic. They have sufficient money and resources to get the vaccination and other safety precautions. Moreover, the participant has a horizontal angle of interaction with a fearless gaze which shows his non-friendly behavior toward the audience.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012), our language is always loaded with multiple meanings. The linguistic resource in the cartoon 'YOU CAN'T HURT ME, I GOT ALL THE VACCINE INJECTIONS TWICE OVER' is a highly sardonic comment on the stratified society of Pakistan. The mocking statement reveals that the elite class has

access to all kinds of vaccines while the poor, less literate Pakistanis, particularly women and rural residents have to face various obstructions to get vaccinated. The cartoon conveys the message that in economically depressed countries like Pakistan, there are numerous marginalized and vulnerable groups who have an augmented risk of contracting COVID-19. Here, the labor sector is forced to work overtime, maintain less social distance to serve those in power, and thus remain in danger of gaining virus. (Kelly, 2020).

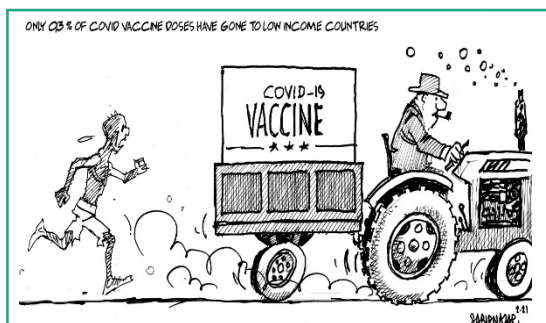


Figure 4: Taken from 'Express Tribune'
Dated: 06-05-2021

Figure 4 presents an alarming condition of vaccine inequality in the world. There are two participants in the given cartoon. On the right side, a fat man is driving a lorry on which the COVID-19 vaccine is loaded. The capitalized and bold words 'COVID-19 VACCINE' written on the lorry signifies the importance of the vaccine in the current crisis. Moreover, by close examination, we can see that cartoonist has given a fatty look to the right-side participant. According to Machin (2007), fat participants depict a dominant stature in cartoons. The fatty appearance of the man is the portrayal of affluent countries which have been producing vaccines. Due to technological advancement and developed pharmaceutical infrastructure, these countries possess the power to distribute vaccines among the developing countries as portrayed through the control of the lorry by the fat man.

Unfortunately, the image depicts the abuse of power as the cigar in the mouth of a fat man shows an untroubled attitude of developed countries.

While on the left side of the cartoon, the second participant is shown in greater despair while running for the vaccine. The torn-out clothes, two-three thin hair on the head, and the shoeless illustration of the man entangled in smoke represent the miserable imagery of the poor man. As cartoons employ visual communication to present realities (El Refaie, 2009), the poor person is the depiction of developing countries that are deplorably running after the vaccine. Along with these semiotics resources, linguistic resources have also been utilized to highlight the vaccine disparity in the world as on the top of the image it is written that 'ONLY 0.3% OF COVID VACCINE DOSES HAVE GONE TO LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES'. The cartoon communicates that the pandemic has wreaked havoc on the poorest and most vulnerable groups. And as given in the cartoon, only 0.3% of vaccine doses have been given as aid to such countries. All other vaccination quantum has gone towards rich countries causing an uneven world.

Vaccine Hesitancy

Vaccination is a 21st-century miracle of public health (Randolph & Barreiro, 2020). To acquire herd immunity against COVID-19, it is crucial to vaccinate the world population against SSRS-CoV-2. However, in lower and middle-economy countries, vaccination hesitancy is a strong and widespread phenomenon. Due to various conspiracy theories, spreading through the media, Pakistan has also been facing the dilemma of vaccine hesitancy (Akhtar et al., 2021). In such context, the political cartoons published in various newspapers have highlighted this issue and tried to spread awareness among the masses.

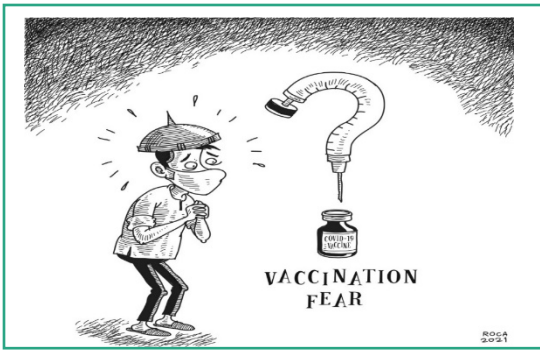


Figure 5: Taken from 'Dawn' Dated: 07-03-2021

The cartoon in Figure 5 is depicting the prevalent vaccine fear among individuals in Pakistan. In the image, there is only one participant of a younger age. The less rigid posture of the person shows his frightened state as said by Machin (2007) also. His convoluted body with clipped hands and bulged-out eyes depict his anxiety against vaccination. The person is shown wearing good clothes and shoes which means that vaccination fear is not only limited to the lower or illiterate class; but, is also found in the educated and well-earning class of Pakistan. It is ironic to note that the participant is wearing a mask as well as an unnecessary helmet as precautionary measures against COVID-19; but, is fearful of the vaccine which is the most efficient and reliable precaution against COVID-19. The cartoonist has consciously added a helmet on the head of the participant to raise the consciousness of the masses that instead of indulging in needless measures, they should go for vaccination.

Moreover, in the image, an injection of vaccine is shaped in the form of a question mark which connotes public questioning of vaccines amid conspiracy theories against COVID-19. Also, the shaded area above the participant adds to the fear and anxiety of the participant about the vaccine. The bold discourse 'VACCINATION FEAR' written under the vaccine bottle highlights public

hesitancy. In Pakistan, numerous conspiracy theories based on western agenda, religion, and microchip distribution have put substantial challenges in vaccinating the public (Khan et al., 2020). Therefore, the particular cartoon has highlighted the vaccination distress among the masses in Pakistan.”

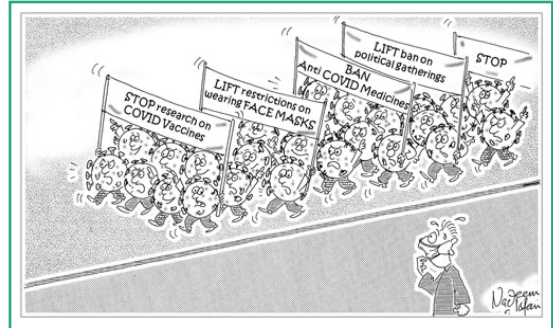


Figure 6: Taken from 'Pakistan Observer' Dated: 09-07-2021

According to Machin (2007), participants are observed by their style, character, and actions in the image. They convey implicit meanings according to their gestures. In the Figure 6 cartoon, we could observe a march of COVID-19 viruses who are holding placards and protesting publically. On close examination, it could be inferred that these viruses are the individuals of society who are against vaccines and other COVID-19 precautionary measures. The cartoonist has shown those individuals in the form of viruses as they are spreading the narrative of viruses. There are 5 placards displayed in front of the public with the discourses written as 'STOP research on COVID Vaccines', 'LIFT restriction on wearing FACE MASKS', 'BAN Anti COVID medicines', 'LIFT ban on political gatherings', 'STOP'. The first verb of each placard is written in a capitalized manner which shows the emphasizing behavior of such individuals on their anti-preventive agenda against COVID-19. Moreover, the aggressive facial expressions, stern gazes, rigid postures, and evil body language of viruses indicate their negative

attitude towards COVID-19 preventive measures.

Moreover, another participant, who is following COVID-19 safety protocols, is also shown in the cartoon. The participant is perplexed to see the anti-preventive measures of the public. The nervous body language of the participant implies that the public, who is following preventive measures and getting vaccinated, is also becoming doubtful of their measure. Thus, toxic individuals with negative agendas are not only damaging themselves but also the general public health. Indeed, the cartoon spreads the idea that the anti-preventive agenda against COVID-19 is an unparalleled health challenge against vaccinating the Pakistani nation.

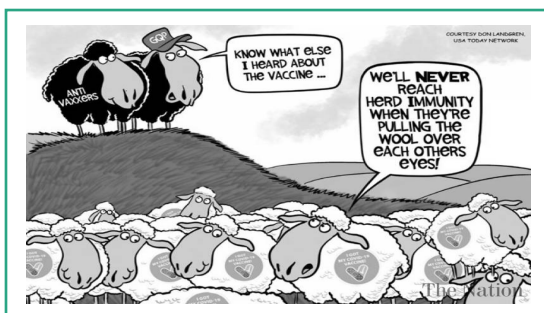


Figure 7: Taken from 'The Nation' Dated: 03-05-2021

The cartoon in figure 7 is an important illustration of the damage being done by Anti Vaxxers in society. Anti-Vaxxers are the people who are against the usage of vaccines for a variety of reasons. In the cartoon, there are two types of sheep presented in front of the audience: the black sheep which represent the Anti Vaxxers, and the white sheep which represent the Vaccinated population of Pakistan. The black sheep are standing at a higher and a distant position from the audience which show their non-friendly relationship with the audience as suggested by Machin (2007). The black color of the sheep is the representation of evil. Along with the semiotic dimension, the

cartoonist has also employed linguistic dimension by writing bold and capitalized 'ANTI VAXXERS' on one of the sheep. Moreover, the sheep are shown as spreading false claims and misconceptions against vaccines by employing the words 'KNOW WHAT ELSE I HEARD ABOUT THE VACCINE...' The three dots used in the sentence depict the unlimited conspiracies against vaccines.

The second type of sheep depicted in the cartoon is the white sheep. White sheep are in numerous numbers which shows a popular acceptance of vaccines in Pakistani society. Additionally, in the middle of every sheep, it is written that 'I GOT MY COVID-19 VACCINE' which is a positive as well as a constructive statement against the virus. The white color of the sheep is itself a representation of peace and friendliness. Moreover, if we focus on the gazes of white sheep, we find that gazes are demanding in nature and form a bonding with the audience as discussed by Machin (2007). But, due to the evil statement passed by the Anti Vaxxers sheep, the white sheep are shown as worried as they say 'WE'LL **NEVER** REACH HERD IMMUNITY WHEN THEY ARE PULLING THE WOOL OVER EACH OTHER'S EYES'. The statement is crucial as it shows the concern that Herd immunity (which occurs when a large portion of a community (the herd) becomes immune to disease) could not be touched unless the Anti Vaxxers stop deceiving themselves and other people. The cartoonist has consciously written **NEVER** in a bold manner so that the public would get aware of the danger of vaccine hesitancy.



Figure 8: Taken from 'The Nation'

Doctors and nurses are the frontline workers against COVID-19 (Jecker, Wightman, & Diekema, 2020). In Pakistan, doctors and nurses are not only fighting against the virus but also the ignorance and neglected behavior of individuals regarding the vaccine. The cartoon in Figure 8 is published in 'The Nation' and portrays a nurse who is fighting on both fronts. The nurse is shown as holding two injections: one is for vaccine and another one is for ignorance. The size of the vaccine injection is large and signifies the importance of the vaccine in fighting against COVID-19 as Machin (2007) suggests that the large size of objects portrays a significant meaning. The nurse has also utilized the linguistic resource by uttering the sentence 'THIS IS THE VACCINE FOR COVID-19'. Hence, both the semiotic and linguistic resources are aiding in conveying the importance of vaccines by health professionals. While, on the other hand, the nurse is holding another injection. Through her own words, she is communicating that 'AND THIS ONE IS FOR IGNORANCE!'. By bolding the word THIS, the cartoonist has emphasized the dilemma of the ignorant behavior of the masses regarding vaccination. Moreover, the facial expressions of the nurse are also important to note as they depict her anger and annoyance for the vaccine-doubtful individuals. Therefore, the cartoon is implicitly criticizing the vaccine reluctant people and urging them to be responsible and get their vaccine jabs on a priority basis.

Conclusion

The given study investigates the use of cartoons to highlight Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy and unequal distribution of vaccines among the populace of Pakistan. Significant political cartoons are purposively selected from Pakistani English Newspapers. The theoretical notions of Machin (2007) have been adopted to analyze the semiotic and linguistic resources present in the cartoons. The research reveals that various implicit and explicit visual features are utilized to show inequality and hesitancy as two central challenges that obstruct the effective delivery of COVID-19 vaccination in Pakistan. The cartoons depict that due to the backward pharmaceutical infrastructure, dependent and lower-income status of the country, dominant elite, and prejudiced policies of the government, there is unequal accessibility of vaccines to all social groups and classes in Pakistan. Moreover, due to various conspiracy theories and anti-preventive agendas against COVID-19, individuals in Pakistan are vaccine-hesitant. The findings of the study demonstrated that the cartoons published in Pakistan have utilized various techniques of humor, satire, labeling, and exaggeration to highlight vaccination issues in a developing country like Pakistan. From the COVID-19 perspective, political cartoons play an essential part in educating the masses on vaccine importance, mobilizing communities, and encouraging vaccination acceptance among the individuals of Pakistan.

References

- Aazam, F., Baig, T., Azam, A., & Azam, Z. (2020). A discourse of Fear and Economic Crisis: A Multimodal Analysis of Pakistani Newspaper's Political Cartoons of COVID-19. *Linguistics and Literature Review*, 6(2), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.v6i2.952>
- Akhtar, N., Nawaz, F., Idnan, M., & Hayee, S. (2021). COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy in Pakistan: An Analysis of Challenges and Mitigations. *Microbes and Infectious Diseases*, 2(3), 403-406. <https://doi.org/10.21608/mid.2021.77185.1159>
- Alkhresheh, M. M. (2020). Semiological Discourse Analysis of the Editorial Cartoons of International Newspapers on COVID-19. *Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology*, 14(4), 6169. <https://doi.org/10.37506/ijfmt.v14i4.12564>
- Ashfaq, A., Ijaz, S., & Shami, S. (2019). Drawing the Foreign Rivalry: Depiction of Indo-Pak Relations in Political Cartoons of Mainstream Pakistani and Indian English Newspapers (2014-2017). *Global Regional Review*, IV(1), 8-20. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019\(iv-1\).02](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019(iv-1).02)
- Ashfaq, A., Shami, S., & Khan, S. N. (2019). Metaphorical Devices in Political cartoons with Reference to Political Confrontation in Pakistan after Panama Leaks. *Pakistan Vision*, 20(1), 1-10.
- Baldry, A., & Thibault, P. J. (2006). *Multimodal transcription and text analysis: A multimedia toolkit and coursebook*. Equinox.
- Bivins, T. H. (1984). Format Preferences in Editorial Cartooning. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61(1), 182-185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769908406100128>
- Cahn, D. (1984). The political cartoon as communication. *Media Development*, 4, 39-42.
- Edwards, J. L. (1997). *Political cartoons in the 1988 presidential campaign: Image, metaphor, and narrative*. Taylor & Francis.
- Ehreth, J. (2003). The value of vaccination: a global perspective. *Vaccine*, 21(27-30), 4105-4117.
- Imperial, D. (2020). Constructing Myths via Art of Controversy: A Semiotic Analysis on Political Cartoons. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 1(3), 81-99.
- Ghilzai, S. A. (2020). History of Pakistanis' Power Politics-from 1947 to 2020-through the Critical Lenses of Cartoonists-Analysis of Political Cartoons. *European Academic Research*.
- Hajj Hussein, I., Chams, N., Chams, S., El Sayegh, S., Badran, R., Raad, M., ... & Jurjus, A. (2015). Vaccines through centuries: major cornerstones of global health. *Frontiers in public health*, 3, 269. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2015.00269>
- Jecker, N. S., Wightman, A. G., & Diekema, D. S. (2020). Prioritizing Frontline Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 20(7), 128-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2020.1764140>
- Khan, Y. H., Mallhi, T. H., Alotaibi, N. H., Alzarea, A. I., Alanazi, A. S., Tanveer, N., & Hashmi, F. K. (2020). Threat of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan: the need for measures to neutralize misleading narratives. *The American journal of tropical medicine and hygiene*, 103(2), 603-604. <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-0654>
- Kulikova, L. V., & Detinko, I. I. (2014). *Construction of political "others" through multimodal texts (cartoons) in British press*.
- Medhurst, M. J., & Desousa, M. A. (1981). Political cartoons as rhetorical form: A taxonomy of graphic discourse. *Communications*

- Monographs*, 48(3), 197-236.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758109376059>
- Morrison, M. C. (1969). The role of the political cartoonist in image making. *Communication Studies*, 20(4), 252-260.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10510976909362976>
- Perveen, S., Akram, M., Nasar, A., Arshad-Ayaz, A., & Naseem, A. (2021). Vaccination-hesitancy and vaccination-inequality as challenges in Pakistan's COVID-19 response. *Journal of community psychology*.
- Randolph, H. E., & Barreiro, L. B. (2020). Herd immunity: understanding COVID-19. *Immunity*, 52(5), 737-741.
- Sani, I., Abdullah, M. H., Abdullah, F. S., & Ali, A. M. (2012). Political cartoons as a vehicle of setting social agenda: The newspaper example. *Asian Social Science*, 8(6), 156-165.
- Shaikh, N. Z., Tariq, R., & Saqlain, N. U. S. (2019). Cartoon war..... A political dilemma! A semiotic analysis of political cartoons. *Journal of Media Studies*, 31(1), 15-23.
- Shoukat, A., & Jafar, M. (2020). Scarce resources and careless citizenry: Effects of COVID-19 in Pakistan. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, Special Edition: COVID-19 Life Beyond.
https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol_14/Iss_6/PUL014_Shoukat_2020_R1.pdf
- Tehseem, T., & Bokhari, Z. (2015). Spoiling or the saving faces in Pakistani newspapers: A multimodal discourse perspective on analyzing political cartoons. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(2), 1-14.
<http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/40020519521>