



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Political Persona on Twittersphere: Comparing the Stardom of Prime Minister(s) of Pakistan, UK and India

<sup>1</sup> Maryam Waqas    <sup>2</sup> Mudassar Hussain Shah\*    <sup>3</sup> Saima Kausar

1. Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, National University of Modern Languages, Lahore Campus, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> July 13, 2021</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> October 03, 2021</p> <p><b>Online:</b> October 06, 2021</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Imran Khan, Johnson Boris, Narendra Modi, Political Persona, Stardom, Twittersphere</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b></p> <p>mudassar.hussain @uos.edu.pk</p>	<p>Political setup demands to use <i>Twittersphere</i> for preserving its reputation because of significant twitter audience, which follows celebrities and political figures. In this perspective, political figures frequently use twitter to highlight their political as well as personal lives worldwide. However, political figures take the stardom status among the twitter audience that follow, retweet and comment by their fans. The purpose of this study is, to analyze what kind of language, level of interest is made by political figures while communicating via twitter, text, phrases and languages used by political figures, and do their tweets contribute in their reputation. The qualitative content analysis is used for evaluation of the interests shared by PM Imran Khan, PM Boris John Son and PM Narendra Modi with the key words of tweets. A well-established coding sheet is developed for the analysis of text, phrases and words in the frames of negative, positive and neutral from March 2020 to May 2020. The results are demonstrating on the basis of content shared by Prime Ministers of three countries i.e., From Pakistan, Imran Khan, United Kingdom, Johnson Boris and India, Narendra Modi on twitter. The findings also reveal that varied issues discussed in tweets, significantly positive and neutral words are selected by these political figures. PM Imran tweeted more negative tweets than PM Boris Johnson and PM Narendra Modi. However, PM Boris Johnson and PM Narendra Modi make significant positive and neutral tweets. It is observed that political figures are conscious about their personal reputation while tweeting. It also revealed that the issues and tweets shared by these leaders contribute to their personal reputation.</p>

## Introduction

Digital media have become an integral part of public communication, people prefer to use digital media technologies for information and communication all over the world (Gil de et al., 2019). Digital media tools like Twitter, Facebook, My Space, and blogging are

prominently used to influence and engage people in the spheres of politics by political figures (Grant et al., 2010). The worth of digital media can be seen in political scenario due to the usage of social platforms like Facebook and Twitter by political figures. As believe that these social platforms have the potential to highlight the political participation and political consciousness positively (Stieglitz et al., 2012). Digital media has given a new dimension to political communication and political discourse strategies (Kurt & Karaduman, 2012). Digital media have given an opportunity to political figures and public to be involved themselves in political discourse at personal as well as public level (Khan & Shami, 2019).

A coin has two sides, similarly, where digital media is being used by people for political awareness and updates, on the other hand, political figures who have, to some extent, authority, or influence in a society are also engaged for highlighting their political activities for positive image building and maintaining their personal reputation via digital media (Wolfsfeld, 2015). It is argued that digital media have become one of the most powerful tools for political figures. They are utilizing digital media for different purposes like connection with public, highlight their plans and programs, declare their decisions and mainly for the purpose of personal reputation. The trend to use digital media for political discourse among political figures started by Barack Obama then Donald Trump and many political figures get advantage with the frequent usage of digital media for their personal political reputation (Park et al, 2020). Digital media enable political figures to directly communicate with their political audience and let them know about their views, plans, projects and even their personal lives. At the same time, digital media can be a threat for political figures to ruin their reputation, lesser their vote bank and destroying their image among the people. As a channel of two-way communication, digital media also provide opportunity to the public to know their political representatives as well as to keep an eye on their activities and even question their acts. Digital media have contributed to connecting and mobilizing like-minded individuals for different socio-political affairs. However, while distributing informative and mobilizing messages, digital media also raises concern over the dissemination of misinformation and the information that has negative personal and have political impacts that is why political figures are more concerned to disseminate such content on digital media which never destroy their image but good for their personal as well as political image (Gil de Zúñiga & Chen, 2019). Since politics is moving onto the digital media in force, people's perceptions and decisions are getting highly influenced by the image of the politicians portrayed by the politicians themselves. People tend to believe what they see on digital media, and political figures seem to take good advantage of online reputation. The attributes including the credibility of political figures, intelligence, ideology and narrative, and biological information are exposed through communication over digital media. These attributes are evaluated by their public which has a great impact on their political career as well (Shami & Ashfaq, 2019). However, in contemporary era, political figures have started using digital media to reach the public (Shami & Ashfaq, 2019; Chi & Yang, 2011; Williams & Gulati, 2010). They use digital media to connect with the public and convey their narrative. However, it's seemed that sometimes their activity on digital media lead them towards controversy or affect their reputation. Many researches have been conducted studies on corporate reputation management, but personal political reputation management is considered to be a neglected area in the political communication. There is no relative research work found to define principles about what type of content can affect the reputation in a positive way. Thus, this study

aimed to analyse the content published and shared on digital media by political figures and it caused with their reputation.

Primarily, this research is aimed to examine, for what purpose political figures are using digital Twittersphere. As mentioned by Karamat and Farooq (2016), the most popular and common channel for digital media communication are Facebook and Twitter in Pakistan. Twitter is mostly used for political communication for uploading tweets, photos, videos and interacting with public, it was developed in 2006 and became most popular and trendy in the arena of politics. Moreover, to explore the activities of political figures that have the potential to influence their reputation. Limiting the scope of the research area to politicians' digital media communication, this research has examined the pattern of digital media usage particularly twitter by political figures to identify their interest level what kind of information they want to share, selection of words they use in their communication. There are theoretical and practical implications of this study for the field of political communication, celebrity studies and twitter communication.

### **Political Reputation Management**

This study examines how political figures are getting benefit by using social media for their political and personal reputation by investigating the existing body of literature. Jiang (2016) studied that there is a strong relation between digital media and political participation. It is observed that digital media have a strong influence in molding and changing the public perception towards politics. This is enhancing the value of politics and election concentration among the public. Public have started more relying on digital media for getting political news than to traditional media. No doubt, digital media have increased the voting turn out among the public. So, this medium is not only becoming popular among the public but also frequently using by political figures for their personal and political reputation.

Khan and Shami (2019) argue that the scenario of practicing politics has been changed due to the emergence of technology enhancement. The best part of social media is, it regards the two-way communication between politicians and public. It also critically analyze how social media is being used by political figures in Pakistan. It is also suggested that what type of researches can be done in the domain of social media and politics. It is concluded that the significance of new media cannot be ignored in the domain of politics, to the upcoming information and communication.

Shami and Ayesha (2019) studied that political leaders are more relying on digital media as compare to traditional media for political reputation, maintain their connection with their public. It is argued that political leaders are using digital media though which they can increase their voters list and strengthen their relationship with public and maintain their public image. Many scholars (Marshall, 2010; Thomas, 2014) believe that reputation is very crucial in political discourse as compare to any other industry. It is pertinent to mention that positive repute never means, more visibility on digital media, but one has to be more trustworthy and credible. This research mainly focus on what type of repute are gaining by MNAs of Pakistan on Facebook and Twitter. Also focusing on how credible MNAs are considered in the eyes of public and what type of response they are getting by public on their tweets and posts. The scholarship is also premeditated to examine

that which medium either Facebook or Twitter gets more supportive comments from the audience for the political leaders.

Dasli (2019) explained that initially, it was considered social media which can only be used for the purpose of entertainment and amusement, but gradually the importance of this new medium is realized for other domains as well particularly in politics. Most of the politicians started to use this new media for improving their image building and for successful election campaigns worldwide. The most important benefit of social media is to connect a large audience in a very short time. It maintains the two-way relationship between public and politicians, effective for getting instant response from the public. Moreover, the demand of politicians to target the young audience can easily be achieved.

Kamasaka et al. (2019) explored by using self-administrative questionnaire from 397 employees of 96 Turkish companies and find that the involvement of politics in corporate sector is a prolific activity. Most of the companies are engaged in corporate political activities (CPA) with non-commercial partners such as political institutions, government bodies, bureaucrats just to improve their business opportunities and positive image building of the companies. Previous studies revealed that companies involve politicians in the process of corporate activities which is beneficial for them to reduce the tax charges. Furthermore, to involve politicians in the corporate boards like other corporate political activities i.e., lobbying and contribution in political campaigns, are more helpful. Tasente (2020) explored Facebook is considered to be a helpful and active platform for the purpose of socialization among the public, It also has become a very important platform for image building of political figures. Due to the emergence of social media, the concepts of maintaining, sustaining, building and fixing the image or increasing the social image are related concepts in Marketing, Public Relations and Advertising and frequently used in the real world. It is noted that these concepts in social media particularly on Facebook have been replaced by "reputation management" in the current scenario.

Park et al. (2020) demonstrated that the politicians use digital media for political communication and online reputation to attract public to cast the votes. This is the reason, nowadays, mostly politicians are actively engaged on digital media to directly interact with their public and to run their political as well as personal campaigns. Digital media proved to be very productive for political reputation in the U.S. presidential campaign in 2008. In 2010, election ceremony in U.S. (22%) adults were engaged in the ceremony via twitter. So digital media is a productive way for politicians to interact with adults. After the victory of Barack Obama, he delivered his victory speech on twitter which was retweeted about 810,000 times.

### **Online Reputation Management**

Rob Brown (2010) demonstrated a study to define various tips and strategies to build the personal reputation. He argued that in today's highly competitive world of low trust, low loyalty and access to information & technology, reputations can be made or beat overnight. The way to increase political party or an organization reputation, there are only online platforms which can help out to maintain and sustain the image and reputation of a party in this competitive environment, where there is a rush of multiple same parties or

organizations are available in the political market. As a result, the practice of reputation management has boosted specifically due to the online environment.

Lovejoy et al. (2012) conducted the risk factors of reputation due to the emergence of social media. The use of social media in current environment for reputation has more threats and challenges as compare to conventional media. Moreover, social media can have notable effects on group-level strategic endeavor, which cannot be avoided in order to get success in this modern and competitive environment.

Oncioiu et al., (2020) studied that online reputation is a dynamic process for every organization, country or political party. It is found that online reputation plays a vital role in failure and success of the organization or political party. This study was aimed to design what role is played by corporate social responsibility (CSR) in building online reputation? How online reputation affects the financial performance of organization or country? Is online reputation predictable? It is concluded that online reputation is the great strategy for improving and sustaining the image and reputation of the organization or the country by monitoring online activities. Econometric approach is used to propose the model for role of corporate social responsibility in building and sustaining online reputation particularly for economic benefits of a country or organization. However, in the current era, the leaders of the country give significant emphasis on the investment or corporate relations with other countries that is judged by their supporters as significant leader of their country, which intends to bring economic prosperity for them.

Syed Alwi et al. (2020) assert that corporate sector has to face the challenge of digital society with other challenging factors as well. To survive with the competitive environment, adoption of digital media is a dire need of corporate market. Digital media one side it transforms the patterns of socialization, on the other side it has changed the practices of technical capabilities as well. The perspective of reputation management seems to be redefined due to the emergence of digital society. In this new age of technology, there is a need to change the tools and tactics to interact with the potential stakeholders with help of digital platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. This study addresses the following questions by using metanalysis technique.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Present research is supported by Reputation theory. Reputation theory suggests that a social entity (e.g., a person, an organization) engages in several reputation-related processes. It actively monitors reputations both by its own and by others (Bromley 1993; Emler 1990). Evidence suggests that every social entity indeed is interested in monitoring their own reputation (Bromely 1993; Leuthesser 1988). Monitoring of an entity (i.e., a digital media and reputation management of public figures) is important because it gives rise to perceptions of the extent to which the entity's reputation is good or bad. Researchers applied this theory on political figures, using twitter as a digital platform to communicate their public. Reputation management theory has given direction to this research in a way how twitter is used for personal reputation by political figures. It is analyzed that what is the impact of communication via twitter on personal reputation of political figures. For this purpose, this research went through measuring the major interests of political figures of Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Boris Johnson, Prime

Minister of United Kingdom and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India using twitter, and the language particularly selection of their words while tweet, and observe its effect on their reputation.

### **Material and Methods**

This research examined the content shared by political figures to know the major areas of their interest and the manner in which they communicate on twitter. Content analysis is used to sort out the major interests of political figures on twitter and to analyse the selection of words in the content shared by them, with the reference of personal reputation. The method began with analysing the major interest of political figures. The content shared by political figures on twitter is analyzed for a specified time period of three months. The keywords of content in their tweets are noted down, and on the basis of these keywords, major interests of political figures using twitter are determined. This research method also helped out to identify the selection of words in content shared by political figures. For this purpose, a coding sheet is designed of three categories e.g., positive, negative, neutral and the words according to their nature are put in the relevant category. Time frame of analysis of three months period starting from March 2020 to May 2020. Sample size is three political figures of different countries i.e., Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of United Kingdom and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. Purposive sampling technique is employed in this study. Results are presented in graphical form.

### **Results and discussion**

Figure 1 indicates the major interests of political figures on Twittersphere. #International Relations is about the relations with neighbouring and acquaintance nations. It also includes strategic and economic relations. All political figures are found to communicate, in their official capacity, about the affairs and interests of their states with other states. #International affairs include the stance and narrative about global and international events. Political figures are found to communicate with their public regarding current global scenarios and events. This is found the most active topic among all the political figures as the demand of the current situation. Many posts are related to the #Covid-19 updates, development and awareness during this pandemic situation. As the time frame of this study covers the time of the global pandemic, Covid-19, this interest has been dominant in the digital communication of political figures. This interest includes the appeals for #relief funding during the pandemic. As this global pandemic caused the economic collapse globally, the political figures provoked their public to raise funds to support their government in the current situation. This interest comprises the appreciation and encouragement for the healthcare workers working on the front lines in Covid-19 pandemic. The political figures appreciated healthcare workers efforts in this crucial time and asked their public to support them by following the SOPs. The political figures, in their official capacities, frequently shared progressive and development plans regarding the #economic, #industrial, and #political reforms to cope up this critical situation in this Covid-19 pandemic. Unignorable interest by all political figures. It includes the political scenario within a state and the activities of different political parties. The political figures frequently communicated about the #domestic political parties and their activities. #Human rights majorly include minorities' rights within a state, civil rights, and women's

rights. The political figures found to be positive and optimistic regarding human rights in their Twittersphere (see Fig.1).



Figure 1. Major Interests of Political figures PM Imran Khan, PM Boris Johnson and PM Narendra Modi on Twittersphere. Modified from the twitter template, source Ditch hat textbook (2021).

Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan found to be interested in communicating about Covid-19 and development, international relations, international affairs, Covid-19 relief fund, domestic politics, and human rights (as shown in figure 1).

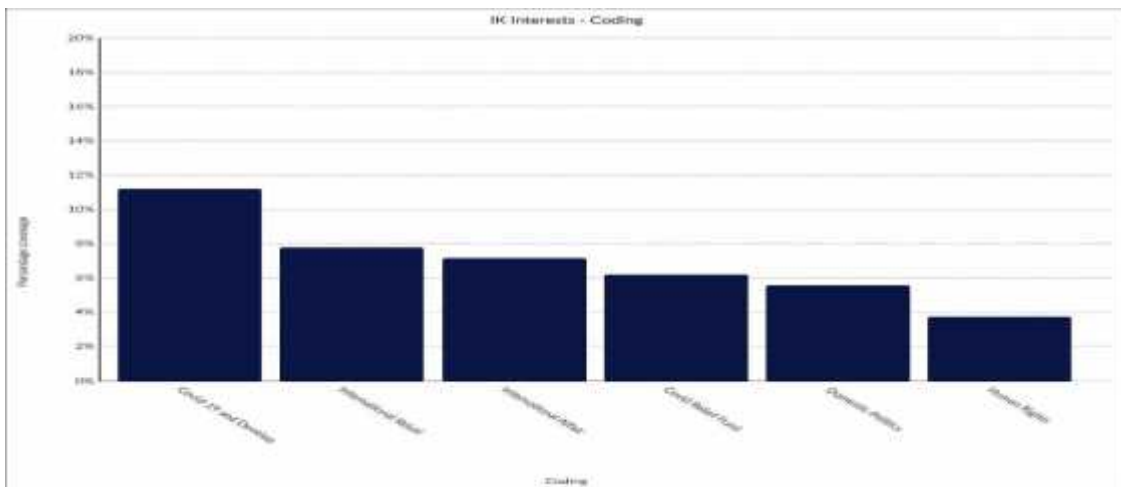


Figure 2. Major interests of @ PM Imran Khan

The UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson found to be interested in communicating about Covid-19 and development, healthcare support, Covid-19 relief fund, domestic politics, and human rights. He seemed more interested in awareness about the Covid-19 and supporting national healthcare service (as reflects in figure 3).

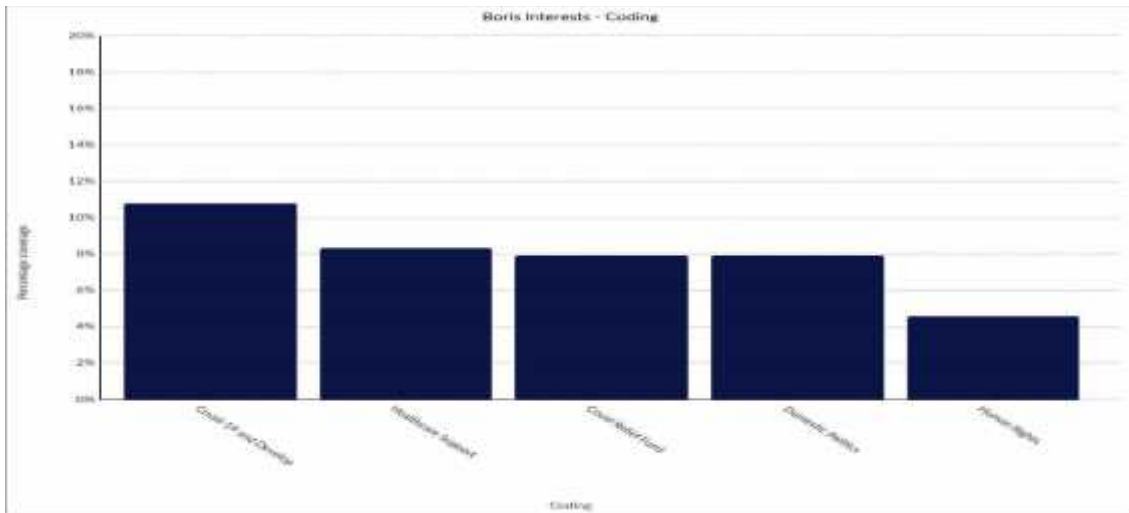


Figure 3. Major Interests @PM Boris Johnson

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi found to have interested in communicating mostly about economic and industrial reforms, Covid-19 and the development, international relations, healthcare Support, Covid-19 relief fund, and domestic politics (as shown in figure 3).

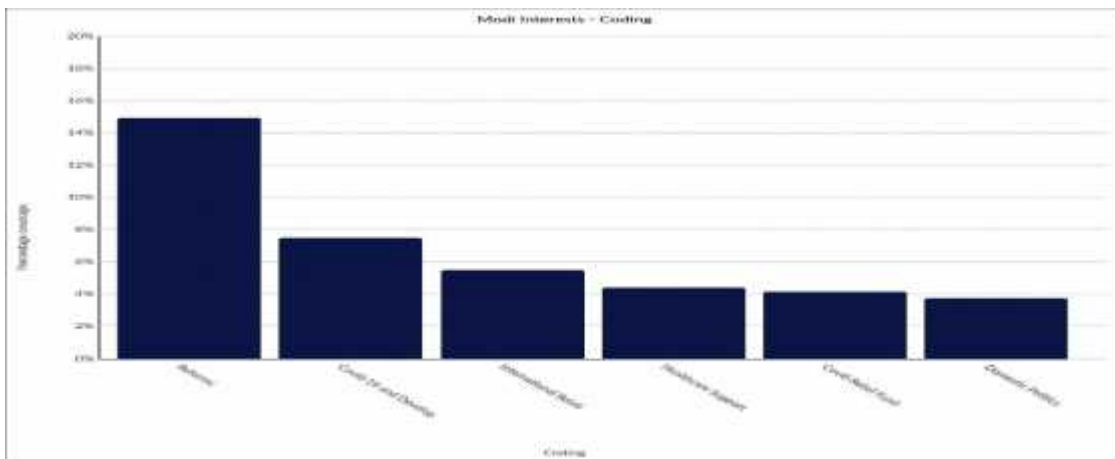


Figure 4 - Major Interests @PM Narendra Modi

Twittersphere is quite common among political figures. The presentation on digital media platforms helps them to manage their reputation. The content shared by political figures are examined that how the content shared by them, particularly their language and selection of words, helps them in managing their reputation on twitter. It was observed that the political figures tend to communicate very carefully, and their content majorly contains such words and phrases that has no or minimum negative impact. (44.62%) of their content has positive words and phrases that help them to portray a positive image of themselves. The percentage of using such words which have negative or bad impact has been recorded (23.77%). The percentage of the words and phrases in their content has neutral impact is



(31.59%) (as shown in table 1). It is noted that political figures tend to use such words which have more positive impact in order to maintain their positive image and personal reputation (see figure 5).

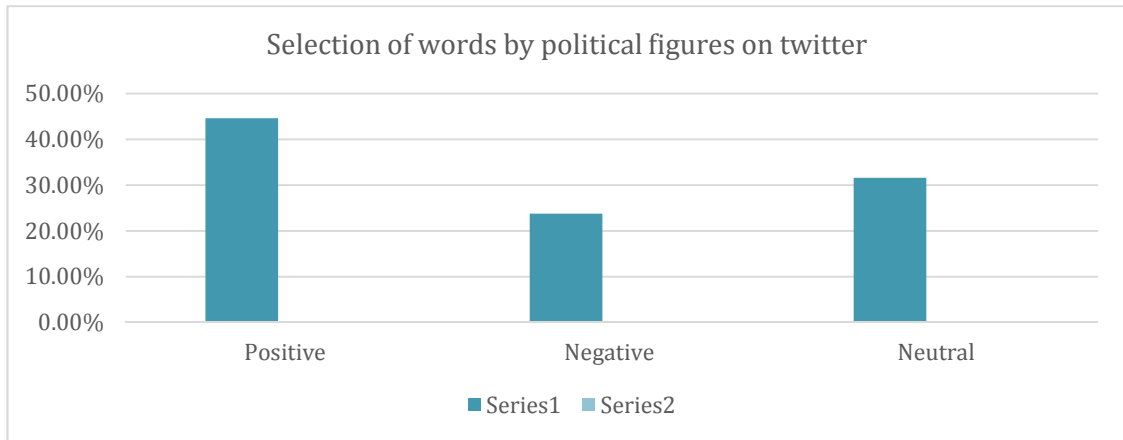


Figure 5. Selection of words by political figures on twitter

Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan found to be used words and phrases which have bad or negative impact more frequently than others. The content shared by him had (32.53%) of negative words or phrases. The positive and neutral words had been recorded (33.13%) and (34.33%) respectively (as shown in table 2.1).

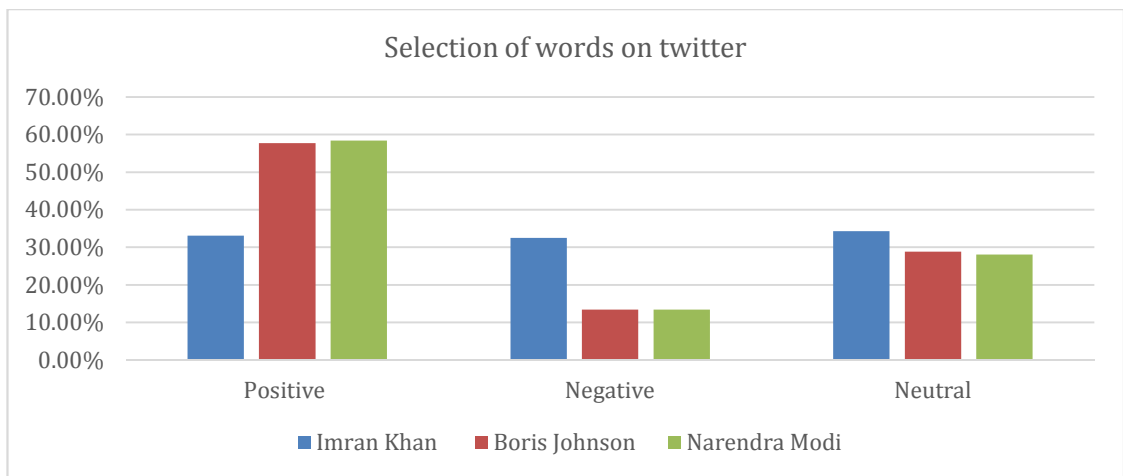


Figure 5. Selection of words, phrases and text on Twittersphere on positive, negative and neutral frames

Prime Minister of United Kingdom Boris Johnson found to be used more positive words in his content. It was found that (57.69%) of his content having positive words and phrases. Negative content (13.46%) of this Twittersphere found whereas (28.84%) neutral words and phrases (as shown in Fig. 5). A major portion of content shared by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had positive words. He found to be used positive words and phrases more frequently than other politicians. (58.42%) of his content had positive words

and only (13.48%) found to have negative words and phrases. Neutral content (28.08%) recorded (as shown in Figure 5). Twittersphere is an effective means to communicate presently. It is considered that twitter is the most popular and frequently used platform for the purpose of political communication. Political figures actively utilize this platform to communicate with their public to maintain their personal reputation as well as political activities. International Relations, international affairs, Covid-19 and development, healthcare support, domestic politics, reforms and human rights are major interests of political figures to communicate on twitter. For political activism, digital media (twitter) is need of the hour for the political figures, this platform is also very beneficial to let public know about their personal life, narrative and daily activities of the political figures. Public are always very keen to know about the personal activities of political figures as same political figures want to connect their public directly. In this regard, twitterphere is considered to be an appropriate and suitable medium for both political figures and public. So, they utilize this opportunity to make harmonic relationship with their public that can help them in obtaining their political position, image and reputation in a positive way. Political figures tend to communicate in a manner that does not have potential to harm their reputation on twitter by using very watchful, positive and soft words rather to speak out abruptly. They put maximum effort to avoid such activities, language, words and phrases that can challenge their reputation on twitter. It is found that Narendra Modi (Prime minister of India) is much conscious about using twitter by uploading more positive and soft words as compare to Imran Khan (Prime minister of Pakistan) and Boris Johnson (Prime minister of United Kingdom). Whereas, Imran Khan (Prime minister of Pakistan) has less ratio of using positive words on twitter comparatively. Although all three political figures (Imran Khan, Boris Johnson and Narendra Modi) have somehow same major interests of communication on twitter.

## **Conclusion**

In the age of Twittersphere, Political figures are realizing the power of digital media particularly twitter and using it for their personal reputation and positive image building. In this research, twitter was selected as a unit of analysis, to study using digital media by political figures for personal reputation and image building. The tweets of political figures for the period of three months were analyzed and extracted the keywords used by political figures and the nature of their language used in the tweets, to understand their major interests of communication. It is also extracted the words used in the content shared by political figures and categorized them into positive negative and neutral that are contributing to their reputation. After processing the collected data, it is noted that all three political figures Prime Minister(s) Imran Khan, Boris Johnson and Narendra Modi are utilizing Twittersphere more frequently to communicate and interact with their public. This research found that political figures frequently and intentionally use more positive words and phrases that have potential to help them in managing their reputation and portraying a positive image of themselves.

## References

- Bromley, D., & Wilsey & Sons, J. (1993). Reputation, image, and impression management. *Psychology And Marketing*, 12(2), 161-163.
- Chi, F., & Yang, N. (2011). Twitter Adoption in Congress. *Review of network economics*, 10(1),1-44.
- Ditch hat text book (2021). Tweet for someone template, <https://ditchthattextbook.com/infographic/tweet-for-someone-template/>
- Emler, N. (1990). A social psychology of reputation. *European review of socialpsychology*, 1(1), 171-193.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., & Chen, H.-T. (2019). *Digital Media and Politics: Effects of the Great Information and Communication Divides*. Taylor & Francis.
- Grant, W., Moon, B., & Grant, J. (2010). Digital Dialogue? Australian Politicians' use of the Social Network Tool Twitter. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 45(4), 579-604.
- Gulati, Girish and Williams, Christine B. (2011), *Diffusion of Innovations and Online Campaigns: Social Media Adoption in the 2010 U.S. Congressional Elections* DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1925585
- Kamasaka, R., Yavuzb, M., & Akinc, S. (2019). The Reputational Effects of Corporate Political Activities: An Empirical Research. *3Rd World Conference On Technology, Innovation And Entrepreneurship (WOCTINE)*, 552-556.
- Karamat, A., & Farooq, A. (2016). Emerging role of social media in political activism: Perceptions and Practices. *South Asian Studies*, 31(1), 381-399.
- Khan, S., & Shami, S. (2019). Political Public Relations and Social Media: A Theoretical Review and the Case of Pakistan. *Journal of the Research Society Of Pakistan*, 56(2), 323-334.
- Kurt, H., & Karaduman, S. (2012). Usage of Social Media by Political Actors: An Analysis on the Usage of Twitter by Leaders of Political Parties in Turkey. *MediAnali: međunarodni znanstveni časopis za pitanja medija, novinarstva, masovnog komuniciranja i odnosa s javnostima*, 6(12), 1-15.
- Lee, F. L. F., & Chan, J. M. (2018). *Media and protest logics in the digital era: Hong Kong's umbrella movement*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Leuthesser, L. (1988), "Defining, measuring and managing brand equity", *A Conference Summary*, Marketing Science Institute, Cambridge MA
- Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public relations review*, 38(2), 313-318.

- Marshall, P. D. (2010). The promotion and presentation of the self: celebrity as marker of presentational media. *Celebrity studies*, 1(1), 35-48.
- Oncioiu, I., Popescu, D., Anghel, E., Petrescu, A., Bîlcan, F., & Petrescu, M. (2020). Online Company Reputation—A Thorny Problem for Optimizing Corporate Sustainability. *Sustainability*, 12(14), 55-70.
- Shami, S., Ishfaq, A., & Khan, S. (2019). Reputation Management in Social Media: Analysis of Audience Feedback on Posts and Tweets of Pakistani MNAs. *Journal Of Political Studies*, 26 (2), 251-261.
- Stieglitz, S., & Dang-Xuan, L. (2012). Political communication and influence through microblogging-An empirical analysis of sentiment in Twitter messages and retweet behavior. In *System Science : 45th Hawaii International Conference on* (pp. 3500-3509). doi: 10.1109/HICSS.2012.476
- Syed Alwi, S., Melewar, T., Cuomo, M., & Schwaiger, M. (2020). Digital Society and Corporate Reputation: Towards the Next Generation of Insights. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 23(3), 129-132.
- Tasente, T. (2020). The elements of political communication on Facebook. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 4(2), 50-54.
- Thomas, S. (2014). Celebrity in the 'Twitterverse': history, authenticity and the multiplicity of stardom Situating the 'newness' of Twitter. *Celebrity studies*, 5(3), 242-255.
- Wolfsfeld, G. (2015) *INFOCORE Definitions: "Political Actors"*. Herzliya, Interdisciplinary Center.