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## Analyzing Language in High-Profile Judicial Verdicts of Pakistan: A Corpus-Forensic Perspective

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### Abstract

Law is language. It is not solely language, since it is a social institution manifested also in non-linguistic ways, but is profoundly linguistic institution (Gibbons, 2003). Surprisingly enough, little research has examined the use of complex language during these culturally significant trial outcomes especially in the South-Asian context. The analysis of language in judicial verdicts has become a substantial area of inquiry within forensic linguistics and discourse studies, especially where legal decisions coalesce with political interplay. Therefore, the language of verdicts, provides theoretical understanding into how legal institutions express neutrality, assert legitimacy and authority, and represent political participants. Pakistan, having a socio-politically charged context, high-profile judicial verdicts often carry ideological significance and have been a source of sparking immense interest in public. This has created a need for scholarly work that examines judicial discourse through corpus-based, forensic, and critical lenses. The study employs Critical discourse analysis (CDA), Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Appraisal Framework methods for the exploration of hidden linguistics elements in the significant judicial verdicts of Panama Papers Scandal (2017) and Cypher Case (2024), with employment of corpus-assisted tools, Voyant and UAM corpus tool.

**Keywords:** Forensic, Linguistics, Discourse, Analysis, Judicial, Verdicts.



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

Courts not only apply law but also construct authoritative narratives, rationalize institutional decisions, and frame political events (Tiersma & Solan, 2012). This paper adopts a corpus- forensic analysis of the language patterns in judicial verdicts of Pakistan including high-profile cases of Panama Papers Scandal (2017) and Cypher Case (2024). Both cases involve important political actors of Pakistan which have served as prime ministers of the country. The verdicts resulted in disqualification from the office, which is being the head of government in a parliamentary system, responsible for leading the executive branch, setting government policy, appointing cabinet members, and overseeing the country's operations. The position holds significant power, making the Prime Minister the chief executive who exercises executive authority and controls both domestic and foreign policy. Nawaz Sharif is the longest serving prime minister, having served non-consecutively, a total of 9 years in his 3 incomplete terms. Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi was the country's 22nd prime minister and maintains a position of popular global figure. Both of these being important figures in the political history of the country, share commonalities in their populist appeal, often supported by segments of the state, and their focus on economic and social development and national governance, despite their differing political ideologies and approaches and with both of their parties drawing significant support and facing political challenges from each other. Another commonality shared by these two distinguished figures in the political history of Pakistan is the judicial verdicts by The Supreme Court of Pakistan, the supreme judicial authority and the apex court of the country, as Panama papers verdict in 2017 against Nawaz Shareef and Cypher Case in 2024 by The High Court of Islamabad West against Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi, which resulted in the disqualification of these prominent figures from the public office over the past two decades and have generated intense public scrutiny. The results of these verdicts do exercise far-reaching implications on governance, political legitimacy, and construction of institutional trust in the country and among citizens.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

According to Solan & Tiersma (2019), verdicts, beyond their formal legal purpose, are powerful linguistic artifacts that shape public discourse, institutional credibility and national political trajectories. Although, court verdicts involving political participants, hold significant influence, little systematic examination has been done in Pakistan's socio-political discourse. The public perception is constructed, mostly on the narratives portrayed by media, whether it be print or electronic and through different social media platforms. Regardless, of the legal examination by political scientists and research scholars on these cases, linguistic analysis for judicial reasoning, stance evaluation and institutional authority is a marked omission in forensic corpus perspective. This gap is the conceptual hinge that analyzing language through a systematic legal and evidentiary context, offers sophisticated analytical tools for uncovering the linguistic mechanisms through which institutions exercise power, construct narratives and encode ideologies (Coulthard and Johnson, 2017).

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

Linguistic choices such as transitivity patterns, modality, evidentiality markers and appraisal expression can subtly shape how courts attribute responsibility, construct legitimacy, and evaluate conduct (Cotterill, 2020; Gibbons and Turrel, 2008). These features not only reflect legal pronouncements but also identify ideological orientations and institutional identities within legal

identification. Despite, many studies conducted on western legal systems and testimonies of state figures, analysis of judicial language in south Asian contexts, especially Pakistan's hybrid governance and legal landscape, remain understudied. Judicial environment in Pakistan is uniquely positioned at the intersection of constitutional obligations, civic accountability, political rivalry, and media scrutiny. High profile verdicts often carry implications beyond the courtroom discourse, influencing governance narratives, shaping public opinion, and affecting political structures. Given these dynamics, organized linguistic examination is essential for understanding not just what courts decide, but how those decisions are linguistically constructed and publicly accepted.

Corpus-based forensic linguistics allows for empirical, replicable, and statistically supported examinations of large textual datasets, addressing concerns about subjectivity in purely interpretive legal discourse analysis (Cotterill & Johnson, 2017). For the purpose of formal study of language in the important legal rulings, this study adopts a corpus-forensic approach, employing Voyant tools and UAM corpus tool software's to extract linguistic features, lexical choices, grammar, modality, discursive practices, socio-cultural power relations, representation and identity, and critical representation through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Appraisal framework.

#### **1.4 Research Questions/Hypothesis**

The study is guided by two research questions, first, how do Pakistani courts construct agency, representation, dominance and legal reasoning in high-profile judicial verdicts involving political actors through language? And second, to what extent CDA, CL and Appraisal Framework contribute to revealing the evaluative, ideological keywords, collocations, hedging and modality patterns emerge in the selected verdicts, and shape institutional authority and public perception.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The answer to these questions forms the main objectives of the current study: (1) to demonstrate the extent to which language in the judicial verdicts is a central concept in building agency, representation, dominance and legal reasoning involving political actors; (2) to explore the extent to which CDA, CL and Appraisal Framework is analytically effective and relevant to the linguistic study of courtroom verdicts.

The research study is divided into six sections. Unit 2 presents the theoretical lens and framework to support the study, the related work by discussing the concepts of Corpus Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Framework. This segment consists of some previous studies relevant to the topic of legal verdicts discourse under investigation. Unit 3 offers the research methodology adopted in this study in terms of the data collection and description of data, as well as the analytical procedures utilized in the analysis of the selected data. Unit 4 reveals the analysis of the selected verdicts. Unit 5 consists of the discussion on the findings and results obtained from the analysis. Unit 6 shows the conclusion and offers some recommendations for further research.

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The rulings in cypher case (2024) involve a compilation of accusations related to corruption, concealment, criminal breach of trust and authority misuse. The Panama papers scandal (2017) verdict announced a decision, finding no direct corruption but ordering a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe further on issues of financial transparency, offshore holdings in foreign land, and ethical qualifications for public office. Both set of court rulings garnered huge public attention and were embedded within broader political conflicts. Thus, a careful and nuanced understanding with corpus forensic analysis allows insight into how courts enforce legislative authority, construct

credibility and builds public perception. These authoritative judgments are not simply legal determinations but complex linguistics artifacts that participate in shaping political realities. Hence, this research could be helpful in expanding the scholarly understanding of judicial language in Pakistan by providing a methodologically robust framework for future inquiries into legal discourse in the region.

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis/ Appraisal Framework/ Corpus Linguistics**

The present study underscores a multi-layered theoretical framework that brings together Critical Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, and the Appraisal Framework to investigate how ideological positions, evaluative meanings and power relations are constructed in the selected texts under observation. The conceptual framework allows the research to move between societal-level interpretations of discourse and text-level linguistic evidence, making sure that the analysis is both theoretically grounded and empirically supported. Critical Discourse Analysis provides the composite lens for understanding how language operates as a social practice and how discourse helps the reproduction and contestation of power relations and ideological positions, Drawing on Fairclough's view of discourse as a three-dimensional practice (Fairclough, 1995), van Dijk's socio-cognitive model ( van Dijk, 1998) and Wodak (2001) about discourse-historical approach, the study interprets discourse as a site where legitimacy, institutional authority and ideological stances are constructed.

Developed by Martin and White (2005), the Appraisal Framework is an analytical tool for identifying evaluative language in judicial discourse, evaluations can reveal implicit attitudes and legal assessment. The model involved judgment which is the evaluation of people's behavior, appreciation responsible for the evaluation of processes, documents, and evidence and engagement which refers to the degree of dialogic openness.

Appraisal is significantly important in high-profile political cases where courts must maintain impartiality and neutrality while evaluating politically sensitive conduct. The comparison of positive, negative, neutral, strong, and weak lexical items across judicial verdicts was conducted as part of a corpus-based lexical analysis, drawing on the Appraisal Framework (Martin & White, 2005). Baker, 2006 and Stubbs, 2001 employed frequency and keyword analyses to reveal how each verdict constructs evaluative stance, ideational alignment, and ideological positioning through patterns of lexical choice.

At the micro- analytical level, the Appraisal Framework from systemic functional linguistics provides a detailed model for examining how evaluation is linguistically coded. Based on (Martin & White, 2005), the framework distinguishes among affect, judgement, and appreciation and captures how writers modulate intensity and strength through gradation. This model allows to trace stance, blame, praise, certainty, and alignment in the text through identification of positive, negative, strong and weak evaluative patterns.

### **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

The integration of these three perspectives creates a triangulated analytical approach in which CDA provides the critical interpretive lens, Corpus linguistics offers quantitative and replicable evidence and the Appraisal Framework supplies systematic tools for examining evaluative language. Together, they enable the study to explore how linguistic patterns accumulate and ideology are woven into discourse. This conceptual framework provides both depth and analytical precision, enabling a comprehensive examination of the discourse under examination.

## 2.3 Related studies

Seminal work by Tiersma (1999) demonstrated that legal language contains distinctive lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features that shape comprehension and persuasion. Khan (2018) focuses on the criminal justice response and the current situation of high-profile corruption cases in Pakistan a serious threat to the stability and security of societies and undermines the rule of law. Overview, roots, perception indexes, major causes as well as legal and institutional frameworks for anti-corruption are highlighted. Prominent cases of money laundering in the past decade in Pakistan are a part of discussion and their effects on nation's economy and social dilemmas are discussed. The article informs about the legal framework, laws as well as international contributions for corruption control treaties which is also a focus of attention in judicial verdicts. Muhid, Qasim & Nisar (2022) conducted a study to examine the impact of biased judgements by the judges, misuse of judicial immunity as well as violation of civil rights of citizens in Pakistan. The jurisdictional authority can be determined by the law in shape of constitution, Acts of Parliament, statuses, rules and regulations. Historical cases of judicial immunity, Union of India and Pakistan and their prosecution are discussed. The article supports my research idea as judicial verdicts and misuse of immunity poses a serious threat to the nationals as well as the decision on merit gives a positive impact on society and trust building. Eltahir et al., 2019 conducted a quantitative study on various linguistic topics to investigate and interpret corpus role in different contexts of language use today. For (Khan & Iqbal, 2019) political speeches in Pakistan, shows ideological polarization and strategic representation of political actors by using CDA. The study provides contextual understanding of political discourse relevant to high-profile verdicts. Research shows that judicial opinions, constitutional debates, legislative arguments and high-profile court rulings often become powerful discursive events that affect political stability, public trust in institutions and the legitimization of state decisions (Fairclough, 2010). International scholarship further highlights that media circulation of legal discourse amplifies its political impact, as legal narratives are reframed, contested or weaponized within public debates (Chilton, 2004).

Corpus-based text analysis reduces interpretive bias and reveals hidden patterns of language in legal judgment through keyword, collocation, and appraisal tagging application to criminal judgements, asylum rulings and sentencing remarks (Coulthard & Johnson, 2017). The study also highlights the importance of Forensic discourse analysis and corpus methods for analyzing evidence and legal reasoning as well as cohesion, consistency, legal register features and bias indicators. Javaid (2021) studied Supreme Court narratives and found politicized framing through evaluative vocabulary. Ahmad & Mahmood (2020) demonstrated how news framing of political trials creates competing ideological narratives. Saeed & Rehman (2021) analyzed statutory language and noted heavy nominalization and ambiguous referential strategies. Farooq & Shakir (2022) examined judicial register and identified markers of institutional bias.

Scholarly research on South Asian judicial discourse remains minimal, especially in Pakistan. While some research explores constitutional language or legislative discourse, there is virtually no corpus-assisted forensic linguistic analysis of high-profile Pakistani cases.

## 3. Research Methodology

CDA has been an important framework to investigate all types of interactions, particularly those pertinent to powerful-powerless interactions, the use of language to achieve persuasion and/or manipulation, and the ways through which power and dominance are exercised in discourse. The utilization of CDA together with CL and Appraisal Framework in the analysis of judicial verdicts discourse gives significance to linguistic features in isolation and marginalizes the role of context

analysis, as it is primarily concerned with frequencies and regular patterns of collocations, which are not enough to arrive at a comprehensive interpretation of discourse (Widdowson, 2004). The comparison of positive, negative, neutral, strong, and weak lexical items across judicial verdicts was conducted as part of a corpus-based lexical analysis, drawing on the Appraisal Framework (Martin & White, 2005).

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study uses a mixed-methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative corpus-assisted design integrating three analytical frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Appraisal Framework and the Corpus Linguistics (CL). As per (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2018) the critical discourse framework provides tools for identifying ideology, power relations, evaluative language, and rhetorical strategies embedded in political verdicts. Corpus Linguistics supports the systematic examination of linguistic patterns, in addition to its effective role in restricting bias in linguistic analysis, CL is “a useful way to approach discourse analysis because of the incremental effect of discourse” (Baker, 2006, p. 13). That is, the employment of CL approaches in the linguistic analysis of texts contributes to understanding the way language is constructed comprehensively and revealing the underlying discourses. Using both approaches enable a deeper understanding of the ideological construction of political judgments as well as the linguistic indicators that reveal consistency, bias, and legal register patterns.

This design is appropriate because political verdicts are not neutral legal documents; they are socially situated texts that reflect institutional power. Therefore, analyzing them requires both ideological interpretation (CDA) and linguistic pattern discourse (CL).

### **3.2 Sampling data**

Jurisdiction & court-level setting:

The Supreme Court of Pakistan and Islamabad High Court (IHC) decisions.

Unit(s) of analysis:

Primary texts: full judicial judgments of the two verdicts.

Judgments/orders with Nawaz Sharif and Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi and that (a) resulted in disqualification, conviction, sentence, or (b) ordered criminal proceedings / transferred references to trial court / set major precedents for political accountability.

Documents in English with an available official text (PDF/transcript).

Time window (2016–2025).

- I.** Panama Papers / Supreme Court judgment disqualifying Nawaz Sharif — 28 July 2017 (landmark disqualification).
- II.** Cypher Case / decisions relating to Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi — Official Secrets Act Violation (December, 2024) and subsequent references to trial court.

Include decisions and legal documents dealing with Official Secrets Act violations, especially the 2024 Cypher Case.

**Sample size:**

Primary corpus: Full judicial texts (Selection of two landmark high-level judgments).

The dataset consists of political verdicts Panama Papers Scandal and Cypher Case decisions involving political forces published between 2016-2025.

Total documents: 2

#### **Corpus size: Panama Papers Scandal**

This corpus has 1 document with 162,044 total words and 7,790 unique word forms.

Vocabulary Density: 0.048

Readability Index: 10.397

Average Words Per Sentence: 38.7

Most frequent words in the corpus:

respondent (1744); court (1082); constitution (679); Pakistan (579); said (518)

#### **Corpus size: Cypher Case**

This corpus has 1 document with 9,016 total words and 1,529 unique word forms.

Vocabulary Density: 0.170

Readability Index: 11.097

Average Words Per Sentence: 32.8

Most frequent words in the corpus:

case (88); court (82); section (80); petitioner (65); bail (52)

#### **Sampling method details**

The landmark rulings were selected with objective criteria (disqualification, conviction, sentencing, and concealment landmark decisions.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

The data collected for the study are the two verdicts of political elites and former prime ministers of Pakistan. The cases include:

#### **1. Panama Papers Scandal**

<https://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/judgement-search/#1573035933449-63bb4a39-ac81>

In The Supreme Court of Pakistan

(Original Jurisdiction)

PRESENT:

Mr. Justice Asif Saeed Khan Khosa

Mr. Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan

Mr. Justice Gulzar Ahmed

Mr. Justice Sh. Azmat Saeed

Mr. Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan

Constitution Petition No. 29 of 2016

(Panama Papers Scandal)

Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi Petitioner

versus

Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan / Member National Assembly, Prime Minister's House, Islamabad and nine others Respondents

**2. Communication of Secret Classified Document (Cypher Case)**

<https://districtcourtsisb.gov.pk/>

In the Islamabad High Court,

Islamabad

Case No.: Crl.Misc. No.1354-b-2023

Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi

Vs.

The State, etc.

Petitioner by Sardar Latif Khan Khosa, Barrister Salman Safdar, Mr. Abu Zar Salman Khan Niazi, Mr. Niaz Ullah Khan Niazi, Mr. Umair Khan Niazi, Syed Muhammad Ali Bukhari, Mr. M. Shoaib Shaheen, Mr. Naeem Haider Panjutha, Syed Mahmood-ul-Hassan Gillani, Malik Nasim Abbas Nasir, Mr. Intizar Hussain Panjutha, Ch. Khalid Yousaf, Mr. Sheraz Ahmad Ranjah, Ms. Shaheena Shahab-ud-Din, Mr. Zahid Bashir Dar, Mr. Mirza Asim Baig, Mr. Shoaib Ilyas, Rai Ashfaq Ahmed Kharal & Raja Haroon-ur-Rashid, Advocate for petitioner.

Respondents by Raja Rizwan Abbasi & Mr. Shah Khawar, Special Public Prosecutors for FIA with Mian Sabir Hussain, AD/IO & Khushnood Ahmed, DD (Legal), FIA.

Panama Papers Scandal against Nawaz Shareef (2016) and Communication of Secret Classified Document (Cypher Case) against Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi (2023) are the verdicts by The Supreme Court of Pakistan, Islamabad.

In the first phase, the verdicts were downloaded from the official websites of the courts, that are publicly available, in the pdf document.

For the corpus creation, the pdf files were converted to txt files to be later employed by software tools for further analysis.

The research involves the textual analysis of the selected data through three different stages. The first stage is a preparatory stage, in which the whole text of the cases is downloaded from the Supreme court of Pakistan and High Court of Islamabad in pdf document, it is then converted to .txt files through OCR technology for corpus development. Cleaning and pre-processing of the .txt files to remove punctuation marks and spaces to clear noise within the data.

The second step involves the automation of text through integration of two corpus tools UAM and Voyant tools for visualization of data and identification, which is related with finding out the total frequency of the selected lexemes pertaining to each lexical category, i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These frequencies are analyzed to measure their contribution to the understanding of the evaluative language, metaphors, hedging, actor representation and ideological keywords communicated by the selected verdicts employed in the case. In other words, they help in

deciphering the various hidden meanings targeted in discourse. It also involves geotagging of the corpus through Voyant tools and the construction of circus word clouds of corpus as well as the summary of the corpus, which shows total frequencies and most frequent keywords. The last step involves the analysis, which is an interpretative and explanatory stage that is based on the use of CDA and Appraisal Framework strategies to reveal the textual analysis purposes conveyed by each of the selected verdicts.

The corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach in this study is analytically relevant to decoding the effectiveness of the discourse markers and linguistic elements present in the legal judgments under study.

### **3.4 Data Analysis Plan**

By using a mixed-methods triangulation approach in which quantitative and qualitative analyses are systematically integrated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Quantitative analysis of two corpus files is conducted using software's such as UAM CT and Voyant Tools, which measures various linguistic features as frequency counts and indicative lexical categories. These statistically significant patterns were then interpreted qualitatively to determine whether they aligned with deeper ideological, cultural, or legal-strategic meanings within the discourse (Fairclough, 2015). Lexical frequency analysis enables the identification of the most common lexical items, including legal terminology and evaluative adjectives or adverbs, providing insight into the linguistic emphasis within legal texts (Anthony, 2014). Keyword analysis involves comparing political verdicts to a reference corpus, such as a general legal corpus, to extract significant keywords through statistical measures like log-likelihood and log-ratio, thereby highlighting distinctive vocabulary associated with political judgements (Kilgariff et al., 2004). Following Fairclough's three-stage framework and analysis examined linguistic features such as evaluative language, metaphor, agency, and modality to reveal underlying perspectives and ideological stances. The analysis interprets how legal language functions to reinforce institutional authority and perpetuate ideological positions, highlighting the role of discourse in maintaining societal power structures.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

During the study, it is strictly maintained that all the texts, verdicts, documents included are publicly available, trustworthy and credible and is on the website of Supreme Court of Pakistan, High Court of Pakistan, Islamabad and Election Commission of Pakistan, so no human subjects are involved. Proper citation of legal texts is maintained.

It was also taken into consideration that no personal identifying information beyond public roles is analyzed.

The study maintains academic neutrality and avoids political affiliation and biases and studied as a forensic and linguistic scholar only.

### **3.6 Delimitations of the study**

The data included in the study does not include summaries or analysis from media personals, reports, news channels and newspaper editorials.

Procedural orders are considered and studied without narrative discussion.

All the data analyzed is in English texts and do not include any other form of language.

All documents were converted to .txt format for corpus processing.

#### 4. Analysis and Findings

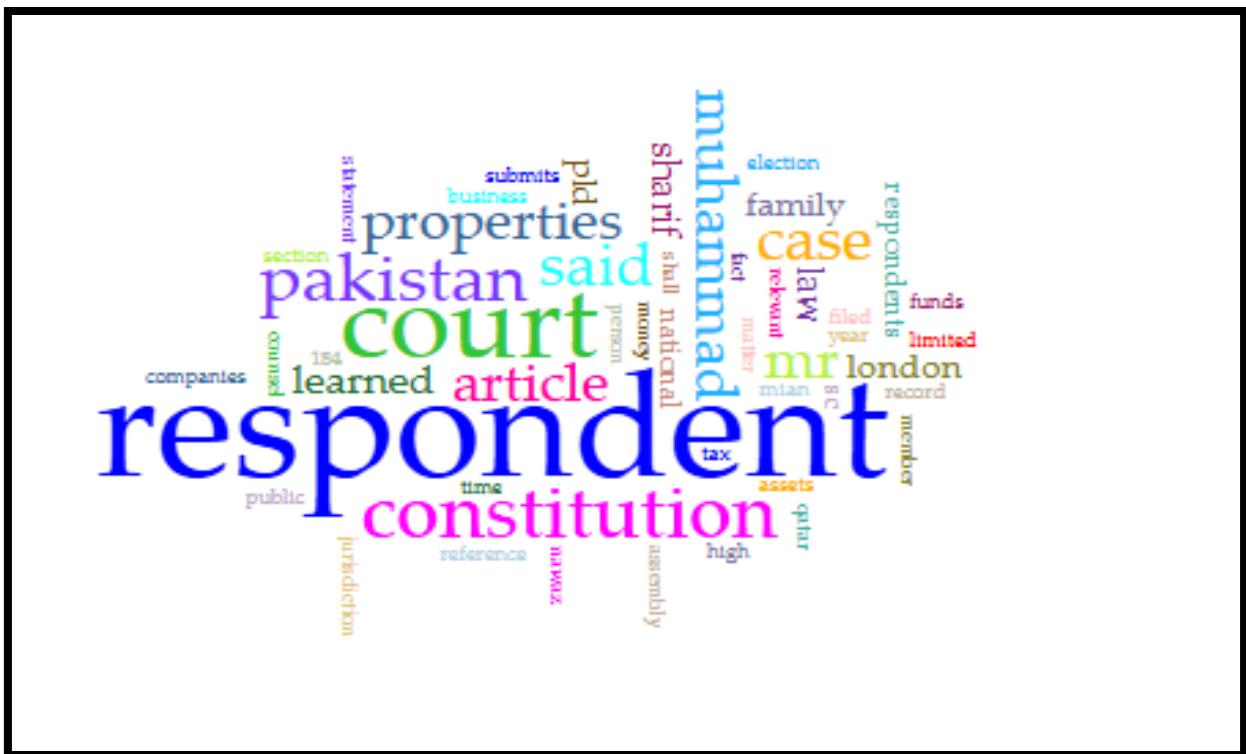
This paper presents the analysis of the selected data by adopting a corpus-forensic approach, employing the UAM Corpus Tool and Voyant Tools to annotate and analyze linguistic patterns within the selected verdicts. Corpus-based forensic linguistics allows for empirical, replicable, and statistically supported examinations of large textual datasets, addressing concerns about subjectivity in purely interpretive legal discourse analysis (Cotterill & Johnson, 2017). The UAM Corpus Tool provides multi-layer annotation schemes that allow the study of complex linguistic features; including lexical evaluation cues of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and keyword patterns of frequency analysis, keyword evaluative terms, distribution of stance markers.

Frequency counts allow the identification of recurring evaluation markers, while keyword analysis highlights words whose usage is statistically more in one verdict relative to the other (Baker, 2006). While analyzing stance markers, such as verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, offers insights into how much each verdict constructs certainty, judgement or emotional intensity (Biber et al., 1999). By integrating these corpus techniques, the study evaluates whether one verdict employs more negative, intensified or ideologically loaded language than the other, demonstrating how lexical choices contribute to framing political actors and shaping legal narratives within institutional discourse.

The layers in UAM corpus tool enables a multidimensional analysis of judicial discourse that moves beyond impressionistic interpretations and provides a detailed account of how word choices function within legal reasoning and the results by demonstrating the Panama Papers Scandal verdict consisted of 162,044 total words and 7,790 unique word forms with most frequent words in the corpus are with the number of times their occurrence in the corpus,

respondent (1744); court (1082); constitution (679); Pakistan (579); said (518)

**Figure 1:** Word cloud Cirrus of Panama Papers Scandal Verdict by Voyant Tools



whereas the Cypher Case has 9,016 total words and 1,529 unique word forms with most frequent words in the corpus are with the number of times their occurrence, case (88); court (82); section (80); petitioner (65); bail (52)

**Figure 2:** Word cloud Cirus of Cypher Case Verdict by Voyant Tools



#### 4.1. Linguistic indicators (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)

This part presents the analysis of the selected data and the results demonstrating the total and indicative frequencies of 28 lexical markers representing four categories: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs in Panama Papers Scandal and Cypher Case verdicts. The use of 7 nouns, 7 verbs, 7 adjectives and 7 adverbs are strategically employed to communicate a particular pragmatic function.

**Table. 1** List of lexical evaluation cues in *Panama Papers Scandal verdict*

Lexical category	Lexical markers (Panama)	Frequency
Nouns	Respondent	662
	Family	294
	Assets	226
	Money	194
	Income	169
	Children	156
	Investment	131
Verbs	Learned	358
	Stated	152
	Received	103
	Purchased	81
	Crumbled	1
	Absconded	1
	Hastened	1
Adjectives	Public	181
	Offshore	93
	Beneficial	86
	Honest	81
	Corrupt	55
	Criminal	53
	Alleged	36
Adverbs	Allegedly	44
	Admittedly	26
	Repeatedly	18
	Unfortunately,	13
	Apparently	11
	Vehemently	11
	Legally	10
Total	28 lexemes	3247

## **4.2 Nouns in Panama Papers Scandal verdict**

Based on the above analysis, in the selected data, some nouns have immense frequency as compared to others. In a corpus of 162, 044 words, occurrence of seven most high-frequency nouns, respondent as 662 times, family as 294 times, assets 226 times, money 194 times, income 169 times, children 156 times and investment 131 times in overall corpus, reveal significant insights into both the pragmatic and semantic dimensions of the text, as well as the contextual focus of the discourse. In semantics, nouns indicate that the case likely revolves around financial matters, resource allocation, and familial responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of economic stability and support structures within the involved parties (Housley & Maton, 2010). The high-frequency of “assets”, “money”, and “investment” shows the material interests at stake, reflecting the legal and social significance assigned to economic assets in the judgments. Meanwhile, mention of “family” and “children” point to the familial and social context underpinning the legal considerations, emphasizing the relational and emotional dimensions intertwined with economic concerns.

## **4.3 Verbs in Panama Papers Scandal verdict**

The presence of verbs in the corpus as “learned”, “stated”, “received”, “purchased” are associated with acquiring or obtaining something, often implying a transfer of ownership or possession, which suggested themes of exchange or material acquisition. “Crumbled” can often be described as a physical breakdown or deterioration, indicating a process of decay or failure. “Absconded” involves fleeing or escaping secretly, often implying unlawful or clandestine behavior. “Hastened” may involve hurried movement or urgency, indicating a sense of speed or pressure in action. These verbs in the corpus shows important aspects of the text depicting a range of actions related to transaction, change, or movement, along with a narrative involving transactions, deterioration, escape and urgency. They suggest a situation involving movement, materials breaking down, actions of acquisition or departure, and the need for quick responses.

## **4.4 Adjectives in Panama Papers Scandal Verdict**

Taking into account, the high-frequency adjectives in the corpus, “public” appearing 181 times, “offshore” 93 times, “Beneficial” 86 times, “Honest” 81 times, “Corrupt” 55 times, “Criminal” 53 times, and “Alleged” 36 times. The frequency patterns of certain adjectives in the corpus indicate a discourse strongly centered on public accountability and financial transparency, with “Public” appearing 181 times to foreground issues of public trust, public interest and legitimacy. The prominent recurrence of “offshore” (93) and “beneficial” (86) shows some text pre occupied with offshore assets and beneficial ownership, pointing to concerns about financial impropriety and asset concealment. At the same time, evaluative words such as “honest” (81), “corrupt” (55) and “criminal” (53) reveal an ideological struggle in which positive self-representation and negative other-representation are constructed through moral and legal judgments, which are consistent with Appraisal theory’s focus on judgment resources (Martin & White, 2005). The presence of “alleged” (36) times also shows a degree of legal cautiousness, as the discourse maintains hedging to avoid presuming guilt.

## **4.5 Adverbs in Panama Papers Scandal verdict**

The presence of “allegedly” 44 times, “admittedly” 26, “Repeatedly” 18 times, “unfortunately” 13 times, “apparently” 11 times, “vehemently” 11 times and “legally” 10 adverbs in the corpus shows caution through hedging, signaling that some accusations are yet not proven. However, the corpus maintains neutrality of legal pronouncement and avoids presumption of guilt. It emphasizes on

public accountability, financial transparency relying mainly on evaluative framing rather than neutral description. These adverbs function to signal varying degrees of certainty, distance, judgment, and affect, most likely suggesting that the discourse consistently negotiates responsibility, credibility, and perspective. The presence of “allegedly” and “apparently” reflects a cautious, evidence- oriented style that is typical of legal and political texts, while loaded words as “unfortunately” and “vehemently” reveal moments where the author’s attitude and positioning becomes visible. The pattern shows that the corpus focuses on events through evaluative language highlighting discourse embedded within judicial and political discourse.

**Table .2 List of Lexical indicator cues in the Cypher Case verdict**

Lexical category	Lexical markers (Cypher)	Frequency
Nouns	Bail	50
	Offence	42
	Information	17
	Code	17
	Circumstances	13
	Prosecution	12
	Affairs	10
Verbs	Learned	31
	Granted	13
	Accused	12
	Received	12
	Authorized	8
	Prohibited	6
	Twisted	5
Adjectives	Foreign	18
	Appropriate	11
	Criminal	11
	Secret	8
	Military	7
	Unauthorized	5
	Punishable	4
Adverbs	Clearly	7
	Directly	6
	Indirectly	6
	Willfully	2

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Voluntarily	1
Overlapped	1
Fraudently	1
Total	28 lexemes
	336

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#### 4.6 Nouns in Cypher Case verdict

The presence of repeatedly occurring nouns in Cypher Case are “Bail” 50 times, “offence” 42 times, “information” 17 times,” code” 17 times, “circumstances” 13 times,” prosecution” 12 times and “affairs” 10 times in a corpus of 9,000 words provides insights into its semantic dimensions, as well as its contextual focus. Semantically, these terms are closely related with the criminal justice system, indicating that the verdict pertains to a criminal case or legal proceedings involving offense and legal procedures (Fairclough, 1995). The word “Bail” suggests considerations related to pre-trial release, while “offence” and “prosecution” highlight the criminal nature of the case and the role of legal status, emphasizing the formal and rule-based framework within which the verdict is situated. They also suggest an analytical approach to specific circumstances that may have an influence on the outcome, highlighting how the legal reasoning is contextualized within particular facts and situational details.

#### 4.7 Verbs in Cypher Case verdict

Display of repeated verbs, depicts a lexical realization in Cypher Case verdict as “learned” appearing 31 times, “granted” 13 times, “accused” 12 times, “received” 12 times, “authorized” 8 times, “prohibited” 6 times, “twisted” 5 times, giving permission, receipt receiving, restriction and deformation which may reflect processes of learning, authority exercise, conflict, and change.

The presence of accused and received signals the recurrent framing of legal responsibility and allocation of benefits and consequences. Meanwhile, some verbs like twisted, though less frequent, depicts evaluative language, showing distortion and manipulation within the events described. These results show that the corpus is built on a discourse centered on legal actions, authority, accountability, and evaluative framing, characteristic of judicial and political narratives.

#### 4.8 Adjectives in Cypher Case verdict

In the selected text, high-frequency adjectives include “foreign” 18 times, “appropriate” 11 times, “criminal” 11 times, “secret” 8 times, “military” 7 times, “unauthorized” 5 times, and “punishable” 4 times in a corpus of 9000 words in total. Presence of “criminal”, and “appropriate” in the corpus, highlights legal judgment and the moral or regulatory status of actions, reflecting emphasizes on accountability and law enforcement (Martin & White, 2005). Adjectives such as foreign, military, and secret point to the discursive construction of external or institutional forces, that may suggest attention to power, secrecy and political stakes (Fairclough, 2013). Moreover, “appropriate” signals normative evaluation, pointing judgments about conformism to rules and expected behavior. This display of adjectives appearing in the corpus consistently encodes positioning, stance, and evaluative judgment.

#### 4.9 Adverbs in Cypher Case

Commonly found adverbs in the corpus are” clearly” 7 times, “directly” 6 times, “indirectly” 6 times, “willfully” 2 times, voluntarily 1 times, overlapped 1 and frequently 1 time., which discloses a discourse concerned with modes of action, intentions or unintentional, as well as clarity of

processes. Lexemes such as clearly, directly, and indirectly highlight the transparency or the manner in which actions are carried out, highlighting distinctions between explicit and implicit responsibility (Martin & White, 2005). The appearance of adverbs like “willfully” and “voluntarily” points attention to intentionality and agency, suggesting that the corpus encodes judgments about actors’ motives and choices (Fairclough, 2013). At the same time, less frequent adverbs such as “overlapped” and “frequently” shows occurrences of procedural and repetitive actions but with lower emphasis.

#### 4.10 Visualization of verdicts by Voyant Tools

Ullah (2022) studies Voyant Tools by using five basic areas Summary, Cirrus, Phrases, Links, and Context to analyze mid-level English textbooks based in Pakistan. Transforming the textual content into dynamic visualizations, the tool enhances textbook engagement and provides effective and engaging reading experience. The Summary tool, findings provide insights that software can quantify stylometric features like frequency of words, vocabulary density, and sentence length, while Phrases and Cirrus indicate significant themes, collocations, and repetitive linguistic patterns (Ullah, 2022). The Links tool makes knowledge graphs by linking important concepts, while the Context tool implores word meanings by analyzing how words are distributed across different textual contexts. This study underscores the prospective of distant reading to enhance comprehension, independent learning, and corpus creation in educational and pedagogical settings.

**Figure 3:** Dreamscape of Panama Papers Scandal verdict by Voyant Tools



Figure 4: Dreamscape of Cypher Case verdict by Voyant Tools



Figure 5: Links in Panama Papers Scandal verdict by Voyant Tools

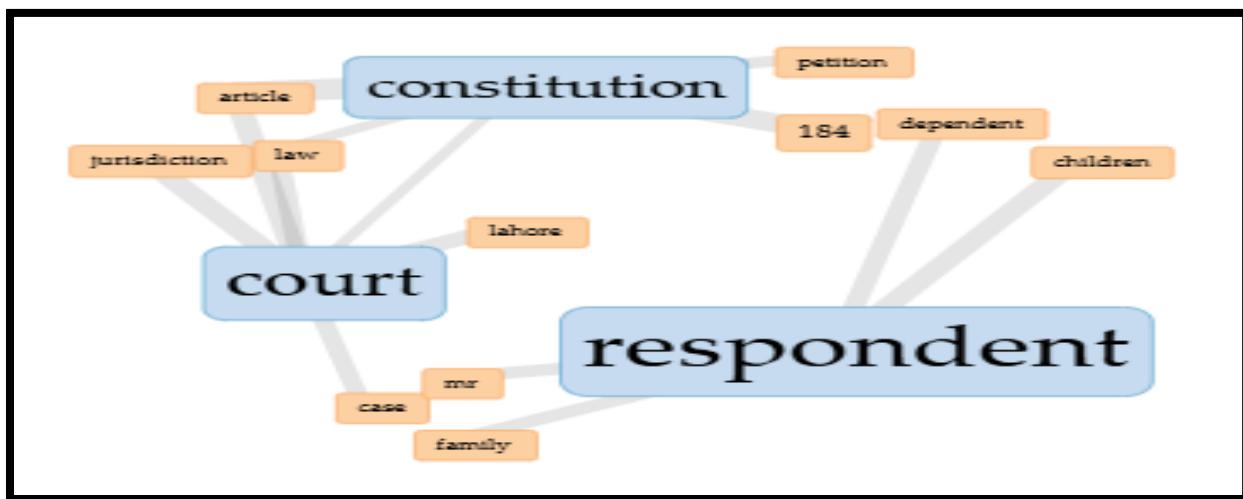
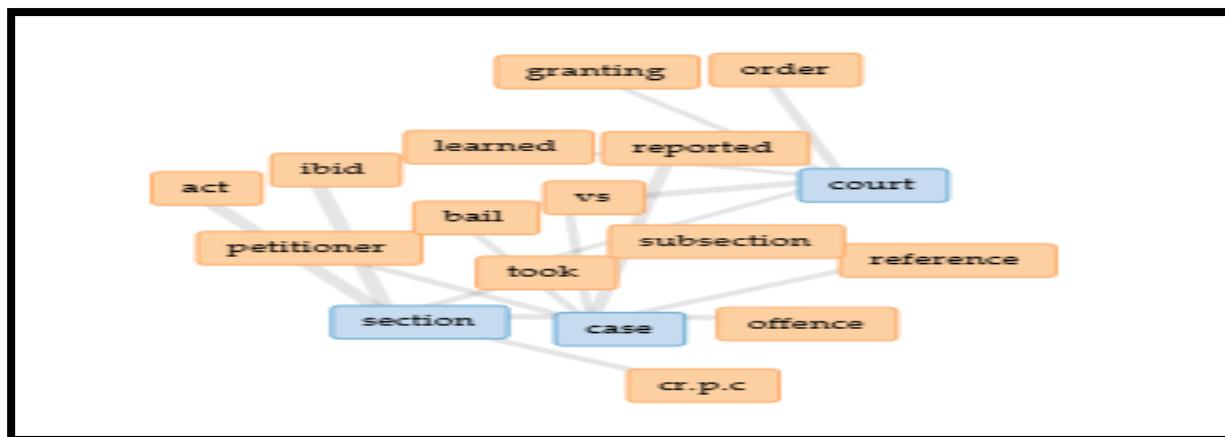


Figure 6: Links in Cypher Case verdict by Voyant Tools



## 5. Discussion

A corpus-assisted forensic analysis of language involving evaluative words across the two verdicts draws on established methods in corpus linguistics, including frequency analysis, keyword evaluative terms and distribution of stance markers. High-frequency nouns in Panama verdict like “respondent, family, assets, money, income children and investment” somehow indicates and emphasize on the matters related to financial misconduct, legal problems and familial involvement. Adjectives having significant presence in the corpus involves “public, offshore, beneficial, honest, corrupt, criminal and alleged” may indicates several qualities of human beings leading to be fair, unfair, involvement in corruption or criminal matters. Panama Papers verdict employs a more formal, legalistic language, emphasizing constitutional, procedural and substantive legal concepts, which aligns with a complex, document-heavy case with almost 162,000 tokens in corpus involving extensive legal reasoning. The visualization done through dreamscape in Voyant tools shows that Panama papers verdict revolves around geographical locations of Plato, London, Dubai, Jeddah, Doha and Quetta which indicates a broad, perhaps, global geographic scope in the subject matter. The corpus does have an indication of multifaceted and expansive scope.

The Cypher case verdict focuses on specific allegations and financial terms, highlighting a more straightforward or focused case, possibly with a narrower scope centered on charges like tax offenses, concealment, deciphering important information and asset related claims with a corpus of almost 9000 words. The geo- tagging visualization of Cypher case done by dreamscape feature in Voyant tools shows places like FIA police Islamabad, President Azad Jammu Kashmir, Lahore, and Nirmal Puri reveals a focus on geo politics and law enforcement in Pakistan concerned with official matters which may include crime, investigations, national security or legal proceedings.

This discussion suggests that the case narratives differ in tone, with the Cypher case highlighting and narrowing down on accusations and offenses involving investigations related to figures or events within different regions and cities of Pakistan, while the Panama Papers focus more on allegations and financial malpractices involving international geo-locations of Jeddah, Doha, Dubai, London, Plato and cities within Pakistan as Quetta, and Lahore.

## 6. Conclusion

The study explores a systematic investigation of evaluative words and 28 lexical cues with 7 nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs of two significant judicial verdicts in the history of Pakistan, by adopting a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach to gain insight into the linguistic elements and going within pragmatic purposes and semantic functionality.

The results revealed the difference in nature, tone and emphasis of legal narratives in both the verdicts. Along with that, utilizing visualization tool, the study also revealed the different geo-locations involving both the corpus. This indication of lexical patterns involving frequency analysis and significant indicative keywords not only highlights the perceived power of evaluation but also functions as a subtle reflection of underlying ideological biases embedded within linguistic choices as well as the difference of nature, and positioning of both the notable and critical cases.

## 7. Future Implications and Role of Language

The results not only illuminate the profound role of language in shaping perceptions of justice authority, and societal values within the broader context of society but also reveals the way Pakistani courts construct agency and dominance through assertive and evaluative language. The study also demonstrates that legal discourse is not merely neutral but actively contributes to legitimizing judicial decisions and reinforcing authority of institutions. The use of ideological

keywords and strategic lexemes patterns reveal how judicial language can decipher and perpetuate societal biases, influence public perceptions of political actors, and undermine trust in the justice system. Nonetheless, the reliance on moral and legal judgements, shaping attitudes towards corruption, ethics, morality, and legality. This underscores the critical importance of transparent, balanced and critically aware legal communication, as language choices in judicial contexts directly impact public understanding, trust, and the legitimacy of justice itself, highlighting the inseparable link between language, societal power, and the pursuit of justice.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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## Appendices

Word	Count	Word	Count
court	780	case	81
respondent	662	section	78
no.	624	petitioner	63
constitution	617	bail	50
article	493	offence	42
case	477	court	41
others	455	cypher	37
properties	405	state	31
family	294	government	30
law	292	article	27
respondents	265	person	27
person	249	counsel	25
matter	248	constitution	25
year	247	document	24
counsel	237	contents	24
record	233	order	23
assets	226	act	23
business	222	information	17
tax	221	code	17
statement	221	ibid	16
section	214	respondent	16

time	201
fact	200
funds	196
money	194
companies	188
reference	181
jurisdiction	180
question	173
factory	173
income	169
sale	163
evidence	162
children	156
federation	151
member	149
cases	147
basis	145
years	137
facts	136
disqualification	134
scmr	132
office	131
investment	131

similarly	12
simply	12
apparently	11
obviously	11
vehemently	11
purportedly	11
no.	11
legally	10
commonly	10
abroad	10
thereby	10
generally	10
best	10
respectively	10
likewise	9
consequently	9
surely	9
deed	9
essentially	9
fully	9
approximately	9

admittedly	26
statedly	25
merely	24
hence	23
on	21
herein	21
apart	20
duly	19
repeatedly	18
actually	18
once	16
below	16
specifically	16
least	15
directly	15
ameen	15
over	15
thereafter	14
initially	14
unfortunately	13
that	13

		Word	Count
aside	7	therefore	171
clearly	7	namely	96
therefore	6	well	82
otherwise	6	thus	78
well	6	far	46
directly	6	already	45
indirectly	6	allegedly	44
inasmuch	4	wherein	42
accordingly	4	above	42
pursuant	4	subsequently	40
far	4	at	37
hence	3	otherwise	36
together	2	clearly	35
wilfully	2	later	32
obviously	2	therein	29
duly	2	categorically	26
apart	2	admittedly	26
overlapped	1	statedly	25
fraudulently	1	merely	24
liberally	1	hence	23
above	1	on	21
		conjunctively	1
		were	1
		air	1
		categorically	1
		abroad	1
		inter	1
		generally	1
		cumulatively	1
		over	1
		that	1
		wherever	1
		solely	1
		alia	1
		thereof	1
		voluntarily	1
		along	1
		willfully	1
		cypher	1
		apparently	1
		petitioner	1
		strictly	1

Word	Count			
such	482	present	5	corrupt
respondent	330	bare	5	liable
other	266	punishable	4	political
same	226	relevant	4	criminal
relevant	217	large	4	false
public	181	concerned	4	national
available	162	indian	4	dependent
own	96	prejudicial	4	competent
legal	94	federal	4	high
offshore	93	naval	4	involved
beneficial	86	involved	3	true
real	86	proper	3	disqualified
above	85	subsequent	3	appropriate
present	84	first	3	independent
honest	81	high	3	concerned
fundamental	72	certain	3	private
various	70	wide	3	personal
different	67	various	3	late
constitutional	67	possible	3	alleged
first	63	documentary	2	mayfair
financial	61	retrospective	2	general

Word	Count
said	500
learned	358
made	334
filed	183
is	176
has	172
had	162
referred	155
held	152
stated	152
pld	151
submitted	134
mentioned	126
have	117
maintained	116
regarding	114
produced	112
submits	112
respondent	107
owned	103
received	103
foreign	18
political	12
official	12
public	12
appropriate	11
criminal	11
instant	10
bailable	10
same	8
secret	8
further	8
military	7
reasonable	7
classified	6
armed	6
-bailable	6
serious	6
applicable	5
unauthorized	5

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