

Content Analysis of Mission Statements and Vision Statements of Universities in Pakistan: A Corpus Based Study

Anila Afzal ¹

Abstract

This study conducts a corpus-based content analysis of the mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) of the top ten universities ranked by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, aiming to explore their major objectives using various corpus methods including keywords, frequency lists, concordances, collocations, and text-type ratio. A mixed-method approach has been employed for data analysis, revealing that while the majority of universities emphasize the holistic development of learners/scholars, some (UHS, UVAS, UoK, and COMSAT) show a lack of focus on moral development, as indicated by the absence or low frequencies of value-based lexemes. Consequently, the study suggests that meticulous design of MS and VS is essential to reflect a holistic approach toward intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, and social goals, collectively pursued by all stakeholders, emphasizing the need for universities to align their institutional goals with broader societal values and expectations.

Keywords: Pakistani universities, vision statements, mission statements, corpus-based, content analysis, holistic development

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Universities have long served as centers of learning and research, playing a vital role in the scientific and technological advancement of nations (Ozdem, 2011). As nuclei of teaching, learning, research, and technological development, universities continually require strategic measures to ensure the smooth operation of academic activities. In the 21st century, amidst global competition, this necessity has grown significantly (Ozdem, 2011; Ahmad & Masroor, 2020). Mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) stand out as the most critical strategic tools

¹Assistant Professor, Govt. Associate College (w) Qadirpur Raan, Multan

adopted by universities worldwide to plan and manage their activities effectively (Ozdem, 2011; Hladchenko, 2013). Through MS and VS, universities establish their organizational identities and publicly articulate their objectives, ambitions, and values, aiming to foster a corporate culture and enduring commitment to these goals among all stakeholders, including faculty, students, researchers, parents, and the community (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hladchenko, 2013). While the MS addresses the fundamental question, 'What is our business?' the VS takes a visionary approach, answering, 'Where do we want to be in the future?' Given that MS and VS serve as guiding principles for the planning and implementation of all activities within educational organizations, they should be meticulously crafted and disseminated (Akgemci, 2007).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The present study aims to conduct a corpus-based content analysis of the mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) of top Pakistani universities to explore their main objectives and ascertain whether these statements reflect the metrics—"quality assurance, teaching quality, research, finance and facilities, social integration, and community development" (HEC, 2015)—on which the Higher Education Commission (HEC) ranks universities in Pakistan. Corpus broadly refers to "collections of texts that are stored and accessed electronically" (Hunston, 2002, p. 2), and according to Xiao, McEnery & Tono (2006), Corpus Linguistics (CL) is recognized as "a methodology" (p.7) widely applied across various fields in recent decades. McIntyre and Brian Walker (2019) highlight the advantages of employing a corpus-assisted approach to data analysis, including (1) reducing researcher bias by providing authentic data, (2) enabling researchers to view the wider picture, and (3) favoring triangulation by involving multiple methods of data analysis. The CL methods used in this study include keywords, collocations, concordances, and text-type ratio (TTR). To facilitate this analysis, Voyant Tools, an open-source, web-based application offering multiple tools for corpus analysis, has been utilized.

1.3 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary objectives of Pakistani universities as indicated by their mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS)?

2. Do the MS and VS of Pakistani universities demonstrate a dedication to the holistic development of learners/scholars?
3. How efficacious are Corpus Linguistics (CL) methods in conducting content analysis of the MS and VS of Pakistani universities?

1.4 Delimitations and significance of the study

Due to time and space constraints, this study is delimited to analyzing the mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) of only the top ten universities in Pakistan. However, its implications hold significant value for academic development policies and practices. The research illuminates the primary aims and objectives of Pakistan's leading universities. Additionally, it underscores the importance of embracing a holistic approach to the development and nurturing of learners/scholars, which should be explicitly reflected in the MS and VS, upon which successful strategic planning relies.

2. Literature Review

The culture of developing mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) as strategic tools for business organizations emerged during the late 20th century in Britain. This practice was adopted by British higher education institutions (HEIs) in the 1980s and has since become an integral part of managerial operations implemented in universities worldwide (Ozdem, 2011; Efe & Ozer, 2015). Rooted in strategic management theories, the formulation of MS and VS draws from concepts such as organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1994), which emphasize the importance of articulating organizational goals and aspirations. Furthermore, the adoption of MS and VS reflects the broader shift toward corporatization and marketization of higher education (Marginson, 2000; Deem et al., 2007), where universities increasingly operate within a competitive marketplace and are expected to demonstrate accountability and transparency in their objectives and operations. Thus, the development and analysis of MS and VS within the context of higher education not only contribute to organizational management literature but also offer insights into the evolving nature of university governance and identity formation in the contemporary higher education sphere.

Exploration and investigation of MS and VS of organizations have been significant focuses of research since the 1980s, with numerous studies conducted to analyze the content of VS and MS of HEIs. A review of contemporary research in this field is provided below. Ozdem (2011) analyzed the MS and VS of seventy-two public universities in Turkey, finding that providing services and education to produce a qualified workforce was the major focus of the universities' MS, while becoming a well-known global research university was the key underlined message of the VS.

Ellis & Miller (2014) conducted a corpus-assisted content analysis of seven HEIs in Jamaica, revealing through keyword analysis that some institutions had very little in common. The study concluded that the mission statements of several HEIs did not clearly reflect the principles of 'Education for All', as conceptualized by UNESCO in 2013, necessitating a re-examination of their MS to align with global policy goals. Kosmützky & Krücken (2015) performed a textual analysis of VS and MS of German universities to explore their objectives. The study concluded that while most universities' MS reflected objectives set by higher education law, they supplemented them with unique images related to their historical and geographical locations to preserve competitive distinctiveness.

Efe & Ozer (2015) conducted a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of mission and vision statements of universities in Turkey, highlighting that historical, cultural backgrounds, and various political and economic conditions played decisive roles in shaping the MS and VS of these universities. Fitzgerald & Cunningham (2016) analyzed the mission statements of seven Irish universities' technology transfer offices (TTO), finding a primary focus on two mission components—target customers and markets, and principal services. Hladchenko (2016) conducted a comparative study of the contents of VS and MS of Ukrainian universities before and after the Revolution of Dignity (2014) to investigate the universities' state of transition and formation of their new organizational identities. The study concluded a stronger commitment towards innovation and research in the VS of Ukrainian universities after the adoption of new legislation in 2014.

Deus, Battistelle & Silva (2016) explored the content of MS of 30 leading Brazilian universities to evaluate them using sustainable education

criteria. Their findings highlighted that only a few universities stated clear sustainability aspects in their MS.

Seeber, Barberio, Huisman & Mampaey (2017) conducted content analysis of 338 MS and 291 VS from universities worldwide to investigate the factors affecting the content of these statements. Their study concluded that universities attempted to assimilate with other universities of the same organizational form while trying to differentiate themselves from geographically closer universities to create competitive fields. Ahmad & Masroor (2020) analyzed the generic patterns of MS and VS of universities from four different countries, revealing three basic moves with further steps for the performance of various functions.

Al Falah, Siddiqui & Raehman (2021) found that the MS of seven Saudi universities analyzed were not in conformity with the social and political transitions the country was undergoing, suggesting a need for universities to reflect technological advancements and changing philosophical orientations in their MS. The review of literature indicates that while researchers have extensively studied MS and VS of various universities worldwide, no study has exclusively analyzed the MS and VS of Pakistani universities. This research aims to fill this gap.

3. Methodology

The data for this study consists of the mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) of the top ten Pakistani universities ranked by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan in 2015, based on criteria including "quality assurance, teaching quality, research, finance and facilities, and social integration and community development" (HEC, 2015). The MS and VS were collected from the official websites of the respective universities. Table 3.1 provides information about the selected universities.

Table 3.1: Top ten universities of Pakistan according to HEC ranking, 2015

Sr. No.	Name of University	Category	HEC Ranking, 2015
1.	Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad (QAU)	General	1
2	University of the Punjab (PU)	General	2
3	National University of Science & Technology (NUST)	Engineering	3
4	University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF)	Agriculture	4

5	Aga Khan University (AKU)	Medical	5
6	COMSATS Institute of Information Technology	General	6
7	Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS)	Engineering	7
8	University of Karachi (UoK)	General	8
9	University of Health Sciences, Lahore (UHS)	Medical	9
10	University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Lahore (UVAS)	Agriculture	10

In order to analyze the mission statements (MS) and vision statements (VS) of the selected universities, Corpus Linguistics (CL) methods have been employed using automated programs. For this purpose, a software named Voyant Tools has been utilized for content analysis. Voyant Tools is a web-based application that aids in textual analysis of digital texts, offering more than twenty visualization tools that assist in generating keyword clouds, term frequencies, concordances, relative frequencies of terms, and Text-Type Ratio (TTR), among others. Corpus-based content analysis has been chosen as CL tools provide assistance in analyzing large amounts of data and diminish the risk of deviation by presenting statistically accurate calculations (Mautner, 2009; Efe & Ozer, 2015). The texts of the collected MS and VS of the selected universities have been combined to create a single large corpus to identify the main focuses of these statements. However, ten separate corpora have also been created, each comprising the MS and VS of one selected university, for the purpose of comparison. CL methods used for content analysis include keywords, frequency lists, concordances, collocations, and TTR.

A mixed-method approach has been employed to explore the data. Results of the quantitative data generated through keyword clouds, frequency lists, concordances, and TTR have been displayed using tables and charts. Qualitative analysis has been conducted through discussions based on emerging themes and patterns.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Keywords

Analysis of keywords is essential for identifying the main themes and foci of the text (Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013). The keyword cloud generated by Voyant Tools reveals the following keyword pattern.



Fig. 4.1: Keyword cloud for MS and VS of Top 10 Pakistani universities

The keyword cloud above highlights that the term 'research' is the most prominent word in terms of keyness, occurring 30 times within the corpus. This indicates that Pakistani universities prioritize research programs and activities. This emphasis aligns with the top priorities of globally renowned universities such as Harvard University, Stanford University, and the University of Oxford. The significant collocates of the term 'research' include 'development' (5), 'excellence' (5), 'ensure' (5), 'teaching' (4), 'national' (3), 'international' (3), 'conducive' (2), 'endeavor' (2), 'quality' (2), and 'activities' (2). All of these collocates carry positive semantic prosodies, projecting a constructive image of the term. Table 4.1 presents five random concordance lines of 'research' in the corpus.

Table 4.1: Five random concordance lines of 'research'

Concordance	
1	Functioning as a research oriented institution dedicated to academic excellence, open-mindedness and equality
2	creating interprovincial harmony, providing solutions through research relevant to the national needs,
3	shaping public and private policies, through strength in research and excellence in education
4	To attain international excellence in education and research and to produce highly skilled manpower
5	Ensure transparency in research system of the university

The next most significant word in terms of keyness, as generated by the keyword cloud, is the term 'quality', which is utilized by universities within the context of providing "quality education" (PU, NUST, PIEAS), "quality enhancement" (PIEAS, COMSAT), "quality of teaching" (PIEAS, UVAS), and "quality in teaching and research" (UVAS, UAF). The emphasis on the use of the word 'quality' indicates the universities' serious commitment to providing standardized education and research opportunities to the community members. The frequent collocates of the term used in the corpus all have positive semantic prosodies, such as 'education' (4), 'enhancement' (2), 'teaching' (2), 'research' (2), 'ensure' (2), 'effective' (2), etc. Table 4.2 represents five random concordance lines of 'quality'.

Table 4.2: Five random concordance lines of 'quality'

Concordance	
1	Offer programmes of international quality
2	operates on the core principles of Impact, Quality, Relevance and Access
3	to ensure the highest standards of quality in everything that we do
4	Improve quality and standard of education to conform to national and international standards
5	promotes quality enhancement of all its academic endeavours

The third most significant word in terms of keyness is the term 'university', which occurred 16 times within the corpus. It indicates the universities' self-presentation in terms of their business and future aspirations and goals, as evidenced by statements such as "UHS is a leading university" (UHS), "academic and research led university" (NUST), and "the University aspires to be the nation's leading Public Sector" (UVAS), extracted through concordance. The frequent collocates of the term 'university' used in the corpus include 'strive' (2), 'research' (2), 'development' (2), 'environment' (2), and 'committed' (2). All these collocates carry a positive semantic prosody, contributing to the creation of a dynamic, prolific, and constructive image of the term 'university'. Table 4.3 shows five random concordance lines of 'university'.

Table 4.3: Five random concordance lines of 'university'

Concordance	
1	Ensure transparency in research system of the university
2	University is committed to the development of human capacities
3	The University promotes learning environment
4	to make the University inclusive of all socio-economic groups,
5	the University is committed to building an environment that fosters intellectual freedom

4.2 Word Frequency

In addition to the previously mentioned keywords, numerous other significant words and terms related to academic, social environment, and community have been frequently used within the corpus. Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 represent the high and low-frequency words, respectively, in the corpus, which have been extracted by running a frequency test.

Table 4.4: List of Most frequent words in the corpus

Most Frequent Words	Count
Research	30
Quality	17
University	16
development, education, student	15
Excellence	14
academic, needs	13
environment, international, knowledge	12
national, ensuring, learning, teaching	11
faculty, leadership, society, country	10
innovation, technological,	9
highest, skills, economic, professional, maintain, intellectual	8

Table 4.5: List of Least frequent words in the corpus

Least Frequent Words	Count
endeavours, effective, cultural, committed, human, foster, global ,high, transparency, standard	4
advancement, aims, community, conduct, diverse, diversity, economy, entrepreneurship, environment, ethical, fostering, society	3
academia , achieving, acquiring, harmony, honesty, integrity, affordable, conducive, culture, equity, freedom, truthfulness, values	2

The tables above indicate that many of the most frequent words relate to academic excellence, intellectual development, and leadership skills, such as 'intellectual', 'professional', 'leadership', 'skills', 'academic', 'research', and 'technological', among others. Conversely, many of the low-frequency words are associated with moral and cultural values, such as 'honesty', 'transparency', 'harmony', 'truthfulness', 'integrity', 'open-mindedness', and 'diversity', among others. This discrepancy suggests that not all universities have given equal representation to ethical values in their mission and vision statements.

4.3 Word count and Token-Type Ratio (TTR)

Table 4.6: Number of tokens and Types of MS and VS of Universities

Name of University	Tokens	Types
QAU	120	85
PU	162	96
NUST	523	259
UAF	166	105
AKU	268	151
COMSAT	62	44
PIEAS	545	241
UOK	44	33
UHS	60	45
UVAS	89	66

The researcher conducted a scan to obtain the total number of words/tokens and types (unique words) using Voyant Tools by creating 10 separate corpora of the selected universities' MS and VS for the purpose of comparison. Table 4.6 above shows the total number of tokens and types of the MS and VS of each selected university.

It is observed that the MS and VS of NUST and PIEAS are the most elaborate, although the number of unique words (types) is less than half of the total number of tokens, as indicated by the Text-Type Ratio (TTR) represented through the pie chart below.

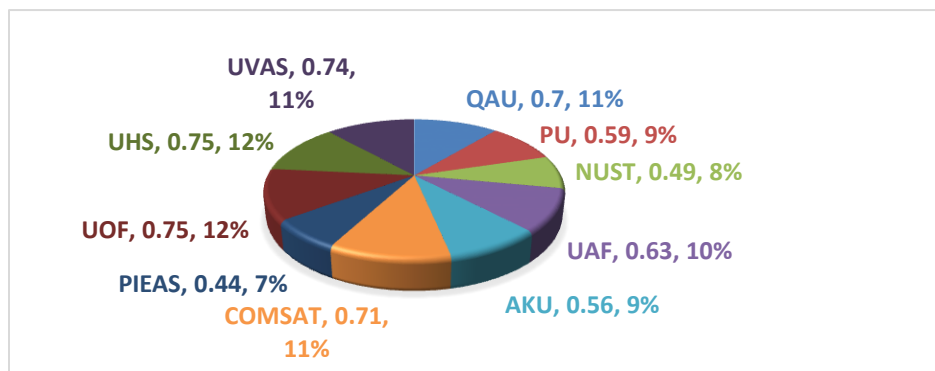


Fig. 4.2: TTR of MS and VS of Universities

By analyzing the concordances of the frequent terms used in the corpora of these two universities, it has been revealed that much emphasis has been placed in their MS and VS on intellectual attributes such as 'creativity', 'innovation', and 'skillful', as well as academic excellence represented by terms like 'organized', 'purposeful', 'progressive', and 'leadership qualities'. Additionally, moral values such as 'mutual respect', 'integrity', 'honesty', 'diversity', 'transparency', and 'fair play' have been prominently featured. This emphasis is also evident in the keyword cloud of NUST below. The repetition of similar words/phrases for reinforcement contributes to the low density of their vocabulary.

holistic approach towards community development, as much of the focus has been laid only on the nurturing of 'intellectual', 'entrepreneurship', and 'leadership skills'. Although UoK and UVAS have briefly mentioned "fostering of human values" (UoK) and "integrity and ethical conduct" (UVAS) as part of their mission, no such claim has been made by COMSAT and UHS, as evident from the keyword clouds of their MS and VS below.



Fig. 4.5: Keywords Cloud for the MS and VS of COMSAT



Fig. 4.6: Keywords Cloud for the MS and VS of UHS

5. Conclusion

The analysis of data reveals that the primary objectives of the MS and VS of top Pakistani universities are in harmony with the principles on which HEC ranks the universities in Pakistan. These principles include "quality assurance", teaching and research quality, "finance and facilities, social integration, and community development" (HEC, 2015). The keyword cloud and the word frequency lists indicate that terms like "research", "quality", "development", "country", "society", "national", and

"international" are the keywords of the MS and VS of these universities, indicative of their focus on advancement and development. However, the MS and VS of UoK, UHS, UVAS, and COMSAT lack comprehensiveness, with less - and in the case of UHS and COMSAT, no - emphasis on moral and cultural values such as "truthfulness", "honesty", "open-mindedness", "transparency", "integrity", etc. As the VS and MS act as guiding principles for all the stakeholders of a university who make a collective effort to strive to achieve the set goals, it is suggested that universities should carefully design their MS and VS. Due space should be given in MS and VS to all those aspects that are necessary for holistic human development.

To draw conclusions from this study, the researcher has carried out a corpus-assisted analysis. CL methods used in this study (Keywords, word frequencies, concordance, collocations, and TTR) have helped in generating reliable data. The use of automated programs has imparted this study with all the qualities of good research, such as replicability, reproducibility, and transparency.

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