

## Gendered Expression of Politeness and Power on Social Media: A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Instagram Comments

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### Abstract

*Language not only serves as a means of communication, but also a powerful device that expresses politeness and supports social distribution of power, especially between genders. This study aims to investigate how gender shapes the expression of politeness and power on Instagram, a platform where millions of people share their opinions freely and shape their online identities. Qualitative method was used to understand gendered communication patterns. One hundred comments (40 males and 60 female) posted under three public posts related to a celebrity, an influencer, and a politician were collected. The study Applied Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. The study identifies how male and female users differ in their use of linguistic strategies such as directness, emotional expression, criticism, praise, and solidarity. The findings showed a clear difference between male and female styles of communication. The male commenters tend to rely on direct, assertive, and often confrontational language to express authority and power when commenting on moral, religious, or political issues, whereas female commenters tend to communicate politely, using emoji, supportive phrases, and show power more subtly through moral reasoning and supportive language. The study reveals that Instagram is not just a visual platform but also a meaningful space where gender influences how people speak and react. The study also highlights how social media platforms are places where gender norms are redefined and questioned through common speech, emphasizing the highly gendered nature of online communication.*

**Keywords:** gender, power, politeness strategies, Instagram

### Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a powerful device that expresses politeness and reinforces social distribution of power, especially between genders. Men and women speak differs by their communication style or word choices and this is formed by social and cultural factors. From a young age, individuals are socialized into specific gender roles that shape how they should speak. Men are generally encouraged to be direct, assertive, and commanding, while women are guided to be more cooperative, indirect and polite in language use. These communication patterns are linked to the power dynamics in society, where men often hold higher status and authority, while women are often expected to employ more submissive roles. As a result, both men and women communicate often reflects the underlying power structures in their social positions.

Politeness as a speech pattern refers to social manners or etiquette in communication that aims to show respect for each other in communication. It functions to improve speech and includes socio-pragmatics study which examines meaning, form, strength and contexts that are sometimes necessary and sometimes not (Rose&Kasper, 2001). The knowledge of politeness also contributes to one's communicative competence (Kurdghelashvili, 2015, Saragih, 2016). The concept of

Politeness was developed by Brown and Levinson (1978), who noted that people generally behave in everyday interactions because they care about their public self-image. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the act of maintaining face in pragmatic courtesy involves actions that threaten faces and actions to save face.

Yule (2006) defines politeness as a practice of being tactful, modest, and nice to other people, taking into consideration the “face” concept, which is essential in linguistic politeness. “Face” in pragmatics refers to one’s self-worth or self-image that an individual seeks to maintain or enhance while avoiding being threatened or damaged (Abdul Majeed, 2009). Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish two different aspects of faces: positive face, which means the desire to be respected by others, and negative face, which means the desire to act freely without any interruption from others. To maintain or protect these aspects of face, speakers use some degree of politeness. There are three main types of politeness: (a) positive politeness, (b) negative politeness, and (c) off-record politeness. Positive politeness is one of the communication that is concerned with the person’s positive face. This strategy emphasizes solidarity, alignment with listener’s interests and goals. Whereas negative politeness is more concerned with the face-saving act which is oriented to the person’s negative face, which will tend to show deference, emphasize the importance of the other’s time or concerns and also an apology for the imposition or interruption. And off-record is another strategy of politeness where the speaker uses indirect language to hint at a request or intention, avoid a face-threatening act (FTA), and leave the interpretation to the listener.

Social media has completely changed how people express their social identities, construct meaning, and interactions. Among these sites, Instagram has developed into a powerful platform, where people can openly engage, voice their thoughts, and create online personas through comments and interaction. As interaction has become more public and regular, sociolinguistics study has focused on how people exhibit authority, civility and disagreement online. Social standards, cultural expectations, and gendered communication patterns all influence language on social media. Research showed that men and women use language differently, men frequently choosing direct, assertive methods while women exhibiting more cooperative strategies, emotional expression, and civility. In online environments, these gendered tendencies are often enhanced or reshaped due to anonymity, public exposure, and rapid interaction. This article aims to investigate how language reflects power dynamics between genders with a particular focus on how speech pattern such as politeness, assertiveness and emotional expressiveness shapes gender relations.

### **Statement of problem**

Although many studies have examined communication on social media, there remains a limited understanding of how gender influences expressions of politeness and power on Instagram. Most existing studies focused on one aspect of online behavior but it does not fully explain how men and women differ in their use of supportive language, criticism, moral judgement or ideological expression, especially in response to public figures. This study aims to investigate how men and women use politeness strategies and power dynamics when reacting to the posts made by celebrities, influencers, and politicians on Instagram.

### **Significance of this study**

Brown and Levinson’s framework on politeness and Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis model are used to examine how politeness and power are expressed in society, particularly in Instagram comments. This research is significant because it shows how language used by people affects

social interactions, mirrors authority and cultural values on Instagram. Comprehending this pattern can help men and women interact online more distinctly and respectfully. It encourages positive discussion and reduce misunderstandings. It also helps to explain how social media becomes a place where users express and challenge identity, power, and social norms in different ways depending on gender.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To identify politeness strategies used by male and female Instagram users.
2. To examine linguistic markers of power, dominance, or assertiveness within Instagram comments.
3. To explore how gender influences the use of supportive, confrontational or indirect communication styles.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Instagram user's express politeness in their comments, and how do these strategies differ between men and women?
2. What linguistic features indicate power or dominance in Instagram comments, and how do these features vary by gender?
3. How do gendered communication patterns reflect broader social norms of politeness, authority, and emotional expression on social media?

### **Literature review**

In the modern era, numerous social media platforms have emerged, allowing users to observe and evaluate others' politeness through their online expressions. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as one of the most widely used communication tools across the globe. Each day, its popularity continues to grow with the increasing number of users beyond serving as a medium for interaction; Instagram also authorizes individuals to share their ideas, opinions, and perspectives. Moreover, it has become an influential arena for political communication (Bossetta, 2018). Every day, people compete to share content on Instagram ranging from ordinary users to public figures, government officials, and even global leaders. Each post attracts thousands of comments that often include self-praise, hashtags, and expressions of digital literacy (Matley, 2018). These comments may convey positive participation, although not all interactions show politeness. For some users, the perception of politeness on Instagram depends on factors such as social distance (Ammaida & Muttaqien 2018).

### **Politeness theory**

One of the key aspects of communication is politeness, which frequently appears in everyday interactions. Politeness is an important area of study within linguistics, particularly in the field of pragmatics. Politeness exists as a social phenomenon closely linked to communication, and the strategies of politeness can be categorized based on the degree of politeness expressed in speech. In sociolinguistics, impoliteness is generally not considered a separate concept; the level of politeness is assessed according to social norms within a community. Hence, there are no absolute standards of politeness or ethics across cultures, as each language embodies its own cultural norm of communication (Yule, 2014). Brown and Levinson argue that everyone has positive and negative face. Politeness focuses on the effect a speaker intends to have on the listener's self-image or face. There are four types of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987) such as Positive politeness, which is performed to save the listener's positive face by expressing solidarity and emphasizing shared interests or common goals between speakers. Negative politeness, which

in contrast to positive politeness, is more concerned with face saving act which is oriented towards the person's negative face by demonstrating distance and caution. It also often adds the feeling that the speaker is imposing on the other person and use apologies to minimize imposition and avoid intruding on others' territory. Bald-on record is without regressive action, speaker ask directly, ambiguously. This action is mostly done with friends or family. While Bald-on record is with regressive action that includes positive as well as negative politeness. And Off-record is an indirect strategy as it gives hints, clues, and ambiguous utterances to the hearer. Politeness serves to interpret speech within society; it functions as a strategy to reduce or prevent conflict and to maintain smooth and harmonious interpersonal relationships through appropriate social behavior and evaluative judgments of social conformity (Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Critical discourse analysis investigates the relationship between language, power, and social structures by examining how discourse shapes and reflects power dynamics and ideologies. CDA focuses on how language is used to shape, reinforce, or challenge power relations and social inequalities. Language plays an important role in creating and maintaining power structures. It examines how discourse reflects and influences power relations within various social contexts, such as politics, media, and everyday interactions. Norman Fairclough, argues that language is not objective but is deeply immersed in power relations and social practices (Fairclough, 1995).

### **Norman Fairclough's three- dimensional model of CDA**

Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA is one of the most influential frameworks for analyzing the relationship between language and power. This model uncovers how discourse contributes to the production, maintenance, and transformation of social relations and power dynamics. Fairclough's Three-dimensional model includes textual analysis which involves the analysis of the text including linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, cohesion, and coherence. It also includes analysis of specific linguistic devices like metaphors, modality and transitivity, which helps to reveal the underlying meanings and ideologies within the texts. Second is Discursive practice (Interpretation) that examines how text is produced, distributed and consumed within society. It's an analysis of intertextuality and is concerned with how text circulate within specific social and institutional contexts and how they are interpreted by different audience (2003). And Social practice, the third-dimension links the analysis of the text and discursive practice to broader social and cultural structures. The dimension is concerned with the social effects and implications of discourse, particularly how it relates to issue and ideology. It seeks to explain how discourses contribute to the reproduction or transformation of social structure and power relations. It involves understanding of the ideological effects of discourse and its role in sustaining or challenging existing power dynamics within society (1989).

### **Gender and Power**

The topic of gender-based stereotypes in emotional expression through language was initially addressed by Brody (1997). He suggested that such differences stem from social structures, including gender roles and power disparities. He further noted that stereotypes about women's emotionality are often exaggerated and inaccurate. In contrast, Herring (2015) observed that in the sphere of computer-mediated communication (CMC), men and women tend to employ language differently. Since this study examines language use in CMC, the literature review particularly focuses on the gendered aspects of linguistic expression in this digital context.

Furthermore, Broadbridge (2003) found that men tend to interrupt and overlap speech more frequently when interacting with women. His research also revealed that men generally talk more, use stronger or more vulgar language and demonstrate less active listening behavior. Similarly, Van Baalen (2001) discovered that men often employ short and direct sentences as a means of asserting control in conversation. Her findings suggested that men typically adopt a dominant, analytical and emotionally restrained communication style. Interestingly, while men recognize moments of hesitation in their speech, women often interpret these pauses as confidence and clarity. According to Dale Spender in *Man-Made Language* (1980), men's dominant communication style stems from a societal structure that privileges male authority, reinforcing power dynamics within discourse. Likewise, Romaine's work in *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (2003) demonstrated that distinct speech characteristics are exhibited by different genders.

Chambers (1995) study explored how females generally possess stronger verbal abilities than males, which contributes to the observable differences in language use between the two genders. He emphasized that women tend to exhibit three key traits: a highlighted sense of social status, an awareness of social implications of linguistic variations, and a greater concern for politeness. However, Lakoff (1975) described these characteristics as indicators of a "language of powerlessness," advising that such linguistic forms though refined and polite. These are mostly associated with females and often considered less authoritative.

According to previous studies, gendered language reflects and maintains power dynamics in a diversity of social contexts. Deborah Tannen (1990) studied that men and women mostly have different objectives of conversation. For instance, females want to build a good relationship and keep the harmony, on the other hand, men are usually more concerned with showing dominance and power. As a result, men use more direct, competitive language while women use more collaborative and encouraging language. This leads to different styles of communication. Studies have also examined the function of language in professional contexts where gendered speech styles can affect power dynamics. In a professional setting, women's polite language may be seen as a lack of confidence or power; on the other hand, men's more direct and authoritative language is mostly linked to leadership and competence. (Holmes, 2006). Despite their qualifications, it is difficult for women to be taken seriously or to attain leadership roles which strengthen gender-based power imbalances.

Furthermore, Lakoff, R. (1973) argued in his study that language reflects and deepens women's exclusion and powerlessness in society. Social attitudes shapes women's language that sees women as secondary to men, leading them to use speech marked by politeness, insecurity, and emotional restraint. Women's speech often focuses on topics considered trivial and they treat as objects described by their sexuality and dependence on men. This linguistic system suppresses women's individuality and presents them as less serious or authoritative. The study examines these patterns through vocabulary (e.g., evaluative adjectives and color terms) and syntax (e.g., tag questions, intonation), as well as gendered word pairs like master/mistress or Mr./Mrs. The conclusion shows that true linguistic understanding must consider social norms and calls for language reform in areas such as women's rights, education and linguistics.

Gender and Discourse by Walsh C. (2016) presented a new approach to studying language and gender, focusing on how women entering traditionally male dominated spheres such as politics, religion and activism create new identities through language. The book critiques existing dominance and difference models in gender studies and proposes an innovative analytical

framework that blends critical discourse analysis with feminist theory. Through diverse case studies and accessible tools like charts and visual analyses, Walsh illustrates how language both reflects and shapes gender roles. Her work highlights the challenges women face in public discourse and moves beyond simplistic gender stereotypes, offering a nuanced exploration of how women influence and transform the discourse of historically male institutions.

Kozimovna T.Z. (2025) study explored how language reflects and reinforces gender-based power dynamics. To show how societal gender norms impact language use and power dynamics between men and women, he analyzed speech patterns and communication styles. It looks at strategies like emotional expressions, politeness, and assertiveness, and how they affect interpersonal communication. The article examined how gendered language maintains power imbalances and suggested strategies to encourage more equal communication using sociolinguistic theories and studies.

### **Language, Gender and Social Media**

The emergence of social media has significantly altered the study of gendered communication in digital era. These platforms enable written communication as well as non-real-time communication through images and videos. Teibowei, M. T. (2024) explored the relationship between language, gender and online communication in digital spaces (social media, forums etc.). The researcher used qualitative methods to examine how linguistic patterns, communication styles and the dynamics of digital platforms influence and shape gender representation. This study highlighted the need to use inclusive language, ensure fair representation and create online spaces where people can freely and genuinely express their gender identities. Another study conducted by Herring, S. C., & Kapidzic, S. (2015) investigated how teenage boys and girls on social media present themselves on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, blogs and chat rooms. The research is mostly based in the United States. In this study, the researchers discussed the consequences of social media use, profile construction, visual and textual self-presentation, profile visibility, truthfulness and other aspects of teens' self-presentation in relation to their gender.

Furthermore, Aydın's (2025) study examined how gender affects pragmatic language use on Twitter, Reddit, and WhatsApp using a mixed-methods approach of discourse analysis and frequency-based coding. Scholars examined features like hedges, boosters, apologies, emojis, and mitigation strategies. Findings showed that gendered communication patterns still exist online but differ by platform and context. Women tend to use more affiliative and indirect language such as hedging and emojis, especially in private settings, while men favor direct and assertive styles in public or debate-oriented spaces. The study adds to research on digital pragmatics by showing how gendered identities are negotiated through language in online communication. Similarly, the role of pragmatic markers has drawn increasing attention in recent years. These markers function not only to manage politeness and face but also to convey negative status, affiliation and emotional stance. For example, in the WhatsApp context, studies have shown that women are more likely to use pragmatic softeners and multimodal cues like emoji to express solidarity or mitigate disagreement (Aini et al., 2023). Moreover, Maros, M., & Rosli, L. (2017) examined how people use politeness on twitter and why messages can be misunderstood. The researchers analyzed 776 tweets from nine female students and collected questionnaire responses. Positive politeness was used the most, while negative politeness was used the least. The findings showed that misunderstanding can happen due to the lack of facial expressions or tone. They often occur because of bad language, unclear messages or exceeding Twitter's character limit.

To sum up, the previous literature above has revealed different studies that tackle social media from different aspects. Some of these studies have focused on only one topic, while other neglected the gender or power variable. The present study is different in this aspect as it aims to further investigate the use of politeness theory with its strategies and CDA for power, analyzing the comments of male and female users on Instagram under three different posts.

### **Research Methodology**

In this research, a qualitative descriptive approach was used to examine gendered expression of power and politeness on social media, especially on Instagram. Qualitative descriptive approach was used because the data consisted of sentences and phrases. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2011), the descriptive approach involved collecting data for testing or answering questions about the purpose of the research. This research aimed to analyze how male and female Instagram user's expressed politeness and power when commenting on another person's posts. The source of data collection was Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms in the world.

### **Population & sampling**

The population of this study consisted of publicly visible comments on Instagram written by both male and female users. These comments appeared under the post about celebrities, politician and influencers. The population included English language comments that displayed linguistic features related to politeness and power.

### **Sampling technique**

A purposive sampling was used in this research to select comments that were relevant to research objectives, and those comments were chosen that clearly showed the identity of the user, whether male or female. Comments that reflected opinion, reaction, criticism, praise, and disagreement were deliberately selected because they allowed clear identification of linguistic strategies that displayed relevance to politeness and power.

### **Sampling size**

The sampling of this study included 100 Instagram comments distributed as 40 male comments and 60 female comments from three different public posts belonging to celebrities, influencers and politicians.

### **Data collection**

The data were analyzed by collecting, selecting and classifying the appropriate comments that are relevant to the concept, especially the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson. The data collecting process involved the following steps: reading the comments on Zahid Ahmed's controversy about social media as evil & all influencers will burn in hell on Instagram account *galaxy lollywood*, Khalil-ur-Rehman's view on student-teacher marriage on the account *loug Pakistan* and Zohran Mandani's winning speech on the account *Washington post*. Relevant comments were then selected for the analysis and collected them by taking screenshots. The data was then typed on the laptop. The collected data were coded and grouped according to the categories politeness theory.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

First, the analysis consisted of the process of classifying the data into two categories, men's and women's comments. The language patterns used by men and women in the comment section of Instagram were analyzed by using politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's theory: positive politeness, negative politeness, Bald-on and off record to identify the differences that occurred in the comments of different genders. It was also analyzed how discourse reflects gender

expression of power, through Norman Fairclough’s CDA three-dimensional framework. Finally, data were analyzed to determine the politeness and power of gender differences. The findings show clear difference in how men and women express politeness and power in Instagram comments. The comments analysis of three posts: Zahid Ahmed’s critique, Khalil-Ur-Rehman on student-teacher marriage, and Zohran Mamdani’s mayoral victory speech highlights two main types of politeness strategies, the first one is positive politeness and the second one is bald-on record. Women commenters mostly use positive politeness, including compliments, supportive language, emoji and inclusive expressions. They express criticism indirectly, cautiously, and thoughtfully while using reasoning rather than confrontation. Their comments often show moral evaluation, empathy and social responsibility, carefully navigating potential face-threatening acts. Women express power through ethical reasoning, emotional awareness and concern for others, instead of using blunt assertiveness like men. Men, on the other hand, often use direct, assertive and confrontational language, relying on bald-on-record strategies. Men show power through moral judgment, strong ideological positions, and authoritative statements, particularly in political and religious topics. Even when men use positive politeness, their comments often carry evaluation or moral authority. Male discourse frequently positions men as moral gatekeepers, defenders of social norms, or protectors of national or religious identity. Overall, the findings indicate that men perform power through assertiveness, while women do so through moral and relational strategies. Instagram interactions reflect broader societal norms about gender, emotion, and politeness, showing that gender strongly shapes how people express power and politeness on social media.

#### Analysis of Male Instagram Comments

The analysis of male comments across the three posts, Zahid Ahmed’s critique of social media, Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar’s remarks on teacher-student marriage, and Zohran Mandani’s mayoral victory speech show a clear and repeated pattern in how male communicate, these comments are direct, full of moral judgement and often express strong ideological beliefs. Applying Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory, the comments illustrate a complex balance between building solidarity and performing face-threatening acts.

**Table 1: Analysis of Male Instagram comments**

Topic	Example Male Comments	Politeness Strategy	Gendered Power expression
Post 1: Zahid Ahmed on social media	“A sinner judging another sinner...” “Hypocrisy at its peak.” “He is very true... honest and mature.”	Compliment and support are used when agreeing (positive politeness) Direct and blunt criticism is used when disagreeing(bald-on record)	This show men take charge of defining morality, enforce religious/social rules, claim to have the “right” ideas and used direct, challenging talk.
Post 2: Khalil-Ur-Rehman on Teacher-Student Marriage	“Pedophilia is NOT something one should debate over.”	Mostly bald-on record; minimal solidarity; slight positive politeness in alignment against the speaker.	Men claim to guard social morality, make sure societal rules are followed and speak with commanding rigid tone.

Post 3: Zohran Mamdani's Mayoral Victory	"Not in schools... It kills the purpose of attending one!" "If you hate this man, you're my friend."	Positive politeness (praise, solidarity). Opposing comments are aggressive.	Men declare political, religious and personal beliefs as truth, act as defenders of their country/faith and show their masculinity through political judgement.
	"Fearless, resilient, presidential and a leader." "Goodbye New York... you also fell to the hands of radical Islam." "America belongs to Christ only."		

In the first post, male commenters alternated between supportive agreement and direct criticism. Supportive remarks such as "very true," "mature," and "honest" showed positive politeness strategies, including compliments and appeals to shared moral and religious values, reinforcing solidarity with Zahid Ahmed's stance. However, on the other hand, other commenters used bald-on-record statements to challenge his authority, highlighting perceived hypocrisy through comments like "*a sinner judging another sinner*" and "*Hypocrisy at its peak*".

The second post, which discussed Khalil-ur- Rehman's commentary on student-teacher marriage, highlighted strong moral outrage. Male commenters mostly used bald-on record criticisms. Statements such as "*Pedophilia is NOT something one should debate*" and "*Not in schools... It kills the purpose of attending one*" show an unyielding tone with little use of positive politeness strategies. Their sense of solidarity comes from opposing the speaker rather than supporting him, which shows how men position themselves as protectors of social morality. Critical Discourse Analysis indicates that this discourse creates moral panic, questions the speaker's legitimacy, and present male commenters defenders of social order, reflecting popular expectations of male power.

In response to Zohran Mamdani's mayoral victory speech, male comments were highly political, shaped by nationalist, religious and ideological views. Supportive comments such as "*Fearless, resilient, presidential and a leader*" and "*Mashallah! Great work Mamdani*" show positive politeness through praise, by expressing admiration, and supporting Muslim identity and democratic political values. On the other hand, critical remarks like "*Goodbye New York... you also fell to the hands of radical Islam*" and "*America belongs to Christ only*" express strong opposition, questioning Mamdani's competence, loyalty, and moral authority. These comments show male commenters as protectors of religious and national identity and claiming discursive control over who is deserving of political power. These comments are based on Islamophobic and nationalist ideologies. CDA highlights how such discourse shapes them, framing Muslim identities as threats to social order, strengthening gendered authority and power imbalances in online political discussion.

The summary of these three posts, males repeatedly show directness, moral judgement and strong ideological positions, using positive politeness only when they support shared group values. CDA reveals that these language patterns are embedded in broader cultural and societal discourses,

including religion, morality, nationalism and politics. Male commenters use language to show power, influence how others think, and maintain control over social and moral narratives. In short, this analysis shows how gendered communication on social media becomes a way to perform authority, shape identity and assert ideological power, that reflect wider societal expectations of masculine dominance in both moral and political contexts.

### Analysis of Female Instagram Comments

There is an analysis of comments from females in the following three posts: Zahid Ahmed’s critique of social media, Khalil-Ur-Rehman Qamar’s point of view on student-teacher marriage, and the last one Zohran Mamdani’s mayoral victory, which reveals a style of communication that focuses on solidarity, moral reasoning, and careful discussion of power.

**Table 2: Analysis of Female Instagram comments**

Topic	Example Female Comments	Politeness Strategy	Gendered Power Expression
Post 1: Zahid Ahmed on social media	“Someone dared to speak truth 🙌” “Bravooo 🍌🍌🍌🍌 finally someone said it like it should have been said!” “Stop moral policing and judging people. Munafiq tareen insaan.”	In this comment positive politeness is used to show praise, solidarity and alignment. Criticism is indirect but assertive.	Women show their sense of right and wrong by thinking carefully, using humor and making decision fairly. They easily handle disagreements in terms of respecting others.
Post 2: Khalil-ur-Rehman on Teacher–Student Marriage	“Ahm yeah if both love each other then why not? ❤️” “It is when it’s exploitation and manipulation... totally wrong” “Teachers are supposed to nurture the next generation.”	This shows indirect criticism but explains the reason, use of positive politeness in alignment of moral norms.	Women use their influence by judging what is right, carefully think about, and giving thoughtful responses. They show power gently with the help of logic and fairness instead of being rude.
Post 3: Zohran Mamdani’s Mayoral Victory	“Yesssss love this victory sooo much!!! Go Mamdani! Go New York!” “Finally a charismatic leader that dares to defy Trump!!!! 🍌🍌🍌” “Wise words and plenty of hope... but I fear Trump will put Mamdani in jail for no true reason.”	Positive politeness with compliments, solidarity, and inclusive language; cautious reasoning when noting potential risks.	Women take part in politics as well and share ideas and opinions by showing encouragement and hope. They influence others politely by assisting conversations through shared feelings and careful thinking.

In the first post regarding Zahid Ahmed, female commenters show a blend of supportive and critical approaches of criticism, often mixing humor, ethical reflection, and evaluative language. Positive Feedback, such as “*Someone dared to speak truth 100*” and “*Bravooo 🙌🙌🙌🙌 finally someone said it like it should have been said!*” reveals strategies of positive politeness, expressing praise, arrangement and moral and religious values has been shared with Zahid’s opinion. On the other hand, comments show criticism like “*Though I agree with what he says, we*

*all will rot in hell...*” and *“Stop moral policing and judging people. Munafiq tareen insaan”* illustrate supposed hypocrisy or inconsistencies.

Concerning Khalil-Ur-Rehman’s comments on teacher and student marriage, Female users were careful and relied on moral and social reasoning. Several responses indicated cultivating acceptance (*“Ahm yeah if both love each other then why not? ❤️”*), but most of the commenters focused on fairness, following the law, and the possibility of exploration, such as in *“It is when it’s exploitation and manipulation... totally wrong”* and *“Teachers are supposed to nurture the next generation.”* The above comments reveal the use of indirect strategies, what is right and wrong, and a clear reason to point out problems with the figure without being rude and aggressive, showing a gendered style of dominance exercised through moral argumentation.

In response to Zohran Mamdani’s mayoral victory, women show excitement, hope, and happiness in their comments on this post. Positive comments like *“Yesssss love this victory sooo much!!! Go Mamdani! Go New York!”* and *“Finally a charismatic leader that dares to defy Trump!!!! 🙌🙌🙌”* were used in polite and friendly ways of communicating, showing respect and showing a sense of togetherness. Some comments mixed praise with careful thought, for example: *“Wise words and plenty of hope, would Mamdani make America great again? Well, without the interference of Trump, maybe yes, but I fear Trump will put Mamdani in jail for no true reason and civil war will happen.”* Critical Discourse Analysis shows that women commenters use gentle influence, offering helpful ways to support. They handle risks and uncertainty carefully while promoting social and political values, instead of showing power through creating conflicts.

The summary of these three posts shows women show a style of communication that balances agreement and criticism, praise and cautions at the same time. They often use polite and positive ways of interacting to show support, encouragement and shared values. At the same time, they give criticism indirectly and by explaining the reason behind it. They used to express moral and social power without being rude and aggressive. Critical discourse analysis shows that women discuss social power through careful thinking, moral judgment and sense of community. This is different from men, as they communicate more in direct way and assertively.

## Discussion

The results of this study agree with long-established sociolinguistics ideas, which argue that gender shows how people communicate. At the same time, the data also shows that these communication styles change and take on new forms within digital environments like Instagram. Male commenters usually use a more direct, firm, assertive, and powerful tone, which scholars such as Tannen (1990) and Lakoff (1975) describe as a typically masculine way of speaking, or one that focuses on competition, authority, and assertiveness. On social media, this style appears through moral judgement, strong ideological statements and confident political claims. So, men often use Instagram as a space to maintain traditional roles of power and position themselves as moral leaders.

Female commenters, on the other hand, show patterns like the ones discussed by Holmes (2006) and Herring (2015). Their comments are more cooperative, supportive and emotionally aware. Women tend to be more soft-spoken when doing criticism, and they give explanations well

and present their point of view in a balanced manner. Women carefully handle the situation of disagreement that shows how they give respect to others. They maintain politeness in their tone even when opposing someone's views. However, this politeness should not be taken as a weakness. Instead, it represents another kind of strength based on empathy, ethics, and sense of responsibility.

Critical discourse analysis also shows that the way men and women communicate on Instagram is shaped by broader cultural and ideological forces. Men mostly draw on religious beliefs, national identities, and dominance that gives strength to their arguments. While women focus more on fairness, emotional tone, and positivity. These contrasting approaches show how both men and women perfectly use language to express their opinions. Each gender adapts its linguistic style to fit the fast digital world, creating new ways to discuss identity, power, and social meaning online.

### Recommendation

- Future studies can analyze a larger dataset from many Instagram posts and with different contexts.
- It can include multilingual comments to explore how politeness strategies differ across languages and cultures.
- It can also comprise multimodal analysis, including emojis, hashtags, and images to express thorough online communication behavior.
- A computational tool like a corpus can be used to identify broader or hidden gender patterns.
- Explore how growing gender roles impact communication patterns in younger vs older generations on social media.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that gender plays an important role in how people express politeness and power on Instagram. Female commenters show politeness through empathy, encouragement and positive feedback. However, male commenters tend to be more straightforward and confident, often convey strong and clear opinions or criticism. These differences are not limited to writing styles, they also represent general societal standards and gender related social statuses. Instagram is one of the popular social platform where gendered communication ways are displayed and strengthened through everyday communication. It also highlights the necessity of encouraging polite and inclusive communication among all users, regardless of gender.

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