

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD MADRASSA COMMUNITY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Social media has become an increasingly powerful tool for spreading (mis)information, shaping opinions, constructing identities, and much more. This study investigates the representation of madrasa students' and teachers' identities as constructed by social media users, employing a critical discourse analysis of selected content. The study takes an exploratory approach to examining user attitudes toward madrassas, their students, teachers, and affiliated religious scholars. To analyse the discourse, the study employs van Dijk's (2000, 2003, 2006) socio-cognitive approach as its theoretical framework. Through purposive sampling, specific posts were selected based on criteria aligned with the research objectives. The findings indicate that social media users often project a generalized and negative portrayal of the madrasa community, where terms like "Molvi" carry pejorative undertones, demonstrating how word choices can reveal underlying ideologies. The analysis highlights a prevalent critical attitude towards madrassas and those associated with them, often due to their religious affiliations. The study advocates for the development and dissemination of a parallel discourse that fosters tolerance and promotes positive perceptions of all communities.

Keywords: *madrassa, social media, identity, critical discourse analysis, sociocognitive approach*

Introduction

Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping modern societies by influencing identity, discourse, and attitudes. Unlike traditional societies that rely on physical interactions, modern communities thrive in virtual environments, with human interaction increasingly mediated through digital platforms. Social media serves as a powerful tool for sharing information, forming opinions, and shaping identities. It significantly impacts political ideologies, communal beliefs, and societal norms, as evidenced by its role in fostering both inclusion and division among groups (Nesi, 2020).

In Pakistan, a country deeply rooted in religious traditions, social media amplifies existing societal divides. Specific communities, such as madrasa students and teachers, are often targeted by online narratives. These institutions, historically centres of Islamic learning, are frequently misrepresented as breeding grounds for extremism. For example, the term "madrasa" has acquired negative connotations globally, particularly post-9/11, when narratives about these institutions shifted drastically. Similarly, social media in Pakistan has perpetuated stereotypes, with users often associating madrasa graduates with fundamentalism and illiteracy (Hashim, 2005; Azad, 2017).

This study explores the representation of madrasa students and teachers on social media, using van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (2000, 2003, 2006) as its theoretical framework. It critically analyses selected online content to understand the attitudes and ideological beliefs propagated by users. Findings reveal that language on social media often marginalises madrasa communities, portraying them negatively through terms like "Molvi," which carry pejorative connotations. Moreover, trends such as anti-Shia hashtags exemplify how digital platforms can incite sectarian divides (Diplomat, 2020; Dawn, 2021).

Historically, madrassas were pivotal in shaping Islamic education, with institutions like Dar ul Uloom Deoband and Nadwat al-Ulema leading educational reform in the subcontinent (Ramzan & Rubab, 2013). However, during the Cold War, these religious schools were politicised, receiving funding from global powers for their geopolitical agendas, further complicating their perception (Bin Talal, 2002). Despite their significant contributions to society, madrassas today face challenges in aligning with modern educational standards, resulting in limited opportunities for graduates. Therefore, madrassas are not only criticised for having outdated syllabi and a lack of modern education but are also reproached for failing to improve students' moral values. Furthermore, they have frequently been associated with allegations of abuse, including instances of paedophilia.

The present study focuses on the attitudes displayed by social media users in their posts. The researchers have selected discourse from posts discussing incidents related to the madrassa community. These posts and accompanying comments were analysed using critical discourse analysis to uncover underlying themes and ideologies.

Research Questions

1. What kind of identity of the madrassa community is projected through selected social media content?
2. What are the ideological beliefs held by social media users regarding the madrassa community as depicted in selected social media content?
3. What kind of choice of words has been used in portraying the madrassa community?

Literature Review

Media and its Role in Identity Construction

In the digital age, the process of identity formation involves constructing one's self in online spaces, where commercially produced media is accessed. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is an interpersonal and socio-cultural phenomenon that develops and circulates in local discourse settings of interaction. Thus, identity is first locally constructed, maintained and negotiated. It is linked to social or geographic categories such as nationality, age and gender as well as to local roles, positions and categorizations. Moreover, identity can only be understood with other identities, gaining social meaning in connection with other available identity status and social actors.

Based on Erik Erikson's psychosocial model (1950), the process of aging constructs a coherent and stable identity with societal meaning and value. Identity achievement occurs through investigation and commitment driven by a decreased reliance on parents and increased engagement with relationships in broader social spheres during youth and the transition to adulthood. Social networking sites have facilitated the establishment of an extensive web of social connections for young individuals, often numbering in the hundreds. This trend, coupled with the opportunity to present an elegant self-image to the large number of friends has raised concerns about the potential prioritization of superficiality over substance in identity constructions. However, more optimistic perspectives consider digital realms as offering valuable opportunities for self-elaboration among youth.

Traditional Media

Traditional media refers to the conventional forms of mass communication that have been present before the arrival of digital and online platforms. These kinds of media characteristically include print media, broadcast media, and other analogue communication methods.

The process of youth identity development does not involve passive indoctrination by media programming. Albert Bandura's (2002) Social Cognitive Learning Theory and related experimental research suggest that young people are active agents in mass media socialization. They actively interpret the symbols present in their media environment and

learn behaviors that are considered suitable, rewarded and valued by seeking out suitable and appealing media role models. The Media Practice Model (Steele & Brown, 1995) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Rubin, 1994) further support this perspective suggesting that teenagers' daily media partialities and practices reflect their unique navigation of identity concerns and personal interests. They selectively represent and reinterpret media content to express and affirm their individuality, preferences, values, views and principles.

Youth culture draws from mass media as a means to collectively construct what is considered valued and meaningful. Youngsters develop their identities by adapting to these peer cultures through social processes (Arnett & Larson, 1995). In summary, youth actively engage with media, utilizing it as a resource for shaping their identity, preferences and values rather than being passively influenced by media programming in their individuality development.

Social Media

The advent of social networking sites in 2005 brought about a notable reduction in the anonymity of popular online media environments. Notably, platforms like Facebook have emerged as effective tools for the youth to create virtual spaces, maintain past relationships or fleeting connections, and expand their social circles. This phenomenon is often referred to as "social grooming," encompassing activities such as sustaining friendships, monitoring contacts through public posts, tracking interactions and discussions, staying updated on social events and trends, and managing one's status within the network (Tufekci, 2008).

Social media is recognized for its distinctive language and debating culture, a feature that can be attributed to the lingering influence of the oratory tradition. This tradition harks back to a time when oral communication dominated and written forms were less prevalent. Remarkably, oratory, as the art of public speaking, served two primary purposes: to persuade and to explain (Ong, 2011). In the contemporary context, social media empowers politicians, artists and opinion leaders to craft extensive posts, often presented in numbered segments. Consequently, tweets with their defined character limits, hold the potential to reach a wide audience perpetuating the continuity of the oratory tradition within this digital realm.

The nature of social media allows its users to create connections with both publicly known and unknown individuals, facilitating the sharing of preferred content among peers. Nevertheless, it is essential to remain aware of the fact that the information disseminated through social media can be viewed by other users, rendering everyone, irrespective of their prominence, subject to public scrutiny (Tufekci, 2008). Consequently, the ubiquitous presence of social media in the public sphere has become an inescapable reality for individuals whether they are famous or not.

Role of Identity in Social Life

According to the research conducted by Gunduz (2014), the concept of self or identity is multifaceted, encompassing psychological dimensions such as a sense of belonging to a larger collective, feelings of security, and emotional connections within a social, emotional, or political community. Identities also contribute to diversity, as each innovative identity introduces its compatibilities and incompatibilities. In various circumstances and communication contexts, individuals may present themselves differently, leading to the emergence of distinct layers of communication, each requiring a unique identity. As virtual networks foster diversity in society, a reflexive society gives rise to reflexive identities. Consequently, the risk of stereotyping arises, leading to the proliferation of similar identities within a given community. This interplay between online and offline identity constructions, in conjunction with peer interactions, influences adolescents' self-esteem, highlighting the interconnectedness of online and offline identities (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011).

In the realm of social identity, the concept of bridging social capital has garnered considerable attention due to its illustration of the value of social networking sites in

accessing social resources. The robust association between active Facebook use and bridging social capital is highlighted, characterized by establishing functional connections with instrumental resources and information within extensive social networks, thus fostering identification with broad and moderately diverse communities (Ellison & Lampe, 2007). The convenient and efficient access to public posts within the networked public contributes to a sense of belonging and connectedness to communities that extend beyond regular face-to-face social groups. Furthermore, engagement in social networking sites can play a role in cultivating identification with specific social categories, including ethnic social groups. For instance, Facebook provides a platform for involvement in race-related discussions with a diverse range of individuals, thereby offering ethnic minority adolescents opportunities to elaborate on their ethnic identities (Tynes et al., 2011). Additionally, Facebook offers youth the means to construct a profile that reinforces their ethnic self-concept (Martin & Zhao, 2009).

Moreover, research by Marwick & Boyd (2011) suggests that the process of image management to large and amorphous networked publics on social networking sites encourages individuals to perceive themselves as brands to be socially marketed. This phenomenon underlines the development of self-presentation strategies within the online environment, shaped by the desire to project a carefully crafted image to the broader social network audience.

Theoretical Framework

van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a theoretical framework that researchers in a particular study have utilized. According to van Dijk (1997), this model outlines categories that are crucial for CDA studies. One aspect highlighted by van Dijk is the tendency for writers to hide the agent and their identity, particularly when the agent is engaged in wrongdoing. This phenomenon is observed when writers do not explicitly mention the responsible party or purposefully complicate their involvement. van Dijk also introduces the concepts of "self" and "others." He suggests that writers often attribute positive qualities to themselves or individuals they favour while assigning negative qualities to others or those they oppose. This bias in assigning qualities helps shape the discourse and influences how individuals are portrayed in a particular text. Additionally, van Dijk emphasizes that his methodology captures how these different thoughts and perspectives are expressed through various linguistic structures. These structures include lexical choices, grammatical patterns, discourse markers and other linguistic devices employed by writers to convey their intended meanings and shape discourse.

By employing van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA, the researchers in the research can analyze the text in question to uncover hidden agendas, identify biases in the attribution of qualities and examine how different thoughts and perspectives are expressed through linguistic structures. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which researchers can critically analyze discourse and gain insights into the underlying social and cognitive processes at play.

Research Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis as Research Methodology

The study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its research methodology. CDA is a multifaceted approach that explores the interplay between ideology and power within specific social contexts. It seeks to uncover how discourse reflects and shapes societal structures, particularly in terms of power dynamics and ideologies. Several foundational principles underlie CDA, forming the basis for analysing discourse. Torusdağ (2023) posits that CDA conceptualises discourse as a social practice, underscoring the dialectical

relationship between language and society. This approach focuses on how discourse—whether in text or spoken form—both influences and is influenced by societal power relations and ideological constructs (Wodak, 2024). Additionally, Wodak elaborates that CDA is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing upon insights from sociology, linguistics, and cultural studies to offer a comprehensive analytical lens. In discussing CDA's assumptions, Riyanti (2023) emphasises that discourse actively shapes societal norms and values, illustrating its pivotal role in the construction and perpetuation of social ideologies. Consequently, CDA is regarded as a powerful tool for examining the impact of discourse on society, providing critical insights into the mechanisms through which language sustains or challenges existing power structures. This theoretical grounding ensures that CDA is well-suited for analysing the attitudes expressed in social media discourse and their broader societal implications.

Text Selection

Data can exist in various forms, such as printed text or information retained in memory. In this study, Twitter and Facebook serve as the primary sources of data collection. The data is gathered from posts, public reactions to specific incidents, and user-generated content related to those events. The primary rationale for selecting this type of data lies in its widespread popularity and its significant impact on societal attitudes and behaviours. Below is a list of incidents considered for data collection and analysis, along with the types of posts and comments reviewed: 1) Rape and murder of 7-year-old Zainab in Kasur by Imran Ali in 2018. 2) Beating to death of 9-year-old Hussain, a madrassa student, by his teacher in Bin Qasim town, Karachi. 3) Viral video of renowned cleric Mufti Abdul Aziz molesting a madrassa student. Additionally, following types of posts and comments were considered for the analysis: tweets on twitter, Posts on Facebook, Reactions to specific incidents (e.g., outrage, anger, demands for justice), Comments responding to posts, Hashtag-based conversations (e.g., #JusticeForZainab, #MuftiAbdulAziz), Public responses to celebrity and politician posts/tweets.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Cognitive Analysis of Ideology

Wodak (2009) suggested that critical discourse analysts focus on the context while analysing texts and talks. The context in the traditional meaning refers the socio-political condition of some outgoing issue in question but context within the socio-cognitive approach is considered as mentally constructed. Context has two dimensions that control the ways in which language is used as a tool which includes local and global dimensions. The global dimension of the context includes the socio-political conditions in which the communicative event happens. The local dimension concerns the instant situation of the outgoing event, which means who speaks to whom where when and for what kind of purpose.

✚ “The mullah’ism needs to stop for good! It has done no good ever! [#Muftiabdulaziz](#) [#MuftiTariqMasood](#)”

The comment reflects a cognitive perspective by asserting that “mullahs” (referring to the influence of religious scholars) have “done no good ever!” This indicates the mental representation and belief of the commenter about the negative impact of religious scholars. It implies that their cognitive structures and beliefs influence their perception of the issue. This statement employs strong and definitive language, such as “need to stop for good!” and “has done no good ever!” These linguistic choices contribute to an emphatic tone and a clear stance against “mullah’ism” This reflects a critical perspective on the influence of religious scholars and suggests a desire for a fundamental change in their role.

van Dijk’s reference to the normative component highlights that evaluative beliefs are not solely based on individual preferences or subjective opinions. They are influenced by broader

societal norms and expectations, which can play a significant role in shaping how individuals form their evaluative judgments.

✚ ‘The True Face of Pakistan Religious Institutions...’

The comment suggests that the incident of molestation reveals a deeper problem within religious institutions in Pakistan. It implies that this incident is not an isolated case but reflects a broader issue. By highlighting the “true face” of these institutions, the comment brings attention to the need for addressing systemic problems. Religious institutions are often considered sacred spaces and are associated with moral values, guidance, and education. However, the comment challenges the perceived image of these institutions and questions their true nature. It implies that the incident exposes a side of religious institutions that contradicts their projected image of piety and righteousness. It’s important to note that the comment focuses on the institutions themselves rather than the entire religion. It does not condemn the faith itself but rather highlights issues within religious institutions which may not represent the core principles and teachings of the religion itself.

Social Analysis of Ideology

This dimension includes the structure of ideologies which is composed of two important fundamentals, the Microstructure of ideologies and the Macrostructure of ideologies which are responsible for the mechanism of social control

Structure of Ideologies

Ideology can be defined as the common(social) beliefs of a certain group of society. These beliefs can be acquired easily according to social conditions and with the changing interests of certain social actors. The social perspective of ideology helps to examine the social processes and structures that help to build and sustain these ideologies and discourse. The social manifestation of ideology is consisting of two levels: micro and macro ideological structures. (van Dijk, 2011). This is a theoretical distinction in practical usage both are interrelated to each other. Both types of social manifestations help construct an ideology. Ideologies are structured through the basic properties of social groups.

Microstructure of Ideologies

In the age of social media, individuals actively participate in discussions, share content, and express their opinions on various topics. These micro-level engagements reflect the manifestation of ideologies in daily life. For example, users may engage in debates, support causes aligned with their ideologies or spread information consistent with their beliefs. Microstructures of ideologies take a more concrete form because these are embodied in social practices. These microstructures of ideologies are socially constructed and vary from person to person. They are shaped by factors such as socialization, education, cultural influences, and personal experiences.

✚ “Stop sending kids to madrassas”

Analyzing the microstructure within critical discourse analysis involves examining the linguistic choices and their potential effects. In this case, the imperative nature of the statement indicates a command or demand, implying that the practice of sending children to madrassas should be halted. The phrase is straightforward, lacking detailed justification or elaboration, which can limit the depth of the argument. Considering both van Dijk’s socio-cognitive theory and the microstructure analysis, this comment showcases a cognitive perspective that associates negative outcomes with sending children to madrassas. The microstructure, with its direct imperative, emphasizes the urgency and necessity to cease this practice without providing further elaboration or supporting evidence.

Macro Structures of Ideologies

Ideologies are manifested at macro levels of society. Macro structures are abstract although these are key factors to determine the strength of any ideological action. In social structures, these are existing in the following manners

- Groupness
- Relations of power and dominance
- Institutions

Groupness: Ideologies are linked with social groups (van Dijk, 1998). It is a crucial characteristic of ideology. Ideological groupness is different from the common group because it consists of some shared beliefs which are perhaps unacceptable for other people, for example, people who are defending madrassa clerics on social media are facing criticism but on the other hand their ideological groupness is different from the people who are criticizing them. A key feature of ideological groups is that they have mutual social representations (van Dijk, 1998). These communal representations of a group are the foundation of the action and behaviors of group members.

🚩 “There jamias in a nutshell”

The comment demonstrates a macrostructure of bias by presenting a biased and simplistic portrayal of madrassas and jamias as negative entities. The use of terms like “in a nutshell” suggests a reductionist and stereotypical view that fails to capture the complexity and diversity within these educational institutions. The comment engages in essentialization by portraying madrassas and jamias as inherently negative or problematic. This macrostructure simplifies the diverse range of madrassas and jamias, overlooking their various educational philosophies, curricula, and contributions to society. It generalizes these institutions based on limited or biased perspectives. The biased portrayal of madrassas and jamias in the comment perpetuates stigmatization and marginalization. By presenting them in a negative light, the comment contributes to the marginalization of these educational institutions and the people associated with them. It reinforces stereotypes that can lead to social exclusion and discrimination.

Relations of Power and Dominance: Ideology is not only influencing the people who are following them rather it helps to organize the way that members interact with the members of additional groups. One of the most influential roles of ideology is to protect the interests of people belonging to the same ideology. Ideology is closely related to power relations and dominance in a way that dominant groups exercise their power to control the mindset of the common masses. This kind of dominance marginalized the members of other groups. As van Dijk (1998) stated

“If a group is in a fundamental relationship...ideologies have the double purpose of maintaining or confirming the status quo and at the same time providing the basic cognitive framework for arguments to influence its members as well as others that this situation is just natural, God-given or valid.” Such perceptive control can be accomplished through language use. Those who have access to publish the discourse are those who can regulate the ideological perspectives of people which shows the unequal power relations in the society.

🚩 “Not every person related to madarsa is perfect and completely following rules of Islam...There used to be some hidden black sheep... Ghulam mirza Qadiyaani also got education from madarsa...”

Institutions: Last but not least, ideologies have an institutional dimension which plays a key role in prospering certain ideological beliefs. This institutionalization helps recruit new members, formulating new principles and setting goals. This is also helpful to organize the resources to protect specific interests.



✚ “The only solution is to ban madrassas in Pakistan because in all maddaras this usually happens we don't need maddaris because there they only teach extremism and in Pakistan, maddrasas are the factory where terrorists are been prepared”

This comment expresses a strong opinion about madrassas in Pakistan, advocating for a complete ban based on the belief that they teach extremism and serve as factories for preparing terrorists. The comment uses strong language and negative labels to characterize madrassas. It portrays them as places where “extremism” is exclusively taught and refers to them as “factories where terrorists are prepared.” Such labelling stigmatizes and demonizes the institutions, reinforcing negative perceptions and stereotypes.

✚ “Nothing unusual...he was just following Madarsa curriculum”

The comment states, “Nothing unusual...he was just following madrassa curriculum.” At first glance, it appears to downplay or dismiss an incident involving a student who was molested by his religious teacher. The comment assumes that following a madrassa curriculum somehow justifies or explains the alleged molestation. It implies that such incidents are common or expected within the context of a madrassa. The comment may reflect an attempt to protect or defend the institution of the madrassa by normalizing or excusing the alleged misconduct.

Discursive Analysis of Ideology

Another important dimension of ideology is discursive dimension through which it can be analyzed. van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach to CDA underlines the cognitive processes involved in the production and clarification of discourse. It recognizes that discourse is not only influenced by social structures but also shapes social cognition and social representations. This approach investigates how discursive practices contribute to the formation, reproduction, and transformation of social representations and ideologies.

✚ “Why people do not talk about universities colleges and even schools These types of organizations are also involved in this type of act but the media show only madrasa.”

The social media user raises a concern about the media's focus on madrassas while ignoring similar incidents in universities, colleges, and schools. The comment suggests that there is a bias in the media’s coverage of such incidents. It implies that the media selectively highlights cases involving madrassas while neglecting similar incidents in other educational institutions.

Semantic Forms

van Dijk (1989) stated two types of semantic forms including global and local semantic forms.

Local semantic forms have the following characteristics:

Ways of Description: After the selection of a topic, correspondents need to decide how much information is needed to include in the text. This phenomenon can be ideologically motivated. For example, some people criticize the overall education set-up of Pakistan while some specifically criticize madrassa for the degradation of the moral standard of society. A text can include a detailed account of the negative characteristics of out-group members and the positive attributes of inside-group members.

✚ “Just a trailer of the reality of madrassas and Pakistani molvis”

The comment begins with the phrase “just a trailer,” which implies that the incident being discussed is only a small glimpse or representation of a larger reality. This evaluative language suggests that the commenter perceives the incident as an indication of a more widespread problem. The comment generalizes the incident to “madrassas and Pakistani molvis.” This generalization attributes the issue of harassment solely to the institution of madrassas and religious teachers in Pakistan.

Implications of text in Question: Implications are connected to the expressed information. Communicators need to decide on what type of information must be included in

the text and what is not needed for the text or talk. This decision is based on personal knowledge which is helpful for further interaction. Sometimes communicators leave out known information just to deploy effectiveness in the text.

✚ “Just a trailer of the reality of madrassas and Pakistani molvis”

The comment, by linking the incident to the broader notion of madrassas and Pakistani molvis, may perpetuate negative stereotypes and stigmatization of these institutions and religious figures. It implies that such incidents are representative of the reality of all madrassas and Pakistani molvis, without considering the variations and diversity within these conditions.

Presuppositions: Presuppositions in CDA are not limited to individual sentences but are understood as part of the larger social and ideological context. According to van Dijk’s approach, discourse is influenced by societal structures, power relations, and ideologies. Presuppositions can reflect and reinforce these underlying structures and ideologies, serving to maintain or challenge dominant power relations and social norms.

✚ “Nowadays MUFTI word is the spoiled one.”

This presupposition suggests that there was a time when the term "MUFTI" carried a positive connotation, indicating a respected religious authority or figure. It also implies that there has been a shift in the public’s perception of the term “MUFTI” to a negative or tarnished one. Furthermore, this presupposition suggests that the negative perception of the term "MUFTI" is a relatively new phenomenon, implying that it was previously regarded differently. The comment's presuppositions suggest a negative perception of the term “MUFTI,” implying a loss of trust or respect for religious authorities. This perspective could reflect a critique of religious institutions, their practices, or their failure to uphold moral standards. The presupposition that the term “MUFTI” has become “spoiled” implies a change in societal values or norms. This perspective suggests that what was once revered or respected may no longer hold the same esteem, potentially indicating a broader criticism of societal shifts or cultural changes.

Coherence at Local Level

This property shows the connectivity of sentences in the text or talk. A text is coherent when all the sentences are connected in a way that conducts a conceivable situation for the reader. Coherence is divided into two types: referential and functional, Referential coherence deals with the relation of facts with each other in the text or talk on the other hand functional coherence refers to how different propositions are related to one other within the text or talk. It is emphasized that coherence does not completely rely on the representation of facts in text rather coherence of the text is determined by the communicator’s understanding of these facts. Some inferred meanings are biased based on a biased mental model for example a person claims on Facebook that “nowadays mufti word is an abuse”

Following Facebook comments and Twitter posts are topoi in nature:

✚ “The True Face of Pakistan Religious Institutions...”

✚ “Their jamias in a nutshell”

✚ “Normal activities of seminaries”

f) Depiction of social actors

The role of social actors in the text or talk depends on how these actors are characterized in the text or talk. These are constructed in various ways which evoke different social, political and religious implications. For the illustration of social actors specific cultural and religious groups play their role which can be ideologically motivated.

✚ “Alas! What kind of religious preaching would have been imparted by a person in this position? Pity to those people who follow such kind of miscreants instead of their conscience.”

The comment suggests that the teacher holds a position of authority within the madrassa and questions the type of religious teachings they might have imparted. The teacher represents an authority figure who has abused their position and violated the trust placed in them. The commenter expresses their emotional response to the incident and raises questions about the nature of religious teachings provided by someone in such a position. The commenter represents an individual reacting to the news and expressing their opinion.

Modality

Machin and Mayr (2012) define modality as an expression which is employed by the communicator in text or talk to show their commitment to what they talk and write. It allows the communicator to express their attitudes, opinions, beliefs and valuations regarding the information they are presenting. It is useful to express the level of certainty in the text or talk. During the advocacy of their opinion, communicators can use high or low modality. Modality includes mental verbs (I think, I believe) modal verbs (may, might, could, will) and modal adjectives (probably, certainly, likely).

✚ “I have seen this kind of punishment in madrassa. It must be stopped”

The phrase “I have seen” indicates personal experience and serves as a modal expression that conveys certainty and authenticity. The use of “I” emphasizes the personal perspective of the tweeter, suggesting firsthand knowledge or witnessing of similar punishments in madrassas. The phrase “this kind of” denotes a specific type of punishment, implying that it is not an isolated incident. The choice of “kind” suggests a recurring pattern or a recognized practice. The use of “punishment” implies a negative evaluation and disapproval of the disciplinary measures employed in madrassas. The modal expression “it must be stopped” indicates a strong sense of obligation and necessity. The use of “must” signifies a moral imperative and a call to action. It reflects the tweeter’s firm belief that the practice of such punishments needs to cease.

Actions

An essential element of discourse including semantic forms and linguistic structures is the action which is accomplished through the text or talk. Particular statements regarding certain issues have definite consequences followed by actions. Actions are accomplished through speech acts in the form of promises, declarations, threats or allegations.

✚ “Hang this cleric. This is the solution. Even the EU will not intervene in this matter as this is, unfortunately, a so-called Islamic Cleric. I did not see a word from the Islamic political parties or Wafaq ul Madaras.”

Above mentioned comment contains several elements that can be analyzed concerning actions demanded by a common social media user for a religious teacher who was involved in some immoral activities, a sensitive issue highlighted on social media. The following actions are required according to the given statement. “Hang this cleric. This is the solution.” This structure presents a direct and explicit demand for action, suggesting that the cleric involved in the incident should be executed. The use of the imperative verb “hang” indicates a call for severe punishment as a solution to address the situation. “Even the EU will not intervene in this matter.” This structure asserts that external entities, such as the European Union (EU), would not involve themselves in the issue.

✚ “Took decades for the West to respond to such cases in the clergy. It will be centuries before we take action against untouchable deen k Thekedaar”

However, it is important to note that critical discourse analysis should also consider the validity and evidence supporting the claims made in the tweet. Without specific details or

evidence, it is challenging to evaluate the accuracy of the claims about response times or the perceived untouchability of certain individuals within the religious context. The element of sensitivity is also included in such matters.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that negative social media content targeting madrassas must be effectively addressed, as it significantly impacts the mental well-being of students, resulting in emotional distress, diminished self-esteem, and academic challenges. Such content also fosters stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion, exacerbating their marginalisation. To mitigate these effects, it is essential to create supportive environments, promote positive online behaviour, and provide mental health support to safeguard students. Drawing on the study's findings, the research recommends that madrassas take a proactive approach to managing their social media presence. This involves establishing official accounts, consistently updating content, and responding to inquiries with professionalism. Sharing uplifting narratives, such as student achievements, community outreach initiatives, and educational activities, can help counter negative portrayals. Additionally, showcasing community engagement efforts, including charitable activities and collaborations with local organisations, can enhance their public image. Providing detailed information about curricula, teaching methodologies, and the holistic education offered by madrassas can further dispel misconceptions. Testimonials from students and parents highlighting positive experiences can serve as a powerful tool in reshaping public perceptions. Addressing concerns constructively, responding to valid critiques, and demonstrating transparency in areas such as governance, accreditation, and child protection policies can build credibility and trust. Finally, fostering relationships with local media to ensure balanced coverage and promoting transparency in madrassas' operations are essential steps towards establishing a more positive and accurate representation of these institutions.

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