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RESEARCH PAPER

Political Vlogs on YouTube and their Role in the Promotion of Hate Speech

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ABSTRACT

Digital media became a significant tool for political communication and citizen journalists became more active on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, and these platforms emerged as a major source of political information. These citizen journalists are disseminating the news and their analysis in the form of Vlogs on YouTube. The purpose of this study is to study the perception of YouTube viewers about hate speech in political Vlogs uploaded by Pakistani YouTubers and the mediating role of political discourse. A quantitative method of survey Interviews is used to analyze the randomly selected (*N = 400*) YouTube viewers. This study investigated the Political Discourse positively mediating the correlation between watching political Vlogs on YouTube and Hate speech in viewers. According to their attitude, political beliefs, and exposure, citizen journalists actively promote political speeches and messages through YouTube videos.

| **Keywords:** | Digital Media, Hate Speech, Political Discourse, Political Videos, YouTube |

Introduction

Worldwide political and civic initiatives to lessen its prevalence and lessen its effects witness the fact that hate speech has become an issue in communities across the world. A "panoply" of varying meanings is linked to the term's acceptance in public discourse, and there is still no clear agreement on the fundamental elements of hate speech. Hate speech has become a problem in communities all around the world, as seen by global governmental and civic movements to minimize its prevalence and lessen its impact. The term's acceptability in public discourse is associated with a "panoply" of several interpretations, and there is still no unambiguous consensus on the essential components of hate speech. Citizen Journalism and civic culture are very interrelated and somehow depend on each other in any society. Worldwide globalization gives significant importance to citizen journalism to gather and deliver the news. Along with this citizen journalism provides an opportunity for local authorities to proper functioning as well as civic life (Wall, 2015). The Internet significantly impacts every aspect of life and has made the world a smaller place. It has also become an integral part of people's daily lives. Social media has completely changed how people communicate with each other (Mahmood & Shahzad, 2023).

Public, participatory, or guerrilla journalism are other terms for citizen journalism. Other names for citizen journalism include public, participatory, or guerilla journalism. Public contribution in gathering, analyzing, and reporting the news and information for social media as the destination is a growing trend in journalism. Digital journalism without the control of a traditional "editor" to smooth out or filter out potential inconsistencies in the reporting is known as citizen journalism. Because only the citizen can decide what is newsworthy at any given time, citizen journalism is commonly referred to in this way. For journalists, it has taken on the traits of a "rebel" or "protest" media when choosing what is and really should be newsworthy (Okedi & Enyindah, 2022). The scholars have different perceptions about hate speech and no universal elaboration of the term hate speech. It can target any person, group, minority, race, and religion. UN highlighted hate speech as an

offense constructed on inherent individualities, like race, gender, parties, nationality, or group (Di Fátima, Branco, et al., 2023).

Modern technologies are changing human behavior, beliefs, and social reality. Now in the digitized world citizen journalism has been replaced by new media or social media. Via YouTube vlogs, blogs, Facebook videos, status and posts, and online journalism, these are all now representatives of modern Citizen Journalism. Now, if any strong organization or political party wants to convey its stance, they use social media. In Pakistan, many local citizens have created social media accounts and channels to report local news and information.

Political Vlogs and Hate Speech

The root causes of hate speech in Pakistan are many but the differences in political views and ethnicity are most prominent. Every vlogger or online citizen journalist makes videos to support their favorite part and group and spreads hate for other parties and groups via misinformation. Any application of electronic communications technology to disseminate information or messages that are racially hateful may be referred to as "digitized hate speech." These electronic communications technologies include the Internet, additional computer and mobile phone-based information technologies, social networking sites, blogs, Instagram, online chatting, and e-mail such as WhatsApp (Rao, 2020). Thanks to these technologies, more people than ever before in Pakistan's history can reach and affect sizable audiences. Both those promoting racial hatred and those who favor social reform can now increase the size, variety, and location of their target population thanks to digital media channels. The globalization of information technology has been accompanied by a steady rise, though digital media platforms offer a variety of transmission choices and are rapidly developing (Montalvo et al., 2010).

Political Discourse and Hate Speech

A relatively recent concept, hate speech refers to emotional responses to presented content. Hate speech's primary purpose is that it can alter the emotional and behavioral state of those who experience it. Individual differences may propagate racist ideas and treat minorities in various ways, and the mass media's global reach has become a severe threat to both national and international security (Konieczny, 2023). The post by Geoffrey and Harwell in The Washington Post on December 28, 2018, in which they termed the year a "Year of Online Hate," indicates the seriousness of this issue. They claimed that Facebook reported removing around 3 million hateful statements between July and September 2018 and the number rose to 7 million between July and September 2019 to maintain transparency. In contrast, YouTube also took down 1 million videos and 17,000 hate speech channels up until June 2019 for violating its policies against harassment, cyberbullying, and offensive or violent content (Ranawat, n.d.).

Politics everywhere, especially in Pakistan, depends on the effective execution of political tasks through linguistic manipulation. Politicians strategically employ political speech to influence public opinion to get the results they want. Political discourse allows politicians to accomplish their targeted communicative goals because they go to great lengths to use their linguistic abilities to influence the target audience and achieve political objectives (Iqbal, 2013). Social Networking Sites (SNS) are the platforms that users of the internet use the most. The demonstrations against the Iranian election were referred to as a "Twitter revolution" due to Twitter's active involvement in forming public opinion. The Arab Spring and the Occupy movement were both often and successfully used SNS. It is criticized that activism should not be mobilized via Facebook or Twitter, despite the potential importance of SNS in this regard being recognized (Ansari, 2012).

On one hand, keyboard warriors are busy on social media making profane comments regarding the personal lives of the opposition party's representatives. On the other hand, political leaders also address each other using derogatory titles and aggressive language for the other party's supporters. But in the case of e-political hate speech, since politicians are public figures, they can't abuse or threaten other people with unidentifiable IDs on social media. Social media happens to be a stage where politicians are actors and are meant to perform according to the script they are being assigned. Slogans, photos, and hashtags are the props they use, and the audience is their supporter or opponent (Noor, 2021).

Literature Review

Is it feasible to pinpoint the exact moment "citizen journalism" first entered the public lexicon? Similarly, we might argue at what point it becomes journalistic (Allan et al., 2009). It is hardly unusual that there are numerous variations of citizen journalism throughout Asia, a massive continent with a wide diversity of governance mechanisms. Few things can be taken for granted in nations where political pluralism is frequently constrained by authoritarian leadership, where opposing ideas of "citizenship" and "journalism" resonate, occasionally in surprising ways (Allan, 2009). Despite multiple major citizen journalism initiatives over the past 15 years, citizen journalism has struggled to gain a high profile in its various forms. This is a consequence of the mainstream media's dominance, but more importantly, it is a result of the relatively recent phenomenon of universal access to high-speed Internet (Zeng et al., 2019).

Radio and television, which are examples of traditional mass media, are no longer as enticing to individuals, particularly younger individuals, as they once were. The unbalanced upward movement of content in mainstream media with recipients who are passive at the other end has been replaced by the unbalanced horizontal flow of knowledge in social media networks with engaged consumers at the far end. Except for changing a channel or switching off the device, viewers of mainstream media are forced to observe and hear the content provided by the media administration. However, users are free to indulge in anything they want, whenever they want, and can even share them with other users, thanks to current communication and information networks (Jan et al., 2019).

Ethnic conflicts are typically a sign that the disputing parties lack communication and goodwill. The prominence and position-taking that result when opposing viewpoints are exposed in the media only serve to intensify the dispute. The ease with which everyone may express themselves through digital media, free from restrictions or limitations, has led to an increase in the outpouring of racial hatred on the internet. Today, the rebirth of citizen journalism and grassroots communication is due to the spread of new technologies (Allan & Thorsen, 2009). In 2013, citizen journalism significantly contributed to the emergence of ethnic intolerance and the speed at which it spread among Kenyans. The public was constantly exposed to nasty and derogatory representations of politicians and racial groups, as well as the notion that it was OK to publicly communicate and express hatred online. The definitions and terminology we use in this paper to discuss digital hate speech in Kenya are presented in the section after this (Kimotho & Nyaga, 2016).

In the Pakistani context, political hate speech can easily be heard and seen in many instances. The political figures use inflammatory language and make highly personalized comments against their opponents to please a certain kind of audience. The goal of politicians employing such hateful rhetoric is not to sound boring. In the current age of digital media. Pakistani politics has been stirring up political cynicism ending up invigorating hate-filled rhetoric (Shafiq, 2021).

Newspapers, radio, and television remained the only major media outlets for political discourse and news reporting a few years ago. The speed of communication has

increased since the advent of the internet and mobile devices. However, the significant increase in communication just started in the past ten years as a result of the introduction of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WeChat. These social networks drew billions of individuals together and gave them a platform for unrestricted interaction without conventional communication constraints (Canter, 2013).

Justification / Rational of the Project

Pakistan is facing its worst political instability and polarization since the start of the year 2022 and the main source of Mass Media is converted into digital media. This modern source of information is in the hands of non-professional journalists who analyze political events and situations without any gatekeeping. These digital media content creators are specialized in the use of digital technologies but they are not skilled in the actual limits of freedom of expression, recently they may promote political intolerance through hate speech in the sugarcoating of political awareness and freedom of speech in the digital media viewers. Studying the influence of these political Vlogs on YouTube is very timely.

Hypotheses

H_1 Watching Political Vlogs on YouTube is positively correlated with Hate speech among the viewers.

H_2 Political Discourse in Vlogs is positively correlated with Hate speech among the viewers.

H_3 Political Discourse is positively moderating the correlation between watching political Vlogs on YouTube and Hate speech in viewers.
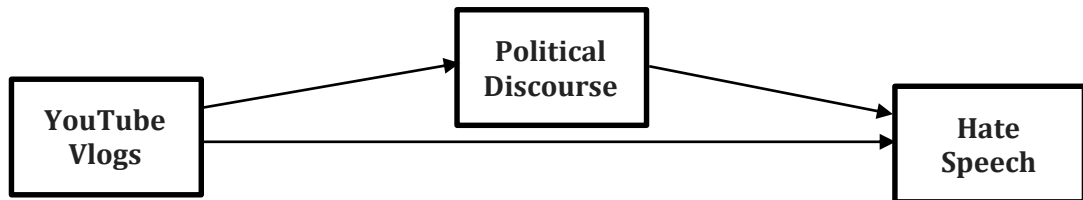
YouTube Vlogs on social media are the independent variables and Hate speech is the dependent variable in H1. According to the H_1, the rise in viewership of political Vlogs is positively associated with Hate speech by Vlogs on YouTube and, these Vlogs are involved in hate speech when they are posting, and sharing political content. In H2, Political discourse in Vlogs is the independent variable and hate speech is the dependent variable, if Vlogs have political content, it increases the hate speech. According to the H3, Political discourse is a mediating variable that is positively mediating the relationship between Political Vlogs (IV) and Hate speech (DV).

Material and Methods

In the current study, YouTube viewers both male and female (*N=400*) randomly participated in the quantitative survey. All the respondents were from different parts of central Punjab. To collect the data a questionnaire was designed on Google Forms and the form link was shared on social media groups. The questionnaire was designed in Urdu and English language because English is a second language and people are not very fluent in reading.

Table 1
Demographics Profile of Respondents (N = 400)

Demographic Variables		N	Number of Respondents (%)
Gender	Male	207	51.8%
	Female	193	48.3%
Age	18 to 30	301	75.3%
	31 to 40	76	19.0%
	41 to 50	3	0.8%
	Above 50 years	15	3.8%
	Prefer not to say	5	1.3%
Education	School	5	1.3%
	College	30	8.8%
	Bachelor's	190	47.5%
	Master's	163	40.8%
	PhD	12	3.0%

Table 1 highlighted the demographic profile of the respondents where male respondents (N = 207) 51.8% are slightly higher than female respondents (N = 193) 48.3%. The table shows that the age of 75.3% of respondents are 18 to 30 years old, and 91% of the respondents are studying at a university level.

Results and Discussion

Table 2
Correlation of Political V-Logs with Hate Speech (N = 400)

	PVL	HS
PVL	1	
HS	.216**	1

PVL = Political V-Logs; HS = Hate Speech **. "Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)"

To analyze H1 which is watching political Vlogs on YouTube are positively correlated with Hate speech among the viewers. Table 2 shows that Political Vlogs (IV) are positively correlated with Hate speech (DV) at .216. It indicates a moderate positive linear correlation between watching Political Vlogs on YouTube and Hate speech among the viewers, so the findings support H1 because the positive correlation is identified between watching Political Vlogs on YouTube and Hate Speech among the viewers.

Table 3
Correlation of Political Discourse with Hate Speech (N = 400)

	PD	HS
PD	1	
HS	.458**	1

PD = Political Discourse; HS = Hate Speech **. "Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)"

H2 of the study, which is Political Discourse in Vlogs is positively correlated with Hate speech among the viewers. Table 3 shows that Political Discourse (IV) is positively correlated with Hate speech among the viewers (DV) at .458. It indicates a moderate positive linear correlation between Political Discourse in Vlogs and Hate speech among the viewers, so the findings support H2 because a positive correlation is identified between IV and DV.

Table 4
Regression Analysis for Mediation of Political Discourse between Political V-Logs and Hate Speech

Variable	*B*	95%CI	*SE B*	β	*R²*	Δ*R²*
Step 1					.17	.17***
Constant	9.08***	[8.279, 9.886]	0.40			
Political V-Logs	0.15***	[.08, .22]	0.04	.22***		
Step 2					.25	.08***
Constant	5.55***	[4.563, 6.541]	0.50			
Political V-Logs	0.13***	[.07, .20]	0.03	.17***		
Political Discourse	0.36***	[.29, .40]	0.03	.45***		

Note. CI = Confidence interval, ***p < .001.

To examine the H3, Political Discourse (MV) is positively moderating the correlation between Political Vlogs on YouTube (IV) and Hate speech in viewers (DV). Table 4 shows the impact of Political Vlogs on YouTube and Political Discourse on Hate Speech in Hate speech viewers. In Step 1, the *R^2* value of .17 revealed that the Political V-Logs explained 17% variance in the Hate Speech with F (1,398) = 19.43, p < .0001. The findings in Table 1 revealed that Political V-Logs positively predicted Hate Speech (β = .22, p < .0001). In step 2, the *R^2* value of .25 revealed that the Political V-Logs and Political Discourse explained 25% variance in the Hate Speech with F (2,397) = 64.11, p < .0001. The findings revealed that Political V-Logs (β = .19, p < .0001) and Political Discourse positively predicted Hate Speech (β = .45, p < .0001). The Δ*R^2* value of .08 revealed an 8% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with ΔF (1,397) = 103.77, p < .0001. The regression weights for Political V-Logs subsequently reduced from model 1 to model 2 (.22 to .17) but remained significant, confirming the partial mediation. More specifically, Political V-Logs have direct as well as indirect effects on Political Discourse.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that watching political Vlogs on YouTube (IV) is positively correlated with Hate speech (DV), and this relationship is positively mediated by the political discourse (MV). It explains that Watching Vlogs and Political Discourse both are positively correlated the Hate Speech which proves the (H1 & H2). Meanwhile, mediation by the Political Discourse also increased the ratio of the impact of watching political Vlogs on Hate speech among viewers which indicated the validity of H3. As suggested in previous studies, Religion and Political Discourse are the domains, which are widely involved in spreading hate speech in digital media users (Ashraf et al., 2022). In this study, most of 51% of the selected respondents thought Hate Speech was a serious issue that needed immediate attention but 59% of the respondents never reported any video on YouTube that has Hate Speech meanwhile 38% of the respondents indicated that they often or always unsubscribed or stopped watching the YouTube channels who involved in the hate speech. 55% thought that Vloggers always intentionally verbally attack politicians in their content while 56% explained that these Vloggers use emotionally charged wording and language to attract viewers to YouTube and 54% of the respondents agree and strongly agree with the statement that the content creators have to do not promote hate speech in their video content. These frequencies show that the YouTube viewers are concerned about the hate speech but they do not want to report, block, or ignore it. Digital media literacy and media-mindedness can be the possible solutions to minimize hate speech.

Recommendations

While there is a positive relationship between watching political vlogs on YouTube and viewers' promotion of hate speech, it's important to note that this connection is not predictable. It depends on several variables, such as user preferences, the significance of the

content, platform guidelines, and the overall media and social context. To mitigate the possible negative effects of online political content, it is crucial to promote media literacy, responsible content development, and responsible platform policies. This study suggests studying the role of digital media literacy in mediating the relationship between watching Political Vlogs on YouTube are positively correlated with Hate speech among viewers.

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