



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring Ethnic Discrimination and Hate Speech in Online Political Discourses: A Comprehensive Analysis from the Pakistani Context

¹Dr. Muhammad Akbar, and ²Dr. Aasima Safdar*

1. PhD Scholar, Institute of Media and Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.
2. Assistant Professor, Institute of Media and Communication Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author** aasimasafdar@bzu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This article establishes the presence of ethnic, racial and linguistic based hate content on politically oriented Facebook pages and as well explores prominent themes within these hate discourses to understand the promotion and propagation of ethnic, racial and linguistic based hate, intolerance and radicalization. A total of 94 Facebook post were purposefully collected and thematically analyzed with the help of NVIVO 12. The major theme revealed that ethnic diversification was framed as curse and threat for social harmony and development of the society. In online political discourses, specific ethnic, racial and linguistic groups were framed as “others” and “responsible” for destruction of social, cultural and political spheres of society. In these online discourses, specific groups were stereotyped and discriminated in much negative, disgusted hateful manner through directly demonizing with abusive language and derogatory remarks and dehumanized through comparing with specific animals like dogs, pigs etc. Different ethnic groups were discriminated and stereotyped on the basis of “Us vs Them” such as Baloch’s were framed as Invaders, while Afghans were framed as criminals, burdon, inferior and parasites on the Pakistani economy. Punjabi’s were framed as dominant in every sphere such as politics, economy and have biased towards specific minor ethnic, racial, linguistic and regional groups.

Keywords: Ethnic Hate Speech, Facebook, Political Discourse, Thematic Analysis

Introduction

Hate speech on new means of communication such as Facebook has become a biggest threat to Pakistan’s diverse cultural, religious, ethnic and political norms and is against towards social cohesion of the society. Specifically, hate speech in political discourses towards specific ethnic and racial groups become more dangerous in the society like Pakistan which is already much polarized and divided into different ethnic, cultural, linguistics groups and cleavages (Muluka&Nassiuma, 2017).

Social media has become very important and essential source and communication tool in politics (Solovev and Pröllochs, 2022) as it has enabled individuals and groups to engage themselves into different online political discussions and political activities with the purpose to connect, persuade and influence political opinions and voting behavior of the public. (Gionis, Terzi, & Tsaparas, 2013) These tools also help politicians to set their political agenda and shape outcome of their political campaigns and as well it helps to strengthen their “capital visibility”, and affirmation of a discursive identity of such politicians (Tasențe, T., & Ciacu, N. 2013). Social media has become an alternative news media for dissemination of specific political ideology and dissent voices in those circumstances where traditional media is not allowed, censored and even blocked. (Tufekci& Wilson, 2012)

Beside the positive use of social media in political communication, some serious questions has also raised about the negative role of social media specifically Facebook. (Wickremesinha&Hattotuwa, 2016) because with increased utilization of social media in

politics, there is also an increased chance of hate speech presence and penetration on those online networks which was considered as “the stratification of online hate” (Keipi et al, 2017). Specific features and characteristics of social media such as anonymity, a synchronicity, its open and unregulated nature also makes these online media as a fertile ground for disseminations of hate speech content which promote and enhance political polarization, radicalization, hatred and intolerance (Cammearts, 2009, Hughy& Daniels, 2013). It is argued that social media does not assure the quality of political discourse and can generate the discourses of “us” against “them” between different groups (Christofrou, 2014).

Both new and traditional media were blamed for fuelling “tribal hate speech” during the electioneering period. (Maweu, J. 2013)) The level of political rhetoric on social media has sometimes become more dangerous towards the peace and rest of the society. The adoption of social media by politicians is thus a double-edged sword posing risks both to themselves and society as a whole (Hong, Choi, & Kim, 2019) It is stated that the rise in racial tensions is partly due to the rise of social media and the anonymity it allows in which can allow people to say what they want and this has become even worse in recent times.

There was need to investigate this concerning issue and phenomenon of online hate speech within the multicultural, multi ethnic and multi linguistic context of Pakistan. Pakistan is a multi ethnic and multi racial country and there was need to investigate the extent of utilization of social media specifically Facebook as a communication platform for production and dissemination of the discourses of ethnic and racial based hate and discrimination.

The purpose of this article was to fill the research and literature gap through establishing the presence of ethnic, linguistic and racial based hate speech on politically oriented Facebook pages of two mainstream political parties PMLN and PTI within multi-cultural and multi ethnic context of Pakistani society. This article has also addressed the theoretical, methodological, policy and strategic issues regarding the promotion and propagations of ethnic based hate speech through Facebook in Pakistan and contributed the academic discussion about the qualitative analysis of such hate discourse through exploring prominent themes within online hate discourses.

Literature Review

Hate Speech and Racial Discrimination

In communication studies, hate speech can be understood as a communication which denigrates, humiliate, offend or frighten and foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance against different groups on the basis of their proposed affiliations to a specific religious, gendered, racial or ethnic groups. (Bagdikian, 1997) Racial discrimination is defined in Article 1 (Part 1) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in 1969 as any restriction, distinction, preference, or exclusion that was based on either color, race, ethnicity, descent, or nationality with effect or purpose to impaired or nullified one’s recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights, political, economic, social, cultural or any freedom in all aspects of life.

Ethnic and Racial hate speech in Pakistan

In Pakistan, population is divided into different ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural groups like Pashto (15.4%), Sindhi (14.1%), Balochi (3.6 %) , Punjabi (44.7 %) , Muhajir (7.6 %), Siraiki (8.4 %) and others (6.2 %) etc and these groups spoke different language according to their specific regions(The world Factbook). It is stated that hate speech is very common against and between different ethnic and racial groups such as Punjabi’s and Pashtoons and these groups are targeted, abused and stereotyped on different grounds.

Generally Pashtoons are referred as stupid, illiterate who are extremely violent, backward who are obsessed with their honor and so on. Punjabi's are also hated, feared, etherized and mocked by different groups.

Discrimination and hate speech against certain ethnic and racial groups can be seen not only on mainstream media but also evident in offline public gatherings which are driven on the basis of some historical tensions and conflicts. During general elections 2018, a war of words, accusations and counter accusations was going on between media cells of two major political parties in the Pakistan in which ethnic based hate speech was disseminated and different disgusted words and insulting terms were used against different religious and ethnic groups in which opposites were abused and dehumanized.

Framing on Social Media

This study was theoretically linked with Framing theory of Mass Communication which is generally understood as the production of different news in such a ways that viewers think about the news story within the familiar context. This article has some new perspective about the framing on social media and is somehow different from previous framing research studies which analyzed the effectiveness of traditional media framing in political communication but this article is about to study framing of politics on new online media specifically Facebook. It is stated that different features of social media and communication applications have attracted different political groups and organizations for direct communication to the target public without lobbying traditional media outlets through developing their own unique messaging strategies (Krieger, 2014). Strategic messaging and framing on social media is free of the influence of journalists and traditional media outlet.

Social media is a powerful tool which offer an opportunity to send direct messages to the audience without the filters like in traditional media to directly influence the public opinion and behaviors through framing of different issues and events. Specifically, it become the matter of much concern about the framing of different conflicts and tensions between different groups on social media such as through posting different stereotyped images and certain hateful comment and keywords, framing can influence, divide and polarize audience and put them on different ends of political spectrum (Hemphill, Culotta&Heston, 2013).

Material and Methods

To answer the research questions, the qualitative research design was used to investigate the phenomenon of ethnic based hate speech in political discourses on Facebook. Qualitative research design is most appropriate to achieve this type of study objectives to explore prominent themes within ethnic based online hate content. Qualitative design can provide a depth and detailed understanding of a particular topic or issue. (Martyn & Lyndsay, 2019) To explore different themes within hate discourses, thematic analysis was used to uncover the prominent themes within political hate discourses as Anderson (2007) argued that thematic analysis is used to understand the new and unknown issue and phenomenon.

Collection of Data from Facebook

The data was collected from four Facebook pages of two major political parties in Pakistan PMLN and PTI. These Facebook pages were selected with help of Facebook search engine through different key terms as investigated in previous studies such as (Wickremesinha&Hattotuwa, 2016.; Kushin&Kichner, 2009.; Gyulai, 2016). Some specific key terms like "Hate Imran Khan", "Hate Nawaz Sharif" were used with the aim to search most "relevant", "active", "interactive", "substantial", "heterogeneous" and "data-rich" for qualitative scientific research (Kozients). In the result, almost 40 to 50 Facebook groups and

pages names were displayed in which the page with most number of likes and followers were listed at the top of the list. (Woolley et-al, 2010) Those pages which have clear intentions to promote hate speech in their “pages names”, “profile pictures”, “cover photos” and also in their “definition and about” sections were deeply analyzed. Recently active pages with more than 100000 “members” or “likes” were selected for data collection to ensure heterogeneous and mass level of engagement form public towards specific hate content.

Following four pages were selected

1. I Hate Imran Khan(The Master of U Turn)
2. بے کا نشان کنجروں کی پہچان
(*The symbol of Bat represents prostitutes*)
3. I Hate Nawaz Sharif- The Master of NooraKushti
4. شیر کا نشان بے غیرتوں کی پہچان
(*The symbol of Lion represents Shameless people*)

The data was passively collected from only public pages because public pages require no consent and prior permission while closed and secret pages were not selected.

Population and Sample

Total 10395 posts on all selected pages of time period of 12 month were selected as the population of the study. From this population, ethnic based hate content was selected purposefully and total 94 posts were categorized as ethnic, racial and linguistic based hate content. Each post was categorized as ethnic and racial based hate content which contain derogatory and abusive remarks towards specific ethnic and racial groups and the content inciting someone to insult, stereotyped, demonized and dehumanized specific ethnic, linguistic and racial groups were categorized as ethnic based hate speech. In this article, the data was manually collected through extraction and copying each post and saved as PDF file. This PDS file was taken to NVIVO, qualitative data analysis software for further analysis. This software was used for coding to explore different themes within the data.

Data Analysis

In this research study, inductive thematic analysis was utilized to explore prominent themes through following six phases suggested by Barun and Clark (2006) such as familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing research report. In thematic analysis open, axial and selective coding are utilized to explore prominent themes. After coding each and every post of Facebook, themes were emerged from data. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) In open coding each post was read and read again and different codes were identified (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In Axial coding, different codes were interconnected with each other and developed various categories and sub categories. While in selective coding, the core categories and themes were identified and integrated to structure theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Results and Discussion

Ethnic and Racial Hate and Discrimination in Online Political Discourses

The data reveals that there was a significant amount of ethnic based hate and discrimination was presented in online political discourses. By analyzing data following themes regarding ethnic based hate and discrimination were explored.

Table 1
Frequency of Ethnic based hate speech content on Facebook Pages

	No of Posts	
	Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
Ethnic, Racial and linguistic based Hate Speech	42	52

The article found that ethnic, racial and linguistic affiliations were targeted in much derogatory and disgusted manner through abusing and insulting directly in online political discourses. Politically oriented Facebook pages of pro PMLN and Pro PTI become the source for dissemination of ethnic based hate content. It was found that politicians have targeted ethnicity, race and linguistic affiliations to gain specific political benefits through inciting the people of specific ethnic group against other ethnic and racial and linguistic groups.

In total 94 posts, specific ethnic groups such as Muhajirs, Baloch, Afghan, Punjabi were targeted with a major theme that “ethnic diversification as threat for social harmony, peace and development of the country” in which ethnic, racial and linguistic affiliations were discriminated and stereotyped on the basis of their affiliation with specific ethnic group. These groups were negatively exploited and the content which justified these stereotypes and negative thinking was also presented.

Prominent themed against Ethnic, Racial and Linguistic Affiliations in online Political Discourses

Major prominent theme in online political hate discourses against specific ethnic, racial and linguistic groups was “ethnic diversification as threat for social harmony and development” in which different ethnic groups in Pakistan were framed as “curse” and “hurdle” for interethnic peace and as well as for social, cultural and economic development of the country. Specific ethnic affiliations were targeted through disseminating specific frames such as “others”, “NamakHaram”, “Invaders”, “Parasites”, “Criminals”, “Idiot” etc. Different ethnic conflicts and issues were highlighted in which ethnic diversity was framed as “threats” to peace, harmony and development of the society which is already divided into many groups on linguistic, ethnic and racial basis. Other themes which were emerged are discussed as follows.

“Othering” Opposites

Table 2
Othering specific ethnic, racial and linguistic groups political hate discourses

Theme Identified	Sub Themes & Key Terms
Othering Opposites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Us and Them, opposites as Inferior, inhuman • Own side as defenders, superiors, Hero Narrative • Others as evil, threat, Hurdle for social, cultural and economic development

After thematically analyzing the data, it was found that specific ethnic groups were framed as “others” through highlighting specific differences and highlighting the discourses of “us and them. It was explored that different ethnic groups such as Baloch, Afghani’s and Pathan’s were framed as “Others” in the society who have become “hurdle” and even “threats” for social, cultural and economic development of the country. The thoughts of “Us and Them” was provoked through highlighting different issues which were already present in the society such as biased Punjabi leadership, unfair division of state resources, sense of deprived minor ethnic and racial groups and specific interethnic tensions etc. In these discourse, Baloch’s and Pathan’s were considered as “Invaders” who have occupied the recourses of state and framed as biased against certain ethnic groups. It was argued that these invaders from “other” provinces have occupied the state and specifically Punjab who are also illiterate, incompetent and incapable and are responsible for different incidents and

mismanagement of state organizations. Afghan's were framed as "criminals" who are now become "Parasites" on the resources of the state and become "burdon" on economic development of the country.

Distorted images with derogatory remarks to target specific ethnic groups were posted in which the discourses of us and them were highlighted about proposed biased behavior and anti Punjabi policies. In different posts, specific ethnic groups were insulted and abused through naming as "Niazi Pig" , "BalochiKhtmal", "Stupid" who have biased behavior towards Punjabi's. In different posts, people were directly incited and motivated to take actions against these biased politicians. Different ethnic groups were framed as "inferior" and "inhuman" with different derogatory remarks such as "bad blooded", "Stupid", "Idiot" people who have no loyalty with the state.

Political leaders and their policies were targeted in the context of ethnic lines stereotypes through framing these as major threat for social, cultural and economic development and also against the unification of the state. Opposites were framed as "biased", have "dual standards" and discriminated behavior against certain ethnic groups like Punjabi, Hazara Community. Different issues were highlighted such as merger of FATA, Hazara region, Division of Punjab into two provinces, Laptop scheme and other development funds and resources in which it was framed as the biased behavior of opposites who did not belongs to the Punjab and framed them as "others" in online political discourses.

The decision to divide Punjab in two provinces on administrative basis was criticized and framed as it is against national interest and integrity of the state. This issue was framed as the most concerning issue for Punjabi's which have immediate reaction needed from Punjabi's. This practice was done in such a negative way and manner in which ethnic affiliations were directly targeted to promote radical behavior and emotionally incite against certain group and personalities The proposed decision of divide Punjab into two provinces "South Punjab" was correlated with the incident of "East Pakistan" as "Bangladesh" and targeted that,

"General Niazi" was responsible for country division while Imran "Niazi" is going divide the Punjab.

(Source.F.B Page) [BallekaNishanKanjonkiPehchan \(Posted on, 24 Sep, 2018\)](#)

Punjabi's as Biased, Dominant in Economy and Politics

Table 3
Targeting Punjabi's in Political Hate Discourses

Theme Identified	Sub Themes & Key Terms
Punjabi's are Biased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Jaag Punjabi Jaag", "Namak Haram" • Lahori politicians are biased • Punjabi's hegemony in Politics, Economy, • Lahori's as "Shameless", "Idiot", "Brainless" • Traders of "Pashtoon" dead bodies

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan by population and the major portion speaks "Punjabi" while other groups such as "Saraiki" and "Pashtoons" are less as compared to Punjabi's. In these hate discourses, Punjabi politicians as a whole were framed as "biased" who occupied the major positions in every sphere and are against other minor ethnic groups. It was argued that these biased politicians have stereotyped and discriminated behavior towards specific ethnic groups such as "Pashtoon", "Sindhi", "Muhajir" and "Afghan".

(Source.F.B Page) *I hate Imran Khan & PTI (Posted on, 27 July, 2018)*

In this regard, different statements from politicians were highlighted for example, the slogan,

"Jaag Punjabi Jaag" meaning "wake up Punjabi's" was considered as biased and stereotyped behavior of "Punjabi" politicians towards other small ethnic groups. It was also considered against the harmony between different ethnic groups.

(Source.F.B Page) *I Hate Imran Khan.The Master of U-Turn (posted on 14 July, 2018)*

In different posts, "Punjabi" politicians were framed as dominant in Pakistani social, economic and political sphere and they have not given any space to the politicians of other provinces which were also framed as "Punjabi hegemony". The belonging of ex Prime Minister to "Lahore" was also targeted in many discourses through targeting the "Lahori's" as a whole as shameless that have no respect and argued that "Lahori Lion" have disgusted mindset.

In these discourses, different economic grievances of other provinces against Punjab and also within the Punjab were also highlighted and framed "Punjabi" politicians biased attitude such as the issue of "Orange Train" in Lahore which was framed as the "loss" of public funds and will be paid by the whole province but will run only in Lahore for giving benefits only to "Lahori's". It was argued that these mega corruption projects will be paid by the poor man who have not the basic necessities of life such as posting a picture of a man drinking water from a

"Tallab" and argued that "Lahori" politicians have taken all the funds of Punjab province to their home town Lahore. In another post, it was argued that

"Lahori's" are "Idiot" and "brainless" and the big obstacle in the development of the country.

(Source.F.B Page) *I hate Nawaz Sharif. The master of NooraKushti (Posted on, 13 August, 2018)*

(Source.F.B Page) *BallekaNishanKanjonkiPehchan (Posted on, 27 July, 2018)*

Punjabi politicians were framed as "threat" and considered as the "responsible" for provincial stereotyping and ethnic clashes and tensions among the Federal and Provinces. It was argued that these politicians have killed innocent people on the name of "Sindhi nationalism" and also framed as the traders of "Pashtoon" dead bodies.

The issue of "Kala Bagh" Dam was highlighted and framed as the intentional efforts of opposites to make it as conflict among provinces and claimed that these politicians are working on the agenda of India which have built different dams while in Pakistan these puppets are against the construction of dam which is necessary and have much importance for Pakistani's and also for the development of the country.

Against Afghani's: "Refugees as Burdon on the Pakistan", "Criminals"

Table 4
Targeting Afghani's in Political Hate Discourses

Theme Identified	Sub Themes & Key Terms
"Afghani's" are burdon, parasites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghans as "Traitor", Criminals "Parasites" • "Burdon" and "Parasites" on Economy • "Criminals", "Traitors", "Anti Pakistan"

• “Bad Blooded”

The discrimination against Afghani's was also present in online political hate discourse on both Pro PMLN and Pro PTI political discourses. In these discourses, Afghani's were targeted because of their suspected role and their loyalty towards the state of Pakistan. In a post, it was argued that

“Imran Khan's as the son of “Afghani Refugee” mother who has given birth of a “bad blooded” son who is against the national integrity of the country”.

(Source.F.B Page) I Hate Imran Khan.The Master of U-Turn (posted on 10 May 2018)

In these discourses, Afghani's were considered as “bad blooded” and “traitors” who are against the state of Pakistan. It was claimed that there are four million Afghani refugees are living in Pakistan who have become “Burdon” on the economy of Pakistan. They were framed as “threat” for economic development of the country. It was argued that Afghan “refugees” were involved in such terrorist and anti state activities from Afghanistan and has become dangerous for national peace and harmony. The murder of a religious scholar Sami ulHaq was associated with “Afghani's” intervention and framed as a planned attack from Afghanistan because he was threatened from Afghanistan directly because of his anti Taliban stance. Afghani's were also framed as “criminals” who are involved into criminal activities such as narcotics which are questioning the rule and law and broken the law of Pakistan through their anti state activities.

Different violent incidents were associated with Afghanies and argued that like India and America, Afghani's are also involved into different violent activities and considered that “Afghani's”, “Dieseli”, and “Pashteeni's” are happy on such type of violent acts and incidents. It was argued that these violent activities have been done to destabilize and bring unrest in the society. Afghan refugees and their supports were framed as “burden” and “parasites” on Pakistani economy and also framed as “threat” to the national peace and security. It was stated that these millions of refugees have been fed by the state of Pakistan since four decades and their two generations have been grown up in Pakistan through stating that these

“Afghani's, live here, they earn from here, they eat from Pakistan but in return they abuses against the state of Pakistan”

(Source. F.B Page) BallekaNishan, KanjronkiPehchan (Posted on, 19 July, 2018)

In online hate discourses, Afghani's were targeted in more hateful and disgusted manner such as framed them “bad blooded” and “Namak Haram” nation who despite all these facts are against the integrity and development of the state of Pakistan. It was demanded in different posts that these refugees and their supporter politicians must be thrown out from Pakistan and must be sent to their home country Afghanistan.

Different politicians statements and action were targeted and framed as the supporters of theses “anti state” elements and have soft corners because of their proposed links and affiliations with Afghanistan, these politicians are taking certain actions which are against the sovereignty of Pakistan. It was argued that these politicians have financial and political benefits with Afghanistan and because of this they are supporting Afghan refugees with every mean which was considered and unethical and against the national interests of Pakistan.

Against Baloch's: "BalochiKhatmal", "Invaders"

Table 5
Targeting Baloch's in Political Hate Discourses

Theme Identified	Sub Themes & Key Terms
Baloch's as Invaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As "Invaders", "Outers" • "Khatmal", "Balochi Dog", "Niazi Pig" • "Stupid", "Incompetent", "Illiterate who have no vision"

In these discourses, the next target in ethnic lines was "Baloch" ethnicity a largest population in Balochistan province. The Baloch's were frequently targeted on the basis of their "mentality", on their "education" and their "living standard" of life. In this regard, Baloch's were targeted through calling them "BalochKhatmal" and "Stupid", "parasites" and "invaders". It was argued that Baloch's are "uneducated" people and because of this they have no vision in politics and have no role in the development of the country. Different stereotyped terms like "BalochiKhatmal" and disgusted words like "Balochi dog" were associated with specifically "Baloch" ethnicity.

(Source.F.B Page) I Hate Imran Khan.The Master of U-Turn (posted on 18 august 2018)

The Baloch's were framed as "outers" who occupied the Punjab government with illegal means and come into power while sharing the pictures of Baloch people as framing them illiterate and tribal community who have no vision and sense to deal a large population.

The appointment of "Baloch" Chief Minister in Punjab was targeted and framed as "invader" and "other" who have come into power with illegal means in Punjab. It was questioned in many posts that how much Punjabi's have been appointed as Chief Ministers of Sindh, Balochistan and KPK? In different posts, the appointment was framed as,

"Punishment from Allah towards Punjabi's and bad luck for Punjabi people"

(Source.F.B Page) I Hate Imran Khan.The Master of U-Turn (posted on 18 august 2018)

It was claimed that Baloch Chief Minister of Punjab is biased because of utilizing the financial sources of Punjabi's on other provinces while the population of Punjabi's have been deprived. The decision of Punjab Government to make hospital in Balochistan was criticized and framed as the biased and discriminated behavior of Balochi Chief Minister towards Punjabi's.

Conclusion

Pakistan has a diverse population with different ethnic backgrounds such as (Punjabi, Baloch, Pashtun and Mohajir, etc) and this ethnic diversity sometimes leads to different racial, tribal, regional and ethnic prejudices and conflicts. Meanwhile, politicians have played a pivotal role towards initiating the online hateful discourses in more extreme forms and have amplified the use of social media to appeal and mobilize ethnic support during election campaigns through stereotyping against other ethnic groups which have resulted in more polarization and division among the society which is already divided on ethnic basis (Kimotho&Nayaga, 2016) In Pakistan history, it was witnessed that politicians have used ethnic and racial cards in different times to take the political benefits and take the sympathy from the public even on the price of dividing the nation into many groups which is also against the federalism and unification of the state.

In this article, the major objective was to explore prominent themes within political hate discourse against certain ethnic, racial and linguistic groups. The data was collected from politically oriented Facebook pages of two mainstream political parties in Pakistan. It

was found that Facebook was significantly used as important tools for the promotion and propagation of ethnic based hate and intolerance in the society which has longstanding religious and ethnic conflicts and tensions which strengthen the argument that new communication tools on internet have facilitated the propagations of extreme hate narratives against certain ethnic and minority groups (Burnap& Williams, 2016). It was found that certain ethnic, racial and linguistic groups were stereotyped and discriminated in much derogatory and disgusted manner. After thematically analyzing data, it was found that “ethnic diversification was considered as “curse” and “threat” for social, economic and cultural development of the country. In online political discourses, main targets were “Punjabi’s”, “Pashtoons”, “Afghani’s” and “Baloch’s” who were targeted on different grounds.

The most important and prevalent theme was found that Facebook was utilized as the platform to frame the opposite’s ethnic, racial, linguistic and regional affiliations as “others” and “responsible” for destruction of social, cultural and political spheres of society. These affiliations were exploited on the basis of “nationalism”, “patriotism” and about the development of the state and framed the ethnic diversity as the “curse for country development”. Specific differences between different groups were highlighted to promote “us vs them”. It was noted that othering of opposites in online discourses was in more aggressive and hateful forms through targeting more disgusted and derogatory manner.

The findings strengthen the argument that ethnic politics is mainly concerned “with the protection of rights, privileges and other benefits for members” of that specific group when someone will be in power of that specific party (Kimotho&Nayaga, 2016). It was framed that Punjabi are “dominant” in Pakistani “politics” and “economy” and this hegemony have been resulted into different conflicts and as well stereotyped and biased behavior of Punjabi politicians towards minor ethnic groups as they have not given the basic rights and facilities to small provinces and populations. In different posts, such issues were highlighted that these Punjabi’s politicians have spent the entire budget only on the Lahore to strengthen their political grip. The words “Lahore” and “Lahori” were targeted and abused as calling them as “shameless”, “biased” and “stereotyped” people who have established biased policies towards specific minority ethnic, provincial and regional groups.

The data indicated that Baloch’s, Afghani’s and Pathan’s were framed as “Others” who have become “threats” for social, cultural and economic development of the country. Different disgusted and derogatory terms were associated towards these groups such as “Afghani’s were framed as bad blooded”, “Parasites”, “inferior”, “Namak Haram” and “inhuman” who as well become threat to national peace and integrity of Pakistani state. In this regard, different terrorisms and anti state activities were associated with these afghani’s refugees.

In conclusion, the findings of this study strengthened the argument that specific features and characteristics like “inexpensive”, “unregulated”, “ideologically heterogeneous communication space”, “instant dissemination of breaking news” (Christofrou, 2014) make social media a fertile ground for hate communication. In this study, it was found that Facebook was effectively and distinctively used by different political groups to promote and propagate ethnic, racial and linguistic based hate, intolerance and radicalization in the society. The results of this study are significant in that they demonstrate the capability of social networks specifically Facebook to promote and propagate ethnic, racial and linguistics based hate, intolerance and radicalization in the society because it has been argued that social media can be a source for “flame of wars” which can strengthen conflicts between different groups in the society (Cammaerts, 2009).

Recommendations

- This study found that presence of ethnic based hate speech on Facebook has become a subject of serious concern for journalists, academics and policymakers to take measures and enhance efforts to combat hate speech phenomenon within multi ethnic and multi linguistic context of Pakistan.
- The study suggested that the presence of ethnic based hate speech should be investigated on other information and communication technologies such as blogs, websites Twitter, Youtubeetc at a large and substantial scale.
- This issue should be investigated from other methodological approaches like survey and interviews to investigate social and psychological impact and consequences of hate speech.
- Government and legislators should redefine hate speech and make amendments in current laws as well make new legislations and take immediate initiative and measures to control presence and promotion of hate speech.

References

- Anderson, R. (2007). Thematic content analysis (TCA). *Descriptive presentation of qualitative data*, 3, 1-4.
- Bagdikian B.H. (1997). *The media monopoly*. Boston: Beacon press,.
- Barun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101
- Burnap, P., & Williams, M. L. (2016). Us and them: identifying cyber hate on Twitter across multiple protected characteristics. *EPJ Data science*, 5, 1-15.
- Cammaerts, B. (2009). Radical pluralism and free speech in online public spaces: The case of North Belgian extreme right discourses. *International journal of cultural studies*, 12(6), 555-575.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage Publications. London
- Christoforou, S (2014). *Social media and political communication: Hate speech in the age of Twitter*, Master Media Culture and Society Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication Erasmus University of Rotterdam Master Thesis.
- Gionis, A., Terzi, E., & Tsaparas, P. (2013, May). Opinion maximization in social networks. In *Proceedings of the 2013 SIAM International Conference on Data Mining* (pp. 387-395). SIAM, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1137/1.9781611972832.43>
- Gyulai, D. (2016). *A qualitative investigation of USA Weightlifting Facebook follower engagement during a world event*. San José State University.
- Hemphill, Libby and Culotta, Aron and Heston, Matthew (2013). *Framing in Social Media: How the US Congress Uses Twitter Hashtags to Frame Political Issues* (August 28, 2013). Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2317335>
- Hong, S., Choi, H., & Kim, T. K. (2019). Why do politicians tweet? Extremists, underdogs, and opposing parties as political tweeters. *Policy & internet*, 11(3), 305-323.
- ICERD (1969). *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. OHCHR.ORG
- Keipi, Teo, PekkaRäsänen, AtteOksanen, James Hawdon&MattiNäsi (2017). Exposure to online hate material and subjective well-being: A comparative study of American and Finnish youth. *Online Information Review* 42(1) 2-15
- Kimotho, S. G., & Nyaga, R. N. (2016). Digitized Ethnic Hate Speech: Understanding Effects of Digital Media Hate Speech on Citizen Journalism in Kenya. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(3), 189-200.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Ethnographic Research Online*. Sage Publications Limited.
- Krieger, A. (2015). *Social Media Comment Sections and Their Effect on Message Framing: Implications for Political Communication and Public Relations* [Master's thesis, Kent State University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations

- Kushin, M. J., & Kitchener, K. (2009). Getting political on social network sites: Exploring online political discourse on Facebook. *First Monday*
- Martyn, S., & Lyndsay, W. T. (2019). *Qualitative research design*. EXPLORABLE.
- Muluka, S., & Nassiuma, D. B. K. (2017). Hate speech: A Derivative of Kenyan politics?. *International Journal of Communication and Public Relation*, 2(2), 55–69.
- MwendeMaweu, J. (2013). The ethnic hate speech was networked: what political discussions on social media reveal about the 2013 general elections in Kenya.
- Solovev, K., & Pröllochs, N. (2022). Hate speech in the political discourse on social media: Disparities across parties, gender, and ethnicity. In *Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2022* (pp. 3656-3661).
- Tasențe, T., & Ciacu, N. (2013). Social Media and Political Communication: Case study—the Parliamentary Parties in Romania. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition*, 6(1), 91-106.
- Tufekci, Z., & Wilson, C. (2012). Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication*, 62(2), 363–379. 62. 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01629.x.
- Wickremesinhe, R., & Hattotuwa, S. (2016). Voting in Hate-A study of hate speech on Facebook surrounding Sri Lanka's Parliamentary Election of 2015. Center for Policy Alternatives. Sri Lanka
- Woolley, J. K., Limperos, A. M., & Oliver, M. B. (2013). The 2008 presidential election, 2.0: A content analysis of user-generated political Facebook groups. In *New Media, Campaigning and the 2008 Facebook Election* (pp. 87-108). Routledge.
- The World Factbook (2020). Pakistan Country Summary*. CIA
- ZA, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.