

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Reactionary Twitter Posts on the Motorway Rape Incident (September 09, 2020) in Pakistan

Saman Jabir ^a Sulaiman Ahmad ^b Khushnood Arshad ^c

Abstract: This research work aims to analyze the reactionary Twitter posts on the motorway rape incident which took place on September 09, 2020, in Pakistan. For this purpose, a total number of thirteen tweets were taken from the official pages of the Pakistani actors, social influencers, and common citizens. For the qualitative analysis of the collected data, the researchers used the socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis proposed by van Dijk (2007). The results of the study revealed that the producers of Twitter posts either supported or resisted the motorway rape incident which took place in Lahore, Pakistan; however, the majority of the tweets were found in favor of the victims of the incidents and against the people who were involved in the criminal act. In order to support their view stance in favor of the in-group (i.e., the victimized) and against the out-group (i.e., those who were involved in the crime), the producers of the discourses of tweets made use of various discursive strategies. They represented the in-group members in a positive way and the out-group members in a very negative tone. The researchers suggest that such acts against the rights of women should strongly be resisted through the discourses of resistance.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Internet discourse, Twitter

Introduction

Background

Critical discourse analysis helps to inquire into the ideological concepts possessed by discourse producers; it also helps to shape the cognitive abilities of the masses. The interaction among human beings is possible with the help of discourse production and discourse consumption. Van Dijk (1989) argues that when discourse is produced, several mental processes take place that help to understand the discourse. Therefore, the discourse produced by the people is closely related to cognition. The cognitive processes are responsible for social actions and social interactions, and they also control the use of language and discourse. Likewise, discourse plays a vital role in the expression of people's ideologies and beliefs. In addition, according to Van Dijk (1989), in an attempt to make communication successful and to make discourse production understandable, socially shared beliefs and knowledge are of utmost importance.

Social cognition helps in the understanding of power relations as it uncovers the dominant group and subordinate group (Van Dijk, 1989). The socio-cognitive theory proposed by Van Dijk (1989) revolves around the concept of 'self' (us, in-group members) or 'other' (out-group members). According to this polarization, the people who share the same ideological, social beliefs, and knowledge will tend to support their group members, and they will oppose or resist the out-group members with the help of discourse. These cognitive processes activate, deactivate, form, and change the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and knowledge of a group of people.

^a BS English Literature & Linguistics, National University of Modern Languages (Peshawar Campus), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: samanjabir99@gmail.com

^b Lecturer, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (Peshawar Campus), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: sulaimanahmad@numl.edu.pk

^c M.Phil. in English Linguistics, Department of English, National University of Modern Languages (Peshawar Campus), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: khushnoodarshad566@gmail.com

It is obvious and widely noticed that in the era of scientific and technological advancements, the production and consumption of discourses take place through online social sites, and one such famous and widely used social site is Twitter, which is used for sharing and shaping the beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions of the masses. This study analyzes the reactionary Twitter posts on the motorway rape incident that took place on the 9th of September 2020 on the Lahore motorway. The purpose of this study is to provide a socio-cognitive analysis of reactionary Twitter posts, among which there was a blend of ideas, with some supporting the victim, while very few were there blaming the victim. Thus, the tweets suggest that every individual has personal and social beliefs that affect discourse production.

Statement of the Problem

It is widely observed that females have been marginalized for centuries. They are not safe while traveling or doing everyday chores. They are humiliated by the male members of society in different ways, among which the prevailing incidents of rape are unavoidable. There are some people who support females when it comes to moral and social abuse, while some of them blame women for going out. The motorway rape incident is also an example of the marginalization and exploitation of a woman in Pakistani society. It shows the insecure environment of the society and its people. The reactions of people to the motorway rape incident show the mindsets of the masses along with their approach and understanding of the matter. The relationship present between discourse, ideology, and society in reactionary Twitter posts on the rape incident at Lahore motorway exhibits that rape is an atrocious crime which is victimizing most of the females of the world, and people show mixed responses towards incidents through the tweets; either blaming the victim or supporting them. This research study intends to analyze the background and reactions of masses via tweets in order to examine the discourses produced through tweets. The discourse produced in the tweets shapes the cognition of the masses as people get influenced when they read things on social sites. It also shapes their mindsets regarding the concerned matter. Thus, this study has analyzed the beliefs of people expressed in the tweets, their thoughts, sentiments, and perspectives regarding the motorway rape incident, and the role of females in society.

Research Objectives

- ▶ To Identify and highlight the psyche and approaches of subjects through an online social site (Twitter),
- ▶ To explore the fact that critical discourse analysis helps to unveil the hidden agendas and societal problems.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis deals with the aspects in which power abuse, dominance, and unfair treatment are practiced, transferred, and opposed through discourse in social and governmental scenarios and circumstances (Van Dijk, [2001](#)). According to Dijk, social cognition describes and builds the relationship between discourse and society through mental processes. Van Dijk's model ([2007](#)) has been used to examine the concepts of 'self' and 'other'. The relationship between discourse and society is driven by social cognition. This model of Dijk discusses and critically analyzes the dominance and resistance of groups, with the help of some of the pointers and markers, some of which are actor description, victimization, polarization, authority, evidentiality, comparison, illustrations, irony, etc. These measures and signals help to critically analyze the hidden power relations, the positive self-representation, and negative other representation, references to prove something right, disclaim the negative or evil deeds, to divide the groups into totally opposite categories on the basis of differences in ideologies and philosophies, use of language to provide awareness and knowledge, and also to uncover the sarcasm or taunts and so on. The various indicators of Van Dijk's ([2007](#)) model are applied to Twitter tweets, which has helped to critically analyze and evaluate the dominance, resistance, and power control practiced in society. This model of Dijk examines the psychological perspectives

of the discourses produced. The indicators applied to selected tweets have helped to analyze the tweets from a deeper perspective by giving insight into the thoughts of in-group and out-group members. Some of the indicators of Van Dijk's (2007) model applied to reactionary Twitter posts are given below:

- 1: Evidentiality
- 2: Actor Description
- 3: Authority
- 4: Irony
- 5: Victimization
- 6: Comparison
- 7: Polarization
- 8: Illustrations/Examples

Significance of Study

The researcher has explored the field of internet linguistics and critical discourse analysis. The researcher has provided a critical discourse analysis of reactionary Twitter posts on the Lahore motorway incident, which in itself is a sensitive and unexplored area. This research study has analyzed and highlighted the socio-cognitive approach during discourse production. The researcher has contributed to the field of CDA by applying Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model and its indicators of practical social evil and incidents. It gives an insight into the mental level and intellectual capacity of the people, joined and united by the trending hashtag of the motorway rape incident. The application of various indicators on tweets adds up to a better understanding of critical discourse analysis on internet discourse. The readers will learn about different linguistic strategies used in discourses to analyze and judge things from deeper perspectives. This research study has given insight into the analysis of discourses produced through tweets in order to explore and uncover the realities behind them.

Literature Review

Critical discourse analysis is the branch of discourse analysis that involves the ways and processes of communication. Communication is an integral part of human life, without which life seems to be impossible, as human beings are social animals, and they require social interaction, which is possible only through the use of language. According to Fairclough (1993), critical discourse analysis helps interpret and investigate ideology and mindset through the use of language in a specific context. It also helps to show the mental status and social rank of an individual. CDA took a new form and shape in the 1980s through the contribution of intellectual and learned linguists such as Norman Fairclough, Van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak. According to most of the theorists, experts, and practitioners of this field, CDA is more closely associated with society than how mindsets, beliefs, and ideologies are practiced and shaped through discourses. It is mainly concerned with the relationship of social situations and norms with the discourse that is produced according to specific situations.

According to Fairclough (1993), CDA addresses and tackles the visible as well as hidden agendas and aspects of power, control, superiority, and unfair preference. Correspondingly, Dijk (1998) has also explained CDA as concerned with social norms, beliefs, concepts, and ideas expressed and portrayed through discourses, and those mindsets and social norms, customs, and values are enacted and practiced through discourses. In addition to it, it is also connected with how social norms and values are maintained through discourses. Sheyholislami (2001) describes that the hidden realities and agendas are exposed and highlighted with the help of critical discourse analysis, which is the prime aim of CDA. Thus, CDA uncovers the hidden truths, realities, concepts, and notions behind utterances. The researcher has discussed the functions and properties possessed by discourse production, which reveals the concepts that are hidden from the common people; the intended research works investigate and study how to understand those concepts and ideas by applying certain parameters in order to understand the deep meaning behind discourse production.

CDA not only analyzes the purpose of the text but also talks about the deeper aspect and interpretation of an idea. As believed by Elsharkawy (2017), In CDA, the text is of vital importance. It pays special attention to the use and purpose of the text. In order to know about the ideological perspectives behind discourses, it is crucial to know the ways, manners, and aspects in which discourses are uttered. To put it simply, the analysis and evaluation of a text, along with the social association of that text with the concerned situation, is of vital importance and requisite to understanding the ideological and socio-political factors (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Critical Discourse analysis is critical in nature because it explains and demonstrates the form and also gives ways and functions of the language used in a given context. CDA digs out the data, purpose, goals, and practices in association with public, societal, cultural, governmental, and financial contexts (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In all, that process also gives insight into how and why a particular discourse is used and what the underlying meaning behind certain utterances is. Research studies in the field of CDA also deal with the representation of resistance and opposition regarding certain issues, matters, or any political, cultural, and religious philosophy and ideology. CDA studies the social situations and social limitations regarding certain ideas and the views or the social cognition of people regarding that concept. Van Dijk (1995) argues that it involves the discourses of resistance and opposition as well as the discourses of support and acceptance in relation to that specific idea and norm. CDA deals with various philosophies and ideologies such as colonialism, islamophobia, racism, and capitalism, etc., and the ways in which these ideologies are presented, promoted, practiced, and imposed through discourses or/and, in contrast, the ways in which these ideologies are resisted through counter-discourses and counter ideologies such as orientalism, anti-islamophobia, anti-racism or Marxism, etc.

In addition to that, text and talk are important parts of critical discourse analysis. In accordance with Van Dijk (1995), CDA is associated and involved with the use of other concepts along with power control and power abuse. In other words, CDA inquires about ways in which the power is misused by the dominant group through discourses and also the ways in which it is practiced, maintained, and further promoted. The misuse of power takes place because the dominant class or group carries control and command over the discourse that they produce; thus, it becomes easy for them to spread their ideology and inculcate it in the minds of people. Therefore, it gives them control over using discourse for their own social or political benefit. Van Dijk's (1995) article discusses various techniques of power control and power abuse enacted and practiced by the dominant groups in society, but it does not discuss power control with respect to social issues. Therefore, the present research study investigates and examines the discourses of tweets that were produced as a reaction to the rape incident from the perspective of society, the ideologies of the masses producing those discourses, and the effects undergoing during the production of those reactionary posts.

CDA is often linked with society because discourses play a vital role in shaping the minds of the masses. Fairclough (1992, 1995) argues that through the critical evaluation of discourses that are produced, one may easily analyze the mindset and mental approach of the discourse producer. Hence, we can say that critical discourse analysis deals with the ways in which ideologies, philosophies, concepts, norms, and values are practiced, revealed, stated, claimed, permitted, and accepted, and it also deals with and uncovers the social status and mental capacity of discourse producers as well as discourse consumers. Furthermore, it investigates the ways in which discourses shape the minds and thinking of individuals (Van Dijk, 1995); his study has also drawn the particular aspect of critical discourse analysis through the perspective of ideologies and their practices. The present research study will elaborate on the analysis of discourse (tweets) from the perspective of social cognition through various indicators.

Internet discourse is the debate, discussion, social intercourse, dealings, and dialogues in recorded and textual form. The amalgamation of spoken and written discourse is internet discourse. There are different types of internet discourse, as it is a vast field of knowledge. Synchronous form of internet discourse consists

of the study of messaging and conversation, whereas asynchronous type of internet discourse deals with emails and different posts (Romiszowski & Mason, [2004](#)). Ferrara et al. ([1991](#)) carried out research on internet discourse, more specifically on the synchronous forms of internet discourse, and they found out that the messages related to traveling mostly consisted of the use of cataphoric references. It is the type of reference in which the referent refers forward to the reference. It is the feature of written discourse. They also found out that in the internet discourse, a wide range of terms like Sorry and Okay were used, which is the characteristic of spoken discourse. They have discussed the advantages and mechanisms of asynchronous communication. In their study, they talked about the advancements and features of asynchronous interaction.

An additional research study has discussed the discourse or communication via social media, most specifically through the discourse produced through Twitter, the afterward reactions to particular incidents through the social platform of Twitter, and its effects raising the social issue prevailing in society. Additionally, this research work also highlights the mental level of the masses and their reactions towards the increment in rape cases in Pakistan. As it is a mixture of written and spoken discourse, it shares some features with spoken discourse as well as some features with written discourse. Emoticons are also used in internet discourse to portray human feelings and emotions in a more striking and colorful way. In emoticons, smileys are used to convey inner emotions through the facial expressions of emojis. Emojis are also used to disagree with someone or something but in a polite and soft manner. According to different research reports, the conversations in which emoticons were used mostly were found to be more consistent and frank with each other. Different gestures are also used to convey feelings, as it is observed that onomatopoeic words are often used in Internet discourse (Lee, [2001](#); Smith, [2003](#)). AbuSa'aleek ([2015](#)) argues that in his research study on internet discourse, the research participants used punctuation marks to convey the messages without ambiguity, but they made some phonological mistakes in writing spellings like wuz for was, box because they used more short forms of words instead of using full spellings. Additionally, pronouns were also omitted, and the proper standard sentence structure was violated mostly for convenience.

The use of acronyms was also seen and observed, such as ASAP (as soon as possible) and BTW (by the way). Moreover, reduplications like 'soooo much' etc. were used to emphasize something, and gap fillers like hmmm, umm, etc. were also seen to be used. In addition to the shortenings, contractions and clippings were also used in internet discourse, such as bro for brother, can't for cannot, and 'til' or 'wil' for till and will. Some other features of Internet discourse that are witnessed through research are word digit replacement, word combinations, and word letter replacements (Abusa'aleek, [2015](#)). The above-mentioned research work has been conducted on the selected number of students belonging to nearly the same caliber or the same academic level. The participants knew that their answers were recorded for the research. The present research study, however, is different from the one mentioned above in the sense that it studies the data and discourse produced by different people belonging to different fields of life and have completely different approaches and mental caliber. Additionally, in this research work, random tweets have been analyzed from the linguistic perspective of critical discourse analysis in order to unveil and bring out the hidden reasons behind the production of discourses. Human beings interact with others through the internet discourse and convey their ideologies and perspectives, which an individual possesses. It also helps in the learning of different languages and concepts. The interaction that they share with each other determines the action taken as a result of shared ideas and aspects.

In conformity with Saha and Menezes ([2016](#)), in the modern world, information travels faster and in a much more convenient way because of the approachability and ease of understanding of social sites. The particular piece of knowledge is shared and viewed with the help of language through online social sites. Twitter is an online social site on which users share and account for facts, data, findings, and evidence. Different researches are conducted to check and analyze the use of language by the users of social sites in order to read the mentality of the people (Herring, [2004](#)) and to check the reactions of people related to that particular event or incident. Twitter posts and reactions help to analyze and understand human nature and

the psychological approach of human beings, particularly people belonging to specific areas. Posts and facts shared through online social sites such as Facebook and Twitter also help to play a role in governmental as well as community-based approaches and practices. They play a key role in social development by bringing forth the changing aspects of that process phenomena (Bardici, [2012](#)). Social media plays a huge role in shaping the thoughts and ideas of the masses, as argued by Newsome and Lingle ([2012](#)). Both highlighted the ways in which Arab feminists brought about social change with the help of social media.

According to the research conducted by Aljarallah ([2017](#)), it is observed that the outcome or the behavior of people varies according to their gender. This difference in approach is based on gender, which can be seen in the issue of driving females, which was raised in Saudi Arabia a few years ago. The people who were opposing the decision were of the view that it was an unethical and antireligious act. In contrast, the supporters of this decision supported it on the basis of their personal life experiences and everyday struggles. The above-mentioned work has discussed the approaches and reactions of people regarding the driving of women in Saudi Arabia; the difference in opinions was discussed briefly. The women driving received mixed responses from both genders. Thus, social media platforms were used to express their views and thoughts regarding political decisions taking place in their country. The present research study explores the issue and problem via Twitter posts in order to bring awareness and justice to the victim and to raise voices to get the basic right of protection for the victim of the motorway incident in Pakistan and for other individuals in Pakistan. The categorization is made on the basis of differences in opinions. Moreover, this work highlights the incident that took place in Pakistan. This work studies people's reactions from the perspective of social cognition. The study of Aljarallah ([2017](#)) concludes that on the social site Twitter, different hashtags are used by people to display their sentiments and thoughts. Hashtags also help reveal the intellectual capacity, power of reasoning, and caliber of the people responding to hot-burning issues. The survey, analysis, and deep study of those hashtags gave the view that those females who were opposing the decisions were considered pious women, while the ones who were in favor of the decision were called as bold and liberal ones. In this way, the mindsets of the masses can be analyzed by checking the use of hashtags on Twitter. Thus, the ideological bases and principles can be shown and portrayed through social sites and networks.

As per Zappavigna ([2012](#)), interactions through social media give rise to feelings of closeness and intimacy with people who share the same ideas and thoughts. It is a natural phenomenon that human beings get attracted to people who possess similar thoughts regarding different things; it can be any hot burning issue, any political decision, any social issue, or any campaign. Therefore, the users may be away from each other, but they get united by the use of shared knowledge and thought, or in simpler words, they are united by one hashtag on any current issue, slang, or meme. The present research study discusses the mechanism through which people get united on a single platform to raise their voices for the betterment of individuals and society.

The present research study investigates the reactionary posts on Twitter concerning the motorway rape incident in Lahore, Pakistan. The researcher applied the socio-cognitive model of Van Dijk ([2007](#)); this model highlights the relationship between language and societal norms, functions, mechanisms, and mental processes. Various indicators given by Van Dijk have been applied to the Twitter posts in order to critically analyze the reactionary posts. The model further talks about the concept of us and them, which in other terms can be referred to as the difference in mental approach and caliber that leads to the differentiation of groups. According to this approach, the negative other representation and the positive self-representation are highlighted and portrayed through every possible act. In simpler words, in-group members are portrayed with a positive image, while outgroup members are portrayed with a negative image. Moreover, as internet linguistics and computer-based communication are getting on top day by day, as an automatic consequence, it is considered a good source and platform to provide awareness, guidance, and information regarding any issue. Twitter also comes in this category of spreading awareness and knowledge, and it allows people to

raise their voices against injustice and inequality. Twitter hashtags play an important role in getting the attention of the users. The hashtag that is followed and retweeted most gets on top trending, which highlights the issue more. Thus, hashtags on Twitter can create a powerful effect and can bring change. In today's era, everything gets posted on Twitter. Therefore, the discourses produced via Twitter posts help to understand and analyze the socio-cognitive approaches as well as the views and reactions of the masses regarding any particular incident. As a result, this research work studies and talks about the reactions of people through Twitter discourse (hashtags) on motorway rape incidents with the application of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model.

Research Methodology

The researcher has used qualitative method to conduct this research. Random sampling is done, as data is analyzed and taken from twitter.

Research Design

The research design is qualitative in nature. It is first-hand data and non-numeric as it is taken directly from Twitter posts. It is descriptive in nature and involves textual analysis of the twitter posts.

Data Collection

The researcher selected tweets from people of different genders and social statuses. A total of thirteen tweets were selected, which were done by actors, social influencers, and common citizens of Pakistan. The purposive or judgmental sampling technique was used as the researcher analyzed the data under the application of indicators of the Van Dijk model ([2007](#)). The tweets were tweeted as a reaction to the motorway rape incident that took place in Lahore on 9th September 2020. The duration of the selected tweets ranges from 9th September 2020 to 5th April 2021. These all-selected tweets were the reactions and expressions of thoughts and ideas regarding the rape incident.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis deals with the aspects in which power abuse, dominance, and unfair treatment are practiced, transferred, and opposed through discourse in social and governmental scenarios and circumstances (Dijk, [2001](#)). According to Dijk, social cognition describes and builds the relationship between discourse and society through mental processes. Van Dijk's model ([2007](#)) has been used to examine the concepts of 'self' and 'other.' The relationship between discourse and society is driven by social cognition. This model of Dijk discusses and critically analyzes the dominance and resistance of groups, with the help of some of the pointers and markers, some of which are actor description, victimization, polarization, authority, evidentiality, comparison, illustrations, irony, etc. These measures and signals help to critically analyze the hidden power relations, the positive self-representation, and negative other representation, references to prove something right, disclaim the negative or evil deeds, to divide the groups into totally opposite categories on the basis of differences in ideologies and philosophies, use of language to provide awareness and knowledge, and also to uncover the sarcasm or taunts and so on. The various indicators of Van Dijk's ([2007](#)) model are applied to Twitter tweets, which has helped to critically analyze and evaluate the dominance, resistance, and power control practiced in society. This model of Van Dijk examines the psychological perspectives of the discourses produced. The indicators applied to selected tweets have helped to analyze the tweets from a deeper perspective by giving insight into the thoughts of in-group and out-group members. Some of the indicators of Van Dijk's ([2007](#)) model applied to reactionary Twitter posts are given below:

- 1: Evidentiality
- 2: Actor Description
- 3: Authority

- 4: Irony
- 5: Victimization
- 6: Comparison
- 7: Polarization
- 8: Illustrations/Examples

Data Analysis

Evidentiality

Evidentiality, according to Van Dijk (2007), is a supporting statement or kind of information provided to support the argument. Evidentiality makes the argument stronger, more powerful, and more impactful as it refers to some proof and evidence related to that particular issue. The purpose of evidentiality is to provide confirmation. The tweet of Fareeha (see figure no.1a), an anchor of a famous Pakistani TV channel, explains the whole story of the motorway rape incident by providing evidence from her interview with the victim or survivor of the brutal act that happened in Lahore. Evidentiality can be sensed as the anchor person refers to the discussion she carries out with the victim regarding the incident. The impact it has created upon the minds of the people is that they got the sense of conformity and surety that, being a media person, Fareeha has provided them with the correct and authentic news.

Figure 1a



Another example of evidentiality as an indicator in a tweet can be seen when a random girl (see figure no.1b) gave a reference to what women go through on a daily basis. The discourse produced shows that the girl tweeting discusses her personal experience associating with the rape incident to raise her voice against such cruelty and disrespectful acts prevailing in society. The discourse has created a clear distinction between in-group and out-group members by giving insight into the fact that the ingroup members (females) are not safe due to unlawful and immoral acts by some of the out-group members (males). The in-group members are suppressed and marginalized by out-group members. The same results of evidentiality can be seen in the research study conducted by Khan et al. (2015) under the title, "The Linguistic Representation of Gender Identities in Pakhtu Proverbs" They argue that the males are dominant over females, and females are supposed to accept and live the dominance of the male members of society. The tweets mentioned in the present research work show the male dominance and unsafe environment caused by harassers (males). So, overall, it can be seen that women are marginalized in Pakistani society from every aspect.

Figure 1b



Actor Description

It refers to the discourse or information produced by an actor or a participant in order to present out-group and in-group members more directly without any hesitation (Van Dijk, 2007). In in-group and out-group, the discourse producers describe and represent their in-group members in a positive while the out-group members in a negative way.

Figure 2a



In this above tweet (see figure no. 2a), a random Twitter user clearly divides the in-group and out-group members. The user has divided in-group members as victims, infants, and women, while out-group members such as rapists and men. This positive representation of the in-group members and the negative representation of the out-group members by the discourse producer (Mehar) show her reaction toward the motorway incident. The way she describes the actors shows that she is strongly against those who were involved in the incident and supports the victimized woman. Thus, she favors the women to raise their voices through her tweets and resists the patriarchal ideological structures of society.

Figure 2a



In the above-mentioned tweet (see figure no. 2b), the famous actress of Pakistan, Sanam Saeed, presents her thoughts and views about the rapists. In her tweet it can clearly be seen that she has used the word 'Them' for rapists in order to exclude the evil doers from 'Us' (we). Thus, in discourse, usually, it is about Us and Them; this actor description with reference to the nature of an act, profession, etc., gives a deep analysis of the discourse production and mindsets of people. The similar results can be seen in the research study under the title, "GENDER POSITIONING IN ACADEMIC SETTING IN PASHTUN SOCIETY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE PERSPECTIVE" conducted by (Athar et al., 2018) argues that the actors of in-group members

present themselves as positive while they present the members of out-group as negative ones. Similar can be seen in the present research study. The above-mentioned tweets clearly present the out-group members are the evil doers while the in-group members are presented as victims and innocent ones.

Authority

Authority is considered a powerful tool by Van Dijk (2007), as it influences the minds of the audience. Authority is regarded as the powerful people having more command over the masses and their mindsets. Authority is often linked with powerful discourse production. Thus, the reference to authority is given in order to influence the people or to raise the issue or any evil to a higher level in order to get it solved. The authority could be any powerful group, political party, or government. This also shows the confidence of the speaker in the correctness of the discourse being produced, as they mention authority in the discourse.

Figure 3a



Consider the tweet in (see figure no. 3a) which is done by a Pakistani actor, who has mentioned the powerful authority, the prime minister of Imran Khan to take an action against the culprits in order to set an example and to prove his idea of Riyasat e Madina. In discourses, these references to authorities are given in order to convey one's message in more strong way.

Similarly, Pakistani singer and philanthropist Hadiqa Kiani also condemns the incident by mentioning the government in her tweet (see figure no. 3b). She has clearly asked the government to provide knowledge and awareness to the population in order to educate them about basic moral ethics. She has also demanded punishment for the

commitment of such disrespectful and harmful doings to ensure justice. She, being the influencer, has produced a discourse that carries huge importance because the people who follow her will also raise their voices against the heinous act. Secondly, by mentioning the government, she has fulfilled her duty as a famous celebrity in Pakistan. Thus, the discourse production of these famous celebrities, along with mentioning authorities and asking them to take clear and direct action, not only impacts the minds of people following them, but it also unites people of the same thoughts, and as an automatic consequence, justice can be ensured.

Figure 3b



Additionally, the same results can be seen in the study conducted by Arshad (2020) under the title "A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE RESISTANCE OF ISLAMOPHOBIC IDEOLOGY IN Imran Khan's CONFERENCE TO UNGA" where he discusses that the references to authority plays a major role in the development and changes to be brought. As he mentions, Imran Khan refers to the UN as an authority to diminish the Islamophobic effect. In the same way, the present research study has applied this indicator of authority to tweets where the authority is mentioned by referring to the government and prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan.

Irony

Irony is a remark that is used to criticize something. The tone is light. It is a kind of sarcastic criticism or taunt.

Figure 4a



This above-mentioned tweet (see figure no. 4a) is done by the famous anchorperson of Pakistan, who has pointed out and highlighted the inefficiency and poor management of the government in such sensitive and attention-demanding cases. Calling the victim an 'honorable woman' shows his sympathy with the lady. By referring to the government by saying, 'this government and its allied institutions,' the ironical tone in the discourse can be pointed out clearly. The indicator of irony is used to point out the issue more vividly with the support of arguments. In a similar way, the research study "GENDER POSITIONING IN ACADEMIC SETTING IN PASHTUN SOCIETY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE PERSPECTIVE" conducted by Athar et al. (2018) also talks about the use of irony as a way to indicate the issues in a sarcastic way. As Athar et al. (2018) discuss, the discourse produced by males was ironic towards the females, while the discourse produced by females was also ironic in showing men as the dominant part of society in every aspect. The present research study discusses the ironic way one of the anchors highlights the concerned issue.

Victimization

In this indicator, the discourse producer presents in-group members as innocent victims of the cruelty practiced by the out-group members. In the analysis of reactionary Twitter posts, it is observed that the people involved in the crime of the motorway incident were presented as exploiters, while the victim was portrayed as an innocent lady in most cases.

Figure 5a



In the tweet (see figure no. 5a), the discourse producer divides the whole society into two. He portrays the evil doers (rapists) as exploiters while the exploited ones (victims) are shown innocent. In this way, the division of in-group and out-group members can be analyzed using the indicator of victimization. The affected ones (society and women) are victims, while the rapists and the people who blamed the lady for that heinous act are called the exploiters.

Comparison

The comparison is drawn between various aspects in order to bring out the actual meaning and mindset behind certain discourses. Through comparison, both the negative and positive sides are presented in a clear way.

Figure 6a



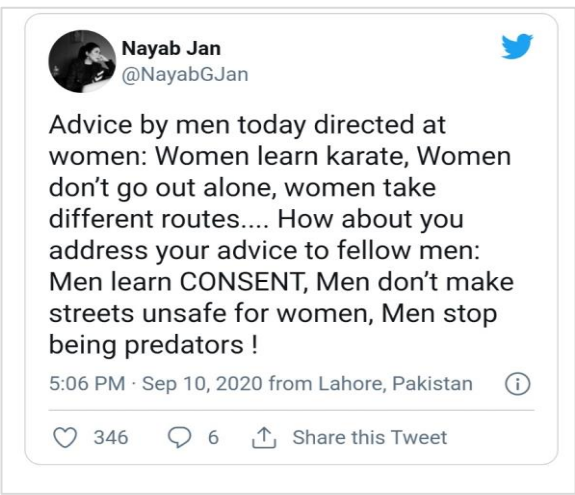
In this tweet (see figure no. 6a), the well-known actress of Pakistan, Mehwish Hayat, makes remarks by making a clear comparison between the safety and protection in Singapore as compared to the unsafe and insecure environment and society of Pakistan. She emphasizes her views by talking about civilized society and the jungle. She compares Pakistani society to an uncivilized society, without any constitutional rules, just like a jungle. The comparison is made between safe and unsafe society and environment. This indicator of comparison is also used by Athar et al. (2018) in their research study "GENDER POSITIONING IN ACADEMIC SETTING IN PASHTUN SOCIETY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE PERSPECTIVE" which shows that the

comparison was used in order to compare females of Pashtun society with that of West. Moreover, the comparison was also made between the differences in the discourses produced by both genders. In a similar way, the present research work mentions the tweet in which the indicator of comparison is used to point out the difference between a healthy, safe, and unhealthy, unsafe environment.

Polarization

As per Van Dijk (2007), discourse producers try to draw a clear boundary to mark the edge and limit the line between in-group members and out-group members. Through this indicator of polarization, the substitution and exclusion of 'them' can be seen from 'us.' As in the below-mentioned tweet:

Figure 7a



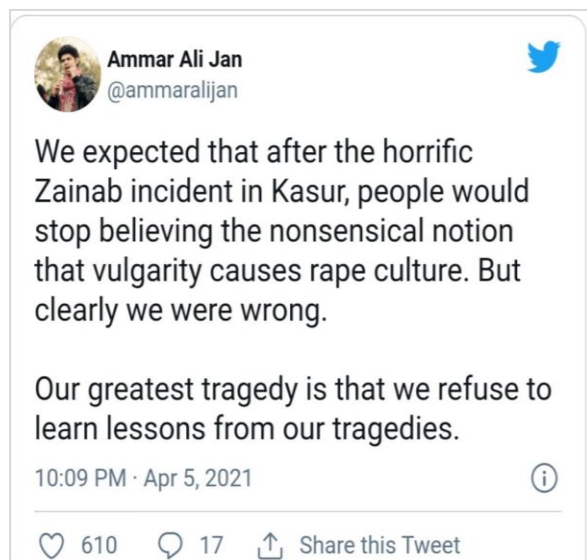
In this tweet (see figure no. 7a), the lady clearly marks the difference by asking men to stop misbehaving with women instead of giving them advice and lessons. Out-group members or 'them' are taken completely out of the suffering as the consequences are faced by in-group members or 'us.' In the tweet, the subordinate role of women can be seen through the discourse, while the dominant and harsh behavior of men in society can also be perceived.

Illustrations/Examples

Illustrations and examples are given by discourse producers in order to present their ideas in a more vivid form (Van Dijk, 2007). The aim behind examples is to catch up with the mind of the discourse consumer. Through examples

and illustrations, one gets control of the audience and, thus, grabs the attention. Secondly, when examples are provided, it gives a sense of authenticity.

Figure 8a



This tweet (see figure no. 8a) has given examples and references to other horrific and terrible incidents that took place in the past. The basic aim behind these illustrations and examples is to prove the point with more authenticity and strength, to come forward with the confidence of authenticity. In order to raise the voice, examples of past incidents are given to provide justice to the victim. The examples are given in the tweet to awaken the nation and authorities to take action against all evil doings. Such condemned reactions show that the people were really upset and mentally tortured.

Findings of the Study

The results of this study show that the discourses of tweet posts carry hidden meanings behind them. There is a purpose behind discourse production. The basic aim and mentality of the discourse producer can be found by analyzing discourse via the lenses of linguistic strategies. This research study has explored reactionary Twitter posts by the application of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model. The various indicators of this model are applied to the tweets, which give insight into the mindset and mental approach toward the particular rape incident. In addition, it is seen that the in-group members try to present themselves as positive while out-group members as negative. Furthermore, when the indicators are applied to discourse, it uncovers various aspects and perspectives of people regarding the matter. The indicators help to understand the deep meaning behind the utterance of discourse. Moreover, discourse plays a vital role in expressing the beliefs and values of the people reacting to the incident. Just as the majority condemned the heinous act taken place at Lahore motorway, which gives the insight that Pakistan being a Muslim state, condemns all such evil acts and that the punishments should be given to the rapists.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the reactionary Twitter posts on motorway rape incidents from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. The researcher applied Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of self and others to analyze and examine the psyche of the discourse producer by utilizing certain indicators of this model. In the tweets analyzed above, it was found that the producers of Twitter posts either supported or resisted the motorway rape incident which took place in Lahore, Pakistan; however, the majority of the tweets were found in favor of the victims of the incidents and against the people who were involved in the crime. In order to support their view stance in favor of the in-group (i.e., the victimized) and against the out-group (i.e., those who were involved in the crime), the producers of the discourses of tweets made use of various discursive strategies. They represented the in-group members in a positive way and the out-group members in a very negative way. Similarly, they polarized the in-group and out-group members and provided various evidentiality and authorities in favor of the in-group members and against the out-group ones. Thus, with the help of these discourses, the discourse producers shaped the cognition of the masses against the ones who were involved in this crime.

Recommendations

Owing to the delimitations of the present study due to the time and space constraints, the researcher puts forward the following recommendations for future research studies.

First, in this study, the researcher analyzed only thirteen Twitter posts of Pakistani people. Thus, it is suggested that a research study with a bigger sample should be conducted in order to find out the reactions of other people to the said incident. In addition, this study was confined to the tweet posts of the Pakistani discourse producers only, so a systematic investigation should be carried out on the tweet posts of the international leaders and celebrities in order to find out their attitude towards the said incident and their hidden agendas. Furthermore, the researcher analyzed only the tweet posts regarding the said incident, and thus, it is recommended that the reactionary posts regarding the said incidents posted on other platforms and sites of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr, etc. may also be analyzed by (Romiszowski & Mason, [2004](#); Athar et al., [\(2018\)](#) researchers. Finally, the present research study was only about the motorway incident which took place in Lahore on September 09, 2020, so it is suggested that the reactionary posts about the other many incidents which have taken place in Pakistan and in other countries should also be explored in order to have further in-depth exploration of the discursive strategies used for such purposes and their effects on the socio-cognitive structures of the masses.

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