



Sociocognitive Analysis of Facebook Memes: Investigating Political Ideologies and Identity Formation among Pakistani Youth

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Abstract

The transformational significance of Facebook memes as a digital communication tool that is changing political discourse among Pakistani youth is examined in this research. With Teun A. van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Theory as its analytical framework, the study explores how political memes, with special emphasis to how they depict political people, reflect power relations, embody complex meanings, and function as tools of resistance. 16 political memes that were randomly chosen from highly engaged Facebook pages representing a range of political themes were analyzed using a qualitative technique. The research looks at the mental processes that these visual artifacts use to build ideological alignments, affect political views, and help young people develop their identities. The results demonstrate the dual role of memes as both accelerators for ideological change and mirrors of social power systems. The research demonstrates how memes not only reflect dominant political beliefs but also promote changes in political attitudes and actions by examining the relationship between digital media, politics, and identity. By showing how meme-based communication promotes ideological development and is crucial in forming the political awareness of Pakistan's younger generations, this study advances our understanding of the role of digital platforms in modern political involvement.

Keywords: Facebook memes, political discourse, youth identity, Pakistan, Socio-Cognitive Theory, digital communication, ideological transformation.

Introduction

The extensive use of social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, has fundamentally altered how people interact. One of the most effective communication tools that is becoming more and more popular every day is the meme. The dissemination of diverse cultural narratives via memes' visual



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components and humorous language has become an essential component of contemporary communication (Shifman 2014). Memes have profound significance for establishing beliefs and creating particular identities in addition to being a source of communication and pleasure. Because Facebook memes are used so often, they produce complex realities that are ingrained in society. In the views of certain political organizations, they have unparalleled resistance and a great ability to construct particular political narratives. As a result, they provide the framework for establishing and preserving certain groups' collective realities. Through the use of certain phrases and visual representation, sarcasm and humor may be embedded into a single picture to concisely express hidden meanings (Brock, 2017). It is necessary to critically examine the intricate mental processes that take place when people repeatedly see these memes on various social media platforms in order to comprehend how these visuals quickly transmit a certain meaning. In summary, despite their brief appearance, Facebook memes convey much more complex stories than one may ever imagine. It is impossible to ignore the influence that these stories have on young people's brains. They act as a medium for establishing, absorbing, and preserving diverse political identities via a subdued and quiet sense of humor. Young brains are the ones who take in this kind of information on a regular basis without ever realizing the impact it has on them. Even though the topic of political identity development has been extensively studied, little is known about how to view this from a sociocognitive perspective. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to the cognitive processes that take place in the mind of the person in order to encode and decode such meanings and construct narratives (van Dijk, 2006). Furthermore, it necessitates examining how the representation of certain political leaders shapes power relationships and resistance actions within competing groups. This research attempts to close this knowledge gap by analyzing Facebook memes using socio-cognitive analysis of vandijk. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the development of political identity formation and power discrimination, particularly among Pakistani young, while maintaining a thorough investigation of memes via a socio-cognitive lens.

Statement of the Problem

The growing popularity of Facebook memes has raised concerns about how they profoundly affect children's thinking. Although these memes are widely employed, it is still unclear how they are cognitively processed and contribute to the development of political beliefs. It is necessary to thoroughly examine the power dynamics and resistance that the meme culture fosters among certain groups. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how people digest these memes and develop their political opinions. Therefore, this study examines how meme-based communication propagates and upholds certain beliefs, resulting in political and ideological change.

Objective of the Study.

1. To examine the multilayered meanings of Facebook memes.
2. To analyze how power dynamics and acts of resistance are symbolized by memes, specially in the portrayal of political figures.



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3. To investigate the influence of memes as a medium for changing and shaping the political attitudes of the younger generation.

Research questions

- 1 How Facebook memes convey multilayered meanings and are cognitively processed by youngsters?
2. What are the ways through which power dynamics and acts of resistance are formed through Facebook memes?
3. How do certain cognitive processes are initiated due to Facebook memes and how it leads to the formation of certain political attitudes?

Literature review

Historical Context and Evolution of Memes

In his 1976 book "Selfish Gene," famous researcher Richard Dawkins defined memes as behaviors and styles that spread like genes from person to person within a civilization. Memes have evolved into an essential aspect of contemporary society and are much more than this simple definition (Shifman, 2014). Memes have gained a lot of attention due to their complex character and hilarious sarcastic impact on the audience. Memes on social media are becoming more and more popular both domestically and abroad (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007).

Political ideology and memes. Memes are becoming an effective means of disseminating and expressing ideas, particularly in political contexts. In essence, memes are brief, straightforward statements that are simple to comprehend and share. Political memes are in a crucial position to either promote or oppose certain political viewpoints because of their capacity for rapid dissemination and comedic potential (Shifman, 2014). They mostly employ satire, exaggeration, and humor to critique political parties or leaders in order to advance political ideals and participation.

For instance, during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, memes were frequently utilized to either praise or denigrate candidates, demonstrating the divisive character of contemporary politics (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). As vehicles for idea transformation, political memes can function as platforms for social and political critique. Consequently, it may sometimes serve as the foundation for political polarization.

Cognitive Processing of Memes in Political Contexts

Memes' cognitive processing is influenced by the feelings of particular groups whose perception of a political party they have already established. According to social cognition theories, memes' simplicity and humor elicit emotional responses that prevent viewers from exercising critical thought, making political messages easier to understand (Frijda, 2007). These emotional reactions are heightened by the use of visual symbols and well-known political imagery that correspond with the viewers' preexisting political beliefs and emotional states.

Memes as Political Discourse and Cultural Artifacts.



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Facebook memes blend verbal and visual elements to produce meaning, making them complex cultural artifacts that require cognitive decoding. Van Dijk's (2006) sociocognitive theory offers a helpful framework for understanding how individuals may understand memes and how they convey social values, political ideas, and power dynamics. Because memes are effective political weapons, particularly in influencing the political opinions of young people, researchers are looking at how they work as cognitive artifacts that filter ideological communication. This research review examines Facebook memes' function as powerful political discourse agents within the sociocognitive paradigm, with a focus on how they might represent power structures, influence political beliefs, and denote resistance.

Mememes as Political Communication and Ideological Vehicles

According to Shifman (2014), memes represent the apex of participatory culture in the digital era. Far from being just simple graphics with amusing text, memes have evolved into complex discourse forms that represent political and social viewpoints. Shifman (2014) asserts that memes are "cultural products" that both reflect and shape public opinion. Because of their rapid dissemination via digital means, they have the capacity to upend existing power structures, magnify political messages, and sway public opinion on a scale that is unmatched by conventional political communication. For instance, memes have been effectively used in political campaigns worldwide. Millions of political memes were shared during the 2016 US presidential election, influencing political discourse and influencing voters' beliefs (Brock, 2017). In Pakistan, memes have become a vital tool for engaging with political issues as they often encapsulate the essence of social movements, satire, and political debates (Akbar, 2018).

Power, Resistance, and Political Authority in Mememes

In the context of authoritarian governments or politically oppressive settings, this subversive potential is especially important. According to Barry (2019), memes can offer a platform for political criticism that eschews more conventional methods of censorship and repression, therefore creating a space for resistance. Mememes can reach a large audience thanks to their viral nature, which challenges established power structures and changes political narratives. Mememes represent a type of grassroots resistance that challenges the established quo and gives alternative political expressions a forum in nations like Pakistan, where elites and mainstream media frequently dominate political discourse (Akbar, 2018).

The Role of Mememes in Political Identity Formation Among Youth Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Mememes

Various theoretical frameworks that provide insights into the meaning, spread, and influence of memes must be used in order to analyze them in political discourse. Cognitive theory is an important theoretical framework that suggests memes, as cultural concepts, interact with people's pre-existing cognitive frameworks (Blackmore, 1999). According to cognitive theories, memes are more likely to be spread and interacted with when they appeal to viewers' emotions, prejudices, and mental shortcuts. The idea of cognitive biases, such as

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confirmation bias, which states that people are more inclined to spread memes that support their preconceived notions, may be used to explain this viral propagation process (Friggeri et al., 2014).

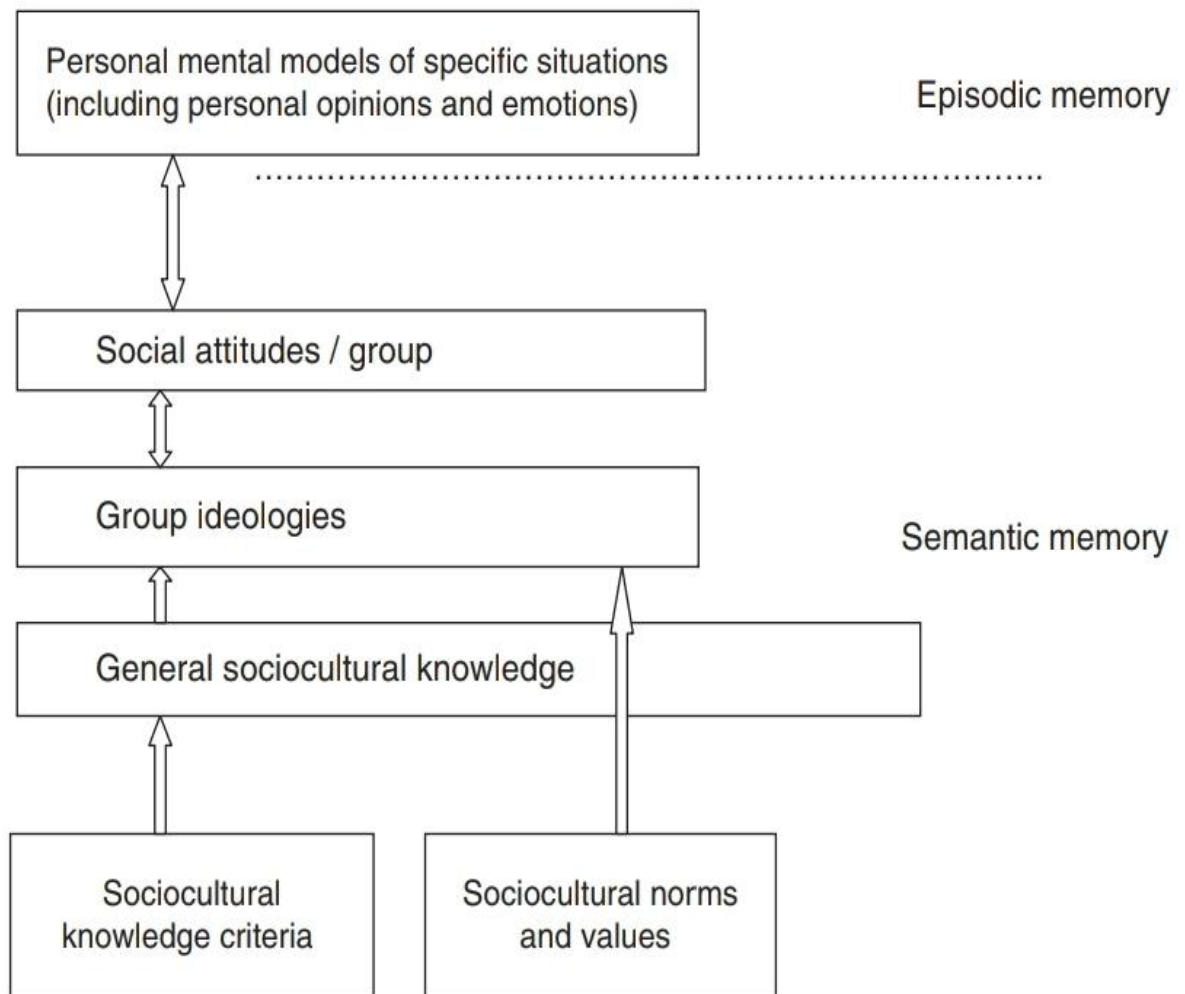


Figure 4.1 System of social beliefs

Van Dijk's sociocognitive framework provides a sophisticated explanation of how social ideologies and individual mental models combine to create collective views. The graphic emphasizes how episodic and semantic memory interact, showing how societal norms and ideals translate individual experiences into more general collective ideology. This hierarchical structure demonstrates how social views are cognitively embedded, with individual viewpoints becoming deeply ingrained sociocultural knowledge that sustains prevailing ideological frameworks and group dynamics.

The process of interpreting memes entails triggering the cognitive processes that direct people's comprehension of the political messages they contain. The sociopolitical background of the person, including their past experiences, convictions, and ideological inclinations, affects these structures. These cognitive processes are essential for comprehending how memes affect political beliefs and



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public opinion, claims Van Dijk (2006). Viewers' views of political memes are influenced by their own social and ideological contexts in addition to the meme's actual substance. The cognitive mechanisms underlying meme interpretation have been the subject of several investigations. Shifman (2014), for instance, investigated how memes' humor, irony, and satire serve as platforms for political commentary, enabling people to interact with political topics in a way that speaks to their own cognitive processes. knowledge how memes may affect political opinions requires a knowledge of the relationship between memes and cognitive schemas. Memes are seen as cognitive objects that mediate the connection between the individual and the broader socio-political discourse, according to sociocognitive theory.

Procedure and methodology

The effect of political memes on Facebook is examined in this study utilizing a qualitative methodology, with an emphasis on how they affect young identity and political views. To guarantee that a range of political subjects were covered, 16 political memes were chosen at random from different active Facebook pages. These memes, which were selected due to their broad participation and represent contemporary political discourse, may have an impact on public opinion, especially among younger users.

Vandijk's sociocognitive method is applied to examine how Facebook political memes influence the development of political identities, especially in young people. The research investigates how memes influence the ideological and cognitive frameworks of their audience, define political discourse, and depict political players via methodical investigation. The results will provide a better understanding of how politics, identity, and digital media interact in modern society.

Data Collection and Sampling

During the sampling process, political memes that had attracted a lot of attention were chosen. Memes that addressed pertinent political issues, such as elections, political movements, and national concerns, were the main requirements for inclusion. To prevent prejudice and guarantee a wide range of political messages, memes were chosen at random. The memes included a variety of text, picture, and video formats—all of which are often used in Facebook political discussions.

Framework for Data Analysis

Teun A. van Dijk's Socio Cognitive Theory, which investigates the connection between discourse and cognition, serves as the foundation for the study. This theory looks at how people receive and understand speech using their cognitive structures, which are influenced by social circumstances as well as individual experiences. By using this approach to political memes, it is possible to investigate how political messages are communicated via memes and how these messages impact people's social and cognitive comprehension of political problems. In particular, the investigation examines how political individuals are portrayed in the memes, how political events are framed, how language and symbols are used, and how these memes may affect young people's cognitive development. The main goal is to comprehend how memes influence the



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development of political identities and ideological alignment.

Methodology for Analysis The analysis follows a clear, systematic process. First, the memes were coded according to recurring themes such as political criticism, satire, and ideological framing. Next, a content analysis was conducted to examine the visual and textual elements of each meme. The linguistic features, such as the use of humor or sarcasm, and the symbolic visuals, like caricatures or political imagery, were closely analyzed. Each meme was then interpreted through the lens of van Dijk's Sociocognitive Theory, considering how the ideological messages within the memes align with or challenge existing political beliefs. Finally, the findings were contextualized within the broader political environment, considering how these memes reflect the political landscape and contribute to identity formation among youth.

Ethical Considerations

While the memes evaluated are freely accessible on Facebook, ethical issues were taken into account. The research assures that no identifiable personal information is utilized and that the analysis respects the privacy of persons who may be engaged in sharing or producing these memes. The study focuses on the political content itself and does not aim to control or exploit the audience's reactions.

Limitations of the Study

One weakness of this research is that it focuses primarily on Facebook, which may not completely represent the range of political memes across other platforms. Additionally, the sample size of 16 memes may not be big enough to generalize the results, but the qualitative character of the research allows for a deep investigation of the content. Despite these limitations, the study gives useful insights into the function of political memes in forming teenage political identities in the digital era.

Data analysis

Table

S. No	Statements	Members
1	Neutral Political Meme Posting	(+29000)
2	PMLN Meme Posting Area	(+4.3k)
3	PMLN Lovers	(+105k)
4	Expose PTI	(+2.8k)
5	Pakistan different Meme Posting	(+110k)



Date	Post
7 Janua ry 2025	<div data-bbox="448 465 1453 1527"></div> <p>With an emphasis on how common social ideas and ideologies impact textual and visual material, Van Dijk's socio cognitive method is a critical discourse analysis paradigm that explores the relationship between cognition, society, and discourse. By using this theory on the given picture, we may reveal the sociocultural narratives and implicit ideological foundations of the image.</p> <p>The picture features a well-known person, and the Urdu text highlights a perceived mismatch between their behavior and how the public views them. The title suggests a criticism of the person's actions or words, implying comedy and social judgment. The semiotic components—such as the formal dress and solemn expression—highlight a deliberate rhetorical contrast with the caption's lighthearted tone.</p>



	<p>According to sociocognitive theory, this disparity is a reflection of social schemata, which are common conceptions of powerful people, especially in South Asian societies. The caption's comedy plays on societal conventions of credibility and stereotypes to imply that the person's speech or behavior is out of the ordinary. The audience's preexisting ideological convictions are triggered by this divergence, which promotes group laughter and sometimes even criticism.</p> <p>The discussion also supports the idea of polarization in the social cognitive theory. By portraying the person as a "other" who is being ridiculed, the text strengthens viewers' sense of in-group solidarity as they all take the same stand of criticism or mocking. The text's usage of Urdu strengthens its cultural distinctiveness and ensures that it resonates with a local audience while upholding common beliefs.</p> <p>In summary, the picture serves as a sociocognitive reinforcement medium, reflecting and sustaining societal ideas associated with humor, judgment, and public figure expectations. It reinforces cultural narratives and social norms by influencing cognitive processes to elicit certain emotional and intellectual reactions.</p>
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Using van Dijk's Sociocognitive Theory to analyze the given image exposes the underlying sociopolitical ideas and cognitive techniques used to shape the people's views. The meme draws on cultural schemata and preconceptions to elicit responses from viewers by contrasting two situations involving political personalities using textual and visual components.

Social-Cognitive

Evaluation:

1. Cognitive Structures and Ideological Polarization: Two political figures who are connected to disparate ideological narratives are contrasted in the meme. One leader is depicted in the first picture, and the text mockingly calls him a "Jewish agent." This takes use of an established social schema in the local political debate, where accusations of treason or foreign loyalty frequently surface to disparage opponents. The second picture shows a different leader interacting amicably with people dressed in traditional Middle Eastern garb, with a message emphasizing the connection to a "religious family." By portraying one leader as hypocritical while quietly defending the other's conduct, the cognitive framing here serves to further polarize ideologies.

2. Social Representation and Manipulation: The meme manipulates social representations by posing a rhetorical conflict between the images and words. Given that their political equivalents exhibit comparable alliances or connections, it suggests that a leader's public statements regarding foreign plots are disingenuous. Written in Urdu, the book is intended for a particular readership that is acquainted with these ideological contradictions, guaranteeing that the comedy and criticism are relevant to regional sociopolitical settings.



	<p>3. Contextual framing and power dynamics: As accusations and rebuttals of loyalty and authenticity are common in Pakistani political discourse, the meme functions within these power dynamics. This divergent portrayal of the leaders serves to further in-group and out-group dynamics. In addition to undermining the legitimacy of both individuals, the comedy also reflects the general cynicism of society regarding political alliances and rhetoric.</p> <p>4. Cultural and Linguistic Semiotics: By using Urdu, the critique becomes more culturally particular and the audience is able to decipher hidden meanings associated with political and historical themes. The audience's cognitive processing of the text is influenced by the visual composition, which also conveys traditional and ideological affinities through the clothing and body language.</p>
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Analysis

Date	Post
8 January 2025	<p>تلخ حقیقت !! بائیڈروجن اور ایٹم بم سے زیادہ خوفناک تجربہ 2018 میں ایک کھوٹے کو شیروانی پہنا کر پاکستان میں کیا گیا</p> <p>😄</p> <p>This meme criticizes political leadership using humor and sarcasm, framing the political era starting from 2018 as a "failed experiment." Let's analyze this using van Dijk's Sociocognitive Theory.</p>



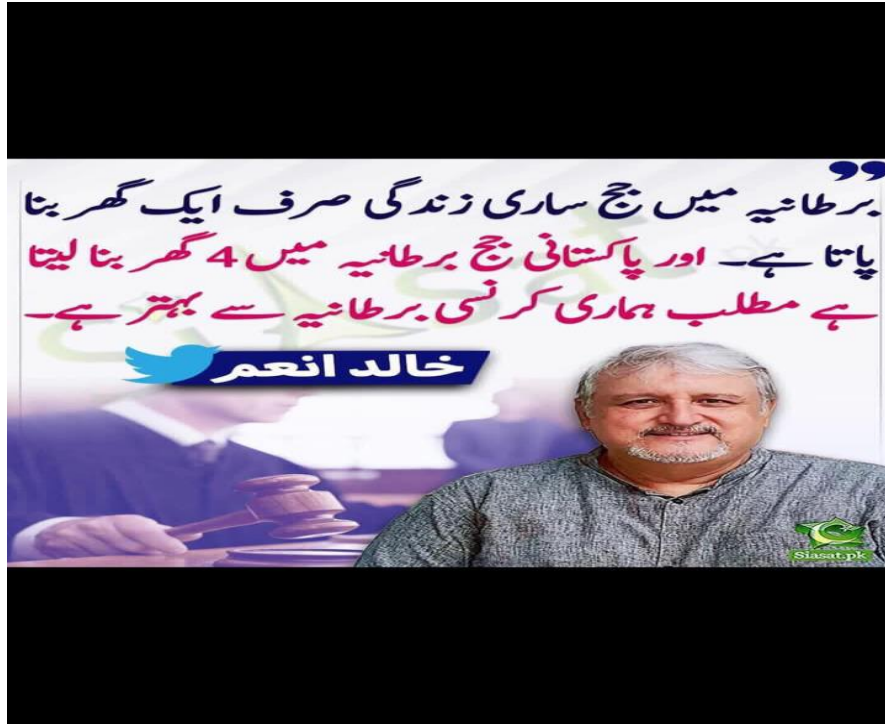
	<p>Social-Cognitive Evaluation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cognitive Framing: To compare the political tenure starting in 2018 to catastrophic occurrences like an atomic or hydrogen bomb, the book employs the concept of a "dangerous experiment" The audience's schemas associated with loss and destruction are triggered by this contrast, which exaggerates the perceived negative effects of the leadership. 2. Ideological Polarization: By characterizing the political period as a catastrophic "experiment," the meme serves to further erode favorable opinions of the 2018 government's affiliated political party (PTI). This reinforces the in-group (party critics) vs. out-group (party supporters) division, which is a defining feature of ideological debate. 3. Using Humor as a Discursive Strategy: By adding a laughing emoji at the end, the criticism is less serious and more approachable, which makes it easier to post on social media. While keeping its critical posture, this tactic disarms counterarguments with comedy. 4. Social Context and Audience Targeting: It is evident that the Urdu-language meme, which was shared in a group devoted to exposing a certain political party, is intended for readers who are acquainted with Pakistani politics. This audience's cognitive processes probably include mistrust or discontent with PTI, which increases the meme's resonance and effect. 5. Power and Representation: The political leader's legitimacy and authority are called into question when they are shown in isolation and accompanied by a harsh criticism. The audience is positioned as the victims of the leader's actions via the language, which suggests a communal loss and catastrophe. <p>In summary:</p> <p>The meme uses van Dijk's sociocognitive techniques, such as ideological polarization and schema activation, to challenge political leadership via a combination of comedy, exaggeration, and culturally particular allusions. It fosters a sense of dissatisfaction within its target audience while reinforcing already unfavorable views.</p>
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Socio-Cognitive Evaluation of Every Image Using Van Dijk's Model

Image 1. Contextual Representation and Ideological Framework:

Using monetary achievement as a rhetorical tactic, the picture juxtaposes the lifestyles of judges from Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The claim that a Pakistani judge builds four houses in Britain while a British judge spends their whole life constructing one suggests that the legal system is corrupt or ineffective. This rhetoric presents Pakistan's judicial institutions as exploitative or opportunistic in comparison to Western systems, which is an implied ideological criticism. The funny framing of the contrast, however, may mitigate the criticism while elevating national pride over individual economic success.

2. Power Dynamics and Social Inequality: The text highlights a gap in privilege and power, implying that certain people take advantage of their positions of authority to amass excessive riches. It casts Pakistani judges as representatives of a more significant structural problem, generating a conversation that subtly challenges social structures and government. This criticism reinforces a narrative of inequality and corruption while highlighting social distrust about institutions.

3. Cognitive Processing and Public Interpretation: This picture probably triggers common social schemas among viewers, especially those pertaining to elite distrust and corruption. It encourages readers to consider the inefficiencies in home systems by bringing up a comparison approach. The message's comedy makes it memorable and guarantees that viewers from all socioeconomic backgrounds will find the criticism relatable.



Analysis

Date	Post
5 Janu ary 2025	<p>1. Ideological Framework and Contextual Representation: By highlighting the concept of self-reliance and sacrifice via a personal story and relating it to the subliminal desire to deceive others, this picture illustrates sarcastic humor. The person asserts that they have left the house to secure their children's future success, demonstrating altruistic behavior based on family duties. The book is consistent with neoliberal principles of meritocracy and entrepreneurship by highlighting individual hardships and ultimate achievement.</p> <p>2. Power Dynamics and Social Inequality: The discussion emphasizes personal responsibility in the face of economic inequality, obliquely suggesting that social systems may not always be conducive to advancement. A progressive narrative that alters power relations is presented by the allusion to a "Manika" lady coming out, which questions conventional gender norms in South Asian civilizations. The criticism is subtle, however, since the book also emphasizes the value of financial independence over reliance on patriarchal or inherited riches.</p> <p>3. Cognitive Processing and Public Interpretation: The book engages the emotions of its audience, especially those from collectivist societies, by evoking similar experiences and family responsibilities. The story acknowledges the sacrifices necessary for achievement while urging viewers to adopt proactive strategies. The message resonates widely because of the aspirational tone, which promotes cognitive congruence with cultural ideals of diligence and hard effort.</p>




Analysis

Date	Post
31 December 2024	<p>1. Ideological Framework and Contextual Representation: By highlighting a political figure's alleged ineffectiveness, this picture uses satire to criticize political leadership. In a lighthearted way, the passage implies that Khan's desire for power would wane if he were forced to do housework. This criticism is consistent with ideological narratives that cast doubt on the responsibility and intentions of political leaders. Humor and conversational language make the discussion approachable to a broad audience, which encourages participation in the criticism.</p> <p>2. Power Dynamics and Social Inequality: The essay draws attention to the gap that exists between the problems of common people and political leaders. The story portrays the leader as disconnected from the reality that the people confront by making fun of their alleged inability to carry out simple duties. This strengthens the audience's sense of power disparities and fosters a conversation that quietly demands more responsibility and compassion from the leadership.</p> <p>3. Cognitive Processing and Public Interpretation: Humor is a cognitive technique that keeps an audience interested while provoking critical thought. The audience's life experiences and the criticism are connected via the familiar images of doing housework. The book questions accepted ideas of leadership and accountability by fusing comedy with nuanced social analysis, leading viewers to doubt the sincerity of political people.</p>

Analysis



Date	Post
3 Janua ry 2025	 <p>The graphic material captures the social discourse that permeates Pakistani culture via a sophisticated mix of linguistic and semiotic signals. The top part of the picture, which shows a distorted image of a well-known politician with a handprint on his face and the words “the world’s greatest cursed” written over it, emphasizes a delegitimization ideology. The handprint’s visual metaphor for public shame and communal censure subtly incorporates social dissatisfaction into its semiotic structure. The picture reinforces the intended scorn by evoking an external authoritative look with the use of an internationally famous actor waving towards the changed face.</p>

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امریکہ پر عذاب اس لیے آیا کہ
اس نے بے گناہ قیدی نمبر 804
کو رہا نہیں کروایا
ایک غمگین یوتھیا 😊

Sociocognitive Analysis of the Statement Using van Dijk's Theory

The given statement, "امریکہ پر عذاب اس لیے آیا کہ اس نے بے گناہ قیدی نمبر 804 کو رہا نہیں کروایا ایک غمگین یوتھیا", reflects a narrative deeply embedded within the sociocultural and ideological structures that govern discourse production in the context of Pakistani socio-political spheres. Employing van Dijk's Sociocognitive Theory, this analysis explores how societal cognition, ideological positioning, and the interplay between power and resistance shape the construction and interpretation of the statement.

1. Contextual Framing and Ideological Polarization

At its core, the statement articulates a cause-and-effect relationship between an act of perceived injustice by a dominant global power (the United States) and its subsequent moral or divine retribution. This framing is indicative of a polarized "Us versus Them" ideology, where "Us" represents a collective identity tied to moral superiority and victimhood, and "Them" symbolizes hegemonic oppression. The mention of "804 قیدی نمبر" (Prisoner No. 804) functions as a discursive tool to anchor the narrative in a specific instance of injustice, evoking collective empathy and indignation.

Van Dijk posits that such discourses are shaped by shared societal cognitions, which are internalized by members of a specific group. Here, the audience—likely individuals aligned with the nationalist or anti-imperialist sentiment—perceives the United States as culpable for global injustices, a perception reinforced through recurrent narratives in media and public discourse.



2. Cognitive Models and Emotional Appeal

The phrase "غمگین یوتھیا" (a grieving supporter of a political movement) invokes a cognitive model of emotional vulnerability and moral righteousness. This identity construction is strategically employed to elicit solidarity and emotional resonance. According to van Dijk, cognitive models are not only individual but also socio-culturally shared; thus, the grief expressed by the "یوتھیا" resonates with a broader audience who internalize similar grievances against perceived global inequities.

The attribution of "عذاب" (divine punishment) to the actions of the United States reflects the cognitive schema prevalent in certain ideological frameworks, where global powers are seen as subject to higher moral accountability. This aligns with van Dijk's assertion that ideologies influence the interpretation of events by shaping the mental models individuals construct to make sense of the world.

3. Discourse Strategies and Power Dynamics

The statement employs specific discourse strategies, such as hyperbolic moral judgment ("عذاب") and personalization of injustice ("804 قیدی نمبر"), to challenge the perceived dominance of the United States. These strategies align with van Dijk's notion of resistance discourse, where marginalized groups construct narratives to subvert and delegitimize the authority of dominant powers.

Furthermore, the reference to a numbered prisoner rather than a name dehumanizes the victim in one sense but simultaneously amplifies their symbolic representation. This technique abstracts the injustice, making it universally relatable and transcending individual identity to represent a collective grievance.

4. Socio-Cognitive Implications

The cognitive representation of the United States as an oppressor and the use of divine retribution as a counterbalance underscores the interplay between religion, ideology, and power in the sociocultural fabric of Pakistan. Van Dijk's framework suggests that such representations are not isolated but are part of a broader schema that perpetuates resistance to hegemonic structures through discursive means.

In conclusion, the statement encapsulates a rich interplay of ideological, emotional, and cognitive elements that reflect broader socio-political undercurrents. Through the lens of van Dijk's Sociocognitive Theory, it becomes evident that the discourse is not merely an expression of grief but a strategic tool to construct and perpetuate narratives of resistance, solidarity, and moral accountability.



Analysis

Date	Post
7 January 2025	 <p>آزادی خون دینے سے ملتی ہے ڈی چوک پر بہنیں غپانے سے نہیں</p> <p>The statement, "آزادی خون دینے سے ملتی ہے ڈی چوک پر بہنیں غپانے سے نہیں" encapsulates a discourse that dichotomizes sacrifice and superficial activism, employing van Dijk's sociocognitive lens to unveil its ideological underpinnings. This utterance constructs a moral hierarchy, where "خون دینے" (bloodshed) signifies valor, commitment, and authentic patriotism, while "بہنیں غپانے" (dancing at D-Chowk) is relegated to a realm of performative and trivialized resistance. Such a binary is deeply rooted in socio-cognitive models that align national freedom with martyrdom and collective struggle, contrasting it with ostentatious public demonstrations that lack tangible results. The spatial marker "ڈی چوک" (D-Chowk) symbolizes a politicized space of dissent yet is discursively framed as inadequate in achieving substantive liberation. Van Dijk's theory suggests that this narrative reinforces a collective ideological schema, privileging certain forms of activism while delegitimizing others, thus influencing the audience's cognitive models of what constitutes meaningful participation in the pursuit of freedom.</p>

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The provided image operates as a multimodal artifact of ideological reproduction. Through its strategic combination of linguistic and visual cues, it reinforces cognitive schemas of economic dependency, mobilizes collective discontent, and perpetuates societal hierarchies. This sociocognitive interplay illustrates the nuanced mechanisms through which discourse shapes, sustains, and amplifies dominant ideological frameworks.

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	<p>The meme uses a discursive technique that is full of character assassination, mockery, and gendered stereotypes. This meme may be seen as a purposeful act of delegitimization directed at a political person by confusing his identification with morally contentious and culturally stigmatized myths, according to van Dijk's sociocognitive paradigm. Additionally, the purposeful sensationalism manipulates public perception to cast doubt on his integrity by using cognitive schemas of scandal and shame. Such speech serves as an instrument of ideological division, promoting hostility and sustaining larger socio-political power dynamics.</p>
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Analysis

Date	Post
8 Janua ry 2025	<p>The statement "ڈی چوک مجاہد خواتین: آج سے ہمیں (بھگوڑا) نہیں غازی کے نام سے لکھا اور پکارا جائے" reflects a discourse saturated with irony and defiance, encapsulating an effort to reclaim narrative agency. Using van Dijk's sociocognitive approach, this utterance can be seen as a counter-discursive maneuver that subverts derogatory labels such as "بھگوڑا" (deserter) by recontextualizing the subject as "غازی" (victorious warrior). The spatial reference to "ڈی چوک" symbolizes a politicized arena where identities and ideologies are contested, serving as a backdrop for this reassertion of honor and legitimacy. The use of mock-heroic terminology reflects a shared cognitive schema, where the societal construction of heroism is appropriated to challenge hegemonic narratives. This reframing not only resists negative stereotyping but also seeks to reconstruct collective perceptions, aligning the discourse with broader struggles for dignity and recognition amidst ideological polarization.</p>



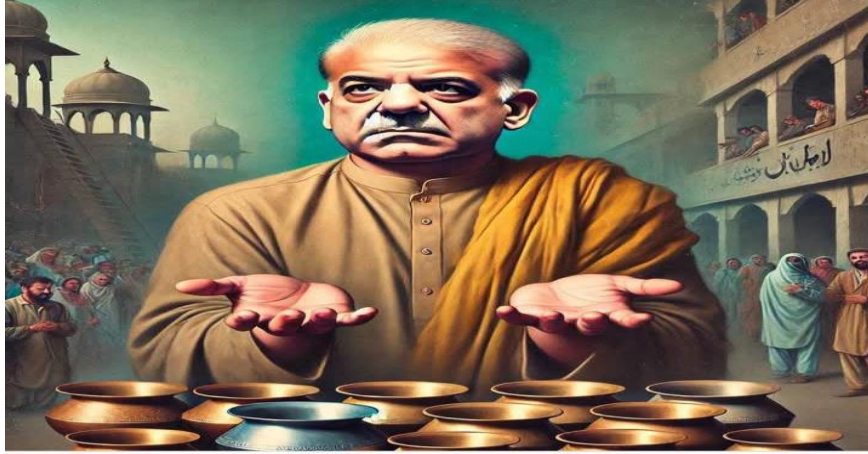
Date	Post
10 Janua ry 2025	<p>By depicting the exchange "JaAP patwari ko moriyam or arbi kee post send kreyn lekin patwari apko reply na krey" followed by "Le phir post daikhta hua patwari," the meme functions as a satirical representation of observed behavioral patterns and political allegiances. By using humor and sarcasm to create an ideological contrast, the discourse presents the "patwari"—a colloquial word for Maryam Nawaz or PML-N supporters—as steadfastly devoted yet inactive in interaction, according to an analysis of this using van Dijk's sociocognitive framework. Partisanship is stereotyped as blind devotion rather than active discourse because the picture appeals to audiences' shared cognitive frameworks. This supports van Dijk's theory that, in political circumstances, humor often reinforces in-group unity by mocking the out-group, so sustaining social stratification and ideological polarization.</p>

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بھتیجی پیش کرنے کے علاوہ کوئی چارہ نہیں تھا
قوم مریم کی اس قربانی کو سنہری حروف سے یاد
رکھے گی۔ 🙌😂😂



The statement "بھتیجی پیش کرنے کے علاوہ کوئی چارہ نہیں تھا قوم مریم کی اس قربانی کو" paired with the image of Shehbaz Sharif operates as a satirical critique of perceived political dynamics within familial and institutional hierarchies. Through van Dijk's sociocognitive framework, this discourse can be understood as a reflection of ideological cynicism aimed at the alleged transactional nature of political alliances and sacrifices. The reference to "بھتیجی" (niece) symbolizes a reductionist portrayal of Maryam Nawaz's political role, framing her contributions as mere pawns in a larger power game orchestrated by male counterparts. The hyperbolic tone in "سنہری حروف سے یاد رکھے گی" (remembered in golden words) employs irony to amplify public skepticism, invoking shared cognitive schemas of nepotism and gendered underestimation. Such discourse underscores the societal perception of political families as prioritizing personal interests under the guise of public service, perpetuating a polarized view of leadership legitimacy.

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In the second section, a Pakistani political leader and an international public figure are contrasted, and originality is questioned and critiqued using comparative rhetoric. The poem creates a hierarchical divide by using language like "original" and "cheap copy," which embeds a criticism of imitation and perceived inferiority. This similarity is further heightened by the visual composition of identical clothing, which establishes an intertextual narrative that encourages viewers to support the producer's ideological perspective on cultural appropriation and authenticity.

According to sociocognitive theory, the picture uses stereotypes and common cultural information to incite group thought against the targeted people. By triggering ingrained mental models of political corruption, imitation, and social contempt, the rhetoric serves to control group division. In addition to creating a polarizing "us versus them" narrative, this is consistent with Van Dijk's theory of ideological reproduction, which holds that media artifacts like this help to maintain hegemonic ideologies by condensing complicated social realities into easily understood images and words.

Conclusion

This research emphasizes how Facebook memes, especially among Pakistani young, have a transforming effect on political discourse and identity. Memes serve as both reflections and creations of power relations, resistance, and ideological alignment by encapsulating intricate socio-political narratives in visually appealing forms. The study illustrates how these digital artifacts affect cognitive structures, allowing young people to absorb and internalize political views, using van Dijk's Socio Cognitive Theory. As a result, memes in the digital age are becoming vital instruments for political identity building and ideological dissemination, beyond their mere entertainment value.



Recommendations

Future studies could think about including a bigger corpus of memes from various social platforms to guarantee greater coverage of political discourse in order to better investigate the influence of digital media on political views. Promoting critical media literacy initiatives that empower young audiences to interact critically with digital information is one way that educators and policymakers may address the effects of meme culture on young people's political views. Furthermore, political analysts and social commentators are urged to recognize the persuasive power of memes in influencing public opinion and to use this platform sensibly in order to foster educated and productive political participation.

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