CYBERBULLYING: A FORENSIC LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MEMES

BY

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ISLAMABAD

OCTOBER, 2022

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M. A., National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, 2018

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

In **English**

To

FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES   **FACULTY OF ARTS & HUMANITIES**

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Thesis Title: Cyberbullying: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Social Media Memes

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Master of Philosophy
Degree name in full

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Candidate of **<u>Master of Philosophy</u>** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **<u>Cyberbullying: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Social Media Memes</u>** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis/dissertation at any stage, even after the award of a degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Cyberbullying: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Social Media Memes

In the present time, people find it easy to threaten, abuse, swear, and humiliate others through social media and yet they are ignorant of the fact that they are involved in crimes of language. The basic reason is that they are not aware of the crimes of language and keep on infringing the rights of social media users. Keeping in mind this situation, an exploration was needed to highlight unseen crimes through language from a legal perspective. This study used research tools informed by pragmatics while keeping the forensic ends in view. The researcher explored criminal use of speech acts in memes on social media sites. For this purpose, 35 memes were selected from 25 pages and 25 groups on Facebook. Data were collected through purposive sampling. The objectives were to identify and categorize speech acts in memes, explore possible motivating factors behind the use of such memes and evaluate their socio-legal sensitivities. Analysis of speech acts was conducted with the help of Pragmatic Act Theory presented by Mey (2001), whereas Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) was relied on for general classification of speech acts. To highlight socio-legal sensitivities related to the memes in various forms of cyberbullying, its conceptualization propounded by Willard (2007) was used as a theoretical ground. The assistance from a professional lawyer was sought throughout the project to have an expert opinion on the matter of cyberbullying in memes. The lawyer assisted during the process of selection of relevant memes. During the process of data analysis, descriptive and interpretative analysis was carried out by keeping both frameworks side by side. It has been found that memes containing various speech acts represent different forms of cyberbullying. The researcher suggested that people should be sensitized to the socio-legal side of such types of practices. The researcher also hoped that the thin line between freedom of expression and cyberbullying would be clearer in future, and implementation of cyberbullying laws would be possible with lesser absurdity. Lastly, keeping in view the basic human rights, it has been suggested that forensic linguistic study focusing on multimodal analysis of videos should be conducted so as to highlight the socio-legally sensitive content on social media sites.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PAT	Pragmatic Act Theory
SAT	Speech Act Theory
COVID- 19	Corona Virus Disease-19
SMS	Short Message Service
INF	Inference
REF	Reference
REL	Relevance
VCE	Voice
SSK	Shared Situation Knowledge
MPH	Metaphor
M	Metapragmatic Joker
ECHR	European Convention of Human Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
PECA	Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Questioning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family who has been a big support to me and my friends and students who prayed for me throughout the journey. I dedicate this study to myself as well.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In today's era, it is of no surprise that the world has turned into a global village which has many benefits along with its negative implications (Yitzhak, 2020). People now have easy access to every type of media including social media as well. It has been observed that ways of expressing one's opinions have changed over time. Now social media users have more freedom, and tools to express what comes to their mind (Kraft, 2006). This has led to a situation where freedom of expression is exploited. It has also been observed that social media users infringe rights of other people in apparently unfelt ways. It is a common practice now to target someone on social media and disrespect, humiliate and threaten the person in various forms. The creation of memes is one of the various forms, and in current scenario it has become popular (Milner, 2012). This trend has become popular globally, however, the change has been observed in Pakistan specifically. Keeping in mind the general atmosphere of Pakistan, people may have less or no understanding of crimes of language which means the crimes that are committed via language either written or spoken. The reason behind this study is the urge to explore as to how crimes of language are committed on social media. In this case, the medium of crime is written language but the problem lies here that people do not even consider it a crime. The crimes of language have various forms, however, this study is concerned with cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a kind of crime of language exercised in the form of speech acts inside memes. Cyberbullying has also become popular so is the case with memes, and memes containing cyberbullying spread widely without being noticed (Baukhage, 2011). Speech acts play a significant role in the application of cyberbullying because they are based on the intention, and action of the speaker (Bach & Harnish, 1980). Therefore, the forensic dimension of the study is chosen intentionally to understand and explore how cyberbullying or crime of language in the form of speech acts is performed inside memes on one of the social media sites, Facebook, and how it violates basic human rights of the targeted people in the context of Pakistan.

The reason behind exploring this specific dimension is to make people aware of what they do not pay attention to is a crime. They may not know that their simple words can become culpable, and there can be laws to punish them and cyberbullying is ignored by people generally (Gilkerson, 2012). It has been observed that Pakistani people may or may not have any awareness regarding the issue mentioned earlier. It is assumed that they may have no or little knowledge about the forensic dimension of crimes of language. However; it has been stated that there are no specific international laws for cyberbullying on social media (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Keeping in mind this issue, the present study may lead to the formulation of new suitable laws for cyberbullying, and other crimes of language on social media.

This study attempts to investigate the ways by which speech acts of warning, threat, humiliation, and abuse in the form of cyberbullying are performed through memes on Facebook. The study is conducted from the perspective of the emerging domain of forensic linguistics. Speech acts in memes are analyzed through the lens of pragmatic act theory and cyberbullying. The socio-legal sensitivities of the content are presented in interpretative as well as the descriptive paradigm. For this purpose, 35 memes are selected from 25 public pages and 25 public groups. It is investigated how the crime of cyberbullying is committed through memes on social media sites. There may be various types of crimes through language, but this study specifically focuses on the ways by which people use threatening, humiliating, and abusive words in memes which harm the self-respect of the targeted people on public platforms. An emerging interest has been found among the researchers to investigate social media communication from a forensic perspective. This study aims at furthering the same perspective.

For this purpose, it is necessary to understand what cyberbullying is and how it is a crime of language. Cyberbullying is part of a broader domain; cybercrime. However; there may not be a definite point where we can define it because of varying strategies, and the advancement in technology (Costello, Hawdon, Ratkiff & Grantham, 2016). Similar is the case with cyberbullying and there may not be any definite boundaries to define cyberbullying (Hariani & Riadi, 2017), and the way to define it is the understanding of the situation. Cyberbullying is the act of bullying people on online

forums by using language with ill will (Willard, 2007). This use of language may involve hate speech, trolling, threatening, abusing, swearing, humiliation, defamation, harassment, name-calling, making fun of someone and so on (Kowalski, Limber, Limber & Agatston, 2012). Rayner and Hoel (1999) presented five categories of bullying which correlate with cyberbullying. Firstly, they described professional domain bullying which includes public humiliation regarding the profession, belittling opinion, the accusation of no effort, etc. The next category is related to personal affairs such as calling incorrect names, insulting and annoying. The third category is to isolate someone from being trained or informed. Overwork bullying is also another category that includes threats to do overwork, and abnormal deadlines. The last category belongs to destabilization which means giving no credit when necessary, removing responsibility, and so on. Forensic linguistics deals with investigation of crimes of various types such as murder, forgery, fraud, and so on. It also helps in solving the mystery behind cybercrimes (Correa, 2013). Cyberbullying, as part of cybercrimes, has also a significant relation with forensic linguistics because linguistic methods and strategies help linguists to dig out cyberbullying behind the language that is used to commit it (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). Forensic linguistics provides a chance to discover the types, causes and effects of cyberbullying in various forms of discourse. According to Nielson (2002), hate speech influences the same way as physical violence. Online bullying can be done through website, social media and many other online forums. In this study, the forensic linguistics as a domain and forensic discourse analysis as a method helped to understand cyberbullying on social media in the form of memes. The arguments regarding cyberbullying provide a chance to understand how cyberbullying, a crime of language, is practiced on social media. Relevant to this study is the creation of memes on Facebook and how cyberbullying is exercised in the memes.

For understanding memes, basic ideas, beliefs and thoughts about different issues are considered important (Milner, 2012). Memes involve language, pragmatics and socio-legal sensitivities (Jewitt, 2013). Precisely, the use of forensic discourse analysis provides insight into how language works in context with legal implications (Adek & Rahmi, 2020). This links language, context, and legal framework creating a whole new dimension of forensic linguistics. There are also other ways of conducting analyses of

speech acts but the purpose of dealing with speech acts under the forensic linguistic domain, and specifically forensic discourse analysis, is that certain discourses need to be discussed from the perspective of legal sensibility.

The memes represent sensitive content and cyberbullying in different ways and, for this purpose, the meme makers need a platform. The social media sites provide people with various opportunities in the form of different social media sites. The domain of social media was chosen for the study because people have changed their trends. Their surrounding has led them towards different circumstances. Surprisingly, now people of every age tend to spend much of their time scrolling on social media accounts (Araujo Correa, da Silva, Prates, & Jr, 2014). There are many social media networking sites out of which Facebook was considered appropriate for the study because a great number of people have Facebook accounts (Jaishwal, 2020), and comparatively people tend to use it more than other networking sites (www.quora.com). It is said that false statements are more on Facebook than the other social media networking sites (Jaishwal, 2020). It has been observed that many people have easy access to it, thus they find it easy to use it as a tool of criticism. There are also numberless pragmatic features of a language either verbal or non-verbal (Krisdahayn, 2018 & Saifullah, 2016). The reason behind choosing speech acts from many pragmatic features of language was that speech acts involve actions (Austin, 1962). When people on social media say something, they end up doing it. For instance, if someone bullies or threatens the other person in the comments of any public post, he does this by writing those words. It is meant to be done on purpose.

Memes on social media in general and Facebook in particular, provide plenty of opportunities for people to express their thoughts (Jaishwal, 2020). It has been observed that memes have become an ever-growing trend on social media for some years now, and it is growing fast day by day (Silva , de Melo, Almeida, Salles & Loureiro, 2013). People are more interested in picking up a topic, and start making memes on it. But, this trend usually crosses the set boundaries related to human rights. Sometimes people start abusing and threatening each other due to the content of the memes. Argumentation on the issues harms the self-respect of others and it affects privacy as well (Judhita, 2015, Wadipalpa, 2015, & Handayani, 2019).

Memes were the data for this research and their collection was done through purposive sampling. Public pages were considered better in this regard because on private forums people are known as well as limited. On private pages, if somebody scolds the other person, people do not mind it because they know each other. While on public pages, there is always a crowd of unknown people who start commenting and sharing memes of any kind (Peterson & Densley, 2017).

Abusive language has been analyzed from the perspective of discourse analysis. But there is a need to look at this issue from a forensic perspective. Hence, forensic discourse analysis is needed in this regard. People end up committing verbal crimes due to ignorance regarding laws. There should be awareness among people with regard to the use of social media accounts. The account should be used sensibly without violating human rights. It is significant to understand what people can say, and what they cannot say on public platforms. Hurting the self-respect of others or infringing their privacy rights by commenting on the posts is quite serious in nature. People should know about the pros and cons of committing crimes of language. This study investigated what type of socio-legally sensitive content was used in memes, and how people can prevent themselves and others from violating laws. It is not the case that there are no laws in Pakistan to protect the rights of people. The issue which requires attention is 'Do people know about these sensitivities and laws and if they know, then how do they violate these laws on the social media?'. If people are doing it on purpose, and not ignorantly, then they are responsible, and they should be stopped from committing such crimes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Unlike the past, the present generation has got many opportunities to say openly what it wants to say due to the growing trends on social media. The poor and victimized people can defend themselves publically via social media. But, there is no denying the fact that social media creates problems for the people as well. Keeping in mind the usage of language, people tend to abuse or threaten as well as make fun of others while posting different sorts of memes and other stuff which infringe the legally protected rights of respect, dignity, and privacy. When people make fun of others or criticize anyone through posts and memes, they commit crimes of language because the content within the memes

is legally sensitive. People need to understand socio-legal sensitivities of the content and existence of cyberbullying on social media. They also need to know the way human rights are violated on online platforms. Unfortunately, due to lack of knowledge, people generally do not consider it a crime as they are not aware of basic human rights.

1.2 Research Objectives

Objectives of this research are given below:

1- To identify categories of speech acts used in the selected memes on Facebook.
2- To identify possible types of cyberbullying hidden in the selected memes on Facebook.
3- To explore possible factors behind the use of different memes on Facebook.
4- To discover the types of socio-legal sensitivities related to the use of memes on social media.

1.3 Research Questions

Following are the research questions:

1- What categories of speech acts are used in the selected memes by Facebook users to achieve desired effect?
2- In what ways have the speech acts in memes been used to represent different types ofcyberbullying on social media (Facebook)?
3- How have the various forms of social media memes been influenced by the possible motivating factors in the background?
4- How do memes on Facebook represent socio-legal sensitivities?

1.4 Significance of Study

Along with entertainment, the massive use of the internet has led to the creation of sensitive content (Leukfeldt &.Yar, 2016). Multiple options are available to the users and they create memes that often represent various forms of cyberbullying as crimes through language. The problem here is that cyberbullying in memes on social media is not seen as a crime by users, although, it harms targeted people in one way or the other.

The present study may contribute to highlighting the problem mentioned above. In the near past, people have been exploring social media, cyberbullying, speech acts, and memes, etc. from different angles. Previous studies conducted by Grundlingh (2017), Homsseinmardi, Mattson, Rafiq, Lv and Mishra (2015), Zhong, Li, Squicciarini, Rajtmajer, Griffin, Miller and Caragea (2016), Joshua (2020), Kiela, Firooz, Mohan, Goswami, Singh, Ringsha and Testuggine (2020) analyzed the performance of speech acts in memes in general while other studies analyzed memes as a tool of cyberbullying, excluding speech acts respectively, and so on. The previous research studies do not focus on cyberbullying through memes and the role of speech acts in cyberbullying on online forums. Also, the studies, mentioned above, were different with regard to the selection of social media sites, that is, Instagram or Twitter. These limitations of the studies mentioned above provided me a chance to conduct this study. This study specifically connected these three topics; memes, speech acts and cyberbullying under a forensic dimension. Additionally, there is lack of knowledge regarding the way speech acts in memes represent cyberbullying on Facebook. Besides, the selected theoretical framework (pragmatic act theory by Mey (2001) and conceptualization of cyberbullying by Willard (2007) has been applied in a different way because PAT has not been applied for the identification of cyberbullying in memes, and Willard's concept of cyberbullying has not been explored with regard to speech acts in memes on Facebook. This study may add to existing knowledge in the sense that it is done from a forensic and legal perspective. Moreover, dealing with existing frameworks with a forensic linguistic dimension has also made this study unique in the particular field of knowledge.

This study may also be significant in Pakistan particularly because no study has been conducted here in this domain so far. In Pakistan, neither speech acts nor memes have been explored from the forensic dimension which makes this study a significant contribution. It may prove beneficial for researchers in Pakistan as well as the masses to start thinking seriously about this prevailing issue.

The socio-legal sensitivities that surround memes on social media are not usually known to the masses. Therefore, people unknowingly engage themselves in crimes such as cyberbullying and end up harming others. This study may provide awareness regarding

the way memes become a tool of cyberbullying because the speech acts attached to them become expressions for different types of cyberbullying. This study may be seen as a manifestation to understand the socio-legal sensitivity of the content that the people upload. It may also make them aware of morally, socially, and legally loaded content that is more than mere fun. This study may become helpful to sensitize people about the legal loads and implications of social media content. It may enable them able to differentiate between indecent and appropriate online content. Also, people would come to know how to protect their basic human rights.

It is hoped that this study may be considered as an appeal to international organizations of human rights, and it may be helpful for people working on human rights to understand this emerging problem of cyberbullying with its multiple forms. It can provide them hints about making human rights better for the protection of people. It may also invoke legislation of countries at the national level and enable them to understand the breach between freedom of expression and cyberbullying on social media. Although lawyers may be aware of the issue of cyberbullying, however, the present study may prove to be a roadmap for people in the legal profession. There is a possibility that they may not have observed cyberbullying in the form of speech acts attached to memes. It is hoped that law-making machinery would better understand this issue, and there will be specific laws for the prevention of cyberbullying on social media at the national and international levels. Through this study, they may understand the implicit nature of cyberbullying. This study may also be helpful for the victims of cyberbullying in the online world. It is assumed that most people become victims of cyberbullying in the online world and sometimes react to it. However; many people do not understand cyberbullying hidden inside memes. It may guide victims of cyberbullying to understand how harmless words become a source of insult and infringement of human rights. It may also guide them as to how human rights are violated.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

In today's world, crimes through language are becoming popular especially considering the context of Pakistan. People threaten others and use offensive and abusive language on public platforms. Memes are very popular on social media networking sites.

It has recently been observed that people are in the habit of posting memes regarding any hot issue on social media. These memes contain legally sensitive content and become viral instantly. As COVID-19 has provided people with a longer period of free time, most of the people spend time scrolling down their social media accounts (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016). This trend has led to many things which need attention. There is a need to examine memes and the language that is used to abuse or threaten other people because it becomes a source of cyberbullying and, hence, the violation of human rights. People do not pay attention to what human rights say and what laws and regulations are regarding social media discourse. These crimes through language should not be ignored. Making fun of people and their personal affairs through memes comes under crimes through language and socio-legal sensitivity. It was necessary to explore how crimes through language are committed on social media, and locate the points of violation of cybercrime laws. Usually, cyberbullying and libel are not given much attention and these crimes through language go unnoticed as they have become part of our daily social media routine. But this situation is not unproblematic as when we utter words, we do perform actions (Austin, 1962). When we use threats or abusive words, we threaten or abuse other persons either in person or on public networking sites. The research was basically conducted for raising public awareness.

1.6 Delimitation

This research is delimited to one site, Facebook, and it is concerned with the identification and analysis of speech acts in memes from the angle of cyberbullying and socio-legal sensitivity. Only memes relevant to this study are selected. Only captions or verbal aspects of memes have been focused on. However, part of the selected theory deals with visual elements of the data. Thirty five memes are selected from 25 public pages and 25 public groups purposively. The reason for selecting public pages and groups is that private pages are liked by the people who know each other very well. Authorial identity has been a topic in the beginning of this field however; this study is not concerned with fake or real identity of the memes creators. The study is limited to the extent of existence or non-existence of these pages and groups. Therefore, whatever they

comment is not considered bullying. The focus of the study is, therefore, to investigate how cyberbullying in the form of speech acts is exercised in memes.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Forensic linguistics had its roots in ancient times, but was not acknowledged as a discipline. Forensic linguistics is considered to be scientific in nature. The discipline of forensic linguistics is interdisciplinary as it is related to multiple approaches. Whatever is related to legal affairs, whether inside or outside the courtroom, is included in forensic linguistics (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). There is no limit to the areas associated with forensic linguistics. This field of knowledge is growing with every passing day. Some of the areas to be mentioned are author identification, forensic stylistics, forensic discourse analysis, document examination, media forensics, plagiarism detection, software forensics, forensic phonetics, and so on (Correa, 2013). As far as the term forensic linguistics is concerned, it is obvious that law has an intricate relationship with language. This kind of relationship can be described in three major categories. The first category presents language as a tool of communication between agencies and suspects. The second category tackles a specific kind of language, jargon of law, which cannot be understood by everyone. The last and third category, which is also relevant to this study, is the crimes of language and language as evidence. Language as evidence means that any text which is written or spoken in any form is considered evidence (Correa, 2013). As other kinds of crimes have no end, crimes of language are also not less in number. Much research has been conducted on linguistic crimes. These kinds of crimes involve a variety of texts. They can be written or spoken, phone calls, SMS, posts on social media, memes, voice notes, slogans, etc. (Correa, 2013).

The question that arises in mind relates to the necessity of forensic analysis in the investigation of language in any form. The answer to this question is that it is the forensic linguistics that guides us in using various linguistic principles and techniques. These techniques may include discourse analysis, conversation analysis pragmatic analysis and so on. Forensic linguistics is necessary when the application of linguistic knowledge is required in forensic matters such as legal or criminal issues. In terms of cyberspace, forensic linguistics also determines the meanings which are interactional as well. Linguists can identify slang meanings with the combination of various methods (Grant,

2017). As this study is directly related to the crimes of language, and more specifically cyberbullying, this review of literature presents how this type of crime of language (cyberbullying) has been tackled by scholars in the recent past, and what strategies they applied while exploring this issue. Besides, this section also talks about other linguistic domains that play their significant role in the investigation of crimes of language in relation to forensic linguistics. In the last section, the research gap of this study has been highlighted after the in depth analysis of previous studies.

2.1 Application of Stylistic Techniques for Forensic Purposes

This subsection focuses on the significance of the stylistic approach to crime investigation. The studies mentioned here indicate the type of methods and strategies that have been used in this regard. The recent literature on the issue indicates that in numerous criminal cases and other legal issues stylistic linguistic techniques were used in forensic linguistics. According to McMenamin (2010), forensic stylistics is viewed as a technique that entails linguistic analyses of various writing styles and supports author identification. The earliest studies took keen interest in issues regarding author identification and, for this reason, various techniques were applied to written forms of texts However, it has been noted that the studies in the past were mostly based on courtroom settings and expert linguists were asked to solve problems regarding specific cases inside the courtroom. There have always been problems regarding the authorship of literary writings as discussed by Coulthard and Johnson (2007) in their book. Considering their discussion on the said issue, it seems obvious that there have been people in the past phase who threatened or abused others on trivial as well as serious issues. This type of study helps us to understand the types of crimes that were committed through language and the way forensic linguistics provided ways for resolving those issues. Correa (2013) discussed in her article that for the purpose of author identification, linguists have been using comparison strategies for finding real authors behind disputed texts. The linguist compared questioned text with other texts of the presumed author. In this regard, she has mentioned cases in her article to support her argument. Shuy (2001) solved a case where he identified the suspect through the way he wrote a ransom note. The criminal pretended to be an uneducated person by misspelling many words in that note. However; Shuy

(2001), as an expert linguist, identified those misspelled words and found out that they were created deliberately. The suspect used the term *devil strip* which was only famous in Ohio and there was only one educated person there. In this regard, Shuy (2001) paved the way for solving a criminal case by applying stylistic methods. However, there are certainly serious issues regarding author identification which are highlighted by Correa (2013). According to the scholar, the reliability of author identification is not valid in every case and, many a time, the forensic linguist fails to provide sufficient evidence. Also, there are chances of rejection of opinion given by the linguist on part of the courtroom because of lack of solid conclusion. It can be said that author identification is not as simple as it seems to be. When texts are analyzed, many non-linguistic features are missed out and the opinion on crimes based on textual analysis is not considered valuable. Author identification has gained much more attention in forensic linguistics and various linguistic strategies are applied in this regard. Considering this aspect of forensic linguistics, it can be stated that the issue of author identification can also be found regarding content produced by social media sites because this is an era of internet. There are many chances for people to do nasty activities on social media sites anonymously but this issue is beyond the discussion of this study. This study does not focus on what has been done traditionally with regard to the problem of author identification.

2.1.1 Lexicogrammatical Linguistic Choices and Author Identification

Certain criminal cases were highlighted by another linguist Coulthard (2005). In 2005, he analyzed texts based on the confession made by a convict. A paperboy was killed and four men were accused in this matter. One of them, Patrick Molloy, confessed that he killed the boy but later on he denied the existence of any confession. When Coulthard (2005) compared the recorded stories provided by police and the suspect, he found out that the suspect was right. For this purpose, he applied the uniqueness principle which explains that if a person tells a story in two different situations he is supposed to use different lexicogrammatical choices. It turned out that the two stories based on confession were very similar and the police were at fault. This was all possible because of stylistic techniques in forensic linguistics. Coulthard (2005) used a conventional way of solving the problem and the method of author identification was justified.

In 2008, another case was solved by the same linguist. This time Coulthard (2005) applied the stylistic technique of linguistic choice identification. A person kidnapped and killed a girl named Danielle Jones. The mystery was resolved when the police asked Coulthard to analyze text messages from her cell phone. The linguist created a corpus of 65 texts of the last three days and compared them with the two most recent ones. It was revealed that the last two messages were not written by her. Hence, the case was solved and the suspect was arrested because of a forensic linguistic approach. These cases proved to be the influential and laid the foundation for further cases of author identification. These studies highlight the importance of applying linguistic techniques and approaches in solving criminal cases. The above-mentioned cases support this study on the stance that techniques and strategies of language do help linguists to find out crimes through language behind mere use of language. This is the point highlighted in the current study but with a different dimension and setting.

Kotzé (2010) conducted research regarding author identification. For this purpose, the researcher took two cases: the case of a father punch and the case of an angry academic. The researcher designed the study in a comparative style because texts written by suspects and anonymous authors were compared. According to the design of the study, two approaches were selected for investigation. The first approach was partly deductive and based on quantitative stylometric analysis and the other was partly inductive stylistics analysis to make a linguistic profile of the relevant authors. The researcher also used WordSmith Tools such as Wordlists, Concordances and Keywords as well as a chi-square test. The researcher found out that most texts were written by the same authors and they were non-natives. Kotzé (2010) states that the identification of real author through stylometric analysis is very important. Although the case study done by Kotzé (2010) has contributed to the laudable development of modern techniques for author identification. His study, however, focuses more on software analysis of disputed texts which is mostly quantitative. The scholar rejected traditional ways of analyzing texts for author identification. The idea of quantitative study in the foregoing study is also supported by Chaski (2001). She also mentioned that the quantitative approach provides 97.5% reliability and accuracy in a forensic linguistic analysis specifically in the case of author identification. However, the current study based on qualitative analysis

emphasizes that qualitative analysis has its own importance within the forensic linguistic analysis. Chaski (2001) conducted an empirical study of testing language-based author identification techniques. Essential to the requirements of the study, many hypotheses were postulated to investigate stylistic approaches through experimental testing and statistical analysis by using chi-square. These hypotheses included syntactic analysis, syntactically classified punctuation, sentential complexity, vocabulary richness, readability, content analysis, spelling errors, punctuation errors, word form errors and grammatical errors. The writing sample database was taken from four women. The findings of the research showed that only two hypotheses were reliable, that is, syntactic analysis and syntactically classified punctuation. The results led the researcher to conclude that forensic stylistics fails to fully comprehend the issues regarding author identification. However, the study mentioned above supports this study in many aspects as it helps to understand how author identification on the bases of strategies of language helps in criminology and forensic linguistics. In another study, Chaski (2013) supported the foregoing arguments where she explained with the help of empirical study that author identification is done in a better way with forensic computational analysis than forensic stylistics and forensic stylometric analysis. Chaski's (2013) empirical study contradicts the favor given to forensic stylometric analysis by Kotzé (2010). However; both of the studies mentioned above support this study in a sense that crimes of language have been a serious issue and language has been used to commit crimes in one way or the other.

Keeping in mind the above mentioned studies, it can be observed that author identification is not limited to the choice of words, punctuation and spellings only. The procedure of author identification can also be done with the integration of other linguistic domains such as semantics, syntax, and phonetics and it also depends on the genre of text provided. It is difficult to define techniques for representing the stylistic choices of the author of text (Zheng Li, Chen, & Huang, 2006). Although there is much scholarship regarding author identification from different perspectives, but there is no specific study related to author identification in the case of cyberbullying. Besides, cyberbullying was not part of these studies in any form which makes this study different as this aspect has not been explored so far.

2.2 Forensic Discourse Analysis

Discourse includes so many things that it almost covers every aspect of language. Where there is language, there is discourse, therefore, it can be understood that crimes of language are directly linked with discourse and, in this way, strategies of discourse are needed for forensic linguistic analysis of linguistic crimes. An often heard issue of forensic linguistics is crimes through language and it is at this point when strategies of discourse analysis are needed to resolve issues related to law and criminology. Linguists and scholars have dealt with this phenomenon in different dimensions. Back in 1979, the Davis case happened and the man was accused of killing his wife with help of an employee. Shuy (1982) unfolded the truth behind this case. The analysis of topic and response focused on the spoken discourse because the whole conversation was recorded. Davies was thought as the culprit. But when this analysis was carried out on both conversations, it was found out that because of fewer responses such as 'Uh-huh' and 'good', Davis was portrayed as the murderer. This case highlights the importance of forensic discourse analysis which is also directly related to this study. This is also based on forensic discourse analysis, but from a different dimension. Referential definition and discourse framing are also strategies of discourse analysis and help us reveal the hidden truth behind the mere use of words. A case of defamation happened to Roy Harris, a person who was accused of murder. The news reporters framed this person as a guilty one and used the analogy of another murder case. However, with the help of discourse framing analysis, the case was resolved (Shuy, 1982). Thus, discourse analysis has helped and it still helps to reveal intentions behind disputed texts as well as removes ambiguity in questioned text types. These instances make it obvious how discourse analysis is significant in forensic linguistics.

Forensic discourse analysis is not only limited to solving courtroom cases, it has also played a significant role in the identification of crimes of language in other settings. A recent study highlights issue of cyberbullying related to one social media site, Instagram. Cybercrime and cyberbullying are very prominent domains within forensic linguistics and also they are much relevant to the crimes of language. The researchers, Putri and Satvikadewi (2017), found cyberbullying in LGTBQ's Instagram account. For

this purpose, they selected pictures from Dena Rachman's account along with indecent comments. The analysis of hateful comments was done by using van Dijk's model of critical discourse analysis. They divided comments into three major categories: comments on the body, comments on identity and comments on religion. For the textual part of the model, they collected pictures along with comments on them and did a linguistic analysis. Social cognition is the next level in this model and ,for this, the researchers interviewed regular commentators on victims' posts. Analysis of social context, the last level of van Dijk's model, was done in terms of power and access. The researchers successfully highlighted how cyberbullying was done through comments on Dena Rachman's posts and pictures because of gender transition. It can be concluded from this study that cyberbullying is a crime and it is often committed through language either written or spoken and even sign language. It is a much relevant subject in forensic linguistics where a linguistic model is used to describe criminal activity. This study approached cyberbullying through the lens of critical discourse analysis as a tool to identify cyberbullying behind comments and the current study takes pragmatic analysis (also forensic discourse analysis) of cyberbullying in speech acts in memes with the exclusion of comments. The aforementioned study is helpful in terms of its rationale and methodology as the viewpoint of this study is supported by the mentioned one.

DeCook (2018) conducted her research on Instagram memes. She specifically analyzed the movement of 'Proud Boys' because the ideology behind their memes prevailed in physical and symbolic violence. She conducted discourse analysis using Bourdieu's framework. The purpose of her research was to reveal how Instagram memes are created and used for propaganda. The internet provides its users with plenty of opportunities for expressing their thoughts all over the world. Now people do not hesitate to speak out whatever is there in their minds. Because of the internet, people all around the world have become closer and have created a global internet community. Her study supports the viewpoint of this study in the sense that memes on social media are used as a tool to create chaos and the discourse regarding it is generated intentionally. The difference, however, lies within violence and cyberbullying. Another qualitative and semiotic study conducted by Zain (2017) discussed hegemony in meme comics derived from *lehugak.com*. Only twelve relevant memes were selected by the researcher. These

memes were analyzed following certain steps which included: the selection and classification of memes on the bases of hegemonic issues, identifying myth in memes by application of Ronald Barthes' theory and Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony and conclusion of memes in the light of myth. The research also followed steps of data reduction, data display and verification of conclusion keeping in mind strategies of data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Twelve data memes were arranged according to the prominent hegemonic issues inherent within. Four memes were studied under economic hegemony. The other four memes were kept under a section of political hegemony and the last four under technological hegemony. It is to be noticed that memes can also be hegemonic in many ways. This study reveals how memes can be the source of dominating others, but this research paves way for other researchers. The various ways for dealing with such memes are left open for new researchers. This study does not address how to prevent the creation of such content. This study is helpful for understanding how memes are used as a tool for maintaining power.

There are also other ways of highlighting cyberbullying through various forms of discourse analysis. Most recently the researchers, Cheng, Hu, Matulewska and Wagner (2020), explored cyberbullying as a global phenomenon from a socio-semiotic perspective. For this purpose, they studied cyberbullying in cross-cultures mainly in the US, EU and China. By comparing and contrasting different dimensions of cyberbullying in these regions, the researchers concluded that cyberbullying has no limits since there is no end to advancement in technology. They gathered a large amount of scholarship on this issue and introduced the status quo of three legislations regarding cyberbullying. It was found that the US and EU perspective of cyberbullying is mostly relevant to children and protection of their rights. But, in China, every person is considered worthy regardless of age. Also in all the three regions, it was found that there are no specific laws for the implementation of criminal sanctions for cyberbullying at the national and international levels, and this development of laws is still in its nascent stages. It can be inferred through this study that if these countries lack specific laws and rules regarding cyberbullying, the situation in Pakistan is no wonder. There are slight traces of laws about cyberbullying across the globe. There remains a debate because of a grey area between the limits of freedom of speech and cyberbullying. This study addressed this

issue as well because it is necessary to understand how we can define and categorize cyberbullying on social media. The above- mentioned study is supported by Kadir (2020) who used discourse analysis, speech acts and language style as tools to investigate criminal verdicts of the state court of Gorontalo city, the state court of Gorontalo district, the state court of Boalemo district, and the state court of Pohuwato district. For this purpose, the researcher used a qualitative approach and data collection was done through the literature review technique along with purposive sampling. The researcher highlighted the importance of forensic linguistics from a language perspective in conclusion and the focus of the study was on the forensic linguistic techniques that help solve problems regarding legal language.

A relevant research in this regard is conducted by McHugh, Saperstein and Gold (2019). In their research, the researchers examined 41,943 tweets along with URLs from Twitter (May 2016). The tweets were specifically selected with keywords and hashtags of cyberbullying (cyberbully, #cyberbully, cyberbullying, #cyberbullying, cyber-bully, online bully). The researchers selected a mixed-method approach for the study. The researchers identified sentiments behind tweets, thematic content and content within URLs with the help of methodology provided by Neiger and colleagues (2013). The researcher also used LIWC software for the categorization of tweets. The findings of the research showed that Twitter is a venue for harmful public discourse for spreading cyberbullying. This research is relevant to the current scenario as well. However, this study failed to identify and discuss the types or forms of cyberbullying that existed within the selected tweets and provided a general overview of cyberbullying discourse. Also, this study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches for better results. But there is no mention of the type of cyberbullying content that was presented in tweets. As Lee (2016) states that content on Twitter regarding cyberbullying has led to many serious suicides which indicates that social media sites have adhered to cyberbullying rigorously. There have been attempts to define characteristics of cyberbullying by scholars like Berne, Frisén, Schultze-Krumbholz, Scheithauer, Naruskov, Luik, & Zukauskiene, (2013) and also Al-garadi. Varathan, and Ravana (2016) explored the reasons behind aggressive behavior of masses and cyberbullying specifically. Supriadi, Gunawan and Muniroh (2020) conducted research on identifying bullying in tweets. This study seconds

the one mentioned above in terms of intentionality and data collection. The researchers took fifty two tweets as a sample and applied Martin and White's (2005) attitudinal system for analysis of the language of attitude (a systemic functional linguistic approach). The data were collected from the reply section of tweets from five accounts. Three aspects of attitude: judgment, appreciation and affect were identified in data tweets. In the later part, the researchers also analyzed tweets under the laws of information and electronic transaction in Indonesia. The researchers agreed with Shuy (1993) and Correa (2013) on the point that cyberbullying is considered a part of crimes of language because it is meant to deliver rude, insulting and offensive messages. The study mentioned above was also supported by Tahara, Gunawan, Samad, Weda, and Rahman (2019). This is a crucial point to notice here as the current study also anchors the same notion. The most important and fruitful section of the study was related to the researchers' discussion on the consequences of cyberbullying under laws of information and electronic transaction in the Indonesian community. They presented their viewpoint by relating it to real-life examples of a person against whom a case was held because he uploaded insulting remarks about a policeman on Facebook. The researchers selected the most appropriate laws regarding cyberbullying which are: Laws of The Republic Indonesia number 11 (2008) Article 28 paragraph (2) and Laws of The Republic of Indonesia no. 19 (2016) Article 45A paragraph (2). The study is justified in terms of its methodology and conceptual underpinnings, however, this study did not discuss the reasons or sources of cyberbullying which need to be investigated and explored by future researchers.

The previous discussion brings to the fore the importance of discourse analysis and its application in the forensic domain. The relevance to this study is that it also puts emphasize on crimes of language. However, the direction or dimension of this study is different from the previous ones so far. This study is also based on discourse analysis of memes, however, the strategies and theoretical framework of this study make it different from the mentioned above. It is also to be noted that the studies discussed are a guide for this study in terms of methodologies and theories.

2.3 Phonetics and its Implications in Criminal Investigation

Crimes of language are not only committed in written form rather they can also be done through spoken language. In fact, when crimes are committed in spoken language, then it is worth-mentioning here that one major domain of linguistics, that is, phonetics plays a significant role in crime investigation under forensic linguistics. Phonetics plays a big role in criminal investigation mainly in speaker identification. But there are also other issues regarding spoken interaction going on between suspects. Coulthard (2007) mentioned a case in his book where acoustics phonetics enabled the researchers in resolving a mystery. The difference that was noted and examined by the linguists was related to a single phoneme /t/. A doctor spoke English with a Greek accent and he was prosecuted for ignorantly telling his patient about injecting a drug. The words 'can' and 'cannot' were considered questionable. Phonetic analysis showed that the doctor did not use /t/. Also acoustically the vowel /a/ in 'can' had a lower first formant and higher second formant than the word 'cannot'. This case indicates how this field of linguistics is needed for the forensic analysis, and that the presence of only one phoneme saved the life of a person. Forensic phoneticians use several methods to identify the suspect. They need to transcribe data carefully and also do laboratory experiments for acoustics purposes. They pay attention to each sound uttered and the slightest pauses and wavelength of intonation.

Mukattash (2016) conducted research through which the researcher highlighted the significance of phonetic methods, tools, the techniques such as speaker identification, voice line-ups, ear-witness tests, speaker profiling, recording- analysis, identity authentication and so on. The researcher did a case study to support the idea that forensic phonetics is a much needed field in terms of speaker identification. For this purpose, he took two recorded samples from two different people: one recording was of an unknown person and the other was the intentional recording of a person in prison. The voices of these two persons were recorded on mobile phones with different duration and only one word '*believe*' was compared in both the samples. The analysis was carried out under Praat software that showed similarities in both the samples on the bases of formant structure. The vowels at the beginning and at the end were similar in both sample

recordings. Essential to our understanding is that phonetic analysis is helpful in the forensic domain. In 1993, Hirson and Duckworth did research and described creak as an effective element in voices disguise. Fourteen subjects were asked to listen to tape recordings with creaky voices and, later on, these subjects read aloud certain texts as well. The listeners were able to identify almost 65% creaky voices and 90% undisguised voices. It was concluded that creaky disguised voices matched with the undisguised voices in many cases and the percentage of accuracy was around 81%.

These cases indicate that phonetics has played a significant role in the forensic domain yet there is much more to discover. People commit crimes without even realizing it, therefore, interactions in recorded form and their transcriptions are required for forensic analysis. As it is obvious through the previous discussion that forensic phonetics may always be needed when a suspect or criminal is to be caught through speech. Although this linguistic domain also supports forensic linguistic analysis, however, spoken language is not the concern of the present study.

2.4 Forensic Multimodal Analysis

Multimodal analysis has its significance because of its depth and vast range. To support this notion, Ajayi (2021) conducted a study on the social media memes following the pragmatic act theory (PAT) by Mey (2001) and the theory of multimodality by Kress (2010). The scholar highlighted the changed behavior of people during COVID-19 pandemic. He argued that social media users are getting more free time and this tends to create more memes on different topics. The researchers examined various pragmatic acts within memes and concluded that Mey's (2001) concept of pragmemes is efficient to understand speech acts than the conventional practices. However, this study provides an important point of relevance to the present study. There are chances of increased number of memes created during pandemic which are meant to hurt others. As users of social media got more time to spend on these sites, chances of cyberbullying through memes also increased. Moreover, it is important to understand the situation related to memes and the use of language within it. This type of analysis is especially required in forensic linguistics because now crimes of language are not limited to their conventional

atmosphere rather crimes of language are becoming popular because of internet activities. Therefore, in this type of situation, multimodal analysis of criminal texts is a big help in the detection of crimes in the online world. Another relevant study by Tseng (2010) explains that how scam is done inside emails and how people are made to believe the content. The scholar applied pragmatic act theory in order to understand how performative acts are done to persuade other people. People are convinced through blended acts, metapragmatic repetition and implicit indexing. This study is relevant because scamming is also a crime and, in this particular study, it comes under cybercrime. The pragmatic act of fishing as a metaphor has been investigated by the researcher. He highlights that how scam discourse is generated and how the true intensions of the scammers are made covert. This study provides bases for understanding the true intensions in a specific situation that can be uncovered to expose the crime behind. On the analytical ground, the present study follows the aforementioned studies. This type of analysis is especially required in forensic linguistics because now crimes of language are not limited to their conventional atmosphere rather crimes of language are becoming popular because of internet activities. Therefore, in this type of situation, multimodal analysis of criminal texts is a big help in the detection of crimes in the online world.

Yuan (2018) conducted a comparative multimodal discourse analysis of courtroom trials of American and Chinese courtrooms. The researcher intended to analyze the data from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics and tried to discover ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning in the courtroom. For this purpose, categories of legal actors, verbal language and paralanguage were focused. The researcher selected two murder cases from the live broadcast; one case from America and the other from China. The detailed multimodal analysis revealed that the American courtroom is a kind of battlefield where prosecutors and people in defense share equal power whereas the Chinese courtroom is more like a lecture hall because an asymmetrical relationship exists there. This is a way where multimodality paved the way to understanding legal issues in a better way. Haiping (2017) did an exploratory study to present a tentative theoretical framework of multimodal discourse analysis of criminal discussion inside the courtroom. For this purpose, the researcher approached social

semiotic theory along with multimodal analysis software (MMAV). It also highlighted how much multimodal discourse analysis is necessary for an in-depth understanding of complex legal discoursers. The study mentioned is very crucial in understanding how forensic multimodal analysis is important in crime investigation, however, this study talks about the setting within the courtroom and is inspired by the study conducted by Motoesian (2010). The scholar largely supported multimodal analysis of courtroom discourse under forensic linguistics. According to him, forensic linguistic analysis is incomplete without multimodal analysis as only words do not carry the full meaning of discourse. But the study does not provide any guidance on how to conduct forensic multimodal analysis outside of the courtroom setting. The present study also highlights a minor aspect of multimodality under the selected framework.

There are many opportunities of exploring legal discourses from multimodal analysis; there are also ways of analyzing multimodal discourses from the forensic perspective. The researchers Gorbacheva, Nesterova and Osadchiy conducted research recently (2020). This study also discusses multimodality in a different dimension regardless of the setting. The researchers did an experimental study to identify psycholinguistic characteristics in multimodal extremist texts. For the conduction of this study, they hired expert and non-expert people in forensic linguistics. The data was analyzed through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. They were asked to analyze texts with extremist content along with semantic and grammatical dimensions. The findings of the study showed that lack of expert knowledge, as well as professional ways, affected forensic assessment. Therefore; they recommended more scientific methods for analyses of texts regarding forensic linguistics. However; this study also does not discuss anything regarding forensic multimodal analysis for online crimes such as cyberbullying, etc.

The above mentioned researchers indicate that multimodal analysis is necessary to understand complex legal discourses critically. The reason behind this is that multimodal analysis consists of a variety of modes that can be used in understanding of the meaning behind mere words. All these factors contribute to what is counted as forensic linguistics. Multimodal analysis of sensitive memes may prove to be fruitful for the identification of

cyberbullying, especially in the context of Pakistan. However, this notion is left for future researchers and is not a concern of this study.

2.5 Importance of Syntactic Analysis in Syntactically Complex Legal Discourses

Syntax, being a significant part of language, can be used for forensic linguistic analysis as the arrangement of words and expression is important in delivering meaning. Syntactic ambiguities are a common feature of legal language and also alterations in syntactic tricks can be used in committing crimes of language. Complexity of legal discourses is no more a new thing. It is understood that the language of legal affairs is difficult to understand and comprehension of meaning is not an easy task. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) discussed in their book that even in some cases the court needs forensic linguists because they are not experts of language. Contrary to this notion, sometimes, expert opinions of forensic linguists are also rejected by judges. A case of syntactic complexity was resolved when Kaplan, Green, Cunningham and Levi (1995) dealt with certain appeals made to court through their research article. A person was prosecuted twice and the sentences that were used for the first prosecution and the second were full of lexico-grammatical ambiguity. The phrase 'not less than one third' created big trouble for judges. The linguist resolved this ambiguity and sent it to the judges. After going through this syntactic analysis, the court released the accused person because he already spent eleven months in prison which was double his actual punishment. If the problem had not been solved by a forensic linguist, the accused person would have to live in prison for nearly twenty months which was three times more than his actual penalty. Now the case mentioned above highlights the importance of forensic syntactic analysis.

Petersen (2017) conducted a syntactic analysis of two different courtroom trials to better understand their reliability. For this purpose, he used syntactic cartography in two cases namely Flores-Figueroa v. United States (2009) and In re Sanders (2008). The researcher analyzed prepositional phrases and drew detailed tree diagrams with the guideline from Merlo and Ferrer (2006). He focused on importance of these kinds of analyses for analyzing jury instructions and future legislations. But this study also does

not provide any information regarding the identification of crimes of language through syntactic analysis.

The complex nature of legal discourse cannot be denied. It is, for this reason, syntactic analysis of the legal text is much necessary or else the ambiguities will be there and the decision made by courts will not be reliable. Almost every aspect of language can contribute to the identification of crimes and their relevant consequences.

2.6 Semantics and Legal Discourse

Understanding of meaning is an important phenomenon of language, discourse and life in general. People, either in online or offline worlds, communicate with each other for the sake of giving and receiving meaning. However, meanings are not necessarily meant to be positive all the time. There are instances of people communicating with each other and the meaning behind their communication turns out to be harmful to others. There are certain crimes of language which can be uncovered through semantic analysis. Ambiguities in understanding the meaning of legal discourse are just like air and breath. There are many cases where people are accused of confusion in the meanings of even single words. A case was reported by Coulthard (2007) in his book about confusion in names. In 2004, a Kurdish refugee was accused of funding a terrorist group because of the similarity of his name. He was referred to with the title 'commander' but later on this ambiguity was removed. It was not an Arabic but Kurdish word of formality. Gibbons (2003) reported a case of another word that was a bit strange. He analyzed a recorded conversation that contained an utterance 'I'm just so nervous of gepoepingepinsepide'. This simple utterance was made complex by inserting extra 'ep' in it. This was all possible because of semantic approach. However, other than these cases, there are certain studies conducted in this regard. Recently a study is conducted by Asfar (2020) about the use of lies on Facebook regarding COVID-19. The researcher did this qualitative and documentary study on the grounds of forensic semantics. For this purpose, hoax news was collected from Facebook and after forensic semantic analysis, it was found that the news was based on lies and forensically it becomes a violation of laws. The fake news was made about an area with all corona positive cases. This study can also be understood in terms of defamation in the form of libel. Defamation is a form of

cyberbullying when fake news is spread through written or spoken forms. This study is related to the one mentioned above in certain aspects. However, defamation is not the only type of cyberbullying related to this study.

Ho, Kao, Chiu-Huang, Li and Lai (2020) conducted research under forensic linguistics using computational analysis by collecting around 140,000 tweets through Kasture's (2015) dataset. The researchers analyzed charged language by focusing on the dimensions of biology, sex and swearing. With the help of computational analysis, the researchers were able to differentiate between cyberbullying and non-cyberbullying hotspots. This study is significant and pretty much relevant to the current study. However, the study's quantitative methodology does not help in this regard. Despite its quantitative nature, the study mentioned above clarifies many things regarding cyberbullying in tweets or posts and the way it seems to be prevailing everywhere. Momeni (2012) conducted research on the recontextualization of police interrogation by using semantic, syntactic and discourse tools. The researcher took more than fifty recorded investigations of cases from the police stations. The findings showed that the majority of the interviews disappeared when the cases reached court. Therefore, the researcher insisted on the use of linguistics tools in rebuilding police investigations. This study highlights the significance of forensic semantic analysis. The study was conducted in Iran, however, if a similar study is conducted in Pakistan, it will pave a pathway toward the importance of the forensic linguistic analysis of the legal language.

Ambivalence in meaning is an issue that has its roots in the remote past. Even in ordinary language, confusion in meaning creates a great deal of misunderstandings. Legal discourses are prone to this. Essential to our understanding, semantic analysis of legal texts is important in forensic dimension.

2.7 Corpus Linguistics in Legal Affairs

Corpus analysis in the legal domain is required when the data under study is large enough. Also, corpus linguistics helps in the investigation of crimes committed online in certain ways. As all the domains of linguistics contribute to the field in one way or the other and resolve criminal issues, so corpus linguistics is no exception. The notion here

can be made clear with the example of a solved case of dual authorship. Coulthard (2013) mentioned a case where a man protested because his superior made an incriminating report on his behalf. The issue of dual authorship was resolved because of corpus linguistics. The person was not well-educated like his superior; therefore, frequencies of complex and rare words were checked through corpora. It was proved that the person was not guilty of a crime. This is how corpus linguistics is helpful in criminology and legal affairs. Coulthard also mentioned several other ways to use corpus linguistics for forensic purposes throughout his article. He constructed corpora of ordinary witness statements and police statements, as well as, the spoken elements of the COBUILD corpus to question the authorship of Bentley's disputed statement. Heffer (2005) discussed in detail how to use different corpus dimensions in courtroom discussion in his book; '*The Language of Jury Trial: A Corpus-Aided Analysis of Legal–Lay Discourse'*.

Wright (2017) used a corpus linguistic approach in author identification of emails and idiolects by using word n-grams. In the first section of the study, twelve authors were identified for several disputed texts, and in the second section only one author was identified with the help of many samples. It was concluded that word n-grams were better to identify the author's idiolect. For this purpose, the author rejected the statistical approach to research, rather he relied on the usage-based concept of entrenchment. It can be implied that if corpus linguistics is helpful in author identification, it can also be fruitful in the detection of cyberbullying on online platforms. He also applied corpus approaches in three forensic texts where he highlighted the importance of corpus techniques (Wright, 2021). McMenamin (2002) discussed the empirical value of corpus linguistics in the field of forensic linguistics and wrote a detailed book for this purpose. He highlighted the importance of corpus linguistics in terms of author identification. He mentioned two important factors for author identification; consistency and resemblance and corpus linguistics makes it easy to analyze these things in the questioned texts. He also solved a case regarding Californian zip code for author identification. Coulthard (2013) solved another case of suspicious text messages through corpus linguistics. A girl named Jenny Nicholl disappeared in 2005 and the police suspected the way the text messages were sent from her phone. Coulthard was asked to resolve the mystery and, for this purpose, he generated a corpus and found out through difference in the style of

abbreviations and proved that those text messages were not written by the girl. Cotterill (2003) also resolves a case where a person named, O. J. Simpson, was portrayed as a violent person through the use of certain words during prosecution. Cotterill (2003) used the COUBLID corpus to identify harmful words disguised as neutral words. Now this type of situation can also be found on social media sites where cyberbullying exists largely and a corpus study is required for them, however, this dimension of the study is out of context for the present study.

Other than the cases mentioned above, corpus linguistics for forensic purposes has been the use from different perspectives. Haworth (2018) analyzed the authenticity of police investigation and interrogation in interviews. It was concluded that many issues regarding police station interactions were found because of the techniques of corpus linguistics. His study was supported by another scholar as mentioned ahead. MacLeod (2010) generated corpora for the purpose to investigate police station interviews from the perspective of discursive patterns. Similarly, Shapero (2011) also used corpus linguistics for analyzing 286 suicide notes, yet there is no end to such cases. It is also considered that from the perspective of forensic linguistics, the internet is providing a huge range of legal issues and there are many opportunities to solve crimes and legal issues on the internet with the assistance of corpus linguistics. A forensic linguist, Grant (2017), solved a murder case including the word 'duppy' and, for this purpose, he approached corpus linguistics for forensic purposes and gathered data from the internet. He also focused on the corpus strategies that can be used in the detection of slang words and their meanings which is a relevant aspect of this study. There is also further progression in this regard where the corpus is generated to identify threatening, malicious communications (Chiang & Grant 2017), trolling and online grooming (Gales, 2015). A relevant study in this dimension is conducted by the scholar, Gomez (2020), who analyzed social media memes from the perspective of cyberbullying. For this purpose, data in the form of 19,000 comments from YouTube was collected by generating a corpus. Different algorithms were applied to the dataset such as Naive Byaes algorithm, Support Vector Machine and Convolutional Neural Network. The annotated comments were identified successfully.

A very important study in this regard is crucial to mention here. Zhang (2020) conducted research on one specific kind of cyberbullying, that is, flaming. For this purpose, the researcher selected one of the Chinese social media sites, WeChat, and from there he took twenty six suspected articles from different subscribed accounts and approached forensic corpus linguistics for the analysis of collected data. The researcher claimed that the invisible and covert framing can be highlighted through the identification of keywords, semantic prosodies and speech acts, as well as, the crime of incitement in terms of illocutionary acts. However, this study did not include the reaction of masses in terms of the perlocutionary effect. It could have been better if their reaction was also included in data analysis as well as other forms of cyberbullying besides framing. The corpus used for data analysis was ToRCH2014 and the most exciting part of this research was to make people aware of the intentionality behind framing. The researcher argued in a pretty laudable way that incitement of crime is itself a crime and whether the reaction is received or not, the intention of bullying others emotionally on online platforms is inherently a crime and wrong morally. To further support his idea, he referred to Scott (1975) who mentioned imprisonment according to the laws of England regarding the offense of inciting and soliciting a person for committing the crime. This study is also in line with Su and Holt (2010), a study that examines the nature and extent of cyberbullying in Chinese web forums, as well as, Langos (2012) in defining cyberpsychology.

These studies show the importance of corpus approaches in the forensic linguistic domain. These approaches have been used in trials in the courtroom during the investigation of crimes (Szczyrbak, 2016). However, the uptake in the development of corpus for forensic purposes is a bit slow as claimed by Wright (2021). It also presents that different types of issues are emerging in this era of technology and excessive use of social networking sites. Although all these studies contribute to the domain of forensic linguistics in multiple ways, the current study has been carried out from a different perspective.

2.8 Application of Pragmatic Approaches for Forensic Purposes

Pragmatics is an important part of language as meaning is not complete without pragmatic tools. It also deals with the intensions behind certain communication which is also a crucial point in terms of legal discourse. Pragmatic analysis of legal texts is required for a complete understanding of the meaning. Studies show that linguists found ambiguities in legal discourses because of their complex nature. Although every domain of linguistics contributes to a better understanding of legal issues, pragmatics has its own significance. Tiersma (2002) gave a valid explanation of a legal issue regarding warnings mentioned on products. The case was resolved because of Grecian Maxims. The case reported by him was related to the maxim of relevance and the company was sued because of inadequate warning mentioned on the product. The case was of *American Optical Co*. v. *Weidenhamer,* marketed under the labels *Sure-Guard* and *SuperArmorplate*. Tiersma (2002) analyzed a similar case of inadequate warning but this time the product was different, that is, the cigarette. Coulthard (2007) has mentioned many examples from courtroom discourses where pragmatic tools helped to understand the meaning behind interactions in an efficient way. In courtroom discussions, there are many chances of violating the cooperative principles, and Grecian maxims are also not followed. The speech acts of threat and order are very relevant to legal discourses and face-to-face interactions inside the courtroom. Face-threatening and face-saving acts along with run-takings are also part of courtroom interactions as mentioned by the scholar.

2.8.1 Forensic-pragmatics: A New Approach towards Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a major forensic problem of the present time and many pragmatic strategies have been used to detect cyberbullying. Lagorgette (2011) used a pragmatic approach towards a defamation trial of French singer because he was accused of defamation by a French police in 2002. The trials of this case remained ambiguous. The researcher explored the legal texts from the perspective of violation of speech acts. The detailed analysis of extracts showed that a pragmatic approach is vital for legal issues. The researcher presented certain views which, one way or the other, relate to the current study as he focused on the role of a forensic linguist in courtroom trials regarding

crimes of language. He mentioned that in France the role of a forensic linguist is not taken seriously which is quite similar to the situation in Pakistan. Here, too, there is not much trend of asking for expert opinions of linguists. It was also discussed that the pragmatic nature of speech acts is ignored in courtroom trials because of the absence of any expert in language. This situation leads to an unfair declaration of guilt or imprisonment and the people remain dissatisfied with the decisions of the courtroom. Taking into account this situation, Pakistan also needs forensic linguists so that decision-making may not become difficult for the judges as well.

However, there are certain studies that are similar to this study in many respects. Although their methodologies, approaches and settings are different, yet they provide guidance in many ways. One of the most relevant studies is discussed ahead. Putri, Sudana and Bachari (2020) conducted a very crucial study in terms of contemporary issues regarding cyberbullying. This was a forensic-pragmatic study through which the researchers tried to identify cyberbullying in the netizens' speeches in DL's Twitter reply columns conducted through presuppositions and highlighted the importance of pragmatic analysis in the detection of cyberbullying, a major forensic issue. The comments were selected through purposive sampling as per the demand of the study. They used Yule's types of presupposition and Willard's types of cyberbullying and made this a descriptive qualitative study. The researchers successfully analyzed those comments and concluded that many types of cyberbullying were there on the basis of lexical presupposition. They also mentioned the act of defamation for penalties for such crimes of language. However, a counterclaim is made by Jay (2009) that offensive words are not harmful and it depends on the context. Through the findings of the research mentioned, it can be understood that offensive words do not carry cyberbullying, however, the present study contradicts and argues that offensive words do represent cyberbullying as also claimed by Zhang (2020) that intention behind using emotionally harmful words is enough to be considered as a crime. As mentioned above, it is difficult to grasp the pragmatic nature of hateful and malicious discourse in the online world and the offline world. Irimba, Ndambuki and Mwithi (2021) conducted a study on hateful micro-speech acts and performative modality from the forensic perspective. The researchers collected 120 posts from Facebook and 40 tweets from Twitter and provided forensic interpretation of selected data by using

computer-mediated discourse analysis by Herring (2004). The researchers also grounded the concepts from speech act theory by Austin (1962). The data posts and tweets were related to the 2017 election in Kenya and the analysis was carried out through purposive sampling. The findings showed that the data indeed depicted hatefulness and threat in it. This research, like the afore-mentioned researches, also highlights the issue that there is no proper hate speech law enforcement in Kenya to determine the pragmatic nature of hateful content.

There are studies based on some practical kind of cases where pragmatic strategies are used to uncover covert hateful meanings. Carney (2014) analyzed hateful speech acts from the forensic perspective and matched the findings of the study with that of a court. The researcher analyzed Herselman v. Geleba case (2007) under Equality Act and focused on the point that judges should ask forensic linguists to use pragmatic tools for the interpretation and evaluation of disputed discourses. The former accused the latter of hate speech because the person used the word 'baboon' in his speech. The researcher explored whether this comment was hurtful or harmful as the court declared it harmful. The researcher agreed with the decision of the court after doing a detailed analysis. However, it was argued in the research that the courts should be careful in deciding whether an expression is harmful or hurtful and for this purpose the role of a forensic linguist is a must, especially in the case of pragmatics. Pragmatics as a tool should be appropriately used by courts for a fuller understanding of the matter. The researcher criticizes African courts because they value more what has been received by the hearer. The current study supports the viewpoint of the researcher because it is necessary for the judges to avoid subjectivity and, for this reason, they should focus more on linguistic tools for the detection of crimes of language. In connection with this study, a Russian researcher put forward his point of view. Dmitrievich (2021) conducted a research on verbal extremism in forensic practices and research. For this purpose, the researcher analyzed forensic practice, research papers on forensic linguistics and anti-extremist law, and manuals organized by Russian law enforcement agencies and scientific and educational organizations. He classified many extremist speech acts through forensic diagnostic complexes. The forensic diagnostic complexes of extremist speech acts helped in differentiating between the right to freedom of speech and the right to protection from

abuse. It is worth-highlighting that a similar situation is found in Pakistan and many other countries. There is no proper forensic diagnostic complex to reveal the hidden meaning behind the harmful use of language and people usually do not know anything regarding the limits of freedom of speech and hateful speech. This vagueness on part of the masses creates a lot of chaos and people do not seem to understand and differentiate between freedom of speech and cyberbullying. This is also the main concern of this study.

However, there have been attempts to identify hate speech and cyberbullying in the online world just as the offline world. Subyantoro and Siroj (2019) identified hate speech in Instagram memes from a forensic linguistic perspective during the election campaign of the president in Indonesia by using K-means methods. The researchers collected data from two accounts,@prabowo and @jokowi using Simak and scrutinizing methods specific to language. The findings of the research revealed hate speech in the form of insult, defamation, blasphemy, unpleasant acts, provocation, incitement, and the distribution of false news. Many scholars have dealt with speech acts and memes from the forensic perspective from different dimensions. Speech acts have been analyzed inside the courtroom. In the courtroom, speech acts are identified as criminal acts and the intensions behind speech acts are also important in this regard. Ali (2020) presents in his descriptive overview of forensic linguistics that speech acts may also lead us to the identification of crimes. He discussed that for achieving a threatening perlocutionary act, the sincerity of the person who threatens the other person is necessary. He also discussed the case of a person named Mustafa. This person was threatening a girl and her brother through stalking, SMS, and tracking and also hired a person to kill her. Now according to him, the perlocutionary effect was that the girl changed her contact number and reported this situation to the police. However, the situation on social media is a bit different. Threat language in memes may or may not affect the people in the same way. People targeted in posts or comments may not involve the police but start reacting furiously and end up abusing each other. Recently a study was done in 2020 where speech acts were analyzed as a tool of hate speech in COVID-19 discourse on social media. In this research, it has been presented how speech acts are used by people in intoxicating language on social media and spread 'infodemic'. According to Leukfeldt and Yar (2016), cyber victimization has become popular for some years and people have started

targeting others in the virtual world. It has been observed recently that cybervictimization has increased during the pandemic because people had to stay inside their houses all over the world which provided them 24 hours access to social media. People started politicizing COVID-19 on new media and also gave views about the lockdown. Because of free time available to people of every age group, the ratio of cybercrimes has increased. As it was mentioned by scholars in 2018 that some people tend to spend more time on the internet and easily fall into trap of cybercrimes. (Costello, Barret-Fox, Bernatzky, Hawdon, & Mendes, 2018)

In connection with the ongoing arguments, discussion on relevant studies becomes crucial here. Adek and Rahmi (2020) conducted research on cyberbullying in the form of hate speech in cyberspace. The researchers gathered data from three accounts on Twitter and Facebook purposively and analyzed it through a semiotic-pragmatic approach. Illocutionary speech acts that contain elements of humiliation, defamation, and incitement of violence and provocation were analyzed as well as signs used in data posts. It was concluded that hate speech was part of those texts. The viewpoint of the study mentioned above is also supported by another study. Kiela et al (2020) have conducted their research keeping in mind a dimension related to this study. They studied how hate speech is spread through memes on social media. For the purpose of the study, they analyzed memes under a multimodal approach, but with a different dimension. They took the overall caption of memes, not a specific category. Throughout their study, they focused on the multimodal understanding of memes in the light of machine learning and artificial intelligence. They gathered one million memes from American social media and through a process of filtering, they ended up providing accurate data of ten thousand memes. They created a dataset of these memes to detect hate speech in them. For the detection of hate speech, they considered both text and images of memes and applied the process of Benign Confounders to replace hate speech with non-hate speech keeping the original semantic meaning intact. For authenticity and unbiased results of research, the researchers hired trained annotators to identify hate speech in memes accurately. In their findings, it was concluded that the most common type of the attack done through hate speech in memes was dehumanization. The other kinds of attack were negative stereotyping, hate crimes and so on. The detection of hate speech in memes was done

through a process with different phases such as filtering, meme construction, hatefulness rating and benign confounders. Through this research, it is may be said that memes do contain hateful content which is challenged differently and dealt with by many researchers. But this research only converted hateful memes into non-hateful memes. This issue is not tackled under the cyber domain which gives this research a space to fill in. This could have been better if cyberbullying was also discussed side by side.

Cyberbullying in memes is not only explored with textual analysis rather there are studies that consult the opinion of people regarding this problem. Rasheed A P K, Maria and Michael (2020) recently analyzed memes on social media as a tool for increasing crime in cyberspace. The researchers did survey research and distributed the structured questionnaire to 170 participants which were the primary data for the research. The secondary data consisted of memes and news sites. It was a qualitative study done related to Kudathai murder case. The results from the study revealed that social media trolls and memes do have an impact on an increased crime ratio. Now this study reveals how much influence social media memes have on the masses and how the things portrayed in the online world affect people in a certain way. Although interaction with the participants is not the aim of the current study, yet behavior of people can be understood with the help of content created in the online world. Memes are used as a way of expression in the online world if not possible in the offline world. A similar kind of study mentioned ahead throws light on it. A recent study conducted in Indonesia by Purwaningrum and Sudana (2020) revealed how criticism is done through memes on Instagram. The criticism was deciphered in terms of signifier and signified used in memes. The data was collected from @fakartun and the memes showed criticism of the House of Representatives. The researcher applied the theory of Ronald Barthes and Searle's illocutionary act. This study presented a pragmatic qualitative analysis of memes from a semiotic perspective. It was concluded that electronic graphic designs were also used in memes to spread criticism on revised bills. Only two memes were selected for this purpose. This study also shows that people tend to use memes as a tool of criticism for targeting other people. Sometimes the criticism is somewhat justified, but taking it in terms of inappropriate ways of criticizing, memes as a tool become problematic. This study is limited to semiotic analysis only and

does not lead towards any valid solution. This is considered to be the major loophole of this study.

Sometimes memes are used in disguise of humor but the intention behind is not mere joke or fun but rather something of serious nature. There are certain memes that seem to be funny but are meant to disrespect others in the name of mockery. Joshua (2020) did a pragmatic analysis of the discourse of humor and irony in memes taken from Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Thirty out of ninety three memes were selected purposively and analyzed through the lens of the General Theory of Verbal Humor. These memes were conversational and the researcher took two years to collect data by keeping screenshots of relevant memes. Analysis of memes was a descriptive and qualitative one as well as based on observation and intuition. During analysis, the researcher also categorized memes in terms of speech acts under the categories provided by Austin (1962) and Allan (1994). The speech acts were expressive and assertive mostly. The study also showed that the reaction to memes posted was sometimes insulting. The comments on memes were a kind of insult in various disguises of humor. It is evident from this study that memes do play role a significant role in insulting and humiliating others. Sometimes the jokes and humor are for the sake of fun but many a time this is not the case. In the guise of humor, people humiliate others on social media. The study dealt with insulting humor to a limited extent which makes it different from this study. However; when the issue is serious and not just for the sake of fun, law enforcement authorities should take serious steps toward this issue. Laws concerning Electronic Information and Transactions should be made reliable and strong enough to detect hate speech and cyberbullying solidly and measurably.

Another study supports the above mentioned view from a different dimension. Morris (2019) examined memes whose content was to make fun of disabled people. For this purpose, she analyzed the case of Katy Price whose fourteen year old son was targeted online and the mother went for the petition to consider online abuse as a criminal offense. The research was conducted to highlight issue of disable language in image-based internet memes. For this purpose, the researcher conducted seven individual semi-structured interviews with non-disabled participants. The study proposed an academic

way of implementing *Article No. 8 "Awareness-Raising"* through a process of self-regulation and judgment. Now, this type of study is pretty much relevant to the previous ones and current study. This study also focuses on a similar rationale although the settings of the study differ from each other. This study recommended the creation of a balance between two important articles of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). These two articles are *Right to Freedom of Expression* and *Protection from Discrimination*. The presence of these articles represents that there have been attempts to consider online hate speech as the online criminal offense in different western countries. It was made sure that if people find any content in memes as hate speech, they could complain within 24 hours and results were obtained likewise. It was observed that due to strict actions, 70% of the online hateful content was removed from the internet sites. Through this study, it is pretty much evident that online hate speech is to be considered as the online crime.

There is no end to how different scholars have been attempting to explore cyberbullying from different perspectives. Homsseinmardi et al (2015) have contributed a lot through their research on cyberbullying on social media. They chose Instagram images and their respective comments and put them under labeling analysis. They labeled sensitive images and content according to varieties of cyber aggression and cyberbullying. The researchers collected data from 25K public profile users from Instagram and this collection was done through snowball sampling and purposive sampling specifically for comments. The focus of this research was specifically on words that were sensitive in terms of cyberbullying. This study proposed a whole new dimension of dealing with sensitive words yet giving a space for this research to fill. Zhong et al (2016) also conducted their research on cyberbullying on the platform, Instagram. They selected a dataset of 3000 images along with captions and related comments. The researchers identified certain features and. on this basis. they categorized a particular Instagram image along with caption and comments as cyberbullying. They gathered 9000 images containing 500,000 comments as 150 comments per image. The images were reduced to 3000 as per the space of research work. The labelers were also hired for this research who labeled each image and each comment individually and checked whether they were part of cyberbullying or not. There were only 560 images

considered as a tool of cyberbullying and which were labeled from different dimensions. While doing categorization, they kept in mind the text-based, image-based and meta-features of Instagram images. For analysis of words in captions and comments, the researchers applied the 'Bag of Words' model by Haris 1954 and grouped offensive words. It is obvious from this study that much scholarship has been done on cyberbullying on different social media platforms but in different dimensions which provides the current study an opportunity to fill the left over gaps.

In another study, Amelia and Fadlilah (2018) presented a kind of similar situation in Indonesian society. These researchers conducted research on Instagram and considered comments on political posts of official profiles as part of hate speech through a pragmatic study. They analyzed comments considering their expressive illocutionary power. The basic techniques that were applied in this research were observation, note-taking, and descriptive analysis. From above mentioned research, it is pretty much evident that cyberbullying has been dealt differently under various dimensions, but not any previous study combined pragmatics with forensic linguistics in specific terms which leads this study towards an unexplored region of knowledge. In a study conducted by Power, Keane, Nolan, and O'Neill (2017), it was claimed that cyberbullying, in textual form, is not limited to the type of words or expressions used in captions or comments on social media. According to them, for a complete cyberbullying action, three elements are necessary. The three elements are personal markers, implicit or explicit dysphemistic element and the link between both. They created a cyberbullying database that was based on semantic and grammatical information.

The studies mentioned above reveal the importance of pragmatic techniques in forensic linguistics for crime investigation. After analyzing these studies, it can be noted that they are similar to the present study in one or the other way yet leave space for future research. Their methods and approaches are a guide towards this study as well. However, sometimes it becomes difficult to prevent illegal activities going on through the internet. Although malicious material is deleted from sites yet it is difficult to monitor whatever is available on social media (Costello, Hawdon & Ratkiff, 2017). Cybercrime activities have increased recently and now people are more confident about the online world and

express whatever comes into their minds. This situation creates chaos, especially in the context of the current pandemic. People start debating their views and end up fighting, abusing and threatening others on social media sites. People pretend as if cyberbullying is just fun but it is not less serious than other crimes. They do not bother to notice and consider it as a crime (Yitzhak, 2020). Cyberhate and cyberbullying lead to the extremist point of view on social media which differ from other types of cyberviolence (Costello et al, 2016). Cyberbullying in disguise of fun memes and posts can be related to stereotyping, ethnicity, race, and identity crisis, or national, regional, or religious conflicts (Hawdon, Oksanen, & Rasanen, 2017). Online hate and cyberbullying spread through different platforms such as social media, blogs, chatrooms, listservs, etc. (Hussain & Saltman, 2014). People can target an individual, group, nation, community, or any political party. When different group target others, they also get a response. It is observed that mostly it happens on public political pages and public religious pages (Potok, 2015). Ultimately it gives rise to a negative attitude among people and they find it easier to bully others through social media posts and comment sections. A forensic humor study is related to law enforcement for making fun of others. In the courtroom, a humorous text is critically examined in the light of forensic linguistics and the court decides the intension behind such texts. This type of application of forensic linguistics is very popular in Europe (Koltay, 2017).

In conclusion, the notion that has been highlighted in the recent researches is that forensic linguistics is an umbrella term and it is useful for the investigation of crimes. This research study is based on pragmatics (speech acts) which is basically used as a tool in a forensic issue, that is, cyberbullying. Although it has been discussed how different domains contribute to a forensic analysis of legal discourses effectively, there are many areas yet to explore. Cyberbullying has been analyzed from different angles and so is the case with memes. However, cyberbullying, a crime of language, in memes committed through speech acts, either verbal or non-verbal, is not studied so far. It is at this point that this study differs from the previous ones because here pragmatics is used as a tool to illustrate a criminal problem. No study so far has focused on cyberbullying hidden in speech acts presented through memes on Facebook. Specifically, in the context of Pakistan, research in the domain of forensic linguistics in general and cyberbullying in

particular is in its infancy. There is no study known to highlight cyberbullying on any platform of social media in Pakistan which makes this study unique in the Pakistani setting and it is also a research gap in terms of worldwide scholarship. There are new experiments to be done on speech acts and cyberbullying which are the concern of this study. With the growing trends in technology and the prevailing situation of COVID-19, the chances of cyberbullying are countless. Therefore, a study is needed to make people aware of crimes through language and how mere words have legal implications. This study is a minor step toward this big issue. In brief, Pakistan is no exception as cyberbullying is a prevailing trend and there are also cyber laws for preventing such crimes. Questions like these 'Do people in Pakistan know about cyberbullying and cyber laws? Do they understand cyberbullying as a crime? lead to another debate. There have always been problems with the misuse of language on different forums. Therefore, much of the scholarship has been done about crimes of language on social media. Scholars have conducted research on how people use language for illegal purposes on social media networking sites. This study fills the gap as it has been conducted in the context of Pakistan. There is no study conducted on memes in this dimension so far in Pakistan. A study was conducted in 2005 on the illegal use of the English language in short messages written online. People usually write to scrutinize other people and do not expose their identity in the online world. In this regard, it is examined how words, phrases, clauses, etc. are manipulated for creating harmful discourses. But still, this study did not discuss anything regarding cyberbullying. Out of so many linguistic features, speech acts are selected for this research because this linguistic area is yet not explored in Pakistan. Precisely, this research focuses on memes. Memes as non-verbal speech acts were analyzed from the perspective of semiotics in 2017, but the difference between this study and others is that this research was done from the legal perspective within the domain of forensic linguistics.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a critical introduction, explanation and justification of various approaches, methods and techniques used to explore answers to the research questions.

3.1 Type of Research

There are generally two major types of research: qualitative research and quantitative research. This research is qualitative in nature, and the reason behind choosing this type of research is that it is quite appropriate for addressing the research questions. Qualitative research provides an in- depth interpretation of data. Interpretation and description of speech acts that are used to commit a crime in memes demand a type of analysis that moves beyond the surface level. For this reason, qualitative research suits this study. For the qualitative analysis of the memes, two theoretical frameworks have been selected that work as analytical tools for analysis. The selected theoretical frameworks are Pragmatic Act Theory by Mey (2001) and Speech Act Theory by Austin.

3.2 Research Design

The research design selected for this study is based on the interpretative and descriptive paradigms. As the research type is qualitative so detailed descriptions of memes, as well as, contextual interpretations are needed so that meaning behind speech acts used in memes can be understood precisely. The meanings of the memes depend on their specific context and in order to comprehend the context, the above-mentioned design is considered to be suitable. The descriptive type of research provides a chance to thoroughly understand the background of a problem which may not be possible in other research designs. For the purpose of identification of the categories of speech acts in the memes, discussion sessions were arranged with the scholars who had linguistic background.

3.3 Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The purposive sampling was done regarding the selection of 35 memes because the researcher only focused on the relevant and suitable data. These memes included all types of memes that depicted socio-legally sensitive speech acts. It is important to mention that non-political and political memes were selected for conducting this study. Most of the subjects of the memes were politicians, but non-political figures were also included. It is necessary to highlight the reason for selecting such memes because usually it is considered to be a wrong notion that criticism on them is justified. The researcher has tried to explain that public figures are also humans and they have protection against violation of basic human rights. This is the point which the researcher wants to highlight that cyberbullying cannot be ignored on account of political or justified criticism because they also have basic human rights. Some memes only had text while other memes had text along with the image. This research considered both kinds of memes, but the main focus was on the memes with captions. The memes were selected from twenty five public pages and twenty five public groups. The data collected from these pages and groups is only concerned with the notion that whether culpable data exist on Facebook or not. The reliability of data is limited to this extent. The authorial authenticity on these pages and groups is beyond the limits of this study.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

As far as the research design for the collection of data is concerned, the pages and groups were selected randomly, however, the researcher selected only those pages and groups that were related to the Pakistani context. The selected pages were created during the year 2018 and onwards. The researcher started searching data from January 2021 to December 2021. However, there were certain difficulties regarding data collection. Firstly, most of the memes from selected pages and groups were in Urdu as well as a mixture of Urdu and English. Although many memes of such kinds were relevant to this study, but the researcher had to remove those memes from the list because of translation problems. Secondly, despite the availability of a number of memes on the selected platforms, the memes relevant to this study were difficult to find or they were in Urdu

language. Some of the pages and groups did not provide a single meme. Thirdly, the selected groups provided minimum memes because there were plenty of videos that did not contain content related to cyberbullying. The primary data collection consisted of almost one hundred and fifty memes which were filtered, and the remaining data consisted of hundred memes. Later on, specific thirty five memes were selected out of hundred memes. The reason behind the selection of thirty five memes instead of hundred memes was to avoid repetition of themes during analysis. A tentative sample was given at the time of synopsis and selection of the data was done during in one year, 2021. After collection of 150 relevant and qualified memes, 100 memes were supposed to be analyzed. Also purposive sampling made it necessary to select only relevant memes. However after analyzing 30 memes, the analysis reached at the saturation point. It was felt that themes inside memes were being repeated and further analysis could provide same result. Therefore to avoid redundancy, it was felt at this stage that no further analysis was required. Some of the memes were in the form of screenshots and some were downloaded. After collection and selection, the memes were cropped to avoid unnecessary details.

The selected pages for the memes were Pakistani Political Memes (2017), Memes (2012), Know Your Meme (2009), Pakistan Memes (2012), Best Memes Right Now-Funny Hindi & English Memes and Quotes (2020), Pakistani Memes Lord (2018), Pakistan Memes (2012), Sarcastic Tweets (2017), Pendu Production Memes (2018), Meme Point (2017), All Pakistan Memes Point (2016),50 Shades of Sarcasm (2019), Memes By Aquid (2019), Loquacious Memer (2019), Pakistan Memes Masti (2014), GCSE English Memes (2018), Trending Pakistani Memes (2018), Meme Point (2017), Pakistan Meme Party (2018), Memes of Pakistan(2018), Dekhlo (2019), Memes For Memes (2021),University Ki Memes (2018),The Hadharaam Movement (2013), and Memes (2021).

The groups selected were: Politics in Pakistan (2017), Pro Memers Pakistan (2020), All Pakistan Memes Territory (2019), Pakistan Meme Community (2020), Pakistani Memes (2020), National Memes Assembly of Pakistan (2018), All Pakistan Teenagers Meme Posting (2020), Memeistan (2020), Tweets and Memes (2021), Meme

Therapy (2021), Memelogy (2021), Memers Point (2021), Pakistan Memes Hub (2021), Laughing Tweets (2020), Memes-Land (2020), Meme O meme 1.0 (2021), Pakistani Memes Society (2021), Memes Point (Pakistan) (2020), Burgerposting 2.0 (2020), Memeistan 2.0 (2020), A group where we all are Meme lovers (2021), Funny Tweets (Memes) (2020), Pakistani's Meme Posting (2020), Meme's World (2021), and LahoriFied Memes (2020).

These specific groups and pages were selected randomly from many similar pages. After observing for months, these selected groups and pages were found suitable for the study as they contained relevant content from the perspective of this study. Moreover, the reliability of these pages and groups is dependent on the fact that they exist on Facebook. All the other groups and pages which had international memes and posts were not chosen purposely as they were not suitable to meet the requirements of this study. Although some of the memes had international characters within them, but their meaning was understood in the context of Pakistan. All the memes have Pakistani background and the characters in them are also Pakistani. Only a few memes have international characters in them but their meaning is created and understood in the context of Pakistan. The characters that are being mocked are Pakistani. Besides they are meant for Pakistani audience and this mockery as well. The international references create meaning for Pakistani audience. Nevertheless this research is done in the context of Pakistan. One more important point is to be mentioned here that the researcher had nothing to do with any political party. There were many memes that were related to politicians, but the researcher analyzed them neutrally, and neither favored nor disfavored any political party or person. The memes were selected for analysis only, and during the whole process, the researcher remained unbiased.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study was based on Pragmatic Act Theory (PAT) by Mey (2001) and the concept of cyberbullying defined by Willard (2007). The primary theoretical frameworks have already been discussed in detail. As far as the conceptual background and general categorization of speech acts are concerned, Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) was selected because Pragmatic Act Theory is grounded in

Speech Act Theory. It was also necessary to strengthen the argument regarding cybercrime and cyberbullying. The assistance of a lawyer was also added as a tool as his assistance was required during the process of the selection of the data. Assistance from the lawyer was required for better understanding and confirmation of cyberbullying.

3.5.1 Pragmatic Act Theory

The Pragmatic Act Theory was proposed by Mey (2001) as a modification of the Speech Act Theory by Austin. The differences between these two theories are not huge, but both the theories have their underpinnings and implications. The most important thing in Pragmatic Act Theory is the situation in which conversation takes place because the situation determines the affordances of interactants about what can possibly be said and understood. The Pragmatic Act Theory is based on various concepts out of which the concept of pragmeme is very prominent.

3.5.1.1 Pragmeme

Pragmeme is a general prototype situated speech act that explains how people can understand the meaning of language in relation to the situation of interaction. Pragmeme is made of two parts. The two parts are discussed below:

1- Activity part

The activity part of pragmeme elaborates how interactants interact with each other. This part of pragmeme deals with the types of speech acts that are used by interactants. The speech acts can be direct and indirect. Conversational speech acts which are mostly dialogues are also included in the part. Other than these, psychological speech acts (in the form of emotions), prosody (intonation, tone, stress), and physical speech acts are also added in the activity part. Physical acts include gestures, body language, and facial expressions (physiognomy).

2- Textual part

The textual part of pragmeme consists of various elements which are used to understand speech acts according to the context in which they are used. These contextual elements

are INF (inference), REF (reference), REL (relevance), VCE (voice), SSK (shared situation knowledge), MPH (metaphor), and M (metapragmatic joke). Inference means how the other participant infers the meaning. Reference and relevance are related to context whereas the element of voicing includes how the language is designed. For instance, the font, color, size of the text, and either it is bold or not, and the types of spellings and punctuation marks used, etc. The visual part of the memes is only considered with reference to the element of voicing and overall reference of the pragmeme. The visusality of the image is not foregrounded. Visuality of the text is the concern of the study. Visuality of the image is not focused. It is limited to the extent of reference and relevance under the theory followed. It remains limited for the sake of reference and relevance only. It is not focused for in-depth analysis. The memes are not analyzed from the perspective of multimodality. Shared situation knowledge deals with all the background information about a pragmeme. Metaphor is usually the use of conceptual metaphors in this regard. Lastly, metapragmatic joke element deals with everything that works at the level of metapragmatic. For example, if deliberate alteration of word order is done, then it is dealt under metapragmatic level.

Both these parts are combined to make a pragmeme. But when speech acts are uttered, the inclusion of all the elements at the same time is not a must. The pragmemes are represented by pragmatic acts which are actual ways of realization of pragmeme. Therefore, the pragmatic acts are also called 'practs'. When different practs are used in different situations, they are termed as allopracts. An example is given below to understand the concept of pragmeme.

Pragmeme: (inviting someone to have dinner)

Practs: (Please have a seat.)

             (Why do you not eat more?)

             (Try this dish also, please.)

All the above mentioned practs are also allopracts of a particular pragmeme but these allopracts represent a different situation. For a better understanding of PAT, a figure is represented here:

```
                            PRAGMEME

        ACTIVITY PART                      TEXTUAL PART
        (INTERACTANTS)                     (CO(N)TEXT)

                                        INF  REF  REL  VCE  SSK  MPH  'M'...
        SPEECH ACTS
        INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS
        CONVERSATIONAL ('DIALOGUE') ACTS
        PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTS (EMOTIONS)
        PROSODY (INTONATION, STRESS)
        PHYSICAL ACTS:
            BODY MOVES (INCL. GESTURES)
            PHYSIOGNOMY (FACIAL EXPRESSIONS)
            (BODILY EXPRESSIONS OF) EMOTIONS
            ....
        Ø (NULL)
                            PRACT

                          ALLOPRACT
```
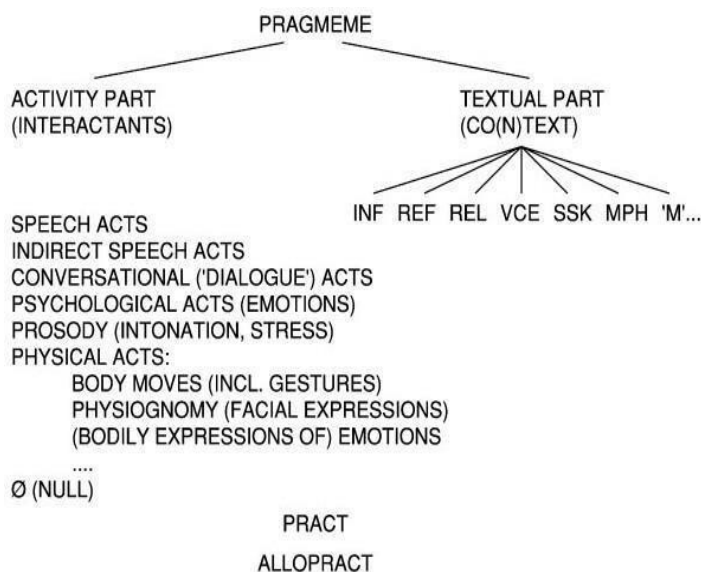
Figure 1: Model of PAT

The reason behind choosing this particular theory was its broader scope. Although basic concepts were taken from the Speech Act Theory but for understanding a complete situation of speech acts, Speech Act Theory was not enough. Pragmatic Act Theory deals with every kind of speech act, and it is not bound to verbal speech acts only. It deals with verbal, non-verbal, physical, and many other types of speech acts. Furthermore, unlike Speech Act Theory, this theory is not bound to any rules or regulations and specific words for speech acts to be performed. Also, there is no restriction for speech acts to be performed only through sentences and certain type of language. Rather this theory focuses on situation and context. According to Mey (2001), prior context is very important to understand the whole realization of pragmeme through pragmatic acts. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze things from the outside in, and some of the scholars say that exploration and understanding of pragmatics acts should be in both ways, that is, from inside out as well. Regardless of the outside in or inside out way of exploration,

context and situation are important factors. This is the point where PAT is preferred over SAT because the focus is not only on individual speech acts and words, but also on the situation and the way things are done.

The researcher also took guidance from relevant studies. The analysis related to Pragmatic Act Theory was mostly guided by a study conducted by Ajayi (2021), Osisanwo (2017), Tseng (2010), and Kecskes (2010). In these studies, major concepts of this theory have been discussed. These studies are important in this regard because some of the concerns of the present study are voiced in them.

3.5.2 Cyberbullying by Nancy Willard

This framework has its background in cognitive and educational settings, however, the theory has been transported from that field of knowledge to the one concerned with this study. Also, this transportation of theory is supported by the notion that multidisciplinary researches allow adoption and adaptation of theories from one domain to another. The origin of the theory is in the cognitive and educational settings. It is common in multidisciplinary researches that theories are transported, adopted and adapted from one domain into other domains. As far as this study is concerned; forensic linguistics is itself multidisciplinary in nature because it involves emergence of two fields; forensic and linguistics. As forensic linguistics is itself interdisciplinary in nature, therefore, framework of cyberbullying has been used on same grounds in this study. Willard (2007) provided an extensive definition of cyberbullying. According to her definition, cyberbullying is any speech that is 'defamatory, constitutes bullying, harassment, or discrimination, discloses personal information, or contains offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments'. The definition provided by the scholar is self-explanatory and covers a wide range of aspects related to cyberbullying.

The different categories of cyberbullying by Willard are described below:

1- Flaming: This type of cyberbullying involves online fights through messages by using angry and vulgar language.
2- Harassment: It means sending nasty, sexual, mean, insulting messages repeatedly.

3- Denigration: It includes teasing someone by sending or posting gossip or rumors about someone to damage their reputation.

4- Impersonation: It means copying someone to pretend to be someone else and damaging their reputation and harming them.

5- Outing: It includes sharing secrets, personal information and images to embarrass them in front of others.

6- Trickery: This type of cyberbullying is done when a person persuades others to leak out their secrets and information and, later on, the bully shares it online.

7- Exclusion: It happens when someone is intentionally excluded from an online group or community to hurt their feelings.

8- Cyberstalking: This type of cyberbullying involves repeated as well as intense harassment. It also consists of threats and causes fear to a certain extent.

A recent study conducted by Saengpranga and Gadavanijb (2021) provided a guideline in the identification of types of cyberbullying by Willard (2007). This study provided a stance on how cyberbullying is prevailing through social media. This study is relevant to the current study at certain points. However, there still exist differences concerning these researches.

3.5.3 Speech Act Theory (SAT)

Speech Act Theory provided the conceptual background for this study. Speech Act Theory was proposed by Austin (1962) when he published his work "How to Do Things with Words". According to him, every text is a speech act. Words not only provide information but also carry actions. It means when we say something we do it. Speech acts are categorized into three dimensions: locutionary act which means the literal meaning of a word, illocutionary act that is meaning in context and perlocutionary act is the effect created by illocutionary act. These illocutionary acts may include warning, ordering, threatening, apologizing, making fun, abusing and so on. Austin (1962), after presenting his trichotomy, also divided illocutionary acts into different categories: expositives mean accepting, denying, stating and correcting, exercitives include warning, nominating and advising, commissives refer to confessing, declaring, promising, betting, planning, and swearing, verdictives focus on ruling, judgment, valuing, analyzing,

calculating and lastly, behabitives refer to welcoming, thanking, apologizing and sympathizing.

3.5.4 Operationalization of the Theoretical Framework

As far as the operationalization of the theoretical framework is concerned, it was done by following certain steps. Firstly, speech acts were categorized under Speech Act Theory. Secondly, analysis of particular pragmeme was done according to Pragmatic Act Theory by Mey. For this purpose, the activity part of pragmeme decided which type of pragmatic act is being performed and then the memes were analyzed under the seven elements of the textual part of pragmeme. It is notable here that presence of all the seven elements of pragmeme is not a must, therefore, the research focused on those elements only that took part in the realization of a pragmeme. Although all the elements were relevant to the study, the four elements (inference, relevance, reference and shared situation knowledge) were more focused as per the suitability of the study.

It is to be noted that one meme can come under more than one category of speech acts as well as types of cyberbullying, however, only those categories have been mentioned that potentially have high probability. This was done on purpose to avoid confusion and to have clarity regarding the identified categories. Also one category was preferred based on contextual background and researchers own perception. Also regarding reliability of the categories of memes the researcher took guidance from the supervisor, two experts and the peers. Moreover, cyberbullying in memes was identified and defined according to Willard's definition and, later on, relevant type of cyberbullying was also identified based on the categories defined by Willard. Lastly, memes were analyzed by focusing on the interpretation of the lawyer who provided guidance regarding human rights and Pakistani legislation with regard to cybercrimes. For the purpose of measuring socio-legal sensitivities behind these memes, the researcher relied on the theory of cyberbullying to identify socio-legal sensitivities from a legal perspective. However, the social aspect of socio-legal sensitivity was identified under the field of pragmatics which reveals intentional meaning of the speaker along with the contextual factors. Pragmatic Act Theory helped to explain how speech acts are understood by the society. The researcher's own position in the society also guided her in

interpreting memes from social, cultural, situational and contextual perspectives. The position of the researcher in the qualitative study helped in this regard. For the purpose of highlighting legal sensitivities, the researcher followed theory of cyberbullying and took guidance from the lawyer. The socio-legal sensitivities have been identified through lens of pragmatic act theory as well as researcher's own interpretation of the society and culture. Being a qualitative study, the researcher's position in the society helps in the analysis based on socio-cultural and contextual understanding. Besides pragmatic act theory explained how speech acts are taken by the society and how negativity behind them is interpreted by others. Pragmatics helps in analyzing intentional meaning of the speakers and in this study intensions of the memes creators.

For the forensic aspect of the study, the researcher applied the theory of cyberbullying and considered the opinion of the lawyer quite significant in this regard. For understanding the motivating factors behind memes and socio-legal sensitivities, the Pragmatic Act Theory and the interpretation based on contextual and social background have been considered. The speech acts themselves reveal intensions of the meme creators which is sufficient to understand socio-legal sensitivities of these memes. For the forensic aspect of the study, the researcher took guidance from the theory of cyberbullying. This theory helped to legality of the issue and exposed culpable content. Moreover; the study is based on forensic discourse analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher analyzed memes in the light of the selected analytical frameworks. The analysis is done on the basis of the guideline provided by Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory (2001), and the definition and types of cyberbullying proposed by Willard (2007). The descriptive and interpretative analysis of the data is also done with the assistance of the lawyer whose expert opinion was required throughout the procedure.

Although most of the memes were not found in the selected groups, however, the selected pages provided the required memes. The names of these pages are obvious and the contextual background of memes on these pages is similar. All these pages are created for the purpose of sharing memes. Initially, these memes are shared for the sake of fun, but later on, these memes become a tool of cyberbullying in different ways, and this situation is common in all the pages and groups specifically designed for the creation of memes.

Figure 2

The caption in the given meme is not long, yet it is thought-provoking and interpretative. According to Pragmatic Act Theory, the pragmeme of judgment is realized through the pragmatic act of verdict which includes judging someone's character. It involves a situation in which judgment of someone's character is done in the form of a pragmeme. The pract/pragmatic act 'be characterless, be Kaptaan' depicts the whole situation of how certain people think of the subject of this meme. The activity part of pragmeme classifies this pract as a direct speech act because the intention of the creator of this caption is explicitly conveyed. The response from the audience is received in the form of comments which can be verbal as well as non-verbal. Other categories of the activity part are not relevant here as they are applicable to physical presence of the interlocutors.

The textual part of the pragmeme presents this meme in a different way. First of all, this meaning can be inferred that the character of a person has intentionally been presented in a negative way. The next element of the textual part is the reference and it is pretty much obvious that this reference has been made to a specific person in this meme and the audience understands the purpose and relevance. Relevance is linked with the situation in which this meme is created (Ajayi, 2021). The time of the creation of the meme and circumstances are the relevant events for the public. Just by reading this meme, they understand the whole event. Voicing also plays a vital role in the creation of a pract. The voicing in this meme is in the form of capitalized words that foreground selected features of the message to convey the meanings in a certain way. Shared situational knowledge is the key element in the Pragmatic Act Theory. The creator of the meme is very well aware of the current political scenario and the types of discourses that people produce regarding a political figure. Also, the whole process of uttering this kind of speech act represents a metapragmatic function of language which, in fact, damages the reputation of the targeted person (Mey, 2001). According to Willard (2007), this type of language is related to denigration, a type of cyberbullying. The word 'characterless has negative connotations associated with it, therefore it is considered cyberbullying and should be dealt under cybercrime laws. Denigration, type of cyberbullying, can be done by using derogatory and offensive terms or remarks, and the purpose behind it is to devalue the subject as well as damage his reputation.

For understanding this meme in terms of legal implications, it can be observed that the caption used in this meme is not a mere political criticism rather it is a personal attack on the target of this meme. The reason for not accepting it as political criticism is that the pract used in the meme is depicting meaning beyond political criticism. The concept 'characterless' has many negative meanings associated with it in our society. If the targeted person is bullied in the offline world with the same words, then it will be considered a crime which may lead to respective consequences later on (Suler, 2004). Similarly, if this meme is analyzed under cybercrime laws of our country, it can be understood that it is a crime committed in the online world. According to Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA-2016), spreading hatred in any form is considered a crime under section 11 of the act. Additionally, it is considered a crime as it goes beyond the boundaries of freedom of speech. If this meme is further analyzed in light of basic human rights, it is still a crime because the words used in the meme are meant to damage the reputation of the targeted person (Kiela et al, 2020). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) declared by the United Nations General Assembly, everyone has the right to protect their dignity. These human rights are applicable to both offline and online worlds. If a person has to protect his/her dignity in front of people in real life, it is also obligatory for the people in the online world to protect and respect the dignity of other people (Dmitrievich, 2021). Human rights of social media are also framed by the UN and, according to those rights, people on social media are not allowed to create or share any content meant to embarrass a person in any way. Although the boundary between freedom of speech and culpable content of social media becomes fuzzy in certain situations (Waseem, Davidson, Warmsley, & Weber, 2017), yet human rights of cybercrimes in general and social media, in particular, do not allow anyone to attack the dignity of a person by any means. Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as, the Pakistani Constitution mention the inviolability of the dignity of man.

It is observed that memes do contain speech acts or more specifically practs of various categories and these are used for the purpose of cyberbullying. Therefore, Shuy (1996) states that violent speech acts are punishable if analyzed and interpreted on semantic and pragmatic grounds. It is evident from the caption of this meme that how this

pract is used to judge and denigrate someone's character. Coulthard (2010) also stresses the fact that speech acts should be given much importance because it is necessary to understand the intentions and context behind words. The dictionary meanings considered by the courts are not enough. The matter is no less than traditional bullying. If a person uses such kinds of remarks in face-to-face interaction, then he/she might face the consequences instantly. McCulloch (2019) also states that mere words can be dangerous sometimes and lead to disputes. Butler (1997) also states that mere words can be dangerous and lead to disputes. Nevertheless, people say whatever they want to say on online platforms by simply ignoring the severity of these matters. If the victim wants to defend himself/herself, the online bullies can be in trouble because such kind of language is not appropriate legally and promotes discourse of hatred (Kowalski et al, 2012). In alignment with the interpretation of the lawyer, political criticism is a kind of freedom of speech in democratic countries where the public is allowed to criticize the politicians. However, the difference between political criticism, freedom of speech and cyberbullying is that politicians can be targeted for their political inabilities and activities (Irimba et al, 2021), but the personal attack on anyone is not allowed. In this regard, Shuy (1993) explains that sometimes the boundaries of the problem remain there as the judges examine words without expert knowledge and tools, that is why, Finegan (2009) stresses the importance of forensic linguists to minimize ambiguities in crimes of language in an expert way.

Figure 3

The pragmeme of congratulating a couple on the wedding day is highlighted in this meme through an indirect pract and it is meant to convey meaning beyond the surface level. The pract in this meme is the representation of an indirect speech act which is also the activity part of the pragmeme. Speech acts of greeting are part of the behabitive category. The textual part of pragmeme can be analyzed on the basis of its elements. The possible meaning that can be inferred is that the person highlighted in the meme is being ridiculed by the creator of the meme. Reference and relevance of the pragmeme in this meme can be observed as two politicians are referred to as a couple. A humiliating greeting is directed toward two politicians. As far as voicing is concerned, a very short and witty caption has been used. Shared situational knowledge reveals how they are portrayed by people on social media. Also, the subjects of this meme have been trolled over by the public a number of times. Due to this regular trolling on different forums, it is not difficult for the masses to understand its meaning as it has become a part of their shared knowledge (Mey, 2001). According to the definition of cyberbullying provided by Willard (2007), the kind of cyberbullying is in the form of rumor and insult done through the use of words in an indirect and sarcastic way. Although offensive words are not used explicitly, the context of the meme foregrounds the type of message delivered to the audience. It can be observed that the purpose of this meme is not to criticize the subjects of this study politically, rather it is a personal kind of attack which is not protected by the laws of states. According to Irimba et al (2021), 'politically correct talk' is cyberbullying in reality. It is not political criticism in the real sense. Every person has the right to

privacy and dignity, and these are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights, ECHR as well as European Court of Human Rights, ECHR. The International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights, ICESCR, also provides protection for the dignity and self-respect of all people (Henderson, 2017).

From socio-legal perspective, this meme does not contain harmful words, but the intensions behind the use of such words are not positive. It should be noted here that such type of content available on social media spreads negativity about the people targeted. Indrayani and Johansari (2019) agree on the fact that cyberbullying is a negative side of social media and it cannot be denied. Because of cyberbullying, many social media users have committed suicide. It has been reported that in some situations the suicide rate was 90.4% and the reason for such increased rate is depression and anxiety due to cyberbullying (O'Dea & Campell 2012). It is not respectful to show sexual relationship regarding somebody. The pragmatic act used in this pragmeme highlights unusual relationship that exists between these two politicians. This has nothing to do with their political agendas rather it is a personal attack on them (Irimba et al, 2021). In this meme, they are being congratulated because of their marriage which is not true and, hence, this meme becomes part of cyberbullying. Lagorgette (2010) discussed a case where Sine filed a case against Claude Askolovitch for defamation. Apparently, this type of cyberbullying is not understood at fight sight. The situation and context magnify the actual meaning related to these so-called harmless memes. The caption in this meme is not offensive or derogatory, however, understanding it as a speech act and digging out its intentions reveals that it is an attack on the dignity and rights of the targeted people. Rainville (2005) argues that humor sometimes becomes vague and it is meant to harm others, yet is it presented in a disguised manner.

Figure 4

The pragmeme regarding appearance is highlighted in this meme. According to the general category of speech acts, this pragmatic act belongs to the category of the expositives through which a statement is made. The activity part of the pragmeme reveals that it is an indirect speech act. The person is not insulted through the use of direct words. Inference from the textual part indicates that a woman is humiliated. The creator of this meme humiliates her by comparing her to an animal in an insulting way. The reference and relevance of this pragmeme make it understandable for the audience. Shared situational knowledge related to this pragmeme makes it more prominent that the famous singer is being ridiculed for certain reasons. As far as this meme is concerned, the audience already knows the person targeted here and the reason for which she is being criticized.

According to the definition provided by Willard (2007), the caption used in this meme can be considered as the representation of cyberbullying because the intention for using specific words is not to highlight the beauty of the subject of this meme, rather the person is ridiculed for the sake of entertainment. Through the use of such caption, the feelings of the targeted person are put at stake (Joshua, 2020 & Budiawan & Mualafina, 2016). As per the types of cyberbullying, this meme is specifically related to denigration because gossip in the form of a meme is generated to damage the public self-image of the subject. Also, the use of the word 'goat' in the caption is associated with negative cultural

connotations. The word 'goat' refers to a foolish and idle person. It is also used for a lecherous person but this meaning seems to be inappropriate here.

Agreeing with the interpretation of the lawyer, it can be observed that this meme is the representation of cyberbullying. Using animal names for people on the basis of their looks is considered to be a personal attack. The meme-makers also know that the audience will not compliment the targeted person in a positive way. So, their words add fuel to fire. The use of such memes encourages other people to pass negative remarks in the comment section for the targeted person. According to Willard (2007), the use of the word 'brag' is also considered negative as it annoys others. These kinds of remarks affect the mental health of the person targeted. Talbert (2010) discussed a similar idea where people get affected by negative remarks and the comments which put them under mental pressure. Carney (2014) conducted a case study regarding hate speech and, for this reason, the researcher took a case from the courtroom and analyzed it pragmatically. The analysis of the researcher and decision made by the court were similar. The *Herselman v Geleba case* was held in 2007 where Herselman was accused of hate speech as he used the word 'baboon' for the other person. The court related this case to many other similar cases and declared Herselman guilty of hate speech by calling the other person 'baboon'. The researcher reached the same conclusion through the use of linguistic tools and highlighted the importance of applying linguistics methods to the legal affairs. This study is relevant here, however, the difference lies in the source of the crime. In *Herselman v Gelebacase* case, hate speech took place in face-to-face communication, while cyberbullying in the online world is the focal point of this study.

Although the recent scholarship highlights that cases of cyberbullying are increasing with emerging trends in today's world, yet the thin line between freedom of speech and cyberbullying makes it challenging to solve this mystery. It is quite obvious form the afore-mentioned case that people get engaged in negative activities and the courts are also aware of this fact. However, the problem relates to the ambiguous defining criteria of cyberbullying because it keeps on evolving exponentially. Irimba et al (2021) mention Kenya, like other countries, also lacks specific laws to identify the pragmatic force of hateful content. Human rights organizations and conventions are becoming more

aware of cyberbullying cases and they also highlight various forms of cyberbullying in their list (Rasheed, 2020). Nonetheless, this meme presents a form of cyberbullying because if the same word had been used in face-to-face interaction, the consequences would have been worst. The use of such content is considered to be a crime in both the real and the online worlds (Suler, 2004). The reason behind this is that such type of cyberbullying can cause emotional stress and anxiety in victim. Herring (2007) and Ndambaki (2010) put forward their views that it is actually the users who convert a harmless daily conversation into symbolic linguistic violence. Hannah (2002) shares a similar point of view. The scholar argues that language and violence can be linked together depending upon the use of the language by the user. Therefore, it can be stated that language itself is not part of the crime or cyberbullying, but is the users of social media who shape the language according to their intentions.

Figure 5

In this meme, the pragmeme of criticism is highlighted through comparison. The pragmatic act indicates the verdictive speech act category as the pract is based on judgment. The activity part of the pragmeme shows that it is an indirect speech act, because in an indirect tone it is being said that a thing of poor quality and looks is preferred over a beautiful and expensive one. While the textual part can be understood through inference. The pragmeme associated with the meme refers to the fact that one person is scrutinized on the basis of comparison. Reference and relevance of this pragmeme are directed towards people of showbiz highlighting the preference of an actor. The use of the metaphor BMW also contributes to the realization of the pragmeme. BMW is used as a metaphor for a beautiful woman, whereas Mehran is presented as a metaphor for someone who is ugly. Shared situational knowledge amplifies its meaning further and the audience of this meme can quickly understand the matter associated with this meme. This pragmeme is based on a recent incident related to three people from showbiz.

As per Willard's definition, the comparison done in this meme can be taken as a depiction of cyberbullying. It is a kind of offensive remark on a very personal matter of a person. People do not realize this fact that celebrities are also human beings and they need to be given due respect. Celebrities are not to be judged by the public just because of freedom of speech. This meme also reveals the denigration type of cyberbullying. This type of statement on social media can potentially affect laws of privacy rights and the

dignity of man. As far as the socio-legal sensitivity is concerned, this meme is actually a type of cyberbullying because it represents a personal attack on the person who married twice and tried to hide his new relationship with his ex-wife. Therefore, the people take keen interest in highlighting the complicated marital life of the person targeted here. Comparing celebrities or non-celebrities for the sake of mere entertainment is a serious crime that needs to be punished. Apparently words in memes appear to be harmless, but in depth analysis brings to the fore the real intentions associated with the words. Marrying someone is a very personal matter of every person, but people consider it their duty to discuss the personal affairs. The situation gets worse when it comes to the online world where hundreds of people start commenting on the personal affairs of people targeted in the memes (Dooley, Pyżalski & Cross, 2009). Besides, commenting on the marital life of a person in general and taking a wrong decision in marrying someone while divorcing the other has nothing to do with people out there. Also, using different metaphorical expressions so as to focus on the wrong decision on the part of the person is not appropriate. It is against the manners to comment on the personal life of a celebrity. The meme-creator deliberately highlights that the ex-wife of the targeted person is more valuable than the other. These are the things that affect the mental health of the members of the offline and the online worlds.

The only thing which creates confusion is the vague nature of cyberbullying cases (Dmitrievich, 2021). All over the world, there are different laws and amendments so as to resolve this issue. In 2015, the American states formed laws against bullying which explicitly included cyberbullying as well (Putri & Sudana, 2020). The basic problem with the formulation and implementation of cyberbullying is that its development is in infancy (Waseem et al, 2017). It is expected that in near future the culpable content of this nature will be handled through strong legislation. As Johanna et al (2016) state that we cannot fully understand the mind of speakers, but there are certain linguistic clues that represent the intention of the users of language. It can be argued that speech acts on social media may be analyzed more critically to uncover crimes of the language associated with them. Searle (1969) posits the same notion that words are a reflection of intentions in the mind of the speakers. There have been many attempts to understand the intentions of people related to hateful content in online and offline worlds. But only speculations are not

sufficient. There is a lack of empirical evidence in this regard as discussed by Olsson (2013). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze language critically so as to understand crimes of language efficiently (Bardici, 2012 & Wafula, 2016).

Figure 6

In this meme, pragmeme of disgust is represented. For the realization of this pragmeme, the pragmatic act is performed in the form of swearing that belongs to the category of commissive speech acts. In accordance with the activity part of pragmeme, this pragmatic act is a direct speech act whereas the textual part of pragmeme provides further details. It can easily be inferred from this pragmeme that feeling of disgust is directed towards the lady in this meme. The reference and relevance of this pragmeme indicate feminism Metaphorically, the appearance of the lady is associated with a pig in this meme. Shared situational knowledge helps the audience to relate this pragmeme of the meme to feministic ideas of this lady specifically with reference to a recent drama. The masses can understand this meme with the help of background knowledge and relate this meme to the hot debate that took place between this lady and the writer of that particular drama.

The use of the word 'pig' along with a feeling of disgust makes this meme a part of cyberbullying as per the definition provided by Willard. It belongs to the denigration type of cyberbullying. Although in some countries like Korea, China and Hawaii, 'pig' is considered to be a symbol of good fortune, yet it has many negative meanings associated with it (www.storymaps.arcgis.com). In our country, calling someone, a 'pig' has various cultural-based negative connotations. It is often referred to as filthy, ugly and something associated with extreme sexual desires. These kinds of connotations make it an offensive term and, therefore, it is considered to be a part of cyberbullying (Seo yeon's case mentioned in McCurry, 2019). It is the denigration type of cyberbullying as it reveals a kind of hatred towards the targeted person. Saengprang and Gadavanji (2021) state that

the Meriam Webster dictionary provides an additional meaning of 'pig' as a dirty, gluttonous or repulsive person. Recent reseach indicates that context is important in order to understand cyberbullying. It is evident from the context of the above-mentioned meme that the intention behind the use of this word is not to praise the person, rather it is to show feelings of hatred and disgust towards the person which makes this meme socio-legally sensitive.

Cyberbullying in this meme relates to Herselman and Geleba's case studied by Carney (2014). The scholar argues that courts solely depend on dictionary meanings and simply ignore the pragmatic meaning which is not justifiable. The same notion is favored by Coulthard (2010). It can be argued that if courts in the developed countries lack the ability to identify the crimes of language, then it is a challenging task to handle such cases in Pakistan.The difference is because of the forum on which these crimes of language are committed. However, the effects of cyberbullying on victims are similar in both cases and damage is done to their dignity (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016). In the online world, it is not possible to control everything (Suler, 2004). People cannot be stopped from sharing jokes and sensitive content with others. According to Rainville (2005), humor is represented in a vague form so that no one can understand the actual insult embedded within it. This non-stop sharing of the sensitive content motivates many people to comment and create memes to target ifferent people. Calling someone a pig on social networking site is definitely not done with the intentions of benefiting the targeted person. Even the mere word 'brag' is considered inappropriate in certain cases of careless talk (Willard, 2007).It is not done to praise the other person, and the intentions associated with the use of these words can easily be understood. This is not an appropriate way to address someone just because of some difference in opinion, and make fun of the person in an insulting way. If the court deals with cyberbullying in the offline world effectively, then such cases in the online world will also be resolved. Human rights on freedom of speech and the First Amendment in U. S. constitution protect the rights of everyone to speak up. Nevertheless, these laws also have some space for cybercrime and cyberbullying is a pertinent par of itt. However, Dmitrievich (2021) argues that there have been attempts to apply forensic diagnostic methods to extremist speech acts. The law-making authorities have tried to minimize the ambiguities related to freedom of

speech and abuse of rights. Also, it is argued that there are no universal ways to define linguistic features of verbal extremism (Dmitrievich, 2021). It can be seen that almost every country is struggling in the process of defining and identifying cyberbullying and crimes of language. For this reason, laws require some serious consideration in this regard. Kuznetsov and Olennikov (2014) have observed that incitement to hatred is vague and boundaries between independent speech act overlap with those of offense.
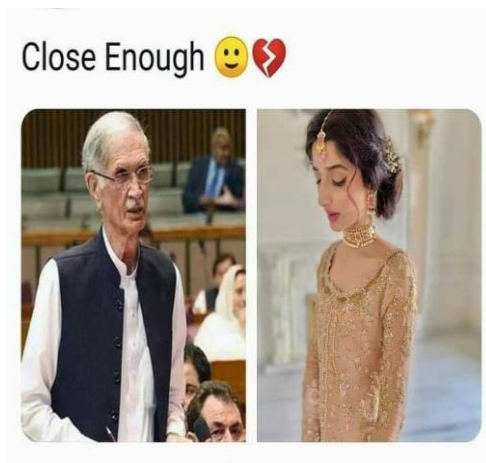
Figure 7

According to the Pragmatic Act Theory presented by Mey, the pragmeme of criticism in the form of comparison is presented in this meme. The meme creator draws similarity between the selected people. The activity part of pragmeme represents pragmatic act as a statement is made about someone. The indirect speech act is performed within this meme because the actual meaning is not conveyed directly. The textual part of this pragmeme indicates inference about the artist. The person in this meme is targeted for some negative purposes. Relevance and reference are directed towards the skinny figure of the female character. According to shared situational knowledge, the reason for targeting this actress is quite evident. There are certain set standards of beauty in showbiz and the people who lack those qualities are securitized in different ways (Mey, 2001).

Commenting on the body parts of the other people is included in cyber harassment. It is also a type of cyberbullying proposed by Willard. The context of this meme highlights the fact that this is an act of cyber harassment as the meme creator uses indirect words. The meme creator makes fun of the targeted person because of the set norms of the society regarding female body (Strinati, 2007). The female body was required to conform to the set parameters of beauty in the past (Featherstone, 1982), and now the discourses generated on this issue are prevalent in social media. As Sugiarto and Quartulaini (2020) state that memes have the potential to violate the EIT laws as part of persuasive and expressive hate speech acts. However, scholars like Anam and Hafiz (2015) state that this article of 2016 is criticized as a 'rubber article' as it fails to identify

crimes of language. Hurting people by passing negative comments on their features and body parts is painful and embarrassing in real life which causes distress and depression in victims. It sometimes leads to the suicide of the victim as well. A cyber-harassment case happened in the past when Megan Meier committed suicide in 2006 because of cyberbullying done on the social networking site' MySpace'. The person with the fake profile befriended her and later on bullied her using words like 'ugly, fat, and slut'. The female body is treated just like any 'object' and its representation is commercialized. If it does not reach the set standard of beauty, then it is questioned by other as well (Octavita & Zaimar, 2018). Society puts pressure on the females on the basis of gender discrimination (Butler 1990). Women are supposed to be in a particular form and if they fail to maintain their form or figure, they are targeted for this reason. This case shows the effect of these words on the victims to such an extent that they end up taking their lives due to depression and anxiety. Many people do not get a chance to meet celebrities in the real world, therefore, they take it as a golden opportunity to pass negative comments on them. (Suler, 2004). Internet is such a huge platform that it is really difficult to recognize the people who end up making fun of others through memes (Tokunaga, 2010). Anonymity boosts the chances of cyberbullying (Vandesbosch & Cleemput, 2008). Body shaming is not a new phenomenon in our society.

Famous people are usually scrutinized for lack of beauty standards. People are judged on the basis of their skin color which leads to racism and these practices are very much prevalent in our society. Females are also targeted because of their non-standard body shapes. Seo-yeon identified herself as a feminist and worked hard for protection against body shaming and a bill was passed after her death (McCury, 2019) which highlights the importance of efforts behind the issue. If women are fat, they are criticized by everyone so is the case with skinny ones (Muttaqin & Ambarwati, 2020). People use different slang words for such kinds of situations. These kinds of cases also happen in the online world frequently where pictures of famous people become part of everyone's discussion. If actors or actresses lack something, memes of body shaming and humiliation are created for them. It is observed that the frequency of derogatory terms is quite high in the memes created by people. (Giglioli, 1970 & Gumperz, 1972). There are plenty of slang words about body shaming on the internet and the most common phrase

used for skinny girls is 'she is flat' which directly ridicules the targeted person. This type of personal attack causes emotional pain in victims (Parks, 2013). The victims suffer mentally and are put into an inferior place by the attackers (Mills, 2010). A website (www.edition.pk) highlights the issue that cyberbullying in relation to body-shaming is becoming popular on TikTok in Pakistan. This is evident in this meme as the targeted person is compared to a skinny person. These kinds of remarks leave an impact on the mind of the targeted people and they remain under mental pressure. Some public figures talk about this issue in Pakistan as well. They spread information regarding body shaming and the way it affects mental health. Actually, this is a part of cyberbullying.

Figure 8

Here, the pragmeme of relationship with a specific person is highlighted in this meme. The pract in this meme is in the form of direct commissive speech act as a declaration is made on behalf of the subject of this meme. But the inference and relevance of this pract reveal something more than a mere declaration. There is a possibility for the public to infer this meme at a different level. It can be inferred that the character of the person with regard to his previous activities on social media sites is highlighted here. The reference here is made towards a famous social media person and relevance is made towards his activities on social media. This meme precisely focuses on this person's preference for gender in terms of relationship. As far as the voicing of this meme is concerned, the statement 'relationship ended with my wife' is capitalized so as to grasp the attention of readers. It appears as if some disaster has happened to the person. In the later part of the statement; 'her father' is highlighted with a different color. Now people usually understand the personality of this person because of the way this person presents himself on social media. Shared situational knowledge refers to the previous activities of the targeted person as well the reaction of the people towards him (Mey, 2001).

As per the definition provided by Willard (2007), it can be argued that this is a depiction of cyberbullying and more specifically it is verbal sexual harassment in which a

person's sexual orientation is highlighted through the use of a nasty comment. This kind of caption makes it part of the cyber harassment category of cyberbullying by Willard (2007). Telling somebody about their sexuality in an explicit way is not that much easy in the offline world (Suler, 2004). It is really hard to convey such sensitive messages to a person. Creators of such content live in their own world where they presume things on their own and judge other people because of their activities on social media (Suler, 2004). The non-serious attitude related to these words leads to a never-ending discussion about the targeted person and people start a wave of personal attack (Joshua, 2020). All the other factors behind this toxic disinhibition effect are relevant here also (Suler, 2004). As far as the activities on social media are concerned, it is just a common practice to post indecent picture or memes so as to humiliate others. The caption highlighted in the afore-mentioned meme is significant and serious in nature as it focuses on the ultimate end of a relationship with a woman and tying knots with the person of the same gender. It gives hints about homosexual orientation of that person. The person in reality may have nothing to do with such stuff. It is a very serious issue as the targeted person is accused of homosexuality. It is socio-legally sensitive as well as part of cyberbullying because someone is accused of being in a sexual relationship (Siroj & Subyantoro, 2019). The personal lives of the people should not be targeted by the public. The problem with memes is that they cannot be limited to certain people rather they spread to a huge number of people and this is what makes the situation worst (Baukhage, 2011). The ones who dislike some celebrity or common person promote such sensitive for the sake of mere entertainment.

Although rights of freedom of speech are protected by human rights, the rights of the dignity of every person and the rights against cyber harassment also need to be implemented by the law of the state. However, it is argued by Dalla, Virginia , Morel and Psaila (2016) that there are no legal standards yet and only 44 states include sanctions regarding cyberbullying laws (Prabowo & Saputri, 2019). Cyberbullying is treated under civil law not criminal law with few amendments (Handiyani, 2019). These kinds of remarks are punishable and, therefore, it may be expected that potentially this type of content will be considered seriously by the legislative bodies. If the same thing had been said to the person in front of him, the situation would have been different (Suler, 2004).

One of the many reasons could be our cultural context and our reaction towards gender and sex related issues. This type of attack based on sexually deviant behavior damages the character and dignity of a person within no minutes. If such verbal attacks are repeated, they may have harmful and serious effects as well (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016).
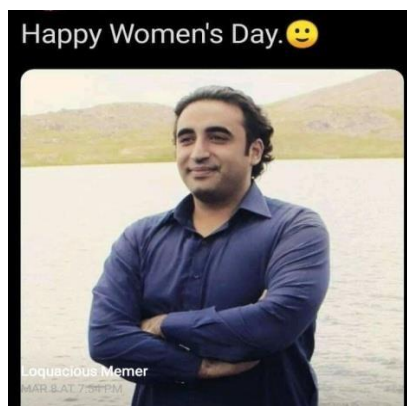
Figure 9

The situation presented through this meme is the celebration of women's day, but the purpose and intention behind it is not simple. 'Happy women's day' is a kind of pract that falls in the category of commissives which in turn specifically classifies this pract as a declaration. This is basically an indirect speech act in which the text creator hits the targeted person tactfully. The textual part of the meme is analyzed as an inference. It can be inferred that women's day is not a very important day as it is not celebrated officially, yet it is celebrated on media and social media sites. This meme refers to a politician whose ways of speaking and body language are a hot topic for social media members. Shared situational knowledge provides the basis for understanding this meme. The Pakistani people keep discussing this political leader for his unique style of speaking. As he does not even know how to speak Urdu, so people take pleasure in ridiculing his peculiar speaking style. Hence, it is not difficult for the Pakistani people to understand why this particular person is referred to on women's day. The actual use of this pragmeme is not to celebrate women's day but to make fun of the targeted person here in disguise of this pragmatic act (Mey, 2001). According to Willard's definition, this type of cyberbullying can be understood in terms of discrimination, precisely gender discrimination. In the cultural context of our society, there are specific ways to represent the gender of someone according to the demands of culture and society. The word 'women' is not derogatory or hateful, however, what makes it offensive is the context of this meme and the way the creator of this meme intentionally uses this particular caption for the political leader here. As the subject of this meme is a politician, therefore, people

consider it their due right to say anything about him for the sake of political criticism. But this political criticism is unjustifiable because the personal traits of the political leader are highlighted here. The context of this meme clearly indicates that it is not mere political criticism, rather it is a personal attack on the gender of the person.

People may disagree with the policies and acts of a politician and his party for multiple reasons, but the attack on someone's personality through any means is not appropriate and justifiable. According to Suler's online disinhibition effect (2004), the above-mentioned meme is a source of cyberbullying because it provides people a chance to attack a person's personality and spread hatred through the use of certain negative expressions. In relevance to the lawyer's interpretation, this meme is a part of cyberbullying. Politicians and celebrities are, no doubt, public figures, but as human beings, they still have privacy rights and other human rights because they are also part of the state. People start criticizing others on the basis of specific gender roles. The slightest change in gender roles triggers people to target others (Butler, 1990) and similar is the case with this meme. Gender identity is used as a platform for bullying people in the offline and online worlds (Putri & Satvikadewi, 2017). The political leaders can be punished for political reasons, however, attack on their personal life and personality traits on social media is a serious issue that needs the attention of human rights organizations. Wagner (2019) argues that the problem lies here because there are no legal instruments for identifying cyberbullying. Nocentiti, et al (2020) mention that in countries like China, Spain and Germany cyberbullying is not directly addressed in laws as domestic violence which means crimes of a similar kind are given much attention if done in the offline world. It is also said that there is a gap between official definition and practical application in the matter of cyberbullying which worsens the situation (Mishna, et al, 2010). It is common observation that online crimes are not considered crimes by the legislative bodies in Pakistan. It is the pressing necessity to take serious actions against online crimes of language committed by the meme-creators.

Guess the animal?

Figure 10

In this meme, the pragmeme of name calling is prominent and the speech act belongs to the category of expositive speech acts. The activity part of pragmeme shows that it is an indirect speech act because the person is criticized through the use of implicit words. As far as the textual part is concerned, the inference here is that someone is called an animal. The reference and relevance of this pragmeme are directed towards a famous actor. Voicing in this pragmeme pertains to the use of red color as it indicates the animal being dangerous (Ajayi, 2021). Shared situational knowledge is well known to the users of social media (Mey, 2001). Usually, the contextual meaning behind the creation of such memes is associated with the previous activities of the targeted people. As per the definition given by Willard (2007), it is considered cyberbullying because the use of the word 'animal' highlights negative attributes related to the person. It is not a severe kind of cyberbullying like death threats or harassment. Rather it is a form of cyberbullying where a term is used offensively. The problem with the content on social media is that it becomes viral within few minutes and people start commenting on posts, tweets and memes. They spread misinformation about the targeted person in no time (Cheng et al, 2020). At this point, the content creators invite so many other people to damage the reputation of someone and hurt their dignity. Once the arguments start, there is no end to them. There have been cases in different regions where celebrities suffered from depression and anxiety caused by cyberbullying on social media. Not to mention all, South Korean actress Sulli took her life at the age of 25 and a prominent reason behind

her death was considered to be cyberbullying (www.nytimes.com). The actress was dealing with hate comments, harsh criticism and personal attacks which eventually brought an end to her life. It is important to notice that although celebrities become public figures but still their human rights and fundamental rights provided by the state are protected and they have the right to fight against cyberbullying and infringement of privacy rights.

By interpreting this meme in the context of socio-legal sensitivity, it can be observed that comparing someone to animals is not a sensible job. The reason behind this is the word 'animal' that has multiple negative connotations and it can be used as a representation of an uncivilized person (Mishna et al, 2010). Recently, the U.S. president was condemned because he used the term 'animal' for immigrants. This comment infuriated the masses and he had to face harsh criticism (www.vox.com). It is understood that animal name calling or the term 'animal' is not considered appropriate culturally. Here again reference can be made to 'baboon' case because that also presents animal name calling (Carney, 2014). The cultural meanings behind such words are important to understand. Therefore; the use of this particular word for the person in this meme is not intended to give a positive vibe rather viewers of this meme construct a negative meaning instantly while decoding the meme (Kiela et al, 2020). Even if there are no negative thoughts about a person in minds of people, they are forced to think negatively about the targeted person due to such content (Klein, 2018). Although these words appear to be harmless but, in reality, they affect the person badly. Even if people have conflicts with others or differences of opinion, there are other ways to express one's opinion respectfully.

Figure 11

The pragmeme of negative comment on the gender of the targeted person is obvious in this meme. The pract in this meme is in the form of a direct speech act which says that the future of the country is in hands of a 'gay'. The category of speech acts to which it belongs is exercitive speech acts because the pract is nominating and indicating someone as a prediction of future, but the intention behind this nomination is negative in nature. The textual part of this pragmeme includes inference and the inference. It can be inferred that something about the future of Pakistan is being predicted here. Reference is made towards a politician who is going to change future of this country and nation. The pract is quite relevant in the sense that the next represetatative will come into action and save the country form destruction. Voicing of this pract refers to the use of the word 'gays' that starts with a capital letter so as to focus on the reference. Shared situational knowledge contributes to understanding. People already have a stock of knowledge regarding the way he uses body language and the way he speaks on public forums. This contextual knowledge provides people with an instant inference of what is being said in the meme. The meme makers are taking advantage of this shared situational knowledge as it provides them a lot of content and opportunity to make memes. They may be ignorant of the fact that mere fun, humor and mockery can spread socio-legally sensitive information about someone's character (Rainville, 2005). It is quite sensitive in nature to highlight someone's sexual orientation on public forums (Mey, 2001).

In accordance with the definition of cyberbullying by Willard, this is a type of cyberbullying because the use of the word 'gay' is associated with many cultural and contextual meanings. On the basis of the definition, it can be understood that this is the case of cyber harassment as well as discrimination as mentioned above in another meme of a similar kind. The use of the term 'gay' provides contextual meaning in the form of humiliation of the targeted person. It can also be understood that this is a personal attack on the gender of the politician which makes it different from political criticism (Putri & Satvikadewi, 2017). In real life, it is not always easy to use derogatory terms for any person because people know about the instant resposnse as well as other consequences (Vandesbosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). But in the online world, there is no limit to meme makers and they keep highlighting and interpreting different issues according to their own perception (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012). In reality, people who know each other may cut jokes regarding each other and there is nothing wrong in it, but in the online world ridiculing someone is not a simple matter rather it becomes a public matter and numberless people come to know about targeted person. Meme makers also want to become popular in no time and, for this reason, they post or upload senisitve material for increasing the number of their followers. Such personal criticism is not justified whether the person is a politician or not (Tokunaga, 2010). The use of the terms that have something to do with the sexuality or gender of the other person cannot be counted as mere fun. Different acts and sections regarding human rights conventions are against this type of cyberbullying. Also, in Pakistan, there are acts and sections of acts related to cyber harassment. It is expected that the fuzzy, grey area between freedom of speech and cyberbullying on social media will become clear in near future because of the emerging cases of cyberbullying.

Figure 12

By applying Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory, it becomes obvious that the pragmeme in this meme relates to defamation. It basically focuses on the wedding of the targeted person. The meme presents pract of declaration and it is direct as well which makes it fall in the category of commissives. The textual part of the meme starts with inference. The social media users can infer that a declaration is made about the marriage of the people mentioned in the meme. The reference is made towards a politician and a famous tiktoker. The relevance of this meme can be understood through the activities of the tiktoker. Voicing in this meme can be observed through bold caption at the beginning of the meme. Shared situational knowledge generates meanings because of the videos the tiktoker uploads and the kind of information she shares. People can understand as to why this particular person is targeted here because they have stock of previous knowledge about her activities. Therefore, with the help of the prior knowledge, it is easy to grasp the meaning (Mey, 2001).

In accordance with Willard's definition and types of cyberbullying, the content in this meme is the representation of defamation. The reason behind this is the fact that a false statement in the form of libel is used which means defamation in the written form. This type of rumor can harm the targeted people emotionally, morally and socially. Their public self-image gets damaged because of the never-ending gossip about them. Defamation on social media takes place due to innumerable factors. According to Silver (2017), publication is considered important for defaming the targeted person because

publication includes three criteria to be fulfilled. Firstly, there should be a person to give a statement. Secondly, statement should be direrted towards people and thirdly it should be false. The researcher also mentioned some of the cases regarding defamation to highlight its effects on victims. She mentioned case of Oprah Winfrey who was sued because of a false statement about the disease in cows on a show. Similarly, Courtney Love, an actress, had to pay a fine because of a libel. She used a false statement for a designer. She used the words 'nasty lying hosebag thief' for the designer. She emphasized the fact that if someone repeats the false statement, he/she is also considered to be the culprit. In this sense, it can be understood that memes are also repeated and made viral within hours on almost every social media site.

Analyzing this meme from the point of view of cyberbullying, it can be stated that this meme projects false kind of information which can damage the reputation of the targeted person (Silva et al, 2013). Online interactants include the meme maker and the people who comment on the prevailing issues. It is difficult for the users of social media to behave in a blunt manner in front of the targeted people, that is why, they prefer online forums to give vent to their negative thoughts and feelings. A similar kind of meme was made about another famous personality for targeting his marriage with this tiktoker and false information was spread. In reaction to this, the person concerned filed a complaint in the cybercrime wing of FIA (www.geo.tv.com).

It is clear from the afore-mentioned case that stuff like this is part of cybercrime in general and cyberbullying in particular. The example here is proof of the way people react to their humiliation in the online world. It can be included that this particular meme is meant to spread false information and damage the reputation of the people highlighted in it. The socio-legal sensitivities related to this meme are objectionable and punishable. It is, therefore, necessary to take immediate actions against such cybercrimes.
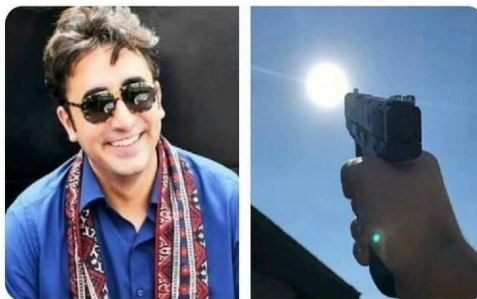
Is the sun bothering you my queen
♥

Figure 13

The pragmeme in this meme refers to some troublesome situation. As far as the categories of speech acts are concerned, this pragmatic act belongs to expositive category as a statement is obvious here. The activity part of this pragmeme represents it as an indirect speech act because the person is labelled as a woman through the use of indirect words. Inference from the textual part of the pragmeme indicates that a person is being ridiculed on the basis of gender. Reference and relevance of this pragmeme provide additional meaning as the targeted person is insulted in an indirect way. On the basis of shared situational knowledge, it is not difficult for social media users to grasp the idea behind this pragmatic act. The inflammatory comments or personal attacks on social media forums is a common practice in our country. The targeted person in this meme is insulted time and again peculiar way of speaking. Such criticism is mostly towards gender (Mey, 2001).

Willard's definition appears to be useful her. Actually, it is the representation of cyberbullying or cyber harassment. The memes of a similar kind have already been discussed. This meme also devalues and hurts the dignity of the targeted person. The meme maker uses a different word 'queen' for the person. We can also observe gender discrimination behind the surface level of the caption. The context of this meme makes it obvious that terms related to gender and cyber harassment are not meant to spread positive energy. Interpreting this meme in the light of the lawyer's guideline, it can be understood that it is not a mere joke, rather it is an insult for the targeted person. A male

person is highlighted here for his feminine qualities. It is, in fact, an example of personal attack (Joshua, 2020). The politician in this meme is ridiculed time and again because of his ways of speaking and actions but the negative behavior on the part of the public is not justifiable at all. Words appear to be harmful when they are used and manipulated on purpose. This unfair manipulation makes the words socio-legally sensitive (Parks, 2013). The meme makers do not spread factual information about celebrities, politicians and other famous people through the use of memes. Rather, they do everything intentionally and this is very obvious from their choice of words and tactful use of expressions (Adek & Rahmi, 2020). They know what they create and how it is going to affect the public. The creation of the memes is dependent upon shared situational knowledge.

Figure 14

In this meme, the pragmeme of shooting someone is obvious. The pragmatic act denotes the category of commissive speech acts because it is in form of a threat. The activity part of this pragmeme illustrates that it as a direct speech act. The textual part of the pragmeme generates further meanings associated with this meme. Inference can be drawn that some negative desire is associated with the meme. The meme focuses on the killing of the targeted person. The pragmeme highlights the fact that the meme creator wants to kill the lady because of the arguments that were given by this lady on feminism. Reference is directed towards a famous feminist woman and relevance refers to the recent incidents that happened because of a drama against feminism. Shared situational knowledge relates to the fierce arguments between feminist and anti-feminist personalities (Mey, 2001). In light of the definition of cyberbullying by Willard, it can be observed that the content in this meme is the representation of cyberbullying because the subject is threatened. Such memes create chaos among people on social media and a simple meme turns out to be harmful in nature (Joshua, 2020). Also, the use of the word 'alien' shows the intention that the meme creator simply wants to humiliate the target.

Feminism is a big issue in our society and the meme particularly focuses on a related issue The issue spread like a fire in the jungle and there was a bombardment of memes on social media sites (Irimba et al, 2021). The creation of memes provides many people to give their views on the burning issues. Even if the threats are given to the

targeted person in a non-serious way, they are still considered threats. Human rights conventions and legislation in every country provide the citizens protection against death threats. The problem in identifying cyberbullying is because of its covert nature in some cases and especially in the case of social media sites (Irimba et al, 2021). It is not always easy to separate spiteful content and ill will behind texts from freedom of speech. Attacks on someone's dignity and right to live are not protected by the fundamental rights of people across the globe (Sugiarto & Quartulaini, 2020). This meme can be interpreted in the context of socio-legal sensitivity because of its negative content. Mere ignorance on the part of meme makers can hurt someone's dignity in no time. Although people have the right to freedom of speech and they can express what they feel on various issues but this freedom has certain limits which cannot be crossed (Adek & Rahmi, 2020). Expressing a desire to kill someone on social media sites is a serious issue, in fact.

Figure 15

In this meme, the pragmeme of complimenting someone is the focal point. The first pract in this meme is in the form of a statement. The second practs relates to the act of swearing. The indirect speech acts fall in the category of commissive speech acts. The subject of this meme is insulted by using witty caption. The textual part of this pragmeme can be analyzed with the help of inference. The possible inference that can be made is that a person is confessing what he has done. The reference and relevance of this meme are directed towards a politician and his usual ways of answering people. Voicing of the pragmeme can be analyzed on the basis of the caption that is written in the form of paired conversation. The word 'asshole' is bold and it is written in bigger font because it is used as a key point in this meme which highlights the basic purpose for the creation of this meme. It is also capitalized to signify its importance in the caption. The element of metapragmatic joke is related to voicing. Shared situational knowledge helps to understand memes in a better way as people already know the reason for targeting a particular person. The politician is targeted here through the use of a swear word and the people already know how he gives response to media-related persons (Mey, 2001).

Cyberbullying is obvious in this meme as per the definition provided by Willard. An offensive swear word is used for the target of this meme. 'Asshole' has many negative cultural connotations associated with it and it is not appropriate to address someone with this offensive term either in a direct or indirect way (Siroj & Subyantoro, 2019). The use of a swear word in this meme clearly illustrates that it is a part of cyberbullying. Such kinds of expressions have their legal implications. The meme starts with a caption which indicates as if something serious is going to be highlighted in the final section of the meme. In this tactful way, the person is successfully targeted. It is obvious from pragmatic acts used in this meme that the intention of the meme creator is not to raise a wave of praise for the victim. Rather, this meme promotes negativity towards the person (Purwaningrum & Sudana, 2020). The use of swear words along with manipulative use of language is enough to damage the reputation of a person. It is a challenging task to stop the flow of such negative memes on social media platforms. According to the Gratification Theory by Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) people instantly react towards these things.

There are chances of legal actions against such type of damage done to someone's dignity rights. It is evident from the meme that it is not mere political criticism as it is a personal attack on the person (Judhita, 2015 & Wadipalapa, 2015). The laws defined for the protection of human rights by international organizations as well as states are required to create a balance between freedom of speech and reputational and dignity interests of the masses.. The reason behind the creation of such insulting memes is obvious. Traces of cyberbullying can be found in in such memes (Kuznetsov et al, 2014). Therefore, it is expected that the sensitive nature of such content on social media will be tackled through adaptations in the laws.

LQ is the only team which despite
having 3 Johnny sins, still gets
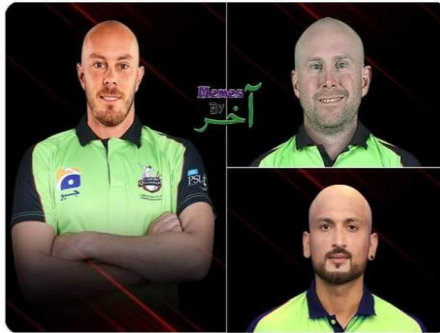dominated by opposite team

Figure 16

The pragmeme of failure in performance is obvious in this meme. A judgment is passed based on comparison and it is interesting to note that three people are compared to one person. The comparison is usually drawn in both positive and negative ways, but here it is quite negative in nature. The pract in this meme is in the form of a statement relating it to the expositive category of speech acts. Also the activity part of pragmeme is expressed indirectly. The textual part of the pragmeme indicates various elements. Inference can be drawn that failure of performance is depicted in this meme. Reference is made towards team members of the cricket team and a porn star. This meme is basically related to the performance of the team members and they are compared to a porn star because of their appearance. Shared situational knowledge about this meme refers to the contextual information. Social media users confidently comment on the performance of the team members without any hesitation. A kind of metaphoric comparison is also made here. The possible motivating factors behind this meme can be the performance of cricketers. This metaphoric comparison is not simply a source of entertainment, rather it clearly damages the reputation and self-respect of the people highlighted in the meme (Mey, 2001).

Considering Willard's definition, it can be observed that this meme is a depiction of cyberbullying where an offensive reference is used for the subjects of this meme so as to make them feel embarrassed and degrade them in eyes of the masses. Denigration type of cyberbullying is obvious in this meme because the intention behind the use of an

offensive reference is to humiliate the target of this meme (Putri, Sudana & Bachari, 2020). The thing to note here is that three people are targeted through a meme and compared with a porn star. . This comparison serves as a source of criticism and mockery (Joshua, 2020). The problem with memes is that people keep on sharing and spreading misinformation and there is no end to this process. One person is ridiculed as well as criticized by thousands of people (Saifullah, 2016 & Krisdahayn, 2018). Therefore, it is not a surprise for the person to understand the various ways by which the self-respect is targeted. The targeted people may not like the comparison drawn by the meme maker. Such negative activities motivate other people to express their opinions related to the issue (Handayani, 2019). There is a possibility that people might forget the poor performance of cricketers but their comparison to a porn star will not go unnoticed. If people are compared to the ones involved in sexual activities, they start fighting and arguing (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016), but when it comes to online platforms and especially memes the same people do not hesitate to damage the public image of famous people (Vandesbosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

The context of the meme and the caption used in it are socio-legally sensitive in nature. It is not appropriate to call someone a porn star in either direct or indirect ways. There is a possibility that human rights of dignity and fundamental rights defined by states take notice of this type of cyberbullying because an offensive reference is used to address the subjects of this meme so as to attack their personal lives.

Figure 17

In this meme,the pragmeme of vacation/honeymoon is focused on. The activity part of pragmeme indicates that this is an indirect declarative speech act as it belongs to the commisssive category of speech acts. Subjects of this meme are presented as a couple through the use of indirect words. People can infer that the statement in this meme is about a person who is having fun with other people. Usually, such statements are made if someone is going on a honeymoon as Maldives is a famous place preferred by couples for honeymoon (www.milaidhoo.com). The pract of this pragmeme is relevant as it is related to the usual family trips. Voicing of this pract relates to the use of capitalized letters as well as changed color for two names to highlight the significance of their reference in the meme. Shared situational knowledge reveals the attitude of the public towards these two people. Both of them belong to different parties and people keep on creating memes on them. In this meme, the caption portrays them as a couple spending time together on a tour. Yet another reference to the prime minister is highlighted to express his support towards the couple mentioned (Mey, 2001).

According to the definition by Willard, the content of this meme is considered a representation of cyberbullying because the context of this meme shows that sexual harassment is involved in it. This sexual harassment is in form of a nasty and mean type of message delivered to multiple people. It is not political criticism because it has nothing

to do with the political agendas and activities of the political leaders, rather it is a personal attack as they are accused of culturally and morally deviant sexual orientation. A similar kind of situation is also found in memes mentioned earlier. Different websites such as (www.travelgreatness.com) have defined Maldives as a place famous for honeymoon and dating purposes. The specific mention of this place is a proof that social media users are accusing them of being couple. The caption in this meme also has a kind of defamation in the form of libel because a false statement is provided to the public about the subjects of this meme. In this context, it seems as if two people are supported by the third one which makes it sensitive content. From the perspective of legal sensitivity, this meme has its legal implications because through this meme the targeted people are accused of being a couple and this thing is portrayed through memes as a source of mockery. Such kinds of remarks damage the reputation of public figures and with the passage of time people start assuming that these things do exist in reality as well. Apparently, the statement looks harmless but after thorough analysis of the pragmeme with its situation and elements, it becomes obvious that this meme damages the dignity of people. The politicians here are presented asif they are involved in an incestuous relationship and yet they are supported by higher authorities. For the proper understanding of the meaning associated with this pragmeme, the situation and intentions behind words are equally important (Milner, 2012). The situation in this meme is created in alignment with shared situational knowledge about these politicians.

Talking about sexual behavior and orientation of people is a personal attack which makes it part of cyberbullying (Willard, 2007). Human rights and fundamental laws of states provide every person rights of dignity. It is expected that when dignity, self-respect and reputation of people are socially and morally challanged (Dalla et al, 2016), legislation may take action against bullies and protect the victim from mental issues as well as self-harm.

When uh Love Nokia 3310 more than Iphone 11 pro 🙏😂

Figure 18

The pragmeme of comparison between good and bad is obvious in this meme. Pragmatic act in the form of statement can be observed here and it belongs to the expositive speech act category. The activity part of prameme refers to an indirect speech act. It can be inferred from the textual part of the pragmeme that the artist is being ridiculed because of his choice of life partner and he is insulted in an indirect way because people comment on his ex-wife as beautiful and nice while his second wife as something invaluable. Reference and relevance are directed towards three people from showbiz and this pragmeme is related to a personal matter of their life. Metaphorically, both the ladies are compared to mobile phones as per their qualities. Shared situational knowledge about this pragmeme refers to the way people think about this artist's choice of life partner (Mey, 2001)

Considering Willard's definition it can be stated that the comparison drawn in this meme can be considered as a depiction of cyberbullying. It is a kind of offensive remark related to a very personal matter of a person. Being a celebrity does not render a person of basic human rights of dignity and privacy (Dmitrievich, 2021). People who do right or wrong in their married life are not to be judged by the public just because of freedom of speech. This meme also reveals the denigration type of cyberbullying. The statements of this type on social media can potentially invoke laws of privacy rights and dignity of man (Kiela et al, 2020). By interpreting this meme from the perspective of socio-legal

sensitivity, the meme can be considered as a way of cyberbullying because it is representing a personal attack and the person who got married twice did not expose his relationship with his ex-wife. Therefore, it is not possible for the public to understand real facts related to their lives (Tokunaga, 2010). Comparing people either celebrities or non-celebrities with things for the purpose of highlighting their bad or negative traits is something very serious in nature (Kiela et al, 2020). Words in memes appear to be harmless on the surface level but in depth analysis brings to the fore the intentions behind them (Handayani, 2019). Marrying someone is a very personal business of every person and people do mind when other people discuss their personal affairs. The situation gets worst when it comes to the online world where not one or two rather hundreds of people start commenting on the personal affairs of people represented (Jaishwal, 2020). Besides, commenting on the wrong choice in marrying someone while divorcing the other has nothing to do with people out there. Also, it seems inappropriate to use different metaphorical expressions so as to focus on the wrong choice of that person. It sounds indecent to comment on a person's life that his ex-wife was more valuable and the other is cheaper. These are the things that affect the mental health of people, be it offline or online world (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).

Social media users have the advantage of commenting on others because in the offline world it is not possible not to react (Suler, 2004). In the offline world, attack on authoritative people does not go unchecked and people who bully other authoritative people have to face consequences (Suler, 2004). In depth interpretation of this meme with reference to socio-legal sensitivity highlights the fact that this meme is the representation of cyberbullying. The reason pertain to the use of metaphoric expressions so as to humiliate targeted people. Firstly, there is no need to make memes on the personal affairs of people especially when they have nothing to do with politics or any other agenda. Secondly, it is not the duty of people to decide who is better than whom in terms of partnership. If someone has married a person and left the other, then it has nothing to do with common people. However, in this meme, it can be observed that a judgment is made about the choice of that person and remarks are also mentioned about his poor choice. His choice is metaphorically compared to good and poor quality mobile phones. This kind of

commentary on others cannot be considered part of freedom of speech rather it is cyberbullying (Saengprang & Gadavanij, 2021).

Figure 19

In this meme, the pragmeme of sexual act is represented and the pragmatic act belongs to the category of expositive speech acts because it is in the form of a statement. The activity part of pragmeme shows that it is an indirect speech act. The textual part of this pragmeme begins with an inference. It can be inferred that a mean-spirited relationship between two politicians is portrayed. Reference and relevance of pragmeme are directed towards two politicians. This meme is related to the recent events. It is a common practice to present these politicians as a couple. However, shared situational knowledge provides an instant guideline to understanding this meme (Mey, 2001). Recently, these two politicians were highlighted as a couple on social media sites and some people used demeaning ideas to damage their reputation by attack their personal lives.

In light of Willard's definition, this meme contains content that is not appropriate because sexual orientation of the targeted person is questioned here. Both these politicians are portrayed as a couple on social media sites which is inappropriate as far as cyber harassment is concerned. The phrase 'not coming slow' is not used in a positive way, rather it is used in a very negative sense. In terms of socio-legal sensitivity, the pragmatic act used in this meme depicts the negative intentions of the meme maker (Ali, 2020). The pragmatic act reveals how two politicians are portrayed as a couple and their incestuous relationship is portrayed through the power of imagination. This is not an appropriate way to target the personal lives of others. Memes of this kind urge other

people to think in the same way (Judhita, 2015). It cannot be taken as freedom of speech because it has nothing to do with the political affairs of politicians, rather it is a personal attack and their imaginary sexual relationship is represented as a fact (Henderson, 2017). These kinds of memes damage the reputation and dignity of people on a public platform where unlimited people participate in insulting others supported by shared memes (Handayani, 2019).

Human rights protected by the state are expected to discourage such practices which are very common on social media sites. People should not be given permission to question the character of any person. Picturizing people as a couple and mentioning their socially deviant sexual behavior make their character suspicious in the eyes of public (Willard, 2007). This is the point where the dignity of the targeted people and feelings of self-respect are hurt (Wadipalapa, 2015). From the context of this meme, it can be observed that the speech act is not used for political criticism, rather it is a personal attack. It is quite necessary that issues of this kind must be considered seriously by legislation and appropriate actions must be taken against such type of cyberbullying (Putri et al, 2020).

Two dustbins in one frame! 🙌

Figure 20

The pragmeme in this meme is about useless and dirty things. This meme basically insults the targeted person. The category of speech acts is expositive as it can be seen that the pragmatic act is in form of a statement. Taking into consideration the activity part of pragmeme, it appears to be an indirect speech act. As far as the textual part is concerned, inference can be made as a person is called a dustbin. However; reference and relevance of pragmeme are directed towards a prominent personality of Pakistan. Metaphorically a person is called a dustbin which can have many interpretations. Shared situational knowledge explains how a person is picturized in our society (Mey, 2001). In terms of the definition provided by Willard, the word 'dustbin' has certain cultural negative associations, therefore, the caption of this meme falls in the denigration category of cyberbullying. 'Dustbin' is most often associated with 'trash' and it is considered offensive and in some contexts extremely derogatory (www.vocabulary.com & www.dictionary.com). The context of this meme makes it obvious that use of this word is done for insulting as well as degrading someone on a public platform. Such types of comments lack respect for the targeted person. In fact, such comments the damage dignity of the targeted person.

In accordance with interpretation of the lawyer, there can be many negative meanings associated with the word 'dustbin' and remarks of this type cannot be included in political criticism. The difference between insulting someone in person and in online platforms is that in face-to-face fights, arguments or insults the interaction remains

limited to a few people or sometimes even between two participants; speaker and hearer (Suler, 2004). However, insulting someone on online platforms becomes a widespread phenomenon within a few minutes and many people become part of this humiliating behavior (Dooley et al, 2009). Another drawback of online insult is that one word used in memes or posts can urge other meme makers to do the same and hence in this way a person is targeted again and again (Hariani & Riadi, 2017). So, it turns out to be a vicious cycle that never ends. Such humiliating words or expression damage other people's dignity in one way or the other. Therefore, use of derogatory terms is part of cyberbullying because of socio-legal sensitivity. If a real life situation is considered in the same context, the consequences may be faced on the spot (Nocentini et al, 2009). The reason behind it is that people usually do not tolerate any form of insult in real life contexts and they react to it either verbally or non-verbally depending upon the situation (Suler, 2004). It has been observed that many a time people start fighting with each other. These fights range from mere arguments to physical abuse (Tokunaga, 2010). The derogatory and offensive words make the situation worst because people become more aggressive due to the use of indecent words. It can be assumed that targeted people of online world come across such content, their dignity is hurt and they become emotionally disturbed (Siroj & Subyantoro, 2019). Sometimes celebrities and other public figures react quite angrily and avenge the people on social media (Adek & Rahimi, 2020). It does not matter whether people get a chance to react or not, the basic thing to understand is that people from anywhere should not be bullied. The behavior of this type is not protected by human rights as well as legislation of respective states.

Figure 21

Here, the pragmeme of comparison is quite noticeable. The caption in this meme is in the form of a direct speech act which is also commissive (swearing, insulting) in a broader sense and fulfills the activity part of the pragmeme. The textual part of this pragmeme starts with inference. It can easily be inferred through this meme that the presence of the corrupt leader affects the party members as well. This meme refers to a popular party leader and his party member. Again this meme relates to the prevailing political turmoil and prevailing issues. The element of voicing in this meme is presented in the form of a black colored main caption along with a sign of hundred percent certainty. Taking into account the shared situational knowledge, it is not difficult for the Pakistani people to understand this meme. They make sense of this meme on the basis of their previous experiences with different political parties. This background knowledge makes it easier for them to understand the meme. Therefore, the meme creators are not required to describe the whole story to the people. Even the use of a short caption may convey the whole story to the people. Resultantly, the people start reacting towards such content. Metaphorically speaking, these two political figures are compared to 'shit' and the speech act or pract of swearing is highlighted here (Mey, 2001).

According to the definition provided by Willard, it can be observed that the denigration type of cyberbullying is involved in this meme. The offensive and derogatory

terms are used in the caption of this meme which makes it socio-legally sensitive. These words are not appropriate for anyone out there. Such kinds of derogatory terms are part of cyberbullying (Willard, 2007) and victims can go against such type of careless and socio-legally sensitive language (Costello et al, 2016). Some websites define 'shit' as offensive, derogatory as well a slang term and its use is not encouraged in any form of discourse (www.toppandigital.com). This offensive term, like many other terms, has negative cultural connotations across cultures. Calling someone 'shit' is insulting and its meaning can easily be understood by anyone. Such words are uttered intentionally so as to devalue the other person morally and socially. Similarly, the offensive and derogatory term 'fuck' is inappropriate, especially with regard to the context. Although its use has become common over the centuries, it has many negative meanings associated with it (www.quora.com). It is frequently used in a wide range of contexts. Nonetheless, the understanding the meaning of this term is absurd and controversial at times. Although U.S. Supreme Court gives protection to this term 'fuck' under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, however, controversies still exist to this day across states (www.conversation.com).

According to Hargrave (2000), 'fuck' is the third most offensive word in Britain. The Canadian Press also ranked it as the third most vulgar word and its use is prohibited especially by media persons. In Australia and the Unites States of America, use of indecent and disorderly language in public is charged with a fine and imprisonment. In Pakistan, a similar kind of situation is described in section 504 of the Pakistan Penal Code. Intentional use of swear words to provoke others is considered a crime. A case was held in 2015 because of the use of this term in a rally in Sydney. Catherine Rose, one of the members of the party 'Community Action Against Homophobia (CAAH)' used the term 'fuck off' for the opponent party. Two other people from the same group, Patrick Wright and Holcombe used 'fuckers' and 'fuck Fred Nile' for the opponent parties (www.conversation.com). The case was taken to the courtroom because the police arrested them on account of the use of offensive language for the opponents. The case was dismissed because of the absurd nature of this term, however, it was claimed that it depends on the context to a great extent. There also happened another case in 1968 where an American person, Paul Cohen, was imprisoned because he wore a jacket in the

courthouse with the term 'Fuck the Draft' written on it and the case was again taken to the U.S. Supreme Court (https://theconversation.com).

Taking into account the lawyer's interpretation as well as the arguments mentioned above, the meme illustrates the fact that politicians cannot be criticized through the use of foul language just on the basis of political conflicts and freedom of speech. Although political criticism is allowed but the use of offensive language is beyond the limits of political criticism (Putri et al, 2020). Quibbling about the behavior of some political leader is not objectionable but using slang expressions with their names is troublesome. There are many factors that motivate people to create such kind of stuff (Costello et al, 2016). The ubiquitous reason behind the creation and propagation of such memes is simply to humiliate the targeted people. For this reason, harsh and blunt comments are used by the people to target and humiliate the person (Putri & Satvikadewi, 2017). The effect of these memes can be seen in the comment section where people as well as the meme creators enjoy the situation (Peterson & Densley, 2017). The mere ignorance on part of meme creators damages the reputation of other people and the point to ponder is that they do not even realize the effect that such memes have on the targeted people. There is a possibility that if people do not make such memes, they may not have a chance to spread negativity everywhere (Kemp, 2017).

When u have fucked railway
system and PM didn't ask you for
resign coz u know he fucked the
Economy

Figure 22

The pragmeme in this meme is about the destruction of the economy of Pakistan. The meme maker uses a compliment to highlight this destruction and relates this destrcution to a famous polotician. According to Mey's Speech Act Theory, the activity part of this pragmeme indicates that the pragmatic act is an indirect one and it relates to the commissive speech act category because of the act of swearing. The textual part of the pragmeme foregrounds its actual meaning. It can be inferred that the political activities of the politicians are considered to be destructive for the public. Although there is nothing wrong in it as the people judge politicians for their political propaganda and policies, but the use of indecent terms is objectionable here. Refernce and relevance of this pragmeme refer to the sexual activity on the part of the politicians whereas shared situational knowledge indicates the major reason for using this indecent word (Mey, 2001). By relating this meme to Willard's concept of cyberbullying, it can be observed that the use of the word 'fuck' is controversial. Although this term is accepted because of its excessive use in daily lives, however, it is still considered offensive and vulgar in many states (www.quora.com). As it is a derogatory and vulgar term, it can be put in the category of denigration cyberbullying (Willard, 2007). The use of this offensive term makes this meme socio-legally sensitive because human rights and laws stated in the constituition of Pakistan do not protect the use of derogatory terms.

Quibbling about the political acitivites of a politician is not objectionable, but using slang expressions for them is problematic in nature. There are many ways in which

a person can be criticized, be it a politician or any other person (Irimba et al, 2021). However, the issue becomes socio-legal sensitive when people use offenaice terms for the targeted people. These issues or problems are common in the online world, but it is difficult for the people to use such offensive terms in the offline world because the consequences are obvious and unavoidable (Vandesbosch & Cleemput, 2008). They may end up fighting with each other. It also happens that a fight starts with derogatory expressions and leads to fierce reactions and severe outcomes (Suler, 2004).

Figure 23

The pragmeme of success in an evil task is the focal point of this meme. The pragmeme refers to the act of complementing a politician . The pract in this meme is the representation of a direct speech act. A declarative statement is there, therefore, it falls in the category commissive speech acts. The speech act of swearing can also be observed in this meme. The textual part of pragmeme represents an inference that the meme is about success in achieving some target. But this achievement is targeted in a sarcastic way. Reference and relevance are directed towards the ex-prime minister and his activities. The element of voicing is associated with the headline format of caption (Ajayi, 2021). Firstly, a short caption, 'mission successful', is given in bold at the very beginning of the meme. In the final section of the caption, capital letters are used to enhance the importance of the statement that is used in this meme. Shared situational knowledge of this meme is related to the current political scenario.

This meme is related to the denirgration type of cyberbullying because of the use of an offensive term. Although this particular vulgar term is presented as a neutral expression, yet it appears to have negative connotations which makes it socio-legally sensitive. This meme has legal implications because of a swear word. Scrutinizing any politician for their political activities is not considered cyberbullying because in a democratic country criticism of this kind is associated with the rights of freedom of speech (Siroj & Subyantoro, 2019). The issue in this meme is the use of an abusive word

which has many negative connotations and, therefore, it is considered to be an inappropriate word. Political criticism can be done using neutral words so as to highlight the political activities of a politician (Irimba et al, 2021). But personal attacks are not related to freedom of speech because they damage the reputition and dignity of other people (Power et al, 2017).

Figure 24

The pragmeme of copying someone is highlighted in this meme in the form of a compliment. In this meme, the activity part of the pragmeme can be analyzed and interpreted as an indirect speech act and it falls in the category of behabitives because the pract is a request. The basic reason is that no explicit words are used to express what the people are waiting for. The textual part of the pragmeme is interpretable. It can be inferred that one person is copying the action of others. Reference and relevance are related to two political figures. The voicing element of the pragmeme is related to the repetition of pract and the part is highlighted through the use of changed color. Shared situational knowledge provides room for thoughtful deliberation and interpretation of this meme (Mey, 2001). Subjects of this meme are already known to the masses which makes it easy for them to understand. As per the definition and categories of cyberbullying, it can be argued that no offensive word is used in this meme, but the context of the meme creates a negative image in minds of the public. The kind of meaning that gets generated through the use of images in this meme is not appropriate. The message highlighted in this meme is associated with the naked image of the female which makes this meme sensitive in nature.

From a socio-legally sensitive perspective, although apparently words mentioned in this meme do not seem to be harmful at all. The understanding of the whole situation associated with the pragmeme makes the meaning obvious. Cyberbullying in this meme can be traced on the basis of the way this pragmeme is created. Taking someone's pictures and then relating them to something else in a wrong sense is not appropriate and it makes this meme socio-legally sensitive (Yuan, 2018). The words in this meme are used sarcastically and are not used for some positive purpose. With the use of so-called neutral words, the meme maker makes fun of a female and damages her self-respect by projecting her copied naked image (Joshua, 2020). Now, these kinds of memes are evidence of the personal attack. Such memes are not a part of political criticism because in this meme no political performance of politicians is being described, rather the way the politicians are portrayed through this meme urges people to comment on their personal lives which is part of cyberbullying (Amelia & Fudlilah, 2018).

The purpose behind creation of such type of content is not to expose political deficiencies of the targeted people, but to demoralize the victim. Although people have a right to political criticism, however, everything may not be ignored on these bases. Most of the content created on these grounds turns out to be a part of cyberbullying (Irimba et al, 2021).

Figure 25

The pragmeme in this meme refers to the choice of a person. The activity part of this pragmeme highlights an indirect speech act which belongs to the category of verdictive speech acts because it is in form of a judgmental remark. The textual part of pragmeme can also be observed with the help of its elements. Firstly, inference can be made as a judgmental remark is used for the targeted person of this meme whereas reference and relevance are made towards people related to showbiz. This pragmeme points towards a recent event. Precisely, this meme focuses on the friendship of the celebrities and the reaction of people towards them. Voicing of this pragmeme relates to the name of the character that is clearly mentioned within parenthesis. This is done in order to highlight the significant target of the meme. Metaphorically, the subject of the meme is compared to a cheap and worthless thing. Shared situational knowledge explains the controversies with regard to this scenario.

The indecent use of language is quite obvious in this meme. The word 'plastic' has got negative meanings associated with it because, in many cultures, its meaning is taken as something 'cheap, worthless, and unreliable', etc. (www.langugaelog.idc.upenn.edu.com & www.blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/newsroom). The use of this word in the afore-mentioned meme is not done for spreading some positive information regarding the target, rather the choice of words is simply humiliates and insults the targeted person. The socio-legal sensitivity of this meme relates to the

judgmental comment on the choice of a person (Yitzhak, 2020). It is not suitable for the public to comment on the right or wrong choices of other people. Calling someone plastic and cheap is a significant aspect of cyberbullying because of its hazardous effects on the victim (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). These kinds of expressions cause emotional distress in the victims which may get worse due to repeated actions (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).
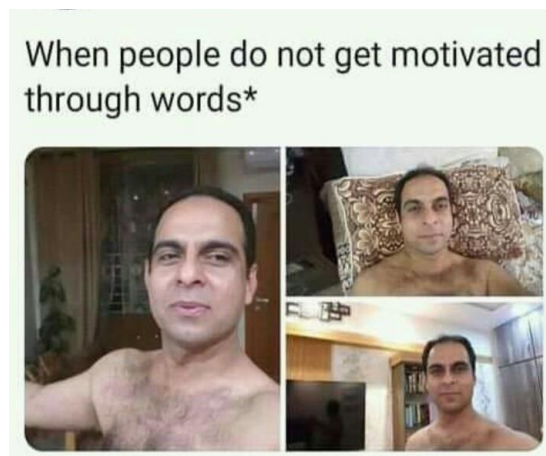
When people do not get motivated through words*

Figure 26

The pragmeme related to motivation is the focal point in this meme. However, the implicit intentions associated with this pragmeme are negative in nature. The activity part of this pragmeme indicates that it as an indirect speech act and falls in the category of expositive speech acts because something is stated in this meme. The textual part of the pragmeme starts with inference. It can be inferred that the targeted person is motivating others with the help of his naked body without using words. Reference and relevance of this pragmeme are directed towards a famous motivational speaker. Voice in this pragmeme is related to the use of '*' and 'words' that appear to be prominent in the statement. Shared situational knowledge guides the audience regarding the basic purpose of this pragmeme. It is understood by users of the internet that the naked body of someone is associated with negative meanings (Mey, 2001).

This meme is also a representation of cyberbullying in terms of the use of the image. In light of Willard's stance, a negative kind of meaning is being delivered through this meme. The audience can understand the meaning of this meme that the person in the meme is using unethical ways for motivating others by showing his naked body. The reality indicates the opposite about this person. So, the meme spreads incorrect and negative information about the targeted person. It actually disrespects the other person and raises negative thoughts in minds of the masses (Putri et al, 2020). This type of meme can be included in the outing type of cyberbullying because in this meme a person's

image is shared in the online community to disrespect and embarrass him. In consensus with the lawyer's opinion, the analysis of this meme indicates that it is not appropriate to use personal pictures of someone and then edit them according to one's intentions in the name of mere entertainment. In the afore-mentioned meme, the meme-creator associates the person with sexual appeal by highlighting his naked body. This type of denigration is part of cyberbullying (Willard, 2007) and this practice is very popular among social media network users (Kiela et al, 2020). This meme also relates to the other types of cyberbullying proposed by Willard (2007) such as outing and trickery where a person's image is used to damage the self-respect of the targeted person.

This type of content provokes others to talk about the targeted person in many negative ways. It is a personal kind of attack on him. In some cases, these attacks cause severe psychological and mental health issues leading to death of the victim. Recently a death case took place where the victim was ultimately found dead. According to some people on social media, Dr. Amir Liaquat (late) had been a victim of revenge porn, a type of cyberbullying, as his private videos leaked out. According to some people, he was bullied on the basis of that leaked content. This situation refers to outing or trickery types of cyberbullying (www.blog.siasat.pk). It has been discussed on various platforms that he was one of the major victims of cyberbullying (www.dailyparlimenttimes.com).

Figure 27

In this meme, the pragmeme related to future marriage/relationship is represented. According to Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory, the activity part of pragmeme depicts an indirect speech act. This indirect speech act is in the form of a statement that belongs to the expositive category of speech acts. From the textual part of the pragmeme it can be inferred that the marriage of the targeted person is highlighted in an indirect way (Mey, 2001). Reference of this pragmeme is directed towards two famous people from showbiz. Relevance of this pragmeme is based on the rising controversies between these people. It also relates to the shared situational knowledge of the audience (Osisanwo, 2017). The emoji of fire is also used to magnify the meaning associated with this meme. Considering the definition and categories of cyberbullying suggested by Willard, it can be stated that the caption used in the above- mentioned meme highlights a defamatory type of cyberbullying where a false prediction and statement is made about the personal life of the targeted people. It is a personal kind of attack on the subjects because they did not announce anything regarding their marriage.

Socio-legal sensitivity associated with this meme refers to the fact that intentional interference on the part of the people is inappropriate and unacceptable. The meme-creators make false claims about the targeted persons (Dalla et al, 2016). The privacy rights of the celebrities and common people are protected by international human rights and the national laws of states. However, memes are misused so as to target specific people on social media forums (Klein, 2018). It has been observed that the subjects of this meme have been bullied by the online communities and their personal affairs have

been discussed by people through the use of negative remarks. Human right organizations and laws at national level need to focus on cyberbullying of this type in the online world. Defamatory statements in the form of libel on social media sites need to be considered seriously.

Figure 28

The pragmeme in this meme refers to the procedural killing of someone. The activity part of this pragmeme is presented in the form of indirect speech acts. These speech acts represent choices, in fact. The speech acts in this meme belong to the category of exercitives. The textual part of pragmeme highlights the inference that a choice is presented before people whether they want to continue killing of a person or not (Mey, 2001). The reference is made towards a cricketer and the relevance of this pragmeme can be understood in terms of a recent situation related to cricket matches. Voicing of this pragmeme is relates to the use of witty and short caption presented in the form of choices. Shared situational knowledge is the basis of this pragmeme wgich relates to the cricket world (Ajayi, 2021).

According to the concept of cyberbullying by Willard, it can be observed that it is an offensive kind of threat given to the subject through the image. The meaning of this image is the wish to kill this person in a certain procedural way. This is what makes this meme socio-legally sensitive. Brutal killing of people suggested by the meme-creator is not protected by international human rights organizations as well as national laws (Henderson, 2017). A study claimed that giving threats to somebody in the form of emojis is also a type of cyberbullying which cannot be ignored during the process of investigation (Danesi, 2021). People may disagree with other people, however, giving

death threats to anyone in any form is not supported by laws (www.lynnandbrown.com). It can be hoped that in the future there will be no ambiguities regarding the limits of freedom of speech and cyberbullying with specific reference to memes.

Figure 29

The pragmeme highlighted in this meme refers to the character of a person. The speech act in this meme is in form of a statement that belongs to the category of expositive speech acts. The activity part of pragmeme reveals that the pract in this pragmeme is indirect with the help of which the past incident of a person's life is focused on. While the textual part of pragmeme starts with inference which points towards the fact that the person highlighted in the meme is involved in unethical and morally unacceptable activity. The reference and relevance of this meme are directed toward a politician who was involved in an indecent act. Metaphorically, the politician is compared to a porn star. Shared situational knowledge is based on the recent indecent event (Ajayi, 2021).

Keeping in view Willard's ideas regarding cyberbullying, this meme can be placed in the category of outing cyberbullying because people on social media mold the known situation of a person according to their choice. Cyberbullying takes place here as the social media users take the image of a person and use it to embarrass the targeted person. Whether the targeted person is guilty or not that is decided by the authorities (Costello et al, 2016). The potential legal implications of this meme may invoke human rights laws for protecting the dignity and self-respect of every person. These kinds of acts are punitive and are not protected by any international or national laws and regulations (Purwaningrum & Sudana, 2020). When people do something inappropriate or unacceptable, then there are laws and regulations to tackle the situation and make the culprit suffer because of his/her deeds in the offline world. Nevertheless, there are no or

vague laws to justify harsh and malicious criticism targeted on people in the online world. This is done solely for the sake of entertainment (Dmitrievich, 2021).

Figure 30

In this meme, the pragmeme of complimenting someone is focused on. The speech act in the form of a statement is presented here which belongs to the category of the expositives. The activity part of pragmeme is the representation of an indirect speech act because the intention behind these words is not expressed in explicit words. However, the textual part of pragmeme provides further explanation. It can be inferred that the subject of this meme is labelled as a porn star in an indirect way. Reference and relevance of this meme are related to two famous people. Shared situational knowledge refers to the fact that both these subjects commented on each other (Mey, 001). According to the notion of cyberbullying, this meme can be put under outing type of cyberbullying where an image of someone is associated with the other for the purpose of embarrassing the target (Willard, 2007). Although both of them commented on each other, yet the context of those comments provides space for calling the other a porn star.

Socio-legal sensitivity of this meme pertains to the connection that has been established between the characters. The problem of calling someone a porn star is inappropriate because of the image of this profession across cultures. This is again similar to questioning the character of someone because of the comparison drawn by people on social media. These kinds of remarks are intentionally given to others so as to insult and embarrass them (Supriadi & Gunawan, 2020). Recently, an Indian actress was labelled as

a porn star because someone used her pictures and edited them in an unethical way. The actress reacted to it by delivering a message on Instagram (www.indiatoday.in/television.com). People on social media do not have the right to infringe the privacy rights of any person (DeCook, 2018). It can be assumed that fundamental human rights do not allow anyone to harm the dignity of other people at any cost. However, people take advantage of the online world because they know that they are not easily reachable and, therefore, they do not bother about consequences (Suler, 2004).

Figure 31

The pragmeme of someone's wedding news is represented in this meme in the form of defamation. The speech act is related to the category of commissives because it is in form of a declaration. The activity part of pragmeme depicts a direct speech act whereas the textual part of pragmeme describes inference as wedding news of the subject is highlighted here which is false. The reference and relevance of this meme are made towards this famous tiktoker and his activities on social media. Voicing is done with the help of hashtag and emojis to express opinion. Shared situational knowledge is that the subject of this meme is often criticized because of his feminine looks. He is often stigmatized on social media (Mey, 2001). As per the concept of Willard on cyberbullying, the meme mentioned above is the representation of defamation in form of libel because a false statement is made regarding the targeted person.

By analyzing this meme in terms of socio-legal sensitivity, it can be observed that a false statement is given about a person so as to ridicule and humiliate him (Joshua, 2020). People do not have the rights to make fun of others on public forums just to sound funny and amuse others. Insulting others in name of mere entertainment is not protected by laws. The dignity and self-respect of the targeted person is affected by these kinds of remarks and rumors. Freedom of speech does not provide the masses the rights to insult and humiliate others (Klein, 2018). The purpose of defamation either libel or slander is to

spread negativity about the targeted person and these rumors are spread with ill will (Lagorgette, 2011).

50 shades of Malala

Figure 32

This meme represents pragmeme of complimenting someone, whereas the speech act of the judgment is performed. A kind of compliment based on judgment of character is highlighted which belongs to the category of verdictive speech acts. The activity part of pragmeme depicts that an indirect speech act is performed in this meme. However; the textual part of pragmeme is related to inference. It can be inferred that the subject of this meme is presented as a supporter of a socially and morally unacceptable profession. Reference of this pragmeme is made towards two famous people on social media and a famous movie on sexual orientation '50 Shades of Dark'. The relevance indicates that this meme is created on the basis of comments given by one of the subjects of the meme. The meme-creator highlights the involvement of the subject in unethical activities and associates the subject with a movie based on sexuality. Voicing in this meme is done in form of previous comments attached as part of the meme. Shared situational knowledge highlights the reason behind the creation of this meme is the comments made by the subject of this meme.

Keeping in mind the notion of cyberbullying, it can be observed that outing type of cyberbullying is related to this meme. The reason behind this is the foregrounding of previous comments by the meme-creator which are used as a basis to devalue the targeted person (Parks, 2013). People on social media use these comments for their entertainment (Kowalski, Limber & McCord, 2019). They interpret meanings as per their feasibility

which is morally and socially unacceptable for the targeted person. This meme appears to be sensitive because people do not have the right to question the character of someone just for the sake of their entertainment. Relating a person to a porn star is an act of defaming the other person. The targeted person is wrongly portrayed as the one involved in unethical sexual activities. Reference to a movie famous for its sexual content is directed toward the targeted person. The purpose behind all this comparison is obvious. Careful consideration of the context of this meme as well as the intension behind the use of this pract highlights the sensitive nature of this meme. The character of a person cannot be considered questionable on the basis of such memes (Yitzhak, 2020). The debate between limits of freedom of speech and boundaries of cyberbullying remains there because of the emerging new types of issues on social media (Kiela et al, 2020). Nevertheless, such types of memes related to socio-legal sensitivity.
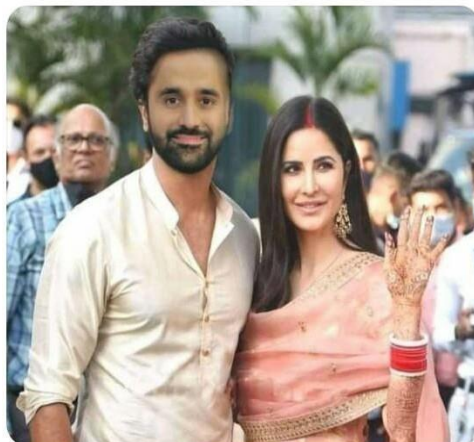
Waseem badami wtf........😭😂

Figure 33

In this meme, the pragmeme of complimenting someone is obvious whereas the speech act of swearing is performed that belongs to the category of commissive speech acts. The activity part of pragmeme shows that it is an indirect speech act. The inference from the textual part of pragmeme relates to the subject of this meme. The couple highlighted in this meme refers to an Indian film star. The reference and relevance of this meme are directed towards these famous people. Voicing in this meme is also done through the use of short and meaningful caption and emojis (Tseng, 2010). Shared situational knowledge reveals that this Pakistani anchor is often scrutinized and stigmatized because of his complexion. As per the notion of cyberbullying, this meme can be put under denigration. It is a type of cyberbullying because the use of the offensive term refers to a specific person. It is also a type of cyberbullying and the reason behind this is that image of a person is taken and attached to the other person without consent. Moreover, the selected characters are presented together due to their complexion.

Other than the image, the use of the offensive term also makes this meme socio-legally sensitive because it is not appropriate to take the image of a person and then use a vulgar term for that person. People on social media use this technique very often and they justify their acts in the name of entertainment (Bauman et al, 2013). This is actually the humiliation of the targeted person. The intention behind the creation of this meme is not

goodwill for the person targeted, rather the purpose of such content is to harm self-respect and dignity of people (Zhang, 2020). Fundamental human rights do not allow people to harm the dignity of others in the offline world and the online world.

Figure 34

In this meme, the pragmeme of complimenting someone is prominent and the speech act belongs to the category of expositive speech acts. According to the activity part of pragmeme, the meme is the related to an indirect speech act whereas the textual part of pragmeme indicates inference in the form of an indirect insulting remark and judgment because of the looks of a person. The reference and relevance of this meme are directed towards a famous figure. An emoji is used to add to voicing of this pragmeme. Shared situational knowledge is based on the horrible image of a movie character compared with the subject of this meme. Calling someone 'cheap' is an insult, so this meme comes under the category of denigration cyberbullying. It is not appropriate to call someone cheap as the use of this word humiliates the other person. It is also related to outing type of cyberbullying because the image of someone is specifically taken to humiliate the person in front of others.

Socio-legal sensitivity surrounding this meme relates to the public self-image or dignity of a person that gets damaged because of the content mentioned above. Firstly, the specific images are used and then the insulting captions are attached to those images. Whatever ambiguities there are between freedom of speech and cyberbullying, the content in the meme is still sensitive because it can cause emotional distress in the victim

(Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016). Laws protecting freedom of speech do not allow attacks of a personal kind. By carefully analyzing this meme, it can be understood that it is not a political kind of criticism, rather it is a personal attack on the personality of the subject. It I, in fact, humiliating in the real sense. This type of behavior is ignored by many people on social media which boosts confidence of social media users (Gilkerson, 2012). There is no check and balance on these sites to stop these people from crossing their set limits. Although some actions are being taken against cyberbullying, yet these actions are not very helpful for the victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).

#HappyFathersDay

Figure 35

The pragmeme of complimenting someone is highlighted in this meme through the use of some specific words. The speech act in this meme belongs to the category of behabitives because a greeting is mentioned in this meme. The actual meaning embedded within this meme can be understood through further analysis. The activity part of pragmeme indicates that the speech act is indirect because it is not explicitly stated. Reference and relevance of pragmeme are related to famous people of media and recent event of their marriage. In voicing, a captivating caption is used with a hashtag. Shared situational knowledge relates to the negative reaction of the people towards their wedding (Capone, 2020).

In terms of cyberbullying, although no obvious vulgar or offensive term is used in this meme, however, careful understanding of this meme reveals the intention behind the creation of such stuff. This meme can be taken as a part of outing cyberbullying where the image is presented in a wrong way so as to embarrass the targeted person (Siroj & Subyantoro, 2019). People on social media criticize this couple for getting married which is not unethical or morally questionable because both of them got married by mutual consent. Masses on social media scrutinize them and portray them as father and daughter because of their age difference. This meme can be understood in terms of infringement of their privacy rights and personal attack on their private life issues. Infringement of privacy rights is not protected by laws in the name of freedom of

expression (Henderson, 2017). It is not right for the masses to comment on the personal affairs of others and criticize them on public forums.

The subject of this meme also protested against this harsh criticism in a video '…whoever has been reporting about my personal life, let me just say that it is not only highly inappropriate, it's wrong'. He further added 'who gave you the right? I don't disclose my personal affairs publically…'. The protest on part of the victim depicts that people are affected by cyberbullying on social media when they are repeatedly targeted in one or the other way. It is also a fact that many victims do not show any reaction, but some people do not sit silently and protest against such type of criticism and personal attacks. Bullies either in the online or the offline worlds are judgmental. The meme creators comment on others in a wrong way and ultimately end up hurting others (Supriadi & Gunawan, 2020).

If 'daddu charger' had a face

Figure 36

In the above-mentioned meme, it can be observed that the pragmeme of complimenting someone is prominent. As per the categories, this speech act belongs to the category of verdictives because it is a judgment based on the looks of a person. The activity part of pragmeme reveals that this is an indirect speech act as it is delivered with the implicit intention of insulting someone. The textual part of pragmeme explains inference which states that the subject of this meme is insulted because of her looks. Reference and relevance are directed towards a political figure that is often criticized in indirect ways. Shared situational knowledge explains the background of this meme where reasons behind this kind of judgment can be understood. The element of the metapragmatic joke (M) related to the textual part of pragmeme indicates that whatever is done at the level of language is somehow related to its context. In this way, language is related to a particular context because speech is an action (Austin, 1962). It has been observed that all the memes have a particular kind of pragmeme which is noticeable because of the relevant context. Without the metapragmatic level of language and context, complete understanding of the meaning hidden in memes is not possible (Mey, 2001).

However, analyzing this meme in relation to cyberbullying concept, we can observe with the help of context that it is a denigration type of cyberbullying. The intention behind the use of the phrase 'daddu charger' shows that this speech act is not meant to praise or glorify the personality of a person rather it is insulting. The argument

regarding freedom of political criticism seems to be invalid here because it is an attack on the physical appearance of the targeted person (Putri et al, 2020).

From the perspective of socio-legal sensitivity, speech acts along with the specific context of memes can be taken as the carrier of culpable content. The afore-mentioned meme is not appropriate morally or ethically because the speech act is meant to damage self-respect of the targeted person. It is not appropriate to compare a human being with something that is inanimate in nature (Kiela et al, 2020). Also, human rights do not allow people to harm the dignity of other people in the offline as well as the online world (Bardici, 2012). Whatever the manner is, it is considered indecent to call someone through the use of animal names (Carney, 2013). It has nothing to do with the political agenda of the subject of this meme, rather it is an insult in the guise of mere entertainment. This is why, Fracchiolla (2013) stresses that an appeal should be made to media authorities to equalize online hate with offline. In agreement with the scholar's point of view, it is argued that cyberbullying should be equalized to the offline crimes such as humiliation, name-calling and damaging other's self-respect. It is hoped that if the crime is considered equally in both the online and the offline worlds, the reaction of the authorities will also be the same (Irimba et al, 2021). Just as people get punished in the offline world, they would be punished for their crimes in the online world as well.

The element of the metapragmatic joker (M) of the textual part of pragmeme means that whatever is done at the level of language is related to its context. In this element, language is related to a particular context because speech is an action (Austin, 1962). It has been observed that all memes have a particular kind of pragmeme which is significant and prominent because of its immediate context. Without the metapragmatic level of language and context, a complete understanding of the meaning hidden in memes is not possible.

4.1 Findings

The findings of the research are discussed below:

- According to the procedure of data analysis, firstly the memes were analyzed on the general basis of classification of speech acts following the Speech Act theory by Austin. It was observed that most of the memes presented categories of expositive and excercitive speech acts, whereas some of the memes belonged to the categories of commissive, verdictive and behabitive speech acts. In the categories mentioned earlier, most of the speech acts referred to stating, declaring, judging, swearing and greeting, etc. Although the researcher also found speech acts of warning, but they were quite limited. The research aimed at identifying categories of speech acts in memes. The basic purpose was to understand the meaning of the memes and the categorization helped in understanding the intentions of people who created such texts. Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory was a huge benefit in this regard. With the help of this theory, the researcher was able to find out how a whole situation is created through a meme to perform a speech act. The intentions behind their usage were understood when individual parts of the whole pragmeme were analyzed. Most of the memes performed speech acts by stating them. Although memes with speech acts of humiliation were more in number, however, some of the memes were based on warning and swearing. All the categories of speech acts were found in memes. It was also found that all the elements of Pragmatic Act Theory focused on the successful communication of speech acts through memes. Categories of pragmatic acts in the activity part and elements of the textual part participated in conveying intended meaning relevant to the context of each particular meme. Additionally, it was found that the speech acts or pragmatic acts (practs) were not used out of anywhere, rather they had contextual effects on the meaning conveyed. Whether it was in the knowledge of the meme creator or not, those speech acts magically worked on the social media users and the intention of the meme creator was delivered successfully to the intended people. This phenomenon is very much evident from the environment that prevails the comment section.

- As far as the possible types of cyberbullying in memes are concerned, the concept of cyberbullying presented by Willard was followed for defining and identifying cyberbullying in memes. Most of the memes belonged to the category of denigration and outing cyberbullying whereas some of them also represented harassment. Cyberbullying in the form of defamation and discrimination was also observed. Most of the memes were created through the use of offensive, derogatory and vulgar terms and some of them used malicious images as well. The other types of cyberbullying such as flaming, impersonation, trickery, exclusion and cyberstalking were not found in the memes. The types of cyberbullying found in the memes were verbal as well as non-verbal in nature.

- The purpose of the study was also to explore factors that urged social media users to create various forms of memes. While exploring possible motivating factors, only contextual and contextural clues were used for the interpretation of the memes. In most of the memes, people targeted others by focusing on the burning issue. Mostly, people create such stuff to sound cool in the online world. People who make such memes seem to have negative intentions. They create such stuff to devalue and disrespect others. The factors of time killing and internet addiction correlate with each other. The COVID-19 scenario provided social media users with lots of opportunities and time to post on social media without any noticeable pause (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016). Also, increasing internet addiction can be a factor behind the creation of memes. People are now addicted to internet in a way that they somehow get enough time to create stuff about others (Costello et al, 2017). The factor of anonymity provides plenty of opportunities for meme creators as well as people who comment on others without any hesitation. This freedom provides them a free hand to misbehave, warn and humiliate other people whom they target through memes. The meme makers know that their true identities will not be revealed and they take undue benefit from this kind of situation. Invisibility also increases the spread of socio-legally sensitive content through memes. Together with the audience, the meme creators share humiliating content and they do so for the sake of mere entertainment. They both know that they will remain anonymous and this fact encourages them enough to create socio-legally sensitive

content repeatedly. These factors are proposed by Suler (2004) in his toxic type of online disinhibition effect.

- This research aimed at discovering socio-legal sensitivities surrounding the selected memes as well. It was possible to understand things that were obvious on the surface level and the deeper level in the selected memes. These memes were the representation of socio-legally sensitive content. In all the selected memes one thing was prominent that the creator and audience of the memes did not have any positive motive behind them. All the memes focused on humiliation, swearing and disrespect. All these forms of cyberbullying paved the way for the spread of hatred amongst people. The people may not have certain feelings of disgust towards a personality but these memes play their significant role on social media by creating a bad image about the targeted person. Words that spread hatred, harsh criticism, abuse, threat, swearing, and humiliation are considered carriers of socio-legal sensitivities. These carriers could be slang and offensive words, inappropriate images, judgmental statements, body shaming, name-calling, pornographic material, content damaging the dignity and reputation of the subjects and so on. It was found that there are vague laws for protecting the rights of people and also relevant punishments are there if the victim wants to sue the bully. The point to note here is that people responsible for creating culpable content are ignorant of the socio-legal sensitivities or they simply ignore this fact. On the other hand, victims also do not seem to sue the people who spread hatred towards them. This is the reason that no one is caught and many other people are not aware of these sensitive issues.

4.2 Discussion

Analysis of memes in terms of speech acts and identification of cyberbullying led to specific findings. Different types of speech acts, verbal and non-verbal, were performed through memes, however, this study specifically focused on non-verbal speech acts. In this research, it was found that memes were a platform for the production of both verbal and non-verbal speech acts. The stance of non-verbal speech acts is supported by the findings of Ajaaj (2013) whose point of view is that speech acts also appear in non-

verbal form. These speech acts can be categorized as greeting, refusal, promise, threat and insult. Various forms of speech acts of all categories were performed in all the memes such as expositives, exercitives, commissives, verdictives and behabitives which in turn were in form of statement, judgment, swearing, declaring, greeting and warning (Austin, 196). However, most of them were performed indirectly with mean intentions. Indirect expressions were used to hit the targeted people. After thorough analysis, it was observed that speech acts are a big source of conveying the intentional meaning through the use of memes. The meme creators appeared to be successful in hitting the targeted people because of the way speech acts were used (Adek & Rahmi, 2020). In other memes, people were insulted through the use of non-serious and funny comments. Speech acts of swearing were also created with intended meaning in an effective way (Joshua, 2020). The audience instantly reacts to memes because the intentions hidden in speech acts deliver meaning successfully. Their classification provides similar effects on the conversation in almost every situation. It is argued that communication through memes is difficult to understand and memes do create the intended illocutionary effects upon readers (Olmsted, 2020). The analysis of the present study, like relevant studies, supports the theory of speech acts by Austin because words perform actions on the basis of the effects they create upon receivers. People interpret memes instantly on the basis of the speech acts. In the case of memes, people on social media sites instantly react in form of comments and express whatever they perceive from speech acts (Kiela et al, 2020). If the speech act is made to insult someone, people in the comment section do likewise. Even if people disagree with the idea presented in the meme, they still reply under the influence of the intended illocutionary force behind the speech act (Ali, 2020).

The findings of this study support the Pragmatic Act Theory presented by Mey. The basic reason is that this theory describes the performance of speech acts precisely and extensively. All parts of the pragmeme that relate to the suitable situation of the pragmatic act (speech act) take part in successful communication of practs. The activity and textual parts along with the elements (INF, REF, REL, VCE, SSK, MPH, M) create a whole situation for the understanding of a pragmeme or speech act (Tseng, 2010). It is mandatory to mention here that the non- verbal part of speech acts in memes was analyzed under voice (VCE) element of the textual part of pragmeme. Although the study

focused more on verbal speech acts, but a slight notion was put forward regarding the performance of non-verbal speech acts through memes. However, at this point the study differs from Grundlingh's study (2017) where speech acts in memes were in non-verbal form such as cartoons, images, facial expressions and gestures whereas the element of voice focused on the impact of color, capitalization, font size, boldness, alteration and repetition of words, etc. After thorough analysis of the memes, it has been observed that pragmatic act theory assisted in explaining the transmission of intended meaning through every element of pragmeme (Ajayi, 2021). In specific context of each particular meme, it was crucial to understand the background situation in which the pragmeme was created. The findings of this study correlate with Ajayi's study (2021) where memes of various forms, similar to this study, along with multiple modes conveyed the practs of warning, admonition, information, mockery, criticism, condemnation, rebuke, labeling, accusation and sermonisation. The importance and effectiveness of pragmatic act theory for extensive transmission of meaning through practs or pragmatic acts has been observed during the analysis of memes (Osisanwo, 2017). This point of view of the study is supported by another study by Tseng (2009) where interrelated elements of pragmatic act theory helped in the identification of the fishing of personal information in email scams.

Leading the argument further, speech acts in different categories and their situational significance indicated that these speech acts highlighted different types of cyberbullying. The findings of the study showed that most of the memes constructed speech acts that represented denigration, outing, harassment, defamatory and discrimination types of cyberbullying. Speech acts do perform multiple actions and they are used with the intention to damage the reputation of other people or harm their self-respect and dignity. The creators of such content end up committing those actions (Putri et al, 2020). This is how the present study correlated various forms of speech acts with different types of cyberbullying. This viewpoint of study is supported by Saengpranga and Gadavanijb (2021). They also classified comments according to types of cyberbullying in accordance with types of cyberbullying proposed by Willard (2007). The findings of the study showed that the Korean celebrity faced harassment through indirect speech acts while the British celebrity confronted both harassment and denigration through direct speech acts. This study provides a stance on how

cyberbullying is playing a dominant role in social media and its various forms are practiced in one way or the other. The findings of this study also depicted a similar situation on Facebook (Jaishwal, 2020).

It has been observed that different types of cyberbullying are practiced on various online forums. Researchers have found different forms of cyberbullying other than Facebook. The factors and the consequences for such acts are similar (Putri, Sudana &Bachari, 2020). The internet provides its users with plenty of opportunities for expressing their thoughts all over the world (Jaishwal, 2020). Now people do not hesitate to highlight whatever is there in their minds. Because of the internet, people of the whole world have become closer and have created a global internet community (Putri & Satvikadewi, 2017). However, sometimes it becomes difficult to prevent illegal activities that are common on social media forums. Although, malicious material is deleted from sites, yet it is difficult to monitor whatever is available on social media (Costello, Hawdon and Ratkiff, 2017). This study did not consider trolling as a type of cyberbullying, however, it is also considered another type of cyberbullying by some scholars. Cyberstalking, trolling and revenge porn have been observed in memes on Instagram as well as Facebook (Jaishwal, 2020). It can be argued that cyberbullying in various forms of memes is becoming a global issue that needs attention from authorities. At this point, the present study is in line with Prapti (2020) where the researcher argued that memes on social media are used as a tool of criticism which may sometimes lead to serious trouble Cybercrime activities have increased recently and now people are more confident about the online world and express whatever comes to their minds (Willard, 2007). This situation creates chaos, especially in the context of the current pandemic. People start sharing their views and end up fighting, abusing and threatening others on social media sites (Araujo et al, 2014). People pretend as if cyberbullying is just fun but it is no less serious than other crimes (Joshua, 2020). They do not bother to notice and consider it as a crime (Yitzhak, 2020).

Context plays a key role in the understanding of human language (Mey, 2001). When people make fun of each other on public platforms, it becomes very difficult to understand the intention behind a humorous comment/joke or a violent one (Joshua,

2020). Recently a case has been reported where a comedian made a joke about a politician which ultimately led to the police investigation. This happens on a daily basis when meme creators try to share joke about some issues. Resultantly, people start fighting and bullying each other in the comment sections along with abusive captions (Rawlinson & Siddique, 2019). The memes also contain cartoon figures and images to make fun of others and there are different facial expressions used to express something funny. For instance, a man standing in a cricket stadium was captured by the camera with a weird look. Later on, people started to put his picture in memes whenever they tried to show a disgusted and weird expression. At far as this situation is concerned, nobody considers it a crime and this trend is prevailing everywhere. There is a lack of awareness among people that using someone's image as a fun-making tool is a crime (Joshua, 2020). Some people react in response to these violations but others may not even bother to think about it.

As people of different countries and societies agree with others on certain points. But, in some cases, many people scrutinize whatever is posted online through comments (Irimba et al, 2021). There are everyday instances of cyberbullying, libel and trolling on the internet (Zhong et al, 2016). People simply ignore that they are commenting on public forums which leads to committing cybercrimes and crimes through language on social media and they do it easily because they think that it has no consequences (Tokunaga, 2010). There are some tools devised for preventing malicious comments on some websites. Recently, it has been made possible to control abusive messages on the internet but the procedure is still incomplete (Wagner, 2019). Some websites provide moderating tools to overcome the usage of derogatory language and hate speech (Nocentiti et al, 2010). Cyberbullying in disguise of fun memes and posts can be about stereotyping, ethnicity, race, identity crisis or national, regional, or religious conflicts (Hawdon, Oksanen, & Rasanen, 2017). Online hate and cyberbullying spread through different platforms such as social media, blogs, chatrooms, listservs, etc. (Hussain & Saltman, 2014). People can target an individual, group, nation, community, or any political party. When one group targets the other, instant responses are also received. It is observed that it mostly happens on public political pages and public religious pages (Potok, 2015). Ultimately it gives rise to a negative attitude among people and they find it easier to bully

others through social media posts and comment sections (Kiela et al, 2020). It can be concluded from this study that cyberbullying is a crime and it is often committed through language either written or spoken and even sign language (Zhang, 2020).

Cyberbullying and cyberstalking not only make people embarrassed in front of so many people, but they also give them mental torture (Homsseinmardi et al, 2015). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) state that cyberbullying includes harassment, making fun of each other, and abusing and threatening others through the use of the computer or cell phones. The first incident of punishing someone because of cyberbullying was reported in *The Daily Mail* in 2009. It was reported that a teenage girl from the UK was sent to jail because she gave death threats to her class fellow on Facebook (Salkeld, 2009). There are also instances of people and especially teenagers becoming the victim of mental torture and committing suicide. A twelve year old girl committed suicide in America because of online cyberbullying. A survey research was also conducted in America under *Cyberbullying Research Centre* (CRC) and findings showed that 20% of participants out of 4000 were bullied online in one month and mostly it was done in hateful comments (Broderick, 2013).

Plenty of information is bombarded on social media which ties different communities together (Kemp, 2019) and it should be investigated critically to understand how these connections are built through social media. Social media networking sites should be examined critically under digital forensic investigation. Digital forensic investigation helps in checking levels of culpability within social platforms (Olsson, 2013). People feel free to show their behavior, attitude and visions about each and everything when connecting with new people (Suler, 2004). Social media provides people with a very flexible platform for expressing everyone's opinions (Cheng et al, 2020). The ambiguity remains there as it is not easy to decide which meme is harmful and which is not (Kuznetsov & Olennikov, 2014). Meme creators play with words and try to make fun of different people on social media (Joshua, Budiawan & Mualafina, 2016). But things never happen in a planned manner as sometimes people start fighting seriously and victims of online bullying suffer psychologically as Barlett (2017) describes in his psychological learning model. Therefore, it becomes difficult to differentiate between

lawful and unlawful expressions and phrases. The clues with the help of context provide a better understanding of the contextual meaning behind the text. Sometimes it happens that the meaning behind the humorous text is difficult to infer (Rainville, 2005) and inside the courtroom, judges have to interpret meaning by keeping in mind the context of the text (Lagorgette, 2011). Interpretations of a text can be both reasonable and unreasonable. Implied readers may understand a text differently from real readers. Therefore, when creators of humorous memes or texts on social media post something, they keep in mind the ideal readers who easily agree with them (Joshua, 2020). But, in reality, some of the readers do not agree with the text writer and consider it a harmful act of speech (Zhang, 2020). However, the findings of this study conflict with Jay (2009) where the positivity of swear words is explained and it was claimed that restrictions on speech because of offensive words is misguided. Cyberbullying has been observed in various forms through emerging ways of doing it (Costello et al, 2016) and it also causes emotional and psychological effects on victims which harm them to varying degrees (Leukfeldt & Yar, 2016).

The findings of the study also revealed certain motivating factors behind the use of different memes. Internet addiction can be a factor behind the creation of memes (Araujo et al, 2014). With lots of growing trends in today's world and the availability of so many hot topics, people want to spend their maximum time on social media (Silva et al, 2013). This is the reason why memes are in demand and the people who want to be in the limelight of social media create such types of content (Milner, 2012). Also, time availability motivates meme creators. Related to the factor mentioned above, seeking attention can also be a factor behind the creation of various memes. In the offline world, usually people are not given much attention and their opinions and ideas may not be respected as well circulated widely as per General Strain Theory (Barlett, 2017). According to this theory, people do bullying because they face many strains and social pressure in their surroundings. It can be argued that they come on social media to get relief from strains and attention-seeking is one of them. Therefore, since the advent of memes on social media, people have a growing chance of grabbing attention of others (Suler, 2004). Entertainment can also be a factor behind the creation of excessive memes whereas the availability of plenty of time can be another reason, especially in the scenario

of COVID19 (Ajayi, 2021). However, before this pandemic, people have been creating memes for the last few years (Milner, 2012). This trend is common among young people now and it has been observed that people make it possible to spend time on the internet if they like it (Yitzhak, (2020). People on social media deliberately create such content to insult, humiliate and make fun of others and they name it mere entertainment (Joshua, 2020). Suler (2004) has also mentioned certain factors that boost cyberbullying and they can be related to this study because when those factors are supportive, the creation of memes becomes easier on the internet. The factors are dissociative anonymity (not known or fake identities), invisibility (not reachable physically) and asynchronicity. Smith (2013) mentions in the study that nine suicide cases happened because of cyberbullying. Indrayani and Johansari (2019) describe that, according to a survey, 90.04% respondents answered that social media is one of the major causes of suicide. A survey according to APJII (2019) presented similar results. Another estimate shows that in one month, many suicide cases were reported because of delayed response, solipsistic introjection (lack of non-verbal clues), dissociative imagination (social media user's world) and minimization of status and authority (without fear of status). The purpose of creating such memes is not to benefit the target of the meme, but to create chaos on the internet. It is debatable whether meme creators realize it or not that they are involved in cyberbullying (Power, Keane, Nolan, & O'Neill, 2018). However, after analysis of various forms of cyberbullying in memes, it can be understood that people intentionally create sensitive content so as to damage the reputation of the targeted people.

Commenting on the last section of the findings, it can be understood which types of socio-legal sensitivities surround various memes. The analysis of culpable memes showed that there are many sensitive issues on the basis of which memes were created. It has been analyzed that data memes contained socio-legal sensitivities because of various forms of cyberbullying such as body shaming, use of vulgar, derogatory and offensive terms, sexually-oriented content, indecent images and so on (Kiela et al, 2020). These forms of cyberbullying cannot be separated from socio-legally sensitive content because both of them are interrelated. It was found in the present study that socio-legally sensitive content can damage the reputation of the targeted people as well as harm their dignity. Analysis of the memes showed that the type of content can also affect its victims socially

and emotionally (Costello et al, 2016) leading even to the worst outcome in form of suicide as has already been mentioned. This point of view is supported by Smith (2013) who mentions in the study that nine suicide cases happened due to cyberbullying. Indrayani and Johansari (2019) describe that according to a survey, 90.04% respondents answered that social media is a major cause of suicide. A survey, according to APJII, (2019) presented similar results. Another estimate shows that in one month, many suicide cases were reported because of cyberbullying (O'Dea & Campell, 2012).

In many cases of cyberbullying; sometimes it becomes difficult to decide at which point boundaries of freedom of speech end and cyberbullying start (Dmitrievich, 2021). Sometimes a grey area exists between both of them and because of emerging trends on social media and the varying nature of cyberbullying (Sugiarto & Quartulaini, 2020), it becomes difficult to decide whether it is cyberbullying or not (Henderson, 2017). In 2020 first attempt was made to gather information about cyberbullying globally and was published in the journal Social Semiotics (Volume 30). The European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and other international organizations of human rights find a clash between boundaries of freedom of speech (www.ohchr.org) and cyberbullying (Judhita, 2015 & Wadipalapa, 2015), personal attacks on self-respect are protected by them. ECHR has many articles in section (1) for the protection of basic human rights. Article (3) provides protection against torture which can be extended to mental torture whereas article (8) explains the privacy rights of the family members. This article provides protection for the self-respect and morals of the family memebers and their freedom. Article (14) of the same convention provides protection against discrimination of any kind (www.equalityhumanrights.com). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), article (17) protects the privacy rights of all people. Germany also made Network Enforcement Law (NetzDG) for the prevention of unlawful content whereas, in Ireland, the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred was formulated in 1989 (Lagorgette, 2011).

Other than these mentioned above, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) also protects basic human rights. Article (4) provides protection against torture

while article (6) provides protection against privacy of all the people. Article ((12) states that no one has the right to damage reputation of any person (www.ohchr.org). The European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU, 2000) focuses on the basic human rights. Article (1) is based on protection of human dignity whereas article (4) protects people against torture. Article (8) provides protection of personal data and article (21) protects rights against discrimination of any kind (www.citizensinformation.ie). In the countries like France, Poland and Nigeria there are criminal acts along with penalty i.e. article 222-33-2-2 of Criminal Code France for definition of cyberbullying, article 190a of the Polish Criminal code and Nigerian Cybercrime Act, 2015. In Pakistan too, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA, 2016) and the Pakistan Penal Code (1860) have acts and sections in which the prevention of cybercrime is mentioned in one way or the other. Chapter 2 of PECA (2016) section (10A) elaborates penalty of seven years or fine for spread of any kind of hate through electronic forums. Section (18) describes offences against dignity of any person. Damaging dignity of any person through spread of false information or harm to privacy rights can lead the criminal to imprisonment for three years or fine or both. Section (19) protects modesty of any person against immoral use of photos or images of a person as well as representing link with any sexual act. The criminal may be imprisoned for five years. Similarly, sections (21), (22) and (23) describe rights to cyberstalking, spamming and spoofing. Cyberstalking includes spread of information as well as wrong use of photos or images and the punishment may extend to three years of imprisonment. Spamming and spoofing deal with the intentional misuse of information against any person along with the punishment of three years imprisonment and fine. A recent amendment has been done in 2022 9n PECA (2016) where online defamation is considered as a criminal offense (www.na.gov.pk). The Pakistan Penal Code (1980) chapter (21) section (449) deals with defamation of any kind and related penalty (www.fmu.gov.pk).

In sum, the findings of this research show that previous studies dealt with cyberbullying in different dimensions, but this study has dealt with speech acts used for cyberbullying from the angle of pragmatic act theory. This theory has not been used for this purpose. Also, the concept of cyberbullying and its categories presented by Willard are a new way of understanding cyberbullying on social media. It has been noted in this

study that pragmatic acts of various types have been used in memes depicting various forms of cyberbullying. For demonstrable investigative impact, it can be argued that forensic linguists and law enforcement agencies can be trained for better investigation so as to prevent cyberbullying. The present study can be extended in various dimensions. However, it is impossible to predict the future direction of forensic linguistics accurately.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with the aim of exploring how speech acts were performed through memes and how these speech acts turned those memes into culpable and socio-legally sensitive content making them the source of cyberbullying. The identification of pragmatic acts was done through the selection and application of Mey's theoretical framework. Mey (2001) presented the theory of Pragmatic Speech Acts. For the purpose of analyzing socio-legal sensitivity and culpability of the selected data, the concept and categories of cyberbullying by Willard (2007) were operationalized along with the assistance of a lawyer in the selection process of memes. For general understanding of speech acts, concepts were taken from the Speech Act Theory presented by Austin.

After the whole process of data collection, selection, analysis and findings, it is concluded that pragmatic acts or speech acts can also be performed through memes and pragmatic acts of swearing, abuse, threat, insult, humiliation, etc. make the memes culpable and socio-legally sensitive content. The reason is that people are not aware of many things around them. They are unaware of the fact that the content that they use on social media platforms may be harmful to other people in many ways and the victims also do not know about cyber laws that actually protect their rights. There are cyber laws as well as international organizations of fundamental laws that deal with all forms of cybercrime and bullying in general, however, the ambiguities surrounding freedom of speech and cyberbullying make the decision-making choices absurd. Although there are multiple ways of punishment relevant to the extent of crime, but the existence of grey areas between them makes it difficult to draw boundaries between them in certain situations. It has already been mentioned that attempts to define boundaries between them remain largely speculative rather than empirical. People who are responsible for cyberbullying in the online world are not liable to justify themselves with a mere excuse of 'freedom of the speech'. Freedom of speech is not a right to damage the reputation of

other people. Cyberbullying affects many victims mentally and psychologically. Victims of cyberbullying can also suffer from different forms of depression and anxiety. Harsh criticism and hatred are not liked by anyone and they cannot be related to the freedom of speech rather people need to understand that they are crimes of language.

The need of the hour is to make people aware of the crimes of language especially in the current scenario of COVID-19 because now people get more chances to spend time on social media sites. In this study, memes selected from Facebook were analyzed with specific limitations. Therefore, there are many issues yet to be discussed because the domain of cyberbullying and forensic linguistics still need to be explored by researchers, especially in the case of Pakistan. It is hoped that there will be specific acts mentioned in human rights at the national and international levels regarding the prevention of cyberbullying on social media.

5.1 Answers to the Questions

This research addresses the following research questions:

1- What categories of speech acts are used in the selected memes by Facebook users to achieve desired effect?

By applying the Speech Act theory by Austin, it was observed that most of the memes presented categories of expositive and excercitive speech acts, whereas some of the memes belonged to the categories of commissive, verdictive and behabitive speech acts. In the categories mentioned earlier, most of the speech acts focused on stating, declaring, judging and greeting. The reason behind this was to understand the meaning the memes portrayed and the categorization made it clear to understand the intentions of people who created such texts. The application of Mey's Pragmatic Act Theory proved beneficial in this regard. Most of the memes performed speech acts by stating them. All the categories of speech acts were found in memes. It was also found that all the elements of Pragmatic Act Theory explained the successful communication of speech acts through memes. Categories of pragmatic acts in the activity part and elements of the textual part participated in conveying intended meaning relevant to the context of each particular

meme. Additionally, it was found that the speech acts or pragmatic acts (practs) were not used out of anywhere rather they had effects on the meaning conveyed. Whether it was in the knowledge of the meme creator or not, those speech acts magically worked on the audience and the intention of the meme creator was delivered successfully to the audience of that meme.

2- In what ways have the speech acts in memes been used to represent different types ofcyberbullying on social media (Facebook)?

Regarding the possible types of cyberbullying in memes, the concept of Willard was followed for defining and identifying cyberbullying in memes. Most of the memes belonged to the category of denigration and outing of cyberbullying whereas some of them also represented harassment. Cyberbullying in form of defamation and discrimination was also observed. Most of the memes were created by using offensive, derogatory and vulgar terms and some of them used malicious images as well. The other types of cyberbullying such as flaming, impersonation, trickery, exclusion and cyberstalking were not found in data memes. The types of cyberbullying found in memes were found in verbal as well as non-verbal forms.

3- How have the various forms of social media memes been influenced by the possible motivating factors in the background

While exploring possible motivating factors, only contextual and contextural clues were used for the interpretation of memes. Internet addiction can be a factor behind the creation of memes. With lots of growing trends in today's world and the availability of so many hot topics, people want to spend their maximum time on social media. Related to the factor mentioned above, seeking attention can also be a factor behind creating various memes. In the offline world, usually people are not given much attention and their opinions and ideas may not be respected as well circulated widely. Therefore, since the advent of memes on social media, people have a growing chance of grabbing others attention. Entertainment can also be a factor behind the creation of excessive memes whereas the availability of plenty of time can be another reason, especially in the scenario of COVID-19. People on social media deliberately create such content to insult, humiliate

and make fun of others and they name it as mere fun or entertainment. The context of the memes revealed that factors of toxic online disinhibition effect contributed to the creation of various memes. Suler (2004) has also highlighted certain factors that boost cyberbullying and they can be related to this study because when those factors are supportive, the creation of memes becomes easier on the internet. The factors are dissociative anonymity (not known or fake identities), invisibility (not reachable physically), asynchronicity (delayed response), solipsistic introjection (lack of non-verbal clues), dissociative imagination (social media user's world) and minimization of status and authority (without fear of status).

4- How do memes on Facebook represent socio-legal sensitivities?

The aim of this research was to discover socio-legal sensitivities surrounding selected memes as well. It was possible to understand things working behind surface level and to comprehend the way these memes represent socio-legally sensitive content. In all the selected memes, one thing was prominent that the creator and audience of the memes did not have any positive motive behind them because all that was found in those memes was humiliation, swearing and disrespect. All these forms of cyberbullying paved the way for the spread of hatred amongst people. Words that spread hatred, harsh criticism, abuse, threat, swearing, humiliation, bitter humor and so on are considered socio-legal sensitivities. The examples relate to the use of slang and offensive words, inappropriate images, the judgment of character, body shaming, name-calling, referring to pornography, content damaging dignity and reputation of subjects and so on. The point to note here is that people responsible for creating culpable content are ignorant of socio-legal sensitivities.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that

1- People should be guided about the use of social networking sites and there should be awareness among people regarding the culpability of content. They should be sensitized enough to filter sensitive content beforehand.

2- Although many social media sites provide privacy measures and try to protect the privacy of their users as much as possible, however, there will always be room for improvement. The chaos which is created by memes on public pages and groups mostly remains unnoticed by the authorities and this is the point that needs to be given due consideration. Therefore, it is recommended that there should be specific laws relevant to cyberbullying in the online world.

3- The research may provide new opportunities for further researchers as well. It may guide future researchers in this growing field. Therefore, from the perspective of the research, this type of the study may provide insight into legal challenges and sensitivities. It would appeal to the legal authorities to protect the rights of people on public networking sites through the application of forensic linguistics.

4- They may also get to know about cyberbullying that exists in the form of non-verbal speech acts in memes. Keeping in mind the limitations of this study, future researchers would be able to extend the viewpoint of this study. They would be guided by this study to explore memes, speech acts and cyberbullying by applying different linguistic strategies under forensic linguistics.

5- It is also recommended that people should be made aware of cyber laws to avoid trouble. They should know human rights before using social networking sites and they should also be aware of the content that is culpable and sensitive.

6- Besides, there should be awareness among people regarding the violation of human rights that is done in multiple ways on social media. This awareness will enable them to avoid situations where they create legally challenged content for devaluing other people.

7- There should be ways of educating ourselves and others regarding cyberbullying and its impacts as well as consequences. Appropriate technology usage should be given attention in this regard.

8- There should be training in education institutions and departments as well as precautionary measures.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, this study could be have been conducted in a better way with the help of an extensive multimodal analysis of memes because in memes various elements, other than language, take part in meaning-making and successful communication. Multimodal analysis of memes would have covered a broad range of aspects relevant to this study. Extending the argument, a comprehensive analysis of emojis used in memes could help in understanding meaning of memes in depth as well as extend the results. Secondly, the inclusion of comments could lead this study towards a better understanding of the effect that it has on the audience of memes. Because of the exclusion of comments under memes, the study did not identify the perlocutionary effect related to the speech acts that affect the audience. Thirdly, only one social media site, Facebook, was chosen as a source of data collection while other social media sites were not relied on to have more access to plenty of data. Data gathered from multiple forums may provide various dimensions to the study and a comparative study of different social media platforms can be done for comprehensive results. Lastly, many memes were found in Urdu language so the inclusion of such memes in the research study may extend the results.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

In the light of the findings and limitations of the study, suggestions for future research can be put forward as below:

1- It is suggested that future research may include other social media sites. A comparative study can also be done by selecting data from multiple social media sites so as to gauge the extent to which social media sites contain sensitive content.
2- In the future, a multimodal analysis of memes can also be done which hopefully can make it clear how cyberbullying is hidden inside memes on social media. Because of the multimodal analysis of meme,; it is hoped that it would be easier to comprehend the meaning behind the mere use of memes.

3- There should also be a study about the way non-verbal speech acts in memes represent cyberbullying through memes. Previous studies have shown that memes can be the representation of non-verbal speech acts. However, it would be worth-knowing as to how cyberbullying without words can be done through non-verbal speech acts. A future study of this type can make people aware of this side of social media as well.

4- It would be worthwhile to pay attention to the use of emojis on social media as a trending way of practicing cyberbullying. There have been cases handled in the courtroom where people got punished due to the spread of violence through the use of memes (www.theconversation.com). An extensive study on social media in this matter can be helpful for further awareness.

5- It has been observed that not only memes but videos on social media also carry sensitive content (abusive, vulgar and offensive) and videos are also used to threaten and harass people on social media. A multimodal study of videos on social media can extend the viewpoint of this study. By generating corpus in this regard can be helpful.

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APPENDIX A

The undertaking letter of the lawyer has been attached.

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Ref No. DBA JM. 71

Date 7/1/2021

Undertaking Letter for Research Guidance

January 07, 2021

Jhelum

This undertaking letter is to inform that I have expertise in the domain of cyberbullying, cybercrimes and cyberlaws. I am willing to help Ms. Rakhshanda Elahi doing MPhil Linguistics at National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad in her research project. I will provide requisite guidance regarding her research work titled as *Cyberbullying: A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Social Media Memes.*

Kind Regards,

SAJJAD ALI
ADVOCATE HIGH COURT
DISTRICT COURTS JHELUM
CELL: 0333-5824294