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## Politics of Hate and Social Media: Thematic Analysis of Political Hate Discourses on Facebook



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**Abstract:** This article documented the presence of politically motivated hate content in online political discourses and also explored major themes against political opponents in Pakistan. A total of 744 posts were collected from Facebook pages affiliated with two major political parties. The amount indicates the significant amount of politically motivated hate content presented in online political discourses. The data were thematically analyzed from which 3 major themes emerged. The data revealed that political discourses were filled with denigration of opposites through abusive and disgusted language followed by the dehumanization of opposites such as naming and comparing with different animals like dogs, pigs etc. It was also found that character assassination was done by framing opposites as morally and socially characterless, by accusing them as sexually corrupt, drug addictive, and as well homosexual etc. Lastly, the opposites were framed as "anti-state", "traitors" and "foreign agents who have become "threats" to national peace, cohesion and integrity of the state and as well to destabilize the country.

**Key Words:** Hate Speech, Media Framing, Thematic Analysis, Political Discourse, Social Media, Pakistani Politics

### Introduction

In Pakistan, political hate and political radicalization have become concerning issues which can be evident during the electioneering period and political-related activities. There have been several violent incidents and clashes between political workers and supporters have been reported on mainstream media in Pakistan from 1988 to 2015 in which a number of people were killed and several injured during the violent

political clashes between different political groups (Shapiro, Fair, & Rais, 2010). With the increased utilization of social media by different political groups, there have been also increased chances of more violence and political radicalization in society. This study aims to provide an in-depth insight into the presence of hate discourses in the online political sphere specifically on Facebook and explore major themes within these hate discourses against certain political opposites to promote and propagate hate and political

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radicalization through new means of communication.

### **Social Media and Politics of Hate**

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Social media is defined as “a group of Internet-based applications” which allows its users to create and exchange content within and outside of the network (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The technological infrastructure of social media enables the creation of specific content in textual, audio and visuals format to disseminate (Daugherty et al., 2008). Different characteristics and features available on social media make it a very important tool for political communication and engagement (Bronstein & Aharony, 2015) as politicians are promoting their political agenda and influencing the opinions of their supporters and workers very effectively (Caplan, 2013). Despite the important and positive role of social media in political communication, it has also become a fertile ground for the dissemination of radical political ideology and hate narratives through hate full discourses (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003). It is argued that social media could be a source of political radicalization, and electoral violence through the dissemination of fake news stories, false and fabricated information and rumours about certain social and political issues (Berecz & Devinat, 2016; Keipi et al., 2017).

### **Politically Motivated Hate Speech in Pakistan**

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Pakistan has a longstanding history of political violence and incidents. In different political incidents and clashes between different political workers and supporters, there were 128 deaths and 142 injuries were reported during the 2008 and 2013 general elections in Pakistan (*Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, 2013*). In 2014 sit ins of a political party in Islamabad and clashes between the supporters and law enforcement agencies are some examples of political incidents in which several people were injured. It was noted that media cells of two major political parties during the general elections of 2018 deliberately utilized social media for the dissemination of hate discourse through a “war of words”, accusing and abusing their opposites through derogatory and disgusted words like “beghairat” (shameless) and “children of prostitutes” etc. Christophrou (2014) argued that social media can create an

environment and sense of political disengagement if the discourses of hatred and intolerance are allowed on this new media.

### **Framing and Social Media**

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Framing on social media is somehow a new topic because social media enable people to play a more direct role in the communication process as compared to traditional media in which societal and political elite have control and utilize traditional media to frame different issues according to their specific interests. With the more direct and uncensored role of social media, now the framing research has been turned towards the framing of different issues of public concern with the help of new means of communication. New media have changed the patterns of interactions and communication with its technological infrastructure which allows individuals and organizations to communicate with the public without any restrictions which were imposed by traditional media and develop their own unique messaging strategies. (Krieger, 2014) It was found that “social media creates new contexts for activism that do not exist in the world of traditional mass media organizations”. DeLuca, Lawson and Sun (2012)

### **Statement of the Problem**

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Despite the positive role of social media in political communication, the popularity of social media among politicians, political workers and political organizations also raised some concerning questions about the dark side of social media specifically Facebook as a communication channel (Wickremesinhe & Hattotuwa, 2016). People are disseminating hateful, defamatory and objectionable content against certain political opposites including politicians, political parties and political workers through creating different Facebook pages (Wickremesinhe & Hattotuwa, 2016). During political activities and at the time of different conflicts and crises, a lot of hate content is disseminated on social media to achieve specific political goals and agenda which sometimes convert into violent incidents in those societies such as Pakistan which are already divided into many religious, ethnic and regional lines and cleavages (Muluka & Nassiuma, 2017).

In this qualitative study, the data was analyzed thematically to explore major themes

within online political discourses against certain political groups. This study analyzed major frames and themes within political hate discourses on politically oriented Facebook pages of two major political parties in Pakistan. This article developed and contributed a solid theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing political hate and radicalization content on social media within the political context of Pakistan.

### Research Questions

- RQ1:** How Facebook was used for the dissemination of politically motivated hate content?
- RQ2:** What were the major themes against political opposites in online political discourses on Facebook?

### Research Methodology

In this article, a qualitative research design was used to investigate a new and unexplored phenomenon of hate content in political discourses on social media. Qualitative research design can provide a depth and detailed understanding of a particular topic or issue. (Shuttleworth, 2019) Thematic analysis was employed to investigate this new phenomenon to uncover the prominent themes within political hate discourses. Anderson (2007) argued that thematic analysis is used to understand new and unknown issues and phenomena.

### Collection of Data

In this study, the selection of Facebook pages for the collection of the most appropriate and

relevant data was an important step. Facebook pages of two major political parties were selected which were clear affiliations with these political parties and had clear intentions to promote political hate, and radicalization in Pakistan. Kozinets (2010) suggested that Facebook pages should be “relevant”, “active”, “interactive”, “substantial”, “heterogeneous” and “data-rich” for qualitative scientific research.

The researcher set up a “profile” on Facebook and utilized Facebook “search engine” to search and collect the appropriate and relevant data as in previous studies (Wickremesinha & Hattotuwa, 2016.; Kushin & Kichner, 2009.; Gyulai, 2016). The researcher used different “names”, of prominent politicians such as “Nawaz Sharif”, “Imran Khan” and political party names such as “PMLN”, “PTI” with their electoral signs such as “Lion”, “Bat” with a specific word “hate” to search for the most relevant Facebook pages.

As a result, Facebook's "search engine" listed almost 40 to 50 groups and pages by placing the most "liked" pages at the top. (Woolley et al., 2010). The researcher analyzed the “page names”, “profile pictures”, “cover photos” and also the “definition and about” section of the pages to understand the intention of specific pages for the promotion of political hate. The researcher selected those pages which have more than 100000 “members” or “likes” to ensure a sufficient number of mass communication and selected “active” pages which were updated regularly and most recently.

The following four pages were selected

**Table 1**

S. No	Statements	Likes
1.	I Hate Imran Khan(The Master of U-Turn)	(+237000)
2.	<i>(The symbol of the Bat represents prostitutes)</i> کنجروں کی بیچان، بیلے کا نشان	(+500000)
3.	I Hate Nawaz Sharif- The Master of Noora Kushti	(+323000)
4.	<i>(The symbol of the Lion represents Shameless people)</i> غیر توں کی بیچان، شیر کا نشان	(+500000)

The data was collected from those pages which were “publically accessible” and no consent and prior permission was required from groups to analyze the data. The researcher did not select the “closed” and “secret groups/pages”.

### Population and Sample of the Study

From a total population of 10395 posts from all four pages, there were 744 posts were purposefully collected and categorized as hate and offensive content. “Many qualitative

researchers employ purposive, and not random, sampling methods” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). The data was collected manually and each post was extracted and copied. This data was saved into PDF files because was taken to the data software analysis Nvivo for further analysis and exploring major themes.

### Data Analysis

The entire Facebook post with associated text and an image which include multiple sub-images was considered as a "unit of analysis" for coding themes. Themes emerged after employing three types of coding such as open, axial and selective coding in thematic analysis. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) Initially, the researcher identified various open codes after reading the Facebook posts line by line and broke the data into different codes.

After generating initial codes, relevant codes were connected to each other and developed categories and subcategories in axial coding lastly, the researcher in selective coding, different categories were condensed and identified different themes which were integrated to structure the theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Themes were the basic idea that answered the research question of the study. The researcher used "Nvivo12" qualitative data analysis software for coding. Welsh, E (2002)

### Findings

The research questions were to explore the frequency of politically motivated hate content and the prominent themes within political hate discourses.

**Table 2**

*Political based Hate Posts on Facebook Pages*

	Pro PMLN Pages	Pro PTI Pages	Total
Political-Based Hate Content (Targeting Political leaders, workers, political ideology and views etc)	252	492	744

The data indicated that a total of 252 posts were presented on pro-PMLN Facebook pages while 493 posts from Pro PTI Facebook pages were categorized as politically based hate content in which political opposites including prominent politicians, political workers and specific political ideology targeted in much negative and hateful manner.

### Prominent Themes on Pro PTI and Pro PMLN Facebook Pages

After analyzing data thematically, following major politically motivated hate themes with some supportive sub-themes were identified.

**Table 3**

*Major Themes against Political Opposites in online Political hate Discourses*

Themes	Pro PMLN No. of Facebook Posts	Pro PTI
Denigrating and De-humanization of “Opposites”	82	146
“Opposites” are Morally and Socially Characterless (Character Assassination)	104	40
"Opposites" are threats to National Peace and Integrity (Anti-State)	21	156

**Table 4**

*Theme 1: Denigration and De humanization of Opposites*

Theme Identified	Sub Themes	Example Terms	
		Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
“Denigration and De-humanization of Opposites”	Abusive and Disgusted Language	“Gashti, Randi, Tawaif” “Kanjars”, “Laanati”, “Khabees”, “BeGhairat” Shameless	“Dallal”, “Kanjari”, “Beghairat”, “Bad nasal”, “Germ of Sewerage”, “Lanti”, “Laeen”

Theme Identified	Sub Themes	Example Terms	
		Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
	Comparing Opposites with Animals	"Son of Denkeys", "Dog", "Son of Bitch", "Pig", "Fox" "Posting Pictures of animals with opposites"	"street dog", "germs of sewerage", "son of mares" and "donkeys", "Poisonous Snakes"

### Denigration through Abusive and Disgusted Language

The data reveals that online political discourses were filled with offensive, bizarre and disgusting language which was the major and essential part of online hate content in which opposites were insulted and denigrated in much hate full manner. Political opposites including party heads, and their workers were targeted and abused with derogatory words such as "Beghairat", "Laanati", "Khabees", "prostitute", "Dalal", "Shameless", "Kanjari" etc. Political leaders were frequently called "bad blood in their veins", "bad Nasal", "germ of sewerage" and "poisonous snakes" in these online hate discourses and different derogatory terms were associated with opposites such as "Lanati", "Laeen", "Diesel", "Alien donkey", "Monkeys".

In online political hate discourses, female politicians and workers were specifically targeted because of their participation in politics and framed that females having no place in politics. Female politicians were targeted on their physical appearances such as their makeup and dresses and were abused by calling them "Randi", "Gashti" "Kanjarian" prostitutes and "Pestri". Ethnic and religious affiliations of opposites were also targeted such as naming "Balochi Dog", and Punjabi as "Namak Haram", and Afghani as "parasite" while also framing opposites as traitors of Nammos e Risalat (PBUH) calling them "fuel of hell", "Lanti", "Mushrik", etc.

### De-humanization. (Comparing Opposites with Animals)

The data reveals that politicians were "dehumanized" by posting pictures of animals and directly naming opposites with these animals. Facebook posts were created through graphics of politicians with animals and as well with abusive and textual critiques. It was found that these graphic illustrations gained thousands of likes and shares from the public. In these posts, opposites were compared and called "Dog", "Monkey", "Fox", "Pig" etc. It was found that in the "animalistic dehumanization" approach, pictures of politicians were coupled with animals such as dogs having also some verbal and textual abuse. In these discourses, opposites were targeted with derogatory words and disgusted remarks associated with negative characteristics, traits and misdeeds of political opposites. Opposites were directly called "dogs", "Khinzeer" meaning Pig, "Loomar" meaning Fox and also considered "snakes".

Political workers were called dogs, monkeys, cockroaches, "germs of sewerage", "street dogs", and "sons of a donkey". In different posts, political workers were considered mental slaves like "donkeys" and "monkeys". Political workers were framed as "senseless" and "idiots" who are the supporters of corrupt and characterless politicians. In different posts, direct threats and incitements were presented in which it was demanded that these "mad dogs" must be killed and hanged till death.

### Theme 2: (Character Assassination) "Opposites" are morally and socially Characterless

**Table 5**

*Theme 2: Character Assassination of Opposites in Online Political hate Discourses*

Theme Identified	Sub Themes	Example Terms	
		Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
	Sexualized Insults and Allegations, Sexual Deviance	Sex animal, Homosexual as	Highlighting sex scandals of Opposites, Gays

Theme Identified	Sub Themes	Example Terms	
		Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
“Opposites” are Morally and Socially Characterless (Character Assassination)	Graphic illustrations Contain vulgarity	“Washil”, Certified Rapist Naked bodies Images with females	Involved in Child Pornography “Dallal”, Naked graphics of female candidates,
		Cocaine Khan Kuppi Taan	Users of alcohol and narcotics.
	Opposites as Drug Addictive	Looters of State assets	Dacait, Thief Thugs of Pakistan
	Opposites are Financially Corrupt		

The data from Facebook pages reveals that the focus was to frame the opposites as morally and socially characterless in online political discourses. Character assassination was done by framing opposites as “sex animals”, “homosexual”, and “gays” and highlighting the proposed sex scandals of opposites in online political discourses.

**Sexual Deviance. Sexualized Insults and Allegations**

Opposites were frequently accused and blamed through making sexualized insults and allegations to frame them as “sexually corrupt” such as “homosexuals”, “gays” and “sex animals” who are involved in illegal sexual relations. In many posts, a prominent politician was named a “horrible sexual deviant” and “homosexual” who gets pleasure to see the naked bodies of males. In many posts, proposed “sexual” scandals of politicians were highlighted in which opposites were targeted and framed as “characterless” that have also become threats to the moral and social values of the society. The Opposite’s personal character was also targeted and considered against the moral and ethical values of society.

*“he is now talking about the Riayast Madina while at his young age, he had done all the evils which were against the moral and social values”.*

In many posts, opposites were framed as “certified zaani (Rapist)”, and associated with disgusting activities such as homosexuality through calling “Washal”. Opposites were associated with bad activities like child abuse and pornography which show their sexual misbehavior and shameful acts. It was frequently argued that politicians have indulged them in illegal activities such as harassing their female workers and argued that no female can come into

politics without having sexual relations with elite leaders. In this regard, proposed sexual scandals were highlighted to frame opposites as sexually and morally characterless.

**Vulgar Language and Snaps**

The data reveals that online hate content consisted of vulgar language and graphics of male and female politicians. These types of posts gained thousands of likes and shares which also indicated the penetration of such content within the network. Edited pictures and graphics which fall into the vulgarity such as naked bodies of male and female opposites were frequently posted in which opposites were involved in unethical activities contains such vulgar remarks and captions on these graphics such as “Imrandu”, “Chootia”, “Kanjari”, “Harami” were continuously used in online political hate discourses. Distorted and edited images of male and female leaders and workers were posted which clearly highlight the sexual misconduct of the opposites. Female workers were called “Randi”, “Gashti” “sons of prostitute women”, and “sex ladies”. The physical appearance of female politicians and workers such as wearing jeans and make up was targeted with different abusive remarks.

**Opposites as Drug Addictive**

Character assassination was also carried out by accusing opposite politicians as “users of drugs and narcotics” and framed as “drug addictive”. In some posts, it was claimed that

*“..... used about six grams cocaine in a night and this increases to a ridiculous level with three bags of the “magic stuff” were consumed in one night”.*

Politicians were framed as drug users in different posts and it was argued that this “drug

mafia” is a threat to the development of the country. It was argued that these drug users have lost their senses and are not fit for leading the country to social, and economic development and also against the national peace and integrity of the state. In different posts, opposites were framed as the distributor of narcotics by highlighting different cases in the court and claimed the conviction of this drug mafia from the court in a case of illegal supply of narcotics. Pictures of politicians while holding vine in their hands and taking cocaine were posted. Politicians were named "Kuppi Taan", "Powdery", "Charsi" etc in these posts.

### Politicians are financially Corrupt (“Dacait”, “Thief”)

In online political discourse, opposites were framed as “financially corrupt” and framed as "looters", and "thieves" and were named as “Daku”, and "Chor” through highlighting different corruption scandals and court decisions against certain political leaders. Political opposites were considered responsible for the destruction of any state department because of their proposed

“corruption”, “money laundering” and “bad governance”. To strengthen this argument, issues of health, education, and poverty were highlighted in many posts in which these corrupt politicians were considered responsible and had no sympathy for the common people of Pakistan. It was argued that these corrupt politicians have also become a threat to the dignity and sovereignty of the state to save their corruption.

It was argued that these corrupt Mafia have common interests and deep roots in every department and is so powerful they are not accountable to any court. These politicians were framed as the “friends of corruption” and “Haram Khor” who have stolen the state money and who have supported each other to save their corruption through “Meesaq corruption”.

### Theme 3: “Politicians are Threat to National Peace and Integrity”

In online political discourses, political opposites were framed as "threats" to national peace and integrity by questioning their role in internal and external matters of the state and their specific stance and policies towards specific issues.

**Table 6**

*Theme: Politicians are Threat to National Peace and Integrity*

Theme Identified	Sub Themes	Example Terms Pro PMLN	Pro PTI
"Opposites" are a threat to National Peace and Integrity"	"Traitors", "Anti-State"	"Foreign agent", "Taliban Khan" "Pro Israel & America"	"Moodi Ka Yaar" "Ghaddar", "Rakhail", "Meer Jafar", "Meer Sadiq"

In online political discourses, political leaders and their supporters were framed as “anti-state”, “traitors”, “friends of India”, “foreign agents”, named “Moodi ka Yaar”, “Yahoodi Khan” etc and were framed as “threat” for national security, integrity, stability and national interests of the state. It was claimed that the negative role played by these politicians on the specific financial agenda and specific political interests with India, Israel and America.

### Opposites as “Anti-State”

Politicians were framed as “anti-state” by targeting specific statements and policies of

opposites which were framed as against national interests and security of the state, e.g in many posts it was frequently argued that “*Missiles and the Tanks are Burdon on the State*” which considered as the intentional effort from a specific political group to target and malign Pakistan army to accomplish the specific foreign agenda. It was argued in many posts, that politicians have specific political agenda and financial benefits to target the nuclear and atomic program of Pakistan with the aim to destabilize the country. In some other posts, the military was directly targeted and framed as the "root cause" of every problem in the country. The military leadership was considered responsible to have the ultimate power that is not

accountable and involved in politics which has destroyed the political sphere of the country. It was argued that the planned efforts are part of the game plan to demoralize the security forces as well as to target the military institutions of the country.

In many posts, politicians were considered "responsible" for the separation of East Pakistan into Bangla Desh who were involved in such anti-state activities on the agenda of India. This issue was much highlighted on Facebook in which politicians were framed as traitors and the loyalty of politicians to the state was questioned that who even divided the motherland. The issue of the Mumbai attacks and the proposed visit of Israeli Prime Ministers was frequently highlighted and considered a matter of grave concern for the national interests of Pakistan. These issues also raised questions about politicians' commitments to the constitution of Pakistan and argued that these "anti-state" politicians are now working on the same agenda as Indian like in East Pakistan.

Opposites were also framed as "shameless" and "dishonour" elements who are responsible for the destruction of state interest and it was demanded that these elements must be trialled and they must be hanged till death because of their anti-state stance and efforts to discredit Pakistan in the eyes of the international community.

### **Opposites are Traitors “Foreign Agents”**

Political discourse on Facebook was filled with anti-India and anti-America narratives and statements. In online political discourses, political opposites were intensively framed as “traitors” and “foreign agents” by naming them as “Moodi ka Yaar”, and “Yahoodi Khan” who are working on the agenda of America and India. In this regard, the issue “Kalboshan Yadav arrest” was highlighted and argued on both pro-PMLN and PTI Facebook pages. A prominent leader of a political party was considered a “poisonous snake” and a “political dancer” as he admitted in his interview about the “Mumbai Attacks” were planned and operated from Pakistan. This statement was much highlighted in Indian and international media that Pakistan is involved in state terrorism in India because his ex-Prime Minister is admitting the “Mumbai Attacks”. It was argued that these Indian friends have sold their dignity, self-respect and the respect of the state

because they have attacked the national security of Pakistan which proved them as “traitors” and “poisonous snakes” that are against the national security and integrity of the state and injecting poison in the veins of the society. It was argued that politicians have compromised on security issues of state who have never spoken a single word against Indian terrorist “Kalbohsan” and other terrorist activities which have been facilitated and done by India. Politicians were named “rotten egg”, “Rakhail” and the “illegal son” of Moodi and also named “Meer Jafar” and “Meer Sadiq” who has done the same job as these traitors.

Opposites were framed as the “worst enemies” of Pakistan who are working on the agenda of India, America and Israel to destabilize Pakistan by propagating against Pakistan's army with the help of Indian media.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study found a significant amount of politically motivated hate content was posted on politically oriented Facebook pages of two mainstream political parties. These Facebook pages have thousands of followers and likes from the public. It was noted that some posts containing hate content gained thousands of “likes” and “shares” which indicated the penetration of such hate content within and also out of the network. This study strengthened that Facebook was significantly used as an important communication tool for “politics of hate” to promote and propagate politics of hate and radicalization in Pakistani society which have already a long history of political conflicts and tensions between different groups.

After analyzing data thematically, three major themes were identified first “denigration and dehumanization” in which political opposites were denigrated and insulted through disgusted, abusive and derogatory remarks and language and also “dehumanized” opposites through naming and framing opposites as animals in such online posts with such pictorial graphics of animals compared with politicians containing animal names like dogs, monkey etc. It is stated that the use of disgusted, crude and ill-mannered language in Pakistani politics is very common which also increases the moral crisis in the society and the collected data in this study strengthened this argument as online political discourses on



Facebook was also filled with such type of ridiculous, disgusted, immoral, abusive and bad language against political opposites which is considered immoral and not allowed in routine life. The abusive and disgusting language was the major ingredient of online political hate discourse.

Politicians and political workers were abused in much hateful and derogatory manner such as calling them "Shameless", "Kanjar", "Beghairat", "sex animal", "Germ of Sewerage", "Son of Prostitute" Randi, Tawaif, Dallal, Lanti etc. The data indicated and strengthened the argument that abusing and accusing opposites, targeting their personal life which also motivates the culture of slapping opposites indicate the radical and intolerant mindset of politicians Mehroo (2019).

The data found that dehumanization was also very frequent and prominent in these online hate discourses. De-Humanization can be understood as treating people are less than fully human including "denials of humanness" to both individuals and groups. (Haslam & Loughnan, 2016) Opposites were dehumanized through posting images of different animals like dogs etc even directly calling them "dog", "monkey", "pig", "Street dog", "son of mares", "donkey" etc and also the opposites were framed as "inferior", "aliens", "inhuman" and like "animals" in these discourses. It was found that edited graphics and pictures of prominent opposites with different animals were frequently and prominently posted on Facebook pages which gain many likes and shares which strengthen that online hate discourses contain "dehumanizing messages" like images, cartoons, artworks and memes" (Cassese, 2020).

The next major theme against political opposites was "character assassination" in which political rivals and opposites were framed as "morally" and "socially" characterless with some supportive sub-themes like opposites such as "Homosexuals", and "Drug addictive". This was done through sexualized insults and allegations and vulgar snaps and graphics. Opposites were also framed as "financially corrupt" and looters of the state asses. The objective of character assassination is to deliberately damage the reputation of opposites and develop an extremely negative or unappealing perception and credibility of anyone to reduce political support in

political campaigns and during elections (Icks & Shiraev, 2014). In this study, opposites were frequently blamed as massive drug "addictive" and users of "alcohol" and "narcotics" naming as "Cocaine Khan", "Kuppi Taan", and "Powdery".

Character assassination was done by highlighting proposed sexual relations and sex scandals of opposites and framed as "sex animals", "homosexuals", and "gays" who have no moral and ethical values. In this regard, edited graphics with abusive and derogatory remarks were posted in which politicians were framed as sexually characterless. For example, opposites were targeted through sexualized insults and allegations and posting "vulgar images" with "vulgar remarks" and language in these discourses such as calling opposites "certified rapists", "washal" etc. It is argued that vulgarity in political discourse is able to "affect receivers' behavioural intention" and the use of swear words by political candidates can increase the perceived ability of the people which aim the major intention of character assassination of the opposite and make a good impression about the source Cavazza & Guidett (2014).

Another major theme against political opposites was "politicians are a threat to national peace and integrity" in online political discourses. A lot of hate content was available in which opposites were deliberately accused as "anti-state", "traitors", and "foreign agents" and were also framed as "threats" to national peace, national interests and security of the state. In this regard, different terms such as "Moodi ka Yaar", "Yahoodi Khan", "Raw Agent" etc were used and framed opposites as on the agenda of "India", "America" and "Israel". Opposites were framed as "pro-American and pro-Indian" because of specific "anti-state" actions they were considered as "threats" to the social cohesion, diverse cultural and ethnic affiliations and as well against the economic development of Pakistan.

Different issues such as the "Mumbai attacks" and the arrest of Indian secret agent "Kalbhoshan Yadev" was highlighted in which the loyalty of political opponents was questioned. It was stated that political opposites have anti-state agenda and are framed as "Pro Taliban" and "Pro Indian" who have a soft corner for these anti-state elements because of specific financial benefits which are against the sovereignty and integrity of the state. In these discourses, political leaders were framed

as the "worst enemy" of Pakistan and were declared as "mad dogs" who have become dangerous to their own country. Opposites were named "Nawaz Lal Nehro", "Imran Smith", "rotten eggs", "Meer Jafar", "Meer Sadiq" and "illegal son of Moodi" to target their opposites and framed them as "anti-state" and "traitors".

In conclusion, the findings of this study strengthened the argument that specific features and characteristics like "inexpensive", "unregulated", "ideologically heterogeneous communication space", and "instant dissemination of breaking news" (Christofrou,

[2014](#)) make social media a fertile ground for hate communication. In this study, it was found that Facebook was effectively and distinctively used by different political groups to promote and propagate political hate and political radicalization in society. The results of this study are significant in that they demonstrate the capability of social networks specifically Facebook to promote and propagate politics of hate and intolerance in society because it has been argued that social media can be a source of "flame of wars" which can strengthen conflicts between different groups in the society (Cammaerts, [2009](#)).

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