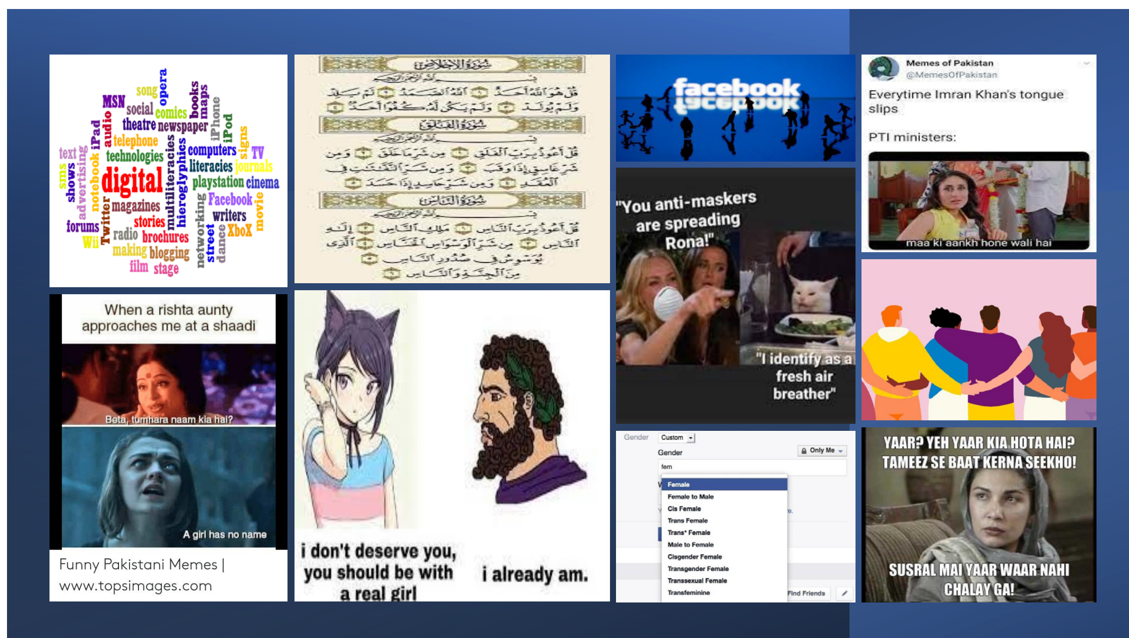
JYU DISSERTATIONS 537

Rauha Salam-Salmaoui

Constructing Gender Identities Multimodally

Young, Middle-Class Pakistanis on Facebook



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

JYU DISSERTATIONS 537

Rauha Salam-Salmaoui

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Young, Middle-Class Pakistanis on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

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In recent years, in Pakistan, Facebook has emerged as a dynamic online platform that provides its users (both men and women) with unparalleled opportunities to express themselves using variety of multimodal resources. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis and taking insights from the theory of performativity, this study specifically aimed to examine how young middle-class Pakistani men and women mobilise visual and linguistic resources in constructing their gender identities in their Facebook posts. More importantly, the study explored in what ways young middle-class Pakistani men and women adhere to or contest the prevailing linguistic and socio-cultural norms and stereotypical gender notions in Pakistan in their Facebook posts and what specific role Facebook plays in enabling and constraining the construction of their gender identities. The results of the study indicated that in Pakistan, Facebook constitutes as a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, Facebook has become another venue where gender norms are reinforced and perpetuated. On the other hand, Facebook was found to be particularly empowering for previously marginalised groups (e.g., women assault victims, the LGBT community) as it offered them space to resist the dominant hegemonic discourses. Thus, these results are in line with previous findings that the gender differences visible in the offline world are not only reinforced but also challenged on social media platforms, as these provide users with a site on which they can simultaneously transgress the dominant gender ideologies.

Keywords:
Gender Identities, Pakistan, Middle-Class, Multimodality, Performativity

TIIVISTELMÄ

Salam-Salmaoui, Rauha
Sukupuoli-identiteetin multimodaalinen rakentuminen: nuoret, keskiluokkaiset pakistanilaiset Facebookissa
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Viime vuosina Facebookista on tullut Pakistanissa dynaaminen internetalusta, joka tarjoaa käyttäjille mahdollisuuksia ilmaista itseään uusilla, monimodaalisilla tavoilla. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan multimodaalisen diskurssianalyysin ja performatiivisuuden teorian avulla sitä, miten nuoret, keskiluokkaiset pakistanilaisnaiset ja -miehet käyttävät visuaalisia ja kielellisiä resursseja rakentaessaan sukupuoli-identiteettejään Facebook-postauksissaan. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan erityisesti sitä, miten pakistanilaisnaisten ja -miesten tavat esittää sukupuolta Facebook-postauksissa sekä noudattavat että haastavat vallitsevia kielellisiä ja sosiokulttuurisia normeja sekä Pakistanissa vallitsevia sukupuolistereotypioita. Lisäksi tutkittiin, millaisilla tavoilla Facebook itsessään mahdollistaa ja rajoittaa sukupuoli-identiteettien rakentumista. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat Facebook-viestinnän monitahoisuuden. Yhtäältä Facebookista on tullut paikka, jossa sukupuolinormeja vahvistetaan. Toisaalta Facebook osoittautui voimaannuttavaksi aiemmin marginaalisoiduille ryhmille kuten väkivallan kohteeksi joutuneille naisille ja LGBT-yhteisöille: se tarjoaa tilan, jossa vastustaa vallitsevia hegemonisia diskursseja. Nämä tulokset vahvistavat aiempia tutkimustuloksia, joiden mukaan sosiaalisessa mediassa voidaan sekä vahvistaa että haastaa yhteiskunnassa vallitsevia sukupuolieroja.

Avainsanat: sukupuoli-identiteetti, Pakistan, keskiluokka, multimodaalisuus, performatiivisuus

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DEDICATION

For my father, *Sheikh Abdus Salam*, who till his last breath made sure that I received everything that I needed to pursue this PhD degree

مجھ کو چھاؤں میں رکھا اور خود
وہ جلتا رہا
میں نے دیکھا ایک فرشتہ باپ کی
پرچھائی میں

((He) kept me protected under the shade while he himself burnt I saw an angel in the form of a father)

For my mother, *Tahira Salam*, to whom I owe my life

دشور راتوں میں بھی آسان سفر
لگاتا ہے۔
ہان میری ماں کی دعاؤں کا اثر
لگتا ہے۔

(Travelling seems to become easy in the darkest
nights yes, it’s because of my mother’s prayers)

For my husband, *Amine Salmaoui*, who is equally proud of my work.

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"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it"

(William Arthur Ward)

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I am also indebted to Saara Jäntti, Samu Kytölä and Saana Tapionkaski for their invaluable insights, feedback, unfailing support, and patience during this research project. I am also grateful to my text group, Sari Piittinen, Päivi Iikkanen, Elina Westinen, Milja Seppala and Karina Doi for their comments on my work and encouragement which meant a lot and provided me with the fuel that kept me going. I am particularly thankful to the Department of Language and Communication studies for their support, which turned out to be crucial in completing this research project.

To my Guardian Angels, I can barely find appropriate words to express my gratitude for all the wisdom, love, and support that they have given me during the process of this research. I am grateful to my father, Sheikh Abdus Salam, for showing me the joy of intellectual pursuit ever since I was a child and thus laying the foundations of my scholarly ambition. I also thank my mother, Tahira Salam, for her unconditioned love and unflinching care that has always provided me with a haven in rough and difficult times. I cannot repay my parents for the struggle and effort that they put in to raising me and providing me with the opportunity to acquire a privileged education. I am also very grateful to my elder sister, Shazrah and my brothers Shajee and Sunie for being in my corner and for pushing me forward when I was ready to give up.

In the end, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my friends, especially Ashrafi Sahab, who taught me the most important skills for survival not only in academia but also outside the university world, Rukhsana Ali, with whom I have spent not only the highs and lows during the writing of this dissertation but to whom I also look up to as an elder sister, Nosheen Kiran, who I always found to be on my side, and last but not least, Samim and Teija, for always being there.

Jyväskylä 24.05.2022
Rauha Salam

PREFACE

Growing up in Pakistan, as soon as I hit my teens, I noticed something odd, something that I could not completely understand, something that I would often find myself questioning. You see, I belong to that 'privileged' stratum of Pakistani society where my father had not only allowed my elder sister and I to study in a co-education institution, but he had also allowed us (single women) to travel abroad to seek higher education. This privilege did not end here. I mean, it was not just for us (daughters) that he had been a caring father, I (I am sure my sister also feels the same way) saw him as a staunch supporter of my mother as he would encourage her to continue with her career in the academy. He let the women of his home go out to work and study, something that is still not common in Pakistani society. Not just this, even inside the 'Chardeewari' (four walls) of our home, we found him to be the kindest, the most loving father and husband, something that he was not afraid to express or show, especially to us, his daughters. I remember him sharing equal responsibility with my mother when it came to raising us and taking care of the household chores. My mother, on the other hand, made sure that her children, home, and husband were well taken care of and showed us how skilfully she balanced her domestic and professional life. Even more so, as on many occasions we saw her practically becoming my father's right hand. No decision, big or small, made by my father would go undiscussed with her, and my father always cherished and welcomed her opinion.

However, I observed early on that beyond the four walls of my home, the world I lived in was very different: it had a different set of rules for men and women. In this parallel world, men do not usually show their emotions, expressions of grief or pain. Moreover, they control their women's bodies, desires, and speech. Women, in turn, are reduced to the reproductive functions of their bodies and are often cast in the essentialist roles of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. Hence, I witnessed men being treated more respectfully and with honour, while women were denied education, career, and were sometimes not even mentioned on their family trees. Now, when I look at my life experiences in retrospect, I understand that it was no easy decision for my father to send us (my sister and I) to foreign lands alone, with no male 'in charge' of us. Moreover, at times, people within and outside of the family would hold him accountable for doing something that is still not a common practice in Pakistan. Sending 'single daughters', especially, away may bring 'dishonour' to the family name.

Torn between "loag kiya kahien gay", an Urdu expression for "what will people say" and our dreams, he nevertheless decided to let us fly, be our own person and allowed us to write our own stories. He wanted us to be independent and live in places where our names would be enough, and where no man would have the power to define our identities. My father also struggled (like any man in his position) at times without letting us know about it, as he was part of a society where, based on their gender, men and women are treated differently. However, as a father and a husband he was so different from many others, who, with their conservative patriarchal notions, built their egos and honour on the

misery of their women and who measured the strength of the women around them by the amount of misery they could endure for the sake of their men. I came to realise that, while exceptional men and women like my parents do exist in Pakistani society (as in other patriarchal societies), patriarchy and its ultimate connection with gender is so deeply embedded that it appears to be completely natural to almost everyone. I watched the many ways through which these notions are inculcated in the everyday lives of little boys and girls. For instance, they are not just reinforced via our institutions and our media; they are also implicitly slipped into our belief systems, our actions, and our desires, into the way we dress, groom, and conduct ourselves, and even into the kind of language we are expected to use. These notions of gender are so much taken for granted that most/many men and women in my society accept them as a divine decree.

During the years I worked on this dissertation, many incidents, and crimes in Pakistan, particularly against women (see, e.g., the case of Noor Muqqadam; the Minar-e-Pakistan incident; Qandeel Balouch's honour killing, the case of Zainab's rape, the motorway incident) were reported, including on social media. These also affected me, and I often found myself angry and dejected, especially at the situation of women in Pakistan, after reading the comments made by the public in response to such posts. Incidents like these not only furthered my interest in understanding the notion of gender in the social media context of Pakistan, but they and the debate they arouse clearly point to the urgency for more studies of this type.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation for study

This study is an attempt to explore how social media platforms, especially Facebook, in Pakistan, have evolved into a space which enables its users to simultaneously reinforce, and challenge gendered cultural norms. In the early 2000s, the use of social media had become a norm and I saw my classmates, both men and women, flocking to social media sites like Orkut, MySpace and Facebook to construct their profiles and connect with each other. Naturally, this curiosity and the need to be a part of the 'in thing' led me to create my own profile on Facebook. As a novice, I had no idea how things worked on these platforms, but the freedom to construct your own identity by using a variety of fun things like emojis, audios, videos, pictures, and writing "what's on your mind" and choosing who you want to connect with really caught my imagination. However, as I spent more time on social media, I observed how my female classmates, especially, who were usually covered from head to toe and who in their offline lives sometimes even trembled when talking to our male counterparts, chatted confidently with them on these platforms. I watched them express their opinions on issues like politics and religion, and even become involved in raising social awareness through their posts. Similarly, a gay friend at the university told me how social media not only allowed him to find likeminded people in Pakistan, but also how he felt secure on Facebook and Instagram in showing his 'true' identity to the world.

Despite these new developments, I also witnessed men engaging in more 'macho' activities, talking endlessly for instance about sports, cars, guns, bodybuilding, bullying minorities such as the transgender community, and sometimes even objectifying women who were on the pages that they joined/liked. It seemed as if social media had suddenly given them the liberty to be who they always wanted to be. At the same time, I also noted that some of my female class

fellows deleted their social media accounts. Upon inquiry, some of them showed me screenshots of their inboxes which were flooded with adult content and porn requests from men, while others said their male family members simply do not want them to be on social media sites, as it will give the family a bad name.

Thus, these encounters and observations made me realise that social media has become an avenue where gender norms are simultaneously reinforced and transgressed. Initially hailed as an "anonymous" and "gender free" space for all (Danet, 1998; Balka, 1993; Graddol and Swann, 1989), I came to recognize that the cyber social world too was heavily gendered. Thus, ideas about gender fill the world around me. It is precisely because gender appears to be so natural, combined with striking the intricate balance between being a 'good respectable Pakistani Muslim woman' and being free to use social media, that I was motivated to take a step back and examine gender from this perspective. This prompted me to question some of the most fundamental beliefs about gender. Doing this was not easy, given that gender is one of the main imperatives governing Pakistani society and culture. However, it is precisely the fact that gender appears to be so obvious and natural that makes the study of gender in today's virtual social world so interesting. It has challenged me to unveil the process of constructing gender identities that I have so long thought of as normal and unchangeable. This dissertation thus stems from the urge to study gender as something that is not handed down to us at birth but is the outcome of performing certain acts and as something that is not merely a cause but an effect.

In this chapter, I first present the general aims and research questions of this study. I then describe the social media landscape in Pakistan. After this, I give an historical account of the gender ideology prevalent in Pakistani culture. The last section describes the structure of the dissertation.

1.2 Study aims and research questions

The rise of internet usage by Pakistani men and women, especially the immense popularity of social media among young people, is increasingly disrupting and challenging the strict modes of behavioural monitoring and control at the personal, familial, institutional, and state levels. This popularity can in part be attributed to the fact that in Pakistan, social media in general, and Facebook in particular, offer a relatively unfettered platform for the dissemination and exchange of information and ideas. It can be argued that, unlike other mainstream media institutions — which can be controlled by the state or might not offer equal (or easy) opportunities of access — the relatively open (and in some cases even anonymous) access to and usage of Facebook has turned it into a popular medium of communication. It allows users to express even counterhegemonic ideas, question established power structures and generate discussions on taboo topics. It also allows marginalised groups, such as women, to voice their opinions and con-

cerns in unprecedented ways, thereby empowering them by challenging hegemonic and/or dominant forces and discourses (Schoemaker, 2016). However, as argued by various scholars (see, e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Mullany, 2004), no matter how powerful and effective social media may seem in these respects, in reality it is not a utopian fantasy, but can also be employed to reinforce stereotypical gender notions in hostile ways.

The reason for my decision to study the use of Facebook is its widespread popularity among young Pakistanis; currently, it is the most widely used social platform in the country (NapoleonCat.com, 2021). In recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a rise in research on psychological, sociological, political, and religious issues in the social media context (see section 1.3 for details). However, little research has documented the impact of these technologies on the socio-cultural and discourse practices of Pakistani social media users (see, however, Salam 2020; 2021 & 2021). This study contributes to filling this gap. Moreover, examining Facebook users' practices in relation to the dominant gender ideology may offer insights into the current transformative potential of social media in Pakistan. My research addresses the following questions:

1. How do young middle-class Pakistani men and women mobilise visual and linguistic resources in constructing their gender identities in their Facebook posts?
2. In what ways do young middle-class Pakistani men and women adhere to or contest the prevailing linguistic and socio-cultural norms and stereotypical gender notions in Pakistan in their Facebook posts?
3. What specific roles does Facebook play in enabling and constraining their construction of gender identities?

Before going into further details, I must also acknowledge here that in this dissertation, I have used the term "Pakistani middle-class men and women" which may give an impression of essentialised homogenised representation of the above-mentioned group. However, it must be remembered that this study is a qualitative exploratory one in which my aim was to understand how young middle-class Pakistanis not only mobilise visual and linguistic resources to construct their gender identities online but also how their Facebook posts adhere to or contest the established gender notions in Pakistan and in what ways Facebook plays a role in enabling and/or constraining their gender identities. I fully recognise that the participants who took part in this study represent only a small fraction of the Pakistani middle class, which is highly diverse in terms of gender, socio-cultural and religious practices. Therefore, the middle-class Pakistani men and women featured in this study may not be considered as a totalising representation of the Pakistani middle class.

The above-mentioned research questions were explored in three interrelated articles. In the first two articles, I employed Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) in analysing the linguistic and visual resources used in my participants' Facebook posts. In the social media context, this choice can be justified for two main reasons. Primarily, in social media posts (whether in the form of audios,

videos, gifs, visuals or simply language) meanings are rarely communicated solely in a single mode (Kress 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). Instead, and this is a defining feature of social media, specific meanings and effects are created and conveyed through the simultaneous and mostly interrelated use of a variety of modes. Therefore, the decoding of social media messages inevitably involves identification of the semiotic resources used, followed by an analysis of the way these resources are combined to generate particular meanings. In this context, the choice of MMDA as a tool of analysis has advantages, since it allows the researcher to consider the full array of modes which in a given context are activated to construct a particular discourse (O'Halloran, Tan, Smith & Podlasov, 2011). Thus, MMDA can be employed to examine and understand how multimodal resources are deployed and how they reflect socio-cultural norms.

For the third article, to complement my discourse analytic findings, I approached a number of Facebook users whose posts I had analysed and interviewed them to investigate how they themselves evaluate their own Facebook practices. I was interested in exploring how the broader discursive context (online and offline) affects the ways in which the participants construct and perceive their understanding of gender. As Wetherell & Potter (1988: 189) argue, interviews are never isolated instances of talk but are culturally bound and context dependent. Thus, the rationale behind these interviews was that, as they allow the interviewees to freely express their views, they could also help me to explore their beliefs about and attitudes towards gender.

Here it should also be emphasised that I do not consider this study to be digital ethnography as my intention was not to "tell social stories" (Murthy, 2008: 837) that are collected over an extended period of time to form the basis of online and offline ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008; Varis, 2014; Markham, 2020). Another reason that the present study may not be considered digital ethnography is that during the data collection process, I was denied access to the comment sections by the male participants (see section 3.2 for more details). More specifically, this study was conceptualised as discourse-centred, as I was interested in exploring the various manifestations of gender via language and other semiotic resources used by Pakistani men and women on Facebook. Therefore, during the study, I neither followed the longitudinal observation of the online discourse of the participants nor maintained prolonged contact with the participants.

Gender identities are understood in this dissertation as socio-culturally constructed and something that individuals 'do'. (Baxter, 2010; Butler, 1990 & 2004). By this I mean that I have used performativity as one of the theoretical orientations to understand gender. More specifically, I see gender in this study as performative, that is, as the kind of repetitive choices that Pakistani Facebook users (men and women) make in constructing their gender. In the analysis of the Facebook data, I explore these choices that Pakistani men and women make in their posts to represent themselves and others and offer interpretations of the images of gender they construct. In this sense, I also view gender as something constructed in discourse. In addition, in describing and explaining how the research participants, through their discursive choices, represent themselves and others on Facebook, I also considered aspects of their identity other than gender, i.e., the

fact that they were young, middle class, Muslim Pakistanis. In other words, I see gender as intersectional.

In the context of this study, Facebook is interesting as it has developed into a space where the tension between users' digital and physical identities is at its most obvious (Schoemaker, 2016). Moreover, in the context of Pakistan I argue that Facebook, in particular, offers both men and women a unique platform to 'do' gender by drawing on the resources available to them. These 'performatives' are shaped by the mechanisms of power relationships that are harnessed in particular socio-cultural contexts, and thus may at times transgress established cultural norms and practices (Leppanen & Tapionkaski, 2019). Thus, these performances are what Butler (1990:33) refers to as "symbolic enactments that are semiotically indexed" that are embedded in their historical perspective and socially produced by repeating particular acts.

It should also be mentioned here that in Pakistani society, multiple factors play a critical role in the construction of gender identities. These factors (or social categories) impact Pakistani men and women in different ways. For instance, in patriarchal discourse, religion is mobilised differently for men and women and for the construction of masculinity and femininity. For example, sexual freedom or promiscuity is accepted as part of masculinity whereas for women sexuality is constructed as a socially destructive force (Salam, 2021). If this issue is framed within religious parameters, then sexual promiscuity is forbidden for both men and women. However, despite the fact that the Quran clearly posits identical principles of sexual restraint, modesty and chastity for both men and women (see Surah-e-Nur, verses 24–31), non-orthodox voices in the interpretation of the Quran and Hadiths are disregarded in contemporary Islamic societies. This generates an atmosphere that helps to maintain patriarchy and enables the women to be treated as subordinate to men, and to reconstruct women's sexuality as a source of "potential stress" or "potential threat" to the honour of the family and/or nation (Dogan, 2011). Hence, the expression of desire and sexuality is constructed as masculine and as part of the normative or socially acceptable behaviour of men. It is, however, important to mention here that women also play a significant role in sustaining the patriarchal system by internalising and reproducing the dominant patriarchal gender norms

I also argue in this study that the gendered performances of the research participants (both men and women) on Facebook are a product of intersecting social categories (e.g., religion, class, nationality, sexuality, and the particular socio-historical context). Drawing on insights from the intersectional approach to gender enabled me to understand the complexities that are involved in the manifestation of gender in the Facebook practices of Pakistani users. While intersectionality has been perceived in different ways, I argue in this study that it is important to adopt an anticategorical approach to intersectionality. Briefly, this approach facilitates a questioning and deconstruction of neatly demarcated social categories, such as gender, class, religion and nationality. In other words, it posits that none of these categories are independent and that they mutually affect individuals (McCall 2005; Weldon 2006: 240). In selecting the participants, while I paid attention first and foremost to their gender, my choice and subsequent anal-

ysis were also informed by my recognition of the significance of other social categories (see section 3.1 for more details). The participants' intersectional positions and access to social media resources thus affected their position as agents and their agency in their writing both in social media and in their offline reality. This, in combination with performativity theory, enabled me to examine how different social categories not only intersect with each other but also how these categories influenced my participants' decisions to do or undo gender on Facebook by making use of various semiotic resources. Therefore, the present analysis of the Facebook and interview data are attuned to the intricate ways in which different social categories (such as class, religion, nationality) come together to shape my participants' social realities and their construction of their gender identities.

1.3 Gender ideology and Pakistan: A historical overview

To understand the gender system prevalent in Pakistan, one needs first to historicise it, as this will show how it is a direct consequence of the intersection of religion, culture, nationalism, and the state. Before discussing this in more detail, it should be pointed out that in the post 9/11 context and the amplified islamophobia associated with it, reductive images of Muslim women and men, particularly in the international mainstream print and electronic media (see, e.g., Cervi et. al, 2021; Ghauri & Umber, 2019; Bleich & Maurits van der Veen, 2018; Khan & Zahra, 2015; Eltantawy, 2013; Chan-Malik, 2011; Cesari, 2011; Munoz, 2010; Richardson, 2009) have gained currency, often resulting in generating a monolithic picture of Muslim men and women. In these representations, women are often depicted as passive and submissive and men as powerful breadwinners and the guardians of women. However, such representations neither consider the historical perspectives that have shaped the lives of men and women in a multiplicity of contexts, nor do they invite closer investigation of the links between Islam and other societal institutions such as culture, nationalism, and the political system.

For these reasons, I argue that no discussion on gender ideology can be complete without the historicisation of gender in Pakistan, especially given Pakistan's complicated history. While I historicise gender in Pakistan, it must be mentioned here that the contemporary feminist movements in Pakistan have their roots in the female activism dating back to pre-partition India. Moreover, for the lives and identities of particularly women of the South Asian region, there is more that unites than separates. It has been well documented that the 'woman's question' came to be central to nation-making processes in British South Asia (Jayawardena 1986; Chatterjee 1989; Sangari and Vaid 1989). What is undeniable and perhaps even peculiar to the region is the long history of women's mobilisation and feminist activism. What further marks the singularity of women's movements in South Asia is their alliances with other democratic struggles, starting with anti-colonial movements, and continuing, post-independence, with strug-

gles around war and militarisation, against religious and right-wing fundamentalism, state repression, and sexual violence, (Jayawardena, 2014). Thus, the prevalent feminist movements in Pakistan have not taken place in isolation.

Hence, it is necessary to discuss and critically examine the role that religion and the state has played in the construction and propagation of the dominant gender ideologies, particularly since in Pakistan both of these forces have been significant stakeholders. More specifically, in providing a historical perspective on gender ideology in Pakistan in this section, I will also elaborate on the impact of General Zia-ul-Haque's oppressive regime, which unwittingly laid the foundations for the emergence and organisation of resistance to gender oppression based on religion. By doing so, I want to draw attention to the fact that the notion of gender in Pakistan is a complex phenomenon, related to Pakistan's colonial past and its socio-political and religious history. Therefore, to understand how gender identities are constructed in present-day social media forums such as Facebook, it is imperative to bear in mind that the serious consequences of the gender ideology imposed by General Zia not only remain visible in Pakistani society but have also carried over into digital social interaction.

1.3.1 Religion, nationalism and gender ideology in the state of Pakistan: The beginnings

The ideological foundations of Pakistan can be traced to the two-nation theory, according to which Muslims and Hindus differ radically from each other in their religion, culture, traditions, and language (Cohen, 2004). These notions led to the creation of Pakistan as an independent Muslim state in 1947. It is, however, noteworthy that for Pakistan, unlike any other state that has been established by partition, most of these ideological differences were deeply rooted in religion (Chaturvedi, 2013). Thus, religion (Islam) was and remains not only the most crucial element in constructing Pakistani Muslim identity, but it also constitutes an essential societal institution that permeates the public and private life of the country (Qadeer, 2006). Even before the partition of the subcontinent, religion was "standardised" for Muslim men and women both by political parties and by religious clerics (Aslam, 2014). For instance, Ashraf Thanvi's book Behishti Zevar (1981) ('Ornaments of Paradise') explicated the characteristics of "perfect Muslim women", and Mohammad Ilyas, who belonged to the Tablighi-Jammat (Islamic preaching parties), laid down the guidelines for men to become exemplary Muslims. However, the most influential writings came from Maulana Abu A'la Maududi, who founded Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in 1941, a political-cum-welfare organisation, which continues to exercise power as the most organised religio-political party in Pakistan (Nasr, 1994; Joshi, 2003). Maududi, in an attempt to reassert Islam, used gender relations as the focus and vehemently emphasised the duality of the spheres for men and women: women belong to the private space of home and men to the public space outside the home. For instance, he suggested different educational curricula for men and women. He was of the view that women should not be taught the same subjects as men (Maududi, 1987). Women

should be educated only in subjects that can help them in the effective performance of their domestic duties and hence in becoming good wives. Moreover, Maududi (1987) believed that deviation from these naturally ascribed roles would result in social anarchy. In particular, his writings (1987:121) advised men that any change in the assigned gender roles/division of labour — which for him are decreed in Islam — would inevitably lead to their emasculation and the usurpation of their authority (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1992; Cheema, 2013). Therefore, for men to maintain their superior position, they must exercise absolute segregation of the two sexes "thereby eliminating the possibility of any competition between the genders that could sow the seeds for challenging the patriarchal order" (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 1990:74).

Feminists (see e.g., Nagel, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Fardan & Thorleifsson, 2020) have pointed out that the nexus of nationalism and religion can prove to be quite destructive, especially due to the masculine underpinnings of the former. Moreover, nationalism refers to the manifestation of an ideology that unifies a nation. It is both inclusionary and exclusionary, as it is associated with both nation building and maintaining disparities. Nagel (1998) and Yuval-Davis (1997) argue that the nation is a masculine enterprise, a fraternity in which women, instead of being agentive civic subjects/agents, exist as symbols. Within this masculine micro-culture of nationalism, women are commonly portrayed symbolically as mothers of the nation or as the land itself (such as Britannica as a woman), something to be protected and fought over. In their domesticated gender roles, women become the symbolic representatives, guardians, and propagators of cultural and national values. Thus, in the nationalist rhetoric, women are assigned a passive position which excludes them from being an agentive civic subject actively involved in the shaping and creation of nationhood.

It is important to note here that despite the existence of traditionalist religious voices like those of Maududi, historically, before the creation of Pakistan, women were continuously challenging and negating attempts to restrict and define their gender identities. This became particularly visible during the Pakistan movement (the anti-colonial struggle of the Muslims of South Asia for a separate homeland), in which Muslim women not only made their presence felt, but also played an instrumental part in the mobilisation of pro-independence demonstrations (Malik, 2017; Saigol, 2016; Jafar, 2005). The political struggle for independence was accompanied across India by a parallel call for social and cultural reform to better combat the cultural colonisation of the British rulers (Saigol, 2016). For both Hindus and the Muslims, one of the cornerstones of the reformist agenda involved the betterment and uplifting of the local women (Khan, 2018). These reformist movements, when combined with the nationalist struggle for independence, helped in pushing "the woman question" to the forefront. Thus, the struggle for independence saw women opting for a more proactive public role (Shaheed, 2009). According to Chatterjee (1994), in the immediate post-independence period larger nationalist concerns regarding issues like the economy, border security, the infrastructure, legislation and dealing with migrants took priority.

This, unsurprisingly, ended up in relegating the issues related to women to the background.

Thus, although women increasingly became part of the public domain and were able to cast off and/or challenge some of the traditional prescribed gender norms, the momentum gained during the independence movement failed to be strong enough to completely dismantle the traditional patriarchal structures (Khan, 2018; Jafar, 2005). Furthermore, the religious right (as represented by Maududi), despite efforts to continue exerting influence, never became a key player in nationalist politics until the 1980s. It was then, as I highlight below, that religion became effectively instrumentalised and wielded as a weapon against women, significantly abrogating their civil rights and liberties, while at the same time strengthening the patriarchal structures of power within Pakistan.

1.3.2 General Zia-ul-Haque's political alliance with religious parties and gender ideology: A marriage of convenience

In tandem with the rise of the religious right and the subsequent politicisation of religion in Pakistan, most scholars see the rule of General Zia-ul- Haque (1977 – as the turning point in country's socio-political history (see, e.g., Khan, 2018; Jafar, 2005; Shaheed, 1999; Weiss, 1987). In 1979, he forcefully removed the elected government and declared martial law in the country. To legitimise his rule, he sought support from the right-winged religious parties in the country. The key demand of these religious parties was to reinforce and implement Sharia law (Gaier, 2013; Kumar, 2001; Shaheed, 1999). Since Pakistani women had started to work in many different spheres of life, they presented a very modern and westernised image to the international community. This was something that did not appeal to the right-wing religious parties. Thus, to appease the religious factions in the country, General Zia turned his attention to the women of Pakistan, who by then, as already stated above, had become noticeable in the public domain (Jafar, 2005). Zia's Islamisation of Pakistani society was initiated particularly with the help of the right-wing religious parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) (ibid). Afiya Zia (2017:225–245) points out that it was considered that the emotional appeal of Islam would not only weaken western influences but also help Zia to gain the support of the threatened right-wing religious minorities, and thus decisively establish his Islamic tyranny. Moreover, General Zia urged the people to not only reform themselves, in line with the Islamic code of conduct, but also to reform their neighbours. Mumtaz and Shaheed (1987:71–75) argue that this led people to pass judgement on the morality of other people and gave rise to unprecedented communal vigilantism. Women, in this political climate, suffered the most.

After seizing power, Zia issued orders that restricted the presence of women in the public sphere. For instance, women in the television and film industry were forced to cover their heads with a chaadar (a headscarf) and could only appear in advertisements that reinforced traditional gender stereotypes. Women were also banned from taking part in international sports, as these did not conform to the Islamic dress code and they were not allowed to apply for positions in the foreign services (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Rouse, 2004; Weiss, 2001).

However, the most damaging changes that revoked women's rights and reinforced misogynistic views were those brought about by the introduction and implementation of the controversial "Zina Hudood Ordinance" and "Qanun-e-Shahadat" (Law of Evidence) (Burki, 2016; Lau, 2007). The Zina Hudood Ordinance aimed at regulating sexual conduct, as a result of which adultery became a punishable crime against the state. If the accused was found guilty, the punishment was stoning to death in public. Moreover, rape could only be proved through the testimony of four male witnesses, a requirement that makes it almost impossible for women to prove the crime (Burki, 2016). Similarly, through the Law of Evidence, a woman's testimony is deemed half as valuable as that of a man, thus preventing most sexual assault victims from seeking redress through the criminal justice system, and instead deeming them guilty of illegal sex rather than as victims of unlawful violence or abuse (ibid). Moreover, because these punishments were carried out in public, the shame of the family rested on the shoulders of the women, if they were found guilty of adultery. It is, however, interesting to note that verification of women's deeds or of the crimes against them was completely excluded from the legal proceedings (Zia, 2017). This significantly affected the way women were treated in society. Women became men's property (Burki, 2016; Jafar, 2005). Moreover, a women's consent to marriage, which was previously considered their prerogative, became irrelevant. In the case of an unmarried girl, her father's consent, and in the case of a married woman, the husband's consent was considered enough (Chadbourne, 1999 & Human Rights Watch, 1999). This allowed women bodies to become a political site for vendettas. These legislative changes, backed by the state, particularly affected women, not only by forcing them to bear the brunt of Islamisation, but also by allowing men to intensify their control and authority over their lives (Burki, 2016). Moreover, they essentially meant that women who follow the established cultural models of femininity are protected and respected by their family and by law (Khan, 2006:10). As a result, working women, in particular, had to operate in an increasingly hostile and restricted space. According to Jafar (2005:47), during Zia's regime, the political discourse on women was motivated by two main principles: women's sexuality is an adverse, destructive and pervasive force that must be curtailed and controlled; and women are responsible for the honour of their family, particularly men, and are men's property.

1.3.3 Women's resistance to General Zia's tyranny and the present situation

General Zia's promotion and advocacy of the slogan "chadar aur chardeewari" (Scarf and Four walls) — an ideological stance meant to restrict and control women's mobility and presence in the public sphere, and to make them return to their 'rightful' place, that is, the four walls of the house — had an ironic effect. The formation and implementation of Zia's prejudiced, gender discriminatory and conservative interpretation of the Quran and the resulting implementation of patriarchal laws led to the mobilisation and greater visibility of women from different walks of life: protests against these laws and Zia's policies in general broke out all over the country (Jalal, 1991). Women's organisations and individual women, particularly the literati, were at the forefront of these protests. They actively collaborated and engaged in the advocacy of women's rights through social awareness campaigns and political activism.

One of the instances that exemplifies the brave and persistent opposition of Pakistani women to the instrumentalisation and mobilisation of religion against women by Zia (and his right-wing supporters) is the case of Fehmida and Allah Bux. Both were sentenced to 100 lashes and death by stoning after a Session Judge, under the Zina Hudood Ordinance, found them guilty of adultery (Imran Munir, 2018: 78–100). To protest against this judgement, the Women Action Forum (WAF) was formed in Karachi, which was later endorsed by other similar Karachi-based women organizations such as Shirkat Ghar (Participation Forum) (ibid). These urban groups of women, who mostly belonged to the middle and upper middle classes of Pakistani society, launched an organised national campaign against the legislative changes made by General Zia through their writings, awareness programs, research, lobbying, street agitation and journalism (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987: 71–75). For instance, on 12 February 1983, these women's organisations decided to hold a peaceful rally outside the High Court to submit a memorandum to the Punjab's Chief Justice against the discriminatory Law of Evidence. However, their peaceful rally was interrupted by 500 police officers who used tear gas and physical violence to scatter the women marchers. Even after the arrest of over 50 women, the marchers were able to reach the High court (Imran, 2005). They demanded a more moderate interpretation of religious laws that would allow women more freedom and equality. Such initiatives taken by Women Action Forum prompted an increase in public debate on women issues and played a significant role in the production and publication of feminist literature (Zia, 2009a). This further endorsed the emergence of other NGOs, such as like Simorgh Women's Resource and Publication Centre, Aurat Foundation (Woman Foundation), ASR (Institute for Applied Socio-Economic Research and Resource Centre) and Progressive Women's Association (PWA), that voiced women issues, demanding societal and legal reforms in Pakistan (Imran & Munir, 2018). What is significant about the protest and political activism against the conservative interpretation of Islamic law is the fact that it was instrumental in developing alliances between ideologically opposed women's organisations (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Zia, 2009). Perhaps for the first time in the history of Pakistan, left-winged secular-minded organisations (like the WAF) were seen protesting side-by-side with right-wing religious female political organisations like the female branch of Jamat-e-Islami. Although this alliance did not last long, it was important as an indicator of the far-reaching impact of activism by women (Mumtaz, 2005: 64).

The changing socio-political scenario also laid the foundation for a new type of resistance in the form of activist theatre groups, including writers and poets (all of whom heavily featured women) who sought to raise political awareness through street theatre, in defiance of official censorship policies and government efforts to remove them. The most significant of the theatre groups with specific feminist and resistance agenda were the Lahore-based "Ajoka" Theatre and "Tehrik-e-Niswan" (The Women's Movement) theatre (Shaheed, 1999). The Ajoka theatre, founded by television actor Madeeha Gohar along with her theatre director husband Shahid Nadeem, produced plays that actively addressed women rights issues (Bibi et. al, 2021). Similarly, television actor and classical dancer Sheema Kirmani, who

even during Zia's regime continued practising her profession, formed the Tehrik-e-Niswan theatre (Mubarak, 2015). These theatres provided the public with much-needed alternative therapeutic spaces and experiences as opposed to the state-controlled television channels and mainstream theatre productions put on by arts councils. A visible change in the Pakistani literary scene was also witnessed, as more and more women writers and poets responded fiercely to General Zia's vision of Pakistan (Imran & Munir, 2018). This period is particularly associated with the emergence of feminist poetry primarily written by such feminist activist poets such as Kishwar Naheed, Fehmida Riaz and Parveen Shakir. Through their writings, they dared to take up the themes of female sexuality, politics, and social issues, something that had never previously been done by female poets in Pakistan (ibid). They thus became the pioneering voices that explicitly fought against women's oppression and the gender-based discriminatory interpretation of Islamic laws and especially in a field that had traditionally been dominated by male poets and writers (ibid).

Even after the General Zia's regime ended in 1988, these organisations continued to work and are now staffed by trained educators, writers, researchers, lawyers, human right activists, actors, film producers and journalists who raise social awareness against discriminatory attitudes towards women and marginalised communities such as the transgender groups (Zia, 2009). Women like Asma Jahangir and Hina Jillani have been at the forefront of legal battles against gender and social discrimination (Shaheed, 2016). As human rights activists, they have been involved in legal battles for obtaining justice for marginalised groups such as battered, violated women and persecuted religious minorities (Imran & Munir, 2018). Similarly, in the contemporary Pakistani film industry, Sabiha Sumar, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Maheen Zia and Samar Minahil, have highlighted socio-cultural, political and gender issues that target women's equal rights and freedom (ibid). However, due to rising right-wing resistance and opposition to women's issues and the implementation of censorship policies, their films have encountered difficulty in finding local media platforms and have mostly been aired internationally (e.g., BBC, CBC, Channel 4 and HBO among others).

Similarly, since 2018, on International Women's Day, the Aurat March (Women's March) has been organized by different organisations, including the Women's Democratic Front, Women's Action Forum, Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls' alliance, Young Teachers Association, Home-Based Women Workers Union, and Hum Aurtain (We the Women). This event is important because it is aimed at raising awareness about the various atrocities (e.g., honour killings, sexual harassment, abuse, violence and wage inequalities) committed against women (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). Women from all domains of life gather, chanting slogans like "My body, My Choice" and "Don't send me dick pics" and carry banners proclaiming their rights. Hailed as the 'new wave of feminism in Pakistan' by some of the country's newspapers, the Aurat March has also taken social media by storm. As a result, in 2019, the Aurat March spread nationwide (Shah, 2018). Some of the mainstream media outlets reported that it was an event of the kind that strikes fear into the core of the patriarchal structure of Pakistani society (Azeem, 2019).

The subsequent debate on Facebook, Twitter, and especially on the mainstream television channels, have divided people (both men and women) noticeably into two groups i.e., those who are anti-Aurat march and those who are pro-Aurat march (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). It is noteworthy that the previous movements on gender equality and women rights, such as the Women's Action Forum (WAF) in the 1980s, avoided public debate on women's bodies and sexualities (Imran & Munir, 2018). However, the new wave of feminism in Pakistan in the form of the Aurat March departs from its antecedents by reclaiming not only women's stake in the public sphere but also their bodies, sexualities and personal choices, thereby reaffirming a narrative where the personal is political (Saigol & Chaudhary, 2020). Because this march has shaken patriarchy to its very core, it is still not well-received by the self-appointed guardians of morality, who previously had no interest in women's issues like domestic violence, acid attacks, honour killings or gender inequality (ibid). In a similar manner, women in Pakistan have also created Facebook pages such as Soul Sisters Pakistan that provide women exclusively with a 'safe' space to discuss taboo issues like rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, parenting, and abortion (Younas et. al, 2020). These pages serve as a vital channel for women to share traumatic experiences and obtain anonymous non-judgemental support from their peers (ibid).

In the context of my dissertation, the above-mentioned events and debate significantly highlight the fact that historically gender has been a contested topic in Pakistan and that conservative ideologies are not traditional but rather have recently been forcibly introduced. It can thus be argued that due to the persistence of women's resistance, views on gender, appropriate gender roles and identities communicated on Facebook and other omnipresent social media in present-day Pakistani society continue the long struggle that previously found expression, among other modes, in literature, activism, and street theatre.

1.4 Popularity of Facebook

Facebook has become a globally dominant social media platform. In January 2021, a report (datareportal.com) ranked Facebook as the most popular social media platform (based on the number of active users in millions) in the world. Underlying the immense popularity and success of Facebook are the unique characteristics and variations that it offers its users. Like all social media platforms, Facebook allows its users to generate online profiles and manage the amount of information that they want to reveal to the others in their network (Ellison et. al, 2007). Users can start by providing general information such as their name, date of birth, hometown, and the name of their school/college/university to more specific information about their relationship status, or favourite movies and quotations. Furthermore, Facebook allows its users to regularly update their status at any given time of the day, either by directly visiting the website on a computer

or a mobile phone (Wilson et. al, 2012). Their status portrays how the user is currently feeling, or it may include other information such as a poem or inspirational quotation. Photo tagging is yet another element in making Facebook interesting. This feature allows members to link pictures of an individual with his/her name and profile (Malik et. al, 2015). Moreover, users can create and join different groups based on diverse topics and interests such as sports, politics, and religion. The option to share audios, videos and live feeds adds another interesting dimension to the user experience.

Yet another reason for the widespread use of Facebook is that it offers users detailed account and privacy settings (Dey et. al, 2012). Facebook restricts the searches of its members to only those present in the user's network. This is unlike other SNS sites (like MySpace) where users can search and view the profiles of anyone who is registered on their system. Commenting on this policy of privacy management, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, said that these restrictions are important to Facebook users because they allow them to choose how much information they want to share and with whom they want to share it (CNBC News, 2018). This privacy management is preferred by most users, not only because it restricts unknown people from accessing their profile while allowing them freedom and choice by granting them control over the management of information they share with people on their friends' lists (Dey et. al, 2012). It is also noteworthy that, during the past few years, Facebook has been strongly criticised for deploying algorithms that influence people and create controversies and conflicts (for instance, the alleged interference of Russia in the 2016 US Presidential elections, controversy about Covid-19 vaccines, proliferating divisive politics, and the Cambridge Analytica data privacy scandal). However, in this study the focus is on the privacy of users in regard to their social network.

1.4.1 Social media landscape in Pakistan: The present scenario

The Pakistani social media landscape has changed tremendously from its inception in the 2000s to the present day. According to the social media statistics issued by datareportal.com, in January 2021, not only were there 46 million active social media users but also the number of social media users had increased by 9 million between January 2020 and January 2021. Similarly, NapoleonCat.com, in April 2021, issued a statistical report that further categorised the use of individual social media platforms, as summarised in Table (1):

TABLE 1 Social Media Statistics in Pakistan

Social media Platforms	Percentage
	(n=223 million people)
Facebook	78.98%
Twitter	16.43%
Instagram	2.33%
Linkedin	0.06%

Table (1) shows that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform in Pakistan. Of the 47 million Facebook users in Pakistan, 78.2% are men and only 21.8% are women. Moreover, the largest user age group, accounting for 17.5 million users, are between the ages of 25 and 34 (NapoleonCat.com Statistics).

The widespread use of social media in Pakistan can be attributed to the fact that, given the strong patriarchal nature of the country, these platforms have provided their users, both men and women, with greater control over the material/information (regarding their own identities or the world around them) they share with their audience (Schoemaker, 2016; Kugelman, 2012). Another reason for the importance of social media platforms is that the boundaries of interaction are no longer confined by geography, allowing people from diverse cultures to interact with increasing ease (Budiman, 2008; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). In Pakistan, one of the most significant factors explaining the popularity of social media is that these platforms play a crucial role in breaking stories that are ignored by the traditional media (Schoemaker, 2016; Kugelman, 2012). Hence, they work parallel to the mainstream media in user access and information dissemination. Such information includes content on political, social, religious, and vulnerable minority groups. For instance, in March 2021 in the Pakistan Senate eletions, a video was posted on social media showing Ali Haider Gillani, son of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Yousaf Raza Gillani, sharing tips with incumbent government representatives on how to waste a senate vote (Express Tribune, 2021). The mainstream Pakistani news channels then picked up on the story, and Ali Haider Gillani was forced to admit that it was true. Similarly, the lynching of two young brothers by a mob in Sialkot in 2010, while the police did nothing, was caught on a mobile camera and later shared on social media. It also created a huge uproar among the Pakistani masses (BBC News, 2011). Further, in Sahiwal in 2019, four people, including two women, were killed in a suspicious police encounter, and social media users were quick to weigh in on alleged police brutality (News International, 2019). This unfiltered access to information on issues such as those mentioned above, allowed Pakistani users to express their points of view and stir up discussion and debate on, especially, the conduct of the government.

Perhaps, as a reaction to the new leeway for communication offered by social media, and as a protest against an "Everybody Draw Muhammad" competition, the Pakistani government banned Flickr, Facebook, and YouTube in 2010 (Ricchiardi, 2012). In this connection, Facebook issued a statement saying that it believed in its users' right to free speech. However, this statement, along with the offensive content, was removed after one week. Likewise, in 2012, YouTube was banned in Pakistan for sharing a film (The Innocence of Muslims) that mocked the Prophet Muhammad. This ban lasted until 2016 when YouTube agreed to launch a Pakistani version of its site (Tsukayama, 2012). Such debates are not linked solely with religion in Pakistan but also with disenfranchised groups such as women (Schoemaker, 2016). For example, in 2016, Qandeel Baloch, a young South Punjabi woman, was the victim of an honour killing by her brother for posting vulgar and provoking videos on Facebook (Alam, 2019). Such online attacks directed at women on Facebook and other social media platforms in Pakistan have not only increased online harassment but also resulted in offline harassment and violence (Naseer & Ashraf, 2021). In sum, while capitalising on the essential craving of individuals to form a community (Kugelman, 2012), these platforms are being employed on the one hand, especially by young Pakistanis, to disseminate the latest news/information, launch humanitarian campaigns, conduct political debates, and mobilise opinion on social causes. On the other hand, this type of social media use has also led to attempts at curbing such activities.

1.4.2 Gender and social media studies in Pakistan

Globally, in psychological, sociological, discourse and cultural studies, the notion of gender and social media has been widely investigated (see e.g., Genter, 2014; Patterson, 2013; Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016; Davis, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020; Point, 2019; Rassi, 2016; Schenato, 2017). In South Asia, this connection between gender and social media has been explored from various angles. For instance, Mishra and Basu (2014) empirically investigated gender and social media with respect to religious and socio-cultural practices in India and concluded that self-presentation strategies adopted by Indian Muslim women on Facebook ensured that the familial values are not disrupted. Similarly, Mishra, Monippally, and Jayakar (2013) explored the self-presentation strategies of Indian Muslim men and women in online matrimonial advertisements and suggested that, while upholding traditional societal norms, they are also making radical changes to adhere to the social media affordances. Similarly, Sultana (2018) using performativity as a theoretical construct explored various discursive and semiotic practices that young Bangladeshi university women engage in while they perform their gender identities on Facebook. Her study suggested that the language and discussion topics of these women not only differed from their linguistic self-representation in face-to-face interaction but also their language use indicated nonconforming gender performances.

It is only in recent years that research on gender and social media has increased in Pakistan. Several studies have investigated the implications and effects

of these platforms on Pakistani university students (see e.g., Ali et. al, 2021; Rabia et.al, 2020; Waqas et. al, 2016; Khalid, 2017; Zaheer, 2018; Zaheer, 2016). Survey studies conducted in universities located in metropolitan areas such as Lahore, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad have shown that social media usage has had both positive and negative impacts on academic life and on the physical and psychological health of university students. For example, Schoemaker (2016) examined the connection between religious identity and social media in Gujrat, Gujranwala, and Mandi Bahauddin in the upper Punjab region. Using a mixed method approach, he showed that mobile and social media technologies, along with public debate, are now shaping the religious identities of minority communities through the emergence of 'digital secularisation'. Likewise, Rashid (2019), who applied a case study approach to critically examine the role of social media in discussions about religion (Islam), found that social media in Pakistan acts as a powerful medium for both religious and social activist groups to propagate their ideologies. Other studies have focused on the role of social media and mobile technologies in politically activating Pakistani youth (see, e.g., Ahmad et.al, 2019; Zaheer,2016; Karamat & Farooq, 2016). Using survey methods, these studies found that the Pakistani youth, particularly men, were not only participating more in political debate, but also that their online participation correlated with their offline political beliefs.

It seems that interest in exploring the nexus of Facebook and gender in Pakistanis is growing. For instance, Humayun et. al. (2019) in their survey-based study explored the linguistic representation of Pakistani women on Facebook and found that gender disparity is also visible in social media platforms. In particular, the study highlighted that, as in their offline lives, Pakistani women are also linguistically depicted on Facebook as illogical, foolish, timid, weak, and sexy. In two other studies, also using surveys, Shabir et. al, (2021) and Hafeez (2014) documented the harassment of Pakistani women on social media. They found that online harassment not only causes depression among women, but it also negatively impacts their personal, professional, and academic lives. They also found that such cases of harassment often go unreported by women. Using semi-structured interviews and observation methods, Riaz and Mudassar (2019) examined the digital literacy practices of teenagers residing in Islamabad and found that both boys and girls reinforced the stereotypical notions of gender through their choices of language and social media content. For example, girls were found to be more interested in fashion and cooking while boys were more engaged in sports and politics. In a similar study, Ahmad and Farrukh (2017) examined gender differences in the written communication of Pakistani men and women on Facebook and Twitter. Their findings also reinforced earlier findings that gender stereotypes are reflected in men's and women's online written interaction. Aksar et al. (2021) conducted an online survey on the role of social media in the psychological well-being of Pakistani women. Their findings indicated that, although social media support women's psychological health, women were also found to adhere to socially constructed gender roles in online spaces due to soci-

etal pressure. In another study, Younas et al. (2019) investigated online peer support systems for Pakistani women. On the basis of semi-structured interviews and observations, they reported that within the conservative setup of Pakistani society, closed "women only groups" have provided Pakistani women with a safe digital space to seek support on otherwise stigmatised issues like abortion, domestic violence, intimate health, sexual abuse and intimate partner relations. In a similar instance, Arslan (2019) in a content analysis of tweets examined the extent to which the #MeToo movement helped Pakistani women to protest against sexual abuse and how this movement evolved in Pakistan over time. He found not only a lack of seriousness towards the issue, but also societal polarisation between those who saw the #MeToo movement as a western agenda and those completely rejected it. Additionally, Fatima (2016) and Channa & Tahir (2020) have utilised gender performativity as a theoretical concept to analyse the gender dynamics in two different contexts in Pakistan. The former's work looked at how using language, male students assert and negotiate their masculinity on Facebook confession pages and claimed that even within the social media context, stereotypical notions about women are embedded in the Pakistani society. Moreover, such notions and performances by men on Facebook provide a fertile ground to construct their own masculinity and establish their dominance. On the contrary, the latter's study carried out in rural Sindh highlighted "various shades of gender" (Channa & Tahir, 2020: 362) based on how the male informants via their language performed their gender in their informal discussions thereby dismissing the fixed binary nature of gender identities in Pakistan.

In contrast to the studies discussed above, which mostly focus on the academic, religious, psychological, and linguistic aspects of Pakistani social media users located mostly in the metropolitan regions of Pakistan, this study examines social media users in the underdeveloped South Punjab (see section 3.1.1 for more details) and focuses on both the dominant gender ideology and the current social transformative potential of social media.

More importantly, understanding gender as performative seems to be an emergent trend in exploring gender with relation to social media in Pakistan. This dissertation research, like Fatima (2016) and Channa & Tahir (2020) also explored the enactment of Pakistani gender identities as situated and performed at the intersection of various socio-cultural forces. Although the term "gender" includes men, women, and other genders, most of the previous studies conducted in Pakistan, whether on social media or mainstream media (see, e.g., Ali & Batool, 2015; Huda & Ali, 2015; Yasmin et. al, 2015; Ullah et al., 2016; Abbas 2018; Fatima, 2019; Babul & Niaz, 2019; Zaheer, 2020; Jamil, 2020a; Hafeez & Zahid, 2021) have overwhelmingly focused on how women are represented in different media. In contrast to these studies, this dissertation focuses on both men and women's Facebook practices and how they construct their masculinity and femininity. This focus on masculinity is of particular relevance, as men, like women, are also policed through the lens of culturally established stereotypical models of masculinity. The implications of empirically investigating masculinity in the Pakistani context are also important, since in many ways men are gatekeepers for gender equality (Chant,

2000) and therefore how they enact their masculinity in their online and offline lives directly impacts women.

Moreover, according to the Global Gender Index Report 2021, Paki-stan ranks 153 out of 156 countries on gender equality. In this context, research (see, e.g., Salam, 2021 & 2020) on Pakistani masculinity offers an insight into how the heteronormative models of masculinity dominant in Pakistan are detrimental not only to women but also to men themselves. In its engagement with femininity, this dissertation research offers an insight into how within the conservative socio-cultural setup of Pakistani society, the presence of Pakistani women in online environments has not only become significant but also at times challenging. Thus, by bringing a South Asian-Pakistani perspective to bear on the global and local debate on how men and women in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan negotiate multiple socio-cultural and religious pressures in constructing their gender identities on Facebook, this study has sought to fill a major research gap.

1.5 Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation report consists of five chapters and three published articles. The introductory chapter, as discussed above, maps out the motivation, aims and context of this research. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical aspects of the study by elaborating on gender, gender identities, multimodality. and social media as a new site for the construction of gender identities. Chapter 3 describes the research design including the choices made during the data collection process, participant recruitment, ethical concerns, and the position of the researcher. Chapter 4 presents the key findings and summarises the study. The last chapter discusses the findings along with the possible limitations of the study and makes suggestions for future research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this dissertation research. It is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with the theorisation of the key terms used in this study, i.e., gender, gender ideology and gender identities. I conclude this section by elaborating on my conception of gender and gender identities in my research. The second section explores multimodal discourse analysis, foregrounding its significance in the study of social media and gender identities. I discuss multimodal discourse analysis in particular, as it forms the theoretical basis of the first two research articles (Salam, 2020 & 2021). The last section of this chapter discusses the approach taken in this study to investigating interviews, the focus in the third sub-study (Salam, 2021) on the Facebook experiences of the participants.

2.1 Theorising gender and gender identities

In the following sections, I introduce the notions of gender and gender identity that are central to my study and explain how I used them in the empirical analysis of my data.

2.1.1 Gender ideology

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:35) describe gender ideology as "a set of beliefs that govern people's participation in the gender order, and by which they explain and justify that participation". These scholars (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003:23) further argue that the dominant gender ideology in any given culture "does not simply prescribe that male and female should be different" rather such an ideology emphasises that men and women are inherently different based on their biological differences. Such ideologies become normalised in societies as people accept them as the natural way of understanding and doing things.

One of the ways through which this naturalisation is achieved is through gender stereotyping (ibid: 43). Talbot (2003: 470–471) defines gender stereotyping as a strategy that consists of rigid contrasting, "splitting", reducing, and simplifying of gender traits, roles and identities that "enables the maintenance of the social and symbolic order". These stereotypes entail power play and, as Talbot (2003) notes, they often help to keep subordinate groups (e.g., women) in their place. It can thus be argued that a patriarchal gender ideology is hegemonic (see Gramsci, 1971; Eagly et. al, 2000; Fiske et al. 2002) in the sense that because it is sustained through cultural consent, the domination of men does not appear to be detrimental to the other genders in society (Budgeon, 2014, p. 322). This communal consensus, where women (and other genders) are positioned as inferior to men and any traits associated with women are undervalued, is achieved through discursive means (Lazar, 2007).

Likewise, a patriarchal gender ideology amplifies gender stereotyping. Walby (1990:20) defines the notion of patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". From a broader perspective, it means that the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance takes place in both the public and private spheres through institutions like education, religion, politics, family, and mainstream media (see, e.g., Caldas-Coulthard, 1995; Lazar, 2007; Talbot, 1998). Moreover, such an ideology socialises men and women to enact their masculinity and femininity in such a way that emphasises the biological differences between them. For instance, line with the characteristics associated with socially constructed (biological) differences, men must exhibit masculine traits such as strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, and competitiveness whereas women must always exhibit feminine traits like nurturing, caring, love, timidity, and obedience (Litosseliti, 2013). In other words, a patriarchal gender ideology attempts to make sure that men always take on the dominant, or masculine, roles, and women always the subordinate or feminine ones (Smith, 1990). Consequently, power and authority within the family, the society and the state remain in the hands of men. It can be argued that a patriarchal gender ideology "reproduces naturalized gender differences" and "in doing so, it functions to sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination" (Talbot, 2003: 472).

An associated concept within the domain of patriarchal gender ideology is "heteropatriarchy". In feminist scholarship, heteropatriarchy refers to a socio-political system where heterosexual males have authority over women and people with other sexual orientations and gender identities, thereby instituting heterosexuality and patriarchy as normal and any other orientation as a transgression, abnormal and a threat to society (Arvin et. al, 2013). In such a system, heterosexual men are placed at the apex of power in society, a situation which often leads to the oppression and marginalisation of other communities (Lorber,1994). However, feminist research (see e.g., Connell, 1987; McNay, 2000; Kimmel & Amy, 2000; Litosseliti, 2013) has deconstructed the patriarchal ideological assumptions about gender binaries, showing them to be ideological rather than natural. They have done this by first pointing to the need to distinguish sex and gender and

then by critiquing the ontological basis of gender through the theory of performativity (Butler, 1993) and pointing to the differences within, for example, the category of "woman", through an intersectional approach to gender. Moreover, the bulk of feminist scholarship (see e.g., Lazar, 2007:147) further argues that "although the prevalent gender ideology is hegemonic and is proliferated and performed through various social means, it is still contestable".

2.1.1.1 Gender ideology in Pakistan

The prevalent gender ideology in Pakistan is a direct consequence of General Zia-ul-Haque's rigid and conservative reading of Islam. The interpretation of gender in his regime can be described as a heteropatriarchal one that builds on the idea of gender as binary opposites. One result of this interpretation was the ideological gendering of the public and private domains. In the public domain, men were stereotyped as active actors in the political and social arenas, making decisions, writing histories, and acting as their families' protectors and breadwinners. In contrast, the private sphere was assigned to women, who were typecast in the roles of mothers, wives, and daughters. They were also expected to act as the guardians of morality and preservers of national or cultural norms (see, e.g., Salam, 2020 & 2021; Jafar, 2005). Moreover, this clear-cut division into the public and private spheres acted as a power tool that helped in maintaining the dominant gender ideology (Shaheed, 2010). However, even in contemporary Pakistani society, most of the time this gendered nature of spaces goes unnoticed because of the unconscious internalisation of the patriarchal system. The rules governing the family are generally laid down by men, which allows them to strengthen their position of superiority by downgrading the traditional domestic role occupied by women. Such an understanding of gender roles reduces women to performers of menial labour and compulsory childcare. Moreover, mothers are usually instrumental in teaching their daughters to obey the established familial and socio-religious traditions and accepting their dispiriting role. Thus, by accepting, internalising, disseminating, and integrating such norms into their family and kinship system, women willingly become both active agents and passive victims of patriarchy (Habiba et. al, 2016). In this way, women become "token-torturers" (a term coined by Kandiyoti in her article Bargaining Patriarchy, 1988: 280) by consciously or unconsciously reconstructing the stereotypical gender ideology and thereby strengthening a system of oppression that affects all women.

More importantly, the Zia regime's reliance on this matrix and juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity as binary opposites presumed and reinforced heterosexuality as the natural order. For instance, to be a real man means that one's behaviour and demeanour should be completely different (read opposite) to that of women. The absence or lack of feminine qualities/characteristics was thus central to the Pakistani male identity (Aurat Foundation and Information Services Foundation, 2016). Any transgression was thus treated as a threat to the religious and socio-cultural norms of Pakistani society. Perceiving gender in this way resulted in rejecting other forms of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, it gave

rise to the gendered surveillance of individuals who did not follow the heteropatriarchal gender ideology (Rehman,2020). These individuals were not only put under surveillance, but they, too, were also compelled to internalise the established gender norms. Since surveillance practices are particularly heteronormative (Abu-Laban, 2015), it is arguable that public and private surveillance by the state and ordinary people played a critical role in obliging Pakistani men and women (and other genders) to adhere to the dominant gender ideology.

The gender-based stereotyping in Pakistani society also gave rise to sexism and misogyny. Sexism can be broadly described as discrimination against women based on the belief that men are superior to women (Savigny, 2020). Misogyny can be argued to be a deeply rooted and violent expression of sexism (ibid). In other words, in the patriarchal system, if sexism is the ideology/belief formed via normalisation and the justification of patriarchal norms, then misogyny, as the hostile policing of women to adhere to the established socio-cultural norms, is the method of sustaining it (Prasad, 2019).

Another central mechanism for sustaining a heteropatriarchal gender ideology works is the control of female sexuality. In the case of Pakistan, this control is exercised using the discourses of religion and the institution of marriage. The control of female sexuality highlights the gendered nature of a social discourse in which discussion of the rights and freedom of women and their bodies is often reductively framed as a simple question of sexual freedom. This is a typical example of how the patriarchal system is kept intact. While the discourses of religion and culture are regularly used as a tool to suppress women's sexual and emotional agency, any digression from the dominant 'Islamic' norms is considered a direct threat to the social and familial structure of the Pakistani society (Jafar, 2005). Scholars (see e.g., Zia, 2017) argue that women in Pakistan, like their counterparts in many other patriarchal societies, are viewed as emblematic and as custodians of men's honour. Within this paradigm of honour (and its concomitant notion of shame) women are daughters, mothers, wives, or sisters but never individual human beings who have the freedom to express their emotional, physical, and sexual identity. Moreover, by controlling women's sexuality in this way, patriarchal systems construct the concept of a good, honourable, and respectable woman. In short, such notions create an unambiguous dichotomy between a good Muslim Pakistani woman and a bad woman, thereby eradicating the existence of other possible gender experiences for women (Stoler, 1995). This type of contrast naturalises heteropatriarchal models of femininity and masculinity that construct a monolithic standardised model of gendered female and male behaviour that is tied to Islamic conservatism (Rehman, 2019). In such a context, it can be argued that not only are the negative consequences of General Zia's 'forced' gender ideology still visible in Pakistani society, but these practices have also been carried over into digital social interaction. For instance, notions like the 'public/private divide', 'gendered surveillance', 'sexism and misogyny' are prevalent in social media interactions, where women are heavily scrutinised and even abused based on what they should and should not share. However, social

media platforms have also become a crucial source of information and a tool for raising social justice and gender awareness in Pakistan.

2.1.2 Discursive construction of gender identities

While investigating the construction of gender identities, I was acutely aware of the key role of language in perpetuating and ingraining a specific gender ideology on a large scale. However, as suggested by earlier studies (see e.g., Graddol and Swann, 1989) to fully understand the complexity of the role of language in constructing and perpetuating particular views about gender and gender relations, I also needed to consider the wider social practices and contexts where individuals actually use language.

Historically, research in the field of discourse and gender has relied on three models: the deficit view (the assumption that the way men speak is the norm, and that women's language use departs from this norm; see, e.g., Lakoff, 1975); the difference view (men don't dominate but just speak differently to women; see, e.g., Tannen, 1990); and the dominance view (men dominate women linguistically and women are linguistically powerless; see, e.g., Zimmerman and West, 1975). Drawing to various degrees on biological determinism (or the essentialist belief that one's physiology and biology determine one's social roles), the abovementioned approaches focus on explaining the differences in how men and women use language instead of on how the notion of gender is constructed through language itself. In contrast, this dissertation is rooted in social constructivist and poststructuralist views that perceive language as the "site of the cultural production of gender identity" (Weedon, 1987:106). Talbot (1998:144) further elaborates on this idea as follows:

> People's identities are an effect of language. Women and men are different because language positions us differently. In this view, subjectivity—our sense of ourselves—is something constructed, not pregiven, and our gender identities are not fixed. We take up positions in our enactments of discourse practices; so, our identities as individuals are constructed moment by moment. From this view, our sense of self is not fixed and static. It is a process, an effect of discourse which is therefore changeable.

Such an understanding of gender identities allows us to move away from the straightforward traditionalist dichotomous understanding of gender (Cerulo, 1997). Instead, it posits gender as a social construct. Recent research in feminist linguistics shows that by making choices from the discourses available to them, individuals can construct different or multiple gender identities (Simpson, 1997:202). These studies further argue that discourse allows people to do gender and become gendered simultaneously (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; West and Fenstermaker, 1995; Coates, 1996; Cameron, 1997a). Gendered discourses refer to discourses that discuss how men and women are socialised into "prescribed behaviours, actions, roles, choices, positions, relations and identities" (Litosseliti, 2013: 58). As discussed above, such discourses signify how particular gender ideology and gendered social practices are not only constructed but also regulated in societies. It is noteworthy here that these gendered discourses are

not associated exclusively with the gender of the individuals who use them; rather they are proliferated by both men and women in various contexts. For example, in the same way as men can be involved in producing anti-women discourses, women can also take part in the production and reinforcement of such gendered discourses (ibid).

In this connection, Sunderland (2004: 22) argues that gendered discourses allow men and women to be positioned in a certain way in a society and to take particular "gendered subject positions that constitute gender more widely". This is known as the discursive accomplishment of gender (and other) identities. Accomplishment here suggests that "people, through their linguistic (and non-linguistic) behaviour, produce rather than reflect a priori identities as 'women' and 'men' in particular historical and cultural locations" (Lazar, 2005:12). 'Accomplishment' also implies that becoming gendered/doing gender is a dynamic process that is never complete, and one in which people are active agents who can also disrupt particular (normative) constructions of gender identity. Lastly, the notion of gender as an accomplishment helps us see more clearly the links between gender identity as performance and as a social construct, for instance, between femaleness and femininity. The former, according to Kiesling (2004), is about what individuals do, while the latter is about social constructs (including stereotypes) that individuals must deal with. In the present study, understanding gender as socially constructed through discursive means enabled me to analyse in detail how the participants of my study not only produced gendered discourses in their Facebook posts, but also how these gendered discourses played a critical role in their construction of their gender identities.

2.1.3 Intersecting gender identities

In this dissertation, my primary aim is to investigate how Pakistani men and women construct their gender identities on Facebook. In this connection, one of the essential issues that I had to deal with was to clarify if I should focus exclusively on 'gender identity' as a singular or plural concept and if I should also consider other dimensions of identity or social categories (e.g., religious, national, social class). I decided to use the term 'gender identities' because first, I do not see the notions of 'gender' and 'identity' as fixed and stable. Rather, I view them as a spectrum and as social: people consciously or unconsciously, in their interactions construct them, and they manifest through their repeated actions. Moreover, as argued by Graddol and Swann (1989), the different kinds of life experiences of men and women cannot be described adequately based on their biological differences. Since gender is socially constructed, it can also be altered by individuals during the course of their lives as they interact with other people in various contexts (Talbot, 1998). In the same vein, West and Zimmerman (1987; cited in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 1) claim that gender is not something that we are born with, and that we have — rather it is something that we do. Gender is performed by men and women and its performance can also vary from one culture to another culture as well as during the course of history, depending

on the different contexts, goals, aims and interests of societies (Wodak, 1997; Talbot, 1998).

Second, in the context of my dissertation, using the term gender identities also indicates that I pay attention to the lived experiences of my participants (whether online or offline) and how it constitutes a complex phenomenon which is shaped by the intersection of different social categories, such as age, class, religion, and nationality. As it is specifically religion and a particular way of interpreting Islam that matters the most in the Pakistani context, then nationality is also a relevant axis of identity. This essentially means that no single dimension of identity (class, gender, nationality, religion, or sexuality) adequately describes how people respond to their social environments or are responded to by others (Collins 2000; McCall 2005).

Thus, my study has been informed by an intersectional approach to the understanding of gender. It shows, most significantly, how the gender identities of my participants on Facebook have been created in relation to other social dimensions. Such intersections indicate that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions intersect in producing injustice and inequality, instead of multiplying around different social identities (Collins, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2007). Such a perspective enriches our understanding in two fundamental ways. First, it allows us to examine the complexity of the notion of identity beyond the simple binary of oppressor and oppressed, and second it enables us to see the diversity and the way people hold power (ibid). Therefore, following scholars in the field of intersectional gender studies (e.g., Collins (2000); McCall (2005); Litosseliti (2013); Sunderland (2004)), I also posit that gender identities are constructed and (re)negotiated simultaneously in relation to other social categories such as age, class, religion, nationality, and sexuality. These social categories (or other dimensions of identity) may well be regarded as important resources that people draw on when constructing their gender identities.

In the context of my study, using the term 'gender identities' was not only relevant but also essential for me for the following reasons. In Pakistan, as mentioned in section 1.4, the notion of gender is linked to the country's colonial history, socio-cultural norms, and political and religious affiliations and is thus an intricate phenomenon that cannot be examined simply additively. In other words, to understand how my participants constructed their gender identities in a present-day social media forum, in this instance Facebook, it is imperative to consider how the different social categories or different aspects of their identity intersect to construct their particular notion of gender in Pakistan. I mean by this that in the Pakistani context, the experience of women, for instance, cannot be completely understood by exploring gender and religious aspects separately, as it is the intersection of the two, or of more than these two dimensions of identity that not only reinforce one another but also create their unique experience, which may not be the same the experiences of other Muslim women. In such a context, gender identities essentially conflate with national and religious identities (or social categories). Thus, taking an intersectional approach to interpret the Facebook

experiences of my participants principally meant that I did not examine their individual online identities alone, but rather paid close attention to the points of intersection that enabled them to construct their identities in particular ways.

2.1.4 Gender identities as performative

Since in this dissertation I see gender and gender identities as both social and individual—and more importantly, as flexible and variable — one way of describing such an active and intentional production of gender is, to use a postmodernist concept, to see it as performative in nature. To this end, I draw on insights from the theory of performativity (Butler 1990) as these help me to disentangle the online gendered practices and gender dynamics deployed by men and women on Facebook in Pakistan. The idea that gender is 'performative' is drawn from Butler's work *Gender Trouble* (1990). In this book she presents a non-essentialist view of gender, one that recognises that gender is not a predetermined or inherent identity that is fixed and stable. She further explicates that gender is produced through repetitive acts which are not only grounded in socio-cultural understandings of gender but are also reinforced by societal norms (ibid:43–44). In other words, it is through the repetitive enactment of individuals as men and women that the categories of men and women are formed, thereby "dismantling the ontological status of gender categories" (Xie, 2014: 19). This also means that any transgression of their assigned gender can have serious negative consequences. Importantly, Butler makes a distinction between the terms 'performance' and 'performative' (Butler, 1990). The former refers to the "preexistence of the subject/individual before the performance while in case of the latter, performance constitutes the individual/subject" (ibid). This suggests that gender identities and gendered behaviours are produced ongoingly: "gender is something you do or perform and that there is an array of possible gender identities (mainstream and non-mainstream)" (ibid: p. 32).

Moreover, for Butler, there is no prediscursive identity, meaning that gender (like other dimensions of identity) is constructed within "regulative discourses", '"frameworks of intelligibility", or "disciplinary regimes" (Butler, 1993:8). Regulative discourses refer to the dominant discourses that are responsible for producing subjects/individuals who must follow the established prescribed gender (or bodily) norms of the society. Such types of discourses also consist of disciplinary techniques or strategies (such as surveillance and maintaining a public/private dichotomy) that map out not only the rules for maintaining the social order but also force subjects/individuals to adhere to prearranged gendered practices, thereby restricting the gender identities that are culturally acceptable (Butler, 1993: 40). For example, as discussed above, the dominant regulatory discourses of femininity in Pakistan constitute women as passive beings who should remain within the four walls of their houses and where any transgression results in negative consequences (Jafar, 2005). Butler (1993: 8) further explains the presence of regulatory discourses as follows:

> ...In that naming, the girl is "girled," brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that "girling" of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and through-out various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is ... the repeated inculcation of a norm.

More importantly, this suggests that 'naming' is itself a repetitive act that is regulated through the established heterosexual models whereas "performativity is construed as that power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (Butler, 1993: 20). This enables subjects/individuals to become socially acceptable to the people around them and make sense of themselves by continuously enacting the established gender norms (ibid). When viewed in this manner, gender identities may well be conceived and understood as a specific type of performance which is regulated and reinforced through the dominant gender models. However, the regulatory discourses that reinforce gender norms, although restrictive in nature, do not completely determine all the possibilities of gender identity performance. As Butler (2004: 52) argues, repeated gender performances are fundamentally inconsistent, thereby "making the reiterations both the way gender norm is (re)produced and the ways it is subverted". In other words, gender norms are reconstructed and evoked through bodily performances which also have the ability to challenge these norms during their performance. Thus, for Butler (1993), gender identity is constructed both performatively and discursively. In this way, Butler has shifted the emphasis of gender identity studies away from gender-based differences to the processes that construct the notion of gender identity in discourse.

In the context of my research, I hypothesised social media as a space where people potentially author their gender identities by consciously or unconsciously choosing what they want to share on their profiles. Thus, for me, the repetitive choice of posting content (whether in the form of their profile pictures, cover photographs or Facebook posts) by the study participants constituted, in theory, the 'repeated acts' that enabled them to construct their gender identities on Facebook. At the same time, their choice of sharing particular types of Facebook posts (both men and women) were informed by the socio-cultural and religious discourses of Pakistani society.

Taking insights from performativity theory proved to be beneficial for the following reasons. First, this approach allowed me to focus on investigating the "diversity of gender identities and gendered practices" (Cameron, 2005: that are continuously enacted on Facebook. This meant that I was able to examine in detail how, within the regulatory discourses of Pakistani society, the participants were enacted their gender in diverse ways, in alignment or in opposition to the disciplinary regimes.

This also suggests that the participants' digital/online gender identities may be considered as extended versions of their physical or offline identities. This is particularly significant in cases where the participants' offline or physical lives were affected by how they portrayed themselves on their social media accounts. Second, with the help of this theory, it is possible to show how users'

gender identities are not only constructed by their social media activities and behaviours in the online communication environment but also that these activities and behaviours serve as a means to make the identity construction process more multifaceted and intricate. This is particularly evident in the case of

Facebook, which, instead of providing a platform enabling linear, singular activity, provides its users with possibilities for interconnected activities (such as tagging, commenting on friend's post, replying to a friend's post, liking, sharing, status updates etc.) to manage their performances online. Third, applying Butler's theory to the study of online gender identities proved to be beneficial, since it posits that gender is constituted in line with culturally available discourses, structures, and practices, which in turn are manifested through repetitive acts. Moreover, once people habituate to these performances, actions and behaviours, they can become normalised for those involved (in this case Facebook users), thus appearing to originate from the individual's "identity rather than constituting it" (Butler, 1990: 25; Salih, 2002: 46).

Thus, this position diverges from the more traditional perspectives that focus on explaining the behaviours and communication patterns of men and women by reference to differences in their discourse rather than viewing discourse as something that constitutes their gender identities. Lastly, extending the Butlerian approach from "bodily" experiences to online communication means that the behaviour displayed by people in a social media environment such as Facebook is as authentic as their performances in their physical lives (Cover, 2012: 177–193). Thus, I argue that the gender identities of my participants are not constructed in isolation but rather construed and shaped at the intersection of various socio-cultural forces in the Pakistani social media context (Salam, 2021).

2.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

Facebook posts are a good example of multimodal discourse. Facebook links technologically enabled semiotic resources like audios, visuals, photographs, and videos, to other resources and language. Moreover, it constitutes a culture (Georgalou, 2016: 40–64) that relies on the constant social interaction of its users through these semiotic modes. The study of these essentially requires a systematic analysis not only of how the various semiotic means work together in an integrated manner (and individually) to produce particular meanings, but it also involves a careful documentation of the impact of such technologies on social interaction and discourses (Poulsen et. al, 2018).

For these reasons, I have examined my participants' Facebook posts by applying Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2010). In Multi-modal Discourse Analysis, the emphasis is not on linguistic features alone; rather, the approach considers language (both written and spoken) as one of the many available resources through which people construct meanings. It further posits that relying solely on the analysis of linguistic features would generate only a partial

understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Jones, 2013). This by no means suggests that language does not play a crucial role in the meaning making process. However, Facebook posts can include resources (e.g., visuals, paintings, sculptures, and Gifs) that do not require language at all. For my purposes, multimodal discourse analysis, by offering "tools that can provide insight into the relation of the meanings of a community and its semiotic manifestations" (Kress, 2011: 239–260), enabled me to explore in detail how my participants' deployment of certain semiotic modes indicated their meaning making processes, practices and, more importantly, how these resources played a critical role in the construction of their gender identities.

I use the term multimodal discourse analysis, as suggested by Jones (2012: 229), not to refer to any one or special type of discourse that can be considered "multimodal", but rather to "the engagement in the multimodal dimensions of all discourse". As its name suggests, multimodal discourse analysis has its roots in the discourse analytic paradigm that has been used to examine either "accounts of connected stretches of language in use" and/or "uncovering salient political, social, psychological features in text-like entities" (Kress, 2011: 239–260). Such an analysis basically focuses on who speaks with whom, in which context and for what purpose (ibid). Multimodal discourse analysis takes this approach a step further by focusing not only on "who" (or whose agency), but also on which modes are involved in meaning making at any given time. This is because the repetitive use of particular modes cannot be regarded as an isolated event. Rather their choice depicts/represents decision making that entails certain consequences (Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009: 28–37).

Modes are socially shaped and assume their particular meanings by being constantly selected in various contexts, thereby offering us an insight into the socio-cultural histories of the communities who use them (Kress 2011: 46–47). Moreover, modes are used to accomplish specific societal functions, which may serve to endorse specific ideologies (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 6–14). It should be noted that the notion of mode in multimodal discourse analysis is different from, for instance, modality as used in grammar, which is used to express possibility or obligation. Similarly, it is different from Halliday's model of context (field, mode, tenor) where mode is the channel through which communication (written or spoken) takes place. Modes are also clearly distinguished from media, which constitute the physical carriers of modes for example computer screens, printed papers, televisions, phones and tablets (Jones, 2012: 229). Examining discourses in such a way essentially unveils the choices in representation that are ultimately connected with the notions of power and agency.

2.2.1 Multimodal discourse analysis and gender identities on social media

In recent years, multimodal discourse analysis has been used extensively in the field of gender studies, and the study of mainstream and social media. In the case of social media in particular, previous empirical research on the multimodal aspects of these social platforms has mostly been carried out from two perspectives.

First, multimodal aspects have been studied in relation to other modes of communication, such as writing, and second, multimodality has been investigated in terms of its content, with a focus on the associated linguistic elements (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005; Kenix, 2009; Kerbel and Bloom, 2005). In recent years, images uploaded and shared by users have also been examined using statistical data analysis techniques, such as automated content analysis. These studies (see e.g., Hochman and Manovich, 2013; Yazdani and Manovich, 2015) have been fruitful in analysing large chunks of data and generating and documenting current trends in the use of visuals.

Second, scholars have also effectively employed multimodal discourse analysis to investigate the construction of gender identities on these platforms. For example, Shokoohi (2017) investigated how Iranian women through their online multimodal performances rebelled against the obligatory hijab imposed by the Iranian state. The results of her study suggested that these women showed resistance both verbally and visually. In a similar vein, Aiello and Woodhouse (2016) focused on the multimodal critical discourse analysis of gender identity in stock photography (Genderblend) and investigated how corporate imagery can be understood as political, that is, in relation to corporate claims that it portrays gender identities and relations in more inclusive and diverse ways, thereby harnessing feminist theory for promotional purposes. Their findings showed that, although Genderblend offers its customers new ways to think about gender identities, these continue to be constructed using traditional gender models. In his investigation of visual and textual representations of the lives of men and women athletes under the hashtag #strength on Instagram, Luyt (2017) reported that men and women are still being constructed in terms of the traditional gender stereotypes. By combining Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis, multimodal analysis, and Halliday's systemic functional grammar, Wartiovaara (2020), in her exploration of how feminist discourses are used by the fast fashion retailer Monki in their Instagram posts, identified five different discourses of femininity and feminism present in the material – commodity, body, choice, self-love and feminist identity – which play a crucial role in empowering socially and economically privileged women. In a similar vein, using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, China (2020) investigated the multiple meanings of '#Beyonce' across different social media platforms. She found 13 meaning-based identity categories for Beyoncé which constructed Beyoncé as a cultural object subjected to reinterpretations both linguistically and visually. In her article, Nilsen (2020) applying multimodal discourse analysis to ethnographic Facebook profile data of European women who support the Islamic State (ISIS) ideology, she argues that in the self-presentation strategies of these women, the prominent discourses included hijra (migration), jihad (holy war), jannah (paradise) and ghurba (estrangement). She further asserts that of these discourses, ghurba may encourage radicalisation the most.

The research discussed above helped guide me in carrying out the present study. For instance, these studies examined both linguistic and visual data. They

also highlighted the fact that social media is used both as a medium where traditional gender roles are reinforced and as a platform where, simultaneously, conservative gender models are challenged. However, most of these studies were conducted to explore and document the experiences of western social media users across different platforms. In contrast, in my study I empirically investigated how non-western Pakistani Muslim Facebook users construct their gender identities via the mobilisation of various semiotic resources. A notable exception is the study by Shokoohi (2017), who focused on non-western social media. However, the study only investigated the social media experiences of women. In contrast to these studies on gender and social media, this dissertation study examined both men's and women's Facebook practices, documenting the meanings and functions that they associated with specific images and their online practices. Moreover, the present study also helps us to understand how gender disparity, especially in the Pakistani context, is oriented to via the use of different semiotic resources.

2.3 Social media and multimodality: New opportunities for the construction of gender identities in Pakistan

FIGURE 1 Social Media and Multimodality

Figure 1 is extracted from one of my male research participants' stories that he shared on his Facebook and Instagram profile. It showcases the complex, multilayered use of semiotic modes with which he authors his gender identity. On the one hand, it shows a sophisticated understanding of how to handle and co-orchestrate a variety of the semiotic resources available on social media platforms. On the other hand, by choosing to post his own cropped makeup picture is a way of negotiating his transgressive gender identity in a hostile conservative culture. Such online performances, whether in Pakistan or elsewhere, also highlight the agency of social media users, who employ these platforms creatively with the help of a variety of semiotic resources to enact gender identities that may or may not be in line with their dominant socio-cultural and religious values. In instances such as that shown in Figure 1, Butler's (1990:188) notion of subversive politics may well be applicable to social media platforms which provide their users with

a space where the non-normative performance of genders, sexualities and sexes is possible and can be achieved by denaturalising the norms that reinforce the heterosexual matrix. However, scholars (see, e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Mullany, 2004) have argued that the same abundance and accessibility to semiotic resources may equally well be used to reinforce heteronormative and misogynistic discourses on social media sites.

More importantly, what Figure (1) shows is that by adopting the new affordances of social media platforms and resourcefully utilising them to enact their identities, social media platforms have become new sites for the construction of identities in general and gender identities in particular.

In other words, the construction of online gender identities may well be understood as drawing on what Blommaert (2005: 207) refers to as "particular forms of semiotic potential, organized in a repertoire" in today's global digital age. Empirically, examining gender identities in such a way demonstrates the range of semiotic modes that users can potentially draw upon to perform their identities online, thereby highlighting their agency and creativity (Al Zidjaly, 2019b). Moreover, the multimodal nature of the construction of gender identities on social media negates the simplistic and dichotomous views of identity construction and instead emphasises that it is a continuing complex interactive negotiation that requires careful contextualisation (ibid). Put simply, the online discursive practices of users and their constructions of gender identities on social media platforms are shaped by their access to particular semiotic resources.

2.4 Interviews with Facebook users: Seeking an understanding of their practices

As this dissertation is aimed at empirically investigating how young Pakistani men and women construct their gender identities in their Facebook posts, a key goal in my study was to analyse visual and linguistic data (what they do on Facebook). However, another crucial aspect in this study was to investigate how my research participants evaluate their own experience and everyday Facebook practices. Therefore, for the third article, I decided to conduct interviews with my participants. In the context of this study, interviews were beneficial in four ways. First, they provided me with an opportunity to explore the views, experiences, gendered ideological beliefs and motivations of my research participants, thereby enabling me to probe more deeply into the phenomenon at hand. Second, they allowed me to understand and learn about their backgrounds, the traditions they followed, and their privacy concerns, all of which would otherwise have remained unknown. Third, the interviews allowed the participants, especially women, to share their experiences on sensitive and contested topics related to gender, and to talk at length, for example about sexual harassment and abuse in their everyday lives. Fourth, because of the flexible nature of the interviews, I

was able to clarify and elicit detailed information from my participants that contributed to understanding and interpreting the complex nature of gender issues in Pakistani society. Exploring my research participants' Facebook practices in this way was thus significant as it provided me with an insight into understanding the ways in which they employed Facebook and how they themselves perceived their practices. More importantly, it also revealed the impact of, and how they orient themselves to, these socio-cultural and religious norms in choosing how to construct their Facebook posts. A more detailed discussion on how the interviews were conducted can be found in chapter 3.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research questions, data collection and analytical methods used in this dissertation research. First, my research questions were:(a) How do young middle-class Pakistani men and women mobilise visual and linguistic resources in constructing their gender identities in their Facebook posts? (b) In what ways do young middle-class Pakistani men and women adhere to or contest the prevailing linguistic and socio-cultural norms and stereotypical gender notions in Pakistan in their Facebook posts? and (c) What specific roles does Facebook play in enabling and constraining their construction of gender identities? It should be mentioned here that, since I made use of similar data and the same method of analysis in both the first and second articles, I discuss the design of their methodology together. I then describe the research design employed in the third article. The chapter concludes with the dicussion on the ethical considerations that arose during the course of this study and my position as a researcher.

3.1 Selection of the key participants

3.1.1 Criteria for selecting the participants for the multimodal discourse analysis of Facebook posts and interviews

I selected the participants for the multimodal discourse analysis of the Facebook posts and interviews based on the following criteria: (a) age, (b) socioeconomic class and (c) geographical locale. As a preliminary step in designing my study and to gain a holistic picture of how Pakistani female and male Facebook users make sense of their social media practices in their everyday lives, I designed a survey that included information on the aims and objectives of this study. The survey items comprised both multiple choice and open-ended questions. The aim of the first half of the survey was to obtain demographic and socio-economic data

on potential participants, while the second half was designed to gather information on how and for what purposes the respondents used Facebook. The survey was shared with people who fulfilled my selection criteria. My objective was to gather as much preliminary background information as possible from a large pool of Facebook users in South Punjab. The next step in the data collection process was to recruit the participants for the survey. Initially, I asked my friends and family members to help by sharing the survey with people they know. By April 2017, the survey had been distributed among a hundred and fifty Facebook users.

However, at this stage, I was only able to obtain 28 responses in total. This may be attributable to the fact that the response rate to such online questionnaires is generally low since people are under no obligation to participate (Baym, 1995). With this initial information, however, I was able to map out some recurring patterns, such as the sharing of religious and motivational posts in individuals' everyday use of Facebook. I also realised that language is not the only resource that enables people to construct their gender identities on Facebook. Thus, this preliminary information enabled me to redefine my initial research questions and shift my focus from the analysis of language to how people mobilised both linguistic and visual resources in constructing their gender identities online.

I also decided to recruit both men and women, aged between 18 and 30 years, as my research participants for the following reasons. First, in Pakistan, following a rapid increase in the use of smartphones, affordable internet packages and access to 3G/4G technology (according to figures recently published (June 2021) by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)), there are currently 103 million broadband subscribers and 100 million 3G/4G cellular subscribers as compared to 2004/05, when there were just under 12 million mobile subscribers, 26 000 broadband subscribers and no mobile Internet users). More importantly, it had been reported that social media platforms are used, in particular, by Pakistani youth aged 18–24 years, thereby making them the largest user age group (Eijaz, 2013; Saleem et. al, 2014). Second, teens and young adults are the heaviest users of social media platforms: compared to the older generations, they find access to new media easier and therefore dominate these platforms (Livingstone & Brake, 20010; Vitak et. al, 2010). This flocking of the teens and adults to social media can be attributed to the fact that social media sites serve as an important source of different information in different domains, such as politics, business, entertainment, and science. On average they spend 6 hours daily on multiple social media sites (Vannucci & Ohannessian, 2019). More importantly, people in this age group are also early adopters of new technologies (Schoemaker, 2016). Scholars (Tucker & Marthews, 2011) have argued that their wide access to the internet and mobile phones offers teens and adults possibilities to not only express themselves in novel ways, but also allow them to recreate their offline reality in the virtual world. Moreover, young people's technological background, exposure to technology, and the ways in which they acquire new knowledge about technologies influence the ways in which they use technology for day-to-day communication.

Third, this age cohort was chosen as the focus in this study, because of the life-phase they are currently in and their special interest in the opportunities Facebook offers them for self-expression and communication. It has been argued (see, e.g., Arnett, 2000b) that this age group is considered not only to be in a critical phase in the development of their social connections but also experiencing profound and significant changes in their lives. This is because it is at around this time many young people settle down in their chosen careers or enter domestic life, situations that form the basis for the rest of their adult lives (Chisholm & Hurrelmann, 1995). Lastly, studies (see e.g., Rindfuss, 1991; Benson & Elder, 2011: have also indicated that during this period, people frequently change and explore different opportunities and possibilities in their careers, world views, and intimate relationships, thus "acquiring autonomy and building a sense of self".

Another key criterion for my selection of participants was social class. Here I must admit that defining and measuring what constituted the middle class in Pakistan was a complex task. Scholars like Reeves et. al (2018) argue that describing the middle class falls under three main categories i.e. (a) socioeconomic resources, (b) education and occupation status and (c) attitudes, self-perception, and mindset. These categories are, however, not completely independent as they tend to overlap and reinforce each other. Keeping this in view, for the present study, I defined the middle class in terms of socio-economic status and the educational and occupational background of the participants. I was able to not only collect this information with the help of the survey, but I also considered the socioeconomic status of the respondents: if their minimum monthly income was rupees (Pakistani currency) 50,000, I considered them members of the middle class. More importantly, studies (see e.g., Wang et. al, 2021; Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2011) suggest that the way people engage in and interact with others on social media also signals their social class. In other words, it can be argued that taking part on social media in certain ways e.g., through posting of religious and motivational images produces different classes. Therefore, I sought to recruit young people from the middle and upper middle classes who were well educated and computer literate. The reason I did not select participants from the elite class and the lower classes was that the extremely affluent, cosmopolitan lifestyle of the former is not representative of most Pakistanis, and the members of the latter, underprivileged class do not use Facebook. The middle class in Pakistan constitutes 42% of the entire population (Husain, 2018; Tirmizi, 2020). Scholars (see e.g., Maqsood, 2017; Ahmed, 2020; Paracha, 2018; Adil, 2017; Riaz, 2014; Jamal, 2013) generally divide the Pakistani middle class into the old/traditional Pakistani middle class and the new Pakistani middle class. The old, or traditional middle class emerged after partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and mostly consisted of bureaucrats, lawyers, doctors, and teachers. This class was dominant during the first three decades after the independence of Pakistan and is particularly associated with General Ayub Khan's philosophy of social and cultural liberalism (Qureshi, 2018). In an attempt to present a secular and modernised version of Pakistani society to the western world, this class organised such events as musical evenings, fashion shows and literary festivals (ibid). In comparison to this

established traditional middle class, the emergence of the new Pakistani middle class is a direct consequence of General Zia-ul-Haque's "Islamisation" policies of the 1980s (Maqsood, 2017). Scholars (see, e.g., Ahmed, 2020; Maqsood, 2017 & Qureshi, 2018) have argued that this new Pakistani middle class is 'visibly' different from its predecessor, on one hand because of its fixation with religion and moralism, and on the other hand because of its desire to enjoy the fruits of modernity. 'Visibly different' here refers to the fact that the new middle class has a strong religious presence (in their lifestyle, e.g., consumption of Islamic goods, manifesting a very dominant Muslim identity by taking part in religious gatherings, and women wearing a headscarf), and because they are socially conservative (Maqsood, 2017). Moreover, their moral outlook and their traditionalism has also caused the new middle class to become overly conscious of their socio-economic status, as any downward trend may lead them towards the lower classes (ibid). This fear compels them to adhere strictly to their socio-religious norms and positions them as the custodians and representative voices of a society's moral, cultural, and societal values (Jamal, 2013). Another characteristic which differentiates this class from the others, particularly from the traditional middle class, is that it combines a feudal value system with consumerist capitalism (Adil, 2017). Additionally, this new middle class is also making its presence felt on social media by actively engaging in social and political debate (ibid). Scholars (see, e.g., Riaz, 2014) argue that this new middle class, which is torn between holding on to the traditional religious practices and reaping the benefits of the modern world, is in a state of ideological turmoil: it is being pulled in different ideological directions and is struggling to determine its identity. Thus, in the present study, selecting participants from the middle and upper middle classes presented me with the interesting task of investigating how the widespread use of social media among their younger members has influenced the prevailing gender ideology of these two classes.

My participants were all from South Punjab, more specifically in Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Bahawalpur which are the divisional headquarters of this region. South Punjab is a relatively underdeveloped area in terms of education, infrastructure, and social services (Zubair, 2006). With specific respect to gender, in contrast to the metropolitan areas like Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad where women have easier access to literacy, education, and "have greater mobility and decision-making authority" (Sathar & Kazi, 2000: 89), the "culture of female covering, shame and concealment prevails" in South Punjab (Habiba, 2018: 252).

Moreover, this region is known for its rigid feudal system in which strict patriarchal customs are reinforced through exchange marriages, acid attacks, burning, domestic violence and 'Kala Kali' (a premeditated form of honour killing) which are carried out specifically against women (Afzal et. al, 2021; Faqir Atta, 2013). The feudal system is often politically supported, with the feudal lords laying down their own laws and justice system in the form of 'panchayats'(council of elders in a village or community) which signify the power of traditional authority to deal with community problems. For instance, such 'panchayats' do not consider honour killing to be a crime punishable by law (Nabi and Baloch, 2010). The Acid Survivors Foundation, an Islamabad-based NGO, (2015) re-

ported that out of 68 cases of acid attacks reported nationwide, 51 were perpetuated in the South Punjab region. Such an omnipresence of dominant and violent patriarchal ideology is often intertwined with religion, for instance in the form of 'purdah' (veiling), to specifically restrict the agency and mobility of women, thereby clearly segregating men and women (Zubair, 2006). The social life of women largely remains under the control of men who make decisions on behalf of these women. Scholars like Mernissi (1993b) argue that the purdah-based type of exclusion of women symbolises the power struggles that exist between fundamentalist men and unveiled women.

However, as discussed above, the mushrooming of social media in recent years, particularly Facebook and Instagram, in Pakistan, has influenced traditional ways of communication by providing people with access to entertainment, political and social news, and business opportunities (Zaheer, 2018). The use of social media and the role it performs in bringing about societal change has been a topic of debate (Schoemaker, 2016). For instance, in 2016, Qandeel Baloch, a young South Punjabi woman, was the victim of an 'honour killing' by her brother for posting vulgar and provocative videos on Facebook (Alam, 2020; Habiba, 2018). Such attacks directed at women offline and online in Pakistan have not only increased but have also resulted in offline harassment and violence (Bukhari, 2014). Such incidents challenge the traditional idea that social media empowers its users to express their point of view (Habiba, 2018).

However, in South Punjab, in the wake of the 2018 national general elections, social media played a key role in moderating the fears of the marginalised people by providing them with a means to challenge their powerful feudal lords. For example, young voters in Dera Ghazi Khan and Multan (the two main cities in South Punjab) video-recorded the confrontation with their tribal heads when the latter showed up in their constituencies for the first time since the previous elections in 2013 (Jarral, 2018). The tribal heads were nervous and embarrassed, as the youngsters were recording them. The video was later shared on social media, went viral and led to several other similar events across the country (ibid). Such events testify to the part played by social media in raising awareness among young people of their political and social rights. Moreover, on a more general level, it could also be argued that these events are indicative of a change reflecting Pakistan's ongoing shift from an agrarian to a more business-centred economy while still holding on to its traditional, rigid socio-cultural practices. Whatever the cause, incidents like these demonstrate the intricate nature of social media use in Pakistan.

Although this study focuses specifically on the feudal and conservative area of South Punjab, the gender-based cultural practices mentioned above can also be observed in other regions/provinces of Pakistan. For instance, a pre-meditated form of honour killing is also present in other provinces of Pakistan under different names, such as 'Karo Kari' in Sindh, 'Siyahkari' in Balochistan and 'Tor tora' in Khyber Pakhtoon Khawah (National Seminar report, 2001; Afzal et. al, 2021). The women killed in such acts remain 'dishonoured' and stigmatised even after their death whereas the men who conduct these acts are commended as

'honourable' men. Similarly, the concept of 'panchayats' mentioned above, also exists in other parts of Pakistan; for example, in Khyber Pakhtoon Khawah, these panchayats are known as 'jirgas'. In July 2021 alone, social media platforms were flooded with cases of gender-based violence from all over the country. On 3 July, Saima Ali was killed by her drug-addict husband in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; on 15 July in a domestic violence incident, Qurat-ul-Ain Balouch, a mother of four children was tortured and murdered by her husband in Hyderabad, Sindh, and on 21 July 27-year-old Noor Mukadam was brutally beheaded in Islamabad (Hafeez, 2021). Thus, it is arguable that the results of this study may well be true for other parts of Pakistan.

3.1.2 Recruitment of participants for the multimodal discourse analysis of Facebook posts and interviews

As mentioned in section 3.1.1, due to the low survey response rate, I decided to opt for the snowball sampling technique to recruit the participants for both multimodal study and interviews. This data gathering technique is based on networking and referral (Parker et. al, 2019; Naderifar et. al, 2017). and sampling ends when either saturation point or the target sample size is reached (Cohen et al., 2013; Groenewald, 2004). As noted by Parker and Scott (2019: 3), by making use of one's social networks to establish initial links, those selected as participants then help in recruiting additional participants via their own networks. This type of non-probability sampling turned out to be beneficial for my study for two primary reasons: (a) I was able to recruit participants who did not want to be identified and/or were vulnerable (especially women), and (b) I was able, owing to the cost effectiveness of this technique, to recruit a study population that was geographically dispersed in three different cities of South Punjab (for more details, see section 3.1.1). Moreover, in the case of a qualitative exploratory study such as this one, where the aim was to investigate in detail how Pakistani users experience social media in general and Facebook in particular in their everyday lives, I was interested in achieving a more contextualised interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. For this purpose, snowball sampling proved useful.

As Creswell (2009: 203) argues, non-random sampling in qualitative research is usually employed when the ultimate goal is not generalisability but rather "to develop an in-depth and contextualised exploration of a central phenomenon." Therefore, my family's and friends' networks enabled me to make initial contact with potential participants. At first, two people responded positively to my invitation to participate. I then requested these two persons to identify other people who might meet the selection criteria. Thus, in recruiting my research subjects my family and friends acted as 'insider assistants' (King and Horrocks, 2010: 31), by helping me not only in establishing the credibility of my research but also by encouraging commitment on the part of those selected as participants (Salmons, 2012: 17). However, primarily to avoid any bias during the analysis of the data, I excluded my own family and friends from the study.

I was eventually able to recruit ten participants in total (5 male and 5 female) for the first two sub-studies on Facebook posts. A small sample size is quite common in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2011). Here, it also allowed a detailed multimodal analysis of these participants' Facebook posts, and, together with the interviews, also enabled me to identify recurring patterns and/or similarities and dissimilarities in the data across the sample.

3.2 Collection of the Facebook data

Initially, to gain a holistic understanding of how Pakistani Facebook users construct their gender identities linguistically and visually, my plan was to analyse my participants' visual posts and the conversational styles and strategies used by their readers' in the comment sections. However, I encountered a major hurdle in the case of the male participants. Although they had agreed and had given me permission to access their Facebook posts, I was nevertheless denied access to their communication threads on the pretext that it was 'culturally' and 'morally' inappropriate for a woman to read their (explicit and often obscene) communications. They also feared that it might result in unsettling their offline relationships. Therefore, I decided to analyse men's and women's Facebook posts without making any reference to their comment sections.

My final dataset consisted of a total of 870 Facebook posts (570 from women and 300 from men). These were systematically collected over a period of three months, i.e., from May to July 2017. The reason why I collected data during the said time period is because doing discourse analysis can be time consuming, I decided to collect the data as soon as I was granted permission from all of the participants to access their Facebook profiles. Most of these posts were not crated or constructed by the participants themselves but were "(re)circulated" by them for their own purposes. These posts (which might include activities, quiz results, videos, Gifs, and images) are thus potential social references that can be replied to and commented on. In other instances, as on special occasions like Father's Day, a birthday celebration or a meet-up at a restaurant, some of the participants also shared photographs of their friends and family members.

The posts were then analysed, and the results reported in two articles, one on posts shared by men (Salam, 2021) and one on posts shared by women (Salam, 2020). The Facebook posts selected as data were thus multimodal in nature: all of them included some text in English, Urdu, or Arabic that was either inscribed on images or used as captions, and still visuals, such as cartoon characters or photographs of family members or film stars Figure 2 presents a typical example).

FIGURE 2 Data Example

Based on their content, posts were assigned to different categories, such as religious and motivational, friends and family, social awareness, travel, and politics (Salam, 2020 & 2021). These categories were not, however, mutually exclusive, but partially overlapping.

3.2.1 The analytical approach to the Facebook data

As established in the previous chapter, the rapidly changing nature of social media platforms has given rise to forms of discourse which conflate novel ways of using language and other semiotic resources. This means that instead of focusing on the meaning-making potential of a single semiotic mode, it is necessary to examine the meanings communicated by the combined use of multiple semiotic resources. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the participants' Facebook posts were analysed both visually and linguistically by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) approach to multimodal discourse analysis and Jones's (2013) take on multimodal discourse, respectively. More importantly, four aspects of the Facebook posts were examined (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015:1–17)

a. ***Facebook posts (texts)*** refers to the use of language and other se-miotic modes such as images, colours, fonts and how both visual and textual features complement each other to communicate specific meanings.
b. ***Context*** refers to the broader socio-cultural and religious context in which the texts are constructed, consumed, exchanged, and ap-propriated.
c. ***Function (Actions & Interactions)*** refers to the functions the Face-book posts (texts) potentially perform. Do these Facebook posts confirm and thus reinforce traditional, binary gender identities or do they show evidence of breaking away from or challenging traditional gendered norms?
d. ***Ideology*** refers to the gender ideologies propagated in the Facebook posts shared by the participants.

In examining the linguistic and visual aspects of the participants' Facebook posts, I first paid particularly close attention to the participants' language choices and the content of their messages, whether language was used in the Facebook posts alone or embedded in the visuals themselves. Language choices refer to the use of particular words or phrases and to the style and tone of the message, that is, whether the message was conveyed in a hostile, authoritative, aggressive, or submissive manner.

Second, to analyse the visual aspects of the participants' Facebook posts, I drew on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) approach to multimodal discourse analysis. Their approach is rooted in Halliday's social semiotic approach (1978) to language. By making use of semiotics, they argue that visuality, like language, carries messages independently and thus constitutes one of the many modes of communication used by human beings (Kress & van Leeuwen's, 2006).

Owing to its connection with both social semiotics and discourse analysis, this approach enabled me to systematically analyse the visual data, thereby also facilitating their interpretation in relation their socio-cultural context. More specifically, the most typical semiotic features of the Facebook posts in my data included salience, angle/point of view/attitude, social distance, and information value (discussed in detail below). A detailed analysis of these aspects helped me to explore and interpret how the Facebook posts shared by the participants on their profiles (a) attracted and directed the attention of their audience; (b) how the participants negotiated their relationship with their viewers; and (c) how the information was packaged and presented to convey a specific meaning (Salam, 2020 & 2021). By examining these aspects, I was able not only to identify and describe what kind of posts men and women chose to share on their Facebook profiles but also how these selected and shared posts with their specific features enabled the profiler's specific gender performance (ibid). Moreover, by expanding Blommaert's (2005:207) notion of identity in the global context, I argue that gender identities can also be perceived on social media as "particular forms of semiotic potential, organized in a repertoire". Analytically speaking, this means that my participants constructed and performed their gender identities on Facebook by strategically drawing on a range of semiotic resources such as language, imagery, and design, that indicates that they are exercising their agency on the issue of whether or not they want to conform to the dominant gender ideology.

In the analysis of the visual aspects, the first compositional feature I paid attention to was salience, which refers to how some people, places or things are highlighted more than others with the help of elements like colour, size, foregrounding, backgrounding, placement of artifacts in the visual field, and the cultural symbols used. For instance, aspects that are represented in the foreground, and thereby attract the attention of the viewer, are considered the most important piece of information in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006:201). In case of the Facebook posts that consisted solely of text, salience was determined by examining fonts and lettering, including bolding, italics, and upper or lowercase letters. This was particularly important as a text written wholly in uppercase may,

among other things, signify hostility, emphasis, or urgency (Minhas, 2017). Similarly, colours also generate a "sense of substantiality and accentuate features of visuals and stimulate effects of distance or proximity" (Hook & Glaveanu, 2013, p. 16). Moreover, the use of different colours in visuals not only strongly influences the way information is perceived but also allows a person to tell a story in a more manner that appeals to the audience at a more emotional level (Murray, 2019). In the same vein, the use of bolding emphasises the message and invites the audience or viewer to focus more carefully on the information being communicated (Bear, 2021).

The second interpersonal criterion that I used to analyse the visual aspects of the posts was the camera angle used. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:134–140) discuss the involvement of the viewers and the power dynamics between the represented participant and the viewer. They exemplify this relationship by focusing on two camera angles, the horizontal and the vertical. The horizontal angle indicates the degree of involvement of the represented participant/s with the viewer, whereas the vertical angle denotes the power dimension between the viewer and represented participant (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:140). These angles and their meanings are summarised in Table (2):

TABLE 2 Angle of view and relationship between viewers and represented participants

Angle or point of view or attitude	**Relationship between viewers and represented participants**
Frontal view	Viewer and represented participant are involved
Oblique View	Viewer and represented participant are detached
Represented participant depicted through High angle	Viewer is in a more powerful position
Represented participant depicted through Low angle	Represented participant is in a more powerful position

The third interpersonal visual aspect that I analysed in the participants' Facebook posts was social distance. Drawing on Edward T. Hall's (1974) work in proxemics, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006:124-133) describe the category of social distance as interpersonal metafunction. This term refers to how social relations are determined by different fields of vision in images. Table (3), adapted from Ly & Jung (2015: p.51), summarises the meanings associated with social distance in images:

TABLE 3 Social distance and its meanings

Distance	**Field of vision/ Camera shots (close up, medium, long shot)**	**Relationship between the represented participant and the viewer**
Intimate distance	Only the face is visible	Intimate
Close personal distance	The head and the shoulders are visible	Intimate
Far personal distance	The area from the head to the waist is visible	Personal
Close social distance	The whole figure is visible	Impersonal
Far social distance	The whole figure and the space around it is visible	Formal and Impersonal
Public distance	The torsos of at least four or five people are visible	Strangers

The last compositional feature that I analysed in the participants' Facebook posts was information value. Information value embodies how information is positioned and distributed in an image. The positioning of information plays a critical role as it may indicate, for instance, the degree to which the represented participants or the things and places depicted in the images occupy a powerful or subservient role. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 179) discuss three ways to analyse the information value of an image: top to bottom, left to right and centre/margin. In the top-to-bottom orientation, placing information at the top represents the 'ideal', while the information provided at the bottom refers to the 'real'. Thus, the ideal is interpreted as having a dominant role in the image/visual, whereas the real remains subservient. In the centre and margin layout, the centre forms the "nucleus or core of the information" while the information in the margins is considered to be the "context". In the left-to-right design of an image, the information depicted on the left refers to the "familiar and known", while the information on the right symbolises "new" information. However, since Urdu is written from right to left, the familiar and known information is shown on the right and the new on the left (p. Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 194–200).

It is worth mentioning here that during the analysis of the above-mentioned visual aspects, I also focused on how the analysis of the semiotic features also involves linguistic analysis. For example, salience was analysed linguistically in relation to the different types of fonts and lettering used, that is whether the message is written in bold, italics, or in uppercase or lowercase. Similarly, textually, attitude was examined with respect to three characteristics: affect, judgement,

and appreciation (Macken-Horarik, 2004b). Affect refers to how a text evokes emotional responses in the viewer or the reader, judgement to the ethical evaluation of a behaviour, and appreciation to the aesthetic dimensions of experience. Moreover, it is manifested in language using possessive pronouns (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006:139). Social distance was linguistically analysed in terms of the level of formality of the style of address (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 129). Thus, a "personal style" (intimate use of language) indicates alliance with an individual or group, whereas a "social style" refers to routine communication with friends and acquaintances, and a "public style" describes formal communication. In the case of information value, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) do not draw parallels with language. They argue that "the meanings these structures express cannot, in some form, be expressed in language, but rather that they are more readily and frequently expressed visually" (ibid). These visual and linguistic choices were then interpreted in the broader socio-cultural and religious context of Pakistani society.

In addition to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) multimodal approach, I also drew on Liu and O'Halloran's approach to the analysis of multi-modal discourse (2009). In particular, their (2009: 372) notion of intersemiotic parallelism (an intersemiotic cohesive device), based on Hasan's (1985b) work on parallelism in language, proved useful in allowing me to investigate how language and images – in this instance the texts and images used in Facebook posts interact with each other to communicate a specific meaning. Liu and O'Halloran (2009: 368) further argue that intersemiotic parallelism describes the cohesive relationship that exists between images and language "when the two semiotic components share a similar form" (Liu and O'Halloran, 2009; pp. 372–377). Moreover, such cohesion generates co-contextualisations that result in a context where the interpretation of both language and image becomes possible, thereby giving rise to semantic expansion in multimodal discourse. In the context of my data, this means that the images shared by my participants included references to their verbal messages and vice versa. In other words, it suggests that the visual characteristics of the participants' Facebook posts became representative and/or an extension of what was communicated through either images or language.

3.3 Collection of the interview data

3.3.1 Recruitment of the interviewees

In the third sub-study (In a world where you can be anyone: An investigation into the gendered social practices of Pakistani Facebook users) I explored how the socio-cultural and religious norms and traditions of Pakistani society influence the choice of the content (images, quotations, videos, or status updates) Pakistani men and women Facebook users share on their profile pages. I was also interested in how they evaluate their own Facebook practices and whether or not they contested or resisted the dominant norms and traditions of Pakistani society. The

data for this article were generated via interviews. In accordance with the selection criteria described in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, I contacted the people who had earlier consented to participate in my study of Facebook posts. These previously recruited 10 participants (5 men and 5 women) all agreed to be interviewed. However, to gather more information, I also decided to contact the 28 people who had initially responded to my preliminary survey. Out of these 28 people two more people agreed to be interviewed which made the total number of interview participants 12 (6 men and 6 women). The sample size of 12 participants was deemed sufficient for the purpose of this study. The idea here was to recruit participants who would be available for the interviews and who could be contacted from time to time for any possible clarifications needed during the data analysis phase. Prior to the interviews, I explained the aims and objectives of this interview study to the participants.

After recruiting the participants, I asked them about their possible availability for timetabling the interviews. I also let the participants choose where they wanted to be interviewed. The participants agreed to be interviewed in their own homes. This was important for two reasons: (a) I wanted them to feel relaxed as their familiarity with the place would encourage them to talk more openly and freely about the topic, and (b) it was vital to see the participants talk in the context of their home as the material things in their surroundings as well as their interaction with the people in that particular environment might offer insights that would otherwise be difficult to obtain (see, e.g., Elwood & Martin, 2000; Kvale, 2007).

Since I was investigating a sensitive issue like gender, it was of the utmost importance that I develop a trusting relationship and rapport with my participants. I therefore decided to interview the participants face to face and individually. Other scholars such as Elmir et al., (2011) and Mallozzi (2009) have also argued that interviewing people individually is an ideal method of collecting data, especially when the investigator is probing sensitive issues like gender, sexuality, child abuse or personal health. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted for about 90 minutes on average.

3.3.2 Conduct of the interviews

I conducted the semi-structured interviews during April–May 2019. I opted for semi-structured interviews, as I assumed that owing to their openness, they would be well-suited for eliciting detailed descriptions from my participants on how they interpreted their own everyday Facebook practices within the broader spectrum of Pakistan's socio-cultural and religious traditions and how the latter affected their construction of gender identities. Therefore, drawing on the findings of my earlier sub-studies (Salam, 2020 & 2021), I designed my interview questions. I developed an interview guide (see Appendix), which allowed me to go back and forth during the interviews depending on the interviewee's responses. Moreover, as argued by DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006), such an interview guide enables interviewees' responses to be explored in a more comprehensive and systematic manner and to keep the interviews on topic. The questions were divided into two broad categories: (a) general questions and (b) core

questions which dealt with the participants' motives for sharing certain types of posts, such as religious posts, travel posts, posts about friends and family, political posts and posts raising social awareness. The general questions were designed to make the interviewees feel at ease and to establish an initial rapport with them, while the core questions were formulated to probe into participants' attitudes and beliefs about the gender norms of Pakistani society and about how these gender norms affected their offline and online lives. These questions prompted the female participants, in particular, to delve deeply into their personal experiences, and to narrate incidents of sexual harassment and abuse they had faced both online and offline. Moreover, due to the flexible nature of these semi-structured interviews, it became easier for me to ask my participants for any clarifications during the interviews, thereby giving me more control over the topics that needed to be covered than would be in the case of unstructured interviews.

With respect to the choice of language in the interviews, it should be noted that although English is a co-official language with Urdu in Pakistan, and it is used as a medium of instruction in educational institutions (Zaidi & Zaki, 2017), people often feel anxious and linguistically less confident when communicating exclusively in English (Hussain & Akhtar, 2020; Ahmed, 2011). Therefore, to allow the interviewees to speak as freely as possible, I offered them the opportunity to select the language (English, Urdu, or both) that they felt most comfortable using when sharing their thoughts during the interview. Of the 12 interviews, 4 were conducted in English, 6 in both English and Urdu, and 2 in Urdu. Although no consensus exists on whether interviews should be uniformly conducted in one language (see, e.g., Cortazzi et. al, 2011) flexibility in the choice of language (translanguaging) during interviews not only enabled my interviewees to express themselves with ease, but also played a critical role in establishing trust and rapport and shifted "the locus of control towards the participant" (Cortazzi et. al, 2011: 508).

The next stage in the interview process consisted of translating (in cases where the participants opted to take the interview in Urdu and Urdu/English) and transcribing the collected data. I ensured that the translations from Urdu into English retained the cultural metaphors and slang words used by the interviewees (Salam, 2021). My decision to retain the cultural metaphors and slangs was based on findings (see, e.g., Polkinghorne, 2005) that to express their experiences in language, people often adhere to the symbols and metaphors culturally available to them. These metaphors or slang expressions are language- and culture-specific (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). For example, some of the women I interviewed (see Salam, 2021) described how, in order to harass them, men made use of words like 'gashti' which in English formally means a 'vagabond or nomad' whereas in Urdu it is a slang word for a 'call girl or whore'. In sum, the interviews provided me with empirical evidence of how the participants interpreted their own Facebook practices in the larger context of Pakistan's gendered socio-cultural norms.

3.3.3 Analytical approach to the interview data

In the analysis of the interviews my primary aim was to investigate their content, that is, how the interviewees themselves talked about their everyday Facebook practices in relation to the broader socio-cultural and religious traditions of the Pakistani society. For this purpose, I used Braun and Clark's (2006) qualitative approach to thematic analysis. Considered as the most widely used method in qualitative interview research (Jugder, 2016; Bradford & Cullen, 2012), Braun and Clark (2006) describe thematic analysis as "a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset" (Braun & Clark, 2006:79). Focusing on understanding the ways in which people make meaning out of their experiences across a dataset provides the investigator with an opportunity to "make sense of the collective or shared meanings and experiences" (ibid). In the context of the third sub-study, thematic analysis proved beneficial for the following reasons. First, from a social constructivist standpoint, thematic analysis enabled me to explore how the interviewees constructed and attached meanings to 'gender', the role gender played in their everyday on- and offline lives and in the broader spectrum of the socio-religious discourses available to them, and how the participants enacted gender. In other words, it allowed me to investigate how their online performances of gender reflected the reality of my interviewees' lived experiences and how through these constructions they mitigated their social worlds. Second, the flexibility of this method, which because it is not tied to a particular theoretical framework broadens its applicability and allows it to be combined with other epistemological orientations (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), made it easier for me to both situate and intepret the participants' experiences and their everyday Facebook practices within the framework of Butler's (1990) theory of performativity. Third, this method allowed me to identify the patterns in the Facebook posts of my participants and make sense of the commonalities through which the interviewees' discussed gender on Facebook. Fourth, this method allowed me to examine data in different but interconnected ways. Most significantly, it enabled me to investigate the 'semantic' as well as 'latent' meanings of the interviewees' views, that is, "the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations — and the ideologies — that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006:13). In other words, I was able to identify recurrent themes and core ideological similarities and differences in the data. This feature of thematic analysis distinguishes it from, e.g., content analysis which does not provide such an in-depth examination of the data. In the analysis of the interview data, I also paid close attention to the language used by the interviewees, for example, the use of cultural metaphors, tone, and the use of active/passive voice. This was important, since language is a "site for the cultural production of gender identity" (see, e.g., Talbot, 1998:144).

In the first phase, following Braun and Clark (2006:77–101), it was important for me to familiarise myself with the data. Since I had collected the data in the

form of the audio files, I first transcribed these files. After transcribing and translating the data, I read through the transcripts, actively observing the meanings and patterns that appeared in the dataset. In the second phase, after familiarisation with the data, I was able to create a set of initial codes that represented the meanings and patterns in the data. In this way, I was able to develop a list of codes, not only to keep track of them but also to be able to organise the data under appropriate codes, such as religious discourse, online sexual harassment, and economic empowerment for women. I also paid attention to gathering excerpts that represented the same meaning under the same code. In the third phase of thematic analysis, I grouped together all the excerpts associated with a particular code. This enabled me to identify the patterns present in the data and subsequently to identify recurrent themes in the data. For instance, I was able to identify two main themes: (1) Gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/physical reality and (2) Gender identities and Facebook as a platform for change and agency. After making sure that my themes were useful and accurately represented the data, I again returned to the dataset to compare my themes against it in order to make sure, for example, that I was not omitting anything significant, that the themes generated were represented by the data and to check on what other ways the themes might work better. In the next stage, after I had the final list of the themes, I named and defined each one of them. By defining I mean here that I formulated exactly what I meant by each theme and specified how it might help the reader to understand the data. Naming the themes enabled me to economically represent the interview dataset. In the final phase, I was able to analyse the data with the help of representative examples. Thus, by using thematic analysis, I was able to organise the collected data in a systematic manner, thereby providing a nuanced understanding and interpretation of the interviewees' talk and enabling me to make sense of the most recurrent and dominant themes present in the data (Blacker, 2009:83).

3.4 Ethical considerations

Different methods of data collection raise different ethical concerns. I shall deal with them in the order in which I conducted the research. First, I shall engage with the ethical procedures related to interviews and then with the ethical dilemmas related to the study of social media. Before conducting the interviews, I explained and asked the participants to sign a consent form which contained several sections. In the first section, I outlined the important details including the goals and objectives of the study. In this section, I also explained to the interviewees that their participation in the interview study was completely voluntary and at any given moment, they could withdraw or cancel the interview. In the second section, I explicitly presented the legal basis for processing their personal data in accordance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation,

Article 6, Paragraph 1 and the ethical guidelines provided by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (https://tenk.fi/en) and the University of

Jyvaskyla. In practical terms, this meant that their data would be pseudonymised, encrypted and processed in a secure environment using secure services. Moreover, they were informed that any direct identifiers would be removed during the analysis and quoting of their data, that their participation would not cost them anything and that the research results would be published in scholarly articles and conferences. Moreover, I explained to the participants that only my supervisor and I would have access to the data. I also provided them with my supervisor's contact details, should any of my participants need more information about data security and the research project in general. In the next section, I gave practical information about the interviews such as their likely duration, how they would be conducted (e.g., face to face or Skype) and asked them whether they would be available if I later needed clarification regarding their interviews. I kept the original signed consent forms and gave a copy to the participants.

On the ethical use of Facebook data in research, guidelines and an ethical framework are available (see, e.g., Townsend & Wallace, 2017; Samuel & Buchanan, 2020). In the case of my dissertation, particularly the two multimodal sub-studies, the following aspects turned out to be the most important. The first question that I had to deal with was whether the data obtained from my participants' social media platforms are public or private. Research (see, e.g., British Psychological Society, 2013; Fuchs, 2017) suggests that this question of public and private data comes down "to whether or not the social media user expects to be observed by strangers". In the case of my participants, all of them had set their profile security settings to 'private'. Therefore, asking the individual participants directly for their consent from was of the utmost importance. Moreover, to establish good rapport and trust, I made my identity as a researcher at the university as transparent as possible to my participants and explained to them that the data from their profiles would be used exclusively in my own research. The second most important thing for me to consider, especially during the interviews, was that some of the people (a male makeup artist and some women) I was dealing with were 'vulnerable' and had already received threats of rape and violence owing to their everyday social media practices. I sought to ensure the wellbeing and safety of these participants by (a) conducting one-to-one interviews in such a way that none of the participants knew each other, and (b) as mentioned in section 3.3.1, I made sure that the interviews took place in the safe and secure environment of the participants' homes.

It must also be mentioned here that, when I made initial contact, especially with the male participants, most of them mentioned that they did not feel comfortable being interviewed in public spaces such as cafés, because they did not want anyone to overhear their opinions about gender. For me, this meant that, if I had to conduct the interviews with men in their home settings, I would be putting myself in a potentially dangerous situation, given the sensitive nature of the issue of gender in the Pakistani context. For this reason, I began to think about how to present myself in order to avoid potential trouble. To minimise risk, before conducting the interviews, I decided to talk with the mothers of the male participants and explained to them the reason for my visit. In this way, I made

sure that the mothers would be at home during the time I conducted the interviews. Following McKee and O'Brien's (1983, p. 158) advice to maintain a "professional manner," I also tried to maintain a serious demeanour when interviewing men. Moreover, I avoided wearing any makeup or jewellery and dressed as modestly as possible. Here I must admit that being a female researcher interviewing men, maintaining rapport with them sometimes became complicated, especially when gender was the subject of discussions. It also made me realise how at times the male participants sought to take control of the interviews to assert their perception of gender. This underlines how dependent a female interviewer's perceived personal safety can be on the actions of her male informant.

3.5 Researcher's position

My motivation for undertaking this dissertation on gender and Facebook in Pakistan originated in my own personal participation and observation of how people conduct themselves on Facebook. My role as a researcher was therefore largely facilitated by the fact that I was an 'insider' not only in Pakistani culture but also in the Pakistani Facebook community. This meant that I was also aware of the technological features of social media and familiar with peoples' communicative practices and how they maintained their networks and friendships. More importantly, being a female Pakistani researcher proved to be both beneficial and detrimental. In the case of the former, being a part of Pakistani culture provided me with the contextual information that allowed me to understand and interpret certain socio-cultural and religious intricacies in the data which would not otherwise have been possible. Moreover, I was able to understand the linguistic dilemmas of my participants. However, during the course of putting this study together, I learnt that almost all of the women who participants had experienced incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. In the end, this meant that for them these interviews were a kind of therapeutic opportunity for them to vent their frustrations.

4 KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES

In this chapter, I present the key findings of the three sub-studies. Initially, I planned to write one article on how men and women in Pakistan construct their gender identities on Facebook through visual and linguistic resources. However, due to the amount of data collected and limitations on word length in target journals, I decided to discuss the data in two separate but interrelated articles. Hence, the aim of both of the first two articles was to analyse how Pakistani women and men construct their gender identities in their Facebook posts. The principal objective of these articles was both to investigate the visual and linguistic choices made by the participants and to understand and document the functions that the images and text in their posts perform in the construction of their gender identities. I discuss the findings of these articles in the order that they were written rather than the order of publication. The aim here is to present a concise summary of the findings prior to the detailed discussion on the wider implications of the study presented in chapter 5.

ARTICLE 1: Construction of gender identities by Pakistani women on Facebook https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2020.1854414

In this article, using multimodal discourse analysis, I reported on how Pakistani women mobilise linguistic and other semiotic resources to construct their gender identities on Facebook. Moreover, I was interested in understanding whether or not their virtual gender identities adhered to the existing stereotypical gender notions in Pakistan. Based on the data analysis, the findings of this article were divided into three main categories: religious and motivational posts, posts about friends and family, and posts about social awareness and taking a stance. These are shown in figure 3 below.

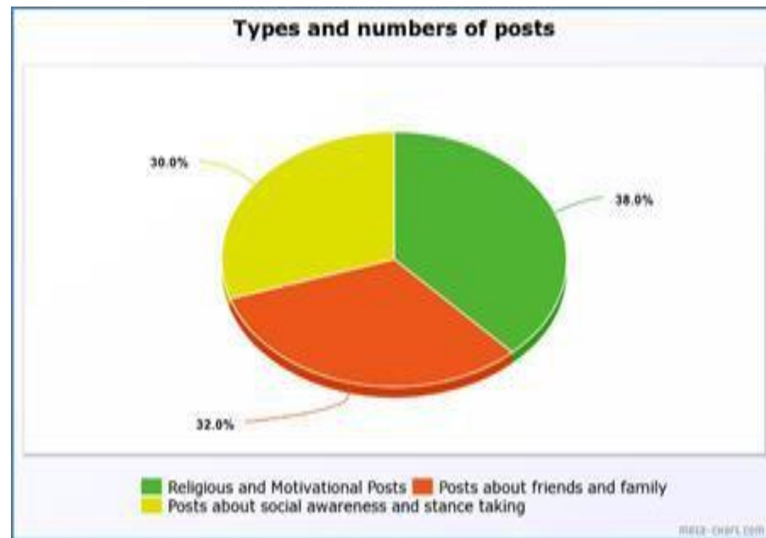

FIGURE 3 Construction of gender identities by Pakistani women on Facebook

As Figure 1 illustrates, religious and motivational posts constituted the largest category (38%) in my data. Posts like this were most frequently shared by the women participants. The images in this category consisted mainly of verses and Surahs from the Quran, Hadiths (collected sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and motivational quotations that had been extracted from other Facebook pages. The themes that most typically appeared in these posts dealt with patience, virtue, protection from evil, seeking help from Allah and how people should conduct themselves in their everyday lives. Moreover, the extracts cited in the posts from Quran and Hadith were in Arabic, while the motivational quotes were either shared in Urdu or English. The religious images were in line with Islamic norms and traditions, as the religious posts in particular did not contain human figures. The religious texts were either inscribed on plain backgrounds and only contained motifs, floral patterns, and calligraphy to attract the attention of the viewer or reader.

The sharing of religious content from Quran and Hadith in the form of images on Facebook by women suggested that they had imported the common offline practice of reciting religious Surahs into the virtual social world. Posting religious images on Facebook was also indicative of two significant social functions. First, these images were used as a coping mechanism in times of distress and grief. This is because in Pakistan, like in other parts of the Muslim world (see, e.g., Zarrouq et. al, 2021), seeking solace in a higher power is seen as a sign of strong faith and as a result of an individual's religious beliefs. The results of this sub-study supported earlier findings (see, e.g., Banning et. al, 2009) that religion provides women with emotional comfort and relief from offline pressures and stress. Thus, Pakistani women on Facebook have resorted to religion to deal with everyday difficulties, as for them, too, religion provides "coping responses to

stress by facilitating acceptance and adjustment to new life circumstances" (Wortmann & Park, 2008: 703–736).

Second, such visible online religious practices result in raising women's status, as they signify their piousness and chastity. In Pakistan, such practices are considered of utmost importance. Scholars (see, e.g., Zaman, 2016) suggest that two significant factors have played a critical role in the increase in the circulation of religious texts on Facebook by, in particular, middle and upper middle class Pakistani women over the past decade. These factors are (a) contemporary revivalist movements and public discussions on Islam and (b) the role of women on mainstream TV talk shows. The revivalist movements such as Al-Huda and Tablighi Jama'at, which are rooted in the colonial past of Pakistan, introduce women to the Quran and Hadith in an attempt to promote the notion of a "pure" Islamic society. By doing so, they urge Pakistani women not only to restrict their presence in the public sphere but also ask them to denounce aspects of Pakistani culture that they deem "unislamic", for example, the wearing of western clothes, such as jeans, pants, and t-shirts. Such policing is done to emphasise the ideology of Muslim national identity that portrays women as the guardians of Islamic piety, traditions, and indigenous culture (Zaman, 2016). Similarly, mainstream religious TV talk shows, particularly on private channels, have also been influential in mobilising wider audiences and giving women access to religious discussions that also enabled them to learn sacred texts. In short, the circulation of religious content on Facebook by Pakistani women can be interpreted as an evidence of the elimination of activities that are considered "western" and an appreciation of the notion of Islamic piety. More importantly, it is also indicative of internalised gendered piety, proclaiming that religion plays a critical role in the online and offline construction of women's gender identities.

The second most popular category, which constituted 32% of the posts, identified on the women's Facebook pages consisted of images and texts featuring their family members and friends. Thematically, these posts dealt with different occasions such as birthdays, mother's and father's days or congratulatng their friends or family members on their achievements. These posts were used by the participants to fortify their relationship with their friends and family members. In terms of multimodality, this fortification was achieved by sharing images that contained cartoon characters, photographs of their family members, particularly men, and by tagging their friends and family members. More importantly, these posts showcased the presence of men whereas women were absent.

The most significant aspect of such posts was that by using the above-mentioned multimodal features, they emphasised the traditional gender ideology according to which men are expected to take part in public affairs and are viewed as the rational and responsible decision makers in the family. In comparison, in this ideology, women are defined primarily in terms of the reproductive functions of their bodies, and they are cast in the essentialist roles of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives and are regarded as responsible for the household (Jafar, 2005). For instance, to celebrate Father's Day, one of the participants shared a photograph of her father, dressed in his work uniform, and tagged her siblings

in an emotional caption highlighting their father's dedication. Her strategic choice of using a photograph of her father in uniform thus subtly reinforced the rigid gender ideology in which men are invested with power and authority and considered as breadwinners.

More importantly, the findings also revealed that the gender disparity discourses are so deeply inculcated via different institutions such as the family, law, media, and educational institutes that women also unknowingly become agents in proliferating them through their everyday practices, such as social media posts. For example, another one of my participants, while innocently joking about the institution of marriage, using multimodal features like cartoon characters, colours, and verbal text inscribed on the image, depicted typical 'male self-victimisation' in matrimonial jokes, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing the dominant gender ideology. By doing so, consciously or unconsciously, she not only served as a mediator of patriarchy but also, counter to real-world reality, portrayed herself as the oppressor. Such multimodal posts highlighted that women's (and men's) identities are constructed in ways that are in line with the established stereotypical gender norms. It can be argued that by disseminating them, they also serve to further normalise and strengthen the subjugation of women in a patriarchal society.

The third most popular category (30%) in the data consisted of posts where female Facebook users not only took a stance on different societal issues but also posted images that aimed to raise awareness, in particular about gender discrimination, economic injustice, sexual harassment, honour killings, women's rights, and about the LGBT community. These posts, which were both in English and Urdu, included content that had mostly been extracted from other Facebook pages such as "Feminist News," "Women's Rights News," "3WF-Third Wave Feminism," "Exposing Men's Rights Activism," "Feminist Info," "Worldwide Women," "Khabees Ourat" ("Mischievous Woman") and "Qandeel ki kahani" ("Qandeel's story"). In their use of multimodality, these posts mostly featured real life photographs of men and women, and protests that had taken place on different occasions such as the Aurat March (Women March, organised by women's associations on International Women's Day), verbal texts written on plain backgrounds and texts written by the participants in the captions. Moreover, these posts shared information in the form of screenshots of tweets and short video clips about the above-mentioned issues.

The findings under this category highlighted that social media platforms such as Facebook have become a means for women to raise social awareness about issues that are important to them. Moreover, the results suggested that online digital platforms provided them with alternative spaces to present a counter-narrative against the heteronormative patriarchal discourses that are predominantly used to not only silence women voices but also to restrict their mobility in public spaces by for instance, state institutions. The analysis of these multimodal posts further showed that social media channels can offer support to marginalized communities and groups that receive little to no attention in the offline

world in which discussions around them are often actively constrained and regulated. By enabling them to post about social injustices, gender disparity, and minority communities and women rights, Facebook has offered women a space where potentially a range of identities can be constructed and celebrated, thereby allowing individuals to become more visible and defy the marginalisation that they experience in their offline lives. Similarly, the women in my data were also found to subtly depart from the established patriarchal discourse. For example, they shared posts containing an image of Hollywood actor Jack Nicholson, who is notorious for playing mischievous "bad boy" roles (Salam, 2020). The image not only portrayed the said actor holding a cigar in his hands but also featured the kind aggressive language that is usually associated with male discourse. More importantly, the use of language by a female can be interpreted as transgressing the conservative gender norms of Pakistani society. In sum, I argue that the growing number of women utilising digital platforms to actively sensitise people about for example, sexual harassment, sexism, and misogyny, has made these social media channels potential sites of political and ideological resistance. The findings of this sub-study thus contributed to answering the question of how women participants strategically used Facebook posts at times not only to reinforce the established gender norms but also to show their resistance towards the prevalent gender ideology.

ARTICLE 2: Construction of gender identities by Pakistani men on Facebook https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2021.1875640

In this sub-study, I again employed multimodal discourse analysis, this time to explore how Pakistani men construct their gender identities by making use of linguistic and other semiotic resources, and to what extent their virtual gender identities mirror the traditional heteropatriarchal models of masculinity prevalent in Pakistan. The findings of the data collected from the male participants were placed in two broad categories: 1) Posts highlighting traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity, and 2) posts highlighting emergent model(s) of masculinity. The first category, posts highlighting traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity was further divided into three sub-categories: a) posts about travel, b) posts about politics and 3) posts about women. The second broad category, posts highlighting emergent model(s) of masculinity, consisted of posts about relationships. These categories were formulated depending on the kind of masculinity that was constructed in the posts. The types of the posts with their relative frequency are presented in the figure 4 below:

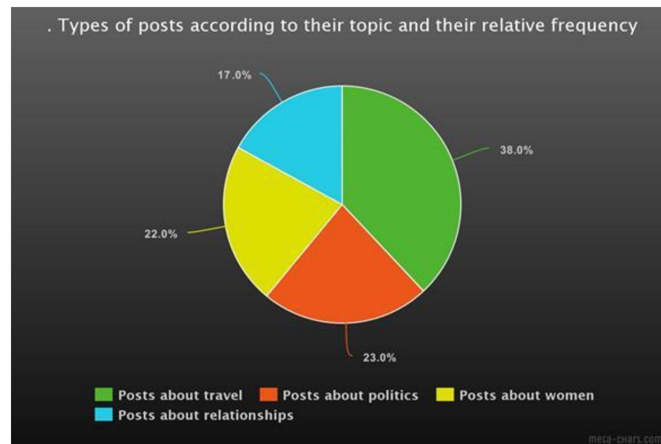

FIGURE 4 Construction of gender identities by Pakistani men on Facebook

The first subcategory, posts about travel, under posts highlighting traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity, depicted men highlighting their adventurous road trips. In terms of multimodality, these posts featured participants for instance in the wilderness and in mountainous regions, especially the exotic northern parts of Pakistan. Sometimes these images were accompanied by verbal texts written by the participants themselves. Moreover, the participants, particularly those in this category, shared photographs portraying them taking part in regional cultural activities, such as hiking and walking along dangerous roads and rivers. The analysis of such posts highlighted three significant aspects. First, the results suggested that in the context of Pakistan, due to the patriarchal "security" discourse which is used to restrict the mobilisation of women in public spaces, these types of posts emphasised that travelling is a gendered phenomenon. Travelling involves individuals moving in public spaces which, in the case of Pakistan, are traditionally assigned to men while women remain protected within the four walls of their homes. This results in the absence of women in public spaces. Second, sharing such posts on men's Facebook profiles also suggests that they conceptualise the kinds of geographical spaces depicted in their posts as "feminine destinations" (Lozanski, 2015, p. 32) that need to be dominated and conquered by men; an interpretation that is in line with research in the field of tourism (see, e.g., Green, 1993; Campbell, 2004). This was, for instance, evident when one of the participants shared a photograph of a man in northern Pakistan. In the photograph, the man is positioned in the foreground on the top of a mountain, taking pictures against the background of snow-covered mountains (Salam, 2021: 44). Such strategic positioning of the man in the photograph and the camera angles used, portray the man as a conqueror of nature, which is thus feminised. Such a representation of geographical spaces is rooted in the romantic discourses of male explorers and provides fertile ground for validating hegemonic masculinity. Third, by sharing photographs that depict Pakistani men travelling to dangerous places, the participants are investing themselves with the persona of a "hero", who successfully overcomes the risks and dangers of unknown terrain (Lupton & Tullouch, 2002, as cited in Lozanski, 2015:32),

thereby allowing them to be associated with the esteemed qualities of bravery, courage, and fearlessness. Thus, I argue that the strategic use of the context, geographical locations and captions provided by the participants on their photographs can be seen as hallmarks of hegemonic masculinity.

Posts about politics constituted the second sub-category of posts highlighting traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity. In their multimodality, these posts featured photographs and caricatures of national and international politicians, who were often shown to be engaged in dialogues or monologues. The participants also provided captions, commenting on different political scenarios in an aggressive, humorous, or serious manner. The findings of this sub-category suggested that men have imported the offline practice of discussing current affairs, economic and political issues into digital platforms like Facebook. More importantly, it was noted that men often used aggressive or abusive language. This was assumed to be done not only to assert their political point of view but also to maintain the upper hand and demonstrate their power and control. This was also frequently achieved by 'feminising' their opponent in terms of language and mannerisms. For instance, one of the participants, while showing his allegiance to the current Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, used language like "Main inko rulaon ga (I will make them cry)" to refer to Imran Khan's political opponents (Salam, 2021: 47). Since 'crying' is an emotional response which is usually associated with how women behave (Conroy, 2016), this type of feminisation in political scenarios is often done in an attempt to attack the credibility of the opposition. In this way, political leaders, and their supporters, in their online and offline lives, portray their opponents as individuals who must be controlled and disciplined, thereby framing themselves as controlled, rational, strong, and protective. Thus, the participants often deployed the strategy of feminising their opponents as a tool to not only maintain their power, but also to repress, silence, and dismiss the opinions of others. Such online and offline behaviour also showed a close correlation between aggressive politics and the construction of a hypermasculine identity which enabled the participants to portray themselves as "real men". Moreover, by doing this, the participants aligned themselves in particular with parties, policies and political leaders who endorse and proliferate the use of politically aggressive behaviour towards their opponents. Since, traditionally speaking, politics is identified as a male-dominated space (Bjarnegård, 2013) discussing political situations on digital forums also offered men an opportunity to perform their identities in accordance with the culturally endorsed notions of masculinity as strong, tough, and resolved.

The posts shared under the subcategory of posts about women were also found to reinforce the traditional heteropatriarchal gender norms. These posts mostly projected negative stereotypes about Pakistani women by sharing images that often featured male and female cartoon characters engaged in some kind of activity, such as a dialogue between a man and a woman, or through captions written by the participants. The content of these posts, whether pictures or dialogues, typically focused on women's behaviour and reactions in their everyday interactions that demeaned and disparaged them. The findings of this subcategory highlighted that while these posts did not use a harsh or aggressive tone

towards women, they contained pictures, cartoon characters and verbal texts that portrayed women as irrational, emotional and weak. For instance, one of the participants shared a multimodal story of a seemingly everyday situation in which a woman takes an auto rickshaw to get to her destination. The image, dialogue and body language portrayed the male rickshaw driver in a positive light, whereas the female character's responses and facial expressions depict her as dumb and unintelligent. Both the cartoonist and the poster thus spread a sexist ideology that positions men as socially more authoritative, rational, and stronger than women.

Thus, I argue that the language used in these gender stereotypes reflects a bias against women and plays a critical role in strengthening the power asymmetries in men's favour (Eagly et al., 2000; Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). More importantly, these posts demonstrated the presence of 'benevolent sexism' in Pakistani culture, which is disseminated multimodally through language and images that represent women as in need of men's protection and promote the idea that women should remain pure and gentle. This, again, highlights the ideology that men should dominate women. This kind of benevolent sexism reinforces the heteropatriarchal order in Pakistan and legitimises men's exercise of power, authority and superiority over women, and is thus demeaning to women (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). In contrast to the categories that underlined the traditional construction of masculinity on Facebook in Pakistan, my data also contained some posts that highlighted emergent model(s) of masculinity in the form of posts that dealt with relationships. Most typically, comments in posts of this kind included extracts from Urdu literature and poetry as well as lyrics from Pakistani and Bollywood songs to express their experiences of unrequited love. However, it was interesting to observe that none of these posts included any real-life women figures. Instead, they mostly contained written text on plain coloured backgrounds, or featured photographs of singers and film stars.

The reason why I categorised these posts as indicating emergent models of masculinity is that these posts show a subtle detachment from and transgressive attitude towards the established models of hegemonic masculinity which prohibit men from displaying their vulnerable side in public. This is particularly significant because in contexts like Pakistan, showing love, affection, and care publicly, even to a wife, is considered to breach masculine norms, and leads to criticism and questioning of the masculinity of men who behave in this way (Karandashev, 2017). Such tactics are used, particularly with the aim of making men conform to the stereotypical gendered norms. More importantly, addressing the beloved of the indirectly and expressing emotions in such posts on Facebook constructs a model of masculinity that not only addresses the sensitive aspects of the participants' identities through literary conventions but also plays a critical role in dismantling the notions that portray men as cold and unemotional rational beings. The emergence of such transgressive models of masculiity on Facebook is in line with recent findings showing a tendency towards the rejection of singular hegemonic models of masculinity. Instead, they emphasise the existence of hybrid masculinities and develop the notion of multiple masculinities (see, e.g.,

Lamont, 2015; Eisen, 2019). In sum, this sub-study supported the view that through their Facebook posts the male participants simultaneously reinforced and transgressed the established gender ideology in Pakistan.

ARTICLE 3: In a world where you can be anyone: An investigation into the gendered social practices of Pakistani Facebook Users http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12147-021-09289-0

In the previous two sub-studies (Salam, 2020 & 2021), I examined how Pakistani men and women mobilised visual and linguistic resources to construct their gender identities on Facebook. The findings demonstrated that Pakistani men and women used Facebook not only to perpetuate the dominant gender ideology but also to (re)negotiate and redefine these established gender norms. To complement the findings of these sub-studies, I conducted a third sub-study in which I interviewed twelve young, well-educated Pakistani men and women specifically to investigate the ways in which the interviewees performed their gender identities and how they positioned themselves and their Facebook practices in relation to the culturally available discourses on gender roles and gender ideology in Pakistan. The analysis considered the strategies that played a critical role in construction of gender identities which may or may not conform to the existing socio-cultural and religious practices of Pakistani society. The findings showed that the interviewees had two main orientations: 1) gender identities and Facebook were seen as an extension of the existing social physical reality, and 2) gender identities and Facebook were considered a platform indicating change and agency. Table (4) details the sub-themes of these two main orientations.

TABLE 4 Main orientations with their respective sub-themes

Gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/ physical reality	**Gender identities and Facebook as a platform for change and agency**
Gender policing through the instrumentalisation of religious discourse	Voicing dissent: Using Facebook to raise social awareness
Online sexual harassment: A mechanism to silence subversive voices	Facebook as a source for economic independence
Gender policing via public opinion: "Loag kiya kahien gay" ("what will people say") syndrome	

The orientation "Gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/ physical reality" foregrounded how, according to some of the interviewees, Facebook played a key role in the perpetuation of the established gender ideology. The interviewees in this category presented views on gender that were more or less conservative in nature. Facebook enabled them to enact their gender identities in ways that resembled their everyday offline behaviour.

The results under this category highlighted religious discourse as one of the most effective strategies to make men and women follow the traditional patriarchal order. In particular, the interviewees' perceptions of gender in this category supported the notion that in Pakistan, religion serves as a 'social institution' that maintains social order (Schoemaker, 2016 & Qadeer, 2006). The discourses of religion and culture are regularly used as a tool to suppress women's sexual and emotional agency. They are also employed to prevent digressions from what are promoted as the established 'Islamic' norms, as these digressions are considered a direct threat to the social and familial structure of Pakistani society. Importantly, these interviewees used the concepts of shame and honour (which has strong religious connotations; see, e.g., Sawai et. al, 2020) as a surveillance tool to maintain the idealised concept of 'respectable' femininity and masculinity. These views further reinforced the ideas that women are custodians of men's honour, and whether daughters, mothers, wives or sisters, they are but not individual human beings with the freedom to express their emotional, physical and sexual identity (Zia, 2017).

Another strategy that both women and men brought up in the interviews was online harassment. The female interviewees in particular reported that they were repeatedly harassed online for sharing information about gender issues. They had received threats of abuse and rape as well as death threats either in their Facebook messenger inbox or in the comment sections of their posts.

The women were also labelled 'unfeminine' for posting about women rights issues. These interviews, in particular, revealed the different, systematic ways in

which such threats are delivered. For instance, it was reported that the most frequently techniques deployed by men to silence women included (a) inventing abusive memes, (b) photoshopping faces to naked bodies of women, and (c) name calling, particularly with names that pertain to female sexuality (e.g., 'rundi', whore), which they considered to be dark humour. Moreover, the women interviewees interpreted these attacks as an attempt by men to reinforce traditional gendered norms. Thus, I argue that, according to the interviewees, women seem to be treated much in the same way in online spaces as they are in the physical world (Adam, 2005). This finding reflects the broader socio-cultural understanding of gender that places women in an inferior position in the patriarchal Pakistani society.

However, the interview data showed that this trend of online harassment was not just limited to policing women, but it was also visible in reactions to men who do not fit into the dominant gender roles. Men who showed signs of transgression were also subjected to harassment. These interviewees illustrated how all expressions of gender identity that diverge from the established models of heteronormative masculinity were considered threatening and intimidating by other men. The male interviewees who displayed feminine traits reported that their transgressive behaviour subjected them to verbal and physical violence by other men both in their online and offline lives. They interpreted these as attempts to curb their feminine side. Thus, it was argued that in Pakistan, hegemonic masculinity continues to be held up as the ideal norm. It helps to maintain the gender hierarchy and subjugates all other forms of masculinity.

The interviewees also pointed to the discourse of Loag kiya kahien gay (what will people say), referring to the attempt to inculcate other's opinions in their minds as another significant strategy that affects not only their Facebook practices but also their offline lives. The female interviewees identified two typical ways through which attempts were made to force them to adhere to the established gender stereotypes. These were (a) shaming women for not being worthy of marriage, and (b) slut-shaming. The interview data further suggested that women are exhorted to get married at an early age. A woman living alone is not only unheard of but is also considered a social stigma that includes her family. Similarly, the female interviewees reported that slut-shaming was usually a direct attack on them when they showed independent thinking, especially when they voiced their opinion about women's rights or shared pictures that did not follow the prescribed gender norms.

While women were taken to task for their 'lack of morals' in posting pictures with men who are not members of their family, men who voiced their concerns about gender issues were targeted by dragging the women in their families into the discussion for the purpose of attacking their "ghairat" (honour). The male interviewees reported that they were excluded from the traditionalist groups of men who reject any critical debate on the topic of gender issues in Pakistani society. This reinforced the stereotype that talking about gender issues is not tolerated, but rather considered as a threat against men. More importantly, the male interviewees pointed out that during conversations these traditionalist men often brought

up the honour of the women in their families to constrain the interviewee's expression of less conservative opinions about gender disparity. Therefore, by verbally disgracing the women in the male interviewees' families in this way, conservative men not only sought to instil feelings of guilt and shame but also to nudge the interviewees into adhering to the stereotypical models of gender.

Some of the interviewed men and women also reported that Facebook can serve as a platform for change and agency. These interviewees saw Facebook as a place where they could express themselves freely. Both men and women indicated that social media platforms served as a medium where they felt free to express themselves in whatever way they wanted to. These interviewees also spoke of their solidarity with other female activists on Facebook. They reported that discussions on gender issues on Facebook had played a crucial role in dismantling the age-old gender stereotypical ideology in Pakistani society. In doing so, they also highlighted the factors that enabled them to construct and express their gender identities in non-conformist ways. The findings showed that both men and women used Facebook to raise social awareness. They described Facebook as a learning platform where social awareness on taboo topics like sexual harassment, child abuse, domestic violence, transphobia, and gender inequality can be disseminated. These interviewees consistently brought up the Aurat March (Women's March) and claimed that due to the extensive debate on Facebook (which was later taken up by the mainstream Pakistani media), Facebook and other social media platforms paved the way for "private" issues such as women's bodily autonomy becoming a topic of public debate. Women argued strongly that the debate on Aurat March has positively sensitised the attitudes of the men in their families (husbands, fathers, brothers) on gender issues and played a critical role in dismantling the gendered stereotypical notions that demonise women who voice their opinions publicly. The male interviewees, on the other hand, reported that, while men privately acknowledge the plight of women in Pakistani society, they publicly avoid recognising this, since the presence of patriarchy is an all-pervasive force.

While describing Facebook as a platform for change and agency, one of the female interviewees reported that accessibility and reach of social media platforms had played a pivotal role for her in achieving her economic security despite her conservative family background. She pointed out that her online business, which she carried out via social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, offered her not only easy access to both consumers and suppliers, but that these platforms also enabled her to balance her work and family life. Views such as this led me to argue that the social media platforms have offered women who come from conservative backgrounds in Pakistani society freedom, independence, and more control over their lives, and have helped them to do things which were previously not possible for them to do in their real physical lives. The findings of this sub-study thus demonstrate that social media platforms such as Facebook can help to both challenge and reinforce heteropatriarchal gender relations. Moreover, it was important to elicit the interviewees' own accounts on the consequences of their attempts to transgress gender norms online.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Facebook and gender identities in Pakistan

In this dissertation research, I investigated the construction of gender identities on Facebook in Pakistan. To this end, I examined (a) how, by using visual and linguistic resources, Pakistani men and women construct their gendered identities via Facebook posts and if these online identities correspond to the prevailing gender ideology in Pakistan or whether they seek to contest the prevailing socio-cultural and linguistic norms, and (b) how Pakistani men and women evaluate their own Facebook practices and how this enables and/or constrains the construction of their gender identities.

In particular, the findings of the three sub studies (Salam, 2020; 2021; 2021) revealed that in Pakistan Facebook is a complex phenomenon. The findings of the three articles are discussed in the following two sections.

5.1.1 Conformativity and gender norms on Pakistani social media

The results indicated that in Pakistan, Facebook has become another venue where the patriarchal gender norms are reinforced and perpetuated. More specifically, the results highlighted that multiple societal factors or discourses played a crucial role in the participants' construction of their gender identities. Of these discourses, *religious discourse* was identified as the one most commonly employed in efforts to ensure the compliance of men and women with the dominant gender norms. For example, one of the male participants while condemning social media for triggering an unwelcome change such as the propagation of Aurat March (Women March), conjoined culture and religion and implied that Aurat March was fundamentally an attack on Islamic values. Thus, it can be argued that in Pakistan, it is difficult to separate religion from nationalism, culture, and politics,

which means that both online and offline gender identities are strongly influenced by socio-religious factors. Interestingly, some of the female participants were also found to proliferate the dominant ideology, thereby showing that women also often act as agents of patriarchy. This renders visible the cultivation of piety and can be interpreted as a rejection of cultural activities deemed 'western.' The proliferation of such an ideology by women not only complicates the issue of agency, oppression, and power in the offline context but also in the online social media context, especially that of Facebook.

Similarly, with respect to Facebook in Pakistan, another common strategy deployed to police the behaviour of men and women was *online sexual harassment*. The female interviewees repeatedly pointed out that whenever they voiced their opinion about women or gender issues, they were subjected to sexual harassment and even received life threats posted in either comment sections or inboxed to them. For instance, one of the women participants who actively makes sarcastic videos about gender stereotyping in Pakistan on Facebook, pointed out the various strategies of sexual harassment such as misogynist verbal and visual abuse, making sexually explicit memes, slut-shaming, and rape threats used by men to silent her voice. This trend of online harassment was not, however, limited to policing women but was also directed to men who were perceived as not fitting into the prescriptive dominant gender moulds and who showed any signs of transgression. For example, one of the male participants, who regularly posts his makeup videos on Facebook and Instagram was physically assaulted. What is significant and different about such threats on social media is that the relative anonymity offered by these platforms, and hence lack of fear of direct retribution, makes it easier for perpetrators to indulge in this type of threatening and harmful behaviour (Bartlett et al. 2018). As pointed out by these interviewees, this behaviour was not random but deliberate, conscious, and systematic, which made it even more dangerous, and, perhaps, effective in reinforcing traditional forms of femininity and gender inequality.

Another typical strategy that was used extensively, online and offline, to monitor and police the adherence of men and women to traditional patriarchal customs was *inculcating fear of public opinion in their personal lives*. For instance, one of the female participants who posted her pictures of her visit to the US, described the two most typical strategies i.e., labelling her unworthy of marriage and slut-shaming, people on social media used to pressure her to adhere to stereotypical feminine models. Such strategies have been adopted to directly attack independent thinking by women as it implies that their minds operate in the way they do solely because they have no control over their bodies (see, e.g., Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). However, the inculcation of fear of public opinion in deviant men was attempted by shaming the women in their families and thus attacking their 'ghairat' (honour). This strategy was adopted to instil in men feelings of guilt and shame that would lead them to adhere to the established socio-cultural models of masculinity. For a collectivist patriarchal system to function in Pakistan, it is of the utmost importance that men and women strictly follow the established gender models. In such cases, societal obligations and customs take precedence over personal needs.

5.1.2 Resistance/empowerment and gender norms on Pakistani social media

Facebook was also found to be particularly empowering for previously marginalised groups (e.g., women assault victims, the LGBTQ+ community) as it offered them space to resist the dominant hegemonic discourses. More importantly, the results further suggested that for some participants social media platforms turned out to be emancipatory spaces which gave them more liberty, freedom, and opportunities both to express themselves and to benefit economically. For example, for one of the women participants, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram played a pivotal role in helping her start her own business from home. Thus, it is argued that social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have offered Pakistani women in particular an opportunity to become online entrepreneurs, thereby providing them with greater and immediate access to local and international business markets and giving them more financial security. Similarly, the results indicated that social media in general, and Facebook in particular, offered individuals opportunities to learn, offer and gain support as well as express their ideas and views. For instance, some of the female and male participants of this study, regularly shared images that can be interpreted to raise social awareness and stance-taking. The findings thus support the idea that Facebook and other such social media platforms play a pivotal role in raising social awareness about issues such as gender disparity, child abuse, sexual harassment and abuse, domestic violence, transgender rights, and social injustices in Pakistan. By breaking the traditional public/private divide, these platforms have turned into learning spaces, especially on taboo topics like feminism, thereby equally enabling men and women to set up and urge like-minded people to use their privilege to make the country a better place for all.

Moreover, Facebook has not only provided a platform for women's resistance to the status quo, but it has also given women a platform to express themselves and reclaim the public sphere. Thus, social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have also been revolutionary and liberating as, while acting as a medium of communication which transcends the traditional pattern of gendered social interactions, they have enabled their users to reach out and freely navigate online cultures that support new and innovative ways of constructing gender identities. This was an emerging rather than prevalent or dominant type of social media use. These results are thus in line with previous findings (see, e.g., Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Mullany, 2004) that the gender differences visible in the offline world are not only reinforced but also challenged on social media platforms, as these provide users with a site on which they can simultaneously transgress the dominant gender ideologies (Al-Saggaf, 2011).

While the data I collected offered a range of possibilities to study gender identities and their multiple expressions, in this study I limited the focus to the most typical and recurrent themes, which I discussed in the three sub-studies. This enabled me to focus on two main themes:(a) gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/physical reality; and (b) gender identities and Facebook as a platform for change and agency. Limiting the focus of the dissertation in this

way was essential as, during the data analysis phase, it turned out to be impossible to analytically discuss everything. However, the initial investigation enabled me to settle on the topics of the three sub-studies. Thus, I restricted my analysis and discussion to the most typical and recurrent themes in the data.

5.2 Significance of the study

The value of this dissertation research is that it empirically furthers understanding of the multiple ways in which Pakistani men and women construct their gender identities both visually and linguistically through their Facebook posts. The qualitative findings reported in this dissertation highlight how the changes in communication patterns that have occurred with the emergence of social media take on additional significance when considered against the backdrop of the cultural and socio-religious norms governing the way men and women are expected to interact with each other in Pakistani society. More precisely, adopting insights from the theory of performativity and the intersectional approach to gender was highly relevant to this study for the following reasons. First, these approaches revealed that even within the conservative mindset of Pakistani society, people on Facebook, both men and women have opportunities to perform their identities in different ways, ranging from enacting and reinforcing traditional gender roles to exhibiting widely transgressive gender behaviours such as men engaging in makeup activities. Such findings further endorse the idea that gender is not what people have but rather something that they do, thereby strengthening the argument that gender is culturally produced and validated via dominant heteronormative discourses (Butler, 1990). Second, the participants were carefully selected to represent young, middle class, well educated, South Punjabi Muslim women and men. These participants constituted a particularly interesting group for the exploration of how gender identities are constructed on Facebook in this dissertation for the following reasons. First, as argued in section 3.1.1, people in this particular age group are not only early adopters of technology but they also form the largest social media user group in Pakistan (Eijaz, 2013; Saleem et. al, 2014). Second, the choice of studying people from the middle and upper-middle class in Pakistan was compelling because this class represents a group that is struggling to reconstruct or determine its identity during a period of ideological conflict in terms of holding on to its traditional religious values while aligning itself with the modern world. Lastly, exploring the Facebook practices of men and women within the conservative mindset of South Punjab enabled me to understand the intricate ways in which these participants negotiate their gender identities in the omnipresence of social media platforms. It is, however, important to mention here that all these factors of age, class, religion, and nationality coexisted and were simultaneously manifested in the participants' performance of their gender identities. Traditionally, much of the research on gender in Pakistan has focused on just one of these factors in seeking to better understand gender. How-

ever, in this study, combining performative theory with insights from an intersectional approach to gender showed that gender in Pakistan is not constructed based on any single factor but rather on the amalgamation of many different factors that play a critical role in people's lives (whether online or offline), thereby enabling them to perform and enact their gender identities in specific ways on Facebook.

In addition to the above-mentioned contribution, this dissertation provides a starting point for further research on social media and gender studies in Pakistan and elsewhere as well as extending the literature on the communication patterns and online performances of Pakistani Facebook users. More specifically, unlike many of the previous studies on social media (see e.g., see Ellison et al., 2007; Back et al., 2010; Villata et al. 2017), the present findings offer a perspective on how non-western Muslim participants use social media and Facebook, thereby increasing knowledge on gender and social media in different local contexts and of the cross-cultural connections between them. Moreover, by investigating how young, adult, middle-class Pakistani men and women perform their gender identities on Facebook, this study contributes to the growing debates on the current social transformative potential of social media in Pakistan.

In terms of gender theories, this dissertation contributes to extending the Butlerian approach from "bodily" experiences to include online social media communication. This is significant for the following reasons. First, such an approach to online gender identity construction rejects some of the early, dichotomic approaches taken in social media studies (see, e.g., Dery, 1992; Rheingold, 1993) which suggested that people experience their online and offline lives differently. In other words, users' online gender identities can be viewed not only as an extended version of their offline lives but also as an intricate process that should be analysed and interpreted within their broader socio-cultural discourses, structures, and practices, and against the backdrop of their daily offline lives. Second, unlike the earlier social media studies which focused on how individuals use these platforms (see, e.g., Ellison et. al, 2007; Liu, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Tong et. al, 2008), applying Butler's theory to online gender identity construction enables us to conceptualise the repetitive social media activities (such as tagging, commenting on a friend's post, replying to a friend's post, liking, sharing, status updates etc.) of individuals as the performative acts that constitute them. This is because like any other social media platform, Facebook, instead of being a linear, singular activity, provides its users with interconnected activities in managing their performances online (Cover, 2012).

Similarly, with the advent of social media, the notion of multimodality has gained momentum. In the context of this study, analysing gender identities on social media with the help of multimodal discourse analysis meant that I was able to conduct a holistic analysis of gender by focusing on the fact that meaning making on social media platforms does not take place solely through language. The analysis of how Pakistani men and women multimodally construct their gender identities on Facebook essentially expands the application of multimodal discourse analysis beyond the western social media context to languages like Urdu,

which uses a bidirectional cursive (connected) script and where the text is written from right to left (Chandio et. al, 2020).

5.3 Limitations and directions for further research

This dissertation is a qualitative exploratory study in which my aim was to conduct an in-depth analysis of how Pakistani men and women construct their gender identities, both visually and linguistically on Facebook. The starting point for this research were the multimodal representations of gender identities that Pakistani Facebook users (men and women) created, and the final aim was to understand why and how different factors contribute to the construction of gender in Pakistan in the social media context. In this respect, the study would have benefitted from access to the comment sections of the participants' Facebook posts to find out, for example, whether and, if so, how readers' views are influenced (reinforced or undermined) by a particular Facebook post, which topics receive more comments/likes, and how participants' conversational styles and strategies vary when addressing same-gender and opposite-gender individuals in a given situation. Such an analysis would be interesting, as users' Facebook posts act as the "interaction agenda and shape the trajectory for the comments" (Stommel and Lamerichs 2014:198–211). Moreover, as argued by Sannon et. al (2017) commenting forms a significant part of social media users' overall experience of these platforms. However, as was mentioned in section 3.2, the male participants denied access to their comments sections under their Facebook posts. This thus became a "culturally" imposed restriction and a limitation of the study.

Additionally, data collection performed by a female researcher in contexts like Pakistan poses many safety and security issues, especially if it is to be obtained from men on sensitive issues like gender. In such a situation, I argue that when, for example, data is collected through interviews, it would be advisable to make use of the two interviewers/one informant model of interviewing. This strategy – whereby one interviewer keeps track of the research agenda while the other concentrates on exploring points that emerge as being of importance to the informant as the account develops – could be employed as a personal safety device for interviewers.

In terms of conducting further research, this study could function as a basis for exploring how individuals from other social classes in Pakistan use social media. As mentioned in section 3.1.1, my prime reason for not selecting participants from the upper/elite class was that the cosmopolitan lifestyle of these groups does not represent that of most Pakistanis, while hardly any members of the lower/underprivileged class use Facebook. However, given the strong presence of religious discourse in Pakistani culture, it would be interesting to investigate how and in what ways for instance, the elite class in Pakistan construct and negotiate gender issues online and offline.

Moreover, during the course of this study, I came across members of the Pakistani LGBTQ community. Encounters with members of this community introduced me to the multiple ways with which they anonymise their identities and sexualities on social media. More importantly, in empirically investigating the said communities, Butler's theoretical insights could very well be applied to understand how the members of Pakistani LGBTQ community for instance through their repetitive use of certain semiotic resources not only perform their identities on social media forums but also how they use these forums to circumvent the culturally imposed constraints without revealing their sexuality.

While it is true that the media in Pakistan reflect the traditional gender bias due to country's strict heteronormative patriarchal system, the enormous influence the media has on bringing social change is also indisputable (Schoemaker, 2016; Salam, 2021). In recent years, Pakistani content writers and directors have turned to OTT (over-the-top) platforms like Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime, Zee5 and Zindagi Digital as an alternative medium for the purpose of depicting bold and unconventional stories, especially where these concern gender. These are erasing previously accepted boundaries of appropriateness and decency and rejecting the existing stereotypical images of men and women that have been presented by mainstream Pakistani media since its inception. This change is attributed to the fact that the content creators on these platforms have a certain freedom to come up with more explicit content in terms of dialogue, visuals, and story treatment, which is otherwise restricted due to censorship by the state authorities (Srivastav & Rai, 2019). These platforms thus allow the creators to express counter-hegemonic ideas and to question established power structures. Empirical investigation of the linguistic, visual and cinematic strategies used by the creators of such web series to construct gender can potentially offer an insight into how, within the conservative socio-cultural setup of Pakistani society, the unconventional construction of femininities on unorthodox media has become not only significant but also at times challenging. More importantly, such investigations contribute to the diversification of the existing media studies landscape, uses and practices by bringing a South Asian-Pakistani perspective to bear on the global and local debate on how women in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan are negotiating multiple socio-cultural and religious pressures through internet based streaming mediums. Furthermore, such studies can potentially highlight the role OTT media are playing in providing marginalised groups, such as women, transgenders, and the LGBTQ community in Pakistan to voice their concerns in unprecedented ways, thereby empowering them by challenging hegemonic and/or dominant forces and discourses.

Non-conformity has remained just as central to the theorisation of language and gender as the gender binary. Scholars (see e.g., Hall, 2003: Zimman, 2020) have argued that sociocultural linguists have been relatively slow in bringing the contemporary 'trans' approaches into research on language and gender. *Translinguistics* represents a powerful alternative to such conventional paradigms of language as bilingualism and code-switching, which assume the compartmentalisation of different 'languages' within fixed and arbitrary boundaries.

Instead, this "trans" trend is characterised by linguistic "playfulness", referring to the "playful" interactions and dialogues produced by language users when they engage in trans-practices (Dovchin, 2020). Therefore, exploring for example, how the fluid use of linguistic and semiotic resources are utilised by different groups and communities to construct alternative linguistic, cultural and gender identities can potentially provide an insight into the socio-cultural transformation via social media technologies in Pakistan.

Due to the popularity of social media platforms, *translanguaging* that involves navigating across diverse social practices is viewed as a holistic form of multiple languages connecting both socio-historical relationships and users' ideologies (Lam, 2009). This practice allows multilinguals to switch languages in order to communicate. It is notable that translanguaging as a theory aims to provide a more complex—or exhaustive—account of language processes, looking to the practices of so-called multilinguals (while also eroding the need for the term multilingual) to understand how linguistic behaviours are shaped beyond discrete language codes, i.e., by more than linguistic elements alone (ibid). In recent years, a number of studies have investigated the increasing frequency of multilingual practices among young people in their everyday lives (Coiro et. al, 2008). In the case of Pakistan, where most of the Pakistani population is either bilingual or multilingual, it is little wonder that many Pakistanis on social media platforms use two or more languages to communicate. In such a context, it would be interesting, for example, to empirically investigate how multilingual Pakistanis on social media display different aspects of their identities when they communicate with their audience. Such a study can potentially provide an insight into how digital translanguaging practices enable Pakistani multilinguals to develop their literate repertoires in multiple linguistic communities. More importantly, such an approach could also provide a basis for capturing the multilingual creativity, fluidity, and hybrid language practices of Pakistani social media users.

The face of the political landscape is heavily impacted by the emergence of social media technologies. Social media is gaining a substantial presence in politics today, especially during times of heightened political awareness (Himelboim et al., 2013; Hsu et al., 2013). The traditional types of political discourse (such as political speeches) are frequently being replaced by information and communications technology-based modes of communication (Hsu et al., 2013). One such platform that has played a significant role in engaging Pakistani youth in politics is Twitter (Batool et. al, 2022). The importance of Twitter discourse in the domain of politics cannot be ignored. For example, its paralinguistic and multimodal features play a crucial role in the construction of, for instance, political identities. In light of these developments, the social semiotics approach used in this dissertation can be furthered by applying it in studies on Twitter. It would be particularly interesting to apply it to the study of gender dynamics in political discourse.

Another avenue of research that emerged during the course of this dissertation project concerns the increase in religious discourse on social media platforms that has taken place over the past few years in Pakistan. This type of religious enactment takes place in a discursive environment that is reinforced and

substantiated on social media (and elsewhere) through the use of visuals, linguistic and other semiotic resources. These repetitive acts through which Pakistani social media users align themselves with a particular religious ideology can be conceptualised as performatives. It would, therefore, be interesting to explore not only how religious and even nationalistic enactments manifest on social media sites but also how social media platforms are being used to proliferate and shape particular religious ideologies in Pakistan.

Lastly, during the course of this research, the issue of online sexual harassment repeatedly cropped up. I was, unfortunately, unable to explore this topic in detail in this study. During the interviews, I observed that it was easier for the women participants to talk openly about this issue with me as a woman researcher. However, as already discussed in this dissertation, online sexual harassment also occurs among men, especially those who transgress the socio-cultural and religious norms in Pakistani society. Moreover, as previously argued (see, e.g., Tyler & Boxer, 1996), sexual harassment is a contextual phenomenon the manifestation of which is influenced by the socio-cultural norms of society, such as the cultural expectations that circulate around gender. I would also like to argue here that sexual harassment (whether towards on men or women) is a performative act where predators develop predispositions within a given social matrix to think and act in particular ways. Hence, by using Butler's notions of gender performativity, it would be of particular interest to me to investigate what different factors or socio-cultural norms contribute to male (and female) online sexual harassment in Pakistan, what strategies are used in committing such acts on social media sites, how these men manage to circumvent such incidents, and how such occurrences impact their online and offline lives. Exploring the sexual harassment of men (and women) in a performative manner may potentially provide useful insights into how sexual harassment is an abuse of power channelled through sexuality and gender-based expectations. In the end, this dissertation research process has opened up multiple choices and possibilities for future study by pointing to the roles and possibilities that social media offers its users and to the fact that despite the hegemony of a binary heteropatriarchy in Pakistan, venues exist for the expression of multiple genders and sexualities as well as practices that sanction and oppress them.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Viime vuosina Facebookista on tullut Pakistanissa dynaaminen internetalusta, joka tarjoaa käyttäjille mahdollisuuksia ilmaista itseään uusilla, monimodaalisilla tavoilla. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan multimodaalisen diskurssianalyysin ja performatiivisuuden teorian avulla sitä, miten nuoret, keskiluokkaiset pakistanilaisnaiset ja -miehet käyttävät visuaalisia ja kielellisiä resursseja rakentaessaan sukupuoli-identiteettejään Facebook-postauksissaan. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan erityisesti sitä, miten pakistanilaisnaisten ja -miesten tavat esittää sukupuolta Facebook-postauksissa sekä noudattavat että haastavat vallitsevia kielellisiä ja sosiokulttuurisia normeja sekä Pakistanissa vallitsevia sukupuolistereotypioita. Lisäksi tutkittiin, millaisilla tavoilla Facebook itsessään mahdollistaa ja rajoittaa sukupuoli-identiteettien rakentumista. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat Facebook-viestinnän monitahoisuuden. Yhtäältä Facebookista on tullut paikka, jossa sukupuolinormeja vahvistetaan. Toisaalta Facebook osoittautui voimaannuttavaksi aiemmin marginaalisoiduille ryhmille kuten väkivallan kohteeksi joutuneille naisille ja LGBT-yhteisöille: se tarjoaa tilan, jossa vastustaa vallitsevia hegemonisia diskursseja. Nämä tulokset vahvistavat aiempia tutkimustuloksia, joiden mukaan sosiaalisessa mediassa voidaan sekä vahvistaa että haastaa yhteiskunnassa vallitsevia sukupuolieroja.

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ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

COMPLIANCE AND RESISTANCE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITIES BY PAKISTANI WOMEN ON FACEBOOK

by

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Compliance and resistance: An investigation into the construction of gender identities by Pakistani women on Facebook

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ABSTRACT
Facebook has recently gained popularity among young, digitally literate and predominantly urban Pakistanis. Such social networking sites allow users the freedom to express themselves using usernames, visuals and topics of their own choice. In this article, I examine how Pakistani Facebook users mobilize such resources in their identity work. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, I investigate how Pakistani women construct their gender identities on Facebook using visual and linguistic resources. The results revealed the significant impact of Facebook on the socio-cultural and linguistic norms of discourse in Pakistan that enables women to challenge established communication models while they simultaneously reinforce traditional gender models.

KEYWORDS Facebook; gender identities; multimodal discourse analysis; Pakistan; women

Introduction

Social media provide people with platforms for building and maintaining social relations with other individuals, regardless of age, language, ethnicity, color, region, sex or religion (boyd & Ellison, 2007). The popularity of social media resides in the diverse range of resources such as audios, videos, visuals, text and gifs that are on offer for online communication. However, these also offer a means of communication that facilitates transgression of traditional gendered social interactions. This is especially important contexts like Pakistan, where women who choose to express their individuality, assert rights, exercise freedom of choice, voice opinions openly, and move in the public sphere among or with men, all of which may often be looked down

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upon, while their defiance of traditional gender roles is interpreted as a sign of loose morals and bad character (Salam, 2011). International and national social media campaigns, for instance, #BringBackOurGirls, #MeToo; #JusticeforZainab, have highlighted this instrumental use of social media. Such campaigns, which are meant to raise awareness – often on taboo subjects such as child pornography and rape – give voice to previously marginalized and disenfranchized groups (e.g. female assault victims) and offer possibilities for resisting mainstream hegemonic discourses. They have also shown that social media is a powerful tool for propagating and/or questioning ideology. Scholars like Halpern and Gibbs (2013) have argued that online social networks have contributed to societal transformation by actively enabling social and political debate. Researchers, such as Al-Saggaf (2011), have also reported that social media platforms offer women a space not only to raise awareness on issues important to them, but also to exercise their freedom of expression, call for gender equality, bring about cultural change and empower themselves.

While social media can be used as a subversive tool, many of the limitations that structure wider reality permeate the former as well. For instance, gender differences, generally observable in a culture, also imbue and persist in digital networks (Lee, 2002). This suggests that social media communication therefore reflects and reaffirms existing gender identities and practices. For example, women have exhibited a tendency to express themselves via their profile pictures in ways that conform to the dominant socio-cultural and religious discourses on gender, such as restricting audiences in posting, placing profile pictures and rejecting "friend requests" from unknown people or specific relatives (Mishra & Basu, 2014). Hence, in the rather conservative mind-set of Pakistani culture, the social media environment, initially declared to be an "anonymous" and "gender-free" space (see e.g. Bailey, Steeves, Burkell, & Regan, 2013), actually serves to maintain and reinforce the integrity and reputations of users and their families. Taking inspiration from these insights, and using Multimodal Discourse Analysis as an analytical framework, explained in due course, this study investigated the following research questions:

a. How do Pakistani women mobilize visual and linguistic resources to construct their gender identities via Facebook posts? Moreover, how do these semiotic resources combine to communicate specific meanings?
b. Do these virtual gender identities adhere to existing stereotypical gender notions in Pakistan or do they seek to contest prevailing sociocultural and linguistic norms.

From a feminist perspective, resistance is identified in various types of discourse such as public assemblies, circulating discourses (e.g. #MeToo

movement), state feminism or resistance to disciplinary power (Lilja, 2017). Similarly, compliance refers to adherence to conventional gender expectations that, for example, highlight men as breadwinners or heads of families and women as homemakers (Leamaster & Bautista, 2018). In this study, I use the concepts of resistance and compliance to refer to the everyday practices of Pakistani women on Facebook. These practices may include those of individual women who consciously raise social awareness about gender issues, question the status quo, make subtle changes in their language use or, conversely, choose to communicate about domestic concerns, religious content or related matters via their posts that conform to stereotypical gender ideologies that strengthen and reinforce gender inequality.

In Pakistan, changes in communication patterns enabled by social media take on additional significance when seen against the backdrop of the cultural and socio-religious norms that govern interaction between men and women. This is predominantly a patriarchal society, in which political, economic, cultural and religious structures and forces have traditionally offered more freedom, control and power to men than to women (Jafar, 2005). To preserve and maintain male dominance, socio-cultural norms target the mobility, voice and freedom of women (Jafar, 2005). Hence, it is not surprising that men and women are assigned stereotypical and essentialist roles: men partake in public affairs and are viewed as breadwinners while women are primarily defined in terms of their reproductive ability, as mothers, daughters and wives. In short, patriarchal values are entrenched in the cultural traditions of the society and regulate the social values of gender. However, the increasing use of social media among young men and women here is potentially perceived as disruptive and challenges the strict monitoring and control of behavior, both at the familial and state levels.

Gender and social media

Previous empirical studies, worldwide, on gender and social media, amongst other things, have focused on the construction of Muslim identities, representation of body image, objectification of women, self-esteem and self-presentation strategies used by women, women's socio-economic empowerment and feminist cyber activism (Davis, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020; Point, 2019; Rassi, 2016; Schenato, 2017). In South Asia, religion and socio-cultural practices have also been subjects of research with respect to gender and social media. Mishra and Basu (2014), in their study of visual self-presentation strategies adopted by Indian Muslim women on Facebook, argue that these represent conscious efforts not to disrupt family values and existing patriarchal expectations. Similarly, Mishra, Monippally, and Jayakar (2013)

explored the self-presentation strategies of Indian Muslim men and women in online matrimonial advertisements and concluded that, while upholding traditional societal norms, they are also making radical changes to adhere to the social media affordances.

Earlier studies on gender in Pakistan have primarily examined gender roles and stereotypes in contexts such as education and the representation of gender in the print and electronic media (Ullah, Khan, Khan, & Ibrahim, 2016). Most of these have concluded that gender typecasting persists in this culture, as depictions of men and women in print and electronic media continue to be heavily imbued by patriarchal ideology (see for example Raza & Liaqat, 2016). A few studies have examined the notion of gender and social media. Rehman (2017), for example, investigates how social media has provided Pakistani feminists with a platform that has enabled them to organize different women-related events and raise the visibility of the Pakistani feminist movement. However, the same online platforms also disseminate online hate talk against these feminists who are also sometimes seen as part of the Pakistani elite. Zafar, Toor, and Hussain (2019), in turn, argue that social media have been invaluable for women entrepreneurs who were prohibited from entering public spaces. It has given them access to potentially "large markets, direct messaging and inexpensive and swift information sharing and flexibility" (Zafar et al., 2019, p. 886). *Although Facebook is hugely popular, its impact on Pakistani society has not been studied much*. As of January 2020, there were 37 million Facebook users in Pakistan, of which 79 percent were men and 21 percent women, while persons between the ages of 18 and 24 constitute the largest user group (NapoleonCat Statistics, 2020). It would, therefore, be significant to investigate how women in Pakistan construct their gender identities on social media, both linguistically and through other semiotic resources.

Research methods

I had unfiltered access to the Facebook profiles of my participants for this study. The dataset comprised 570 Facebook posts shared by ten Pakistani Muslim women, systematically collected over a period of three months (from May to July 2017). The posts were multimodal in nature and consisted of English, Urdu and Arabic text, inscribed either on images or as captions, and still visuals, for example, cartoon characters, photographs of family members and film stars. The participants were recruited via a snowballing technique, whereby I informed my Facebook friends about the study and requested them to share the information with their friends and family members and ask those who were willing to participate. Interested individuals contacted me via Facebook Messenger. This strategy was successful,

and I was able to recruit participants who were unknown to me. I also briefed them on my goal and the objectives of my study and informed them of their right to withdraw from it at any point. Confidentiality was ensured by not disclosing any names or personal information; hence, when quoting from the data, all names have been erased and only those details that were strictly relevant to my research questions were retained.

More specifically, I selected participants according to age, socioeconomic class and geographical locale. I recruited women between 18 and 30 years as my focus was on young women specifically, because in this age span people were likely to be in the midst of one or more of the following life stages: as students, choosing careers, or entering domestic roles. While establishing their patterns of communication and behavior as individuals (boyd & Ellison, 2007), people of this age group are also early adopters of new technologies (Schoemaker, 2016). In addition, I wanted to target women of the middle and upper-middle classes, who have most commonly been cited as the bearers, custodians and representative voices of a society's moral, cultural and societal values, norms and traditions (Jamal, 2013, p. 297). However, as Maqsood (2017, p. 205) argues, while such groups maintain a conservative outlook about Islam and continue to assert the traditional patriarchal structure, they also desire to enjoy the fruits of modernity and so were likely to experience some sort of ideological change.

Finally, I decided to focus on women from South Punjab specifically from Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur cities for two reasons. First, this was a motivated choice, because South Punjab has a pronounced feudal culture and has not traditionally been known as an emancipatory environment. Moreover, from a gender perspective, unlike women in other metropolitan areas of Pakistan who have greater mobility and decision-making power, women in South Punjab are generally discouraged from taking part in any decision-making processes and are thus rendered almost politically invisible (Sathar & Kazi, 2000, p. 89). Second, in this region, given its rigid gender segregation, strict behavioral code, familial and kinship patterns and a strong ideology that links family honor with female virtue (Moghadam, 2003), honor killings and forced or early marriages are common practices and are not considered crimes. Therefore, I considered it important to assess whether Facebook offered young women in this area the freedom to express themselves and how this type of interaction would then influence their construction of gender identities. It is arguable, therefore, that the milieu, social class and age of my participants offered fertile ground for investigating gender identities located at the nexus of modernity and traditionalism. This also provided a space to understand whether changes in participants' Facebook communication patterns conform to and/or subvert dominant and cultural patterns of gendered identity construction in Pakistan. It is

necessary to mention here that these observations may well be true for other parts of Pakistan that may have even more pronounced patriarchal cultures such as interior Sindh and tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Analytical framework

Drawing on the work of Jones (2015) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), I used Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) as my framework. This enables a multifaceted analysis of the range of semiotic resources, such as language, images, gestures, videos and gifs that are utilized to produce meanings. Moreover, MMDA also facilitates examination of the meanings constructed via the integrated deployment of these resources in a given situation (Jones, 2015; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). More significantly, it assumes that, like language, all other modes of communication have been shaped by their cultural, historical and social uses to fulfill specific social functions and that people produce meaning by using and reconfiguring the various resources available to them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

In my analysis of the participants' posts, I used the compositional criteria of salience, social distance, attitude and information value (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Detailed analysis of these elements revealed not only how participants mobilized resources both to capture their viewers' attention and to negotiate their relationship with them, but also how a posted message was presented. In order to show how "identity is constantly interactively (re)constructed and contested on a microlevel via language" (Norris, 2007, p. 657), I paid close attention to the participants' visual and linguistic choices (in captions for images and text inscribed on images) as "identity is constantly interactively (re)constructed and contested on a microlevel via language" (Norris, 2007, p. 657). Furthermore, unlike many earlier linguistic and visual studies (see for example Yazdani & Manovich, 2015) that have examined social media content via quantitative methods, my aim was to empirically document in a qualitative way what images and textual content may potentially "do" (function) and how they "look" (Pinney, 2008).

The first compositional feature analyzed in the data was "salience." Its analysis concerned the elements (e.g. color, backgrounding, foregrounding, emphasis and contrast in the visuals) that attracted viewer attention. Color can be used, for example, to generate a "sense of substantiality and accentuate features of visuals and stimulate effects of distance or proximity" (Hook & Glaveanu, 2013, p. 16). Similarly, in images, foregrounding and backgrounding distinguish more salient from less salient characteristics. In all-text posts, the salience of lexemes is indicated via fonts and lettering (e.g. bold, italics,

upper vs. lower case). "Social distance" refers to the juxtaposition of things, places and people in visual materials. Typically, this is generated through frame size (close, medium and long shots), indicating the level of intimacy and anonymity. Close shots are used to create a feeling of intimacy between the audience and the subject, while medium shots indicate familiarity and long shots generate a sense of anonymity between the viewers and the represented participants. In text, social distance is indicated via the choice of style (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For instance, a "personal style" (intimate use of language) indicates alliance with an individual or group, whereas a "social style" refers to routine communication with friends and acquaintances, and a "public style" represents formal communication. "Attitude" indicates the power dynamics between a subject and a viewer. In visual materials, attitude is indicated through the choice of the viewing angle (e.g. frontal, oblique, high and low). For example, a frontal angle invites audience involvement with the subject, an oblique angle generates a feeling of detachment, a high angle places the viewer in a more powerful position vis-à-vis the subject and a low camera angle reverses this relationship. In text, attitude is indicated via three features: affect, appreciation and judgement (Macken-Horarik, 2004b). Affect refers to whether the text generates an emotive response in the reader, appreciation points to aesthetic fulfillment, and judgement to ethical evaluation of both the visual and textual choice made. Finally, the "information value in visuals" refers to how information is presented to the audience. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify three ways of presenting information: from left to right, the left showing the "familiar, expected and known" and the right "new information" meriting special attention (pp. 179–185); from top to bottom, the information at the top representing the "ideal," while content at the bottom the "real" (pp. 186–194); and center-margin, the center indicating the "nucleus of information" and the margins "subservient" information (pp. 194–200). However, in Urdu, in which most of the messages in my data were written and proceeds from right to left, textual information was presented from right to left, the right showing the "old and known" and the left being the "new" information.

Finally, it was also important to examine how different semiotic modes interact with each other to convey specific meanings. More specifically, this meant that I needed to study "intersemiotic parallelism" (Liu & O'Halloran, 2009, p. 10) in order to understand how different verbal and visual modes, when combined together, contribute to create specific meanings, for example, images may include reference to texts, and the latter may include reference to the former. This is because meanings produced through the combined use of semiotic resources has more impact as compared to the meaning created via an individual semiotic resource. In other words, intersemiotic parallelism allows analyzing how similar organizations of information

are offered across different semiotic modes (Liu & O'Halloran, 2009). Thus, "Intersemiotic Parallelism refers to a cohesive relation that interconnects both language and images when the two semiotic components share a similar form" (Liu & O'Halloran, 2009, p. 372).

Findings and discussion

The findings of my analysis are discussed below in two sections. The first section, "Compliance: Traditional Construction of Gender Identities," documents how the South Punjabi women's posts conformed to the dominant socio-cultural norms of Pakistani society and the second section, "Resistance: Emergent Model(s) of Gender Identities," how women also mobilized posts to empower themselves by voicing opinions and discussing issues generally considered "sensitive" and therefore not openly discussed in this culture. Table 1 groups the posts according to some main types.

Compliance: Traditional construction of gender identities

Posts that included religious and motivational text and images formed the largest group (38 percent) in my data. These contained religious extracts from the Quran, Hadiths, a collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which along with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunnah), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims, apart from the Quran or motivational quotations that encourage them to cope with everyday hardships, as extracted from other Facebook pages. More specifically, the themes in this category were forgiveness, patience, virtue, protection from evil, seeking help from Allah and how people should conduct themselves in their everyday lives. The quotations from the Quran and Hadiths were in Arabic. In contrast, the posts indicating the women's relationship with Allah, along with a motivational quotation, were in either Urdu (70 percent) or English (30 percent). In line with Islamic norms, the religious posts contained no human figures. Hence, most of these used natural motifs, such as floral patterns and calligraphy (see Example 1). Example 1 shows a typical post of this category. It consists of three *surahs* (chapters) from the Quran, which are "Surah Ikhas," "Surah Falaq" and "Surah Naas," written in Arabic.

Table 1. Types and numbers of posts

Types of posts	Number
Religious and motivational posts	203 (38%)
Posts about friends and family	171 (32%)
Posts about social awareness and taking a stance	156 (30%)
Total	530 (100%)

Example 1

The background of the post was white, a color often associated with purity, goodness, calmness and faith in Islam. In the Muslim tradition, black symbolizes holiness, as the Kaaba or the Muslim spiritual center, is covered by a black cloth with verses inscribed in gold. The use of black on white also assists readability and possibly also promotes feelings of spiritual closeness (Nazri, 2015). The *surahs* are separated with the help of a patterning design and decorative motifs, hallmarks of Islamic calligraphy and architecture (Flood, 2007). Further, the *surahs* were in the center, directing the viewer to the core information in the image. These three *surahs* are referred to as the "shielding chapters" of the Quran, as they guard believers from committing *shirq* (identifying or equating someone else with Allah) and protect them from evil (Ali, 2013). The first, Surah Ikhlas, explains the concept of *tawheed* (oneness) and God in Islam whereas the second and third, Surah Falaq and Surah Naas, protect believers from the devil (Ali, 2013). The text-image relationship here exemplifies "montage," wherein the verbal content is the most significant part of the visual.

The inclusion of the *surah*s on Facebook suggests that young Pakistani women have imported the practice of reciting these in everyday life into the virtual world. This is significant as resolving everyday difficulties and trying to reduce grief through religion is a common practice and seen as part of strong faith in Pakistan (Banning, Hafeez, Faisal, Hassan, & Zafar, 2009). Such visible performance of religious practices not only raises the person's status but also signifies piety and chastity. Another reason for

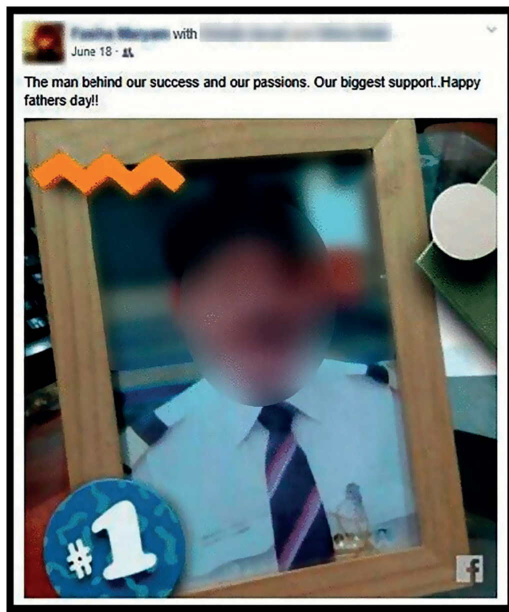
their widespread circulation and recitation is the belief that they protect believers from worldly vices such as the evil eye, jealousy and black magic. Women in Muslim communities often recite these *surah*s for their male family members and children to shield them from harm when they leave home. Thus, they are not only recited to strengthen faith, but also to guard the family from physical harm. Such practices also reflect how in traditional patriarchal cultures women are generally represented as physically and emotionally weak and unable to defend their families and thus need men to guard them and their honor (Jafar, 2005).

The circulation of religious texts on Facebook supports recent empirical findings in Pakistan that the number of women (especially of the middle- and upper-middle-classes) who adhere to "Islamic piety markers over the past decade" (Zaman, 2016, p. 212) has increased. Two primary explanations for this phenomenon are: the contemporary revivalist movement and public discussions on Islam and the role of women on mainstream TV talk shows. Revivalists see themselves as the "bearers of an explicit Pakistani culture as well as a pure Islam" (Zaman, 2016, p. 206). Such movements draw heavily on Pakistan's colonial history. To emphasise national identity during the independence movement in the 1940s, women, especially, were constructed as the custodians of Islamic piety, morals and the indigenous culture (Zaman, 2016).

Mainstream religious TV talkshows on private channels, especially between 1999 and 2008, enabled religious scholars to reach and mobilize a wider audience. As a result, women in particular, started learning the religious texts. Thus, the widespread quoting of *surah*s on Facebook by women can be interpreted to signify the rejection of cultural activities deemed as "western" and valorize the cultivation of piety. Scholars like Banning et al. (2009) also suggest that in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan, religion is used as a "coping mechanism" in times of distress. They further argue that women use religion not only to seek help from higher powers for confronting the injustices of the oppressor but also as an escape from physical reality and to find refuge in adverse situations. Women have also transferred their religious expressions to online contexts, which in turn positions them at the nexus of religion gender and national politics. By circulating religious images, they may find solace in the way of having the protection of a higher power for their families. However, it also subtly displays the outcome of decades of internalized "gendered piety."[1] It is thus evident that religion plays a significant part in the construction of women's gender identity, including on Facebook.

Other popular posts (32 percent) were directed at friends and immediate family members. The themes in these included parents' birthdays, relationships with siblings, friends, husbands and in-laws. Besides text, these also contained film and cartoon characters, pictures of parents, (male) family members, and emoticons. The choice of language in the visuals varied

according to the addressee. Posts targeted at friends were often in English, while those depicting personal relationships with their family members were either in English or Urdu. Those concerning husband-wife relationships or with in-laws, however, were largely in Urdu. Most posts also tagged friends. This category represented a large number (85 percent) of images of family members. Typically, these included photographs of male family members, especially fathers and brothers. Example 2 is a typical case.



Example 2

This shows a photograph of the poster's father uploaded on Facebook, for the purpose of celebrating Father's Day with an image of a framed photograph probably kept at the person's workplace or home. The subject is evidently at his workplace, as indicated by his uniform and the background context. In the foreground, the person has added some additional features to the image, such as the #1 in the lower left-hand corner, with the English caption: "The man behind our success and our passions. Our biggest support. Happy Father's Day!" This also tags two of her siblings and the picture, a close-up, allows viewers to observe how she feels. Moreover, the frontal camera angle, enabling direct eye contact, renders the photograph more appealing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Despite the visual absence of other people (e.g. the poster's mother), instead of using the singular first person, "I," she chooses the more inclusive "our." This may refer not only to herself and her immediate family members, but also more inclusively to other family members, her wider

Facebook audience, or all children who feel similarly about their fathers. The text-image relationship is signaled by the words, "Happy Father's Day," in the caption as well as in the photograph itself. Thus, the verbal elements in the caption extend the meaning of the photograph.

Example 2 represents a typical gendered stereotype: a sole male figure referred to as a source of material and emotional success and strength. It is a headshot, with the subject in his professional context, highlighting that he is primarily associated with or seen in his breadwinner role. This is consistent with traditional patriarchal cultures, where the authority of a father, and hence all men, is perceived as absolute (Moghadam, 2003). These features also implicitly highlight the public (outside home) – private (domestic space) divide that exists in most societies. This divide is particularly significant here as it not only defines the roles men and women are expected to play but also relates to their status in society (Jafar, 2005). This is reinforced by the fact that, while displaying her affection and love for her father by using his picture and strengthening it with the caption, the poster herself is absent from the picture. This is because in a male-dominated society such as Pakistan women generally do not want their pictures uploaded due to concerns about privacy and the fear that these may be misused (Rehman, 2017). In Pakistan, such gender stereotyping not only supports empirical studies that have suggested that men and women learn these roles from a very early age, but it also manifests a typical patriarchal ideology inculcated via institutions such as the educational system and media (Moghadam, 2003).

Similarly, in posts referring to friends and family, those where women tag their husbands, included images praising their behavior, which reinforce socio-cultural norms. Example 3 illustrates posts of this type.

Example 3

The Urdu text and caption is translated as follows:

> The best husband is one who doesn't fight over trivial things; provides for the needs of his wife; is kind hearted; appreciates his wife for doing good deeds; treats her like a friend and life partner rather than a maid and, if there is a fight between the two, is the first one to forgive and forget.
>
> Caption: "You qualify as a Good Husband"

In example 3, the text is framed by a pattern of flowers and hearts in pink and blue against a plain white background. These decorative elements symbolize the loving relationship the woman enjoys with her husband. The message of the title, *behtareen shohar* (excellent husband), is foregrounded in black bold font right at the top and draws the attention of viewers. Below it follows the list of six qualities describing an excellent husband. The text is laid out in the top-to-bottom configuration where the position of the title "behtareen *shohar*" is at the top and then expanded upon in the list below, to generate a sense of positivity. The caption, "You qualify as a *acha shohar*" (good husband), further strengthens this theme of the post. The post is a verbal "montage" as text constitutes the most significant aspect of the visual.

This is a typical instance of praise for a husband for taking care of his wife, amplified here via the caption in English and Urdu "You qualify as a *acha shohar*." Moreover, the text in the image itself lists the qualities that justify this gratitude. This type of post is particularly significant in the Pakistani context because directly after marriage, a woman moves into her husband's home with her in-laws, and thus experiences new family dynamics (Habiba, Ali, & Ashfaq, 2016). Typically, the women in her husband's home see the newly married woman as a threat to their control and power and may try to subjugate her. This effort on the part of the other women to protect their status and authority in the family not only leads to a power struggle that helps to maintain patriarchy, but also exercise control through the male family members (Habiba et al., 2016). This in turn hampers communication between husband and wife. Thus, given these limitations, married women in Pakistan may circulate posts, as seen in example 3, to cope with their new challenges. Such coping strategies accord with earlier findings, especially in psychology, showing that displaying appreciation of one's partner (known as "relationship visibility") on online social media platforms often stems out of feelings of insecurity about the relationship and is directly linked with attachment style (Emery, Muise, Dix, & Le, 2014).[2] Thus, circulating such posts is not only indicative of the discourse used by women in male-dominated Pakistani culture but also show how a typical family is hierarchically structured, with newly married women occupying secondary positions and husbands viewed as authority figures.

Interestingly, the women also posted messages describing their relationships with husbands and in-laws in a humorous manner. These did not include real-life photographs of either and other than the language used to convey messages, they only contained emoticons and cartoons, as seen in example 4 below.

Example 4

The Urdu translates as follows:

> What is the difference between welding and a wedding? In welding, you see the sparks first and then two metals are joined whereas in a wedding you first join two people and then see the sparks.

In example 4, the woman has tried to show the comical side of being married. The image in the post is taken from the "Oye Bazz aa jaa" ("Hey, Stop doing that") Facebook page, which circulates amusing memes on household problems, humorous verse and accounts about everyday encounters between men and women in different settings. To make the image more entertaining, it represents men and women as cartoon characters. The background is white and the Facebook source page is watermarked. In the foreground, in the upper left-hand corner, are two characters dressed in typical western wedding attire, holding hands and a heart-shaped balloon depicting the happy start of matrimony. In contrast, the lower middle section has a male cartoon figure holding his head in both hands, with mouth open, as if

astonished by something the female cartoon character says. Additionally, a hare is placed next to them holding a sign saying "Help," suggesting that the man needs help after getting married. In the upper right corner is another cartoon character, wearing gloves and holding a welding torch to illustrate the "difference between wedding and welding." The Urdu text points to the "difference between welding and wedding" and the word "whereas" in the center is in red font that not only symbolizes intensity, war, danger and power but also highlights the main message. The use of red and black fonts also enhances readability. The text-image relationship in this instance may be defined as "duo-specific": the cartoons depict the man and woman in the left-hand corner, the welder in the upper right-hand corner and the hare at the bottom with the "help" sign, all contribute to the meaning of the text.

On the surface, example 4 appears to be in the way of an innocent joke, representative of the huge body of humorous literature on the institution of heterosexual marriage, both offline and online (Woodzicka, 2010). However, I argue that such jokes both reflect and perpetuate sexism, especially in Pakistan. As seen in example 4 jokes that depict "male self-victimisation" are widely prevalent in Pakistani culture and are used as a strategic device to reinforce male dominance. Matrimonial jokes, particularly those targeting women and portraying them as disobedient, unruly, abusive and materialistic, are very common here and reflect the stereotypical gender identity construction that characterizes its culture (Khan & Khalid, 2019). Women are portrayed as chatterboxes, greedy, shopaholic, nagging wives, while men are depicted as their "oppressed" partners who are peace-loving and happy to spend lavishly on their wives, yet constantly under threat of abuse and forced into marriage (Sanchita, 2016). In such instances, humor illustrates the sexist attitudes prevalent in a society and helps to maintain established patriarchal norms. Many scholars (Maio, Olson, & Bush, 1997, as cited in Prusaczyk, 2018, p. 11) agree that such discourse not only provides an ideal context that "increases negative stereotypes about disadvantaged social groups" but sexist jokes also underpin sexism and promote tolerance for prevailing negatives attitudes towards women.

Interestingly, the woman who posted this joke, indicates that discourses of patriarchy are not only widely inculcated and internalized but also reinforced through circulation and mediated via everyday practices. It is ironic that women are willing to share ideas that portray them as oppressors in the visuals posted on social media. By fortifying and disseminating a male-dominated ideology and then integrating it into their family and social kinship networks, they are clearly serving as mediators of patriarchy (Habiba et al., 2016). Hence, the woman becomes the "token-torturer," as Kandiyoti (1988, p. 280) puts it, by consciously or unconsciously reconstructing stereotypical gender ideology and thereby strengthening a system of oppression that affects all women.

Resistance: Emergent model(s) of gender identities

Around 30 percent of the posts exemplify social awareness and taking a stance on themes such as education, social and economic justice, sexual harassment, honor killings, women's rights and awareness-raising regarding the LGBT community. The content of the images about these mostly comprise real-life photographs of people (similar to example 5). It is, however, noteworthy that posts focusing on topics like honor killings, the transgender community and sexual harassment were extracted from other Facebook pages, such as "Feminist News," "Women's Rights News," "3WF-Third Wave Feminism," "Exposing Men's Rights Activism," "Feminist Info," "World Wide Women," "Khabees Ourat" ("Mischievous Woman") and "Qandeel ki kahani" ("Qandeel's story"). These pages provide information on and a platform for raising awareness on issues (see Example 5) not openly discussed in a patriarchal society like Pakistan.

The women used Facebook as a platform to share their thoughts and emotions. Their posts alluded to life struggles and experiences, disappointments and expressions of love, although these did not target any particular persons, as such. They often included content that women are unlikely to discuss in their offline lives, because of the societal norms that do not allow them to openly express their emotions and inner turmoil, being forced to sacrifice their own aspirations and conceal their own opinions. For instance, such posts are illustrated in example 5.

Example 5

This post is divided into two sections. The upper part has two photographs taken at the same petrol pump. The photograph on the right shows a man kissing the picture of a woman on a billboard in headscarf, t-shirt and trousers on the advertising display stand. The photograph on the left shows a cardboard cutout of the same woman with a man wearing a helmet trying to grab her breasts. These are captioned in English: "Do u think it's funny man?" The lower half of the post consists of a tweet in English by a female poster: "Tell me again how the way a woman dresses contributes to the possibilities of her getting assaulted. This is a cardboard cutout." The post thereby conveys that sexual harassment and sexual assault have nothing to do with how a female is dressed, since both pictures are of a woman who is completely covered and wearing a headscarf. Moreover, the public display of such acts is not something that can be ignored, since assaults on women are an almost daily occurrence in Pakistan. The tweet and the caption are also significant as they indicate that men are shirking their duty in protecting women. The inter-semiotic relationship between image and text here could be termed "interdependent" because, together they express meanings that neither the words nor the image alone would convey.

From the standpoint of raising social awareness and stance-taking, example 5 indicates that social media have become indispensable to women in Pakistan as a means of questioning the status quo, societal attitudes and the manner in which men respond to women's issues. Female social media users in my data shared images that can be interpreted to foreground "uncomfortable issues" in a patriarchal society. This, in turn, demonstrates that social media, such as Facebook have not only empowered Pakistani women to talk about hitherto unspoken and taboo issues, but also provided them with an alternative platform for making their voices heard. Women in my data have posted images that questioned the marginalization of women's issues, as seen here.

Texts and images shared by my participants illustrated the sexual harassment of women in daily life on the streets, in offices or outside home that is often dismissed as either a crime perpetuated by a few individuals or, as in example 5, using humor. These posts question the social mentality of choosing to blame a few selected individuals for perpetrating crimes against women and ending up by reducing these problems to one-time, individual, and random acts. This absolves society from blame and renders these as occasional happenings, thereby reducing possibilities for any mainstream discussions on these or legislation to combat them.

Such attempts to minimize and dismiss gender concerns are common. Therefore, the sharing by women in Pakistan of "forbidden" and "personal" issues on social media is highly significant, as such conversations have

historically been silenced by state institutions (Rehman, 2017). Unlike the majority of state-controlled discussions on women's issues in Pakistan, Facebook has provided women with an alternative platform whereby they can become the authors of their own narratives.

In contrast with such explicit messages, as seen in example 5, example 6 is aimed at the poster's friends and family members and is more ambivalent. While such posts can be interpreted as reflecting conformity because their function is to strengthen the posters' relationships with their friends and families, they also display subtle signs of digression from traditional female discourse. Example 6 illustrates this, as a shift away from the male-dominated model of Pakistani culture and a move towards an alternative model of gender identity.

Example 6

Example 6 includes a meme with names of friends tagged in the caption, a clear indication on the part of the poster's wish to demonstrate the strong bond she has with them. This includes a picture of the Hollywood actor Jack Nicholson, notorious for playing mischievous "bad boy" roles, holding a cigar in one hand and blowing smoke rings. The complete absence of background de-contextualizes the image and draws attention to the most prominent aspect of the post, the photograph rendered in close-up, allowing viewers to observe minute details. Despite the frontal camera angle, there is no direct eye contact between the person represented and the audience,

a feature that generates a sense of detachment and distance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The verbal message of the post, in English, is in bold uppercase white letters and positioned at the center of the image. The words "dickhead" and "smart ass" resonate with the actor's bad boy rebellious image. Thus, the text and image form an additive relationship via Nicholson's reputation for playing anti-heroes and using expressions like "dickhead" and "smartass" that mostly carry negative connotations. Not only are these expressions generally considered to be impolite, but they are also not deemed appropriate for Pakistani women to use in their offline lives (Salam, 2011).

In the case of example 6, the poster uses swear words to signal informality, group solidarity and to reinforce her relationship with her friends (Gati, 2014). However, in a patriarchal setup like Pakistan, women are not normally expected to use such language publicly as it is not only considered impolite, but is mostly associated with an aggressive form of masculinity (Sanauddin, 2015). Instead, they are expected to behave modestly and practice *purdah* or veiling, both literally and figuratively. Such expectations in a patriarchal culture are the result of women being socialized and brought up as individuals who are selfless, obedient and forgiving, while also being responsible for doing household chores and caring for their children, husbands and in-laws (Jafar, 2005). Such a construction of gender identity is disseminated via a "respectability and responsibility politics/discourse" that prescribes strict standards of "piousness, temperance, decorum and self-restraint, sexual restraint, propriety and morality, neat appearance and self-protection" for women, if they are to be respected by their families and society (Barratt, 2018, p. 18). Moreover, women here are expected to make public displays of these virtues, both to demonstrate their worthiness and legitimise patriarchal ideals of femininity. This discourse essentially eliminates the possibility of other feminine experiences, thereby creating a dichotomy of good versus bad woman (Barratt, 2018). Posts such as example 6 confirm what earlier empirical studies (Gati, 2014) have highlighted: women are not only familiar with profane language but also routinely use it in Pakistan.

In sum, given the broader discourse repertoire of Pakistani women, this post (example 6) is of interest as it employs visual and linguistic resources more typical of men than women. Typically, it features women's use of black humor, for example, in referring to mothers, in ways that include taboo words or phrases (e.g. "and she will escort your ass in hell"). Interestingly, this kind of language use, which is most typically associated with men to assert their power and show aggression (Wood & Eagly, 2002), indicates that a feminine version of the power and aggression discourse is lacking. Hence, the use of "unseemly" language by these women on

public platforms such as Facebook not only indicates the breaking down of negative stereotypical notions of women as overactive, lustful and immoral, but also draws attention to the fact that the semiotic resources they employ to communicate in their everyday lives are heavily imbued with a male-dominated ideology. Therefore, in order to appropriate some measure of power, they need to draw on the only available standard and this is a masculine one.

Conclusion

As an insider of Pakistani culture that does not support women in voicing their opinions, I investigate how they multimodally construct their gender identities online via Facebook posts, and how these may be related to ongoing changes in the socio-cultural norms of contemporary society in the country. The data were studied using Multimodal Discourse Analysis and the results showed a marked ambivalence in the use of visual and linguistic resources. On the one hand, women were found to conform to existing socio-cultural standards of a patriarchal society and on the other, they also employed social media platforms not only to distinguish themselves from traditional gendered linguistic patterns by using profanities, but also to voice their opinions on social issues such as sexual harassment, social and economic justice and female empowerment. In terms of compliance with socio-cultural norms, religion was the most frequently used element for women's self-constructions in their Facebook posts, as seen in example 1. This is in line with with the traditional gender ideology practiced in this society whereby discourses construct females not only as the carriers of cultural norms but also as the transmitters and guardians of Muslim and national values (Jafar, 2005). My data also suggest that stereotypical patterns of women's identities are persistently reproduced (as seen in examples 3 & 4), supporting the view that these gendered patterns are socially facilitative. This implies that they are prompted by existing mechanisms of power, such as state institutions, media and educational settings, and thus can be interpreted as evidence of women's socialization in order to accept men as central and in control, while women are encouraged to be cooperative and agreeable to the former (Jafar, 2005). These roles are also continuously reinforced through social media as young people are continuously exposed to them.

Moreover, my data also suggest that for women in Pakistan social media in general, and Facebook in particular, have become crucial sources of information about and means of raising awareness. In a context where the presence of women, particularly on Facebook, is considered to go against the socio-religious norms of society and their access to internet is viewed generally as defiance, their very presence on social media platforms is a subtle sign of resistance against the status quo (Schoemaker, 2016). Women were also

found to engage in discussions on Facebook that challenge (as seen in example 5) traditional gendered ideas of "public" masculine and "private" feminine spheres and question dominant ideologies of womanhood that, for instance, allow acts of sexual harassment to be perpetuated and thereby strengthen the notions of hegemonic masculinities and femininities (Rahimi & Liston, 2009). This also means that women in Pakistan are potentially challenging long-held gender norms, via social media, regarding how they need men to protect their honor. This type of individual or collective social media activism focusing on women's rights and issues is supported by recent empirical studies on women's empowerment via social media in various contexts (Jackson, 2018; Rehman, 2017). These studies suggest that women across the globe are using social media to reject stereotypical models of gender and make themselves more visible and audible. Thereby they seek to celebrate a range of identities. The same studies also explicitly point to the dangers of how women receive threats of death and acid attacks, while experiencing online bullying, surveillance, sexual and verbal abuse, and aggression by doing feminism online.[3] Thus, by bringing the rights of marginalized groups into the heart of public debates, online social media platforms such as Facebook have become powerful instruments for mobilizing popular support for minorities, including women, across the globe.

Notes

1. Gendered Piety here refers to "gendered practices propagated in the Pakistani state's version of Islam. Women, in Pakistan, generally view these practices as one part of Islamic praxis wherein the focus is largely on moral and ethical behaviors and personal and social conduct" (Hasan, 2015, p. 11).
2. Emery et al. (2014) identify three attachment styles: an "avoidant attachment style," where the person feels detached from the partner and shows low desire to post a relationship status; an "anxious attachment style," where persons require more reassurance and therefore share more about their relationships; and a "secure attachment style" for which no instance was identified among my participants.
3. My women interviewees also confirmed this during April–May, 2019 (Salam, forthcoming).

Notes on the contributor

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ABSTRACT IN URDU

دؤرحاضر میں فیسبک نے پر جوش اور ڈیجٹل خواندگی رکھنے والے نوجوان طبقے، جن میں سے اکثریت کا تعلق شہروں سے ہے، میں بہت زیادہ پذیرائی حاصل کی ہے۔ سماجی روابط کے پلیٹ فارمرز اپنے استعمال کرنے والوں کو شخصی اظہار رائے کی آزادی فراہم کرتے ہیں۔ یہ تحقیقی مضمون اسی نکتے پر حقیقت پسندانہ روشنی ڈالنے کی ایک کاوش ہے کہ پاکستانی مرد و زن درج بالا ذراء۱ع مواصلات کو اپنی شناخت کے اظہار کیلیے کس طرح استعمال کرتے ہیں۔ ملٹی ماڈل ڈسکو رز اینیلسذذ سے استفادہ کتے ہوئے میں نے اس بات کی تحقیق کی ہے کہ خاص طور پر پاکستانی خواتین نے ان بصری اور لسانی ذراءع کو بروئےکار لا کر فیسبک پر کس طرح اپنی صنفی شناخت کو اجاگر کیا ہے۔ نتائج سے ظاہر ہوتا ہے کہ فیسبک کے مندرجہ بالا انداز مواصلات نے پاکستان کے سماجی، تمدانی، لسانی اقدار اور معیار ات گفتگو پر نمایاں اثرات مراتب کیے ہیں۔ بل خصوص فیسبک نے پاکستانی خواتین کو یہ موقع فراہم کیا ہے کہ وہ گفتگو اور معاشرتی روابط کے مروجہ و مسلمہ طریقوں پر سوال اٹھا سکتی ہیں تو دوسری طرف فیسبک پاکستانی معاشرے میں مرد و عورت کے روایتی صنفی کردار کو رائج و راسخ کرنے میں بہی معاون ثابت ہو رہی ہے۔

KEYWORDS فیسبک، صنفی شناخت، ملٹی ماڈل ڈسکو رز اینیلسذذ، پاکستان، خواتیذ

II

MEN WILL BE MEN?: MASCULINITIES ON DISPLAY IN THE FACEBOOK COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF PAKISTANI MEN

by

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Men will be Men?: Masculinities on display in the Facebook communication practices of Pakistani men

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ABSTRACT
In the past decade, the popularization of social media in Pakistan has greatly influenced the way in which people communicate and interact with each other. The rapidly evolving nature of online social media communication in the country when viewed against the backdrop of the country's socio-cultural characteristics and religion is particularly significant. Facebook, being the prime social media platform in Pakistan has been revolutionary and liberating because while acting as a medium of communication, which transgresses the traditional manner of gendered social interactions, it has at the same time enabled the users to perpetuate and reinforce the existing gender ideology. As a result, Facebook in Pakistan has evolved into a space where individuals construct gender identities discursively. Using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, I investigate the ways in which Pakistani men multimodally construct their gender identities on Facebook. I show how Pakistani men are not only upholding the existing socio-cultural norms and discourse but also there are subtle signs of digression from the established models of masculinity.

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Introduction

In Pakistan's patriarchal system, gender is commonly viewed in a stereotypical, binary way. In this system, the public domain is predominantly within the purview of men while women are positioned in the private domain of home and family. Men are traditionally seen as the guardians of women and women as 'vulnerable targets' who need male protection (Jafar, 2005). This rigid gender ideology thus bestows on men a power that is not enjoyed by most women in the Pakistani culture. While Pakistani womanhood cannot be reduced to a homogenized singularity of disempowerment and victimization, it is nevertheless true that their conduct and mobility in comparison to that of men is monitored and policed by established socio-cultural norms. Societal pressures compel men to act according to stereotypical gender models of masculinity. For example, they are expected to be rational, brave, aggressive and emotionless beings (ibid). These gendered norms expose the double standards of a patriarchal culture. In

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sexual behavior, especially, men are positioned as active, and even aggressive, partners, and women as passive receptacles of their desire (Khan, 2018). Similarly, male promiscuity is often overlooked and ignored by society, communities and families alike, while the same behavior in women in often severely punished. In fact, as Gelfand, LaFree, Fahey, and Feinberg (2013) argue, Pakistan is among the countries that have the strongest patriarchal traditions and lowest tolerance of deviant behavior.

With reference to people using available digital artefacts to construct and perform gender identities (boyd, 2007), scholars have argued that in the cyber-social sphere, gender can be (re)negotiated with respect to socio-cultural norms and their physical realities (Danet, 1998). In this context, what I mean by gender identities is that I am interested in exploring how gender is being negotiated in connection to other aspects of identity, such as religion, social class, education, culture, and socio-political history of Pakistan. However, the idea that Facebook, or social media in general, allows individuals to enact identities in more 'fluid and non-traditional' ways has been contested in contemporary empirical studies on online discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Mullany, 2004). These studies, some of which explore heteronormative beauty standards and misogynistic discourse in online environments, generate a suspicion that social media allows its users to 'do' gender by replicating the prevalent gender ideology. This, in turn, makes gender, in today's era a carefully orchestrated performance in both the physical and the online world. Furthermore, as far as men, the focus in the article, are concerned, it could be argued that both on-and offline they socially perform masculinity in ways that are semiotically 'linked to men, and not to women, through cultural discourses and models' (Kiesling, 2007, p. 659). In principle, while this may mean orienting to the normative gender dichotomy, it does not attribute any specific traits to masculinity, thus allowing men the possibility to embrace other masculinities simultaneously (ibid). It can be argued here that although gender, discourse and cultural practices of people in an online environment have been rigorously investigated globally, in Pakistan, where Facebook is the primary social media site for particularly men (77% of Facebook users are men ($n = 35$ million)) (Alphapro, 2018), there is very little research on the social and cultural discourse practices on how young Pakistani men engage in online social networking. To bridge this gap in research, in this article, I aim to focus on Pakistani men especially and investigate how they construct their gender identities on Facebook. More specifically, by using Multimodal Discourse Analysis, I investigate the following questions:

(a) How do Pakistani men construct their identities in their Facebook posts? To answer this question, I will pay attention to how they mobilize both visual and linguistic resources, and to how these resources are interconnected in the communication of specific meanings.

(b) Do the gendered performances of Pakistani male Facebook users mirror traditional heteropatriarchal models of masculinity prevalent in Pakistan, or is there evidence of moving away from, or challenging traditional masculinity?

I am particularly interested in examining whether, for Pakistani men, Facebook functions as an extension of the social reality of Pakistani society or whether it has

developed into a potentially subversive space where men feel free to explore and experiment with their identities.

Masculinity in social media

Globally, in psychological, sociological and cultural studies, masculinity on social media has been widely investigated (see e.g. Genter, 2014; Patterson, 2013; Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016). These studies have often focused on such themes as violence, male self-presentation strategies, sexual display, sexual risk behavior and portrayals of manhood. In South Asia, most of the research on social media and gender has focused on political activism, cultural identity and narratives of dissent in young adults. For example, Balaji (2014), in his study on Indian masculinity, argued that social media artefacts play a pivotal role in successfully commodifying men into a hyper-sexualized, heteronormative and homogenized ideal of Indian masculinity, thereby removing all sorts of cultural and regional differences. However, in Pakistan, previous studies on gender have mainly focused on Pakistani women's behavioral patterns, attitudes and language in the educational, print media and television settings (e.g. Pillay, 2008; Raza & Liaqat, 2016). The few studies on masculinity in the Pakistani context have examined these in the specific contexts of religion, terrorism, migration, medicine and transnational marriages (e.g. Aslam, 2014; De Sondy, 2009; Khan, 2018). In the Pakistani social media context, two notable exceptions are Karamat and Farooq (2016) and Talib (2010). Karamat and Farooq (2016) investigated political activism on Facebook and Twitter and found that these social media platforms not only influence political activism but also play a crucial role in initiating political change in the country. Talib (2010), in turn, argued that social media, cell phones and blogs played a huge part in mobilizing students to participate in protests and in disseminating a counter narrative to the government's move to impose a state of emergency in Pakistan in 2007. However, given the rapidly evolving nature of social media and its increasing presence in the everyday lives of Pakistani youth, there is a need to delve deeper into the role of masculinity in social media, and, in particular, to look at how masculinity is constructed not only verbally, but also, increasingly via intersemiotic means.

Methodology

Data collection

The data for this study comprise of 300 screenshots of posts by ten Pakistani Muslim male Facebook users from South Punjab. These posts, consisting of both verbal and non-verbal content (text and visuals), which the participants shared on their timeline, were collected systematically during a three-month period of May to July 2017. The visual aspects of the posts mainly consisted of photographs, animated characters and cartoon strips while the textual elements were either inscribed on the images or presented as a comment by the participants. The participants allowed me access to their Facebook pages without any obstruction, on the condition that I would not analyse the comments on their posted content. Their (gendered) justification for this stipulation was that it was 'culturally' or 'morally' inappropriate for me, as a Pakistani-Muslim woman, to read

comments that could potentially include abusive content. Another justification offered by them was the apprehension that my analysis of the comments might end up unsettling their offline relationships, and/or portray the participants in a negative light.

Sampling and ethical Considerations

I collected the data from participants by using snowball sampling. I started by contacting people in my friend-list. I explained to them the nature and purpose of my study, asking if they would be interested to be a part of this project. They were also requested to share this information with their friends and family members. This technique enabled me to include otherwise unreachable participants (Groenewald, 2004). After a few days, I was contacted by potential participants who showed interest in this project. My rationale for collecting data from ten participants is that, soon after starting the process, I observed that the same themes constantly recurred, rendering additional data collection redundant. The consistency in the repetition of the themes allowed me to build the analysis on a solid and cohesive foundation.

To ensure the privacy and safety of the participants, they were thoroughly briefed about the nature, aims and objectives of the research at the very start of the project. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any time. They were assured that their posts would be analyzed, stored and published in a fully confidential manner, that is, their personal information or real names would not be disclosed. They were also informed that the posts most relevant to the research questions would be collected and used.

Why South Punjab Facebook users?

The age, educational background and socio-economic status of the participants were pivotal points of consideration during the selection process. I selected participants between the ages of 18 and 30 because it has been argued that these are the key years during which individuals 'acquire autonomy and build a sense of self' (Benson & Elder, 2011, p. 2) during this age-group. The elite (the extremely rich and affluent) and the economically underprivileged were excluded from the study because the latter did not use Facebook, whereas the cosmopolitan lifestyle of the former excludes this class from a representative status. I selected my participants from the middle and upper-middle classes because they have most commonly been considered the custodians of moral, cultural and societal traditions (Jamal, 2013, p. 297). According to Maqsood (2017), these classes signify the 'orthodox world of fundamentalist Islam as it reaches out for the fruits of modernity while holding on to the certitudes of traditional structure' (p. 205). Interestingly, however, the same classes are also undergoing ideological turmoil. Economic prosperity in a rapidly evolving digital age has resulted in creating a struggle between modern and traditional impulses and gender identities (ibid).

Additionally, I chose to select participants from South Punjab for two reasons. In comparison to other metropolitan areas of Pakistan, South Punjab is both educationally backward and culturally conservative. It is also known for its feudal system whereby the power, position and authority of feudal landlords is supported by the political administration (Javaid & Aslam, 2017). However, in the wake of the 2018 national elections social

media played a key role in moderating the fears of the marginalized people of South Punjab by providing them with a means to challenge their powerful feudal lords. It could also be argued that these events are an indication of a change from an agrarian to a more business-centered economy. Overall, selecting participants based on their geographical location, South Punjab, age and social class makes it possible to study gendered identities in a digital context, in an era of rapidly evolving modernity.

Analytic framework

This study employed Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA), (Jones, 2015; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) as its theoretical framework. MMDA was chosen for three reasons. First, it enables the investigation of communication processes as an interplay of multiple semiotic resources including still and moving visuals, color, gestures, gaze, posture, typography and layout. It also allows me to examine the potential of semiotic resources to express new meanings and construe discourse (ibid). Second, MMDA assumes that, like language, these modes are culturally bound, as they have been socially and historically shaped to accomplish specific societal functions. Third, semiotic resources play a crucial role in the critical thinking processes of individuals: they are deployed to achieve specific goals and are thus used to uphold specific ideologies (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 6–14).

In my analysis of the linguistic and visual aspects of the posts, I have drawn on the notions of social distance, attitude, salience and information value (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). A focus on these features helps reveal (a) how the posters attract and direct the attention of their audience, (b) how they negotiate their relationship with the latter, and (c) how the information in their posts is packaged and presented. My motivation for paying attention to these aspects of the posts was that it enables me to identify and describe, firstly, what kinds of posts Pakistani men choose to share on their Facebook profiles, and, secondly, what these selected posts and their particular features convey of how they want to construct their masculinity. Particular attention was paid to the posters' language choices and contents of their messages, image captions and the fragments of text embedded in images. In my analysis, the specific aim was to provide an empirical basis for investigating both how textual content and images 'look' and what they can (potentially) 'do', i.e. their function (Pinney, 2008; as cited in Rose, 2012, p. 8). In this respect, this study differs from most of the previous studies that have mainly investigated social media posts with quantitative methods (see e.g. Yazdani & Manovich, 2015).

In the analysis of visuals, paying attention to social distance means assessing the physical proximity of the people, places and things depicted in images. It can be conveyed through the choice of frame size, such as close-up, medium or long shot. For example, a close-up indicates intimacy between the viewer and the subject, a medium shot indicates the social distance between acquaintances, and a long shot illustrates the social distance between strangers. In the verbal parts of the posts, social distance is typically realized through the formality of 'style'. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) identify three forms of style: the 'personal style', which refers to the intimate use of language indicating solidarity with individuals and groups; the 'social style', which is used in everyday interactions with colleagues and acquaintances;

and the ‘public style’, which is reserved for formal occasions. Here, the notion of attitude refers to the choice of camera angles; these reflect the interaction and power dynamics between the subject and the viewer.

As far as the analysis of attitudes is concerned, my visual analysis paid attention to the angles of the representation. The frontal angle indicates involvement whereas an oblique angle suggests detachment between the viewer and the subject. Similarly, the high angle shot, depicts the power of the viewer over the represented participant whereas the eye-level shot indicates an equal distribution of power and the low angle shot the power of the represented participant over the viewer. Linguistically, attitude is articulated through three characteristics: affect, judgment and appreciation (Macken-Horarik, 2004). The notion of affect refers to the emotive quality of the text, that is, whether the verbal text evokes an emotional response or desire in the reader. Judgement refers to the ethical evaluation of a behavior, and appreciation signifies the aesthetic dimensions of experience. Salience was investigated by examining how elements such as foregrounding, backgrounding, emphasis, contrast and color are used to attract and guide the viewer’s attention. For example, in an all-text post, the choice of color, font and how the text is inscribed (i.e. whether it’s written in bold, italics, capital or small letters) may foreground specific pieces of information as salient in the post, thereby immediately directing the attention of the audience to the message. Thus, the salient lexemes allow the viewers to notice the most significant aspects of the message at first glance.

Lastly, attention was given to the compositional criteria of information value in order to analyse how the information was being displayed in the post, that is, how the text and the image is distributed or positioned. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) describe three ways to present this information (pp. 194–200). These are, from top to bottom, left to right and center-margin. In the top to bottom orientation, the top represents the ‘ideal’ whereas the ‘real’ appears at the bottom. In such a layout, the ideal always plays the leading role, the real remaining subservient. In the left to right orientation, the information on the left is ‘familiar and known’ while that on the right is ‘new’. In center-margin design, the center embodies the ‘nucleus of information’ whereas the information in the margins is considered ‘subservient’ or ‘contextualizing information’. However, as Urdu is written from right to left, the familiar and known’ information is shown on the right and the ‘new’ on the left’.

This study also benefited from the notion of intersemiotic parallelism, introduced by Liu and O’Halloran (2009) as part of their intersemiotic cohesive devices framework and which they employed in studying image-text logical relations. Intersemiotic parallelism ‘occurs when similar organizations of information are offered across distinct modes’ (Bateman, 2014, p. 172). Moreover, the similarity of the information across various modes generates co-contextualizations in which each verbal and visual content creates a context of interpretation for the other contents, thereby generating shared points of contact, which support meaning extension (ibid). In my data, an emphasis on intersemiotic parallelism means that the visual features become representative and/or an extension of what is being communicated linguistically and vice versa.

Data analysis

The data was arranged into four groups (see Table 1) based on the topics/themes in posts. It is significant to note here that these groups are not mutually exclusive but often overlap.

These posts are discussed here in two sections, according to what kind of an image of masculinity they convey. The first section consists of posts, which orient to traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity. The second, smaller, group includes posts, which highlight emergent forms of masculinity. It is significant to mention here that the examples discussed in the analysis section below were chosen based on (a) such posts were repetitively posted by the participants, (b) the posts are representative of the most typical trends and patterns found in the data and (c) these posts show significant similarity in the use of verbal and visual features with those that constituted those categories.

(1) posts highlighting traditional heteropatriarchal masculinity

Travel diaries are the most common type (38%) of the posts. Their photography mostly documented the posters' adventurous road trips and positioned them in exotic Northern Pakistani regions featuring landscapes, rare wildlife, and captured people in their cultural activities. In terms of the content of these posts, the posters mostly provided the factual information with whom, when and where they had traveled. As a typical example of these posts, Example 1 depicts a photo taken by the poster's friend during their trip to the Northern areas of Pakistan.

Example 1

Example 1 includes an aesthetized picture of a man visiting an exotic place. It shows the poster's friend on a top of a mountain holding a camera in his hands and taking photographs of the place. The background of the picture shows the snow-covered mountain tops; and the human figure is positioned in the foreground. The image is in black and

Table 1. Types of posts according to their topic and their relative frequency.

Posts by Topic	Frequency ($n = 300$)
Posts about Travel	38%
Posts about Politics	23%
Posts about Women	22%
Posts about Relationships	17%

white – a hallmark of landscape photography (Peterson & Schellenberg, 2017). Black and white color tones are utilized here for multiple reasons. For example, they can redirect the attention of the viewers on the represented participant by creating a sense of mystery and drama to the environment. Moreover, they can implicitly refer to journalistic uses of pictures: in them, monochrome is often employed as a strategic device in reportage or life photography to create a story telling effect (ibid). The use of the long shot in the post generates the feeling of remoteness between the represented participant and the viewer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Moreover, an oblique camera angle is employed in which the subject of the picture and the viewers do not share the same eye line that allows the viewer to look at the photograph from an outsider's perspective and which suggests that the viewer is not engaged in the same world as which is depicted in the visual. Thus, put together, these features combine in making the photograph as a kind of an 'exhibit' for the audience. The only piece of verbal text that accompanies the image is the caption 'P.C Ahmad' (P.C stands for Photo Credits) that provides the audience with factual information of who (Ahmad) took the photograph. In this particular example, the text-image relationship is also indicated through 'Ahmad'.

Globally, the practice of posting travel photography on social media is common among men. This practice is also followed by Pakistani male Facebook users. These posts may suggest that men are engaged in authoring their identities in the form of pictorial digital narratives by posting their travel experiences on Facebook. Through these photographs, they demonstrate the courageous and risk-taking facet of their identities. This also reflects the fact that, in the Pakistani context, traveling is a highly gendered phenomenon. This gendering shows at two levels. Firstly, travel involves movement in public space, which, in Pakistan, is predominantly a male territory. Secondly, as public space is not for women, traveling is marked by a lack of female presence. This reinforces the notion that women in Pakistan belong to the protected environment of home, while men are given permission to transverse through the geographical and spatial boundaries (Jafar, 2005). Secondly, when men post pictures that locate them in rugged landscapes or places that are less traveled, it fortifies the age-old role of 'man as the hunter and man as the discoverer' that is constructed around qualities such as strength, courage and bravery. As characteristics these are associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This gendering of travel practices thus provides men with an ideal context to engage in activities that '(re)construct their personas as "heroes" by displaying courage, excitement, thrill and risk-taking behaviour' (Lupton & Tullouch, 2002 as cited in Lozanski, 2015, p. 32). The risk-taking factor thus provides a basis where the discourses of masculinity and travel are intertwined (ibid). In short, it could be argued that travel diaries by Pakistani men on Facebook allow them to construct themselves in terms of hegemonic masculinity i.e. men need to position themselves in relation to the kind of masculinity that characterizes the most powerful strata of men even within the male community.

Another popular type (23%) of post for Pakistani men are posts related to both *national and international politics*, and posts that show their *alignment with different political parties in Pakistan*. More specifically, the posts feature pictures of local and international politicians, usually accompanied by textual comments that typically discussed political scenarios in a serious, aggressive or humorous manner. Example 2 is a typical illustration of these posts:

Example 2

> **Translation of the Urdu text in the caption**: 'Do you think it's your father's money that we will forget about it? The only reason behind today's verdict was this man's strong instincts and continuous struggle. 'Mian sb [form of address], you will get tired, but a Captain never gets tired'
>
> **Translation of Urdu text inscribed on the image**: 'I will make them cry'

Example 2 refers to the political situation of Pakistan in April 2016 when the ex-Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Shareef had been disqualified and removed from his office by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on the basis of corruption charges related to the Panama Papers leak. Example 2 does this with the help of a photograph of the then opposition leader (and the subsequent Prime Minister) Imran Khan who was actively involved in pursuing the Panama Papers leak case. The photograph is taken in one of his rallies where he is addressing an audience. This is indicated by how he is shown holding a microphone in his hands. In the background of the picture, we see the white and green colors of the Pakistani flag. The picture is a close-up shot from the frontal camera angle of Khan, allowing the audience to not only focus on the minute details of the subject but also to remain in-tune and connected with represented participant's psychological state (Moura, 2014). Moreover, by making the viewers experience and relate to the scene as if they are a part of it (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), this kind of angle of interaction permits the viewer to feel equally empowered as the subject depicted in the photograph. In addition, the top–bottom configuration is crucial for interpreting the overall meaning of the image. The photograph of Imran Khan is positioned at the top of the post, presenting him as the 'ideal' person who can be the savior of the Pakistani nation. The text inscribed on the post is placed at the bottom and in the middle of the image. Its position suggests that the message is the essential piece of information in the post, as it tells the viewers what Imran Khan intends to do with the corrupt politicians, thereby narrating the 'reality'. The intersemiotic relationship is indicated via the direct quotations of Imran Khan, which is not only inscribed in the image but is also in the caption. For example, the inscribed text, 'MEIN INKO RULAON

GA' ('I will make them cry'), is a direct quotation from Imran Khan which he uttered during one of his rallies. In the caption, the poster made use of other quotations from Khan: 'Tumharay Baap ka paisa hai jo bhool jayen gy? … Mian sb, aap thak jao gy kaptaan thakta nahin hai' ('Do you think it's your father's money that we will forget about it … Mian sb (form of address), you will get tired but a Captain never gets tired'). These quotations vividly tie the image and the text together. Similarly, the use of the words 'this man's … ' in the caption also directly refers to Imran Khan.

Thus, here the text-image relationship is that of an extension as the image and text both add meaning to the post. The textual message in this example is written in both Urdu and English. As mentioned above, the Urdu portion of the text in the caption and the message inscribed on the visual are direct quotations from Imran Khan. Urdu is used here to show the poster's emotional response towards the political situation in Pakistan, whereas English is used to (i) provide the factual information that it was Khan who petitioned in the Supreme Court which resulted in Sharif's disqualification. The positioning of the English sentence between the two aggressive direct quotations in Urdu also functions (ii) to soften the hostile tone of the entire message (Malik, 1994). Moreover, English is used by the poster (iii) as a means for expressing his own opinion ('The only reason behind today's verdict was this man's strong instincts and continuous struggle'). Further, the direct quotation in the post add (iv) dramatic value to the post by highlighting Khan's ideological views, thus making the image more relatable for the poster's young, urban, relatively conservative, and middle-class audience who also played a critical role in Khan's victory in 2018 general elections. It also shows the poster's psychological state: by detaching the reporter from the reporting speaker (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran, & Shahar, 2016) and the hostility, authoritativeness and aggressiveness of the Urdu part of the message. The use of the word 'kaptaan (captain)' in caption, by both the poster and Khan indicates the latter's background as Pakistan cricket team's captain. When Khan is cited saying that 'aap thak jao gy kaptaan thakta nahin hai' ('you, (Nawaz Shareef) will get tired but a Captain never gets tired') this allows both the poster and Khan, to associate the qualities of power, dominance, persistence and leadership with Khan.

Interestingly, the poster's choice of sharing this particular quotation of Khan's speech also reinforces and strengthens the masculine persona of Imran Khan. The message inscribed in the image states 'Mein inko rualon ga' (I will make them cry). Written in the active voice and by emphasizing the pronoun 'I', the text directs the reader's attention to the importance of Khan. In sum, these words, in association with the image 'Main inko rulaon ga', ('I will make them cry') are significant, as crying is usually taken as a sign of weakness and is most typically associated with female behavior. Therefore, by making use of words like crying, not only the opposition leader Imran Khan, but also the poster quoting Khan is indirectly feminizing the opponent: Nawaz Shareef, Khan's political opponent, is portrayed as weak and helpless as a woman. Use of such words is a typical feature in constructing a hypermasculine identity as it is achieved through characteristics such as verbal 'toughness' which is viewed as a means of emotional self-control and anger (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993).

Overall, the verbal text provides a judgement of Supreme Court's order and evokes an emotional response on the part of the poster and his audience. In terms of gender, Banaji & Hardin (1996, as cited in Menegatti & Rubini, 2017, p. 4) argue that 'words consistent

with gender stereotypes have powerful effects also when presented at a subliminal level, whereby they lead participants to classify gender pronouns more quickly into male and female categories. Thus, by employing an aggressive attitude via language helps the poster to portray Khan's hypermasculine persona who is capable of achieving a better social standing and asserting his power as the leader of the pack or the Alpha males. Moreover, this extreme form of masculinity highlighted in this post particularly is presented as the only authentic way for men to express opinion and emotions publicly (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993).

Pakistani men also *post (22%) about women.* These posts typically highlight their stereotypical negative views about Pakistani women. Often, they do so by including cartoons in their posts, featuring both women and men as their main characters. The content of the posts, in turn, typically focuses on women's behavior and reactions in their everyday interactions, in ways that end up demeaning and disparaging them. Example 3 represents a typical case: it shows a dialogue between two characters, a male rickshaw driver and a young woman. In the cartoon in question, the female character is described as dull, foolish and unsure of what she wants.

Example 3

Translation of the Urdu text:

Woman:	Auto … (Referring to auto rickshaw)
Auto Driver:	Where do you want to go?
Female:	Want to go home …
Auto Driver:	What is your address?
Woman:	Why should I tell you?

Example 3 tells a multimodal story of a seemingly everyday situation in which a woman takes an auto rickshaw to get to her destination. Visually, the post consists of three pictures. The first section of the cartoon shows the entrance of the rickshaw: it is shown approaching from the left and a female is standing with her slightly raised hand to stop the auto rickshaw. The second picture of the cartoon shows how the driver is asking the woman 'where she wants to go' to which the female replies 'I want to go home'. The last picture is divided into two parts. In the left-hand corner, the rickshaw driver is again asking the woman 'what is your address?' and the female replies 'why

should I tell you?' In the lower right-hand corner, there is an upside-down picture of the auto rickshaw driver, depicting him crying copiously with a bucket full of tears below him. In the background of the picture, on the upper right-hand corner, there is a watermark of the Facebook meme page from which the poster took the image. The text-image relationship here is what McCloud (1994, p. 152) calls a 'duo-specific', one as both the visual and textual elements essentially contribute to constructing the one and the same meaning.

A close observation of the image and its dialogue shows the sexist ideology of both the cartoonist and the male poster. This shows in several of the cartoonist's choices. Firstly, the driver is constructed in a positive manner. This is achieved through his verbal and embodied language. For example, his Urdu word 'ap ka' (your) in the dialogue 'ap ka ghar kidher hai' (what is your address) indexes politeness, formality and education. Similarly, his posture and his bowed head indicate that he is taking a non-threatening position. Moreover, he is shown to be clean shaved, wearing pants, shirt, and sunglasses – in other words, he is presented as a well-mannered and educated man. In these respects, the woman is his opposite. Instead of giving the address of her home, her turn in the third picture, 'mein kyn batau?' ('Why should I tell you?') is a hostile, silly and irrelevant response to the driver's routine question. Additionally, the woman's facial expressions change from the first picture, where she is shown to be almost smiling and calm, to more aggressive ones in the third picture. In a way, the cartoon depicts something quite real in the social context of Pakistan, where for a woman to travel alone is a serious issue, and where security is their foremost concern. This is because traveling alone can expose them to the danger of being attacked (see e.g. 2012 Delhi, India gang rape case). The consequences of traveling alone for women are real in Pakistan as it may result in their, for example, sexual assault or harassment. However, in this cartoon strip, the woman's concern is mocked. The choice of writing the dialogue in Urdu in the strip apparently suggests that this kind of encounter is normal and takes place on an everyday basis. While it depicts women as irrational and emotional beings, its visual and textual mockery also nullifies and de-signifies social issues such as sexual assaults against women by men. In addition, although the overall tone of the dialogue in Example 3 is not harsh or aggressive, it nevertheless depicts women in derogatory terms, reflecting the gender biased norms and sexist attitudes, while (re)constructing and representing the gender (Lorber, 1994).

In sum, Example 3 highlights the traditional gender stereotypes in Pakistan according to which men have a higher social and moral status than women do. Such sexist attitudes are prevalent in all walks of life in Pakistan (Shahzad, Shafiq, & Sajid, 2015). Men learn these sexist attitudes via cultural discourse that trains them to perceive women not only worthless but also their subordinate (ibid). It could also be argued that Example 3 illustrates benevolent sexism prevalent in the Pakistani society. It does this via language that subtly directs prejudice towards women in such a way that it appears to remain 'pure, kind and gentle and in need of men's protection, therefore justifying the male dominance and women's subordinate role (ibid). In patriarchal cultures like Pakistan, men are considered to be the 'rational thinkers' and roles performed by them are highly valued as compared to women; this results in power imbalance in terms of gender and is reflective of the stereotypical notions that are entrenched by the society (Jafar, 2005). Thus, using

benevolent sexism allows men to maintain and exercise their superiority over women and 'treat them in a patronizing manner' (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007).

(2) posts highlighting emergent model(s) of masculinity

Many posts (17%) dealt in some way with *the posters' relationships*. The visuals in these posts either featured pictures of film stars or singers, whereas the textual elements consisted of quotations on a plain background. These texts typically featured extracts from Urdu fiction professing love, or expressing unrequited love through sharing poetry and lyrics of Pakistani and Bollywood songs. Interestingly however, none of these posts depicted any real-life or fictional female figures. Example 4 constitutes as a typical illustration of such posts:

Example 4

Translation of the inscription (from Urdu):

> If I laugh or if I cry I try to find you like a mad person
>
> I don't know if you would love me tomorrow
>
> I don't know if I will have your permission tomorrow
>
> Holding the broken pieces of my heart
>
> I will spend my entire life at your doorstep

Translation of the Urdu caption: I would still keep on loving you.

The image used in Example 4 is taken from one of the scenes from the Bollywood film *Half Girlfriend*. The inscription is an extract of lyrics, taken from the movie's romantic track 'Phir bhi tum ko chahun ga' ('I would still keep on loving you') which showcases the love story between the hero and the heroine. Overall, the post conveys a sense of sadness and anguish. The scene in the post portrays the hero of the movie Arjun Kapoor looking at his girlfriend (Shraddha Kapoor) whose presence is shown by including the back of the head and shoulder in the picture, in an over-the-shoulder shot. This kind of a shot is typically used to enable the audience to see that the setting of the scene as

a dialogue between the two represented participants, showing either the loving relationship of the subjects or the tension that exists between them (Moura, 2014). A shot like this also allows the viewers to see the facial expressions of the represented participants in order to understand the mood of the conversation, hence creating a sense of intimacy with and experience of the subject's world (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The picture is edited so that it combines grays and shades of blue. In terms of color psychology, the gray color symbolizes dullness, dirt, and dinginess and it is often associated with sadness and depression, whereas the blue color typically signifies piety and sincerity (Elliot & Maier, 2014). The combination of both these colors, in the visual, generates a sense of detachment and dreariness. Thus, the utilization of these colors, along with the grief stricken facial expression of the male subject immediately allows the audience to sense the tension that exists between the two characters. The upper left corner in the image shows the name of the website (lyrics.com) from where the Urdu lyrics have been taken, while the bottom of the visual tells the audience the name of the movie 'half girlfriend'. In the foreground, the lyrics are written in white. The first line of the lyrics 'hasna ho ya rona ho mujhe' ('if I laugh or if I cry') is written in small caps whereas the rest of the lyrics are inscribed in capital letters, indicating emphasis (Willingham, 2018) and making the feelings of the subject visible to the audience.

Interestingly, however, this is the second last line of the lyrics 'Toote dil ke tukde leka' ('holding the broken pieces of my heart') which is not only written in capital letters but which is also highlighted, indicating the part of the message that the poster really wants to convey to the audience, directing their attention to his own heart-broken situation. This meaning is made even more obvious if it is read in association with the caption 'Main phir bhi tmko chahun ga' with a broken heart emoticon ('I would still keep on loving you'). The use of the white color in these lyrics represents sincerity, faith, peace and calmness (Elliot & Maier, 2014). In terms of information value, the male character is positioned at the top – thus representing him as the 'ideal' lover who remains invested in love, even if he suffers the loss of his loved one. The textual messages are placed in the center and at the bottom of the image – these convey a sense of the 'actual' situation that is taking place between the two characters. This type of configuration is used here to describe the power dynamics of the two represented participants where the man is portrayed in an inferior position, compared to the woman (see below). In sum, the text-image relationship in the post is anchored via several features. Firstly, the choice of colors of the visual complement the overall sadness that is expressed through the lyrics. Secondly, the grief-stricken facial expressions of the subject bring together the entire theme. Lastly, in the caption, the poster repeats one of the lines from the lyrics along with a heartbroken emoji (💔). Thus, the visual is extending the meaning of the verbal text.

The poster's decision to express his apparent heartbreak at the hands of his love through song lyrics is significant. This is because poetry, an intimate form of self-expression, allows the writer/reader to address and explore the most sensitive issues of their identity via literary conventions (Raheja & Gold, 1994). In this particular instance, the use of words and phrases like 'pagal' ('mad man'), and 'toote dil ke tukde lekar' ('holding the broken pieces of my heart') casts the man in a positive light: they help to associate the qualities of loyalty, perseverance, love and care with him.

More importantly, the sections 'Main phir bhi tmko chahun ga' ('I would still keep on loving you') and 'Tere darr pe hi reh jaaunga' ('I will spend my entire life at your doorstep'), reflect the submission of the male character. As pointed out by Pritchett (2003), in Urdu literary conventions, the power distribution between the lover and beloved is overwhelmingly unequal, as the beloved (female character here) is depicted significantly powerful while the lover (male character in the post) is presented as the one who suffers. The poster, indirectly addressing his beloved here via poetry also thus signifies that the notion of love and it's expressions are deeply rooted in the prevailing culture (Adely, 2016). Therefore, love in South Asian cultures, especially in Pakistan, is perceived as a 'cultural ideal and a hidden practice' (Karandashev, 2017, pp. 167–193). Similar to Tamil culture, previously, even in situations where a man and a woman is married, it was considered disrespectful if the spouses used actual names to refer to each other. Instead the reference was made through a relationship such as 'the father of so and so' (ibid; p.193).

However, from the point of view of traditional gender stereotypes in Pakistan, participant's decision to express his emotions on Facebook shows a subtle detachment from the traditional concept of love and masculinity. Moreover, even when a man expresses such emotions of love, care and affection for his wife, he is criticized for not being a 'real man'. The cultural concept used for such men is the phrase 'Biwi kay neechay laga hua hai' ('to be excessively obedient to your wife'). This demeaning piece of received wisdom mostly comes from the other men who try to uphold the cultural definitions of hegemonic masculinity (Rizvi, 2015). These traditional definitions of masculinity in Pakistan portray men as aggressive, emotionless and ambitious human beings who not only exert control over their wives in order to prove their masculinity. At the same time, they also use these patriarchal notions to ridicule other men who do not follow the established cultural notions of masculinity (ibid). In the context of Facebook in Pakistan, however, and as illustrated by Example 4, men seem to be using social media as a tool to show the softer side of their gendered identities. This more emotional and sensitive masculinity emergent on Facebook could be argued to resonate with the idea of multiple masculinities, highlighted in recent gender and masculinity studies (see e.g. Lamont, 2015). According to these studies, and increasing number of men have started to distance themselves from the rigid and narrow ideology of masculinity, aligning with views that see masculinity as plural, hybrid and inclusive' (Eisen, 2019). However, as evinced by Example 4, such softer models of masculinity may also allow Pakistani men to do gender in a way that manages to uphold their supremacy over women, while at the same time permits them to negotiate the 'symbolic boundaries and power relations between types of men' (ibid, p.3). In Example 4, this shows in how the poster aligns with hybrid masculinity using poetry that allows him to express his emotions, without disrupting the traditional concept of masculinity by blurring the symbolic and social boundaries that exist between Pakistani men and women.

Conclusion

As a member of a culture where men are treated as the norm and their identities taken as the default against which all other identities are measured, I was interested in the construction of masculinity in Facebook posts by Pakistani males. The analysis confirms

its complex and multifaceted nature. Men were found predominantly to conform to the existing socio-cultural norms of Pakistani society. They shared images that reflect the mainstream heteropatriarchal notion of masculinity. For Pakistani men, sharing their experiences via photographs (e.g. travel photos) on Facebook appears to be a subtle way of constructing their identities as members of the most powerful stratum of society. Similarly, my data included many posts referring to politics. Men indulge in political debates to show their affiliation to specific people or groups and thereby exercise their power. Their need to maintain control over the opposition is sometimes achieved via 'verbal toughness', which is viewed as the only authentic way to publicly express their opinions and emotions (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993). Additionally, men also shared posts that targeted women by portraying them as foolish. The circulation of such an ideology allows men to subtly endorse their power and control over women (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). In short, this article shows that, in Facebook posts, Pakistani men are reproducing the dominant cultural models of masculinity. However, the data also contain instances of a shift away from and (re)negotiation of these patriarchal representations. My findings also highlighted the existence on Facebook of emergent forms of hybrid models of masculinity where men choose to share their emotional side with their audience: a practice that is not common in Pakistani culture. Such models indicate a shift away from the traditional norms of a patriarchal society. In sum, this study found further evidence on Facebook in the Pakistani context that masculinity matters. This is significant, as traditionally men have been less discussed than women in the field of gender studies, especially in Pakistani research. Importantly, in contrast to the portrayal of Muslim men as a homogeneous group in previous studies (Manji, 2005), this study showed that other forms of masculinity currently exist alongside hegemonic masculinity in Pakistani Muslim communities.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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III

IN A WORLD WHERE YOU CAN BE ANYONE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE GENDERED SOCIAL PRACTICES OF PAKISTANI FACEBOOK USERS

by

Rauha Salam, 2021

Gender Issues

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

In a World Where You can be Anyone: An Investigation into the Gendered Social Practices of Pakistani Facebook Users

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Abstract
This article investigates the construction of gender identities of Pakistani men and women Facebook users given that Facebook has emerged as the prime social media platform through which Pakistani users interact. By employing thematic analysis and taking insights from theory of performativity and intersectionality, the findings of the interview data suggest that the formation, negotiation, and expression of gender identities on Facebook occurs through complex interplay between the discourses of religion, class, culture, and tradition. In some cases, Facebook highlighted the reproduction of the prevalent cultural models of masculinity and femininity while in other cases; there was resistance to the existing socio-religious cultural norms of the society.

Keywords Gender identities · Facebook · Pakistan

Introduction

In Pakistan, where gender (especially femininities) has historically been a contested issue [1], the use of social media platforms such as Facebook can be a complex experience for both men and women [3] as it reflects the intricate interplay between individual autonomy and socio-cultural and religious pressures to conform. Pakistani men's and women's Facebook experiences are also deeply connected to and influenced by the daily practices and social interactions of their everyday lives, rendering the role of social media in bringing about social change even more complicated and powerful (ibid). Unsurprisingly, by providing unfiltered access to information on issues like politics, gender and religion and enabling users to express their points of view, post potentially transgressive or contentious material and/or use

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these platforms to stir up discussion on various subjects, the role of social media in advancing societal transformation and empowering users in Pakistan has been much debated [61]. Thus, examining Facebook users' practices in relation to the dominant gender ideology can illuminate the current social transformative potential of social media in Pakistan. So far, the social and cultural discourse practices of young Pakistani social media users has been little researched (see, however, [3] & 2021) on.

This article is based on thematic interviews with Pakistani men and women on their views and stances on gender, focusing on their Facebook practices. By combining Butler's [11] theory of performativity, intersectional approach to gender and using thematic analysis [10], I investigate how Pakistani men and women experience Facebook and how it enables and constrains the construction of their gendered identities. I interpret Facebook users' stances on and subjective experiences of a patriarchal gender ideology in relation to the socio-cultural, political, religious and historical context of Pakistan. More importantly, with the rise of global hashtag movements like #MeToo on issues such as sexual harassment, the role of social media in shaping subcultures is even more relevant in a country like Pakistan, which is still struggling to guarantee equal status to all genders. Thus, the present study investigates how social media is shaping the various subcultures in Pakistani society.

Research Context: Gender Ideology in Pakistan

Scholars (e.g., [2] often single out the 1980s, the era under the rule of General Zia-ul-Haque (1977–89), as a turning point in the political, legal, and socio-cultural history of Pakistan. Most of the problems plaguing Pakistan, such as the rise of the religious right, ethnic and sectarian violence, the politicisation of religion, and, in particular, the (re)instatement of misogynist and conservative attitudes towards women are rooted in Zia-ul-Haque's policies. To legitimise his dictatorship, Zia instigated far-reaching legislative and cultural changes. In particular, to curry popular support, especially from the conservative middle class and religious factions, he politicised and instrumentalised religion. Jafar ([34], p. 47) argues that during this period, the political discourse on women was driven by the notions that women's sexuality was a destructive and pervasive force that must be curtailed and controlled and that women were men's property and responsible for the honour of their family. This meant confining women within the "chardeewari" (the four walls of home). These discourses promoted a strict gender division: women belonged to the private domain of the home and men to the public domain. Jafar [34] further points out that these discourses are not mutually exclusive, but often overlap, resulting in the harassment and abuse of women in both their public and private lives. By promoting this gender ideology, Zia-ul-Haque aimed to demonstrate that Pakistan was not only implementing a major "Islamic" reform but had also distanced itself from Western influences and discarded modernity. However, Zia-ul-Haque's gender policies were actively resisted by women's movements in Pakistan and by NGOs concerned with women rights [63].

The consequences of this ‘forced’ gender ideology continue to influence Pakistani society, and misogynistic practices have spilled over into digital social interaction. For example, the notion of feminism as a western-derived liberation discourse and its supporters as “English-educated, westernized, upper middle-class women with imported ideas, having no link to grassroot realities” [32]: p.22), is an example of Zia-ul-Haque’s legacy that continues to dominate Pakistan’s collective consciousness. Moreover, Zia-ul-Haque urged people to reform not only themselves but also their neighbours, a policy which led to morally judging others and unprecedented communal vigilantism [49]. This vigilantism, perceptions of women activists as western agents, and the public/private gender divide are evident in social media interactions. Based on their posts, women activists are heavily scrutinized and even abused. Male feminists are also targeted for deviating from established cultural and religious norms. It is these tensions in Pakistan between the socio-religious and political context and the popularity of Facebook, whose number of users rose by 24% (n = 46 million) between January 2020 and January 2021 (Digital 2021: Pakistan), especially among educated youth, that make it interesting to investigate how this affects.

Pakistanis’ perception of the impact of Facebook on their ability to express their gender identity on its platforms.

Conceptualising Gender

Debate on gender construction usually, directly or indirectly, concerns such issues as biological sex, gender roles, conformity to gender stereotypes, gender socialisation and gender ideology (see e.g. [12, 39, 40]. However, within these various interconnected gender discourses, the shift away from essentialist discourse (e.g., deficit, difference and dominant models) towards social constructivism has opened up the possibilities of doing gender in different ways, unlearning the internalised socio-cultural notions of gender and resisting established gender norms at both the societal and individual level [66]. This presents gender as fluid and variable which is continuously (re)negotiated through social interaction thereby supporting the idea that gender is not only construed by repetitively enacting the prescribed gender norms but also it is created discursively with language (both written and oral) [11, 16]. This also suggests that the prevailing gender ideology in a society is constructed via culturally available discourses about gender and manifested through individuals’ performances. Similarly, West and Zimmerman ([71], cited in [22], p. 1) claim that gender is not something we are born with and not something that we have; rather, it is something we do. In this study, I draw on the post-modernist concept of performativity [11] in conceptualising gender identities. Since social media offers a space where in their profiles people can construct their gender identities, consciously or unconsciously, by choosing what they want to share,gender identities are thus located in particular ‘repeated acts’ [11, 39], such as the kind of content people repeatedly share on their Facebook profile pages. In other words, these performative acts constitute individuals’ gender identities in their cyber social sphere [18]. Using performativity theory to explain the construction of gender identities helps me to

locate and understand my participants' gender identities in their broader socio-cultural and religious online and offline contexts. It also highlights the difficulty of sustaining the traditional dichotomy of "offline identity" vs. "online identity" in today's digital context [18]. This means that users' digital gender identities may be considered as an extension of their physical or real-world identities (this is particularly significant in cases where my participants' offline or physical lives were affected by how they portrayed themselves in their social media accounts,see, e.g., excerpt 4).

Moreover, given the pivotal role played by religious, economic, and socio-cultural factors in the construction and expression of gender identities on Facebook by Pakistani men and women, my analysis of the interviews is also informed by the anticategorical approach to intersectionality, where "categories are understood as artificial and exclusionary. Therefore, performances and understandings of statuses change based on context" [44], p.1773). Further, this approach emphasizes that gender identities, like other social identities, are a product of multiple social categories and are socially mediated [44, 69], enabling me to holistically understand the lived experiences of my participants and show how social categories influence one another. More specifically, I analyze my interviewees' talk about gender and possible other aspects of their gender identities.

Gender and Social Media Studies

Globally, the relationship between gender and social media has been widely explored. For instance, in their study on the self-representation strategies of young women on Instagram, Caldeira et al. [13] foreground their importance for these women as a self-empowering tool. Within the gambit of these strategies, they argue, work remains to be done on (re)negotiating the discourse surrounding selfie-taking to dispel its negative stereotypical gendered reading. Similarly, Baulch and Pramiyanti [7] qualitatively investigated an Indonesian-based hijaber's community on Instagram and showed that by posting veiled 'Muslimah' images, the community constructed their middle-class Islamic identities. They also found that these identities are a product of two distinct factors, i.e., a dynamic global digital culture and a changing field of Islamic communication. Jackson [33], who applied a feminist poststructuralist approach to study online feminist activism by teenage girls, argues that digital platforms not only provide 'safe' spaces for girls to do online feminism

Table 1 Themes with their respective subcategories

Gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/ physical reality	Gender identities and Facebook as a platform for change and agency
Instrumentalisation of religious discourse for gender policing	Voicing dissent: Using Facebook to raise social awareness
Online sexual harassment: A mechanism to silence subversive voices	Facebook as a source for economic independence
Gender policing via public opinion: Loag kiya kahien gay syndrome ('what will people say syndrome'?)	

but also play an instrumental role in enabling girls to connect with other feminists locally and globally. Other areas of interest include the role of social media in the socio-economic empowerment of women [42, 64]. It is argued in these studies that due to the ease of accessibility to larger audiences, social media platforms have become a significant contributor in supporting and economically empowering women, particularly in more conservative patriarchal societies. In turn, studies on men and social media have for instance investigated the relationship between social media campaigns and hypermasculine work cultures [41] and yielded insights into how social media platforms are shaping contemporary workplaces. Social media campaigns such as #MeToo have also played a critical role in naturalising gender differences in such organizations. Putranto et al. [53], applying critical discourse analysis to Instagram posts, explored the construction of metrosexual masculinity through the promotion of facial skin care products. They concluded that metrosexual representations in these images feature clean, bright skin and masculine representations are manifested by beard growth. Schmitz & Kazyak [60] content analysed the strategies used in seeking to achieve social legitimacy and power by Men's Right Activism forums on social media and identified two main strategies: cyber lads in search of masculinity and virtual victims in search of equality. The cyber lads used more aggressive forms of engagement to address men's issues while the virtual victims resorted to political and social movement rhetoric. Other studies have investigated masculinity on social media from perspectives such as commodification as hypersexualized and heteronormative ideals [6], violence and digital media [51] and portrayals on Instagram of the male body [30].

In Pakistan, however, research on gender has overwhelmingly focused on the construction and representation of womanhood and on women's issues in the context of religion, law, politics, development, economics, education, health (including reproductive rights), sexuality, and the media [52, 56]. Recent studies on women and social media in the Pakistani context have also looked at online feminist resistance [57], the socio-economic empowerment of women via social media [73], the impact of social media on family dynamics [1], women's buying behaviour on social media [50] and the linguistic and semiotic construction of gender identities on Facebook [3]. Interestingly, this recent research emphasis on women has effectively rendered men invisible. Most research on men in Pakistan has considered them in relation to religion [2, 20, 36] and Punjabi films [62]. Moreover, many such studies have been conducted within the broader research on Muslim masculinities in the post-9/11 context (see e.g., A notable exception is a study on the linguistic and visual construction of masculinity on Facebook [3, 4]. The present study is important because unlike the dominant readings of Pakistani femininities and masculinities from a religious or political perspective, it offers an exploration of Pakistani femininities and masculinities as situated and performed at the intersection of various socio-cultural forces in a social media context, in this instance Facebook. It is also important as it engages with both masculinities and femininities. It endeavours to fill a major research gap by bringing a South Asian-Pakistani perspective into the global and local debate on how men and women in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan negotiate multiple socio-cultural and religious pressures in constructing their gender identities on Facebook.

Research Design

Interviews

In previous studies [3, 4], I investigated the role of visual and linguistic choices in Pakistani men's and women's construction of their gender identities on Facebook. The results showed that Facebook was used not only to perpetuate the existing patriarchal ideology but also to (re)define and (re)negotiate the dominant cultural models of femininity and masculinity. The results of the present interview study on Pakistani men's and women's thoughts and evaluations regarding their own Facebook activities complement these earlier discourse analytic findings. I conducted the semi-structured interviews during April–May 2019 in the interviewees' homes as familiarity with the interview site is considered to make for a more relaxed environment that may encourage interviewees to talk more openly and easily about the subject at hand [38]. The average interview lasted around 90 min. The aim was to establish how and for what purposes the participants used Facebook and how, in their view, the prevailing socio-cultural and religious norms of Pakistani society influenced their Facebook posts. This would allow me to further probe gender-related issues. I interviewed the participants individually in the expectation that they would talk more freely even about extremely sensitive or private issues (e.g., sexual harassment encountered in their online and offline lives). Moreover, the interviews were conducted in the participant's language of choice (English/Urdu or both). I transcribed and translated Urdu talk into English, retaining the cultural metaphors used by the participants. As I was focusing on a sensitive issue that may have caused individuals (especially women) distress, my participants signed a consent form that not only detailed the research objectives but also emphasized that their participation in the project was voluntary and that their names would be anonymised in quotations from the data.

Interviewees: Background and Sampling

The interviewees were selected from the group whose Facebook profiles I had previously investigated [3, 4]. These interviewees had been selected by using snowball sampling. This technique, which is extensively used in qualitative research [19], proved beneficial for this project as it enabled me to recruit from a difficult to reach population. Thus, my friends and family members acted as "insider assistants" [26]. In total, 12 participants, six men and six women, were interviewed. This sample size is justified as the researcher may reach data saturation within the first twelve interviews, [14, 28]. Moreover, according to Creswell [19], there is no hard and fast rule for sample size in qualitative research. My aim was to find participants with whom I could establish good rapport and who would be available not only for interview but also for possible clarification during the data analysis. All lived in South Punjab, i.e., Multan, Bahawalpur, and Dera Ghazi Khan, and all were middle- and upper middle-class Muslims aged 18 to 30. Having middle and upper middle-class informants for this study was crucial, as these social groups are often seen as guardians of

the moral and socio-cultural values and norms of Pakistani society [35, 55]. Moreover, while their views of Islam are often conservative and they are 'ritualistically religious' [43], p. 205), they are currently undergoing an ideological transformation (see, e.g., [74]. While battling to uphold their conservative outlook on Islam and the traditional patriarchal setup of Pakistani society they are also early adopters of new technologies and enjoy their benefits [61], p. 17). I chose South Punjab for two main reasons. First, this region exemplifies a traditional, agrarian and feudal culture that is transforming with the arrival of information technology and shifting towards a business-based economy and greater political awareness. Second, despite these changes, the region is known for its adherence to a rigid patriarchal ideology based on gender segregation [47]. It should be mentioned here that the feudal culture found in South Punjab is also present in varying degrees in other regions of Pakistan such as Khyber Pakhtoon Khawah, Baluchistan and Sindh (see, e.g., [8, 23, 72]) and hence the results of this study may also have relevance outside of the study location.

Method of Analysis

I analysed the data thematically, applying the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke [10]. This method allowed me to investigate both semantic and latent meanings, that is, "the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations—and the ideologies—that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" [10], p.13). In other words, thematic analysis allowed me not only to find recurrent themes in the interview data but also to identify core ideological or discursive similarities and differences in the data. This distinguishes thematic analysis from content analysis, which does not enable such in-depth investigation [68]. Moreover, thematic analysis provided me with tools to organise the data systematically and inductively and to make sense of seemingly unrelated material, thereby increasing the accuracy, understanding and interpretation [9] of my participants' descriptions of their everyday Facebook practices and experiences. The analysis focuses in particular on the content of the interviews, that is, on gender and the construction of gender identities, as discussed by the participants.

Analysis of the Interview Data

For the interviewees, Facebook was perceived as a complex phenomenon. In some cases, it meant carefully considering how they expressed their views about being subjected to the same policing and constraints they experience in their offline world. Others saw it as providing them with opportunities to express themselves more freely. I discuss these two main orientations (see Table 1) that emerged from the data under the headings (1) Gender identities and Facebook as an extension of social/physical reality and (2) Gender identities and Facebook as a platform for change and agency. It should, however, be noted that the above-mentioned orientations are not mutually exclusive but often overlap. They are linked by the shame and honour based strategies that are used to silence subversive voices in Pakistan [29].

The notions of shame and honour form the basis for what is considered appropriate conduct, especially the sexual conduct of women, which is seen to reflect upon the status of male relatives, thereby sanctioning a society in which power is unequally distributed [58, 70]. In such a social set-up, “male honour and shame becomes intrinsically bound with men’s ability to control the sexuality and body of women associated with them” ([27], p.35–36).

Gender Identities and Facebook as an Extension of Social/ Physical Reality

In this section, I discuss how some of the interviewees highlighted the ways in which Facebook plays a crucial role in perpetuating the existing gender ideology. Their views were more or less conservative in nature. These interviewees indicated that life in cyberspace differs little from their day-to-day lives. For example, they stated that even on Facebook, their freedom to express themselves is limited, and they are forced to conform to the dominant patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity. For instance, they reported that in their online and offline lives, religious discourse is one of the most common strategies used to pressurize men and women to adhere to the established gender order. Similarly, they referred to online sexual harassment and public opinion as other significant tactics used to regulate men and women’s behaviour in Pakistani society.

Gender Policing through Instrumentalisation of Religious Discourse

According to the interviewees, the most common strategy employed in Pakistani society to ensure compliance with the dominant gender norms is to rely on the prevalent socio-religious ideologies of Pakistan. Extract 1 typifies such a position:

Excerpt 1 (Male Interviewee 1, Original Interview in Urdu)

> Social Media and Facebook is bringing a negative change. It is spreading ‘bey-hayaie’ (shamelessness/vulgarity) in our society. Before its popularity, ‘bey-hayaie’ (shamelessness) was not so common. You remember what happened in Aurat March (Women March) where women were holding such shameful and objectionable banners? I feel those are completely against our religious and cultural norms… especially banners like ‘Mera jism meri marzi’ (My body, my choice) were shameful as it was women who were displaying it. Sorry to say it but this slogan only meant one thing that is women want the freedom to have sex like men. Social media is feeding this insanity in our Islamic culture.

This interviewee voices a conservative stance, condemning social media for triggering an unwelcome change into Pakistani society. He sees this as done through the provision of a platform for potentially unpoliced heterogeneous voices and non-conformist views that potentially endanger the existing gender hierarchy. He argues that before the popularity of social media, shamelessness was not visible in Pakistani culture. Now, however, social media are destroying the natural fabric of Pakistani culture by estranging Pakistani men and women

from their Islamic morality and cultural values. In doing so, he twice uses of the word "beyhayaie" (shamelessness/vulgarity) to refer to social media (*it is spreading* "beyhayaie"), thus emphasizing his view. To further reinforce the dominant gender hierarchy, he then strategically connects the concept of shamelessness with the women who stepped out of their homes (*…shameful as it was women who were displaying it*) to protest against gender inequality in Pakistan. The use of the term beyhayaie (shamelessness) is significant here, as the concept of shame in patriarchal societies is often used, as by this interviewee, as a disciplinary strategy to regulate behaviour, especially that of women [24]. For him, shame is a surveillance tool that can help maintain the ideal concept of 'respectable' femininity. In cultures like Pakistan, it is common male practice to use notions like shame and honour to pressure women to adhere to the culturally accepted model of femininity [65]. Moreover, the term beyhayaie has strong religious connotations [59].

He further validates this stance by referring to "Aurat March" (Women March), quoting one of its most widely cited and controversial slogans [*Mera jism, meri marzi (My body, my choice*)]. This slogan was the topic of many heated critical debates on social media as well as on mainstream private Pakistani television channels. The interviewee's statement "especially banners like "Mera jism meri marzi" (*My body, my choice*) were really shameful as it was women who were displaying it" is particularly noteworthy here, since it seems to explicitly perpetuate men's expectations of appropriate female behaviour. Moreover, his use of the pronoun *our* is interesting: he uses it for three main purposes. First, in talking about our society, our religious and cultural values, and our Islamic culture, he strives to emphasize a sense of belonging, pride, and appreciation of traditional Pakistani culture. Second, he is not only voicing a sense of solidarity and togetherness but also trying to represent the collective consciousness of the Pakistanis who reject "Aurat March" and any subsequent public discussion of women rights on- or offline. Finally, he also seems to be seeking the sympathy and support of the interviewer (since she belongs to the same culture). Of particular interest in this excerpt are the two claims against "Aurat March", i.e., that it is an assault on cultural and religious values (*I feel those are completely against our religious and cultural norms*). However, towards the end of the excerpt he equates culture with Islam (*social media is feeding this insanity in our Islamic culture*). Thus, he cojoins culture and religion and implies that Aurat March is fundamentally an attack on Islamic values. Thus, this excerpt highlights the close association between culture, religion and, in particular, women's bodies.

Some of the female interviewees also instrumentalised religious and cultural discourses to show their conformity with the Pakistani patriarchal ideology. Excerpt 2 is a typical example. Here a female interviewee points out that Facebook (and other social media platforms) are the root cause of the spread of 'evil' in contemporary Pakistani society.

Excerpt 2 (Female Interviewee 1; Interview in Urdu and English)

> Discussing gender issues on Facebook is not the right forum because for me these issues are a private matter and discussing such things so publicly on social media will only create a rift between men and women in our society. You see everything in that obnoxious Aurat March was broadcast to the nation thanks to Facebook; it (social media) has become such an evil thing. We live in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and holding up those placards in public is like you are bringing dishonour to your family, cultural and religious values.

While talking about the negative influence of social media in general and Facebook in particular, the interviewee calls social media an “evil thing”. Like the male interviewee cited above, she justifies her stance by referring to the Facebook discussion on Aurat March. She condemns debates on gender issues by calling them a “private matter” that should not be discussed in public. As shown by her use of the word “broadcast,” she considers the Facebook discussion on “Aurat March” to be part of an external agenda designed to destroy the existing socio-religious norms of Pakistani society and hence “an evil thing”. Her use of first-person pronouns, as in “for me”, “our society” and “we live in” creates a division between those against and those for Aurat March. On the one hand, the use of “we” indicates her pride in Islamic cultural values. On the other hand, she also cites religion to justify her stance that public debate on gender issues in is unacceptable in Pakistan. This is because raising private issues in the public domain is generally condemned in Pakistani society [31]. Also interesting is her use of the terms “private” and “public to show her alignment with the ways in which Pakistani culture assigns the public domain—power, status, control of information and decision making—to men, and the private domain—helplessness, domestic chores, dependence on male kin—to women [48].

Online Sexual Harassment: A Mechanism for Silencing Subversive Voices

According to the interviewees, another common strategy used to regulate men’s and women’s behaviour on Pakistani Facebook is online sexual harassment. The interviewees, women, in particular, repeatedly point out that, whenever they voice their opinion about women or gender issues, they are subjected to sexual harassment and even receive threats against their lives. These were posted either in the comment sections of their homepage or inboxed directly to them. For instance, one female interviewee, who actively makes and shares sarcastic videos about gender stereotyping and women issues in Pakistan on Facebook, described her experience:

Excerpt 3 (Female Interviewee 2; Interview in English)

> I have particularly received abuse and even rape threats from men. There is a group of incels who run pages with sexually explicit and demeaning content about women in general under the pretext of *dark humour*. It is also a group which happens to be very active and organized against most of the feminists’

> content and movements on Facebook, and they tried their best to attack me as well. By posting sexist abusive memes, calling me a rundi (whore), photoshopping my face to someone's naked body, all the usual tricks. They also tried to spam my page with similar abusive content in a planned and organized manner, which they call raids.

Excerpt 3 represents a progressive position in terms of gender issues in Pakistan. The interviewee achieves this linguistically by emphasizing herself as an individual agent targeted by her opponents (e.g., using pronouns "I" (*I have particularly…*), "me" (*they tried their best to attack me as well*) and "they", (*they also tried to…*). These strategies allow her to position herself as a reformist who not only advocates gender equality but also challenges conventional gender roles. Thus, she is distancing herself from the traditional gender ideology of Pakistani society. In particular, she exposes self-motivated, traditionalist groups of men (incels: according to the Urban Dictionary, incels are members of an online community who are self-delusional, egoistic pretend to be a nice guy, blame others for their deprivation of sex or a romantic relationship, and often stereotype others, particularly women) who employ threats of violence to police, modulate and/or silence voices that question or (in their opinion) deconstruct established gender hierarchies. In doing so, the interviewee sketches the most typical strategies (*all the usual tricks*) that are employed by such men to curb progressive women's voices. She points out that, on Facebook, these men resort to misogynist verbal and visual abuse, often disguised as "dark humour". In her view, these men regard creating abusive memes and sexually explicit and demeaning content and making rape threats as a harmless joke. She also describes how this kind of sexual harassment takes place in a systematic manner (*They also tried to spam my page with similar abusive content in a planned and organized manner*) to shape and control women voices on Facebook. She further states that this group of men methodically raid the profiles of women (…*which happens to be very active and organized against most of the feminists' content and movements on Facebook*) who in their view, are guilty of violating the acceptable (and thereby respectable) model of passive femininity in Pakistan.

Online harassment is not, however, always limited to women alone but is also visible when men do not fit into the prescribed dominant gender mould. Excerpt (4) illustrates the views of such men. The interviewee identifies himself as a cisgender man who engages in activities that are regarded as gender transgressive. For example, he actively shares his makeup tutorial videos on Facebook and Instagram. As a result of he was picked on and beaten up by a group of men. In his interview, he describes a typical way in which threat and harassment operate when men do not subscribe to the traditional, heteronormative standards of masculinity. In his case, the threats and harassment did not remain verbal but manifested in physical action.

Excerpt 4 (Male Interviewee 2; Interview in English)

> I am a cisgender and happy being a male yet I am proud of my femininity. I have had death threats over phone calls and in my dms (direct messages in Instagram). I get loads of phone calls and sometimes even prank messages

> that literally say that we are going to kill you. I know Pakistan is not flexible enough to digest people like me and this kind of transgression. I was studying at the university; some people came and beat me up just because they were not comfortable with my makeup tutorial videos on Facebook and Instagram. They had problems with my identity and what I represent. Therefore, it is not just an online thing. It is a very real physical trauma too.

This male interviewee detaches himself from the conventional masculine norms of Pakistani society. He describes how his transgressive masculinity, especially because it is linked with femininity, is considered threatening and intimidating. By making use of the active voice and personal pronouns (*I am a cisgender…I know Pakistan is not flexible enough to digest people like me; they had problem with my identity*) he, like the female interviewee above, is not only distancing himself from traditional gender beliefs but also manifests a more immediate and personal stance [67]. His use of the word proud also shows his sense of achievement in consciously attempting to break free from the stereotypical masculine models in Pakistani society. Further, he narrates how he receives death threats (*I have had death threats over phone calls and in my dms*) and how he was beaten up (*some people came and beat me up just because they were not comfortable with my makeup tutorial videos on Facebook and Instagram*). Moreover, by stating "I know Pakistan is not flexible enough to digest people like me and this kind of transgression" and "it is not just an online thing. It is a very real physical trauma too" he draws attention not only to the rigid gender segregation but also to the non-acceptance of other forms of masculine and feminine expression in Pakistan. He seems fully aware of the dangers of deviating from the established gender norms and engaging in transgressive practices.

Gender Policing via Public Opinion: Loag Kiya Kahien Gay Syndrome ('What will People say Syndrome'?)

According to the interviewees, another very common patriarchal custom is inculcating fear of public opinion. In their view, for a collectivist patriarchal system to function in Pakistan, it is paramount that men and women strictly follow the established gender models. This kind of 'vigilantism show' has also crept its way into online social media platforms, as exemplified by one of the female participants:

Excerpt 5 (Female Interviewee 3; Interview in English)

> People keep a constant tab even on Facebook. I remember when I shared my pictures in which I was sitting with a biker man in the US; those pictures created such havoc and people even went to the extent of saying that I am no longer eligible to be married because of those pictures. They even called me a gashti (slut). Nevertheless, people are always going to judge you no matter what you do or don't do.

Excerpt 5 highlights how this female interviewee is not only morally policed on Facebook for transgressing expected feminine behaviour but also how other people's opinions are premeditated to induce feelings of shame and guilt in deviant individuals. She validates her view by narrating how she posted pictures of herself with a biker on Facebook during a trip to the United States that resulted in her being judged as a "gashti" (slut) (*They even called me a gashti*) and not suitable for marriage. She starts with the word "people" (*People keep a constant tab even on Facebook*), that directly translates into the Urdu word "loag" to refer to people collectively in and outside of her circle of family and friends who are involved in publicly policing women. Of interest here is *her use of the phrase even on Facebook*, demonstrating that such moral policing and monitoring is not limited to the real physical world but has also infiltrated the digital social world, as also observed in social media research [5]. Moreover, she uses the phrase "created havoc" to emphasize her mental state when people tried to morally reproach her for her transgressive behaviour.

She further describes the two most typical strategies people use to pressure women to adhere to the stereotypical feminine models. The first is to label them as unworthy of marriage. In Pakistan, marriage is foregrounded as the ultimate female goal [54]. Single women living alone are unheard of. Remaining unmarried is considered a huge social stigma for both the woman and her family (ibid). The young unmarried woman quoted above who chose to express herself freely on Facebook was criticized for deviating from the prescribed gender norms, and therefore declared unworthy of marriage. The second strategy is slut-shaming. The female interviewee is slut-shamed (*They even called me a "gashti*") for not following the female norm. She reports this kind of online vigilantism as a regular occurrence in Pakistan (*people are always going to judge you no matter what you do or don't do*). The style of her statement also conveys the sense that there is no escape from "loag kiya kahien gay" (*what will people say*) syndrome.

Online gender vigilantism is not limited to monitoring and regulating women's behaviour; men also suffer from "loag kiya kahien gay". Excerpt (6) illustrates a typical response from the public when a man transgresses the normative moulds of masculinity in Pakistan. The male interviewee in excerpt 6 was strongly criticized for openly sharing videos on gender issues in Pakistan on Facebook and Instagram.

Excerpt 6 (Male Interviewee 3; Interview in English)

> People, particularly men, try to discipline me by saying things like how can you talk about gender issues on Facebook. You are not one of us (men). Your wife and daughters are going to sleep around with other men. However, my "ghairat" is not situated in what these men say about women in my family.

Whereas the female interviewee in excerpt 5 received comments attacking her lack of 'morals', the male interviewee in excerpt 6 is targeted by dragging the women in his family into the discussion to attack his "ghairat" (honour). He lists the most typical strategies that people use to induce him to adhere to the traditional masculine models. In the same way as the female interviewee in excerpt 5, he initially refers to his critics as people, but immediately specifies that men in particular

attack him for talking about gender issues on social media. He further elaborates that one tactic used by men is exclusion (*You are not one of us (men)*), since this traditionalist group of men wholly reject gender equality (*how can you talk about gender issues on Facebook*). The tone of his words also reflects the notion that even talking about gender is considered a threat to Pakistani men. Thus, in situations like this, discussing gender is deemed a hostile and alien act.

Another common strategy to keep men in check, mentioned by the interviewee, is to attack the women in his family (*Your wife and daughters are going to sleep around with other m*en). As mentioned earlier, in Pakistani society a man's honour ("ghairat") is directly associated with the women in his family [34]. Therefore, by his disgracing the women in his family, conservative men not only seek to instil feelings of guilt and shame but also to nudge the interviewee to conform to the strict norms of masculinity. Interestingly, in his response to his critics, this "tempered radical" [46]: p.308) blatantly rejects the traditionalist idea that male honour depends on female sexuality (*However, my "ghairat" is not situated in what these men say about women in my family*).

Gender Identities and Facebook as a Platform for Change and Agency

For some interviewees, social media also allows people to express themselves more freely. This group also highlighted the factors that support them in constructing and expressing their gender identities differently, such as the key role Facebook plays in raising social awareness, especially about gender issues, and in bringing financial independence, especially for women.

Voicing Dissent: Using Facebook to Raise Social Awareness

One of the most recurrent themes in the interviews revolved around how social media in general, and Facebook in particular, offered individuals opportunities to learn, offer and gain support as well as express their ideas and views. Excerpt (7) illustrates this view.

Excerpt 7 (Female Interviewee 4; Interview in English & Urdu)

> Openly ("khule-aam") discussing things [gender inequality] on Facebook is bringing about positive change. Yes. In my case, both my father and my brother have learnt so much from social media, especially when the whole Aurat March discussions took place on Facebook. I can see a positive change in their attitude towards gender issues. It is not just one voice, the more we speak collectively, the more we can bring change, but right now change is slow.

Excerpt 7 shows how the female interviewee views Facebook (and social media in general) as a learning space and platform that can potentially raise awareness of gender inequality. For example, she observes that Facebook can give people the opportunity of "openly discussing things'', using the expression "khule-aam". The

Urdu word "kuhla", meaning open, can refer to public debate on issues (such as those related to women) which, traditionally and historically, have been considered private [15]. In this context, the choice of the phrase openly discussing things on Facebook thus suggests that Facebook has breached the traditional public/private divide. The interviewee then immediately adds "yes" to reaffirm and emphasize her first statement about Facebook that openly discussing things [gender inequality] on Facebook is bringing about positive change. She validates her view by referring to her own experiences and the Facebook debate on Aurat March and how this induced the male members of her family to change their attitude towards gender equality. The debate on Aurat March on social media platforms improved men's understanding of women's everyday struggles.

Interestingly, towards the end of this excerpt, the interviewee switches from the singular pronouns I and my (e.g., *In my case…, I can see…*) to the plural we (*the more we speak collectively, the more we can bring change*). In this way, she is not only showing solidarity with the women activists on Facebook but also emphasizing how societal change can be collectively promoted via social media. Further, her comment (*it is not just one voice, the more we speak collectively, the more we can bring change)* suggests that besides providing women with a platform for resistance and free speech in the public sphere, Facebook can offer information and education on societal issues. However, she admits that such change is slow.

Similarly, in Excerpt 8, a male interviewee reports how he is using social media to raise social awareness about gender issues and gender inequality in Pakistani society.

Excerpt 8 (Male Interviewee 4; Interview in English)

> My most rewarding experience doing these videos on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (on gender issues) has been the number of men who agree privately with what I share. Some have thanked me for inspiring them to be better husbands and fathers. I think there are far more men who acknowledge the injustices of a patriarchal system than are immediately visible.

Here, the interviewee talks about his experience of sharing his videos on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube on gender injustice and discrimination in Pakistan. He believes his videos are helpful in changing gendered attitudes and in raising social awareness, as they have positively influenced the attitudes of some of his male followers. More generally, he thinks they exemplify what makes it difficult for men in Pakistan to openly support women's rights. He further points out that many men agree with him (*My most rewarding experience doing these videos on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube (on gender issues) has been the number of men who agree privately with what I share*), claiming that his videos have made a difference and that men acknowledge the plight of women in Pakistani society. However, such acknowledgement is not expressed publicly, indicating that these men fear ridicule for not being real men. In short, he views the positive responses to his videos as an achievement. In the last sentence (*I think there are far more men who acknowledge the injustices of a patriarchal system than is immediately visible*), he states his

opinion (*I think*) that the pervasive force of patriarchy in Pakistani society demands that men (and women) adopt a particular persona to avoid any potentially serious consequences of deviating from the traditionalist gender ideology.

Facebook as a Source of Economic Independence

None of the male interviewees mentioned that their use of social media platforms had been financially profitable. One of the women, however, argued that social media had played a pivotal role in helping her achieve financial security.

Excerpt 9 (Female Interviewee 5; Interview in English & Urdu)

> For me the most redeeming aspect of using Facebook and Instagram is that I have been able to start my own clothing business. I was not allowed to go out to work so I thought of trying social media to reach out to the people. Alhamdulillah, with time my business grew. I have become independent and my family supports what I do. I make my own decisions; I feel powerful and this is so liberating.

Excerpt 9 is the clearest example in my data of how social media can have a positive and emancipatory impact on the lives of its users. The interviewee shared her experience of becoming a women entrepreneur with the help of social media platforms. According to her, social media had a redeeming role in her life. She then explains that, due to the conservative outlook of her family, she was prohibited from working outside the home (*I was not allowed to go out to work*), which led her to using Facebook and Instagram to connect with others (*so I thought of trying social media to reach out to the peopl*e). Further, she describes how her decision to start her business not only empowered her economically, but also drew her family's support. To emphasize and celebrate her economic empowerment and achievements, she uses words and phrases like "independent", "I make my own decisions", "I feel powerful" and "liberating". These words, which generally belong to the male vocabulary, are especially significant when used by a woman. It is even arguable that the way she describes her work on Facebook projects a feminist stance, an attempt to challenge and change the power balance between men and women. Thus, the digital world can offer women new freedom, independence (*I have become independent*) and more control over their lives, helping them to do things previously impossible for them in their physical lives.

Conclusion

In this article, applying thematic analysis to interviews and drawing on Butler's [11] theory of performativity and intersectionality, I investigated the views of twelve young, well-educated Pakistani men and women on Facebook as a platform for the discussion of gender issues. Specifically, I investigated the ways in which the interviewees positioned and performed their gender identities in relation to the culturally

available discourses on gender roles and gender ideology in Pakistan. My analysis confirms earlier findings that the formation, negotiation, and expression of gender identities on Facebook occurs through complex interplay between the discourses of religion, class, culture, and tradition. Facebook (like other social media) played a dual role in the interviewees' lives: for some it was a way of reinforcing existing gender ideologies while for others it was a subversive medium allowing the construction of alternative gender identities. The first group enacted their gender identities in order to gain validation and acceptance from society. This involved mobilizing religion and culture (Excerpts 1 & 2) in ways that favour men and disadvantage women. Importantly, my analysis also revealed the strongly gendered nature of socio-cultural discourse (see, e.g., Excerpts 1, 2 & 5) in which demands for women's rights and autonomy were reductively framed as a demand for sexual freedom. Further, the interviews foregrounded that the traditional gendering of space (see Excerpt 2), that is, the relegation of women to the private domain, means the privatisation, and thereby silencing, of the woman question (Habiba et al. [31]). The private–public spatial divide also contributes to maintaining Pakistan's traditional gender models, thereby supporting the argument that public and private spaces can be used to either challenge or uphold the dominant gender ideology (ibid). The gendered nature of spaces often goes unnoticed, owing to the unconscious internalization of the patriarchal system. Today, many social media platforms such as Facebook have also become sites that fortify the biases and hostilities of the offline world [25]. For example, the sexualised nature of the threats highlighted in Excerpt 3 indicates that the perceived violation of patriarchal norms can have serious corporeal consequences. For women, the punishment for transgressing the prescribed model of submissive femininity can range from mild verbal derision, such as being called "unfeminine", to serious forms of sexual assault and even murder.

Men who transgress the established modes of masculinity in Pakistan (see Excerpt 4) can face online harassment and sometimes offline violence. The traditional model of masculinity in Pakistan is closely linked with hegemonic masculinity [17], which not only constructs men as the benchmark against which all other genders are measured but also requires men to shun all types of feminine behaviour [21]. By positioning all other forms of masculinities as subordinate, hegemonic masculinity becomes the norm or the ideal that helps maintain the existing gender hierarchy. Research on gender role transgressions has generally found that although both men and women are likely to be evaluated less positively when they do not conform to gender role stereotypes, male transgressors tend to be viewed more negatively than female transgressors [45]. The interviews also revealed that fear of censorship by society often serves to reinforce existing gender hierarchies. For a collectivist patriarchal system to function in Pakistan, it is paramount that men and women adhere strictly to the established gender models. In such cases, societal obligations and customs take precedence over personal needs. For instance, after a certain age, unmarried women become an object of public censure (see Excerpt 5), while others are slut-shamed for voicing gender discrimination (see Excerpts 3 & 5). Therefore, young, independent single women are viewed as a threat to the patriarchal order. Furthermore, since women are symbols of familial, communal, and national honour, their behaviour

is closely monitored, and infringements are punished. This means that men's honour and masculinity can be questioned because of what their wives and daughters do or say (see excerpt 6).

The interviewees in this study also reported that Facebook offers them an emancipatory space. For many, social media, particularly Facebook, has become a crucial source of information as well as an important forum for raising social and humanitarian awareness, mobilising protests and engaging in political discussion [37]. Previously marginalised women (and men) have benefitted from Facebook and for men it has become a space for learning about gender inequality in Pakistan. Finally, Facebook and other social media platforms have provided women with opportunities to become online entrepreneurs, thereby allowing them to reap the benefits of being financially independent and empowered (see, e.g., excerpt 9). More importantly, individual empowerment has only sharpened their desire to actively re-shape societal gender norms. In other words, by countering gender-related challenges in the creation of their own ventures, these women have begun to perceive themselves more broadly as agents of change.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest The author has no conflicts of interest to declare. Furthermore, there is no financial interest to report. I certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

Ethical approval Written informed consent was obtained from the participants of the study (and the relevant document(s) may be provided when requested by the journal). Moreover, the legal basis for the processing of personal data is based on EU's General Data Protection Regulation, Article 6, Paragraph 1. It states that processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that at least one of the following applies: a. the data subject has given consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purposes; b. processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract; c. processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which the controller is subject; d. processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another natural person; e. processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller; f. processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject, which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child.

Availability of data and material Can be provided on demand by the journal.

Code availability Not Applicable.

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