Original Article   **https://hnpublisher.com**

Podcasting Faith: Exploring Socio-Religious Discourse in Influential Pakistani YouTube Content

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research aims to examine the depiction of religion and socio-religious narratives in popular Pakistani YouTube videos, focusing specifically on religious scholar podcasts. The study emphasizes how these podcasts frame themes related to faith, identity, and contemporary societal issues.

Methodology: An interpretive approach was utilized, with data gathered through the purposive sampling of ten highly listened-to podcasts featuring influential figures such as Nadir Ali and Hafiz Ahmed, including scholars like Mufti Tariq Masood and Dr. Zakir Naik. Discourse and thematic analyses were employed to identify prevalent themes, framing devices, and constructed narratives within the conversations.

Findings: Key observations reveal that these podcasts blend traditional Islamic discourse with modern societal issues, addressing topics such as polygamy, gender roles, and cultural attitudes toward modesty. Framing methods, including narrative and academic framing, are strategically used to engage audiences and contextualize complex religious concepts. The podcasts encourage lively discussions that challenge conventional perspectives and foster critical thinking among listeners.

Conclusion: By situating religious rhetoric within the context of modern challenges, this research highlights the dynamic nature of religion in Pakistan and the role of digital media in shaping public perceptions. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how religious narratives are negotiated within an increasingly complex cultural landscape, offering insights into the intersection of religion and modernity in Pakistani society.

Keywords: Podcasting, Socio-religious Narratives, YouTube, Religious Scholars, Pakistan, Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is a public sphere where people come with ideas, participate in discourse, form opinions and influence others. It provides dynamic platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to influencers. Due to this facet of social media public discourses are becoming hybrid. Interactions through

the internet have narrowed the significance of physical space. Online conversations on a variety of issues connect the masses and bring them to a common debating ground. Individuals have now become netizens who live in cyberspace.

In cyberspace, Podcasting is a new genre of media content based on discussion. It is believed to be a hybrid cultural form between old and new media. It spans both audio and video broadcasting. Podcasting, a term coined from the combination of "iPod" and "broadcasting," first emerged in the early 2000s to distribute audio content over the Internet (Madsen, 2009). Podcasting earned wide public acceptance in late 2004 with the beginning of broadband internet services. Later, in 2005, podcasting grew at an unanticipated speed. In addition to broadband internet access, this genre of broadcasting attained wide recognition due to its time-shifting and portability characteristics (Berry, 2016).

Podcasting has transformed from a niche, amateur activity into a vital part of the modern media landscape, offering flexible, on-demand content that fosters personal connections between creators and listeners. As technology evolves, the future of podcasting promises interactive experiences and AI integration, enhancing its accessibility and engagement (Minooka, 2024). In addition to this user-friendliness, Podcasts have many other attributes that contributed to the success of this medium. For example, Podcasts are a podium for voices that are not heard otherwise because they are not represented in the mainstream or state-owned media. Freedom of speech is a key aspect of this powerful medium. The flexibility and directness of podcasts have contributed to their popularity, enabling users to consume content at their convenience on mobile devices, computers, and other digital platforms (Berry, 2016).

1.1 Podcasting in Pakistan

In the realm of radio journalism podcasting was not a popular media in Pakistan. In the early 2000s when podcasting was making its place in international media, in Pakistan, FM stations dominated the airwaves, focusing mostly on popular music cue sheets instead of engaging in prolonged conversations on diverse topics. Podcasts in Pakistan have evolved to be both informative and entertaining, integrating valuable content into the daily routines of the audience. A research based in Pakistan sheds light on the advantages and challenges associated with utilizing podcasts in an educational context, offering valuable insights from a pedagogical perspective. The incorporation of podcasts into the English listening curriculum represents a promising avenue for enhancing language learning and teaching strategies in the contemporary classroom (Raza, Ahmad, & Manzoor, 2023). Here, this medium gained popularity with the escalation of video content available on YouTube. Today, podcasting is one of the most seen, subscribed, commented and liked content on YouTube in Pakistan. Podcasters invite guests from various social ecologies to join their shows. They often invite each other in their program. It is quite quirky to see that a host of a podcast is a guest on other person's podcast and vice versa. The subjects of Pakistani podcasts usually based on biographical narratives of showbiz celebrities like actors, sports personalities, politicians, and religious scholars. Since these are available in the form of YouTube videos The studio setup often features modern interior with a relaxed setting, complimented with cups of coffee or tea on the table that create a cozy atmosphere for prolonged discussions and storytelling.

Watching podcasts on YouTube allows the audience to listen while multitasking. These podcasts are generally consumed during travelling making listeners to productively use their commuting time. In some households women prefer listening to podcasts while working in the kitchen, gaining knowledge while doing dishes. Podcasts in Pakistan have evolved to be both informative and entertaining. Podcasting is integrating informative content into the daily routines of Pakistani audience.

Based on their technicalities and procedures, podcasts can be categorized into various types, such as interview, conversational, monologue, roundtable, scripted, and hybrid formats. In Pakistan, interview-based, conversational, and storytelling formats are predominantly in trend. These shows are described as a blend of education, information, and some gossip about local celebrities. On the bases of the theme podcasts can be grouped into eight different genres: sports, religion, technology, entertainment, education, news, politics, and economy (Haq, Shahid, Abdullah, Sagheer, & Rasool, 2024).

1.2   *Research Objectives*

The primary objective of this research is to analyze how podcasts (ones that are primarily not religious) feature religious scholars and frame socio- religious themes and concepts. This involves identifying and categorizing the dominant themes discussed by these scholars, as well as exploring the specific aspects of society that are addressed in relation to religion within these video podcasts. Also, the study aims to investigate the religious discourse and narratives constructed in these episodes, examining how they challenge societal norms.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a chapter titled as Podcasting as a hybrid cultural between old and new media from the book 'The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies' Tiziano Bonini writes about the intellectual history of broadcasting, while giving consideration to the political economy of communication. He has applied Actor-Network Theory (ANT), to discover the character of podcasting as a medium of communication in the contemporary times. Bonini has compared the initial years of broadcasting with the premature stage of podcasting. He has tried to show that podcasting had re-mediated some features of radio, but it also contains some extra features. This combination of conventional media standard operating procedures, traditional aesthetics with the modern, interactive, and inclusive aspects of digital culture create the hybrid culture of podcasting (Bonini, 2022).

In his Article the Platforms of Podcasting: Past and Present John L. Sullivan acknowledges that the medium of Podcasting is growing swiftly as a fashionable and enlightening trend. Mainly, it connects the masses to audio content created by broadcasting outlets, radio professionals, and both paid and unpaid hobbyists. In this essay, he theoretically explains the role of digital platforms like Apple and RSS in podcasting. He further explores the impact of these digital platforms on the structure and content of the podcasts, and governance of this industry. Podcasting is in the middle of its evolution. It is undergoing transitions in both content and form. Several online platforms are investing in the medium which is a guarantee that this medium will grow and will attract more listeners and financers. Written in 2019, just five years ago, this essay only focuses on the practices of audio podcasting (Sullivan, 2019).

In the article Religious Communication in Digital Public Sphere the author has tried to assess the impact of religious discussion in podcasts on public opinion, practices, and cultural trends of the audience. This article is an endeavor to explore some exclusive communication patterns available in religious podcasts. The area under study is Bangladesh particularly. After investigating the subjects of religious conversation and the language of communication, the author deduces that the modern digital public sphere of Bangladesh is either undergoing a process of Islamization or evolving into an Islamic digital public sphere. That is creating a controversial milieu in the country. The voices of other religious groups are not sufficiently represented in cyberspace. Consequently, even a small provocation could escalate the communal tensions in Bangladesh, potentially threatening the peace and harmony of the entire region. The author has concluded with three main points. Firstly, there lies an inequality of communication among religious communities where Muslims are in the majority. Secondly, over the internet Islamic content is more prevalent in terms of both time and space as compared to content from other religions. And lastly, Muslims produce digital media-based disinformation to exclude religious minorities from social and public spheres (Al-Zaman & Sayeed, 2020).

A research work titled "Content Analysis: A Comparative Study of Different Genres of Pakistani Podcasts" contains new and interesting information about the podcasting culture in Pakistan. This comparative study dissects different types of podcasts recorded in Pakistan. Researchers have classified the podcasts into eight different types, focusing on the language and tone of the host and guests, the presence of elements of entertainment and fun, and exploring the target audience. By using the lens of language and tone of the people present in the podcast the researchers have concluded that in the religious podcast often a sober and decent tone is used because of the sacredness of the subject. Religious podcasts in Pakistan focus on topics like spiritual counseling of youth and religious dialogue. Researchers have

used the example of "Youth Club Pakistan," which aims to bring about positive changes in Muslim youth and creates motivational and inspirational content for this purpose (Haq, Shahid, Abdullah, Sagheer, & Rasool, 2024).

Another applicable study "Podcasting as an Emerging Educational Tool in Pakistan: The Potential and Challenges" examines podcasting as promising educational support in Pakistan. The researcher sees the culture of podcasting in Pakistan with particular attention to the educational uses of this medium. He explores the possible capabilities and potential challenges of podcasting as a tool for education within local social and technological contexts. By using a qualitative research methodology the findings disclose that podcasting is a flexible and convenient tool for education. It also provides a practical answer to the problem associated with remote learning. The thematic analysis conducted by the author recognized several key elements associated with podcasting like user-friendliness despite the challenges of the digital divide. People can gain information and knowledge from podcasts at their own pace. The study reveals how podcasts help in increasing students' motivation and commitment (Mehboob, Rafiq, & Bazgha, 2024).

In a remarkable research, the importance and need for podcasts were explored in the Pakistani context. The research titled Developing Listening Ability through Podcast for Secondary Level Students in Pakistan endeavored to establish the incorporation of podcasts into the English language curriculum for students in grade eight. The purpose was to uncover the worth of podcasts in educational sector. To study the impact of this innovative pedagogical approach a mixed-methods methodology was adopted. The result of this research showed a noteworthy development in the listening abilities of the students. Moreover, this study highlights the costs and benefits linked with employing podcasts in a school education (Raza, Ahmad, & Manzoor, 2023).

Another study used a survey research design to examine the impact of podcasts on university students. The study titled as Popularity of YouTube Podcasters among Social Media Users is based on the Cultivation Theory of Media as its theoretical framework. The findings signify that YouTube podcasters are acknowledged as trustworthy sources of knowledge and information by most youth. This is broadly demonstrated in the trend of shifting from conventional media to social media platforms for information, education, and entertainment. This study further suggests that in Pakistan YouTube podcasts is an essential component of the contemporary ecosystem, especially for university students (Ghafar, Ishaq, & Anees, 2023).

Another relevant study titled Pragmatic Analysis of Pakistani Religious Podcast (Mufti Tariq Masood) discusses the power of Pragmatics. One of the core elements in pragmatics is the concept of speech acts. The phenomenon of speech acts examines how utterance performs actions that ultimately persuade and influence your audience. The study classifies a range of speech acts in Mufti Tariq Masood's podcasts. The study further categorizes his speech acts are divided into 5 categories: assertive, directive, expressive, and declarative. It concludes that the directive speech acts are significant in guiding his viewers and followers towards observance of Islamic values and practices (Sagheer, Fatima, Khan, & Ali, 2024).

2.2   Research Questions

1. How is religion presented in podcasts featuring religious scholars?

2. How framing techniques are used to convey religious messages?

3. What are the dominant themes discussed by religious scholars in these podcasts and how do these themes relate to contemporary societal issues in Pakistan?

4. Which aspects of society are being addressed in the discussions of religion and are there specific demographics or social issues that are highlighted?

5. What religious narratives and discourses are constructed in these podcasts and how do these narratives align or conflict with traditional religious views in Pakistan?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts an interpretive paradigm to explore the nature of messages, dominant themes, narratives, and discourses presented in selected podcasts featuring religious scholars. The interpretive approach is particularly suitable for this study as it emphasizes understanding the realities and contexts of individuals within specific sociocultural environments. By focusing on the ongoing conversations in Pakistani podcasts, the research aims to uncover the meanings and interpretations that emerge from these discussions.

For data collection, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select podcasts from influential Pakistani YouTubers, specifically Nadir Ali (@Nadiraliofficial) and Hafiz Ahmed (@HafizAhmedOfficial). The choice to concentrate on these two podcasters is warranted by their large subscriber bases of more than one million each, which shows their large reach and impact in the Pakistani online sphere. Both Nadir Ali and Hafiz Ahmed regularly invite religious scholars for discussions, and thus their podcasts are a rich source for studying religious narratives.

The sample includes ten podcasts, with five from each podcaster, that involve various influential Islamic scholars like Maulana Tariq Jamil, Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza, Mufti Tariq Masood, and Dr. Zakir Naik. This was to create a balanced representation of views in religious discourse. These authors were selected for their universal popularity and credibility in Pakistan, given that their sermons and lectures are widely posted on various social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Each of them also has an official channel and social media presence, increasing their exposure. Through an examination of these ten podcasts, each of which has received over one million views, the study seeks to offer a holistic depiction of how religion is framed by leading influencers within the context of digitalization, presenting the intersection of traditional religious authority and new media. The videos were selected according to their relevance to Islam in Pakistan, engagement metrics (such as views, likes, comments, and shares), and the particular emphasis of the debates. Only those podcasts that were recorded from 2022 were used to guarantee that the analysis will represent the up-to-date status of religious discourse in the online world.

Two major approaches were involved in the analysis of data, namely thematic analysis and discourse analysis. Thematic analysis was utilized to extract prevailing ideas and tendencies from the podcasts so that the data could be categorized into prominent themes. It is a broad technique known to be flexible and powerful in qualitative research, permitting researchers to sequentially examine qualitative data and obtain important implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis was conducted to analyze the language, framing strategies, and rhetorical moves made by both hosts and guests. The analysis followed Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis in terms of highlighting the link between language and social power. Three dimensions are involved in Fairclough's approach: the description of the text, the interpretation of the interaction, and the explanation of the social context, enabling a thorough analysis of how religious stories are constructed and conveyed in the podcasts (Fairclough, 1995). This model assists in revealing hidden power relations and assumptions existing within the discourse and sheds light on how religious issues are expressed and comprehended in modern Pakistani society.

Ethical concerns were addressed considering the fact that the research is done on publicly accessible content on YouTube. The research adhered to digital copyright acts by offering relevant citations and authentication for the analyzed video material.

Although the research provides useful insights, it is necessary to recognize its limitations. The research is narrowly based on a particular sample of podcasts, which might not reflect the entire range of religious discourse in Pakistan. Moreover, the interpretive nature of the research implies that interpretations and explanations are subjective and context-dependent, as researchers cannot completely divorce their views from the contexts they examine. In spite of these constraints, the results are hoped to make an important contribution to knowledge of religious tales in Pakistani society today.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In the 8:39-minute podcast of the Hafiz Ahmed Podcast entitled "Mufti Tariq Masood 4th Marriage Complete Details," the host has a candid interview with guest Mufti Tariq Masood regarding his fourth marriage, which is the first podcast chosen for analysis from the sample. The podcast has attracted a lot of attention, having 2.1 million views, 21,000 likes, and 2,700 comments, showing how popular it is and the public's interest in the personal facts of the marriage. The text of the thumbnail creates interesting questions, inquiring if the bride is divorced or a virgin and how the proposal was planned, again inviting people to investigate the conversation.

Key topics include Polygamy, Celebrity Curiosity, and Marriage Attitudes towards Society. The Style and Language are casual and provocative, written to create curiosity and interest amongst potential listeners. The use of blunt questions such as 'girl is a virgin or divorced? is calculated to create controversy and encourage conversation. The host employs analogies such as describing marriage as being similar to trading to explain points, making understanding easier. Humor is used to keep the tone light, especially with respect to the logistics of dealing with multiple marriages.

The guest Mufti Tariq Masood applies narrative framing technique by recounting personal stories in order to frame his arguments. The title and thumbnail utilize sensational language in order to gain attention, tapping into a cultural interest in salacious or controversial content. Posing questions in the thumbnail engages the audience's curiosity and encourages them to click and listen for answers. The host's questions prompt the guest to elaborate on personal experiences, guiding the conversation in a way that keeps the audience engaged. The guest employs moral framing by presenting the challenges of managing multiple marriages as a form of 'jihad,' elevating the discussion to a moral and ethical level. The guest also uses religious framing by providing a theological explanation, framing the discussion around Islamic principles, inviting listeners to consider marriage's moral implications.

The podcast reflects Pakistani socio cultural context where marriage and the personal lives of celebrities are popular topics, indicating societal interest in polygamy and relationships. In Pakistan, polygamy persists as a prominent theme, influenced by cultural practices, beliefs, and individual choices (Malik, Mushtaq, Anwar, Qasim, & Hanif, 2021). It also highlights societal pressures and expectations surrounding marriage and family dynamics. The guest also addresses the challenges faced by women in the marriage market, particularly in the context of traditional norms. Marriage is considered central to women's lives in Pakistani society, with singlehood seen as socially unacceptable and a violation of the cultural norm that views marriage as mandatory (Sultana, Zeeshan, & Ahmed, 2021). The metaphorical cultural references of the Kawasaki GTO 125 and Maulana Tariq's use of the bike in the context of marriage proposal also has a strong socio-cultural context as the GTO 125's reputation as a powerful racing bike mirrors Maulana's ambitious approach to life and relationships. Just as the bike offers speed and agility, Maulana's initiative to approach marriage proposals on this bike signifies his proactive and dynamic personality. It exudes a sense of adventure and determination, which indicates that he is willing to risk everything to get what he wants. The "bad boy" reputation of the GTO 125 can be interpreted as a metaphor for violating social norms (Ahmad, 2022). Maulana's decision to propose with this bike might represent his breaking away from convention in modern-ay life. Such an act, proposing with racing bike normally used for youngsters and freedom, defines some of the conventional thinking regarding proposing marriage. This GTO 125 is also a powerful metaphor for Maulan Tariq's life stance, relationship expectations, and sense of culture. It is fusion of modernity and tradition, elements of rebellion, ambition and status.

The title of the second podcast under study addresses what the veil represents and how it is perceived. The issue extends beyond merely being a piece of cloth over a woman's face; it involves understanding the Qur'anic regulations on modesty and the interaction between men and women. The thumbnail suggests that women who do not cover themselves should listen to it at least once! The statement serves as a cautionary note regarding the implications of not veiling, highlighting the perceived serious

consequences tied to this choice. It reflects cultural and religious beliefs that frame veiling as a fundamental aspect of modesty and faith, urging women to consider their decisions within this context. By emphasizing potential repercussions, it aims to provoke thought and encourage adherence to traditional practices. This clip has more than 400k views. It is one of the most popular podcast clips that is seen and referred to in Pakistan, because it is about a vehement topic of discussion that is veil of women in Islam. Podcast host Hafiz Ahmad and Guest Muhammad Ali Mirza have tried to simplify a complex and often misapprehended topic: the concept of modesty and veiling in Islam. Veiling or covering face is a matter that contains an extensive variety of historical, cultural, and religious perspectives, and it's worth exploring in detail.

Both have tried to explore the Qur'anic basis, historical application, and contemporary interpretations of covering the face. The key Themes are modesty and soberness in women's behaviour and attire. Language and use of words are balanced and respectful, and the guest avoids proposing a singular perspective. He has presented diverse arguments regarding both practice and belief, representing all Islamic schools of thought. The style of conversation is engaging and Informative.

The Arabic term 'hijab' refers to a veil or covering, symbolizing both physical and spiritual barriers, as seen in the Qur'an where it denotes the need for a separation between the Prophet's wives and the public. It emphasizes that God places veils in people's hearts, preventing them from grasping the true meanings of the Qur'an. Additionally, while women may unveil to their husbands, they are instructed to maintain modesty in the presence of others, highlighting the dual significance of the veil in Islam (Galadari, 2012).

In modern times, globalization has led to the cross-border spread of trends and fashion, making it difficult for religious groups to maintain their practices. In an age where women's empowerment is seen as essential for national progress, the practice of Parda, or veiling, is frequently viewed as a barrier to women becoming active contributors to society. The relationship between women and the veil continues to be a contentious issue in Islamic discussions, with ongoing debates about the balance between empowerment and modesty.

The third clip contains a conversation between Nadir Ali and Dr. Zakir Naik. It has 480K views. In this clip, the difficulty of understanding and interpreting various religious texts has been discussed. Being a keen and acknowledged expert on religious texts Dr. Zakir Naik pointed out that the Quran stands out as the most challenging text to fully comprehend. He explained that the Quran is the most untranslatable book in the world. Its verses, even when translated, often fail to capture the depth, beauty, and layered meanings that exist in the original Arabic text. Each verse of the Quran, he noted, can hold multiple interpretations. This makes the Quran intricate and impactful for both the general masses and intellectuals alike.

Key Theme of the video clip under analysis is difficulty in Understanding Religious and the exceptional language and style of the Quranic verses. The Language and Style of Zakir Naik are scholarly yet understandable for a broad and intellectually diverse audience of the sub-continent. Dr. Naik refers to the Quran's verse (Surah Al-Imran 3) to lend credibility and scriptural backing to his argument. Nature of Interaction is according to the usual podcast pattern, which is a question-answer format. Being an epistemic authority on religious texts Dr. Zakir Naik's Framing technique involves references from the Holy Books with confidence. The socio-cultural context of this clip connects to the sectarian divisions in Islam, which arise from differing interpretations of the Quran due to its complex and layered language. The Seven Sects of Islam have different interpretations of scripture, but they share some common beliefs. Their differences can create divisions and cause them to overlook each other's views. Some sects, like Wahhabi, Salafi, and Deobandi, limit creativity to what was accepted in the 6th century, while others, like Sunni, Shia, Barelvi, and Sufi, accept innovation if it helps the community. Although creativity is generally accepted in Islam, some sects resist broader ideas due to religious and political influences (Iqbal, 2022).

The clip 4 is from Hafiz Ahmad podcast. He is in conversation with Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza. The topic of discussion is the rights and duties of husband and wife towards each other in Islam. The key theme of this discourse is financial and emotional perspectives of marital responsibilities. In order to authenticate his point of view he refers to religious teachings and cultural beliefs. Language and Style of the conversation is semi-formal yet informative, dialogue intended to instruct and provide advice. The speaker frames the discussion (Framing Technique) around marriage as a sacred bond, emphasizing that no relationship is closer than that of a husband and wife. He repeatedly uses religious references from Quran and Hadiths to validate his suggestions. The host is questioning whether it's really necessary to share everything with your wife if you're already fulfilling all your responsibilities. The host is questioning whether it's really necessary to share everything with your wife if you're already fulfilling all your responsibilities. The framing may reflect traditional gender roles, where men feel justified in keeping certain information private under the guise of responsibility. This could perpetuate stereotypes about communication in relationships.

Socio-cultural Context of this conversation is rooted in patriarchal norms. This conversation reflects the value of family as a base for existence in South Asian Muslim culture particularly. The guest of the podcast Muhammad Ali Mirza is already known for his non-traditional yet religious views about gender roles in society. The religious scholar claims that women have a gentle nature and desire their husbands to spend all their money on them. This statement reinforces stereotypes about women being emotionally vulnerable and materialistic. It reduces the complexity of women's desires and needs to a simplistic view of wanting financial support. The discourse reflects traditional gender roles, suggesting that women are dependent on men for financial security. It implies a dynamic where men are providers and women are consumers, which can perpetuate inequality. In Pakistani society, the male is viewed as a symbol of power, leading to women's submissiveness. This patriarchal structure results in the neglect of their rights and the erosion of their identity (Ali, Ali, Nadeem, & Memon, 2022). By describing women as having a 'weak' or 'soft' heart, the statement may imply that emotional sensitivity is a flaw rather than a strength. This could discourage men from recognizing and valuing emotional intelligence in relationships. The assumption that women want men to spend all their money on them suggests a power imbalance, where women's worth is tied to material gifts. This can undermine the notion of partnership based on mutual respect and support.

The scholar's viewpoint may reflect cultural beliefs about gender roles and relationships, which can vary widely across different societies. This highlights the need to critically examine how such beliefs influence behavior and expectations in relationships.

The clip 5 is from Hafiz Ahmed's podcast, featuring Tuaha Ibn Jalil. It has more than 780k views. Ibn Jalil is an Islamic public speaker. He is an instructor and country head of Youth Club Pakistan. Youth Club (YC) is a non-profit Islamic organization that provides a platform for the training of youth according to Islamic values (https://youthclub.pk/about-us/). Title of this clip is 'Halal Girl Friend'. He is telling the story of how he got married to a girl he had never seen before, in a simple and brief manner.

The key theme found in this clip is the concept of simplicity in marriage. Language and style of conversation is simple, understandable and decent. The framing technique used in this case can be described as anecdotal storytelling with an emphasis on minimalism. Ibn Jalil recounts the story of his marriage as a personal anecdote. This technique engages the listener and makes the narrative relevant and convincing. The focus on simplicity is an attempt to encourage a minimalist lifestyle that prefers genuineness over lavishness.

Socio-cultural Context: Tauha Ibn Jalil is prominent among Islamic scholars due to his unique socio-cultural appeal. As a handsome man, he captures attention with his good looks, hip style, and frequent use of English words within Urdu. His target audience, mainly urban Muslim youth, finds him relevant. He is mostly seen in Western attire, often wears a P-cap and maintains a long black beard, which adds value to his personality. Unlike traditional scholars, who typically wear local attire such as turbans and address

audiences in conventional Urdu, Tauha adopts a more modern approach in the way he dresses. His style, appearance, and presentation make him popular.

The discussion on simple marriages gains importance in the context of Pakistani society these days, where the videos of extravagant weddings are shared widely on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, with enormous engagements by local/ *desi* audiences at home and spread across the world. Overgenerous lights, elaborate dances, gourmet food, expensive dresses, and multiple events are the highlights of these weddings. The magnificent staging, pretentious arrivals of the bride and groom, and pointless spending on making the event memorable and the talk of the town reflect growing materialism. Tauha advocates simplicity in marriages that is a crucial social need. Instagram promotes extravagant wedding trends among middle-class young adults in Lahore, increasing social, financial, and mental pressures on their parents. This influence affects individuals across various economic backgrounds, highlighting the pervasive impact of social media on wedding practices (Islam, 2021).

 By narrating his own story, he offers a counter-narrative to the rising trend of fake magnificence and inspires young boys and girls to embrace modest practices. The title "Halal Girlfriend" introduces another layer to the discourse. It implies a consideration of relationships within an Islamic framework, which can be seen as a response to modern dating practices. The term "halal" suggests a focus on permissible, ethical relationships, potentially appealing to a younger audience navigating contemporary social norms. The use of a provocative title like "Halal Girlfriend" serves as a strategy to attract viewers. It leverages the curiosity surrounding relationships while addressing deeper societal issues. This dual approach can engage a broader audience, prompting discussions about both cultural values and personal choices.

The clip 6 features a conversation between Nadir Ali and Dr. Zakir Naik, uploaded in September 2024, and it has 274K views. Key theme is the permissibility of music in Islam. Music is often regarded as food for the soul; however, Islam rejects this idea. Islam views music unsuitable for spiritual sustenance. Carrying out a detailed conversation on this issue is relevant to the social-cultural context of the sub-continent. In this region, music is a vital part of festivals and wedding celebrations. It is a symbol of joy, jubilation, and ceremonial greatness, while Islamic religious teachings negate it. The perception of music in Islam, particularly in Pakistani society, is influenced by various factors, including the impact of modern Western culture. Traditional conservative values and religious teachings are being replaced by internationalization and social media, leading to a reduced fear of religious constraints. As a result, music is increasingly seen as a cultural phenomenon rather than a strictly religious issue among the youth in Pakistan (Hassan, Hassan, & Noor, 2022).

The language and style of Dr. Zakir Naik is instructive and solution-oriented. His style and language is authentic. He also suggests options that can be adopted instead of music.

The clip 7 is extracted from the podcast of Nadir Ali with Moulana Tariq Jameel. It has 106K views. In this clip, the host asks Moulana why he has not married more than once. He calmly explains that he has led a very busy life as a devotee of Islam. He states that if he had married more than once, he might have had more children and in turn had not achieved what he wanted to as an Islamic scholar. Moulana Tariq Jameel acknowledges that it can be challenging for a Muslim to maintain justice among multiple wives and their children while being a dedicated preacher of Islam. His language and tone is simple and composed, throughout the session. The key themes found are polygamy and celebrity curiosity.

The framing technique used by the Moulana in his response can be described as ethical prioritization and pragmatic realism. The Moulana places a strong emphasis on the Islamic principle of justice (fair treatment among wives and children), presenting it as a moral obligation. By framing his decision within this ethical context, he accentuates his devotion to Islamic values and aligns his personal choice with Islamic teachings. He adopts a realistic approach by acknowledging the practical challenges of balancing multiple responsibilities, such as being a fair husband a fair father, and preaching a religion/ Islam as true religion. This approach positions his decision as thoughtful and practical, rather than emotional and ambiguous.

The socio-cultural context of Moulana Tariq Jameel is predominantly strong. In 2020, he was named Pakistan's most admired man, according to a poll, surpassing even the Prime Minster of that time Imran Khan (Timo, 2022). His official YouTube channel, @tariqjamilofficial, boasts 8.57 million subscribers (https://www.youtube.com/@tariqjamilofficial). Such metrics highlight his extraordinary reputation in Pakistan and India.

Analyzing this discussion within the context of the sub-continent, it is apparent that Islamic scholars have always encouraged polygamy for various religious and social reasons. Many of them advocate this practice as a Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). A significant number of Muslim scholars, with millions of followers on social media, actively encourage the practice of polygamy. In this context, an authentic and widely respected figure like Moulana Tariq Jameel presenting a very different perspective is particularly noteworthy. His stance diverges from the common narrative, adding depth to the ongoing dialogue on this topic.

The clip 8 titled "4 Wives & 15 Kids" is from the *Hafiz Ahmed Podcast* featuring Mufti Abdul Wahid Qureshi. This clip has gathered 380k views and 17k likes. In the podcast, the guest shares (in a delightful way) that he has four wives who live together harmoniously in a large house under one roof in separate portions. They share a jumbo kitchen. His wives have established a friendly relationship and have divided the household chores among themselves. The language used in the clip is simple and conversational, delivered in a light and humorous tone. The tone and style of the conversation make it appealing and easy to follow for the audience. The idealism is used as a framing technique. Mufti Qureshi emphasizes on the unity and mutual understanding among his four wives. He presents polygamy as an ideal arrangement. By highlighting the friendship between his wives, the guest frames polygamy in a constructive, appropriate, and approachable light. The socio-cultural context behind this discussion is the patriarchal system in Islamic society where financial responsibilities are considered the sole duty of men. The advocates of polygamy believe that if a man can afford it, he is permitted to have multiple marriages, provided he can ensure justice among his wives in all aspects. The masses show interest in such discussions which is evident from the steadily increasing engagement of viewers in this clip. Scholars often aim to counter potential criticisms by appealing to the audience's values of harmony and collaboration within a family unit.

The ninth clip with 106k views is titled 'Hazrat Ali Say Madad Mangna' and is from the Hafiz Ahmed Podcast. Hafiz Ahmed is in a serious conversation with Allama Syed Jawad Naqvi, a prominent Pakistani Shia Islamic intellectual and scholar. The key theme of this clip is the rejection of shirk (polytheism) in Islam. Shirk is an act, that is undeniably rejected in Islam. The guest tries to explain the smaller sects within Shia sect. he also stresses that Attributing divine qualities to any being, whether Hazrat Ali (Ali al-Salam), Hazrat Isa (Masih al-Salam), Rasulallah (PBUH), or any other creation, is considered shirk (polytheism) and a grave sin. Language and style are serious and explanatory. The tone is reverent because Syed Naqvi aims to educate general masses and want to correct some misconceptions about Shia.

He avoids being confrontational and uses a clarifying narrative Framing Technique. His argument begins with, introducing the group (*Ghali*) and ends with explaining their beliefs. The dialogue emerges from a socio-cultural context where sectarian radicalization commonly exists and misapprehension about religious ideas and patterns frequently arise. There is always a need to address confusions about Shia community in Islam.

This last clip in the sample discusses the Concept of Beard in Islam. It is a discussion between Mufti Tariq Masood and Hafiz Ahmad. The conversation revolving around the inevitability of beards in Islam has 1.1 Million views in a year. This shows the significance of the debate in our society. Since the inception of Islam, there have been multiple opinions on keeping a beard or maintaining a clean shaved look. Some argue that a small beard is sufficient, while others emphasized the Hadith, which instructs to grow a beard as part of Sunnah. Mufti Tariq Masood explains that keeping a short beard is preferable over

shaving entirely. However, growing a fist-length beard is a Sunnah, and disregarding it without a valid reason is frowned upon.

The beard is portrayed as an important marker of Islamic identity. Beard as a reflection of obedience to prophetic traditions is the key theme of this clip. The discourse reflects a spectrum of beliefs from strict adherence to leniency, around the key theme. Facial hair, particularly in Islamic contexts, carries varied and often contradictory meanings, reflecting cultural, social, and political nuances. While fundamentalist interpretations may link facial hair to religious piety, these views can misrepresent the historical and hygienic origins of such practices (Shirazi, 2008).

The language and style of the conversation is colloquial but embellished with religious references. The guest in the podcast Mufti Tariq Masood has used words and terms which demonstrates a heavy reliance on Islamic vocabulary. His choice of words grounds the discussion firmly in religious discourse. Islamic practices in subcontinent make the socio-cultural context of this discussion. In this region religious identity deeply influences personal and societal norms. Beards, as an indicator of Islamic piety, tend to be accompanied by images of piety and righteousness. The argument obliquely addresses gender relations and constructions of masculinity. Beard growth is perceived as being both a religious duty and an indicator of "manliness" in conventional society. The conflict between strict interpretation and more lenient, contemporary approaches reflects larger cultural trends in urban Pakistan, where some consider strict adherence to be incompatible with modernity.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the podcasts with religious scholars shows an interdisciplinary approach towards Islamic discourse interweaving classic teachings with current issues of Pakistan society. Employing framing theory and critical discourse analysis, it is possible to investigate how the podcasts address their audience and reproduce larger socio-cultural dynamics.

Religion is described as a dynamic and developing discourse. For instance: In "Mufti Tariq Masood 4th Marriage Complete Details," Mufti Masood explains his fourth marriage in a setting that commingles public interest in polygamy. This is how customary practices are framed in line with contemporary societal standards, responding to both individual and communal expectations. Tuaha Ibn Jalil's experience in "Halal Girlfriend" focuses on keeping things simple in marriage, despite the over-splendor commonly linked with weddings. His story reflects the minimalist version of relationships, which appeals to youth as they go through contemporary dating culture. These presentations demonstrate a mix of conformity to Islamic teachings while considering the realities encountered by the youth, hence building a relatable narrative. Framing strategies are successfully utilized across the podcasts: Narrative Framing: In Mufti Tariq Masood's podcast, stories of his marriage are used to personalize the subject of polygamy and make it less abstract and more relatable. He presents the difficulties of dealing with multiple marriages as a "jihad," raising the topic to an ethical and moral level.

Scholarly Framing: Dr. Zakir Naik, in his discussion on the difficulty of understanding the Quran, utilizes scholarly references to establish authority. His framing emphasizes the Quran's complexity, inviting listeners to appreciate its depth rather than viewing it as a straightforward text. Humor and Lightness: In Mufti Abdul Wahid Qureshi's podcast about having multiple wives, humor is used to create a light atmosphere. By setting polygamy in a comical context, he legitimizes the topic so that audiences find it simpler to connect with what could be labelled as a taboo subject.

All these techniques do not only provide religious messages but also create participation and interaction between listeners.

Several prominent themes including polygamy by Mufti Tariq Masood and Mufti Abdul Wahid Qureshi are discussed on the podcasts based on the common interest and ancient practices of the society. The debates present polygamy as an ethical decision in accordance with Islamic teachings, but they also recognize the issues at stake. Muhammad Ali Mirza writes of the veil beyond being a fabric, delving into

its historical, religious, and cultural aspects. This corresponds to wider discourses regarding women's empowerment and social expectations. Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza deals with gender roles and expectations in marriage, upsetting patriarchal expectations of communication and economics. Dr. Zakir Naik writes about the issue of music being viewed in Islam, pointing to the tension between religious instruction and cultural practice, especially in festival and celebration settings. These are issues that resonate with current challenges like societal demands on marriage, gender relations, and the impact of globalization on cultural customs.

The podcasts touch on diverse aspects of society: The debates on polygamy and marriage point to the conflicts between conventional values and contemporary ways of life, especially in cities. Debates around women's roles in marriage, particularly in the podcasts with Muhammad Ali Mirza, express societal expectations and the demands for gender equality. Characters such as Tuaha Ibn Jalil resonate with urban Muslim youth, offering contemporary explanations and realistic stories of Islamic teachings, which is important for generating interest among younger generations.

Targeted groups include university and college students, especially through Youth Club initiatives that seek to inform and engage young Muslims in their faith.

The podcasts build narratives that both follow and subvert conventional narratives. Scholars such as Mufti Tariq Masood sustain conventional narratives and respond to moral concerns, thus enriching understanding of polygamy in contemporary society. Tuaha Ibn Jalil's plea for simplicity runs counter to the extravagant wedding culture, offering an alternative narrative and countering consumerism. Muhammad Ali Mirza's discussion on the veil invokes a wider scope of understanding going beyond strict interpretation, demonstrating an updated discourse regarding modesty.

These narratives indicate a blend of adherence to Islamic teachings and an awareness of contemporary social issues, suggesting a need for ongoing dialogue within the religious community.

Apart from framing theory and critical discourse analysis, the evidence also points to the applicability of social constructivism. According to this, knowledge and meaning are socially constructed. The podcasts provide a forum for discussion in which listeners are able to access and negotiate their meaning of Islam within a contemporary context. Meaning-making is an important process in a fast-evolving cultural context.

The podcasts are a good vehicle for examining the interaction between religion and issues in modern Pakistani society. By using a variety of framing strategies and discussing pertinent themes, researchers interact with their subjects in productive ways that advance an understanding of Islam in the contemporary context. The conversations are significant in demonstrating how conventional perceptions can change due to shifting social dynamics, thereby leading to a more diverse discussion of practice and faith. Through this examination, it is clear that these podcasts are not just a means of religious instruction but also a means of critical exploration of individual and societal values, prompting listeners to explore the nuances of their faith in a modern context. Popular podcasters like Hafiz Ahmed and others tend to work in non-religious genres. By having religious scholars analyze society-related issues, they craft a combined discourse that will be accessible to a wider audience. This genre-bending enables religious content to be communicated in a context that is understandable and interesting to the people who are not naturally involved in religious discourse. For instance, in the podcast "Mufti Tariq Masood 4th Marriage Complete Details," the topic of polygamy is presented in a context of celebrity intrigue and social opinion, and thus the religious discussion becomes applicable to listeners who are interested in modern social topics more than strictly theological arguments. This strategy encourages a broad audience, including those interested in people's lives and social norms.

Successful podcasters tend to use provocative questions in their thumbnails and content to get listeners involved actively. An example is Mufti Tariq Masood's podcast thumbnail, which inquires whether the bride is divorced or a virgin, which creates curiosity and makes listeners listen to sensitive content. This

not only grabs attention but also incites conversations regarding societal expectations and norms about marriage. By posing questions in this way, podcasters establish a forum for debate that goes beyond conventional perceptions and invites critical thinking. This approach encourages listeners to think about their own faith and societal beliefs, creating a setting for discourse over exposition.

The application of personal stories and anecdotes by religious scholars promotes the accessibility of religious teachings. In Tuaha Ibn Jalil's tale of marrying a girl whom he had never met, emphasis on simplicity in marriage appeals to the experiences and sentiments of the audience and questions the extravagance typical of weddings. Through telling their own stories, scholars bring humanization to their teachings, rendering them more accessible and interactive. This narrative style also enables the probing of deeper issues, including the stresses of modernity and the value of authenticity in relationships. Through the use of real-life examples, the discussion becomes more concrete and pertinent, inviting listeners to relate to the content on a personal level.

The podcasts successfully tackle issues of contemporary society through the prism of religious instruction. Talks on gender roles, modesty, and the acceptability of music show how Islamic principles can be used to solve contemporary problems. Muhammad Ali Mirza's discussion of veiling, for example, transcends religious requirements to touch on cultural attitudes and women's empowerment. By placing religious debates in the context of urgent social concerns, podcasters make their discourse not only informative but also socially applicable. This strategy invites listeners to think about where their religion overlaps with modern-day issues, and it promotes a more sophisticated view of Islam. The structure of these podcasts tends to invite critical thinking and discussion among listeners. The dialogue nature of the content invites give-and-take responses that shed light on different sides of Islamic teachings. For instance, Dr. Zakir Naik's explanation of the intricacies of the Quran encourages listeners to approach the text in a contemplative way, acknowledging its complexity and multi-level meanings. Such a dialogue-oriented approach encourages a climate in which listeners feel able to pose questions and request explanation, thereby broadening their comprehension of the faith. It also leaves the door open to challenging myths and gaining a greater appreciation for the diversity of Islamic thought.

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Appendix I

Clip 1: https://youtu.be/moMvEh_ZQrU?si=Z0xWRW0fFBriqmjB

Clip 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4B5Pj-xHYA

Clip 3: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/aFyzPCSP0Hw

Clip 4: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N34PmYx7mZA

Clip 5: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/JkoPI-nzq9c

Clip 6: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/FChZJsA6O8Y

Clip 7: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/43GmmoESvUE

Clip 8: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/cjeyfrR2UDk

Clip 9: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/dHVggf8HBwg

Clip 10: https://youtu.be/DtdK5t5AdBI?si=ALy5Ko1mHrLsvvLY