

Meme-ing Cricket: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Digital Humor Surrounding Pakistan's hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study explores the discourse of memes generated around the International Cricket Council (ICC) Champions Trophy 2025, a landmark cricket event hosted in Pakistan after nearly three decades. By applying critical discourse analysis, the research investigates how memes, blending visuals, text, and cultural references, serve as vehicles for humor, satire, and collective expression among South Asian cricket fans.

Methodology: Data was sourced from Facebook, the region's most popular social media platform, with memes purposively sampled from a larger pool of 10,000. The study focused on those with the highest engagement (likes, comments, shares) for in-depth qualitative analysis.

Findings: The findings reveal that memes not only entertain but also critique player performances, team dynamics, and the unpredictability of the tournament, reflecting broader issues in cricket governance and national identity. Notably, the memes highlighted the irony of Pakistan's early exit as hosts, India's one-venue advantage, and Afghanistan's dramatic victories, blending humor with social critique.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that memes act as digital artifacts that construct, challenge, and reinforce collective identities and narratives in sports culture. The research highlights the role of memes in shaping online discourse, influencing public perception, and providing insights into societal realities through humor and satire, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection of digital culture, sports fandom, and contemporary communication in South Asia.

Keywords: ICC Champions Trophy 2025, Memes, Critical Discourse Analysis, Digital Culture, Cricket Fandom, Humor and Satire, National Identity, Social Media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fans and the media are expected to react passionately to the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, which will be held in Pakistan and is expected to be a major sporting event, especially for cricket fans in South Asia. In order to generate money for the ICC's development initiatives and to give the world's best teams a stage for competition, the ICC Champions Trophy, a prestigious international cricket competition with a rich history spanning more than 20 years, was first held in Bangladesh in 1998. The most recent 2025 Champions Trophy was held in Pakistan. The Champions Trophy has been held nine times since it began. India won the 2025 tournament after defeating New Zealand in the championship match.

An important milestone was reached in Pakistani cricket after a 29-year wait, as the country last hosted a major ICC tournament in 1996 when it co-hosted the ICC Cricket World Cup alongside India and Sri Lanka. However, a tragic incident of the terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore occurred in 2009, which led to a prolonged absence of international cricket from Pakistan. The incident forced the ICC to relocate all international matches from Pakistan, leaving the country's cricket fans without the thrill of live international cricket. Osborne (2015) explains how Pakistani cricket's history, which includes both triumphant and contentious moments that are reflected in public discourse and popular culture, has made it intricately linked to national identity, politics, and social issues. This intricate relationship is demonstrated by the broad responses to the ICC Champions Trophy, particularly through memes that express shared feelings, where cricket is viewed as more than just a game but also as a prism through which Pakistani social dynamics are discussed and debated.

The 2025 Champions Trophy was a triumphant return for Pakistan to the international cricket scene, demonstrating the country's passion for cricket and its ability to host top-tier competitors. With packed stadiums and thrilling matches, the tournament was a great success and laid the groundwork for Pakistan to host future international cricket competitions. As time has gone on, the Champions Trophy has developed into a fiercely competitive and eagerly awaited event that showcases the skills of the top cricket players in the world and provides fans worldwide with thrilling entertainment.

These days, memes are a ubiquitous way to share news, trivia, and information while providing viewers with an entertaining and thought-provoking experience. More like the lingua franca of the internet age, crossing language boundaries and geographical locations to create strangers as allies in a common experience of humor, reference, and communal insight. Mushtaq et al. (2025) examine the cultural significance of memes on social media platforms in Pakistan and India, highlighting how memes serve as carriers of political, religious, and national ideologies, particularly during moments of tension or celebration, as powerful tools for shaping public discourse. Shifman (2014) has elaborated that;

“In order to be passed along from one person to another, memes are 'loaded' on various vehicles: images, texts, artifacts, or rituals. According to this view, those observable meme vehicles are equivalent to phenotypes—the visible manifestation of genes. In other words, memes are idea complexes and meme vehicles are their tangible expressions” (p.38).

Social media platforms on the internet allow users to freely share content and comment without much oversight. While the majority of users behave respectfully, some take advantage of the anonymity and freedom these platforms provide to post offensive material. This open environment has encouraged people to express their humor more boldly by creating memes. Although memes are meant to be funny, they can sometimes be hurtful or offensive to certain individuals or groups (Suryawanshi et al., 2020).

The word “meme” was coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 as he sought a term to explain the cultural equivalent of genetic evolution. He defined memes as replicators—units of information that are passed on through symbols (Johann and Bülow, 2019). Troll memes, a type of offensive meme, are created with the intention of provoking or offending individuals or groups. These trolling memes can ignite heated discussion on social media and even impact real-world events. They have the potential to

cause financial losses for the companies or severely damage a person's reputation. Therefore, it is essential to detect and control the dissemination of such harmful trolling memes (Mishra and Saumya, 2021).

Cricket is one of the most popular and widely followed sports globally. Although the ICC Champions Trophy is held every few years, it garners immense attention because it features national teams, bringing together diverse groups of cricket fans worldwide. The most recent ICC Champions Trophy competition, according to the time this journal was written, ICC Champions Trophy, which was held in Pakistan, primarily with some matches in Dubai. However, when this competition was held, the 2025 Champions Trophy was always a trending topic on various social media platforms.

Many cricket fans use memes as their tool to convey information or experiences as well as satire, provocation, or to make fun of the opponents of the team they support and their fans. Therefore, the researcher will examine the discourse meaning of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 memes shared on Facebook by Cricket fans, which include the national team, players, money, stadiums, and even fans. These moments are interesting to discuss and analyze because there are still so many people who do not understand the meaning of the meme content that they saw. These memes have distinct and intriguing discourse meaning, which this study intends to highlight.

Cricket holds immense significance in South Asia, extending far beyond just being a game. For Pakistan, cricket is a matter of great pride and passion. The country boasts a rich cricket history, having won numerous international tournaments. However, the tragic attack on Sri Lanka in 2009 led to a significant setback, with international cricket matches being suspended in Pakistan for a long time. A generation of fans missed out on watching matches at home. The Champions Trophy 2025 is extremely important for fans in Pakistan, as it is a big international event in the country after 29 years. The event is an opportunity for the fans to see some excellent cricket in their backyard. The revival of international cricket in Pakistan is an indicator of positive change, and fans are getting excited and hopeful about it. Cricket history in Pakistan and the love of the fans add fuel to the fire for this event. For Pakistani supporters who have been eagerly awaiting the return of international cricket, the ICC Champions Trophy is a dream come true.

1.1 Research Objectives

- 1) Examining the type of humor employed in the memes.
- 2) To analyze how players' performance, team dynamics, and tournament unpredictability are critiqued through memes as collective expressions
- 3) To assess memes as cultural commentary addressing national identity, cricket governance, and the disconnect between investment and output.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to earlier research, memes are discursive texts that represent power, ideology, and social meaning rather than simple humor artifacts. According to scholars who use discourse analysis frameworks (Rodgers, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), meaning is created not only through language but also through images and their circulation in digital environments. With this multimodal approach, memes are positioned as intricate communication tools that internalize questions of identity, power, and resistance. This serves as a foundation, with researchers using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to show how discourse reproduces and constitutes social realities, especially in the context of participatory communication and meme analysis in popular culture (Fairclough, 1995).

Through a humorous combination of images and words that represent profound fan knowledge and social identity, Kassing (2020) examines how online sports memes are used by fan groups as trash talk during Real Madrid vs. FC Barcelona games to demonstrate how memes denigrate the opposition and exalt their own teams. Sports memes serve as a type of "trash talk" that enables supporters to challenge rival teams

and their supporters while simultaneously reaffirming group loyalty. They are multimodal texts that express rivalries and social interactions by fusing language and visual imagery.

Al-jahdali and Alaboud (2024) investigate the Saudi Arabian football fans' usage of memes in 2022 FIFA World Cup within the framework of the general theory of verbal humor (GTVH) which uncovers that memes utilize the GTVH's six knowledge sources of script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language-in a variety of humor approaches including irony, wordplay, exaggeration, sarcasm, and satire.

Memes not only serve to commemorate the national team's victories but also to ease tension following losses and to playfully criticize players, expressing significant cultural and contextual factors. Their research highlights how humor in memes is influenced by collective cultural knowledge and social experience specific to the Saudi environment. Rawlins (2024) examines memes shared by major sports betting companies on social media platform X to see how humor and timely references to recent sports events are strategically used to build a masculine digital persona. He shows that these memes foster a sense of community and engagement among followers as an effective branding tool, helping companies create a recognizable and relatable identity in shaping digital sports betting communities.

De-Groot (2025) discovers how internet memes in China emphasized the dynamic interaction between visual, textual, and cultural elements of memes with the socio-political context through complex multimodal creativity and semiotic remixing practices. Memes as powerful digital tools for expression, resistance, and identity formation shape contemporary communication and cultural representation.

Shoukat et al. (2025) stated that in the digital age, memes serve as a powerful medium for social commentary and reflect social narratives in Pakistan, after analyzing 80 memes from 2024 using Van Leeuwen's social semiotic model to explore their multimodal nature, encompassing political satire, cultural identity, economic issues, sports humor, and community practices. They reveal that memes not only entertain but also critically address serious societal problems through humor, challenging power dynamics within the global community in their ability to influence public perception. Memes can offer insight into societal realities and can contribute to a more positive global representation of communities like Pakistan's.

Memes have become cultural discourse within intercultural communication on Facebook, where "the examination of internet culture offers insight into new ways of constructing identity and communicating. Sport studies scholars have examined intersections of internet culture, sports, and the formation of identities internet culture" (Dickerson and Hodler, 2021, p. 335). The study employs a rhetorical and visual analysis to understand how memes combine images and text to convey socio-political messages and cultural identities. It highlights memes as participatory digital culture artifacts that facilitate the construction of online identities and cross-cultural dialogue. The research emphasizes memes' intertextual nature and their ability to transcend cultural boundaries, thus contributing to globalization and virtual community formation. The study also discusses memes' roles in the conversation about modern culture and their impact on cultural awareness, as well as their impact on social media users' cross-cultural interactions.

Memes, which combine written words and images to convey humor, criticism, and social commentary, are utilized as a form of digital discourse in online communities, according to Zubaidah and Ardelia (2018). Memes are relevant to daily conversation because the cultural knowledge that is commonly used to interpret them tends to reflect current social issues and trends. Social norms can be questioned or upheld by memes, which are a crucial tool for meaning-making and communication in the digital age. In their 2023 study, Panjaitan and Pasaribu investigate the semiotic meanings crafted in Qatari memes with FIFA World Cup themes. By taking into consideration four memes, they explored how signifiers, such as text and images, interact with signified ideas to create meaning, drawing on Barthes' semiotic theory.

Bogerts et al. (2025) use a combination of computational and interpretive methods to investigate the prevalence of hate speech propagated by far-right and conspiracy-driven agents through disparaging memes on German-language Telegram channels. With a corpus of over 2.7 million images gathered between January 2022 and July 2023 from 1675 channels, they found approximately 40,728 unique memes, and around 5.3% of them included discriminatory content. Among these, misogyny (31%), racism and LGBT hostility (each 28%), antisemitism (18%), and anti-Muslim sentiment (6%) were the most common, engaging polarized public debates by visual stigma and textual cues to subtly reinforce far-right ideologies.

2.1 Research Questions

- 1) What types of humor are employed in memes related to the ICC Champions Trophy 2025?
- 2) How do memes function as collective expressions critiquing player performances, team dynamics, and the unpredictability of the tournament?
- 3) In what ways do memes serve as cultural commentaries on cricket governance and national identity in South Asian cricket?

3. METHODOLOGY

As avid followers of cricket and active participants in South Asian social media, we quickly noticed the ubiquity of memes responding to Pakistan’s hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. These memes surfaced across platforms like Facebook and Instagram during and after high-stakes matches, especially when Pakistan faced defeats, controversial performances, or scheduling challenges. The widespread circulation of these memes highlighted how cricket fandom intersects with digital culture, national identity, and sporting rivalries in South Asia. Much like earlier work on memes in American sport and politics where the concept of ‘détournement’, or to challenge through absurdism to the hegemonic ideas occurs (Woods & Hahner, 2019; Shifman, 2014), we observed that cricket memes were not just jokes but discursive tools that shaped broader conversations about performance, governance, and identity as “memes move and change rapidly, and are often found in areas of the internet that not all readers may be familiar or comfortable with exploring” (Nagel, 2020).

In early 2025, we began systematically collecting memes related to the tournament. Given that memes thrive on replication and recirculation (Shifman, 2014), tracing their origins proved difficult. To address this challenge, we identified highly engaged cricket meme pages on Facebook, specifically those based in South Asia (Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan), as our primary sites of data collection. This regional focus reflects both the cricketing context of the Champions Trophy, where four of the eight competing teams were South Asian, and the fact that Facebook remains the most widely used platform in this region, with over 520 million users (Global Statistics, 2025).

From these sources, we assembled a dataset of fifteen memes for critical discourse analysis (CDA). The total pool included thousands of memes created during the tournament, while our sample was selected using a purposive sampling method. We prioritized memes with the highest engagement—likes, comments, shares—and those representing various themes such as humor, critique of players, governance, nationalism, and cultural stereotypes. For this study, we employed a purposive theoretical sampling strategy. Instead of aiming for representativeness, we chose 15 memes based on their relevance to the research goals, specifically how cricket-related humor shapes ideas of national identity, rivalry, and social commentary (Campbell et al., 2020, p.654). Following the principles of theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987; Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014), the dataset was developed iteratively, with memes selected for their ability to highlight contrasts (Pakistan vs. India, or Afghanistan vs. Pakistan) and to reflect common themes of humor, sarcasm, and nationalism in online cricket discussions. Each meme, including its visual elements and textual captions, served as the unit of analysis.

Our analytical approach was informed by cultural studies and discourse analysis traditions. Following Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social

practice, we examined how the memes constructed meaning through language and imagery (text), how they were circulated and consumed in online fan cultures (discourse practice), and how they articulated broader social and political concerns (social practice). Previous studies (Dickerson, 2016; Al-Jahdali & Alaboud, 2024) demonstrate that memes operate as critical cultural texts, and we extend this insight to cricket fandom.

Intertextuality was central to our reading. As Birrell (2007) argues, all texts derive meaning through their relationship to other texts, and cricket memes were no exception. Many memes referenced Bollywood films, political speeches, or previous cricket controversies, amplifying humor through shared cultural memory. This intertextuality allowed us to trace how memes functioned as collective expressions that both entertained and critiqued, while also reinforcing stereotypes or reimagining national identities. Following Kristeva’s (1986) conceptualization of texts as mosaics of other texts, and further developed by Jin and Yoon (2016) in relation to popular culture, allows us to understand how cricket memes reference, remix, and reframe existing cultural narratives of nationalism, rivalry, and humor.

By treating memes as digital cultural artifacts, this study sought to address three research questions: (1) “What types of humor are employed in memes related to the ICC Champions Trophy 2025?” (2) “How do memes function as collective expressions critiquing players, teams, and the tournament itself?” And (3) “In what ways do memes serve as cultural commentaries on cricket governance and national identity in South Asia?” Our analysis thus situates memes as more than fleeting jokes, framing them as part of an evolving discourse where sport, culture, and digital media converge.

4. RESULTS

Figure 1. A meme comparing Haris Rauf’s expensive bowling figure to a Bollywood potato-selling scene.



This meme went viral after the first match of Champions Trophy between Pakistan and New Zealand. The meme is divided into two parts: the upper part shows New Zealand’s batsman Will Young scoring 107

runs, Tom Latham scoring 118 runs and Glenn Phillips scoring 61 runs in that match. This part of meme encourages New Zealand players, played really well and gave Pakistan a good target of 320. The lower part of meme trolls the Pakistani bowler Haris Rauf who conceded the most runs of 83 with the economy of 8.30 in 10 overs. The meme also includes text “150+ bowler” and “Fifty lelo, Century lelo (take fifty, take a century), which is a troll aimed at Haris Rauf, as his bowling speed is 150km/h, yet he conceded the most runs. Basically this is a Bollywood movie scene where a man selling potatoes, on a potato stand, take the potatoes, take the potatoes (Netflix India, 2021). Haris Rauf is being compared to this man for giving away too many runs, take the fifty, and take the century. This meme attracted a total of 8.4k likes, 217 comments and 226 shares.

Figure 2. A meme portraying Babar Azam in a New Zealand jersey to satirize his slow scoring during a chase.



This meme got 10,000 likes, 483 comments, and 505 shares. This meme also went viral after the first match of the Champions Trophy between Pakistan and New Zealand. In this meme, Babar Azam is wearing a New Zealand jersey, and he is receiving “Player of the Match”. This meme is trolling Babar Azam’s slowest half-century 50(81) with a strike rate of 61, while chasing a huge target of 320 runs. This meme is showing that Babar Azam is playing for New Zealand. This is the same surface where the kiwi batting line-up was led by Will Young and Tom Latham, both of whom scored impressive centuries, setting up an impressive total. In reality, this picture is of Tom Latham when he’s receiving his player of the match award after playing a sensational innings of 118 runs (ESPNcricinfo, 2025) but memers has replaced the face of Tom Latham with Babar Azam, because despite being set in home conditions, Babar got out after scoring 64 runs with the slowest strike rate in modern day cricket exactly when team needed his runs the most.

Figure 3. A meme satirizing Abrar Ahmad's mocking gesture toward Shubman Gill by placing him at a Karachi bus stop, symbolizing Pakistan's early exit.



This meme's popularity was evident, with 230,000 likes and 6000 comments, and 6.8k shares. This meme generated widespread virality in the aftermath of the highly anticipated cricket match between Pakistan and India played on February 23rd at the Dubai International Stadium. This meme ruthlessly trolls Pakistani spinner Abrar Ahmad when he mocked India's one-day international (ODI) number one batsman Shubman Gill by shaking his head and telling him to leave the pitch after getting him out. Abrar's was in response to Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya's gesture of waving goodbye to the Pakistani ODI No. 2 batsman Babar Azam after dismissing him in the first innings.

Abrar Ahmad was trolled because when he got Shubman Gill out at 100/2 in 17.3 overs, the match had already slipped out of Pakistan's hands, and India had virtually sealed the game. Therefore, his celebration was unnecessary and futile. In this meme, Abrar Ahmad is shown standing at a bus stand in the same pose, because Pakistan had almost been eliminated from the Champions Trophy 2025, because Pakistan had already lost their first match against New Zealand and had almost lost to India as well, and now Abrar Ahmad is waiting for a bus at a Karachi bus stand to head back home.

Figure 4. A meme contrasting Pakistan's celebratory hosting of the ICC Champions Trophy with their rapid elimination, underscoring the irony of lofty expectations versus early disappointment.



This meme exploded in popularity following Pakistan's humiliating ouster from the Champions Trophy, after they suffered a crushing defeat in their inaugural two group matches, effectively sealing their fate and marking a dismal end to their campaign. This meme has two parts. In the first part, Sarfraz Ahmad (winning captain of the Champions Trophy for Pakistan) is shown holding the Champions Trophy, alongside the president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, with his daughter Aseefa Bhutto (member of the national assembly). This photo is from February 19, when the opening match of the Champions Trophy 2025 was about to start. The three of them were supposed to showcase the trophy on the ground before the National Anthems of Pakistan and New Zealand in the inaugural match.

This photo also has a caption, "waited 29 years to host an ICC event". The underlying interference is that Pakistan resumed its role as a host nation for an ICC event following a protracted hiatus of 19 years. Notably, the country's previous stint as a host was in 1998, when it co-hosted the ICC cricket World Cup in conjunction with India and Sri Lanka. After the 2009 terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team, Pakistan was deprived of hosting any ICC event. In the lower and second part of the meme, Indian batsman Virat Kohli and Axar Patel are shaking hands with Pakistani players Babar Azam and Imam ul Haq after defeating the Pakistan cricket team in Dubai International Cricket Stadium. This part of the meme is also accompanied by a descriptive annotation: "Eliminated in 4 days, Pakistan almost eliminated from CT25 in less than 4 days."

This means Pakistan became the first team to be knocked out of the tournament in just 4 days. They lost their first match to New Zealand on February 19 and their second match to India on 23rd February, which almost confirmed their exit from the tournament. So basically, this meme is trolling the Pakistan cricket team, which is ironic and defending champions, and also most importantly, they are the host of the tournament, yet they became the first team to be eliminated from the tournament. This meme went viral, amassing a staggering 70,000 likes, 1400 comments, and 2.3k shares.

Figure 5. A meme contrasting England's premature celebration with Gulbadin Naib's triumphant flex, symbolizing Afghanistan's unexpected victory and the caution against celebrating too early.



This meme gained significant attention and spread quickly during the England vs. Afghanistan match, earning over 37,000 likes, 743 comments, and 776 shares. This was the eighth match of the Champions Trophy, played between Afghanistan and England on March 26. It was a Group B match and a must-win for both teams if they wanted to reach the semi-finals. Both teams had already lost their first matches, and losing this one would mean their elimination from the tournament. Afghanistan won the toss and chose to bat first, setting a target of 326 in 50 overs. In response, England made a vigorous effort to chase the target, especially Joe Root, who scored a magnificent 120 runs, making the match intensely exciting until the very end.

It was a nail-biting, evenly matched contest with both teams capable of winning, but ultimately, Afghanistan triumphed by a narrow margin of 8 runs. This meme also has two sides. In the upper scene, an England fan is seen rolling up his shirt sleeve, revealing his biceps and celebrating, showcasing England's strength as the team edged closer to victory. This scene was captured at the moment when England needed just 18 runs off 15 balls with 3 wickets remaining. The text "Action" accompanying this scene serves as a reminder that you should never celebrate too early and that every action has a reaction.

In the second scene, the Afghan cricketer Gulbadin Naib, in a cheeky gesture, celebrates his team's win by showing off his biceps, taunting the England fan for his premature celebration. So basically the meme conveys two messages: Every Action has a Reaction, the England fan's premature celebration (Action) led to the Afghan players' triumphant flexing (Reaction) as a way of saying "you celebrated too early". And the second is 'Never celebrate too early': the meme cautions against celebrating before the outcome is certain, as the England fan did. It's a reminder to stay humble and wait until the final results are confirmed.

Figure 6. A meme satirizing ICC Champions Trophy 2025 team standings, contrasting India, Afghanistan, and Australia's dominance with England's struggles and Pakistan's elimination as hosts.



This meme blew up after the 8th match. It all went down after the crazy England vs Afghanistan match, where Afghanistan defeated England by 8 runs and kicked them out of the Champions Trophy. The meme basically roasts the team standings after eight matches in the most hilarious way. This meme effectively combines humor, symbolism, and cricket context to critique the performance of teams in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. At the Top, a child happily playing in the pool represents Afghanistan, India, and Australia. India's on fire, crushing both group matches against Bangladesh and Pakistan and securing a semi-final spot. Afghanistan is still in the tournament after defeating England by 8 runs in group B, and they will punch their ticket to the semi-final if they win their next match. Australia easily won their first match against England, chasing down 351 runs in just 47.3 overs.

Their second match got rained out, but they still have one match left. If they win, they will comfortably storm into the semis. So, in short, India, Afghanistan, and Australia are performing well in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. The middle image, depicting a struggling child, represents England (the Inventor of cricket), England had a nightmare start. They got thrashed by Australia, failing to defend a massive 351-run target. And then, they suffered a heartbreaking 8-run loss to Afghanistan, knocking them out of the Champions Trophy 2025. The bottom image, featuring a skeleton underwater, symbolizes Pakistan's worst condition in the Champions Trophy 2025. Not only are they eliminated after two losses, first against New Zealand and second against India, but their poor NRR (-1.087) is significantly worse than England's (-0.305). Although both teams are out of the tournament, Pakistan is being shown in an even worse condition than England because of NRR, and adding to their irony, Pakistan's exit is especially disappointing since they were the ICC tournament hosts, hosting ICC events after 29 years with upgraded stadiums, yet failed to capitalize on home conditions.

Figure 7. A meme contrasting collective teamwork of New Zealand and India with Pakistan and England's reliance on individual performances in the Champions Trophy 2025.



This meme uses visual satire to critique, appreciate, and compare the perceived main players' performance dynamics of four major cricket teams, namely New Zealand, India, England, and Pakistan, in the context of the Champions Trophy (CT) 2025. The visual structure represents each team player's performance differently, reflecting popular cricket narratives. On top, New Zealand players, namely, Mitchell Santner, Glenn Phillips, Matt Henry, and Tom Latham, are collectively pulling the cart (Cart refers to their own Cricket team), signifying teamwork and equal contribution. The inclusion of multiple key players suggests a well-balanced side where responsibility is shared. In the first match against Pakistan, New Zealand batted first, scoring 320 runs. Tom Latham and Will Young both scored magnificent centuries, while Glenn Phillips contributed 61 runs off just 39 balls, with a strike rate of 156.41. New Zealand won the match by 60 runs. New Zealand also easily won their second match against Bangladesh. These players are leading their team from the front in every match.

This portrays New Zealand as a side built on collective effort rather than individual brilliance. In the second spot, India's representation is much similar to New Zealand; multiple players like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Ravindra Jadeja, and Shreyas Iyer are also pulling the cart, reflecting a team-oriented approach. In the first match against Bangladesh, Muhammad Shami took a five-wicket haul, Rohit Sharma scored 41 runs with a strike rate of 113.88, while Shubman Gill made a not-out century. In the second match against Pakistan, Virat Kohli made a sensational century while Shreyas Iyer scored 56 runs in the first inning. In the last group match against New Zealand, Shreyas Iyer again scored a 79-run winning innings. The presence of senior players indicates a strong squad with depth and balance.

In contrast, England's depiction shows that their senior players Jos Buttler, Liam Livingstone, and Phil Salt are comfortably seated in the cart; this means that they didn't contribute much to their team's win, while only one player, Joe Root, struggles to pull it. In the first match against Australia, Joe Root scored 68 runs in a partnership with Ben Duckett. In the second match against Afghanistan, Joe Root played a brilliant innings of 120 runs, but no other England player could support him. As a result, the entire England team got out for 8 runs short and got eliminated from the Champions Trophy. In the 3rd match against South Africa, the entire England team got out for 179 runs. Root was again the highest run scorer,

scoring 37 runs. Pakistan's representation stands out as the senior players Babar Azam, Muhammad Rizwan, Haris Rauf, and Shaheen Shah Afridi are seen pushing their cart instead of pulling it. This visual metaphor suggests disorganization, struggle, and pressure on individual players to carry the team forward.

In the first match against New Zealand, Babar Azam scored 64 runs on 90 balls while chasing a 320-run target. Muhammad Rizwan scored 3 runs on 14 balls with a strike rate of 21.42, while our premium fast bowler, Haris Rauf, gave 83 runs with an economy of 8.30. In the second group match against India, once again, the Pakistan team panicked and got out for 241 runs. Babar Azam scored 23 runs, while Rizwan scored 48 runs with a strike rate of 59.74. Only Saud Shakeel managed to score a half-century. While chasing the target, Shaheen Afridi gave away 72 runs in 8 overs with an economy of 9.25, and Haris gave away 52 runs in 7 overs.

Only Abrar Ahmed bowled decently, but he could only manage to take one wicket. In both group matches, not a single Pakistani player managed to score a century, and neither did any bowler take a five-wicket haul. The frustrated expressions on the players further reinforce the stereotype of inconsistency and over-reliance on standout performers. This aligns with the broader narrative that Pakistan's cricket team is often unpredictable, capable of producing remarkable moments yet prone to inconsistency. The meme's humor stems from this exaggerated portrayal, blending cricket discourse with relatable stereotypes. By contrasting controlled pulling with chaotic pushing, the meme emphasizes the perception that teams like New Zealand and India thrive on teamwork, while England and Pakistan are more dependent on individual performances. The meme got 16k likes, 186 comments, and 512 shares.

Figure 8. A meme depicting Afghan players as laborers, reflecting how humor reproduces social stereotypes and reinforces class-based and national marginalization in the Champions Trophy 2025.



The popular meme is a nuanced critique of the overlap of sports, identity, and social perceptions. In the wake of the match abandoned between Afghanistan and Australia, which resulted in Afghanistan's exit from the tournament, the memes ridicule Afghan cricketers Rashid Khan and Fazalhaq Farooqi dressed in the clothing of the Afghan flag forced upon their jerseys. The caption "back to original work" takes center stage, suggesting that the players are going back to their alleged origins in physical toil, divesting them of their sporting persona. This kind of humor emphasizes the dynamics of power involved, whereby

sportspeople from less powerful cricketing nations tend to be stereotyped and mocked. The meme also illustrates power dynamics, whereby the dominant cricketing nation earns its rightful place, and the weaker one is subject to online trolling. By linking Afghan players with work, the meme serves to reinforce wider stereotypes of Afghans as workers (infamous as bread-makers/Nanbai) instead of sporting professionals. Finally, the meme addresses not only a sporting result but also indicates wider societal attitudes towards minority groups and international inequalities. The humor, although apparently lighthearted, and yet is weighed heavily to emphasize the nuances of national pride, athleticism, and social perception. The meme received 5000 likes, 3400 comments, and 96 shares.

Figure 9. *A meme of Travis Head with the caption "Nice win India," satirizes Australia's psychological edge over India in high-stakes matches.*



This meme includes Australian batsman Travis Head smiling with the statement, "Nice win, India". This meme could appear to be straightforward, but it is really a subtle and profound reference to his strong track record vs. India in close-knit knockout games. It became popular following India's win against New Zealand in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 group-stage match and received 10,000 likes, 2,700 comments, and 482 shares. This victory decided that India's semi-final opponent would be Australia. It captioned Travis Head, wishing India congratulations, but with an undertone of expectation and confidence. The undertone is from Travis Head's past performances against India in knockout games, being extremely high. Particularly, in the 2023 World Test Championship (WTC) Final, Travis Head made 163 and 18 runs at The Oval (England), claiming the Player of the Match award and taking Australia to victory. Subsequently, in the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup Final in Ahmedabad (India), Travis Head made a vital knock of 137 runs, leading Australia to triumph even when they were 50/3 at one point in time. His capacity to perform well under pressure, especially against India, provides an ironic twist to his congratulatory smile, as though he's eagerly expecting another match-winning act in the semi-final against India. The meme skillfully exploits cricket fans' knowledge of these prior events, mixing humor and sporting tension for Indian fans. It's as though Head is saying, "Good on you, India. Now it's my time to shine". This humorous but tense meme has emerged as a funny expression of the psychological contest between Australia and India before their semi-final showdown.

Figure 10. A meme contrasting New Zealand's extensive travel with India's single-venue advantage under the Champions Trophy 2025 hybrid model.

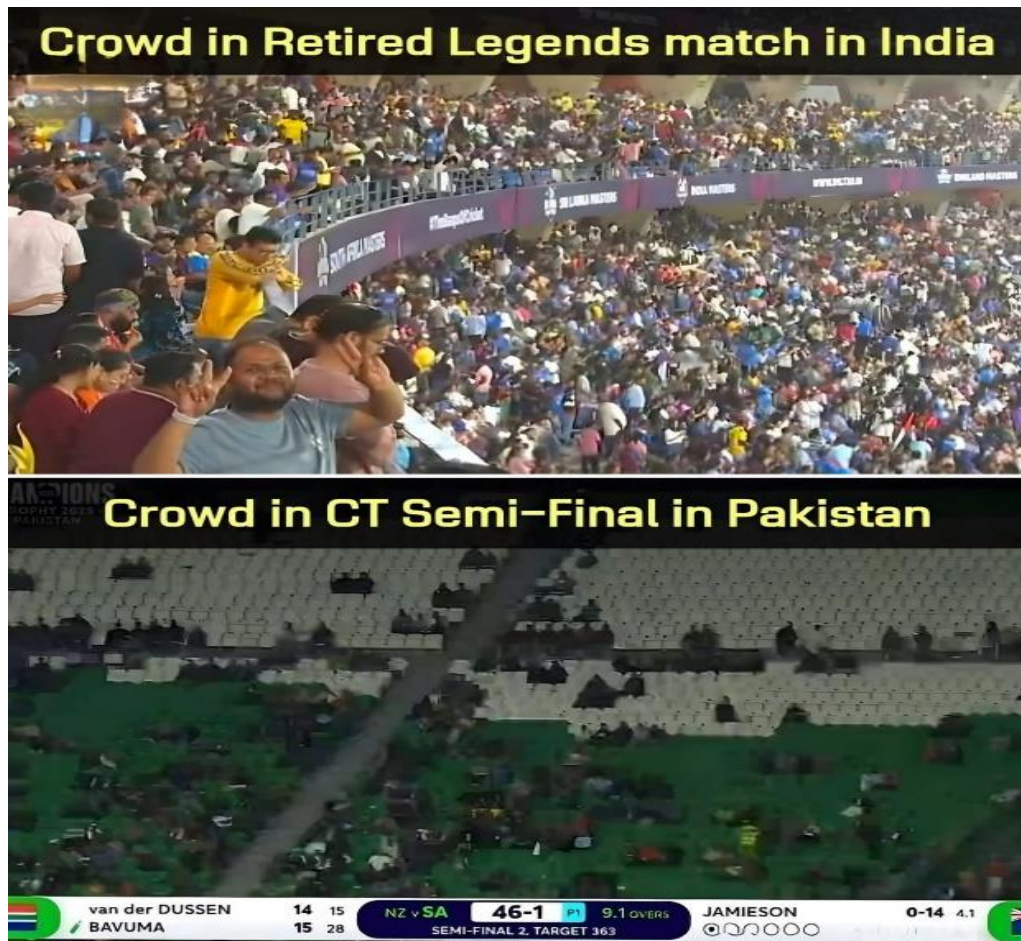


The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 has spawned a hilarious meme that cleverly captures the contrasting experiences of the New Zealand and Indian cricket teams. This meme rapidly circulated online following New Zealand's victory over South Africa in the semifinal, which secured their place in the final held in Dubai. It got a whopping 7200 likes, 221 comments, and 112 shares pretty impressive. This meme carries a layered meaning that reflects the circumstances of the ICC Champions Trophy in Pakistan. The meme is divided into two parts: In the upper side, a person is shown running back and forth, symbolizing the New Zealand cricket team. The text above alternates between "To Pakistan" and "To Dubai," illustrating the constant travel New Zealand endured during the tournament. In stark contrast, the lower portion of the meme depicts a relaxed individual, smoking a cigarette, epitomizing the Indian Cricket Team stress-free experience in the tournament. This visual highlights how the Indian team played all their matches at Dubai International Stadium, avoiding the travel fatigue that plagued other teams. The context behind this meme is rooted in the scheduling of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. After 29 years, Pakistan hosted an ICC event, following the security concerns that arose after the 2009 Sri Lankan team attack.

While other international teams agreed to play in Pakistan, the Indian team cited government policies as the reason for their absence. Consequently, the ICC implemented a hybrid model where India played all their matches at a neutral venue in Dubai. The tournament structure further amplified this contrast. Group A (India, Pakistan, New Zealand, and Bangladesh) played most of their matches in Pakistan, except when facing India, which took place in Dubai. Conversely, Group B (Australia, Afghanistan, and South Africa) played all their matches in Pakistan. New Zealand had a more demanding schedule. They opened against Pakistan in Karachi, then played Bangladesh in Rawalpindi, and India in Dubai. Having progressed to the semi-final, they came back to Lahore to play against South Africa, defeated them, and had to go all the way back to Dubai to play the final against India. At the same time, India had all its games at the single Dubai venue, so they had a huge advantage of not suffering from travel fatigue. The meme playfully

exaggerates the perceived unevenness of conditions in the tournament, making light of the extreme difference between the travel inconvenience of New Zealand and India's relatively hassle-free experience. By judiciously employing visual metaphors, the meme highlights the difficulties encountered by teams throughout the tournament and introduces a light-hearted note into the discussion.

Figure 11. A meme contrasting India's packed stadiums with Pakistan's empty seats, humorously emphasizing differing cricket cultures and fan passions.



Through the comparison of crowd attendance in India and Pakistan, this meme constructs cricketing culture discourse and national rivalry. The top part, depicting a jam-packed stadium in India during a Retired Legend Exhibition match, symbolizes the country's deep-rooted cricket passion, where, in the past, even former players attracted a massive audience. On the other hand, the bottom part shows empty stands in Pakistan during a Champions Trophy semi-final between South Africa and New Zealand, a high-profile international fixture, yet failing to draw significant crowds. This comparison creates a symbolic hierarchy, portraying India as the "true cricket capital" and Pakistan as struggling to generate excitement despite hosting a major ICC event. Through satire and exaggeration, the meme shifts the discourse from on-field performance to off-field fan culture, using visual humor to highlight differences in infrastructure, audience behavior, and national passion. At a deeper level, it reflects digital nationalism, where memes amplify pride in India while mocking Pakistan, turning stadium crowds into markers of cultural strength and weakness. The meme gained significant traction online, receiving over 10,000 likes, 1.2k comments, and 428 shares. Its popularity demonstrates how humor blended with rivalry resonates strongly with digital audiences. Such engagement also reflects how memes function as participatory discourse, allowing fans to align with narratives of pride or rivalry.

Figure 12. A meme depicting shifting cricket alliances, isolating India with Afghanistan's support while New Zealand garners wider sympathy, reflecting fandom shaped by politics and emotions.



This meme, which went viral after India qualified for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 final, constructs a clear narrative of divided cricketing loyalties. The top half of the meme features the Indian cricket team with the flag of India and Afghanistan, accompanied by the caption “ Supporting India in the final,” indicating that only these two nations are standing behind India. Afghanistan’s support is rooted in a political supporting context, as India has hosted Afghanistan’s international matches due to terrorism related security issues in Afghanistan, making India their symbolic “Home Ground”.

In contrast, the bottom half of the meme shows the New Zealand team along with the flags of Pakistan, Australia, England, South Africa, New Zealand, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (not part of the Champions Trophy), with the caption “Supporting New Zealand in the final”. This framing conveys that, apart from Afghanistan, most cricketing nations and their fans favor New Zealand. So the major reason is New Zealand’s repeated misfortune in ICC tournaments, where, despite reaching finals, they have never won a single ICC Trophy, thereby drawing global sympathy and neutral support.

The meme thus highlights India’s relative isolation versus New Zealand’s collective backing, reflecting not just cricketing rivalry but also deeper geopolitical and emotional contexts. This meme got a massive 96,000 likes, 12.8 comments, and 2.4k shares. Its popularity in terms of likes, comments, and shares demonstrates how memes function as a potent form of online discourse that combines rivalry, humor, and sports politics to influence public opinion in a humorous yet significant way.

Figure 13. A meme pairs Glenn Phillips's airborne grabs with Bollywood's "Pehla Nasha," mixing nostalgia and cricketing awe.



This meme shows the remarkable fielding performances of New Zealand batsman Glenn Phillips during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Pakistan by ingeniously fusing cricketing genius with Bollywood nostalgia. A well-known scene from the song *Pehla Nasha* is used in the meme, in which the protagonist, overcome by the emotion of first love, spreads his arms wide and sings, "*Udta hi phiru in hawao me kahi*" (I feel like I'm flying somewhere in the air). With the caption, "No one," Glenn Phillips's famous quote, "*Udta hi phiru in hawao me kain*," is humorously connected to this moment. This ingeniously implies that Phillip appeared to be flying through the air due to his fielding.

This meme works because Glenn Phillips made some incredible, flying catches in the tournament, almost like he was soaring through the air. He took three standout catches, the first one against Pakistan, the Champions Trophy opener between Pakistan and New Zealand in Karachi. Phillips flew to his left to grab a one-handed stunner to send back Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan. The second one against India, Glenn Phillips takes an "absolute screamer" of a catch at backward point to dismiss Virat Kohli for 11 and leave India 30-3 in their ICC Men's Champions Trophy group match in Dubai. And the third one again against India, Glenn Phillips takes a stunning catch to dismiss Shubman Gill in the Champions Trophy 2025 final.

Gill was batting at 31 off 49 balls when he chipped the ball towards Phillips, who was stationed at cover. Each of these catches required Phillips to jump, dive, or stretch mid-air, giving the impression that he was almost gliding like a bird. His ability to time his leaps perfectly and maintain balance while airborne became a defining feature of his fielding in the tournament. By connecting this with the *Pehla Nasha* song, the meme humorously captures Phillips' seemingly effortless movement in the air, as if he were floating just like the song's character. The reference to the song's dreamy vibe aligns well with the sense of awe Phillips created through his gravity-defying catches. This blend of Bollywood pop culture with memorable cricket moments not only entertains but also emphasizes Phillips' impressive athleticism. The

meme resonates with fans because it taps into shared emotions, both the thrill of first love expressed in the song and the amazement felt while watching Phillips pull off those incredible catches. Such creative content reflects how sports moments often transcend the field, becoming part of popular culture in unique and relatable ways.

Figure 14. A meme comparing India's "one venue" Champions Trophy win in 2025 with England's 2019 World Cup boundary rule triumph, humorously critiquing external advantages in tournament outcomes.



This meme hit 26k+ likes, 4.1k comments, and 1k shares. England's boundary count champions and India's one venue champions win just got a whole lot funnier. This meme consists of two parts: an upper part showing the England team celebrating their World Cup victory, accompanied by the text "Boundary Count Champions." This caption is a reference to the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup Final, where England won the tournament based on the number of boundaries hit. The ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 Final was played between England and New Zealand. New Zealand batted first, scoring 241 runs in 50 overs, setting a target of 242 for England. England also scored 241 runs in 50 overs, resulting in a tied match. Two teams without a World Cup title between them in 44 years of the men's competition. After 100 overs, the last couple of which contained almost as much drama as a few previous finals in their entirety, nothing could separate England and New Zealand. For the first time in World Cup history, a Super Over was required to determine the winner.

Asked to score 16 from six balls, Jimmy Neesham coolly struck Jofra Archer's second legitimate delivery way back into the Mound Stand, making the equation seven off four. A brace of twos followed, before Archer's bumper took Neesham off strike. Martin Guptill, at the end of a tournament of personal trial, needed to hit two more; otherwise, England would take the trophy on boundaries scored. Archer found a yorker, Guptill found deep midwicket, and Jason Roy's throw found Guptill short; Jos Buttler completed the run-out at full stretch to end all those years of hurt and an afternoon of exquisite agony.

According to ICC regulations, in the event of a tied Super Over in the World Cup Final, the winner is determined by the team that has hit the most boundaries (fours and sixes) throughout the match. England

had hit 26 boundaries, surpassing New Zealand's 17, thus securing their victory and winning the World Cup. The lower portion of the meme depicts the Indian team celebrating their Champions Trophy victory, accompanied by the text "One Venue Champions." This caption is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the Indian team's experience in the 2025 Champions Trophy.

While all other international teams traveled to Pakistan to compete in the tournament, playing matches across various Pakistani venues, the Indian team cited security concerns and governmental policies as reasons for not participating in Pakistan. Consequently, the ICC designated a neutral venue in Dubai for India's matches. As a result, the Indian team played all their group matches, semi-final, and final at the Dubai International Stadium, without facing the challenges of traveling to different venues.

This has led to the Indian team being playfully mocked in the meme, implying that winning a tournament is easier when playing on a single, familiar venue. The meme draws a parallel between India's victory in the Champions Trophy 2025 and England's 2019 World Cup win, where England benefited from the boundary count rule to secure their championship title. Similarly, the meme suggests that India's "One Venue Champions" status is akin to England's fortunate win, poking fun at the circumstances surrounding their victory.

Figure 15. A meme critiquing PCB's heavy investment in stadium renovations versus Pakistan's early Champions Trophy exit, highlighting the irony between infrastructure spending and poor on-field performance.



This meme appears to be trolling the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Pakistan cricket team. This meme is on fire, hits 58,000 likes, 2000 comments, and 1.4k shares. The meme has two parts. In the first part, Mohsin Naqvi, the chairman of the PCB, is depicted during the renovation of the Gaddafi Stadium. The meme includes the text: "PCB spent 1280 crores to rebuild stadiums for the Champions Trophy." This text implies that the Pakistan Cricket Board has invested approximately 1280 crores (Pakistani rupees) to upgrade three venues, namely Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, National Bank Karachi, and Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Pakistan, for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. Notably, this marks the

first time in 29 years that Pakistan is hosting a major ICC event. Last Time, Pakistan had co-hosted the 1996 ICC Cricket World Cup with India and Sri Lanka. The meme seems to be highlighting the significant investment made by the PCB to host a successful ICC tournament in Pakistan. The second half of the meme mocks the Pakistan cricket team for being the host of the Champions Trophy yet becoming the first team to be eliminated from the tournament, finishing last in Group A. The meme includes the caption: "Pakistan cricket team received 2.20 crores prize money for Champions Trophy." In ICC events, teams receive prize money based on their performance, with the champion team receiving the largest share, followed by the runner-up, semi-finalists, and teams eliminated in the group stages. Given Pakistan's early exit and last-place finish in Group A, they received the smallest prize money allocation. The meme humorously highlights the irony that despite investing heavily in stadium upgrades, the Pakistan team's poor performance resulted in the smallest prize money payout. The meme playfully ridicules the team's underwhelming performance as hosts.

5. DISCUSSION

Memes about the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy offer insight into how comedy serves as a crucial discourse tool that both amuses and challenges cricket's sociocultural realities. Notwithstanding their humorous appearance, the memes reflect the symbolic significance of cricket in South Asia by expressing deeper meanings about identity, power, and common frustrations. By expressing collective sentiments and resisting official discourses, cricket fans use memes to position sports talk within broader cultural, political, and economic contexts. They do this by using exaggeration, irony, and parody (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2006). By reinterpreting Haris Rauf's expensive bowling statistics into a Bollywood analogy of "giving potatoes," Meme 1 makes people laugh. This intertextual borrowing from mass cinema challenges individual responsibility in collective loss and critiques Pakistan's pace-bowling identity on a level above simple humor, as demonstrated by CDA.

Meme 3 frames Pakistan's defeat as a reason to reframe Abrar Ahmad's taunting gesture against Shubman Gill as misguided belligerence. The meme, which places Abrar at a bus stop in Karachi, depicts a sociocultural narrative of "heading home early," making the overthrow of Pakistan a central theme. Irony disqualifies symbolic acts of resistance when they conflict with material realities, as demonstrated by CDA. In Meme 4, the team's quick elimination is contrasted with celebratory images of Pakistan's political leadership, creating a satirical observation between rhetoric and reality. Sports discourses intersect with nationalism, public trust, and governance, as the meme illustrates. It is political satire disguised as cricket fandom through its mocking of leadership.

Meme 5 uses the metaphor of premature celebration to describe Afghanistan's victory over England as an upset. While depicting sports as a place of uncertainty, the humorous "reaction-counter-reaction" setup also exalts Afghanistan's rise as a symbol of defiance against established cricketing powers. In cricket, CDA reveals how comedy undermines hierarchical models and exaggerates stories of underdog success. Meme 6, which depicts an underwater skeleton as a failure despite hosting aid, contrasts Pakistan's prosperous sides with the country. Using stark visual metaphors, humor in this case exposes the irony of infrastructure investments overshadowed by athletic collapse. The sociocultural component ridicules nationalist arrogance in organizing large-scale events and criticizes misaligned goals.

Using exaggerated metaphors of carts being pushed and pulled, Meme 7 emphasizes teamwork (India, New Zealand) over individual dependency (Pakistan, England). Invoking the claim that collective responsibility in modern sports is more important than relying on individual brilliance, this discursive narrative challenges cultural narratives of leadership, coordination, and blame. The way that Meme 8 mocks Afghan players as laborers encapsulates problematic humor. The meme supports the hierarchical power dynamics of international cricket by reinforcing class and ethnic stereotypes, according to CDA. Humor has the dual ability to both challenge and reproduce inequality, as demonstrated by the way memes can reinforce marginalization in addition to criticizing it (Wodak, 2001).

Depicting Travis Head's triumphant smile with "Nice win India" serves as intertextual irony (Meme 9), reminding the audience of previous Australian superiority over India in knockout matches. This meme illustrates how sports humor depends on historical memory, generating anxiety and expectation in fans' discourse. The embedded narrative focuses on psychological hegemony being a symbol of power. Meme 10 addresses uneven travel timetables between India and New Zealand, with logical imbalance portrayed as structural strength. CDA reveals the way humor is enlisted to challenge governance structures in ICC, questioning justice and covert power relations that determine sporting results. Fan culture is framed as a sign of national identity in contrast to the lack of enthusiasm in Pakistani stadiums (Meme 11). Reiterating pictures of cricket culture's decline, the meme attacks Pakistan for failing to arouse such passion even when hosting. Wider socioeconomic gaps in cultural capital and sports facilities are depicted in the story.

Moreover, Meme 12's 'switching sides' image, in which India stands alone while New Zealand is supported by others, uses humor to depict political histories, rivalries, and emotional bonds that go beyond cricket. Through the use of 'soft diplomacy,' CDA highlights how memes are used to inscribe power dynamics and geopolitical imaginaries into fan culture. Fielding becomes a cultural spectacle thanks to Meme 13's fusion of Glenn Phillips' athleticism and Bollywood nostalgia. This creative blending of intertextual references illustrates cricket's hybrid cultural positioning as both popular culture and sport, much like memes combine entertainment genres to emotionally engage fans. In contrast to England's dubious 2019 boundary-rule victory, Meme 14 criticizes India's "one venue" victory. CDA highlights how memes preserve dissenting voices against official celebratory discourse because, in this instance, humor serves as cultural memory, tracing continuity between controversial topics. The meme depicts contradictions between symbolic investments in image-making and material lapses in competitive achievement.

In a socio-political sense, it speaks to criticisms of governance inefficiency within sectors in Pakistan. This study explains how memes depict humor as a "cultural weapon" (Billig, 2005), allowing fans to resist authority, critique the governance, and negotiate national identity in a globalized cricket setting. Critical discourse analysis demonstrates that memes are not harmless objects but multifaceted texts within networks of intertextualities, representing the interactions between sports, politics, the economy, and culture.

6. CONCLUSION

The results from this study yield definitive answers to the three research questions. For Q1 (humor strategies used), the memes presented various humor strategies like parody (Meme 1's analogy using "potato"), irony (Meme 2's slow strike rate criticism), exaggeration (Meme 6's skeleton symbolism), and intertextual associations from Bollywood and cricket history (Memes 9 and 13). These humor types not only amused but also expressed multi-level criticisms of performances and reputations. Addressing Q2 (memes as collective expressions), the study demonstrated how memes articulated collective frustrations and solidarity through satirizing specific players (Memes 2 and 3), contrasting teamwork vs. Memes 7 and 5 highlight individualism and celebrate underdog victories, respectively.

These memes, which were widely shared, mirrored common affective investments in cricket and existed as participatory commentary that fans used to navigate pride, rivalry, and disappointment. Regarding Q3 (memes as cultural commentaries), the CDA was able to highlight how memes were criticizing more significant structures, such as perceived partiality in fixture scheduling (Meme 10, Meme 14), inefficient governance (Meme 15 regarding PCB expenditures), disproportionate fan cultures (Meme 11), and alliances influenced by geopolitics (Meme 12). These cultural analyses revealed how cricket is entwined with politics, economics, and South Asian national identity, going beyond the realm of sports. Collectively, the memes illustrate that humor is not a reflection but a strong discursive tool through which fans give voice to collective feeling, subvert dominant narratives, and perform cultural critique.

As memes continue to proliferate across cricket fandom and digital publics, their role in shaping discourse around performance, governance, and national identity cannot be underestimated. Our analysis demonstrates that memes are not simply humorous artifacts but powerful cultural texts that reflect, reinforce, and contest broader social and political narratives within South Asian cricket. In this regard, the study offers a framework for future media and sport scholars to take cricket memes seriously as critical sites of meaning-making, public sentiment, and collective negotiation of identity in an era where sport and politics are deeply intertwined.

6.1 Limitations of the Study

This research, by focusing exclusively on memes from South Asian Facebook pages, offers a concentrated lens on regional meme cultures, while future studies can build on this by extending the scope across platforms like Twitter and Instagram and incorporating broader geographic contexts for a more comprehensive analysis.

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Conflict of Interest

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