



## A Comparative Analysis of Pakistani and Indian Social Media Memes: Cultural Narratives and Social Understandings

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the sociological impact and linguistic characteristics of Pakistani and Indian memes, focusing on their occurrence on social media sites, and explores how these digital expressions influence cultural stories and public opinions. Employing content analysis, a diverse collection of memes were analyzed to identify themes, linguistic elements, and cultural references attached to the memes under study. Besides, the study seeks to uncover the distinctions between memes in Pakistan and India, their appeal to viewers, and their impact on and representation of social norms, political opinions, and cultural heritage. The study focuses on comprehending the language, humor, and visual elements used to effectively convey messages from memes in different countries. The research embraces cultural essence and offers a thorough examination of how memes influence public opinion and cultural narratives in Pakistan and India. The finding reveals that memes have evolved as powerful tools for social interaction, self-expression, and cultural commentary in digital networks. Study highlights the importance of memes in modern discourse and emphasizes to understand the symbolic meaning of memes for deeper knowledge in their sociological and dialectal aspects.

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## 1. Introduction

Social media provides a platform for people to share content in the form of text, images. (JPEG, GIF and others), videos and hashtag technology. Memes have taken over all social media platforms, be it Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or any other. Memes can also take the form of images and videos that convey or send certain messages, often humorous or satirical manners. (Pareek, 2022). These humor, satire and social commentary catalyzed a revolution in the way we communicate and spread ideas, fostering a virtual ecosystem where creativity knows no bounds. Memes, by their very nature, are more than just funny pictures or videos with funny captions. (S. Bukhari, and Tariq M., 2021). Images are shorthand for complex ideas and social peculiarities, refining them into edible structures that reverberate with surrounding crowds, from the infamous "Grumpy Cat" to "Distracted Boyfriend" and beyond. In friendship media, images are a means of connecting and exploring across various networks (Ali & Naz, 2023).

In an evidently interconnected world, they can be a vehicle for social and political publication and possess a rare ability to create talk, challenge norms, and provoke thought. Memes act as the digital era's common language, critiquing current events, exposing the absurdity of mainstream culture, or providing short breaks in the chaos of daily life (Nazeer & Ashfaq, 2023). Additionally, memes are highly effective in spreading quickly and widely online. They can enhance messages, drive movements, and influence public discussions in ways never before possible through likes, shares, and retweets. Neog (2024) in this sense, individuals function as democratizing forces that enable individuals to participate in the global creation and

dissemination of culture. However, great power comes with great responsibility. While images have without a doubt reformed web-based correspondence, they likewise bring up significant issues about the morals of realness, portrayal, and reception. S. Bukhari, and Tariq. M. (2021b) Memes can sometimes blur the lines between harmless entertainment and harmful misinformation, perpetuating stereotypes or spreading lies. Memes are, in essence, the mirrors and catalysts of our digital society, reflecting and shaping the spirit of the times. Exploring the always growing outskirts of the Web, images proceed to advance and adjust, filling in as powerful specialists of social articulation and social change in an undeniably interconnected world. Nowhere is this peculiarity more obvious than in South Asia, where nations like Pakistan and India gloat energetic web-based networks that effectively take part in self-culture to explore the intricacies of present-day life. (Ali & Naz, 2023) In these states, memes are not only sources of entertainment, but also powerful tools to express dissent, challenge norms and promote solidarity between different groups of individuals.

Against the backdrop of the shared history, cultural heritage and geopolitical tensions of Pakistan and India, a comparative analysis of these self-cultures promises valuable insights into the nuanced ways in which digital media shape and reflect social values, identity and public discourse. This study expects to undo the multifaceted implications and ramifications of these apparently immaterial computerized objects by analyzing the subjects, styles, and sociopolitical analysis implanted in the images of these adjoining countries (Saleem, Maqsood, & Abbasi, 2022). By excavating into the subtleties of language, silly elements, and visual imagery utilized in images, we try to enlighten the different manners by which Pakistani and Indian social orders approach and decipher computerized content. The study conducted by Mukhtar, Ayyaz, Khan, Bhopali, Sajid, and Babbar (2024) examines that how dialectical and regional languages influence on understanding memes and its hidden messages people disseminate using huge social media landscape. Applying content analysis, a varied collection views of memes were analytically investigated to recognize themes, and linguistic origins, and cultural references rooted within them. The findings revealed that memes serve as mirrors of societal trends, generational inequalities dynamics. Memes arose as strong driving force vehicles of social integration. In the age of information, memes are closely associated with norms, values, and culture of specific community which simulated and extensively dispersed from one individual to another using humorous manners and style. The material could be animation videos, & photographs (Dube & Mpolomoka, 2018).

### **1.1. Research Questions**

- What are the most common topics in images from India and Pakistan?
- What are the likenesses and contrasts between the substance, style and dispersion of Pakistani and Indian images?
- Why is it significant to study memes to understand the cultural ideologies and cross culture experiences?

### **1.2. Objectives**

To identify main themes, variations in content and distribution trends. By exploring these differences in depth, the study aims to reveal the complex relationship between digital expressions and their impact on cultural storytelling and social perceptions in each country. (Nazeer & Ashfaq, 2023). Furthermore, the study seeks to deepen understanding of the nuanced ways in which memes shape public opinion, political sentiment and cultural identity in the respective contexts of Pakistan and India.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

By examining contrasts in complacency, this study can reveal how electronic humor and research reflects larger social characteristics, conflicts, and characters in each country. The importance of this study is its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and social aspects of Pakistan and India through the lens of images in Internet entertainment. Besides, the research would add to understand areas of cultural, media, and human psychology. It is important to note that memes have deep influencing public perception (Salam, 2021).

## **2. Literature Review**

Akbar and Safdar (2023) The study of digital media memes has increased in recent years, recognizing their role as effective means of communication. Consolidating humor and social

critique, images have become key to online talk, working with the spread of social belief systems and philosophies. Their viral nature and far-reaching dissemination have prompted what a few scientists call a "memetic warfare," in which images are utilized decisively to impact general assessment and shape stories. This examination adds to this arising field by analyzing the open elements of images with regards to elevated political strains among Pakistan and India and enlightens the job of images in forming public talk and social accounts in the advanced age. The investigation of web-based entertainment in Pakistan has picked up speed because of the stage's immense impact on open talk. Ali and Naz (2023) observes the role of linguistic devices such as hashtags, memes and emoticons in shaping online conversations and sheds light on the power of digital narratives and the dynamics of authority. The results provide valuable insights into the complexity of social media communication, which affects social cohesion, political participation and public opinion formation. Memes are modified, repetitive communications that are quickly distributed by members of participatory digital culture in order to continue a conversation. We recognize that memes evolve from emergent memes, which we describe as altered or remixed spreadable content. Our approach benefits from the addition of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, which helps us understand how memes as products of participatory digital culture are generated. Our meme genre creation reveals the generative power for ongoing memetic evolution and digital cultural engagement. Leiser (2022); Wiggins and Bowers (2015) found that viral political memes on internet impact momentarily on current occurrence. In the study of memes, scholars understand the association of different thought and culture trends.

The result of political memes shows that users see memes as an opportunity to comment publically in their own way. Participants also discuss the possibilities and limits of memes in a political context, noting that political memes can only support other efforts. S. Bukhari, and Tariq. M. (2021b), debates the varied role of political selves in determining public opinion in Pakistan's current political horizon. By studying the moral aspects and agenda strategies intricate in the creation of political personalities, the aim is to find out their impact on public debate. Using the framed technique of Agenda Setting theory, the analysis examines how political memes contribute to the formation of certain narratives and views, especially during important political events such as the "No Confidence Movement 2022". The findings highlight the potential of political selves to both replicate and shape public insights and highlight the need for further research into their wider social impact and impact on democratic procedures. This study examines the role of political memes in online discourse, concentrating in specific on their possible to uphold effective divergence. Using a thematic analysis, the study presents different discourse patterns including: defamation of opponents; dehumanization and derogatory language or comparisons; character assassination questioning moral/social integrity. This certainly illustrates how fiery the political rhetoric in digital spaces was getting including with inflammatory statements and accusations of slighting, undervaluing at purifying your opponents. The virtue of such knowledge is imperative to the understanding and implications of online politics in Pakistan on social cohesion, democracy discourse. Khan (2024); Salam (2021) Explores the association between online meme feeding and offline political meeting through a quantitative analysis of survey responses, stress the potential of memes to notify, amuse and activate young users in politics.

By studying visual symbols, military visuals, and gendered nation-building, the research exposes the ways in which hyper-nationalism and collective culture shape one's view of Pakistan. Additionally, Saleem, Maqsood, and Abbasi (2022), explored that legitimization of radicalism through anti-Indian discourse and underlines the echo chamber phenomena in Pakistani social media, which is rising and can exacerbate the effect of polarization current in society. The culture of message using memes on internet is growing with rapid pace. With digital world and availability of Social Media landscape and changed the transmission of language culture People now have lot of space. People a remarkable space for trolling on social media platforms, the most common are and Instagram Twitter, Facebook. (Hamid & Afshana, 2022). In their study Social Media and Meme Trolling: The Impact of Trolling through Memes in Kashmir opined that memes are now recognized as a cultural unit because they are passed down from person to person. Trolling with memes is quite common tr in Kashmiri youth now-a-days and the use of memes is high among the youth of Kashmir. Though memes are not easy to comprehend, they help to add more information than any other source. Political memes on internet have gained immense popularity and the researcher, journalists and people are taking much interest to understand the obscure meaning in language and symbols and their syntax, and cultural references. Frazer and Carlson (2017) in their analysis of understanding the Indigenous memes and the invention of a people,

they concluded that through the careful narrative of the memes and noted that how the colonial collection of works through "making missing" Indigenous people impacted on people. The second analysis of study looks toward Facebook users' engagement with the memes. It dealt with state politics, Australian colonial history, and cultural knowledge.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical approach, which draws from media psychology and cultural studies, aims to comprehend how memes, as digital objects, influence public opinions and cultural narratives. Cultural studies elaborate and provide clues about the symbols used and in which context they are used, whereas media psychology works in a deeper context and provides a sense of the use of digital images and rose behavior and emotions in the viewer's mind. Both cultural and psychological studies help audiences understand the role of memes in digital culture and their impact on social discourse. The study investigates how memes convey and uphold the social values, identities, and beliefs of Indian and Pakistani people using the concepts of cultural studies. Furthermore, the study applies media psychology concepts to investigate how memes influence public opinion and collective attitudes. The research aims to disclose the themes, symbols, and discourses hidden in memes and shed light on the complexity of these two countries' meme cultures using qualitative content analysis based on theories of communication and discourse analysis. The theoretical framework of this study watched the all aspect of using memes with extensive lens through and investigate the active relationship between characters, cultural descriptions, and social considerations in the age of digital technology.

### 4. Methodology

The study's approach entails an intensive data collection process spanning multiple social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, using hashtags, popular meme pages or groups, and hot themes, an accurate representation of memes from Pakistan and India is gathered over a six-month period to ensure diverse content. After undergoing a qualitative content analysis, gathered memes are divided into groups according to subjects including humor, politics, entertainment, and social issues. By capturing the subtleties and regional differences in self-culture, this method seeks to establish a strong foundation for examining how these digital manifestations both reflect and influence societal conceptions and cultural narratives. The sampling method used to select memes was random, the memes chosen are based on their popularity, fandom and usability scale. To make the study more relevant and expressive, memes sparkly present political and cultural trends in a funny manner were specifically chosen. They signify diverse viewpoints and points of view. One of the most momentous considerations is the timeframe. For qualitative research, in-depth analysis is used. The visuals and tone employed were clearly conveyed, adding to the already fantastic knowledge into the topic. The collected visual content for memes were taken various social media and credited. The content and terms used in this document is not intended to harm or make fun of any individual, it's solely for analyzing point of view.

### 5. Analysis

#### 5.1. Indian Memes

- **"Bhupendra Jogi" Meme**

The meme featured a reporter asking him to name a few places he had visited in the US; however, he responded by stating his own name instead of answering the question. This meme begins with interview where a man asserted that Madhya Pradesh's roads are superior to those in the United States. When asked to name the places he visited in the United States, he answered with his own name. The meme, which is frequently made by people and public figures, became popular because of its ridiculousness.

The cinematic scene was initially taken at the time of Madhya Pradesh elections held in 2018. Jogi, received immense fame when attached in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal. Jogi, got sympathy from audience when admitted in for treatment at a private hospital in Bhopal for severe injuries. India today highlighted this story with the caption "*Bhupendra Jogi was attacked while he was returning home after work*".

The comical mix-up of Bhubhinder replying his own name rather than the places he visited in US resonated with a lot of people as the poverty stricken people of India have never been able

to visit a European country and if the economy continued to go downhill they will hardly be able to afford a living.

Figure 1



### 5.2. "So Beautiful, So Stylish" Meme

This meme features Jasmeen Kaur's is based on exceptional phrase used to label a salwar suit that has become a popular trend on the internet. People, including celebrities and politicians, jumped on the trend by making scrolls and using the phrase in headlines. It gained maximum popularity in Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Odisha and Jharkhand.

Figure 2



Viral catchphrase "So beautiful, so stylish, got fame same as the 'wow!' captured attention of public. This phrase become the reason of her popularity in overnight. Out of nine top memes in India this meme has taken the online realm by storm during the period 2023. The unique style promoting her product of the small boutique owner in Delhi engulf fans around the world, now the phrase has been used worldwide as in complimentary quote.

### 5.3. "Moye Moye" Meme

This meme involves people reacting to different situations and dancing "Moye Moye", taken from the chorus of the song "Džanum" by Serbian singer-songwriter Teya Dora. Despite



the song's theme of longing and rejection, the meme gained significant traction and went viral. The Serbian song's chorus "Moje More" roughly translates to my nightmares. The song tells the viewers about a person struggling to deal with emotional and mental baggage, the meme rose to stardom because of its relatability with GenZ youth, and their current constant emotional state.

**Figure 3**



#### **5.4. "Aayein" Meme**

This meme is from an interview with Aditya Kumar, a sixth grader from Bihar, where he answered the questions 'ayein' and 'Baigan'. It is used in the classic "what?" for a while and became popular for its humorous twists.

**Figure 4**



#### **5.5. "Aukat Dikha Di" Meme**

This meme originated from a scene in the Tamil film Aayitha Ezhuthu where Suriya's character enters the Parliament. It humorously portrays a person's true abilities or status and has created quite a buzz online. The meme is used as a callout or a witty taunt when someone acts a certain way, as showing their true colors.

Figure 5



## 6. Pakistani Memes

### 6.1. "Saeen tau Saeen" Meme

This meme originated from a song by Ali Gul Pir mocking the rights of the feudal class in Pakistan. It portrays a stereotypical image of privilege with captions like "Not only Saeen, her hanger/plant/smile is also Saeen." The memes emphasize the luxurious lifestyle associated with the elite class and their tendency to control everything they own. Furthermore "Saeen tau Saeen" meme is some of the memes attained prominence in recent year. It is taken from "waderay ke beta" (The feudal lord's son) as mentioned above. It mocks at the wisdom of rights class in Sindh who enjoyed all benefits. Saeen is a Sindhi term that is most usually translated as lord. It is traditional to refer to Sindhi people as Saeen. The song featured a traditional Sindhi young feudal ruler proclaiming, "Saeen tau saeen, Saeen ka kutta bhi Saeen." (Not only is he named Saeen, but so is his dog). This moustache, as well as the well-known Sindhi cap, were part of the stereotyped portrayal. Saeen is a Sindhi word that more commonly translates as lord. It is customary to refer to Sindhi people as Saeen too.

Figure 6



### 6.2. "Mufti Saab" Meme

Inspired by a televised conversation between Veena Malik and a priest, the meme features her famous line "Mufti sahib, what's the point?" It satirizes the dominant religious discourse in Pakistan and challenges conservative views by questioning their logical consistency. The hypocrisy and ridiculousness of the religious scholars has given popularity to mufti sahb meme when the religious scholar was called out by a former actress and activist. Which challenged their

conservative society into thinking the logicity of rethinking the religious statements given by these popular religious figures.

### 6.3. "Sultan Rahi" Meme

This meme is based on the loud and aggressive personality of 80s Punjabi movies with actor Sultan Rahi. It comically present the contrasts in his arrogant attitude with unexpected action such as refusing to play Candy Crush, showing the illogicality of his iconic character in a modern context.

Figure 7



### 6.4. "Eye to Eye" Meme

Based on Tahir Shah's popular song "Eye to Eye," this meme makes fun of the singer's peculiar lyrics and bizarre performance. It captures the ridiculousness of pop culture trends and our sarcastic inclination to accept them. "Eyes are a vibrant part of Asian and eastern passion of love and grace and is considered as basic concepts of ishq aur adaa. Taher Shah gained viral popularity because of his extraordinary acumen and amicable behaviour. Taher Shah proclaimed a new Hollywood Start with the title Eye to Eye. It is the same name as his first song released ten years ago. The film according to him would be a big hit.

Figure 8





### 6.5. "Valentine's Day" Meme

By contrasting the destruction inflicted by a priest's bomb with an intact Valentine's Day message in a car, this meme condemns religious conservatism. It casts doubt on the idea of divine intervention and emphasizes how ridiculous it is to put religious dogma before of humanistic principles.

Figure 9



### 6.6. Bhupendra Jogi (India) Vs. Saeen Tau Saeen (Pakistan)

The meme created by Bhupendra Jogi originated from an interview in which he playfully sidestepped queries regarding his travels while in Madhya Pradesh, India. Contrariwise, the meme "Saeen Tau Saeen" comes from a song written by Ali Gul Pir that satires Pakistan's feudal system of justice. Whereas the "Saeen Tau Saeen" meme makes fun of societal hierarchy through satire and exaggerated caricatures. The meme shaped by Bhupendra Jogi portrays humorous the daily encounters in Indian culture, while the "Saeen Tau Saeen" meme addresses socio-political concerns unique to Pakistan, like privilege and feudalism.

#### 6.6.1. Comparison in Cultural Context

The Bhupendra Jogi meme also parodies commonplace comic exchanges in Indian society, but "Saeen Tau Saeen" addresses Pakistani sociopolitical themes including privilege and feudalism. The similar economic status of both countries, and the Caste and status system has given a common ground because of poverty, and similar naive cultural mentality of the two nations.

#### 6.6.2. So Beautiful, So Elegant (India) Vs. Jasmeen Kaur (Pakistan)

Although there are fashion-related statements in both memes, "So beautiful, so elegant" is a response to a trend in Indian fashion. The idiom "that one" is a Pakistani invention attributed to Jasmeen Kaur.

#### 6.6.3. Current Style

Jasmeen Kaur's line "So beautiful, so elegant" became well-known through movies and reels, but the meme is frequently used as a caption or response to images.

#### 6.6.4. Geographical Popularity

Both The "So Beautiful, So Elegant" and Jasmeen Kaur's meme memes were most popular and viewed in India and Pakistan.

#### 6.6.5. Comparison in Cultural Context

The regional popularity of the Pakistani meme Jasmeen Kaur and the Indian meme "So Beautiful, So Elegant" differ from one another. Although Jasmeen Kaur's statement "So beautiful, so elegant" originated in response to Indian fashion trends, it is distinctly Pakistani. The trend's

format also varies: Jasmeen Kaur's meme became well-known through films and reels, while "So beautiful, so elegant" is frequently used as a caption or response to images. Region wise Jasmeen Kaur's meme was very most widespread viewed and received attention. Likewise "So Beautiful, So Elegant" achieved popularity in India. The data was collected and analyzed based on inter related themes and cultural significance. The themes were identified based of their cross border relevancy, popularity and their excessive use by users.

## 7. Findings

Memes from Pakistan and India can be contrasted to reveal a fascinating array of regional variations in humor sensibility, social situations, and cultural peculiarities. Despite their common history and geography, these countries' identities reflect the variety of interests shaped by their unique socio-cultural contexts. In India, memes work as mirrors, reflecting the dynamic fabric of everyday life with references to household interactions, Bollywood icons, and a multitude of regional languages and cultures. These memes resonate deeply with audiences that find humor in the awkward familial dynamics and peculiarities of Indian weddings. Given how diverse and wide-ranging Indian society is, memes could appeal to a wide range of interests, from food to cricket and everything in between. Nonetheless, Pakistani memes usually delve into the country's political terrain and offer biting commentary on current events, cultural preconceptions, and current affairs. Pakistani memes, with a penchant for wit and sarcasm, adeptly navigate difficult subjects by fusing humor and biting social criticism. Whether they mock prominent figures, examine social mores, or make jokes with their Indian counterparts, Pakistani memes show a profound awareness of the world they live in. Furthermore, the different patterns in Pakistan's and India's self-cultures can be explained by historical, political, and linguistic factors using memes as source or tools. Besides, Indian and Pakistani memes are almost the same in it presentation. Memes is being used as a universal language and its use is growing with swift pace.

## 8. Conclusion

Mukhtar et al. (2024), in their study, *Memes in the Digital Age: A Sociolinguistic Examination of Cultural Expressions and Communicative Practices across Border*, stated that a meme on the internet is defined by Davison (2012) as "a part of a culture, usually a joke, which obtains impact through online communication." Scott E. Fahlman is thought to have designed the first Internet meme, popularly known as "the smiley face" emoticon. The ":-)" meme, which is made up entirely of punctuation marks, was originally created to express comedy and sarcasm in formal, official internet email correspondence. Many people found the idea intriguing, and within a few weeks, the smiley-emoticon became extremely popular. Emoji is also a classic example in this regard. A substantial amount of political memes and their captions of both countries (Pakistan-India) concentrate on mockery, teasing and criticism. These memes often realize the political leaders and government to have a look on policies, and critical issues of society. Internet platform is a source of Cognitive dissonance for the people. The complexity of each nation and their centric political approach the widespread of using memes for self-satisfaction is still on. These memes represent the nation's shifting socio-political landscape, which is characterized by convergences between concerns of religion, identity, and governance. Conversely, Indian identities heavily draw inspiration from everyday existence, local languages, and domestic settings. This reflects the wide range of influences that have created the country's social structure as well as its rich cultural variety. Indian memes exceed the complexities of modernity, highlight cultural quirks, and encapsulate the nuances of daily life—from the bustling streets of Mumbai to the tranquil backwaters of Kerala. Notwithstanding these differences, humor is a creative and resilient feature that both Pakistani and Indian self-cultures share and use to express themselves, build networks, and resist in the digital age.

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