



COVID-19 Pandemic: Facebook Hate Speech in Escalation of Inter-ethnic & Sectarian Hatred

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Abstract: In a technologically fast paced world, social media has no doubt shrunk the distances yet has equally put humankind in a power position to change the course of its life, society and state with a mere click publishing and reshaping the unique content to an unlimited sea of audience. In the wake of the Covid-19 uncertainty the existing biases flooded not only in the public offices but also social media, i.e. Facebook and Whatsapp. The fragile inter-ethnic and inter sectarian peace of Quetta suffered as insecurities among citizens were on the rise forming the ripe conditions for an ethno-sectarian violent situation which also could take turn into either genocide or civil war. This research attempts to explore this phenomenon by investigating the role of Hate Speech over Facebook and analyzing its effects on inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian relations in Quetta. Research questions how the hate speech over Facebook goes viral and has a hand in the violent incidents in the city. This study also attempts to find how naive common citizens perceive certain hate statements and in turn how the hate speech shapes the pre-existing biases and beliefs. Facebook posts of specified time period were analyzed into the frame of the Speech Act Theory. The outcome of the study shows that a majority of students were able to identify the hate speech and verify that their opinions were not affected by it. Moreover that the physical world changes and unrest causes a wave of hate speech over Facebook, which in turn incites more violent developments in the physical world as the hate speech publishers and writers are well hidden behind the screens with fake identities and thus can incite violence playing with words on any agenda.

Keywords: ethno-sectarian violent, Hate Speech, Speech Act Theory

I. INTRODUCTION:

With the advent of internet, mobile communication, smartphones and social networking applications and sites, production and distribution of information to comparatively larger audience locally and globally is a tap of a finger away as per the convenience of the user or producer of the information in this era (Allan & Zelizer, 2004) and this combination of Technology and easy access Social Networking software, not only provides the opportunity to common people to self-generate, reformate, edit, distribute, redistribute almost any kind of content globally, but also create the possibility of the content self-reception by the receivers or audience in contact and the cherry on the top is the interactive nature of the medium (Bukhari, S. K. U. S., Gul, R., Bashir, T., Zakir, S., & Javed, T., 2021).

After the advent of web 2.0, Social networking sites over the years have become an important part of our daily life, as of 2019 almost 3.484 billion (45.38%) of the world wide population are active on social media sites (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2019). People of almost all ages use Facebook to connect with people globally and for socialization purposes. The users enjoy freedom of adding and sharing their opinion and information on the web freely (Idrus & Hitam, 2014). Founded in 2004, Facebook today is the largest social networking site in the world with over 2.6 billion monthly active users across the globe (Duong, 2020).

While these social networking sites are a great means of timely mass communication, it also has provided the space and means for harmful and hateful campaigns against specified groups and individuals. It doesn't just cease at the harmful or hateful comments, status updates and statements shared but also takes a turn into

incitement to any kind of violence which sometimes end up deadly. These hate campaigns, trolling and cyberbullying can be directed at individuals by individuals or groups but also directed towards a group of people discriminated against on the basis of their race, ethnicity, and gender. These hate campaigns and call for hate crimes have a tendency of turning into physically violent campaigns(Del Vigna¹², Cimino²³, Dell'Orletta, Petrocchi, & Tesconi, 2017).

Facebook user statistics in Pak and Quetta:

Given the fast penetration of internet and social media, according to Internet world stat, 2016 report, the growth of facebook users in Pakistan is 14% per annum. The total users of facebook worldwide were 2.7 billion till the June of 2016(Zulqarnain, 2017).

There were 38 260 000 Facebook users in Pakistan in February 2020, which accounted for 18.2% of its entire population. The majority of them were men - 79.7%. People aged 25 to 34 were the largest user group (15 000 000).The highest difference between men and women occurs within people aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 9 000 000. (Napoleon Cat website)

The first ever research conducted on the topic of online hate speech, by APC member Bytes for All Pakistan in 2014, with 559 respondents, revealed that more than 92% of Pakistani Internet users faced online hate speech. 51% of which found themselves as the target of the said hate speech. And 65% of the total population of the research faced hate speech often. The shocking reveal is that 91% of the respondents faced hate speech on Facebook. 89% of the respondents had come across online hate speech against the Shia sect. In terms of linguistics 74% of the hate speech on Facebook was in Roman Urdu, 22% English and only 4% was in Urdu script(APC, Bytes for All). Though this survey was conducted back in 2014, it should have at least warned or worried authorities in Pakistan and as well as that of Facebook about the potential risks and damages caused by the Hate Speech against minorities in Pakistan.

According to another recent report published by Dawn in April of 2017, there are 41 out of 64 banned outfits present on Facebook in the form of pages, groups and individual accounts numbering more than 700 which are well connected and networked. They comprise a mix of Sunni, Shia banned terror outfits and some of the global terror organizations operating from Pakistan. Their pages have more than 160,000 followers. The pages are used to share the extremist and sectarianism ideologies openly in roman Urdu form which implies that it is for consumption of the local audience(Haque & Bashir, 2017). These reports were conducted when the world was more certain and there was no pandemic creating chaos. One can easily estimate the potential of unrest and risks of ethnic and sectarian disharmony leading to verbal, nonverbal and physical clashes in a global pandemic scenario in a country like Pakistan.

Ethnicity-Sect:

Ethnicity is a comprehensive and multifaceted term that is inclusive of several factors and qualities such as Religion, geographical location, political morals, social class and language. Although there is no consensus on the definition of ethnicity by scholars but many theorists believe that Ethnicity is defined as the group of people who are seen as and conceive themselves as different from other groups based on how they dress, language and mores. Various scholars take into consideration the different aspects like country of birth, nationality, language spoken at home, skin color/facial features (an aspect for consideration for some and not for others), national/geographical origin and religion. However, ethnicity includes all these aspects, and others, in combination, is widely accepted(Kimotho & Nyaga, 2016).

While on the other hand the term Sect defines a group of believers of a religious, philosophical, or political orientation when this group holds differences in its teachings and rituals from, or opposed to, the prevailing convictions in society(Ayub, A., Gul, R., Malik, M., Sharjeel, Y. M., Rauf, B. M., 2021). The term is usually connected with a religious sect in schism with a larger religious group(Bishara, 2018).

In the context of this research the groups stand at the intersection of ethnicity and sect. The communities living in Quetta city have their defined identities based on their ethnicity and sect, where the majority is Non-Hazara Sunnis (Pashtun-Baloch) and the minority is Shia Hazaras.

Hate Speech:

Defining Hate Speech has always been complex and controversial globally. The definitions vary country to country given their legislation and social-religious setup. Despite the wide debate in academic and political circles there is no universally agreed upon definition of Hate speech (Stakic, 2011).

However according to Robert Mark Simpson (Simpson, 2013), Hate Speech is a political and legal term used to define any verbal or symbolic communication which deliberately expresses hostility towards an individual or group based and distinguished by their characteristics; religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation. It is a form of verbal abuse and harassment using slurs and derogatory expressions which call for the ill treatment or incite violence against the particular group/individual in question.

Since this research is based within the jurisdiction of Pakistan, we shall have a look at what the Pakistan Penal Code's article 153-A titled as Promoting Enmity between different groups state;

“Who (a) with words, spoken or written, or through signs, or through visible representations or otherwise, promotes or incites, or attempts to promote or incite, for reasons of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or community or any other motive, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill will between different religious, racial, linguistic or regional groups, castes or communities; or

commits, or incites any other person to commit, any act that is detrimental to the maintenance of harmony between different religious, racial, linguistic or regional groups, castes or communities or any group of persons identifiable as such for any reason and that disturbs or is likely to disturb public tranquility; or organizes, or encourages any other person to organize and exercise, movement, drill or other similar activity with the intention that the participants in such activity use or be trained to use criminal force or violence or knowing that the participants are likely to in any such activity will use or be trained to use criminal force or violence or will participate, or incite any other person to participate, in such activity with the intent to use or be trained to use criminal force or violence or knowing that it is probable that participants in any such activity will use or be trained, to use criminal force or violence, against any religious, racial, linguistic or regional or caste group of the community or any group of persons identifiable as such for any reason and any such activity for any reason Causing or is likely to cause fear or alarm or a feeling of insecurity among the members of said religious, racial, linguistic or regional group, caste or community. will be punished with imprisonment for up to five years and a fine” (Haque, 2014) .

For the social network hate speech is “content that attacks people based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or disease” (Facebook, 2016). However for this research we are considering the definition given by Facebook and that of the Pakistan Penal Code since the platform we are considering for this research is Facebook within the boundaries of Pakistan.

Ethnic and sectarian tension in Quetta:

The Sectarian violence and tension has been with the Hazara community since the start of the nineteenth century when Amir of Afghanistan Abdul Rehman declared a war against them due to their religious beliefs. The afghan jihadist carried out a campaign on Shia hazara on a large scale which many human right experts refer as Ethnic Cleansing. The Sunni majority across the region view Hazara minorities as a persistent contempt. Sectarian and ethnic conflicts have dominated the capital city of the largest province of Pakistan for nearly 2 decades. The boundary walls were built to ensure the safety and security of the two Hazara resident areas but the walls have also caged and cut off the Hazara community from other communities physically and mentally. The decline in the terrorist attacks came with a high price of being prisoned into these walled areas and limited movement of citizens. Yet these walls have created a massive mental, emotional and physical barrier between the Hazara Community and other communities living in Quetta. On a daily basis people who

don't match the facial features of Hazara are stopped and questioned at those check posts and their entry is denied since they do not belong to this area. Which has consequently increased the distrust towards the Hazara community for having an exclusive area.

Besides this, Quetta is the route for Shia Pilgrims coming from Punjab, KPK and Sindh leaving for the holy places in Iran, Iraq and Syria. After the bombings on the Shia pilgrims in 2014, the security agencies (FC Balochistan and district administration) now escort the Shia pilgrims from Quetta to Taftan Border ensuring their tight security. (BBC-2014). Those pilgrims are temporarily moved into the walled area of Alamdar Road until the security agencies get the security clearance and permission of movement. During their movement through the city the routes are closed for the general public which has caused huge inconvenience for the general public at odd hours. Often resulting in slurs and hatred towards the Hazara Community from the people blocked in the traffic during the movement (videos of which surfaced on local Facebook pages).

The Us Vs. Them Concept:

This attempt into securing the area by building walls has created a sense of Us and Them among people living on both sides of the wall. In other words, there has been a development of In-group and Out-group classification among people living on both sides of the walls. Since Hazara community lost lives due to the huge bombings at their door steps, they have felt insecure of everyone who doesn't look and speak like them around their resident areas. While those who live outside Hazara resident areas (Hazara Town and Alamdar Road) tend to consider themselves as outcasts when entering those areas despite being a lawful citizen of the same city and country.

The whole of the above stated scenario can be justified by the psycho-social identification theory of Us and Them which is basically concerned with divisions based on political, financial, racial, national, sectarian, ethnic and other social and moral categories (Gul, R., Khan, S. S., Mazhar, S., & Tahir, T., 2020). The members of the groups derive their identities and self-esteem by associating to those groups (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979). The member of groups involved in a matter/event consider themselves to be better, on the right side of the line, more deserving of resources or consider the event as a discrimination against themselves thus becoming the victim and associating bad feelings and qualities to the opposite group and in severe cases developing hostility and hate against the opposite group. A competition among the groups for any resources is not needed for the hostilities against each other, just a mere thought of distinction between two groups dividing them into us and them feeling is enough to spark hostility and exterminate empathy. In other words, giving birth to hate towards the other group (ArashEmamzadeh, 2019).

As the uncertainty situation increased during the outbreak of Covid-19 the gigantic number of pilgrims coming back from Iran specifically led to the general concept that The Shia Hazara pilgrims were transporting the virus into Pakistan which re-ignited the hostility and hatred towards the community during February of 2020. Specifically in the light of the orders banning Hazara employs from their offices directly implied that only Hazara community was responsible and the sole career of Covid-19 in the entire province, ignoring the fact that majority of those pilgrims belong not to Hazara Community but to other areas and ethnicities of Pakistan as well.

As the study by Williams and Burnap (Burnap & Williams, 2016) suggested that just like the offline hate the cyber hate (online Hate) also peaks up as a result of trigger events. Given the previous and current social (Gul, R., Kanwal, S., & Khan, S. S., 2020), ethnic and sectarian circumstances of Quetta, the rise in the uncertainty at the outbreak of Covid-19 followed by the mob lynching incident of Hazara town, the public hatred and hostility on Facebook was severe than before.

Speech Act Theory (SAT):

After a careful review of literature, this study adopts the Speech Act Theory (SAT), as the theoretical framework to answer the research questions. The theory clearly provides the framework of understanding the perception of Hate Speech and its consequences given the circumstances of our research.

Since the language is the basic means of communicating and organizing communities, it is used to achieve a certain behavior out of members of society using persuasion, criticism, dissuasion and other forms of verbal communication. (Ayeomoni&Akinkuolere 2012) Therefore, understanding the whys and hows of the effect of language is fundamental to this research on Hate Speech.

Austin's speech act theory argues that to say something is to commit something or in other words to utter something is to actually perform the act. We do not just say or utter things; in fact we perform the certain act by merely uttering it. (Austin, 1975). The speech act theory is further categorized into 3 categories by Austin names as

1. Locutionary act, 2. Illocutionary act and 3. Perlocutionary act

The Locutionary act: is saying something with a specific reference and it having a certain sense in relation to the reference.

The illocutionary act: is the act that is performed by mere utterance of the statement or verb. where act is named and known by the explicit performative verb/word

The perlocutionary act: is the act or series of acts happening as a consequence of the utterance of a certain statement or verb/words . (Searl,Vanderveken, 2005)

The illocutionary act is always under control of the speaker since it is a typical linguistic act. on the other hand, the perlocutionary act is totally out of control of the speaker since the consequences totally depends on the circumstances and specific conditions under which the speech was performed. The aim or objective of a speech as the perlocutionary act may or may not come to fruition since it is totally out of control of the speaker. the speaker may speak/perform a verbal act (Hate Speech) which is Illocutionary in nature, in order to get a certain result (Incite public for violence against certain group) as Perlocutionary in nature, yet the result is totally dependent on how people perceive the act and as well as the fertile grounds of acception and further echo of the initial hate speech/ message and as well as the consequential result/act as per incited by initial hate speech(Zanghellini, 2003). For this research we will be analysing the data on the illocutionary and as well as perlocutionary standards of speech uttered or typed.

Austin's classification

Though Austin classified the illocutionary verbs into 5 categories but his classification was criticized and is not considered complete by many scholars. for this research we will consider Searl's classification of illocutionary verbs which gives a comprehensive yet easy understanding of illocutionary acts

1. **Assertive:** The very basic and simple illocutionary act that simply represents a state of affairs. these bound the speaker to the truth of the expressed intention which may be claiming, suggesting, describing, hypothesizing, asserting, telling, insisting or even cursing.
2. **Directive:** An illocutionary act which is addressing someone specifically addressee to do something. it is basically used to order someone to perform an act. the hearer is urged to take a particular action, request, command or advice like ordering, commanding, daring, defying or challenging.
3. **Commissive:** Those statements which commit a speaker to do a further act, like promises, threats, intends, or vow to make someone do something or to stop them from doing a specific thing.
4. **Expressive:** An illocutionary act which shows or indicates about the true feelings or mental state of a speaker regarding an event. presumably, regression, mourning, cheering, pain.
5. **Declaration:** It is basically the act of declaring an act of affair, like war. when a speaker says something it happens so. For instance, a call to action(Kimotho & Nyaga, 2016).

II. METHODOLOGY:

This Chapter is divided into two sections. The first section talks about the research methods that are widely used in social science researches, a content analysis of viewpoints of Facebook based posts and comments,

escalating hate speech against Hazara Community and second one is the third section which includes the data collection and data analysis method that is used to draw results for this exploratory research.

The aim of this study is to explore the content posted on Facebook about any community which accelerates hate speech and hatred among communities by inciting to violence and hate. Broadly for this purpose of the content analysis approach employed in this research the social networking site (Facebook) is the target population. Through Facebook, the data is collected which is called the sample of this research. All the content (Status updates, pictures and comments) that contained any words and sentences inciting violence, threatening and abusive language or tone were selected as samples for this research irrespective of the identity and ethnicity of the author on Facebook.

Conceptual & operational understanding of research:

From this time period researchers observed the content of Facebook aimed at or by Hazara Community. The data is collected from Facebook pages and individual posts and comments which contain the keywords, phrases and sentences conceptualized as hate speech. This study has endeavored to explore the language/words of those posts and categorize them based on Illocutionary and Perlocutionary definitions of Speech Act Theory which is used as the tool to assist for the operational process of this research. The Unit of analysis for the current study was that every individual posts and community pages hate speech content posted on Facebook during a specified time period.

The data for this research was collected during Feb 15- June 15 which covers the whole duration of social unrest in Quetta, a representation of which could be witnessed over social media particularly Facebook. Keeping in view the algorithms of Facebook we searched all the Facebook posts containing key words relating to the situation in Quetta for the mentioned time period. Those keywords are Hazara Community, Covid-19, Coronavirus, Hazara town incident, Bilal Noorzai, Shia pilgrims, Corona in Quetta and statement of High officials. The posts were sieved based on the number of interactions, engagements and relevance to the matter. Similarly comments from only those posts were picked which had the most interaction and labelled as top comments by Facebook algorithms. The total number of posts collected for the data analysis are 115. Out of which 100 were finalized for the data analysis. The data was collected through keyword hashtags concerning the start of covid-19 uncertainty. The posts from influential community and individual pages containing news, opinion and updates on the issues happening between Feb 15 to June 15 with most interactions and reach were selected for the analysis. Furthermore, the top comments on high reach posts were also included in the analysis. The Facebook algorithm helped in that since it picks up the top comments automatically. The key words used are: Hazara Town, Mariabad, Covid-19, Coronavirus, Zaireen, Quetta, Hazara town incident, Bilal Noorzai.

CODING OF DATA / FORMATION OF THEMES OR CATEGORIES:

Data was being coded according to according to speech act theory into 5 categories and sub-categories. i.e:

Declarative:

1. The first code group that falls under the declarative category is named as Racial-Sectarian Profiling and Allegation; which is indicated by all those words and statements, providing a sense of racial discrimination which relates the spread of covid-19 to Hazara/Shia community.
2. The second code group that lies under declarative type is coding all those words which entitle individuals or groups of individuals as infidels. words including these declaratory remarks are as follows; apostate, infidel, disbeliever, decedent of Yazeed etc.
3. Third code group that has been placed under this category is the identity reveal; which includes all the words and statements revealing personal and confidential details of people in regards to CoronaVirus/Covid-19.

Expressive:

4. The code group Hurt falling under the expressive category includes all the words and statements which express hurt sentiments; words are no doubt expressing some immense feelings of resentment.

5. all the abusive phrases and slurs have been coded under the name Abuse/Slur counted under the expressive category. The words in the posts being analyzed such as follows stipulate rage and pique.

6. Words and statements provoking emotions have been placed under the code group of Emotional Provoke associating to the expressive category; depicting the attempt to incite emotional uproar among the readers/viewers.

7. Statements and phrases providing a sense of mocking or satire have been coded as the Mocking group under the expressive category.

Commissive

8. Revenge: The code group of revenge, includes all the words and statements containing revengeful and threatening senses, falls under the commissive main category of the illocutionary words. These words commit the speaker/author to a certain act/job. The indicator words are as follows;

Directive-Expressive

9. Some phrases and words according to the context being used in the posts to be analyzed fall under a mix category of the both expressive and directive type for which code category Peace is used and words indicates that some of the Facebook users also wanted the situation to cool down and promote peace and harmony among both the communities mentioned in the scenario being analyzed.

10. Words that mention the intent for protest are coded under the Call for Protest group falling under the same mix category.

Content categorization scheme:

Content categorization scheme is the key in content analysis. A coding sheet will be designed for the variables, categories and rules will be identified through this scheme. Coding for hate speech indicator(s), according to Speech Act Theory five main categories are utilized to ascertain which notions of hate speech were assessed as escalating hatred by the various posts of Facebook.

Hate speech Indicators:

1. Declarative:

i. Racial-sectarian profiling allegation

ii. Infidel

iii. Identity Reveal

2. Expressive

iv. Hurt

v. Abuse/Slur

vi. Emotional Provoke

vii. Mocking

3. Commissive

viii. Revenge/Threat

4. Directive-Expressive

ix. Peace

x. Call for protest

Continuing content analysis based on speech act theory, which further has 5 categories as stated above in essence. We have coded those 5 categories of speech act theory into sub categories. i.e:

1. The code of revenge which includes all the words, any revengeful statement lies under the declarative main category. The indicator words include the same words as used in the code categories as above. Due to huge word sense some of the phrases lie on the border line between declarative and commissive.
2. The second code that falls under the same declarative category is the racial profiling which is indicated by all those words and statements, providing a sense of racial discrimination which relates the spread of covid-19 to Hazara community. the indicator words falling under this subcategory as mentioned in the previous chapter.
3. Third category that lies under declarative type justifies how certain words that indicate or declare a community as infidels. words including these declaratory remarks as mentioned in the last chapter.
4. code category for expressive type that includes all the words which denote hatred and hurt with words as stated in the previous chapter; are no doubt expressing some immense feelings of resentment. Secondly, coding all the abuses and slurs in the expressive type with addition of the words in the posts being analyzed such as that of mentioned in the previous chapter stipulate rage and pique.
5. some phrases and words according to the context being used in the posts to be analyzed fall under category of the both expressive and directive type for which code category Peace is where words which indicate the need, wish, or want for peace; when some of the Facebook users wanted the situation to resolve and promote peace and harmony among both the communities mentioned in the scenario being analyzed. Most of the posts had more than one value of revengeful category. Yet most used revengeful terms were the **call to kill** and take **revenge for the blood**. The second most frequently used term was to **constrain the community into their areas** and cut them off from the main city and the call to **physical assault**. whilst the least frequent term was **gun and firearms** use and **dying/killing a dog's death**. In the racial profiling category 7 posts contained more than one values of the category. whilst most of the posts contained **Statements that were not proven** or stereotyped one ethnicity. The second most frequent term was declaring any specific ethnicity **Terrorist** and then associating **Mariabad** residents with **Corona**. It is to be specified that the most powerful statement of IG Balochistan and WASA fell under the same code category associating mariabad and hazara town residents and employees with Covid-19 and excluding them from their duties.

Not surprisingly the declarative term used in the sample size was calling Hazaras as **Infidels and Apostates**. the second most used term was declaring them as **decendent of Yazeed** and then eventually declaring as **enemy of Islam and Sunnis**. This category specifies the level of hatred for the community among the population of Quetta. The frequency of declaring each other as infidel is alarming. Since it directly and indirectly implies that the infidels should be killed or wiped out to cleanse the earth.

Mostly used term was the Personal Emotional expressions of people, the second most frequently used terms were **Necessity of military operation** and **mandatory attacks, tanker attack needed**, which clearly justifies the level of hate which people had for a specific community. The least used term was the **demand, stipulation**.

Under this code category the most used terms were **Oppression, brutality and cruelty** where people expressed their emotional sentimental feelings mentioning oppression, brutality and cruelty, in this code category terms which had more than one value was also used upto 31.3% out of total 100%. The second highest used statements were those which **lead to provocation** and incitement against a specific community. out of total 16 counts, there were only two statements Which were titled as **worst** and **abasement**.

Majority of the posts were declaring Hazara Community as infidels, while a clear majority of respondents disagreed to this statement. Though the majority of posts called for revenge from the community and held them responsible for the incident; a vast majority of respondents disagreed to take revenge if incited and did not hold Hazara community as responsible.

20/100 posts racially profiled Hazara Community as the Corona carriers into Quetta; yet a majority of 34 disagreed to this point and only 7 agreed. On the other hand, nearly half of the respondents deemed the IG Police order of exempting Hazara employees of their duty during Covid was discriminatory and alienating.

A total of 43 posts expressed hate, hurt, mocks and abusive comments during the whole data collection duration; however, a huge majority of 40/51 agreed to not have posted emotionally over Facebook regarding the Covid-19 and Hazara town incident; negating the data analysis results. A total of 17 posts called for peace, majority of the people emphasized on not to be violent and were well aware of the hate speech roaming around on Facebook.

III. CONCLUSION:

Social media and specifically Facebook has although equipped users with the ability to share news and their opinions as per their convenience yet it lacks the ethical and other information law checkpoints. Which enables ill conscience people and hate mongers to spread fake news which incites ethnic and sectarian hatred and intolerance during normal and as well as crisis days. The incitement and hate mongering against ethnic and sectarian minorities on Facebook pages specifically rises during the current situation as uncertainty prevails in the 3rd world countries. Several rising conflicts led to bloodshed of innocent people in result of such hate speech on social media. Hate mongering on social media specifically on Facebook is a common practice observed which has been spreading unrest among different ethnicities and communities. Such as Pashtun and Baloch, Hazaras and Pashtun, Punjabis and other minorities living in Quetta facing hatred and prejudice. Through this deliberation, the Facebook posts containing hate speech and the amount of Facebook users who promoted hate speech without thinking about further consequences were analyzed and later it resulted in bloodshed and conflict among people of Quetta City.

Starting from the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, there were many racist Facebook posts relating the Covid-19 outbreak with China and Chinese Internationally and to Hazara people locally in Pakistan. Linking the pandemic/virus spread on Facebook pages and accounts to a specific ethnicity or race in Quetta city has further widened the cordial social and emotional distance between Hazara community and all other ethnicities residing in Quetta which was already under strain, since the security walls were built around Hazara living areas in attempt to protect them from terrorist attacks. The strict filtration at those security checkpoints and humiliation of common citizens sowed the hatred for the secluded community. Besides building the fear and disconnection from the fellow citizens in the secluded community creating a Us vs Them narrative. The recent Hazara town incident and the information sharing about it on social media yet further intensified the ethno-sectarian misunderstandings. The social media hate mongering and cross hate speech caused a raise to ethno-sectarian violence to the point that common citizens were incited to break the rule of law and set out on tribal revenge.

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