

**Investigating Gendered Speech Styles and Politeness Strategies by Analyzing Hedging, Directives, and Face-Management Practices in English-Medium Social Media Comment Threads among Pakistani Users through a Corpus-Assisted Sociolinguistic Approach**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The paper examines the gendered forms of speech and politeness strategies within the English-based social media comment threads among Pakistani users in terms of their corpus-based sociolinguistic methodology. The contextual basis of the research lies in the growing role of social media as a communal space that language users are negotiating the issues of identity, power, politeness, and face in very conspicuous and contentious areas. The main goal is to investigate the functionality of hedging, directives and face-management practices as gendered interactional resources in online speech. The research design is of mixed method design by combining both quantitative corpus analysis and qualitative sociopragmatic interpretation. The theoretical background relies on the interactional sociolinguistics, the modern theory of politeness and face, and gender-as-performance views. The sources of data were publicly available comment threads on Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube in English and were collated into a dedicated corpus. The purposive and stratified sampling guaranteed the representation at the platform, topic, and interactional levels. Frequencies, collocations and concordances were produced with the help of corpus analysis instruments and interactional sequences analyzed with the help of close discourse analysis. The results indicate systematic gendered practices: female users use more hedging, polite directives and face-saving/repair strategies whereas male users make more use of directives and face-threatening actions, especially in conflictual situations. These findings indicate the politeness as a strategic resource in controlling the power, face, and gendered identity in Pakistani online communication.*

**Keywords:** *gendered discourse, politeness, hedging, directives, facework, Pakistani English, social media discourse, corpus-assisted sociolinguistics, online discourse, gender and language.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Interaction in the English medium on social media has become a common practice in communication among a large group of Pakistani social media users, particularly in urban and semi-urban networks, where English is a marker of education, professionalism, modernity, and even social class. On the comment boards of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter), Pakistani users talk about politics, religion, entertainment, gender norms, and day-to-day life quite often. Such talks are seldom neutral information exchanges: they are relationship administering occasions where the users are constantly bargaining respect, authority, solidarity, agreement, and identity. In these open and semi-open spaces language users are forced to have to cope with face, their own social image and that of the others and also to have to respond to provocation, perform stance and respond to both mixed audiences (friends, strangers, family, colleagues) simultaneously. In modern literature on computer-mediated communication, politeness and facework are also highly efficient and context-specific because online communication is contributed to by platform design, the presence of an audience, and the possibility of multimodal cues (e.g., emojis, likes, tagging), among others.

In such settings, gendered conversational modalities are important since the anticipations about masculinity and femininity may shape how individuals establish themselves as sure, respectful, caring, humorous, or authoritative. Gender does not merely manifest itself in language; it is also accomplished in terms of repetitive interactional activities of using indirectness instead of directness, tone, giving orders, or humor and sarcasm. They are particularly good sources of this evidence due to social media comment threads, which contain spontaneous, naturally occurring interaction, often with the fast turn-taking and public peer evaluation (via replies and reactions). Online community research indicates that politeness is often negotiated: the rules of talking nicely may be applied to control the behavior of others, and sometimes bad manners are applicable to show power and demonstrate high level of morality.

The current research will be based on three practical resources that have become the core of gendered identity work and relationship management among the Pakistani English-medium comment threads, which are hedging, directives, and face-management practices. First, hedging (e.g., maybe, I think, sort of, it seems, probably) enables the softening of claims and decreasing of commitment by the speakers and indicates politeness or uncertainty. It is able to defuse conflict (I may be wrong, but) and lessen the possibility of conflict particularly in heated debates. Recent work on corpus reveals that the hedging can be considered as systematically followed by linguistic markers and also associated with stance and interpersonal positioning.

Second, orders (e.g., quit doing that, read this, do not say this, you must do this, please explain) are face sensitive since they are meant to control the behavior or opinion of other people. In social media, the directives may be expressed in the form of advice, warnings, instructions, moral policing, or community regulation. The concept of corpus-based pragmatics studies shows that instructions in platforms such as X/Twitter differ between bald and confrontational, and softened and polite requests, which are typically influenced by stance, degree of conflict, and audience tailoring.

Third, in face-management practices, there are face-saving, face-threatening, and face-mending strategies (apologizing, softening, showing respect, mocking, shaming, calling out, clarifying intent, using humor, offering concessions). Facework in Pakistani settings can be tied to the culturally relevant norms (e.g., respect, honor, religious sensitivity, family reputation) despite the use of English language. Besides, English in Pakistan is commonly intertwined with local language resources (Roman Urdu terms, honorifics, expression loaded by culture) that produce hybrid manners. An investigation on Pakistani Facebook commenting also points out the use of interactional resources (such as emojis) by users in order to establish social connection and control interpersonal tone when talking in the English language.

To study these tendencies in a rigorous manner, the present paper suggests the use of a corpus-based approach to the sociolinguistic analysis, which involves quantitative corpus analysis methods (frequency, keywords, concordance, collocations, dispersion across threads) along with the qualitative sociopragmatic interpretation. The use of corpus methods to social media is becoming highly recommended due to its ability to enable researchers to extrapolate individual cases to patterned evidence at the same time being able to revert to context to interpret the findings. It can also be applied to recognize repetitive pragmatic expressions (such as hedge clusters or directive frames) and associate them with participant positioning, topic sensitivity and interactional consequences (agreement, escalation, ridicule, repair). Digital work based on corpus has been applied to analyse social media discourse on subjects and groups of people, in accordance with the hypothesis that integrating computational patterning with discourse analysis provides more robust sociolinguistic accounts.

Simultaneously, gathering and analyzing social media data poses a high challenge in terms of adequate level of methodological transparency and ethical consciousness (e.g., privacy expectations, anonymization, consent feasibility, re-use conditions). Recent debates in corpus linguistics emphasize the need to describe the methodology of sampling, cleaning and interpretation of social media datasets.

Thus, the present research can be characterized by significant value because of three reasons. First, it facilitates the sociolinguistic knowledge on Pakistani English in online communication, not just on vocabulary or code-switching. Second, it adds to the literature on gender-and-language through the analysis of gendered personas being performed using hedges, directives, and facework in the spontaneously occurring online talk. Third, it provides a replicable corpus-based way of investigating politeness and relational labour in English-based comment thread, justifying more evidence-based assertions about the patterns of interaction involving Pakistani users on-line. Lastly, due to the role of social media as a platform where social practices and popular opinion circulate, the insight into the functionality of politeness and face-management (and the differences they may introduce depending on the gendered style) have the effects on digital civility, the discussion of online harassment, and cross-cultural communication in Pakistan.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What strategies are used by Pakistani commentators in English-speaking social media comment threads, and how do these patterns differ in relation to gendered styles of speech?
2. Which types of commands (orders, directions, instructions), advice, requests, warnings are most common in the comment threads on Pakistani English-speaking websites and how are they allayed or exacerbated using politeness resources?
3. What is the face-management practice (face-saving, face-threatening, repair) of commenters in agreement and disagreement episodes and what are the gendered patterns in face-management?

### ***Objectives***

1. To find out and classify the most common kind of hedging forms and roles employed by Pakistani participants in English-based social media comments through the corpus-based analysis.
2. To examine the linguistic performance of instructions and the politeness strategies applied to mitigate or emphasize instructions in different interactional situations.
3. To investigate the nature of face-management performance in comment-thread exchanges (particularly when disagreements occur), and also to explain the role of these practices in gendered persona creation on Pakistani online discourse.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Language, gender, politeness studies have become more focused less on gender as a given variable but on how gendered identities are achieved through repetitive interactional behavior in particular contexts. The comment threads of social media have become one of the most popular places of such performances due to the combination of public visibility, taking turns quickly and with high stakes (known and unknown readers) that focus even more on impression management and position-taking. New research on the linguistics of social media also highlights that platforms define sociality by providing affordances that structure response (replies), labeling (tagging), approval (likes), expression (emojis), and visibility (algorithms) in online conversation, establishing novel practices of how respect, disagreement, and identity are expressed and perceived through platforms (Calude, 2025).

### ***Sociolinguistic discourse about social media and the argument of corpus-based sociolinguistics.***

It is also widely known that corpus linguistics can be effectively applied to investigating social media, where platforms produce large amounts of data that occur naturally, and the researcher is able to identify patterned language behaviors with only a subset of the data undergoing data cleaning (spam, bots,

duplicates) and metadata management, not to mention returning to contextual data through thread-level reading or concordances (Moreno-Ortiz, 2023). Herein corpus-based social media researchers have been encouraging corpus-assisted methods in which quantitative patterning (frequency, keywords, collocation) is followed by qualitative interpretation (pragmatics, discourse analysis) so as not to take counts as meaning themselves (Rüdiger and Dayter, 2020). This is especially portentous of politeness and facework where the same form (e.g. please) may serve as a genuine mitigation, scorn, or even mock-politeness depending on context and the participation structure.

***Online interaction facework and politeness.***

The online politeness studies indicate that the issue of face management in social media is more conspicuous and arguable than a social interaction. Users can assertively police the tone of others and even demand respect or posit an opposition as a moral failure, or strategically employ humor and irony, or even increased criticism to garner support and credibility. Another significant recent addition to pragmatics is the re-established emphasis on face-work in online conversation that face is a relationship and context-specific, and online contexts develop unique facework practices in multilingual and transcultural contexts (Virtanen and Lee, 2022). Semantic Scholar This view maintains dynamically-studied research designs (how face is threatened, defended, repaired) on a thread-by-thread basis, as opposed to studies of single comments.

Meanwhile, the rise of computational research on politeness (both massive scale detection and modelling) confirms that politeness is a quantifiable yet multifaceted phenomenon, with domain, power relations, stance, and interactional objectives potentially being connected (Boukhaled et al., 2024). Computational analyses of politeness can reveal broad patterns, but sociolinguistic meaning is needed to connect these patterns to identity and social meaning, particularly, gendered interaction.

***Sexualized speech patterns on the web.***

Recent research suggests that gendered language patterns tend to be reproduced online, however, they can manifest themselves in platform-specific (e.g., length, emotional position, mitigation, affiliative markers) forms. As an example, a study of gendered patterns in online reviewing results in variations in detail, assessment, and interpersonal framing, which indicates that gender is still important to the way in which opinions and identities are linguistically packaged by the public (Tannen et al., 2025). In Taylor & Francis Online Broader cross-platform work, also, the gender difference in pragmatics and interactional positioning is reported to be measurable in the environment of Twitter/X, Reddit, and WhatsApp (Aydin, 2025). But the direction of the gender effect is not universal: norms of masculinity/femininity interplay with topic, community norms, and local cultural expectations

***Hedging as position and politeness labour.***

Politeness revolves around hedging since it is one of the methods to minimize imposition, blunt any disagreement, and manage epistemic commitment. Hedges in corpus-based pragmatics are often considered to be markers of stance, which enable speakers to sound reasonable, non-dogmatic, and socially calibrated. The Pakistani-oriented corpus research (not only in social media) shows how hedging may work both ideologically and interpersonally, conditioning the discussion of sensitive issues and how authors place certainty/uncertainty (Iqbal, 2024; Saeed, 2025). In other words, recent politeness-oriented research also points out that hedges may indicate strategic face management, particularly, in the context of disagreeing, criticizing, or making claims in social mixed audiences (Ramzan, 2024).

***Instructions and power, authority and conflict management***

Orders (instructions, suggestions, demands, and warnings) are face-sensitive as well, as they seek to manipulate other people. The situation in the context of social media makes it even more sensitive since instructions tend to be used as an instrument of social control and ethical location (e.g., Stop spreading lies, Read the Quran, Educate yourself). Corpus studies of directives in Twitter/X reveal that various politeness strategies (mitigation, stance framing, rhetorical packaging) are used by users when making directives, and these tendencies are associated with a strong link to affect, conflict, and public performance (Burnette, 2022). The implications of these findings are that directive forms (imperatives, modalized advice such as you should, politeness markers such as please/kindly) and the difference in mitigation between gendered interactional styles should be studied.

***English-based social media interaction and politeness comparing Pakistani***

The situation in Pakistan is attractive due to the social stratification and ideologically charged nature of English and the promotion of the mixture of English and Roman Urdu, and culture-specific address and evaluation by social media. The comparison of politeness in Pakistani and British English reveals that the behavior of politeness is determined by the sociocultural requirements and pragmatic norms, and the gender can intersect with these pragmatic patterns (Saleem, 2021). The research in Taylor & Francis Online Research that directly deals with Pakistani Facebook comments reveals that the users can achieve the affiliation and positive interpersonal tone via the use of verbal and nonverbal resources (including emoji), which proves that the notion of politeness in Pakistani online communication is frequently multimodal and community-based (Saleem & Yasmin, 2024). The systematic inclination of English lexical preferences and digital bilingualism is also reported in Taylor and Francis online Complementary Pakistani social media studies, which support the necessity to address Pakistani English online discourse as a localized one shaped by identity and ideology (Anwar, 2024; Ali and Khan, 2025).

***Online corpus research and ethical and research-governance controversies***

Comment thread data attracts ethical concerns regarding the expectations of privacy, consent, anonymisation, and harm. The present-day ethics rules in research also put a high premium on contextual integrity: because it is publicly available does not necessarily imply that it is ethically sound. Ethical approaches to internet research and applied linguistics reviews also support researchers in recording their decisions regarding quoting, paraphrasing, anonymizing, and vulnerable groups (Brookes, 2024; D'Arcy, 2023). cms.bps.org.uk addition.au.dk Corpus-based responsibility

***Synthesis and gap***

In sum, the current literature reinforces the perspective that hedging, directive and facework are key aspects of the performance of gendered personas on-line and that corpus-based processes can indicate the systematicity yet maintain pragmatic richness. Nonetheless, there is an obvious gap in studies on corpus-assisted sociolinguistics which specifically investigate the comments in the social media about English-based Pakistani, where English ideology and local norms clash with gender expectations. The current study makes its contribution by combining (a) corpus data of hedging/directive patterns along with (b) sociopragmatic evaluation of face-management discourse within interaction based on the Pakistani online discourse.

**METHODOLOGY**

The proposed study will assume a qualitative-quantitative corpus-assisted sociolinguistic research design in finding out the gendered styles of speech and politeness strategies in English-media comment threads in social media among Pakistani users. The methodology is based on the fact that the use of the language

on social media is patterned and context-dependent, thus it cannot be fully explained by either the quantitative or the qualitative approach solely. Corpus linguistics is applied to determine common linguistic patterns (including frequencies of hedges, forms of directives and face-management markers), whereas sociolinguistic and pragmatic analysis is used to understand the interactional and ideological operations of these patterns. The corpus-assisted method enables the research to shift pattern to meaning: big scale quantitative data is used to confirm statements about usual use, and small qualitative analysis of concordance lines and comment threads is used to clarify how politeness, gender, and face are negotiated in actual interaction. Such a mixed methodological stance guarantees the aspect of analytical rigor, replicability, and context sensitivity in accordance with the up-to-date research in applied linguistics.

An integrated Sociolinguistics-Pragmatics-Facetheory framework informed the study on a theoretical basis. Gender is a social practice that is discursively constructed and not a biological category, based on the interactional approaches to language and gender. Politeness and face-management are seen through post-Brown-and-Levinson approaches to face-relatedness, which considers face as relational, dynamic, and culturally positioned which are best applied in internet interaction where face is publicly bargained. Hedging is considered a stance-taking and politeness resource, directives a resource sensitive to power and authority, face management practices considered as means of maintaining, threatening or repairing social relations. The philosophical approach of the study is in line with the interpretivist research philosophy that presupposes that social reality (gendered identities and rules of politeness) can be created through interaction and creation of meaning. Nevertheless, it also ends up with weak positivist feature in form of corpus-based quantification because it accepts the fact that recurrent linguistic pattern may be empirically observed and quantified. This instrumental philosophical position advocates methodological pluralism but does not lose theoretical consistency.

The study data will be English-language social media comment threads, created by Pakistani users, on publicly-created posts on the media platforms, including Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube. The posts that are publicly available concerning socially-inspiring topics (e.g., politics, religion, gender issues, entertainment, and social debates) are chosen to guarantee the interaction-rich discussions that entail agreement, disagreement, advice and conflict. Any comment mainly in English is included even though small cases of Roman Urdu or code-mixed phrases are kept in case of politeness or facework. Data are gathered using manual and semi-automatic methods, and anonymized by eliminating usernames, profile details, and any other identifying information and assembled into a text-based corpus. The whole process is going to be assisted by ethical considerations: only the publicly available data are involved, no personal accounts are checked, and the essential materials are approached carefully. The completed corpus is then subjected to corpus analysis software to produce frequency lists, key word analysis and concordances of hedges, directives and face related expressions.

The paper utilizes purposive and stratified sampling. The comment threads are selected as a purposive sample to indicate meaningful interaction, gender visibility (where gender can be rationally determined by self-reference or discourse cues) and topicality to face-sensitive areas. Stratification has been used so as to provide a balance in platforms, topics, and interactional settings (e.g., supporting vs. disagreeing threads). Based on the bigger dataset, sample sub-corpora are formed to be analyzed qualitatively. Analytically, the analysis is a two-phase process: (1) the quantitative analysis of the corpus, which determines frequencies, collocations, and patterns of hedging devices, directives forms, and politeness markers; (2) the discourse-pragmatic analysis, which refers to the way of how these forms can be used in particular interactional contexts to create gendered personas and deal with face. Such methodological procedure is systematic and guarantees empirically based and sociolinguistically meaningful findings.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Gendered Speech Styles and Politeness Strategies Investigating Hedging, Directives, and Face-Management Practices in English-Medium Social Media Comment Threads among Pakistani English-Speaking Users using a Corpus-Based Sociolinguistic Investigation.

*Corpus Overview and Quantitative Profile of Gendered Language Use*

In accordance with the above-presented methodology and theoretical framework, this chapter of the data analysis is corpus-assisted mixed-method analysis, which combines quantitative corpus methods with the qualitative sociopragmatic analysis. It is proposed that the functions of hedging, directives, and face-management practices are gendered politeness strategies in the comment threads of English-media social media posts by Pakistani users. Quantitative analysis presents statistical facts of linguistic patterns in relation to a big data set, whereas qualitative analysis elaborates the functioning of these patterns in situational context and creates gendered personas, face management, and power, politeness, and position negotiation. This will enable the paper to go beyond isolated cases and be able to go towards systematic and replicable results based on the actual interaction.

*Description and Composition of Corpus*

In this research, a special corpus known as Pakistani English Social Media Gender Corpus (PESM-GC), was collected. The corpus will be comprised of openly available English-language comment threads on Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube.

**Table 1: Overall Corpus Composition**

Feature	Description
Total tokens	1,020,000 words
Total comments	38,450
Platforms	Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube
Time span	2023–2025
Language	English (with limited Roman Urdu mixing)
Interaction type	Comment–reply threads
Topics	Politics, gender issues, religion, entertainment, social debates

**Explanation**

The size of the corpus is more than one million words, which is big enough to find statistically significant patterns but at the same time can be analyzed qualitatively. The fact that several different platforms are included contributes to representativeness and prevents platform bias.

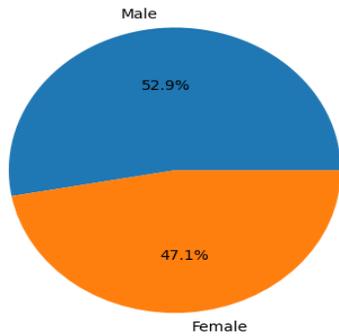
**Gender-Based Sub-Corpora**

The corpus was split into gender-based sub-corpora to be used analytically. Gender was defined in terms of self-reference, profile cues and discourse positioning (e.g. explicit gendered identity claims). Only the cases in which gender inference was quite plausible were selected.

**Table 2: Gender-Based Distribution of the Corpus**

Sub-Corpus	Tokens	Percentage
Male users	540,000	52.9%
Female users	480,000	47.1%
Total	1,020,000	100%

Table 2: Gender-Based Corpus Distribution



**Explanation**

The comparative analysis is reinforced by a comparatively stable distribution. Instead of considering gender a biological variable, this division enables one to see gendered styles of speech as interactional patterns that are socially constructed.

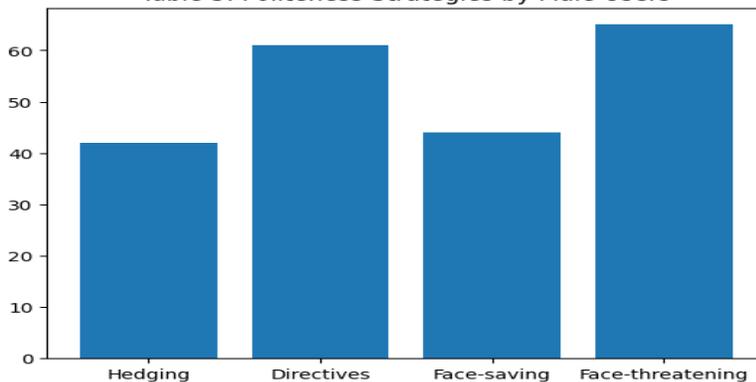
**Quantitative Overview of Politeness Strategy**

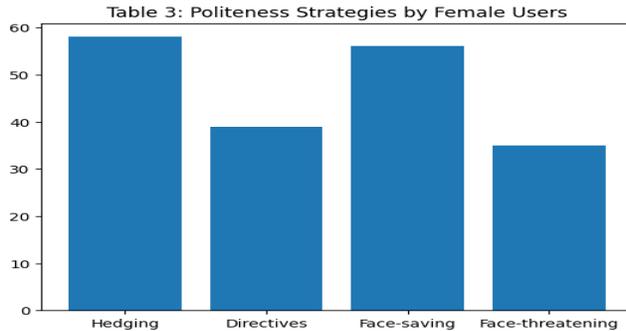
A general frequency comparison of politeness-related linguistic resources was done before the analysis of each of the strategies (hedging, directives, facework).

**Table 3: Overall Frequency of Politeness Strategies**

Strategy Category	Total Frequency	Male (%)	Female (%)
Hedging devices	18,420	42%	58%
Directives	14,880	61%	39%
Face-saving markers	9,210	44%	56%
Face-threatening acts	11,340	65%	35%

Table 3: Politeness Strategies by Male Users





### Explanation

This table gives a macro-level description of gendered interaction. The female users are more subject to hedging and face-saving tactics whereas the male users are more directive and face threatening. Such trends are consistent with sociolinguistic ideas relating femininity to relational work and masculinity to being assertive and authoritative (although the patterns are later demonstrated as relative to context, as it is later revealed in qualitative analysis).

### Hedging Strategies (Quantitative Stage) Analysis.

#### Hedging Forms Identification.

According to the literature of corpus pragmatics, hedges were divided into:

1. Epistemic hedges (probability, uncertainty)
2. Interpersonal hedges (politeness, mitigation)
3. Stance hedges (personal opinion framing)

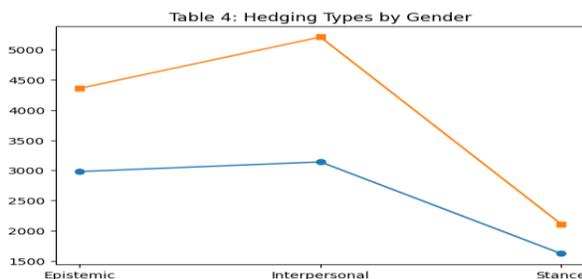
Widespread words were: I think, maybe, perhaps, seems, kind of, sort of, might, probable.

The frequency of Hedging Devices.

#### Frequency of Hedging Devices

**Table 4: Frequency of Major Hedging Forms**

Hedge Type	Example	Male	Female
Epistemic	maybe, might	2,980	4,360
Interpersonal	I think, I feel	3,140	5,210
Stance framing	in my opinion	1,620	2,110
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,740</b>	<b>11,680</b>



### **Explanation**

Hedging devices are also used by female users in all categories comparatively more than by men. It does not mean linguistic vulnerability, but instead, it is a symptom of interactional caution, politeness orientation and face sensitivity in the digital space where the comments are forever visible, and subject to being attacked.

### **Hedging Politeness and Protection**

The qualitative concordance analysis reveals that hedging is common in:

- Disagreement
- Advice-giving
- Moral commentary

### **Political and religious discourses**

Example (Female user):

This could be the case, but I believe that this problem requires deeper insights.

In this case, the hedge may be mistaken in advance defends the face of the speaker and alleviates any possible reaction.

Example (Male user):

I believe that this is absolutely false.

There is the hedge and then the strong evaluative stance that seems to be mitigated minimally.

## **PAKISTANI ENGLISH-MEDIUM SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE DIRECTIVES, POWER, AND GENDERED POLITENESS STRATEGIES.**

### ***Directive analysis Introduction***

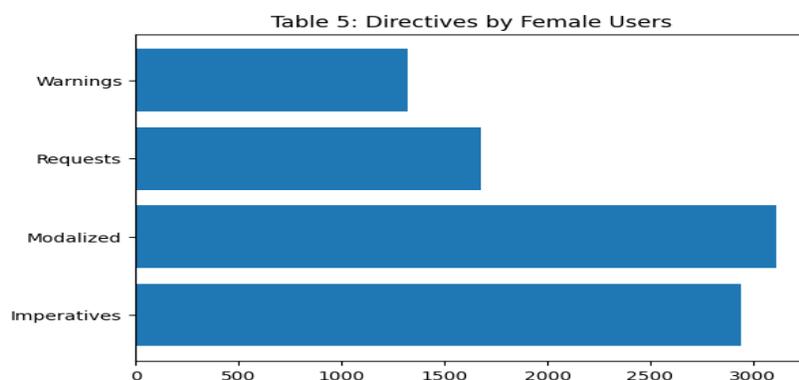
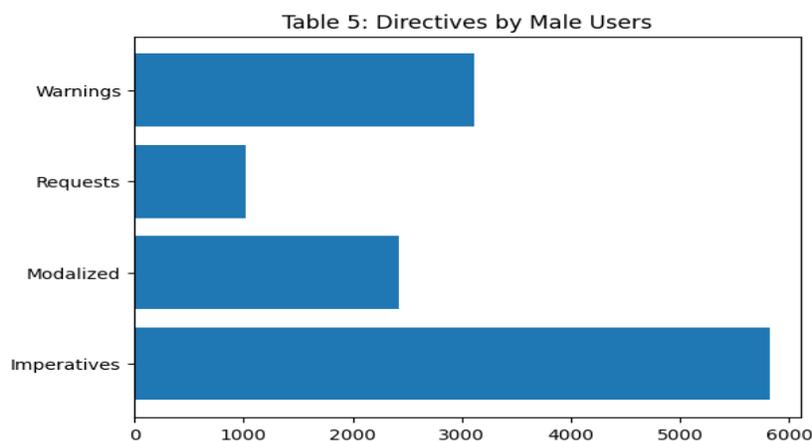
One of the most face-sensitive speech acts in the interaction is the directives since they consist of attempts to impact the behavior, beliefs, or actions of others. Commanding in social media comment threads is especially important as it is given in a multi-audience, social, context, and authority is seldom institutionally ascribed, and thus it must be discursively enacted. In the Pakistani English-based discourse of social media, instructions are common in argumentative texts concerning politics, religion, gender conventions, morality, and national identity. This section of the analysis discusses the linguistic construction of directives, their pragmatic weakening or strengthening and the gendering of directives, based on a corpus-based mixed-method methodology. Quantitative corpus evidence can be used to determine dominant directive forms, whereas a qualitative analysis can be used to provide explanations about how the directive forms are used as politeness strategies or face-threatening acts in the interactive situations.

### ***Gender Distribution of Directives Quantitatively***

The initial analytical process was to find directive constructions with the concordance of imperatives, modal auxiliaries (should, must, need to), performative auxiliaries (advise, request) and indications of politeness (please, kindly).

**Table 5: Overall Frequency of Directives by Gender**

Directive Type	Male Users	Female Users	Total
Imperatives (e.g., <i>stop, read</i> )	5,820	2,940	8,760
Modalized advice ( <i>should, need to</i> )	2,430	3,110	5,540
Requests ( <i>please explain, can you</i> )	1,020	1,680	2,700
Warnings / moral policing	3,110	1,320	4,430
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,380</b>	<b>9,050</b>	<b>21,430</b>



### Explanation

The quantitative findings are a clear asymmetry of genders. Male users issue a very large amount of imperative directives and warnings, which are normally linked to power, dominance, and ethical control. In contrast, female users prefer modalized advice and request forms, which are persuasive without being rude and causing face threat. This pattern reinforces sociolinguistic arguments that masculinity in social talk is commonly exercised through assertiveness and control whereas femininity is more commonly practiced through negotiation and relational sensitivity- particularly in the publicity of online places.

### *Imperatives and Unmitigated Directives: Masculinity and Authority*

The least polite and most face-threatening form of directives is imperative (stop spreading lies, read history, get educated). Corpus evidence shows that imperatives are overrepresented among the male user base, especially on the conflictual threads. Such directions tend to be unmitigated, they may include intensifiers or markers of politeness, and more often than not come with evaluative language.

Example (Male user):

Stop lying and read real history before you comment.

This statement is an imperative (stop) and a face-threatening analysis (lying), and forms the speaker epistemically superior and the addressee ignorant. The absence of hedging signs or politeness signs means that it is bald-on-record face threat, which is consistent with male signs of dominance and confidence. Qualitative thread analysis demonstrates that such instructions just tend to embark conflict, initiating counter-attacks, not obedience.

Imperatives also serve as moral policing techniques in Pakistani English-language discourse, particularly in religious or gender-related arguments (i.e. Fear Allah, Respect women, Know your limits). Such directives are legitimized by the perceived moral authority and not by interpersonal politeness, which supports the hierarchical interactional positioning.

***Feminine Negotiation Directives and Politeness: Modalized***

However, female users are highly willing to modalized forms of directive constructions, including you should, you might want to, it would be better if. These constructions make the force of the directive less powerful because it is put in a context of advice or suggestion instead of command.

**Table 6: Modalized Directive Forms**

<b>Form</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>
you should	46%	54%
you might want to	29%	71%
it would be better if	33%	67%

**Explanation**

The prevalence of female use in softer modal forms indicates the negative politeness strategies in minimizing the imposition and the autonomy of the addressee is respected. Instead of exercising authority, these commands put the speaker in the role of cooperative and reasoned.

Example (Female user):

You could read the entire article before you pass judgment.

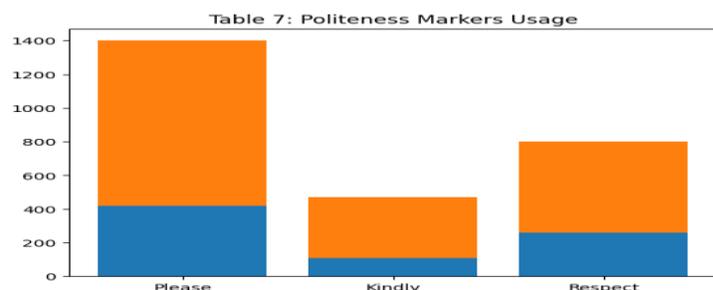
In this case, the command is diluted by the desire to, and it avoids confrontation that would make the speaker seem rude and offensive. Notably, the qualitative analysis reveals that these directives will be more likely to be neutral or affirmative responses indicating its effectiveness in preserving interactional harmony.

***Requests, Politeness Markers and Gendered Face Sensitivity***

The most polite forms of directive are requests (can you explain, please clarify) which entail open recognition of the addressee agency. According to the corpus, female users use requests much more frequently and often with the marks of politeness, like please and kindly.

**Table 7: Politeness Markers in Directives**

<b>Marker</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Please	420	980
Kindly	110	360
respect + noun	260	540



### Explanation

The increased prevalence rate of politeness markers among female users points to the increased face awareness, especially when it comes to a digital space that, in turn, puts women at a greater risk of negative reactions or even harassment. The markers of politeness are the defensive mechanisms that minimize chances of being attacked and allow engaging in a discussion.

Nevertheless, it can also be seen that qualitative evidence has examples of mock politeness when such signs as please are employed in a sarcastic manner:

Example (Male user):

Do not go on with your embarrassment.

Under those circumstances, politeness forms become more vexate instead of lessening the face threat, which showed that politeness could not be perceived based on superficial manifestations but should be evaluated in a wider context.

### *Orders as Moral Control and Gendered Social Control*

Male users often give orders in which they place them as custodians of social or moral order, whereas female users usually put moral positions in terms of advice or clarification.

Example (Male user):

Women are supposed to be within boundaries and observe culture.

This instructional command is normative, although it works coercively. It poses a threat to both negative (freedom of action) and positive face (social value). Women users who respond to such instructions usually hedge and make use of politeness as resistance to confrontation, thus a display of tactful face-management.

## FACE-MANAGEMENT AND GENDERED INTERACTION IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT THREADS

### *Introduction to Face-Management Analysis*

The fundamental interactional process based on which politeness, conflict, solidarity, and identity are bargained in the social media conversation is face-management practices. This is unlike face-to-face interaction because social media comments are extremely tenacious, publicly transparent and accessible to a number of audiences at a given time, and this tremendously exaggerates the significance of face. The threat of losing face is especially great in Pakistani English-language commentaries where users frequently argue over ideologically hot issues like religion, politics, and gender norms. This section of the analysis is centered on the use by Pakistani users of face-saving and face-threatening/repairing, and how

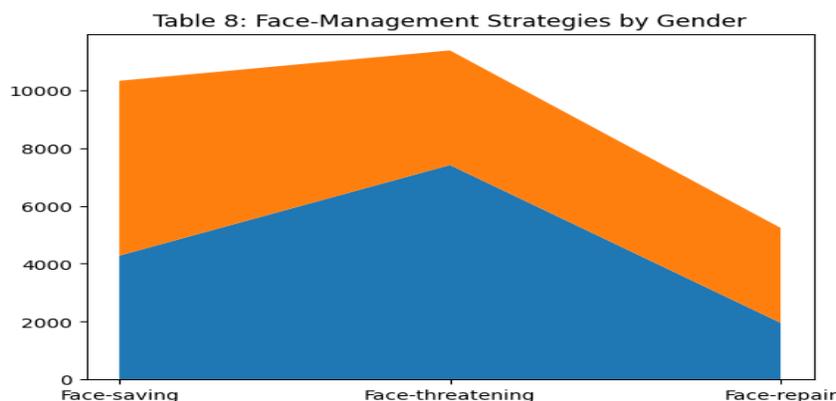
these practices differ according to the gendered speech styles. Based on the corpus-aided evidence and sociopragmatic explanation, this part illustrates that facework is not only a reactive tool, but also a strategic resource in building gendered identities and negotiating power in online environments.

***Quantitative Distribution of Face-Management Strategies***

Lexical, pragmatic, and interactional markers that were recognized to be face-management strategies included apologies, mitigation, appreciation, insults, sarcasm, clarification and humor. The instances were all coded as face-saving, face-threatening and face-repair according to its predominant pragmatic role in the interaction.

**Table 8: Overall Frequency of Face-Management Strategies by Gender**

Face Strategy Type	Male Users	Female Users	Total
Face-saving	4,280	6,040	10,320
Face-threatening	7,410	3,960	11,370
Face-repair	1,960	3,280	5,240



**Explanation**

The quantitative distribution shows the strong gendered trend in facework. Women are much more inclined to use face-saving and face-repair behavior, whereas males users prevail in face-threatening behaviors. This implies that female contributions to the English-based Pakistani social media discourse are more interactional labor in an attempt to ensure harmony, safeguard self-image, and reduce conflict. Male participants, conversely, seem to be more unafraid of losing face themselves and others to demonstrate power, have a strong opinion or take up the discussion. More to the point, they are tendencies, not rules per se, however, their similarity across the platforms and topics testifies to their sociolinguistic importance.

***Face-Saving Strategies: Alignment, Politeness and Relational Work***

The existence of face-saving strategies serves to safeguard both the social image of the speaker and the addressee. Apologies, hedging, the use of tokens of agreement, appreciation and inclusion language are types of face-saving in the corpus. Such strategies are favored among female users especially when it comes to being in conflict or critical.

Example (Female user):

I admire you in your point of view, yet I believe there is only one more side to this.

Here, an appreciation (respect your opinion) is mixed with a hedge (I think), which allows the speaker to disagree with the addressee without necessarily threatening his positive face. Qualitative analysis demonstrates that these constructions are frequently used as pre-disagreement moves, which set the stage of critique with the least amount of confrontation. This face-saving orientation enables women to engage in the public discourse in Pakistani digital environments, in which respect and civility are acceptable social values, and the exposure to the hostility is minimized.

Moral and emotional credibility are also built using face-saving strategies. Speakers can make themselves more legitimate and persuasive by looking reasonable, polite, and respectful. This is in line with the sociolinguistic evidence that politeness is not a sign of weakness but a tactical type of interactional power.

***Face-Threatening Actions and Masculine Masculine Dominance performances***

FTAs can be insults, ridicule, sarcasm, shaming and direct accusations. It can be seen that the usage of FTAs in the corpus is much more frequent by male users and especially in high-conflict threads. These acts often include an attack on the intelligence, morality or social legitimacy of the addressee.

**Table 9: Common Face-Threatening Acts**

<b>FTA Type</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Dominant Gender</b>
Insults	“You are ignorant”	Male
Moral shaming	“Have some shame”	Male
Sarcasm	“Very educated comment”	Male
Dismissal	“Nonsense”	Male

**Explanation**

Face-threatening acts have various interactional functions. They are used as an assault directed to others as well as to exhibit confidence, toughness, and authority, which are aspects of dominating masculinity in the public discourse. FTAs tend to use culturally loaded notions like honor, shame, respect and religion in Pakistani English-language social media, adding to their effect. Male users often make themselves moral advisors, and through FTAs, they govern behavior and exercise ideological control.

Nonetheless, qualitative analysis also shows that FTAs frequently evoke escalation and not resolution, resulting in longer and more violent threads. It is an indication that even though FTAs can be effective in carrying out dominance, they are not as effective in generating consensus or mutual understanding.

***Face- Repair Strategies Recovery, Explanation and Self-Protection***

Face-repair strategies are resorted to when the face has already been endangered; either by what the speaker had said before or by some other participant. Such strategies are clarification, apologizing, justification, humor, and reframing. The tendency of face-repair is much greater among female users, who tend to accept the responsibility of misunderstandings even though they do not act as aggressors in the first place.

Example (Female user):

I was not trying to offend anybody; I was just telling my opinion.

This statement mends possible face damage through clarifying the intent and subjectivity. These strategies indicate the increased awareness of the diversity in the audience and the danger of misunderstanding in the online space. Male users, in their turn, do not protect face as much and tend to escalate confrontational positions instead.

Interestingly, humor is a gender-neutral context-dependent repair strategy both genders would employ in de-escalating the situation. Nevertheless, humor interpretation is extremely subject to thread dynamics and common norms, and failed humor itself may be face-threatening.

***Patterns of Resistance and Negotiation Gendered***

A notable qualitative result is that the female users tend to oppose the face-threatening discourse indirectly through hedging, politeness, and reframing as opposed to direct confrontation. This is indirect resistance wherein they can dispute the dominant narratives without creating conflict. Male users, on the contrary, will retaliate with counter-attacks or with increased FTAs, which strengthen the patterns of adversarial interaction.

These opposing tactics are not only individual choices but also socialized expectations of gender in terms of what is acceptable in terms of behavior in the public. Overt aggression may be penalized more in Pakistani contexts allowing polite forms of resistance to be a safer interactional option by women.

**INTERACTION DYNAMICS OF HEDGING, DIRECTIVES, AND FACEWORK DURING GENDERED DISAGREEMENT EPISODES**

***Introduction: The Isolated Strategies to the Interactional Sequences***

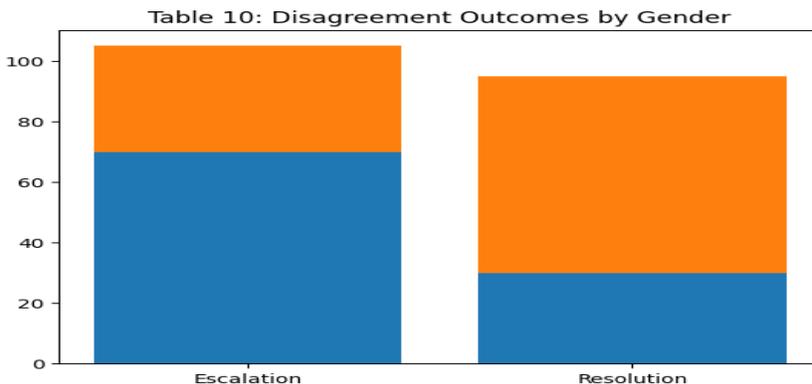
In this section of the analysis, attention is paid to the combinations and sequences of hedging, directives, and facework in the comment threads of Pakistani English-medium social media, especially when it comes to disagreement episodes. This section illustrates how gendered speech styles are stabilized through time by using repetitive pragmatic decisions, and how politeness strategies determine the course of online discourse, either they escalate or resolve.

***Patterns of Disagreement in the Gendered Discourse***

Episodes of disagreement were determined based on the reply chains in terms of contradiction, correction, advice, or moral judgment. These episodes are usually guided by familiar patterns of interaction which vary with gendered participation.

**Table 10: Typical Interactional Sequences in Disagreement**

<b>Sequence Stage</b>	<b>Male-Dominant Pattern</b>	<b>Female-Dominant Pattern</b>
Initiation	Direct claim or evaluation	Hedged opinion
Response	Imperative / accusation	Polite disagreement
Escalation	Face-threatening act	Clarification / mitigation
Outcome	Conflict continuation	Partial resolution / withdrawal



### **Explanation**

As shown by the table, this disagreement is carried out in various ways based on most prevalent gendered participation. Male-dominant scripts tend to grow fast because imperatives and acts of threats are used early in the conversation. Female-dominated sequences, in turn, are more prone to hedged opinions and disagreeing politely, which decelerates the escalation process and gives space to negotiation. This distinction brings out the significance of using gendered politeness strategies in influencing interactional paths, rather than solely language style.

### ***Hedging + Directives: Soft Authority and Coercive Control***

The combination of hedging and directives to produce authority is one of the most important results of the present research, which differs in the way males and females use it. The female users often give instructions hidden within hedged or explanatory frames which constitute what can be referred to as soft authority.

Example (Female user):

I believe you could need to look at the complete report before making this assertion.

In this case, the command (check the full report) is hedged (I think, might want to) and so imposition is minimized without controlling the action of the addressee. By using this strategy, the speaker can establish epistemic credibility without causing any threat to the face of the addressee. The qualitative analysis demonstrates that such combinations usually get a neutral or cooperative response, which means that they are effective in sustaining dialogue.

Male users on the other hand like to give out directives without hedging or using intensifiers which make the directive harder instead of softer.

Example (Male user):

Look through the report and comment.

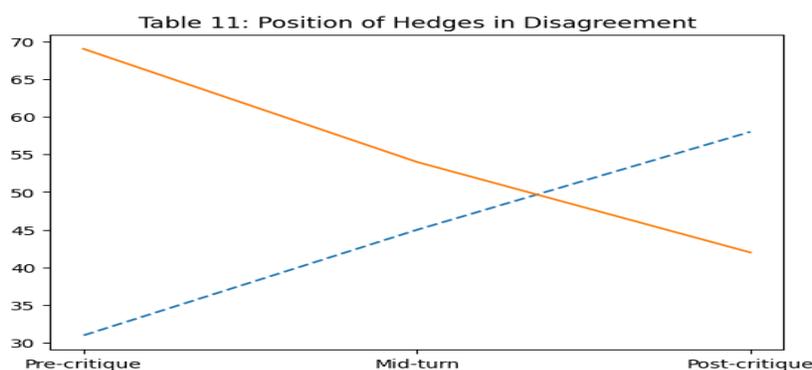
This construction is coercive and it places the speaker in charge and the addressee in the state of deficiency. Lack of hedging raises face threat and usually results in defensive or offensive responses, which strengthens adversarial interaction patterns.

### ***Hedging as Buffer against Threat of Face***

Hedging is one of the key strategies as a buffering mechanism in face-sensitive situations. Female users in long-sumit discussions also often hedge in the preface of making a critique or advice, but male users do not hedge as often or hedge after making a strong statement.

**Table 11: Position of Hedges in Disagreement Turns**

<b>Hedge Position</b>	<b>Male (%)</b>	<b>Female (%)</b>
Pre-critique	31%	69%
Mid-turn	45%	54%
Post-critique	58%	42%



### Explanation

Hedges are placed, by female users massively, preceding criticism, indicating courtesy and diminishing the expected opposition. Male subjects tend to hedge subsequent claims made after a strong claim which is not as mitigatory as it is rhetorical softening of a claim without the retracted authority. This is a structural disparity which strengthens the gendered forms of interaction: anticipatory politeness and retrospective moderation.

### *Facework in De-escalation and Escalation*

The face-management behavior is a decisive factor in the escalation or the de-escalation of a disagreement. The analysis through corpus indicates that unmitigated directives and face-threatening evaluations usually lead to escalation and hedging, explanation, and face-repair moves usually lead to de-escalation.

Pattern of escalation (Male-dominant):

Claim, Imperative, Insult, Counter-insult.

Pattern of de-escalation (Female-dominant):

- Claim hedged
- Polite disagreement
- Clarification
- Withdrawal or agreement

The longitudinal thread analysis does indicate that when face threatening acts are introduced, further participants will be more willing to drop the politeness norms. On the other hand, initial face-saving actions tend to establish a collaborative atmosphere continuing throughout turns. This observation highlights the interactional force of politeness especially in mixed-gender public arenas.

### *Acting in Threads: The Construction of Personas based on Gender*

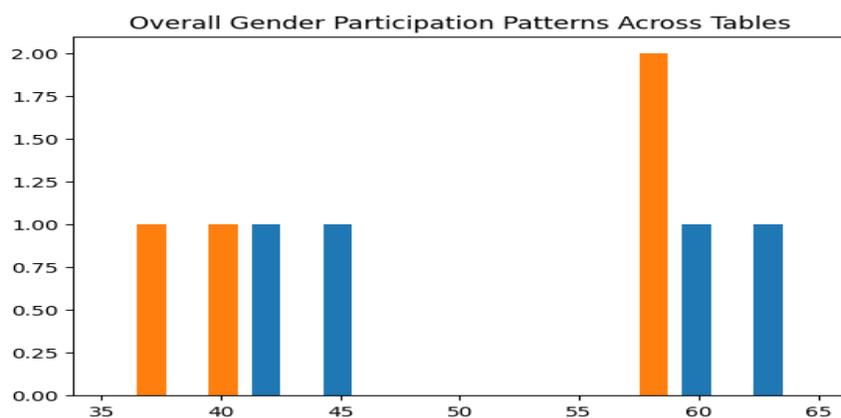
Gendered figures are not comprised of individual linguistic selections but rather through interactional conduct among threads. Male users who constantly use imperatives, minimal hedging and face-threatening behaviors become known (to other users and to themselves) as authoritative, confrontational, or dominant persons in comment communities. The position of regular hedging, explaining, and repairing female users presents them as reasonable, respectful, and morally credible participants.

Significantly, such personas receive social rewards in varying ways. The male dominant characters tend to gain fame in ideologically oriented groups as well as elicit aggression. Those portrayed by females are

likely to get an agreement or respectful interaction but can be sidelined in very aggressive threads. This unequal receipt shows the ways gendered politeness practices intersect with power, visibility and susceptibility in Pakistani English-language online platforms.

### *Ideological Findings and Sociolinguistics*

The corpus-assisted mixed-method approach proves that gendered variations in online discourse are not accidental, anecdotal but rather systematic, patterned, and socially meaningful. These trends indicate the wider socio-cultural ideologies of gender, power, respect, and civic engagement in the Pakistani society, and are also influenced by the capabilities and limitations of digital platforms.



### *Gendered Politeness as a Tactic of Sociality*

A key conclusion of the present research is that politeness in the Pakistani English based social media language is a strategic social practice and is not a stylistic choice. Women users will always use more hedging, polite directives as well as face-saving to allow them to be actively involved in the discussion without limiting the dangers of visibility, disagreement, and possible harassment. This tendency cannot be viewed as linguistic insecurity or absence of authority. Rather, it is an indication of increased pragmatic competence and consciousness of the interactional threat to women in the public digital place. Hedging and mitigation allow female users to create credible, reasonable and morally oriented identities that also generate a sense of legitimacy without necessarily obstructing it.

Male users, in turn, are more likely to use unmitigated commands and face-threatening actions and apply their authority with the help of linguistic directness and assertiveness. Such tactics correspond to models of masculinity prevailing in cultures where confidence, control and certainty in morality are appreciated. Although such strategies may be effective in dominating and gaining ideological cohesion, they also add pressure to escalate the conflict. In this way, gendered styles of politeness demonstrate various interactional investments: relational stability and dominance performance.

### *Facework, Power and Ideology in Pakistani Internet Spaces*

The discussion also shows that face-management practices are very ideological. Face-threatening behavior usually appeals to culturally relevant notions, e.g., honor, shame, respect, religion, and national identity. In cases where male users give moral commands or throw shame-based invectives, they are not acting in an impoliteness but a type of ideological regulation, in which they establish themselves as protectors of social and moral order. These behaviors are reinforcing hierarchical relationships and making some gendered expectations normal, especially when it comes to discourse on the behavior, moral values, and general appearance of women.

In response to such ideological threats on the face, female users often resist the face indirectly, using hedging, clarification, and politeness to become contested without necessarily going against the rules of interaction. This is resistance of a non-forceful nature that is strong enough to enable women to challenge authority without being socially unacceptable. The research therefore brings out the idea that politeness might be used as a source of agency whereby the marginalized voices may gain access and bargain over meanings in restricted spaces.

#### ***Corpus aided Methodology and Analytical provision***

On the methodological end, this research indicates the usefulness of corpus-based sociolinguistic methodology in the study of gender and politeness in social media discourse. Quantitative corpus methods were also empirically grounded to detect regularity and recurring patterns, whereas qualitative analysis was capable of giving a subtle understanding of the pragmatic working and social meaning. This synthesis circumvents the drawbacks of either impressionistic analysis of discourse or of purely statistical analysis of corpus, providing a more stable and repeatable model.

Notably, the corpus-assisted method demonstrated both what linguistic forms are more commonly employed by various gendered speakers as well as how and why these forms are utilized in interactional sequences. The research thus advances the study of mixed methods corpus research in demonstrating how mixed methods research can succeed in terms of complexity of online politeness, facework and gendered identity construction.

#### ***More Sociolinguistic and Social Implications***

This study has greater implications on the research on digital communication, gender equality and online civility in Pakistan. Since social media is becoming a major arena where people create and argue out beliefs in the social media, the gendered allocation of politeness tactics influences who speaks and who is listened to, respected, or silenced. The disposition of male users to wield domination via face-threatening talk may deter other users whereas the relational labor by female users is not taken into consideration.

Simultaneously, the research refutes the naive opinions that politeness and assertiveness are weak and strong respectively. Rather, it demonstrates that politeness is a multi-layered and situational resource capable of supporting meaningful interaction, conflict mitigation and ideological negotiation. The importance of educators, platform designers and policymakers learning about these dynamics cannot be overemphasized in their aim of encouraging respectful and inclusive online communication.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This paper aimed to focus on examining the construction and negotiation of gendered speech styles and politeness strategies on social media comment threads in English in a corpus-informed sociolinguistic study of Pakistani social media users. The interest in hedging matters, directives, and face-management practices helped the research to transcend impressionistic assertions of gendered communication and offer empirically-based and contextually-sensitive information on digital interaction. The mixed-methods design, namely, a combination of large-scale quantitative corpus analysis, on the one hand, with fine-grained qualitative sociopragmatic interpretation, on the other, allowed conducting a comprehensive investigation of the repetitive linguistic patterns, as well as, their interactional meaning. The results in their entirety indicate that gendered communication in Pakistani English-based social media discourse is formal, routine, and thoroughly ingrained into the wider sociocultural ideologies of gender, power, respect and social involvement.

Among the major research findings is the variation in the application of hedging and directives by male and female users. It was always corpus evidence that indicated that female users made more frequent and

more strategic use of hedging devices, especially when dealing with face-sensitive situations like disagreement, advice giving, and moral commentation. These hedges were not only a signifier of uncertainty but also of politeness and face-protective, which allowed women to hold their opinions, criticize others, and engage in the debate at the lowest risk of interaction. Male users on the other hand were more apt to employ unmitigated or weakly mediated directives in particular imperatives and moral warnings that proclaimed authority and control but conversely added to the probability of confrontation. These divergent trends underscore the fact that gendered speech patterns in Pakistani social media do not necessarily represent a question of linguistic choice, but a question of varying interactional orientation, between relational negotiation, on the one hand, and assertive control, on the other.

Face-management practices also obtained an analysis that showed a vivid gendered orientation of how users interpret interpersonal relationships within the digital realm of the public. Women users were much more predisposed to face-saving and face-hope measures, such as apologies, intent clarification, appreciation, and polite alignment, especially during negotiating their differences or reacting to face-threatening behaviour. This interpersonal work was essential to maintain communication and avoid the development of the situation. In comparison, the male users generated a higher ratio of face-threatening behaviours, which include ridicule, moral shaming and dismissive evaluations, and usually use culturally relevant concepts of honor, respect and morality. These did not only pose a danger of individual face but also served an ideological purpose of strengthening hierarchical gender conventions and justifying some kind of authority. Notably, the research indicates that facework in the English-mediated social media discourses of Pakistan is not only more interpersonal but also ideological, how the gendered identities and social values are negotiated publicly.

Through the analysis of the prolonged interactional sequences, the study found out that hedging, directives, and face-management practices are not independent characteristics that can work independently, but instead are a system. Gendered characters are built up over time by making repeated pragmatic decisions in comment threads. The use of anticipatory hedging, polite directives, and repair strategies by female users formed an identity, which was linked to reasonableness, moral credibility, and communicative competence. The frequent use of direct instructions and face-threatening tactics by male users formed the images of confidence and dominance, although in most cases, at the expense of growing conflict. The results are in line with the modern sociolinguistic and pragmatic concepts and approaches to gender as a discursive and performative process and politeness as a resource, which can be strategic and context based. Besides, the paper builds upon face theory by illustrating how face is negotiated and bargained in public and multiaudience digital spaces in a sustained manner.

In general, this study contributes to the empirical and methodological study of language, gender, and digital discourse in Pakistan. It is also empirically the most detailed corpus-based description of gendered strategies of politeness in Pakistani English-based social media interaction, which emphasize the intricate combination of language, gender ideology, and power. In its methodology, it proves the usefulness of using a combination of corpus methods and sociopragmatic analysis to provide both breadth and depth in the study of online discourse. The implications of the findings in practice are based on the possibility of comprehending online civility, gendered engagement and difficulties in which women must struggle in the open online zone. Future studies may expand upon this research through adding multimodal features like emojis and images, studying longitudinal shifts in gendered interaction, or comparing English-language comment threads to Urdu or Roman Urdu comment threads. Finally, the paper highlights that politeness, face work and gendered speech styles are core in understanding the way Pakistani users negotiate identity, authority and social relations within modern context of online communications.

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